

Whatcom County Re-Entry Coalition

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Mission

To promote systems of restorative justice and assist persons in the process of re-entering our community after incarceration.

How You Can Help...

- Write grants, educational material
- Volunteer, attend meetings
- Donate time, money, resources
- Rent to or employ a re-entering citizen
- Help with a fundraiser
- Research, public relations support

We are a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization funded by volunteers and contributions from our community. Call us to find out more!

What Are We Doing Now?

CHOICES AND CONSEQUENCES PANEL

This program is available as our prevention and early intervention presentation for middle school, high school and college-age students and civic use. The panel includes former prisoners and police staff, and is designed to inform and educate.

Erik Ramstead: Police Chief, Everson, WA:
"For prevention, DARE didn't work, Scared Straight didn't work. This panel discussion, presented by WCREC, kept the 8th grade students fully engaged. It was powerful."

CHANGE FOR CHANGE! Feed the Meters!

This is a fundraiser where we have decorated parking meters set up around town to allow citizens to contribute spare change that will help others start their lives fresh. Thank you for your contributions wherever you see a meter.

RE-ENTRY UNIVERSITY - on hold

This program is a mentored platform to support returning citizens with housing, coaching, support and certificate of completion when they are released.

Chene' Harding: *"With dozens of arrests and prison behind me, without the support of the Whatcom County Re-Entry Coalition's pilot program in 2009 I would not be enrolled in college and working in a community agency.*

Their project was 5 months of help with \$900 for housing, education and case management. I now volunteer with prison ministries and continue to believe in change as I share with others how to achieve change as well."



Does It Matter?

Pete Kremen

former Whatcom County Executive:

"70% of our Whatcom County budget is spent on Law and Justice." - 2010 This means we spend more than \$1 million dollars every week penalizing people!

The cost of incarceration is \$32,000 to \$54,000 a year. It takes at least seven taxpayers earning \$50,000 income to pay the annual bill for each life lost to the prison cycle. Not only is it expensive financially...how do we recover the lost human potential? Who is being penalized?

Incarceration rates have more than doubled in 20 years. In 2005 only 17% of inmates had high school diplomas; 71% males/83% females had less than a 9th grade education.

What's wrong with the picture when:

- **40% of our prisoners are illiterate**
- 80% incarcerated for non-violent crimes
- Our systems are stretched
- Taxpayers can't pay more

Might it be a better return on our resources if we do more work with prevention, intervention, re-education, and job re-skilling.

Let's save money - save lives.

How Can we Break the Cycle of Recidivism?

“Building more prisons to address crime is like building more graveyards to address a fatal disease.” Robert Gangl, Exec. Director New York Corrections Assn.

Continuing to promote punitive systems is self-destructive. Our children pay the price. Why not create restorative systems that build healthy communities? We can start where it helps.



Those coming out of jail and prison need the support of a re-entry program to assist them in obtaining stable housing, treatment and other services. They have been separated from the real world, and the world has changed dramatically since they went in.

Without awareness, the barriers that exist can seem insurmountable and the person is likely to re-offend and continue to cycle back through the criminal justice system.

An issue we are working to change is how our state issues ID's for newly released citizens. Currently the badge they release with says, “Department of Corrections Offender”. This creates a stigma that is challenging. *Why*—if they are free people who have served their sentence and whose debt to society is paid—*are they still forced to be identified as ‘offenders’?*

History

Whatcom County Re-Entry Coalition was founded in December 2006 by Irene Morgan and friends after being in contact with Don Kirchner. Don is responsible for a program entitled, “The Society for the Return to Honor.” His story may be viewed at www.amatteroftime.org.

Objective

Our intention is to support honorable re-entry into society. We encourage and assist those who are willing to become functional contributing members of society.

Goals

- Promote prevention; early intervention
- Improve Whatcom County public safety
- Reduce recidivism and justice costs
- Reduce medical and emergency costs
- Educate community about re-entry issues
- Promote community revitalization
- Educate employers about tax incentives

Members

Our members include people from many walks of life: authors, teachers, police, counselors, therapists, DOC personnel, housing specialists, other re-entry programs, former offenders and interested citizens.

Offender Assistance and Referrals

We may be able to help with:

- Case management
- Housing
- Substance abuse treatment

- Mental health counseling and treatment
- Education and vocational opportunities

“ReStoreALife” Center

Founders Vision

There are many places around the country where others have pioneered solutions. Why not do it here?

- Develop transitional housing that includes education and life skills training along with case management and financial and other literacy.
- Develop job skills programs and employment opportunities; partner with businesses to help provide work experience.
- Develop a Wellness Center that encourages recovery from drug and alcohol addictions, wellness coaching that includes life style and values that are life-enhancing.



Opportunities for Involvement

- Do you know someone who is re-entering society and needs help?
- Are you in need of housing, treatment, or other services yourself?
- Do you have an employment position for someone making a new start?
- Would you contribute funds or resources?