

June 27, 2014

Madam Chair, members of the Law & Justice Interim Committee

My name is Jana Staton, and I'm speaking to you today as Steering Committee Co-Chair of the Partners for Reintegration. I am a University of Montana Counselor Education supervisor, licensed therapist, an active member of my church, and serve on the Montana Association of Churches Commission on Church and Society.

- The Partners for Reintegration vision is to make Missoula an inclusive and welcoming community for previously incarcerated individuals who want to succeed, by enhancing their access to housing, jobs, treatment, social connections and relationships. We know that as a community, we need to change our practices, our policies, our stigmatizing perceptions and misconceptions. We believe in possibilities.
- Our model is a network of volunteers and existing community agencies and resources that partners with the Department of Corrections to reduce recidivism in our community. We are not a new nonprofit organization.
- Our coalition came about when Landee Holloway, a Missoula parole officer who fully embraced the re-entry initiative, reached out in the spring of 2013 to the Missoula Interfaith Collaborative representing 20 local congregations. The Interfaith Collaborative was already working on homelessness and training homeless advocates.
- From this initial contact, Partners in less than a year has developed collaborative relationships, and gathered broad public support from more stakeholders. We are involving landlords, human resource managers, employers, service and treatment providers, previously incarcerated persons, DOC staff, and many, many faith congregation members. We're working with Job Service, At-Risk Housing Coalition, the Missoula City 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness, Labor Unions, Human Resource Council, and Opportunity Resources Incorporated.
- Our first public meeting a year ago drew **45** people. **80** people attended the September 2013 meeting, and almost **200** interested community members came this June 3 where we announced the launching of 5 task groups:
 - Housing
 - Employment
 - Mentoring/relationships
 - Mental health, substance abuse and medical care
 - Public awareness/education/policy advocacy

We've hit the ground running, and the response we hear everywhere is "How can I help?" "How can I get involved?"

- Over 50 people volunteered to be part of a Task Group on June 3.
- 20 people came last night in Missoula for training with Larry Gaalswyck to be mentors, provided by the new DOC-authorized Montana Mentoring program.
- We've conducted listening sessions with 25 landlords and already have a network of 10 willing to consider renting to those with felony convictions. The Interfaith Collaborative has trained 15 homeless advocates to work with those who may have been incarcerated.

- We've interviewed 48 small and large employers to identify barriers for hiring individuals with felony convictions.
 - We have an offer from a large Missoula financial institution to develop financial education classes specifically for individuals under supervision.
 - We've had excellent coverage from the Missoulian, TV and KUFM radio and will shortly have a website and digital newsletter.
 - We're holding quarterly public meetings to report on progress, be transparent, invite more stakeholders to join us, and continue to educate the public.
- As Partners for ReIntegration, we believe in possibilities, and in the DOC Re-entry Initiative. We are here to encourage the Committee to consider funding for the Initiative and support for similar community coalitions that can partner with DOC offices statewide.

Some of the Task Group Chairs present today to support this effort and answer any questions are:

Landee Holloway, Steering Committee Co-Chair, Chair of Employment; Task Group
Casey Dunning, Chair of Relationships and Mentoring Task Group
Shari Rigg, Chair of Treatment Task Group

Several active Partners volunteers who are previously incarcerated are present: Faye Slice, Robert Howe, and Max Corrigan.

Thank you for this opportunity, and we will be glad to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted to the Law & Justice Interim Committee June 27, 2014
for Missoula Partners for Reintegration
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