



REENTRY TASK FORCE

WELCOME SERENITY GROVE!



Women for Recovery, a local nonprofit organization that helps people struggling with addiction, has secured a home and a name for the newest women's sober-living house to come to Athens County. As stated by the organization, Serenity Grove will provide a safe, transitional environment in which women struggling with addiction can hone skills for independent, sober, and clean living. Serenity Grove will not be a treatment facility, but rather serve as transitional housing for women who have previously completed addiction services in a supportive community. Seven women and one resident manager will reside within the house coming later in the fall. They will partake in a variety of enriching programming to foster growth, self-confidence, and personal autonomy through initiatives such as gardening. Cate Matisi has attended several Reentry Task Force meetings and has been sharing and gathering information regarding the successful opening of the house. Serenity Grove continues to build their support base within the area and we look forward to seeing the positive impact of their presence in the Athens community.

On October 12th beginning at 5:30pm, Women for Recovery will be hosting the Serenity Grove Barn Bash at the Dairy Barn. Further details and ticket information can be found at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/serenity-grove-barn-bash-tickets-36986501622>

TASK FORCE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT



For many years, the Athens County Prosecutor's Office within the County Common Pleas Court has been a valuable partner in the reentry community. Becky Filar and Reuben Kittle came to the Work Station to discuss the impact of their various initiatives in the community. After hosting the Prosecutor Office's first Vivitrol Graduation ceremony in June with their projected number of participants beginning at 40 and skyrocketing to 200, we were eager to meet with members of the Office to learn more about the dedicated individuals who help shape success stories every day.

Filar is an Ohio University Sociology & Criminology alumna in addition to serving as a Victim Advocate under Keller Blackburn. Kittle's education background leans towards law enforcement, but his career experience blends together a past as a Deputy Sheriff and over a decade in Children's Social Service. Having lived in Athens County for the majority of their lives, Kittle and Filar collaborate together in the Prosecutor's Office with deep understanding of the unique needs of the community. When asked about what made their Vivitrol and Cognitive Behavioral Therapy so successful, the answer came easy: its personalized, vulnerable, community-based approach. "We take anybody and everybody," Kittle said of how they reach community members struggling with addiction. The individuals they work with come through family referrals, the Adult Parole Authority, and even walk-ins. "You don't need to be in trouble to benefit from our programs," Filar stressed. "You don't have to have a criminal background. It takes strength to ask for help, and we just want to work with everyone with where they're at."

As for the future of their programs, Kittle and Filar hope to see a continued increase in the number of Vivitrol participants and an increase in recovery and transitional housing in the Athens area. We thank Becky, Reuben, Keller Blackburn, and everyone at the County Prosecutor's Office for their continued work in bettering our community and aiding in the journey of restored citizens.

RESTORED CITIZENS NETWORK MEETING – MUSKINGUM COUNTY



The monthly meeting of the Restored Citizens Network (RCN) of Muskingum County was hosted at the Noble Correctional Institution (NCI). RCN is a reentry coalition made up of members from community agencies, reentry service providers, and correctional professionals who are dedicated to working together to assist returning citizens. Members from various Southeastern counties within the state were invited to attend, including the Athens Reentry Task Force's Larry Fisher and Madison Yee of ACEnet. Fisher spoke at the event about the entrepreneurial opportunities offered through ACEnet to restored citizens in their 32 counties of service. Also in attendance was the Ohio Director of Rehabilitation & Corrections, Gary Mohr, who provided positive comments on the continued interactions between ODRC and the reentry community. Larry and Madison thank Warden Buchanan for the opportunity to attend the event and the inspiring work that is taking place across the state.

TOUGH TRANSITION

A person recently released from a maximum-security prison shared his thoughts and anxiety about trying to get his life back together upon release. He was 20 years old when he went to prison and his crime was related to a night of drinking and bad decisions costing him 8 years of his life.

Upon release he was hopeful for quick employment and getting things together but after about a week out he realized how difficult things were going to be. On our second meeting, there was notable anxiety as he talked about going to Kroger's for the first time and getting confused with all of the different choices and crowds. There are multiple family and friends who want to reconnect and show support that do not understand the overstimulation that they are causing. There was a big coming home party that felt so awkward and once again people coming from him at all angles acting as if nothing had changed. He stated "I dumped 8 years of prison on my counselor in one visit and I think that I blew her mind".

A lot changes with a lengthy incarceration. He refused to join any gangs or associate with specific groups so was an outcast with a large majority of the prison population. This led to many unprovoked altercations and he was stabbed 3 times spending much time in isolation due to the conflicts. He states that "On the inside everything is about respect and status. You do what you say or else no one will respect you" "On the outside it is people talking all the time making and breaking promises" "I feel like I cannot trust people at their word". He left the Reentry office that day feeling validated and hopeful that by working with his counselor and setting realistic goals things will work out.

- Shawn Stover, Reentry Coordinator

NEXT MEETING INFORMATION

The next task force meeting will be on **September 25th 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!

This newsletter was a collaborative publication between Athens Reentry Taskforce Chairperson Shawn Stover and Newsletter Editor AmeriCorps VISTA member Madison Yee working with the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet) released on August 24, 2017.