



CAMPUS VISIT



(Photo courtesy of Logan Stark.)

Reentry Coordinator Shawn Stover and AmeriCorps VISTA Madison Yee were invited to speak at Ohio University's campus earlier this month. Nicole Kaufman reached out to Shawn to present to her class Sociology 3660: Punishment & Society. Dr Kaufman extended the invitation to the Reentry Coordinator to build upon the class's discussion of the societal implications of punishment for heavily-punished populations as well as for economic mobility, health, and democracy in the U.S.

Shawn and Madison discussed the basics of prison reentry to the class in addition to the distinct challenges returning citizens face in rural Appalachia, such as the struggle of housing availability, transportation issues, and the scarcity of employment for returning citizens. The class was also given the opportunity to ask questions about the field and provided their own perspectives about the future direction of reentry.

We thank the OU Department of Sociology and Dr Kaufman for organizing this important campus engagement and are enthusiastic for continued interactions with the university.

TASK FORCE PARTNER HIGHLIGHT

At the heart of what makes small businesses tick is Larry Fisher. From education to community experience, Larry has a robust knowledge of how to help others succeed. He received a degree in Business Administration from Ohio University in the 80's before working in several different managerial rolls in states throughout the Appalachian region. Larry also served as a consultant to non-profit shared-use kitchen projects throughout the United States.



After joining the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet) in 2002 in the Food Ventures Program, Larry became the Executive Director in 2015. He has begun venturing into the field of reentry services which came to fruition this past year with the hosting of the first AmeriCorps VISTA, Erin Phillips, which jumpstarted ACEnet's relationship with Athens County Reentry. In addition to being an active Athens County Reentry Task Force member, Larry recently helped to secure a Small Business Administration grant (SBA PRIME) to further ACEnet's small business work within the reentry population.

The SBA PRIME award enables ACEnet to expand microenterprise services, including an food sector entrepreneurship program, for citizens re-entering the workforce following incarceration. The program will provide a development of sector-focused training and technical assistance services, business incubation, information on accessing capital and entrepreneurial placements with established food and farm operators. Furthermore, this funding will make it possible for ACEnet staff members to operate from field offices hosted by a regional network in five neighboring counties, thus accessing the already existing reentry network of Southeastern Ohio.

We thank Larry for his long-standing dedication to the Appalachian community and are excited for his continued involvement in the reentry community and the immersion of this grant program.



(Pictured L to R: Jeanette Langford, Madison Yee, Kysten Palmore, Shawn Stover, Trina Jackson, Jamie Gee, Dawn Freeman. Photo courtesy of Mike Davis.)

SECURUS FOUNDATION MEETING

Reentry providers from across the state came together for an afternoon of discussion and engagement in Columbus with Securus Foundation. The non-profit organization was created out of Securus Technologies, a leading provider of civil and criminal justice technology solutions for public safety, investigation, corrections, and monitoring. The Foundation is aimed at addressing solutions to reduce recidivism across the country. The event was coordinated by Mike Davis, Chief of the Office of Reentry and Enterprise Development for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction, and Dawn Freeman, CEO of the Securus Foundation and the Director of Recidivism and Reentry for Securus Technologies. Dawn helped to grow the Foundation and is currently reaching out to reentry communities across the nation in order to learn more about the efforts on state and local levels that are being done to help returning citizens.

The event was a great opportunity for fellow service providers and coalition members to address the issues of their communities for brainstorming collaborative, community-based solutions as well as continuing to grow the state-wide network for community support. We thank Mike Davis and Dawn Freeman for organizing the afternoon and are looking forward to working with Securus Foundation in the future for creating innovative initiatives of reducing recidivism.

REENTRY RANTS & RAVES

One of the great things about doing Reentry for a period of time is that over the years, there are more opportunities to see people succeed. When someone stops into the Reentry office that I have not seen for a few years and tells me about all of their success and accomplishments, it is heartwarming. When a person stops coming in for reentry services, I have to wonder if they are doing well or have returned to addiction/incarceration. Sometimes I will see people on the jail list or in the paper and know the answer.

I always hope for the best and often people will call me and let me know that they have gained employment or started their life over with a big “thank you” for the support that we offered to get them over the hump. Most individuals want to move beyond their previous lives and lead a purpose driven life. Many people succeed with the support from our communities and the positive encouragement that our agencies and organizations offer. I often hear individual say things like “this is the longest that I have been out of prison and out of trouble” as if there was some magic force that was protecting them.

I am and always will be a firm believer in helping people to attend to their basic needs to give them a chance. Imagine what it would be like to reenter society with nothing and have to somehow find shelter, clothing, food and transportation with no help whatsoever. I have great admiration for the true heroes of reentry working behind the scenes each day be, they family, friends, community members, or professionals. We all matter, and believe me, the people that we help appreciate us.

— Shawn Stover, Reentry Coordinator

NEXT MEETING INFORMATION

The next task force meeting will be on **November 27th, 2017** 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 November 21st, 2017.