

## Athens County Reentry Task Force Meeting

November 25, 2019



**Meeting Attendees:** Shawn Stover (OMJ Athens Reentry), Joe McGowan (Supervisor OMJ Athens), Crystal Howard (Public Relations Athens JFS) Jean Demosky (Director Athens JFS), Shawna Green (Health Recovery Services) Carlene Triplett (Foothills District United Methodist Women), Jared Butcher (CORE Academy) Cate Matisi (Women for Recovery/Serenity Grove), Nancy Stotts (Employment Counselor OMJ Athens), Kyle Verge (ACEnet), Nick Diogaurdi (Integrated Services) Laurie McKnight (Director Area 14 WIOA) , Lora Stotts and Melanie Good (ODRC-Southeast Correctional), Jay Forshey (ODRC-Office of Reentry), Clark Goble and Holly Uhrig (ODRC Chillicothe Correctional), Marianna Carson (Adult Parole Athens), Drew Case (ODRC/Adult Parole), David Maze (Athens First UM Church), Katie Daniels( Integrated Services), Sean King( ReUse Industries),Teresa Garey ( State OMJ Employment Services), Scott Fisher, Amanda Sawvel, and Brandee Glenn ( HAPCAP), Diane Pfaff (Athens Hocking Vinton 317 Board), William and Merlin Ryan (Community members), Monica Silverthorn (Athens VA Clinic), Jessie Schmitzer ( HAPCAP-Athens Mobility) Joan Nease (211/ United Appeal)

Meeting begins with Chairperson Shawn Stover greeting members with the focus of the meeting about helping people in Reentry, Recovery and Poverty and improving our community outreach.

Joe McGowan-Reports that the Athens OhioMeansJobs (Work Station) has been at the same location in The Plains since 2000 and will be moving to the previous Veterans Clinic on Union Street in Athens sometime in February/March. Joe talked about the ASPIRE program helping people with their GED and doing outreach with STAR in Nelsonville to help their residents from all counties to work on the GED/literacy skills and take the GED test. OhioMeansJobs is increasing their outreach working with employers, apprenticeship programs, and community partners like the Athens County Libraries. There will be a Job Fair in April with more information provided as the time draws near.

Monica Silverthorn- Reports that they are completely moved into their new building in The Plains near the hardware store and offers to give anyone who wants a tour of the new building if they contact her. She states that they continue their monthly meetings to plan the next Athens Stand Down (2020) and encourages anyone who is interested in being part of the planning committee to contact her. They will receive profits from the Chili Bowl Cook off and also are always looking into donations and volunteers.

Laurie McKnight-Reported that she has been overseeing and guiding Athens, Perry, and Meigs counties with improving WIOA (Workforce Inovations and Opportunities Assistance) services and working with these counties on the implementation of an Opioid Grant. Athens County has partnered with Serenity Grove to hire an additional peer mentor to assist with daily operations and case management services as well as give them good work experience in the recovery field.

Crystal Howard- Reminded people of the many services that are available through Athens Job and Family Services like food boxes and operation "Full Belly" a special project to make sure that anyone who needs food items will be served at the main Rt 13 office from 8-5 Monday through Friday. Money raised through special projects like "Soup for Socks" helps to fund these

additional items. Crystal also reminded people of the importance of the upcoming census and how being counted means more money for our area. She encouraged people to check out our website and Facebook pages for all the services we provide.

Jessie Schmitzer- Athens Transportation update is positive with everything that they had anticipated was funded through next year (2020). Athens On Demand is open to the public for \$1 one way and Athens Community Transit line 7 funded through 2020 showing an increase in riders and being utilized well. They also are in the process of expanding into Hocking County with more details to follow. The Athens Transit system has been a great benefit for people getting to appointments and employment in the Athens area.

Cate Matisi- Active with Women for Recovery and Serenity Grove states that they have had many successes with women at Serenity Grove improving self esteem and gaining employment with one who is now running a successful small business. She encouraged people to utilize "Makers Space" at ReUse Industries for classes and projects as this space offers use of equipment/tools that may be difficult to purchase. Cate is also working with Jed Butcher and the CORE programming providing instruction/classes to inmates at SE Correctional.

