

Reentry News

Bridge to a Better Future



Office of Reentry Services

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2014 National Night Out at the Reentry Resource Center By Leah Dansby Ezeoha

National Night Out is an annual event that happens throughout the country, to encourage communities to get to know their local law enforcement.

The first National Night Out, which began in 1984, involved 400 communities in 23 states and 2.5 million people. This year, 37 million people from more than 15,000 communities from all 50 states, U.S. territories, Canadian cities and military bases around the world celebrated.

The Reentry Resource Center (RRC) hosted our 3rd National Night Out event on Tuesday, August 5th. Over 130 individuals were in attendance. Clients involved with Probation, Sheriff/Department of Correction, and Parole who are doing well in their reentry were invited to attend the event with their family. We treated the families to a BBQ style meal, complete with all the "fixins".

Our theme this year was "Celebrate the Children". Every child who attended the event was given a backpack filled with school supplies. They were also delight-

ed by a variety of fun activities within the carnival-like atmosphere created by the RRC staff. Some children tried to out-do each other at the game "Angry Birds", while others enjoyed creating projects at Children's Discovery Museum's activity table, face painting, stickers, balloons, music, prizes and resource tables. Attendees all left the event with a prize, an art project, or a resource to take home.

The San Jose Sharkie made an appearance and was a hit with the crowd. The Sheriff's Office arranged for their bomb squad team to come out, their robot interactive device fascinated the guests.

Staff from the County Board of Supervisors and San Jose Police Department Deputy Chief Dave Hober were in attendance and gave us high marks for the event.



The Smell of Freedom By Tom Dearmore

On August 12, 2014, I reached six months of freedom. It isn't the fact that I reached six months—I had no doubts about that—it's the surprised I encountered and change in my perspective that are worth noting.

I was surprised at all the people standing at the intersection medians and holding signs

for money. I was surprised at the cost of everything. I was surprised to realize I hadn't seen a tree close up in a lifetime and how beautiful they are. I was surprised how nice strangers can be when you smile and wish them a good day. And I'm still surprised at finding joy in everyday things. Life is good.

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The Smell of Freedom (Con't)

Clearly I was in a culture shock six months ago. It was almost sensory overload—so many colors, smells and sounds. Yet I adapted quickly and felt that I was acclimated after a fairly short period of time. While I may have been making progress quickly, I can look back now and understand how much I was struggling without being aware of it myself.

For any long-term ex-prisoner making the adjustment, acclimation has an increased chance of success if they can gain a sense of belonging. I truly did not feel I belonged out here, at first. Oh, I knew I had earned it and I wouldn't allow anything to derail me, but I also felt apart.

Now, I actually feel I belong and I have an interest in making my community better in some way. I believe it's imperative to afford long-term prisoners the opportunity to invest in society before they are released through charity or some similar method in hopes that they could begin to build connections with the foreign land they are about to be dropped into with \$200.

One subject no one thought to speak to me about was women. Since the early 80's, we had been bombarded with scary stories of AIDS and STD's. If that weren't enough to be concerned about, then I had to determine at what point to mention to prospective mate about my

past. If I blurted it out too soon, it might scare them off. Mention it too long into the relationship and it would appear to be deceptive. Quite a balancing act for someone who rarely even got to speak to women for decades. Gratefully, I met someone who understood my situation better than I could have hoped for. It has been wonderfully scary times as I experience some very intense emotions and navigate my way through some of the greatest joy of my life.

Every breath I take today is sweet. We are breathing the same air...how does yours taste?

Board of Supervisors Approved 2-Year Contracts for Adult Reentry Services By Buu Thai

On June 24, 2014, the Board of Supervisors approved 2-Year contracts for eight community-based organizations to provide adult reentry services focusing on education, employment, family reunification, health and well-being, and legal services. Funded agencies included:

- Center for Training and Careers (Education)
- Catholic Charities & Goodwill Industries (Employment)
- Gardner Family Care (Family Reunification)
- HealthRIGHT 360 & Community Solutions (Health & Well-Being)
- Pro Bono Project & Bay Area Legal Aid (Legal)

Providers will be working with formerly incarcerated individuals who are medium or high risk of reoffending referred from the County's Reentry Resource Center. Services started on July 1st.

The eligibility criteria to refer individuals for these services are:

- Must be a criminal justice involved individual
- Released within 6 months
- Medium or high risk of reoffending
- Referred by Reentry Resource Center

For more information about adult reentry services, please contact Buu Thai at (408) 535-4277 or buu.thai@ceo.sccgov.org.

