



Reentry Community News

Feature Member Jessie Schmitzer - Athens Mobility Coordinator

I originally hail from Logan, Ohio, where I was born and raised. In 2008 I graduated from Ohio University with a BA in History, Pre-Law, and certification in Teaching English as a Foreign Language. After graduating I volunteered often, including the Hocking Hills Inspire Shelter, fresh produce distributions with Ohio Food Banks, and local animal shelters. Realizing my passion for social work I dedicated myself to non-profit initiatives in the region. From 2011-2012 I served as an AmeriCorps VISTA member with Hocking Athens Perry Community Action (HAPCAP) focusing on advocacy and awareness of their programs throughout the region, and serving as an Ohio Benefit Bank counselor, connecting folks to assistance and helping them submit their taxes for free. I continued with HAPCAP as a Job Coach for the Summer Youth Employment Program in Athens County connecting youth to job sites and teaching them life skills for their futures.



Although I had found my immediate passion for non-profit work I had a great aspiration to travel, so in late 2012 I moved to Seoul, South Korea to teach English to Pre-school and Elementary school students. From 2012 – 2017 I lived in Korea and also travelled across Southeast Asia. I was completely dependent on public transportation. From subways to bullet trains, buses to tuk tuks, bikes to taxis, I learned how to use multiple forms of transportation, often without knowing the local language. From my experiences in Southeast Asia with transportation I began to take an interest in transit planning and public transportation culture and use. I took what I learned back to this region to advocate for transportation for all, especially those most in need of these services.

In March of 2017 I returned to SE Ohio and began working as the Athens County Mobility Manager with HAPCAP. Mobility Managers are dedicated to increasing access to mobility for Ohioans by increasing understanding and awareness of transportation needs, coordination of transportation options, and building sustainable and healthy communities by integrating transportation into planning and programs. We advocate for transportation initiatives in the communities that we serve and work directly with community members. I attend meetings at the ODOT offices in Columbus with the 28 other Mobility Managers in Ohio to talk about what we are seeing with transportation in Ohio. I also do outreach and education with community members about all available transportation options and listen to transportation barriers that they face to document issues. You can find me at Senior Safety Day, Stand Down, The Athens Disability Awareness Festival, Christmas in the Village and many more events, reaching out to community members directly about transportation in their area. I encourage all Community members and organizations to contact me for any transportation needs or questions.

Bi-monthly I host the Athens County Transportation meeting at various locations around the County. At these meetings transportation providers, elected officials, community members, and organizations get together to talk about transportation ideas, give updates, and look at what's happening across the State. These meetings are a fantastic opportunity to collaborate and help put the pieces together.

HAPCAP also operates a wide range of programs including the SE Ohio Food Bank, Head Start, housing and utilities assistance, employment training, and much more. I can connect people who need transportation assistance with other programs that might be helpful to them, either with HAPCAP or with other organizations that serve the region.

It's a most rewarding feeling for me when I'm travel training with community members to see someone change from 'I can't do this.' to 'Wow, I really can do this!' and knowing that one person I trained is showing their family or friends how to use public transportation.

I became involved with the Reentry Task Force as soon as I started as the Athens Mobility Manger. I was aware of how difficult the transition to civilian life can be on its own, let alone with barriers like a lack of transportation. Sometimes not having one thing can really be the determiner of opportunities and the barrier to breaking that cycle of poverty. I wanted to make sure that I was at the table to represent transportation for the reentry community, document their needs to come up with solutions, be a resource to all members of the Reentry Task Force with transportation and other programs that HAPCAP offers.

Transportation questions? Want added to the County transportation email list? contact me at 740-589-3790 or email- jessie.schmitzer@hapcap.org

The Athens Reentry Task Force appreciates Jessie and all of the great work that HAPCAP employees contribute to our community to help people succeed and have a better life.



Larry Hayman and Shawn Stover at the Summer Law and Trial Institute Ohio University July 20th, 2018.

Larry Hayman is the Pre-Law Advisor at Ohio University for the Center for Law, Justice & Culture. Each year he hosts The Summer Law & Trial Institute which is a 12-day immersive residential program that aims to increase understanding of the law and its possibilities among Ohio high school students from Southeast Ohio. The program is a great way for the youth to gain knowledge and insight from professionals in the legal field. The goal is to help educate the next generation on all aspects of legal education, service, and issues in order to better prepare them for their futures as legal, advocates and community professionals especially in the Southeast Ohio region.

As a Reentry Coordinator it is a great honor to be invited to speak with students who have an interest in the legal field. I hope to be able to give the students a different perspective on the obstacles and hardships that people coming out of prison

face. I am also a strong advocate for substance abuse treatment over incarceration when warranted. Many of these youth will have a positive future impact on their communities and perhaps even changes in social policy that will strengthen families and communities. To be well informed from professionals in the legal and social sciences field is a great gift that Larry Hayman and his staff are able to provide. I always leave with a good impression of our youth and the questions/concerns that they pose during my presentation. Thanks so much to Larry for inviting me to discuss the values of a Reentry Program.

REENTRY RANTS & RAVES

As everyone knows employment is a huge barrier for people with a felony. Many people in our society watch these Dateline or Investigative Discovery specials and seem to think that every one with a felony is a serial killer or sexual predator when that could not be farther from the truth. Our media reports the worst cases and just continues to throw these stories at us daily. I work mainly with the low level offenders with about 80-90% having some sort of drug charges often attached to other non-violent crimes.

Just think about how anxious that you may become doing a job interview for a job that you absolutely have to have to survive. Now imagine that during that whole interview in the back of your head you are constantly thinking that the question about your past could come up at any time or the employer may not be understanding of your past mistakes when you try to explain them.

During the Summer Law presentation this subject came up and a wonderful young girl in the class stated that her dad runs a business and often hires people with a felony because he knows that they will be loyal and appreciate the chance. She was so proud of her father and I think that we all should be proud of him and anyone else who can look beyond a person's past addiction or mistakes.

So many of us have had 2nd and 3rd chances for mistakes that we have made in life and it is important to remember that we are all just trying to do the best that we can on this big blue marble.

NEXT MEETING INFORMATION

The next task force meeting will be on **September 24, 2018 at 9:30AM** at the Athens County Job and Family Services County Home Office (13183 St Rt. 13 Millfield, Ohio 45761) in the conference room. See you there!