



Reentry Task Force



SUMMER LAW & TRIAL INSTITUTE

Shawn Stover of the Athens County OhioMeansJobs Work Station met with high schoolers on July 14th to inform students on reentry as part of Ohio University's Summer Law & Trial Institute. The program is free thanks to a grant from the Ohio State BAR Foundation and introduces young Ohio scholars to the world of law and its various facets. Stover spoke about reentry efforts within Athens as well as his own experiences in the field. "These are not people we want to cast away and disregard," Stover noted to the class. "Many are not future-oriented because they grew up in an environment where they didn't have anything to look forward to. Starting with providing basic needs, we can get them back on their feet." The students were attentive and thoughtful in the questions they asked about the stigma surrounding the reentry population.

We thank Larry Hayman Pre Law Advisor and Ohio University Chapter of Phi Alpha Delta (National pre-law fraternity) who made the event possible and invited Mr. Stover to discuss reentry.

TASK FORCE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

Serving at the OhioMeansJobs Work Station for 12 years, Nancy Stotts is no stranger to the world of reentry. Her first experience with the field fell upon her when she began her work as an Employment Service Counselor in 2008. Stotts thrives in the position because of its encouragement of creativity in solving problems, the scope of diverse clientele, and most rewardingly, the ability to change someone's life. Stotts explained that her work is truly community based with the reentry-affiliated community using word-of-mouth to refer their colleagues to her services and the programming she offers. "I've had people come back [to the Work Station] and tell me that I changed their lives with the employment assistance," Stotts remarked. "There's nothing more encouraging than that."



In addition to being one of the first members of the Reentry Task Force upon its conception in 2009, Nancy Stotts helped with organizing the annual Athens Area Stand Down as an active committee member. Stotts oversees the in-kind donations for the event which brings local services and resources to homeless veterans and other at-risk individuals in the area. This coming fall will mark the second year of the Stand Down. As for the future of the event, Stotts hopes to see a continuous increase in the amount of people who receive assistance during the day. She also stresses the importance of reaching out to local leaders in positions of influence to participate and/or donate to the event to increase the scope of assistance and community support. We are thankful for Nancy Stotts' dedicated service to the community and the reentry population throughout the years and will continue to celebrate her furthered impact of the future.

DISCUSSIONS IN THE STATE

On June 29th Shawn Stover Reentry Coordinator and Larry Fisher ACEnet Director went to Columbus for a Reentry Coalition round table discussion about what Reentry programs are doing in other areas around Ohio. The event was organized by ODRC Office of Reentry and Enterprise Development. The meeting was an opportunity to discuss challenges and issues facing local coalitions and serve as a forum to exchange ideas on best practices.

There were between 30-40 people in attendance through the local Reentry Coalitions and ODRC. This was a very comfortable format allowing people working in the area of Reentry to openly discuss success and failures. Many of the larger metropolitan areas due to larger populations have more funding and programming to help people with Reentry.

“I left the event feeling good about what is happening around the state of Ohio in the area of Reentry. We have to remember that we are 1 of 88 and what we do in Athens County matters as much as what they are doing in Lucas, Cuyahoga, or Montgomery- just on a smaller scale. There are so many caring and inspiring people across the state with a passion for helping people leaving prison to have better chances of success. Individuals with a felony cross our paths in our communities on a daily basis and are just trying to survive and thrive like the rest of us.”

-Reentry Coordinator Shawn Stover

PARTING THOUGHTS ON A YEAR IN REENTRY

“The reentry program does an incredible job of not only pushing to give ex-offenders the resources they need but also to pushes them to achieve more. Whether printing business cards for a small engine repair shop, or watching someone pull up in their newly renovated food cart. The program provides hygiene items, gas vouchers, snack items, clothes, money for treatment, and money for tools, but also so much more. The office has also been a safe place for countless people to get a listening ear. Shawn has given relationship advice, encouraged someone to stay sober, congratulated a new father, and been emotional support to a discouraged mother. We’ve packed a bag for someone going into treatment and hugged them goodbye as well as given stuffed dogs to parents so they have a gift for their child when they get home. This program is important because it’s not just an arm of the agency filling out forms, it’s a team devoted to helping



ex-offenders feel welcome and not alone. I am a much stronger person than when I began. I’m no longer afraid of going into a prison. I have been creeped on, Shawn and I have been yelled at, and most frustrating of all I’ve seen someone with an incredible amount of potential go from sober then return to pain killers. Every second has been worth it. I am more determined than ever. I firmly believe that this is the population who need the most help and support. My future career will be devoted to being more than a bystander to the symptoms of a systematic problem. I hope to fight for prison reform and be an advocate for those in poverty.”

– Erin Phillips, AmeriCorps VISTA

NEXT MEETING INFORMATION

The next Task Force meeting will be on **July 24th 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 July 20th, 2017.