What's in a Number?

Reentry Resource Center (RRC)

Client Registration Data

September 2014

New Clients: 336 **Returning Clients:** 1,264 (duplicated)

- 82% of clients are males
- 42% of new clients have a high school diploma/ GED
- 39% of clients were released within 30 days
- 38% of clients have Medi-Cal coverage

Top 3 Service Requests:

General Assistance, Food Stamps/CalFresh, and Clothes Closet

Top 3 Service Linkage:

Clothes Closet, Food Pantry, and General Assistance

Reentry Stakeholders Coming Together to Share Experiences and Challenges

By Javier Aguirre

“For any long-term ex-prisoners making the adjustment, acclimation has an increased chance of success if they can gain a sense of belonging.” - Tom Dearmore



SSA—Public Benefits at RRC

(July 1-September 30, 2014)

of General Assistance Applications

Approved = 636

of Medi-Cal Applications

Approved = 380

of CalFresh Applications

Approved = 487

On Friday, August 29, 2014 more than 100 stakeholders representing multiple County and State agencies such as Santa Clara County Superior Court and the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Community-based Organizations and community leaders assembled to share the achievements, challenges, and progress in how we are addressing our reentry efforts as part of the Office of Reentry Services (ORS) annual *Public Safety Realignment Stakeholders Summit*. It was an opportunity to bring together all sides of law enforcement, health and services providers to emphasize and recognize the importance of collaboration in building a system where formerly incarcerated individuals can access services to have a successful reintegration into their communities.

In response to Public Safety Realignment (AB 109 legislation effective October 1, 2011) and the Adult Reentry Strategic Plan, the County has been investing resources to provide services such as substance abuse treatment, housing, case management, supervision, public benefits and employment/vocational training. One key highlight at the Summit was understanding the challenges clients had in accessing substance abuse and/or mental health services. Unfortunately, the need is much greater than the current capacity forcing many of our clients to wait for a long period of time before fully accessing a service. Outcome data that ORS tracks shows that clients who waited for more than 30 days to access substance abuse treatment is more likely to reoffend than those that are enrolled with 30 days of being released. Our data also shows that the most frequent crime that the clients commit before and after enrollment were drug related.

At the Summit, stakeholders had the opportunities to listen to the testimony of two clients that accessed services through the Reentry Resource Center and were placed at various community-based treatment centers.

One client shared his experience visiting the Reentry Resource Center after serving 15 years in prison and receiving the assistance of key individuals and peer support to obtain employment training and health services. He is now working at a local sports complex and being a productive member of society.

Another highlight of the Summit was a panel discussion with staff from Custody Health Services working with incarcerated individuals and Ambulatory Care working with recently released individuals through the Transitions Clinic Network and representatives from Community Solutions, Momentum and Family and Children Services. The theme of this panel, *From In-Custody to Reentry: Frontline Perspectives on Health Services*, stressed the importance of collaboration between all partners and balancing the service needs of the clients with the requirements of supervision.

Since the Summit, staff and all community partners have been refining the referral process, reviewing outcome data and evaluation, and identifying capacity gaps to shorten the wait time an individual encounters before being enrolled in a service. ORS looks forward to hosting the 3rd Annual Public Safety Realignment and Reentry Stakeholder Summit in August 2015.



Calendar of Events NOVEMBER 2014—JANUARY 2015

November 5, 2014

3rd Annual Holiday Resource Fair
4:30-6:30pm
Reentry Resource Center

November 20, 2014

Community Correction Partnership Meeting
9:00-11:00am
Adult Probation Department—Orientation Room

January 28, 2015

Re-Entry Network Meeting
2:00-4:00pm
Reentry Resource Center—Auditorium

Office of Reentry Services

Reentry Resource Center
151 W. Mission Street
San Jose, CA 95110

Phone: (408) 535-4299
Fax: (408) 998-7126



We're on the Web

www.sccgov.org/sites/reentry

Donation Wish List—Men's Clothes Wanted!



The Re-Entry Resource Center is seeking clothes donation for our male clients. Do you have gently used clothes you wish to donate? We are in need of the following items:

Reentry Toiletry Kit Supplies

- Men Deodorant
- Shaving Supplies
- New packages of men underwear
- New Men Socks
- Reading Glasses
- Mouthwash
- Ear Swabs
- Bar of Soaps
- New Hair Brushes and Combs
- Men's Coats
- Men's Clothing
- Clothes Rack
- Large Rubber Storage Bins with Lids

To make a donation, please contact Lorena Madrid at
(408) 535-4236.