



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Mayor's Office on Returning Citizen Affairs Newsletter— www.orca.d c.gov

OUR MISSION IS TO PROVIDE ZEALOUS ADVOCACY; HIGH QUALITY PRODUCTS, UP-TO-DATE, USEFUL INFORMATION FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF PREVIOUSLY INCARCERATED PERSONS IN ORDER TO CREATE A PRODUCTIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT WHERE PERSONS MAY THRIVE, PROSPER AND CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT OF SELF, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY.

ORCA: Open House and Open Doors

By: Lashonia Etheridge-Bey

The Office on Returning Citizen Affairs has opened the new Reentry Resource Center. In fact, the door officially opened on July 8, 2013.

On August 6, 2013 Mayor, Gray, Deputy Mayor Paul Quander, CSOSA Director Nancy Ware, Gennine Hagar, Chief Probation Officer, and Professor Christi Cunningham of the Howard University School of Law were all on hand to lend their support to ORCA and pledge their continued collaborative efforts to reduce recidivism and increase the chances of successful reentry for Returning Citizens.

In his welcoming remarks Mayor Gray spoke extensively about the importance of Reentry support for the thousands of District residents returning annually. He reiterated the notion that Reentry is a national concern and emphasized the fact that the District of Columbia is leading the way with its innovative approach to reentry. For example the digital inclusion program ORCA offers serves as a model for the nation because for many men and women the changes in technology can pose as an insurmountable barrier. However, an opportunity to learn the necessary computer skills can give returning citizens a leg up in reintegration and obtaining and maintaining employment. ORCA has also launched the female

reentry initiative which includes The W.I.R.E. (Women Involved in Reentry Efforts). On August 14, 2013 members of the W.I.R.E., representatives of Department of Mental Health, Allen AME and D.C. Central Kitchen visited over 130 men and women at USP Hazelton who are scheduled to be released to the District within the next year. The men and women received information on vital resources offered in the community and words of encouragement, strength and hope.

ORCA is also leading the way in training practitioners and community organizations who are working with returning citizens. On August 15, 2013 The Office of Returning Citizen Affairs sponsored a Trauma Informed Care training with SAMHSA.

The training was designed specifically for those who are working in Criminal Justice and Reentry in an effort to reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization of returning citizens who are navigating the reentry process.

In October ORCA will be facilitating a panel discussion with W.I.R.E. members and community leaders who are involved and working with returning citizens to help enlighten them about the gender specific issues that female returning citizens face.

As the District's Reentry Agency ORCA has taken the lead in helping returning citizens reintegrate by raising awareness, offering direct services and connecting returning citizens to vital resources.



Director Charles Thornton as he welcomed everyone including the naysayers to the Ribbon Cutting Ceremony for The new Reentry Resource Center on August 6, 2013.



The staff of ORCA and one of the female returning citizens who was able to benefit from the workforce development program ORCA offers celebrate the momentous occasion & cut the ribbon along with Mayor Gray and Deputy Mayor of Public Safety Paul Quander.

PHOTO GALLERY: OFFICE ON RETURNING CITIZEN AFFAIRS



Mayor Gray shares a proud moment with the Director of ORCA. Mayor Gray stated emphatically, "Reentry is one of the most important steps in criminal justice."



The Office on Returning Citizen Affairs is slated to begin their computer class in September of 2013. The digital divide is one of the biggest challenges for returning citizens and ORCA has sought to help bridge that gap..



Director Thornton and Lamont Carey en route to USP Hazelton to visit over 130 men who will be returning to the District within the next year. Lamont received overwhelming applause as he shared with the men how to use their talents to prosper upon release and recited his beloved poem, "Streets Keep Calling."



For the first time ORCA visits a female facility (SFF Hazelton) where over 40 women are scheduled to be released within the next year.

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A MESSAGE FOR RETURNING CITIZENS

Returning Citizens and Residents of the District of Columbia:

The Commission on Returning Citizen Affairs is hosting a housing forum on Thursday, September 19, 2013 at 6:00 P.M. at the Wilson Building, 1350 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W. Room 527. The housing forum was developed as part of the Commission's strategic planning process to engage ex-officio members of the commission and to understand the resources available for returning citizens.

Charles B. Thornton

If you would like to announce a returning citizens event and/or program please contact: lashonia.etheridge@dc.gov