

**Anchorage Reentry Coalition
Quarterly Meeting Minutes
10/24/19**

Representatives in attendance from the following organizations/groups: Alaska Ironworkers Local 751; Alaska Nations Reentry Group (ANRG); Alaska Department of Corrections; Native Men's Wellness Program, Southcentral Foundation; Alaska Housing Finance Corporation; Recover Alaska; Running Free Alaska; Anchorage Police Department; New Path High School, Anchorage School District; YWCA Alaska; Anchorage Community Mental Health Services; Unmasking Brain Injury Alaska; Anchorage Neighborhood Health Center; AK Works Partnership; Partners Reentry Center; Family Wellness Warriors Initiative, Southcentral Foundation; New Hope Compassionate Ministries; Anchorage Health Department; Alaska Native Justice Center; ONE2ONE Mentorship Program; NeighborWorks Alaska; Connections, AK; Choosing Our Roots; Hard Knocks; U.S. Probation.

1. Introductions.

2. Introduction: Chet Adkins, Native Men's Wellness Program, Southcentral Foundation and Anchorage Reentry Coalition Tri-Chair.

Mr. Adkins introduced the first presentation and shared some about his own experiences while incarcerated. Mr. Adkins had the opportunity to visit Spring Creek Correctional Center (SCCC) not long ago and shared his perspectives on the current climate and the feel to the institution; he shared that he recognizes the efforts of the Superintendent and the staff at SCCC to give the men there the tools and the opportunities to be their true selves. Mr. Adkins shared that he has been impressed with some of the men there that are also part of these efforts.

3. Presentation: Spring Creek Correctional Center via Skype.

Mr. Nick S. shared with the coalition information about some of the opportunities that the men at SCCC have to engage in programming and opportunities geared towards reentry and integration into the community. He stated that there is a new prioritization being placed in reentry efforts at SCCC.

He started by explained that there are seven "clubs" each with their own focus, leadership, and structures, but all provide positive outlets for engagement and help to support programming inside the institution (such as education and cultural events). There is a hobby shop inside Spring Creek where the men can create items for sale and do woodworking, bone carving, scrimshaw, painting, drawing; the clubs can help subsidize some materials to be used in the hobby shop. It was stated that the hobby shop facilitated access to productive and rewarding activities.

The Spring Creek Restorative Justice Initiative is a group inside Spring Creek that is connected to the clubs, that among other things, helped to found the sober living community and the reentry community, created an offender dialogue program as a way of communicating and apologizing to those that may have been affected by their crime, and has begun to incentive GED completion by providing fried chicken to those that complete it (which is a big hit; GED participation rates are up 300%). There have also been two forums where community members from Seward have been invited

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to come into the prison and engage in dialogue. Resolutions is the name of the sober living community that the men have created for themselves due to a lack of structured community-based program; the community strives to provide men with opportunities to address substance misuse issues at their own pace.

The newest effort is the reentry mod, where men are preparing themselves to leave the prison and make a healthy transition back into the community. Men may voluntarily participate in this if they are releasing in 16 months or less. The reentry mod has ten in-house mentors that help maintain responsibility and accountability, and build a sense of community. There is an effort to supply all men that leave from the reentry mod with interview clothes, a resume, guidance, or assistance with obtaining identification before leaving, as well as the sense that they will have the support of the men in this reentry mod even after release. Other factors that make the reentry mod unique: the walls have been painted differently, lockdown procedures are done a little differently in the reentry mod, there are two cells that have been designed to be more like an efficiency apartment, and all the men inside the mod take part in the chores and maintenance of their mod. Mr. Nick stated that of the 38 men that have been released in the last year that have participated in this effort, only seven men have violated and been returned to custody. He attributed that success to the efforts to de-institutionalize the men before their release, to build confidence to take care of themselves, to acknowledge their vulnerabilities, and to give them a positive outlook.

There proceeded to be positive dialogue between Mr. Nick and some participants at the meeting. Jonathan Pistotnik acknowledged those involved that allowed for this unique opportunity to dialogue with SCCC. Anyone interested in learning more about the efforts at SCCC may reach out to Alaska DOC; Jonathan Pistotnik of the Anchorage Reentry Coalition also offered to be a liaison between the staff in Seward and community members that may be interested in following up on this particular presentation.

4. Presentation: Lisa Keller, Running Free Alaska.

Running Free Alaska is a running program that began in 2012 inside Hiland Mountain Correctional Center. There are two programs offered throughout the year (winter and summer program), and there are opportunities to participate in organized races. Ms. Keller shared a video that was created last year by NowThis News, which presented an overview of the program and some first-person accounts about individual situations and participation in Running Free. The video is available here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJsYb-sNqqU>. Ms. Keller described the impact the program has had on some of the women that have participated in it, and the positive health impacts the program has on physical, mental, social, and environmental health. More specifically, Ms. Keller stated that Running Free has been found to have positive impacts on physical health, family bonds, and relationships between inmates and correctional officers.