Carlene Triplett- Reports that the HOPE letter writing project with women at ORW/Marysville prison continues to be a big inspiration to the people writing and receiving letters. She states that they are inspired by some of the responses from the letters.

Jerad "Jed" Butcher- Jed teaches with the CORE Academy at SE Correctional to help inmates with educational and reentry needs so they are better prepared when they are released. This program offers many benefits to people. He states that working with KAIROS was a conflict of interest with CORE so he has to withdraw from KAIROS for the time being.

David Maze- States that he has worked with the UM church Monday lunch for over 20 years and his friend Jed Butcher invited him to come to the Reentry Task Force to see the community support for returning citizens. David reported that his wife is part of the Angel Tree Foundation to help incarcerated parents get gifts for their children. He is active with KAIROS and has a strong belief in helping people who are incarcerated to make better decisions.

Kyle Verge- Reports that ACEnet continues to look at different ways for people in recovery or coming out of prison to network with the right partners and pursue small business ideas. ACEnet has a shared kitchen and many food-based sponsors. He is open to new ideas of how to develop job opportunities for people in this area and increase recovery services support.

Shawna Green- States that she is working with youth in the schools to address issues and prevent future substance misuse or incarceration issues. They are working with the juvenile courts and medication assisted treatment to create better alternatives for children and families. She currently works out of the Alexander School District for the last 5 years and feels that education and prevention are key in schools.

Jay Forshey- Reports that Ohio DRC is under new leadership role with new positive ideas and direction. They are working on creating new programs to benefit our returning citizens and looking at step down type half way houses also to create safer environments for people leaving prison. There will be reentry/reintegration centers at all prisons that will be more tolerant of programming with behavioral inmates who need extra services. Early Judicial Releases have also been challenging with people being released early who have not been able to participate in prison reentry programming. Jay states that Ross County is working on new ideas and

upgrades for their Reentry Task Force and that Athens is blessed to have a solid funding source through Job and Family Services to keep their reentry programming consistent. Athens County currently has 298 males and 33 females incarcerated in Ohio. ODRC is also promoting the census and educating staff and inmates about the importance of being counted.

Melanie Good – Says that SE Correctional has been renovating their reentry services and programming. They have increased their OMJ presence and inmate registration with OMJ prior to release.

Holly Uhrig- Encouraging service providers to attend the Reentry Fair and Chillicothe and the other ones around the state to share information with those about to be released. Chillicothe Reentry Fair will be 4/30/20 from 12:30 -3:30 and Ross Correctional will be 4/22/20 from 12:30 to 2:45. If you would like to attend contact the facility for correct procedures.

Clark Goble- Works with Holly at Chillicothe Correctional and has been directly involved with Reentry/Reintegration services to prepare inmates for release. He attended the meeting also to learn more about what is happening in the communities with Reentry services.

Laura Stotts- Also at SE Correctional states that Pre-Entry is key to a successful Reentry and they are sharing and promoting useful resource information with inmates. She states that SE Correctional due to their location has a large amount of people returning to Athens County and the surrounding SE Ohio region.

Diane Pfaff- Reports that the local 317 board will oversee the Community Transition Program at a local level and hopes to improve outreach and communication at the local level. This program helps with finances for housing, transportation and other needed services for people who are being released from prison. She also reports that Hopewell has been expanding medication assisted treatment with Vivitrol and also utilizing Suboxone when necessary.

Bill Ryan- Attending to show support for people who are incarcerated and returning home from prison. Bill states that in the 1980's he was helping with bible studies for people who were incarcerated and has been an advocate for fair treatment of prisoners since that time.

Merlin Ryan- Reported that he was recently able to return home from prison after 35 years and has experienced many obstacles to overcome due to his felony background. He describes reentering society the first few months like "Drinking from a fire hose" with everything coming at you all at once and all the changes in technology and the community over the years. Merlin has been frustrated with the inability to obtain employment and was reaching out for suggestions.

