Freedom Life Ministries

By Jim Smith
McDowell County

April marks the annual observance of Second Chance Month, a time to recognize the importance of helping those returning from incarceration reenter society. Freedom Life in Marion, Avery, and soon-to-be in Yancey County serves justice-involved individuals and their families with programs designed to help our clients begin a journey to a new life.

Freedom Life, the state of North Carolina, and many other agencies across the state are taking steps to make sure that those being released from prisons in the state have a better chance at success. From improved employment programs to access to mental health services and more, there are initiatives in place to help those returning from incarceration.

One of the key initiatives being undertaken with reentry is an increase in employment opportunities for reentry individuals. In our own area, Freedom Life consistently is partnering with NCWORKS along with many local employers to find the right job for those in our reentry program. The state, along with local reentry agencies like Freedom Life, has implemented a program that provides training and job placement services to those returning from incarceration, helping them to secure long-term, sustainable employment. This program is also designed to connect employers with qualified job seekers, providing employers access to a larger pool of potential employees.

In addition to employment opportunities, North Carolina is also increasing access to mental health services for those transitioning from incarceration. Whereas Freedom Life doesn't offer all services mentioned in the article, we do work as a "connector" to get individuals to the right agency with the best services. The state has recently created a hotline that connects individuals with resources such as counselors and therapists. The state is also expanding its reentry programs, providing more classes and workshops designed to address the needs of those returning from prison. These classes cover topics such as financial literacy, life skills, and personal development. Anyone can access these help lines, services, and web-based workshops by going to https://nationalreentryresourcecenter.org/

During Second Chance Month 2023, the National Reentry Resource Center, in partnership with the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), and Second Chance Act training and technical assistance providers, will host live webinars across a range of reentry topics.

Learn more and register for each of these FREE webinars below.

Tuesday, April 4
Strengthening and Maintaining Family Connections: Best Practices for Child-Friendly Video Visiting 1:00–2:30 p.m. ET
Implementing Forensic Peer Services into Reentry Programming 3:00–4:00 p.m. ET
Listen to the Experts: Young People Tell Us What They Need for Successful Reentry 4:00–5:00 p.m. ET
Wednesday, April 5
Housing Finance Basics for Criminal Justice Partners 1:00–2:30 p.m. ET
Pell Reinstatement 2023: Preparing for Implementation 2:00–3:30 p.m. ET
Tuesday, April 11
Enhancing Community Supervision through use of Evidence-based Practices: Preparing Supervision Staff to Advance Behavior Change 3:00–4:30 p.m. ET
Tuesday, April 18
Focusing on Reentry Housing and Family Engagement in Collaborative, Comprehensive Case Plans 3:00–4:00 p.m. ET
Making Young Persons' Reentry Successful 3:00–4:00 p.m. ET+
Youth Reentry Work Matters: Comprehensive Youth Reentry Planning and Case Management 3:00–4:30 p.m. ET
Wednesday, April 19
Preparing Justice-Impacted People for Infrastructure Jobs 2:00–3:30 p.m. ET
Thursday, April 20
Look Beyond Recidivism: How to Capture Your Reentry Program's Impact 3:00–4:30 p.m. ET
Promoting Reentry for Young Adults: Perspectives from the Field 3:00–4:15 p.m. ET
Thursday, April 27
Harnessing the Power of Video for Reentry Program Branding and Sustainability 3:00–4:30 p.m. ET

Now to point to the services that Freedom Life does offer... We offer Life coaching, inside and outside the jail, housing for clients, job skills and connectors, group meetings, spiritual counseling, and many other individualized specific needs. Did you know we also have a car giveaway program? When someone donates a used car, we find the best-connected client for success and, when possible, award them a car. In the last 18 months, we have given away over 15 cars!

Freedom Life is not a recovery agency but has many sister agencies with which we can offer a connection. Please reach out to Freedom Life for more information you may need about our reentry work, resources, and partnerships. www.freedomlifeministries.org call 828.559.2224 or email at info@freedomlifeministries.org

If you would like to donate to help Freedom Life continue the much-needed work here in McDowell, Avery, or Yancey, please go to our website or mail your donation to Freedom Life PO Box 1134 Marion NC 28752

Jim Smith is an area Worship Arts Director, He is the Development Director at Freedom Life Ministries, and run a production company wjscreativegroup.com

Hey y'all, we are Steven and Jennifer Painter. We started out as some of those folks who saw a sad story on the news about a child who had been neglected or abused and said, "why did this have to happen? We would have gladly taken that child and loved him/her!" Yet we didn't make a move to actually BECOME that family because "it was never the right time" or "we don't know where to start". But really, when IS it the right time? Answer: now. How do we get started? Answer: just make the call! There are children NOW who need someone to bridge that gap. Contact McDowell DSS to learn more. 828-652-3355.

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