Skinny Raven has been an important partner in sustaining the program by supporting running events, fitting runners for shoes, and holding fundraisers. Running Free will help cover the cost of race fees and provide running clothing for women that want to continue to pursue running upon their release

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to the community. Bonnie, a woman that participated in Running Free, described the positive impact that the program and the coaches have had on her. Ms. Keller explained that a leadership council comprised of women inside Hilland Mountain help to review applications for participating in the program. Running Free Alaska leadership has met with staff at Spring Creek Correctional Center; there are efforts to build up the running club there.

[More information can be found here: <https://runningfreealaska.com/>]

5. Presentation: Jon Woodard, Alaska Ironworkers Local 751.

Mr. Woodard presented information about the training opportunities that he and his union have been involved in across Alaska. He described the partnership that exists between Alaska Ironworkers Local 751 and the Alaska Department of Corrections to offer training opportunities to people in the community and inside correctional institutions around the State. The effort began in 2014, with a group of women from Hilland and with some men from the Palmer Correctional Center. In 2018, the Ironworkers Union Local 751 expanded the training opportunity and went inside Goose Creek, Spring Creek, and Fairbanks with a trailer to offer welding training. In 2019, training was offered again at Spring Creek, Goose Creek, Fairbanks, and at Hilland Mountain. Since expanding, 120 students have been trained. Mr. Woodard explained that there is evidence that vocational training such as this can reduce recidivism and has a positive cost-benefit. Mr. Woodard explained that there are numerous jobs and employment opportunities associated with this training opportunity and that these skills and employment opportunities can lead to gainful employment (+\$23/hour, including benefits).

Mr. Woodard stated that there is also an apprenticeship program available for those interested in further pursuing the trade when they are released to the community. A short video was shown that demonstrated some of the physical and mental challenges one must endure during Hell Week as part of the apprenticeship application process. Mr. Woodard explained that there have been reentrants that have taken part in this process, and described some success stories that were a result of the in-prison trainings. Alaska Works Partnership is a partner organization that offers free trainings in the community relating to various trades and has endeavored to get reentrants placed in these trainings.

Mr. Woodard also explained his experience transitioning back to the community, completing trainings and educational programs, and eventually being given the opportunity to lead these training opportunities inside DOC facilities around Alaska.

[Mr. Woodard's presentation is available from the Coalition Coordinator]

6. Presentation: Judge Stephanie Rhoades, ONE2ONE Mentor Program.

Judge Rhoades explained that the ONE2ONE Mentor Program is a non-profit that aims to offer mentorship opportunities for women that have been involved in the criminal justice system, who are in recovery and committed to a law-abiding life. Mentors in this program are volunteer professional

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women that are knowledgeable about the challenges associated with being involved in the criminal justice system and mental health challenges. Judge Rhoades described some of her personal experiences, as well as her professional experiences overseeing the first mental health court in Alaska (and indeed, one of the first in the country) that have contributed to her understanding of the challenges women face during the reentry process. IT was stated that the majority of women in custody (67%) have mental health disorders, including high rates of substance use disorders. Judge Rhoades described her interest in supporting women that could benefit from extra support and guidance. The ONE2ONE Mentor Program fosters normalcy and a sense of support between the mentor and mentee at a time where the mentee may be facing uncertainty and instability. In addition to one-on-one opportunities, group mentorship takes place at New Life Development, a sober living facility in Anchorage. Outside referrals are being accepted for mentees. Bonnie, the mentee of Judge Rhoades, shared how she has benefited from participating in the mentorship program and the support that she has received.

[Program information is available by contacting the Coalition Coordinator]

7. Coalition Coordinator Updates: Jonathan Pistotnik.

Mr. Pistotnik stated that there are several opportunities to participate in a reentry simulation.

- OneStop Training Academy – October 29th and 30th at the Loussac Library. The simulation will take place in the morning portion of the event on both days.
- UAA on November 1st at Cuddy Hall. The simulation is aimed at students but is open for anyone in the community.
- Mat-Su Reentry Coalition on November 20th. This is going to be hosted by the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition.

8. General Discussion & Updates.

Chet Adkins (SCF) – Mr. Adkins pointed out that there was a recent announcement by the Department of Corrections regarding the intent to send some inmates out of state to private institutions. He remarked that this had been tried in the past and it resulted in violence, and the importation of gang-mentality to Alaska. Mr. Adkins has personal experience in this matter and stated his concern for this approach.

**Next Quarterly Coalition Meeting:
January 23rd at the NeighborWorks Alaska Office, from 9:30am-11am.**

**Please Contact the Coalition Coordinator if You Would Like To Make A
Presentation to the Reentry Coalition.**