Scott Fisher- Reported that they have several programs running to help people with employment services. He highlighted the Flood Relief Program that is flexible with hiring people with a background and no GED required but they have to pass a drug screening and physical. There could be potential for trainings up to 1 year with certifications. Scott brought 2 new HAPCAP employees to introduce to the members of the task force – Amanda Sawvel and Brandee Glenn. They were interested in area programming and ideas for needs of people in reentry and recovery.

Teresa Garey- Has been doing outreach with employers in the area and trying to find out the employers needs and requirements. She also is talking to employers about hiring people who have a felony/criminal background or recovery issues to create more employer contacts for reentry individuals.

Joan Nease – Sharing information about 211/ United Appeal services and encouraging people to contact her for changes regarding their organization to keep information current for the public. Joan updates resources and sends out lists of community events in the area to subscribers to share in with the community. When you visit the Athens County 211 site there is a short list on the right hand side of the page with food pantry, events, and resource guide information/updates.

Sean King- Reports that he is new to the field and wanted to get to know the various community partners that could benefit from ReUse programming. He discussed the benefits of utilizing Maker's Space and the tool loaning library. He states that they currently have a contract with Serenity Grove and Passion Works to use their space for special projects. He is interested in doing classes on welding or other useful skills if people have ideas contact him to discuss.

Drew Case- Works with Adult Parole Authority and DRC in a 16-county area gathering and sharing information to improve community relations and overall services for people being released from prison. Drew reports that attending community reentry meetings gives him a chance to get to know various partners across the state and look at how things are working or could be improved.

Marianna Carson- Showing support for Reentry Services and gathering information to take back to probation officers on a local level( Athens, Meigs, Morgan) to share and improve services/community connections for people coming out of prison.

Nancy Stotts- Reports that 124 people attended a hands-on apprenticeship event at Tri County Adult Career Center to speak with potential employers about internships to develop their trade skills or apprenticeships. She has been reaching out to the schools and Bassett House to talk about job searching and interviewing skills. Certifications give job seekers a better chance of being hired by most companies.

Nick Diogaurdi- The Community Transition Program that benefits people being released from prison will be undergoing some local changes that should create better communication for the community providers. Integrated Services continues to expand services in the community and provides much needed case management services to individuals who have limited social support systems.

Katie Daniels- Working with Nick at Integrated Services and came to the meeting to make connections and learn about programming in the area.

Jean Demosky- Reports that they are excited about the eventual move of the Athens OhioMeansJobs Center to the Athens area. There will be expanded services and easy access to other partner agencies including Veteran's Services. They continue to run into remodeling issues and are waiting on the wiring for computers which has slowed the move down to potentially February. The new building will be at 510 W. Union Street in Athens and we will make an announcement when the move occurs. She also stressed the importance of participating in the Census and making sure that everyone is counted as this is important for our local state funding.

Shawn Stover – States that community connections around reentry and recovery are strong with many agencies working together on programming and outreach to make sure that people are getting the support and resources that they need for success. Shawn and Cate Matisi were recent speakers at TEDx StroudsRun Athens to bring attention to issues in reentry and recovery. Shawn has also represented Athens Reentry at the Buckeye Hills Regional Council in Marietta and Ohio Correctional & Court Services Council in Columbus to bring attention to employment barriers and other obstacles for returning citizens in SE Ohio. Dan Enger Global Dialogues will be working with Chillicothe and Ross Correctional teaching “Toast Master” public speaking techniques and building self-esteem with select inmates during the month of February. This has been initiated by Dan with the help of Jay Forshey through his contacts with the Athens Reentry Task Force.

**Next Reentry Task Force meeting will be Monday January 27th from 10:00 to about 11:30am at the Job and Family Service office 13183 St Rt 13 Millfield-45761 2<sup>nd</sup> floor conference room.**