



CRP California Reentry Program

Letter from the Director

Dedication. It's what I see every day at San Quentin. I see clients dedicated to making better lives for themselves and their families when they are released. I see dedicated volunteers who show up week after week, providing vital information to clients to help them succeed. I see dedicated custody staff working to keep our communities safe and to keep our prisons productive places for our prisoners, and therefore safer for everyone. I see dedicated donors, who keep the California Reentry Program and other nonprofits going when the need is so great.

So I dedicate this issue of our newsletter to you: our clients, our supporters, our volunteers, our donors, and our staff at San Quentin. You all make our work possible and productive; you make our state safer; you make our neighbors and relatives and friends who have been incarcerated more hopeful and determined; you make the world a better place.

Allyson West, Executive Director

Volunteer-Based Programming NOW more than ever!

Joe is getting out of prison in two months. He's looking forward to re-entering the free world with great hope, but also with great fear.

He hopes he'll succeed on parole and lead a productive life. While he's been in prison, he's done everything he could to prepare for that, but has run into obstacles. Cuts in prison programs eliminated the vocational program he was in, learning a trade. He wants to continue his training when he gets out, find a good job, get a stable home. He's determined to make it this time.

But Joe knows that succeeding on the outside won't be easy and that the odds are against him. To beat the odds, Joe needs more than a ride to the

bus stop and \$200 in gate money. After he gets off that bus at the other end, how is he going to find a place to live and someone who's willing to hire him? Where will he find drug counseling so that he can maintain the sobriety he worked so hard for? How will he get into a community college for vocational training to improve his employment prospects? Who will help him if he hits a rough patch? Joe has never even had a driver's license and has no idea how to get one.

Every month, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation releases on parole 10,000 inmates, many of whom are similar to typical, fictional Joe. About 70 percent of those paroled end up back in prison within three

*CRP is a clearinghouse
for information and
assistance for those
currently incarcerated at
San Quentin*

Continued on page 2

Volunteer Programs , continued from page 1

years, most within the first few months of release. That's the highest recidivism rate in the country.

Combating Recidivism

When people come out of prison to unchanged circumstances, the possibility of returning to old habits is high. The first and principal priority of incarceration should be prevention of further crimes. This can be done through a multi-pronged approach to rehabilitation that includes education, treatment of addiction and mental health issues, and dealing with behavioral and family issues. But because of the state's budget crunch, CDCR has slashed the prison rehabilitation budget and laid off hundreds of state workers who run educational and substance abuse programs.

Releasing prisoners with less education and treatment cannot improve the safety of Californians. Instead, it makes common sense to provide prisoners with information *before* they parole about services available in their communities, so they can get the help they need as soon as they're released. While prisons attempt to supplement their educational staff with community volunteers, California Reentry Program is already there.

CRP offers the resources for prevention

CRP is a clearinghouse for information and assistance for those currently incarcerated at San Quentin. All they have to do is show up at our weekly sessions, and a volunteer will help them customize a release plan to their needs. Our extensive resources are updated and extremely relevant to our out-going clients. We take pride in keeping current with state politics, local agendas and the multitude of resources available from state and county organizations.

Our volunteers help clients make connections with service providers, parole agents, and local support services to assist them with jobs, housing, drug treatment, education, and other needs vital to successful reentry.

We also bring the service providers into San Quentin, so that clients can meet with program representatives before they parole, making connections on the inside that can continue on the outside.

CRP is not a state run program

Despite budget cuts in programs in the CDCR, the California Reentry Program is a private nonprofit, and not subject to statewide cutbacks. We are funded primarily by individual donors and private foundations who feel that our work is important.

Joe needs help in making his transition during those crucial first months right after his reentry into society. Fortunately for Joe and for society, the California Reentry Program is helping Joe prepare for his release.

The staff and volunteers at CRP need your help so that we can continue to help the hundreds of men like Joe that we counsel every year. We need your help so we can help the 800+ more we expect to see, who will be without services as the next round of CDCR budget cuts go into effect. And we need your help to move beyond San Quentin, into other prisons in the state whose inmates, just like Joe, are facing parole with more fear than hope.



All photos courtesy Arthur Chang

California Reentry Program's Dressout Program

Dressouts = Dignity

Dignity = the quality or state of being worthy of esteem or respect.

We are in constant need of generously-sized clothing for our clients, particularly pants

Each month approximately 25 individual boxes of parole clothes (otherwise known as "dressouts") are shipped to the inmates at San Quentin that have a set parole or release date. Those men that receive the dressouts request them at least 30 days in advance while attending the California Reentry Program's advising sessions.

If these men did not have family or friends that were able to get clothing to them, and if the California Reentry Program weren't able to provide the dressouts, they would have to spend approximately \$38 of the maximum \$200 they receive upon their release for a basic grey sweatshirt and sweatpants. As you could imagine, the remaining amount does not go a long way, considering many of these men must buy a bus ticket and hotel room for at least one night before they reestablish themselves. And of course they need to eat!

Most of these men have attended programs within San Quentin; many have completed voluntary or assigned classes, such as anger-management, fathering skills, drug and alcohol abstinence programs, college, GED, etc. They have done their time, and paid their debts, and have learned better paths in life. With dressouts, they can start that new life in street clothes that don't set them apart from others, ready for work, and with some funds to get on their feet.

The dressout boxes that we send often contain slacks or jeans, a nice button-up shirt, a jacket and often shoes and a belt. These clothes can help them to look good and feel confident during a job interview, for instance. The clothes can provide for them a sense of belonging and worthiness. The men we serve are appreciative of the clothing we are able to provide. Just knowing it is there waiting for them to wear upon their release gives them a sense of hope.

Where do the clothes come from? From people like YOU who donate them! We have had so many interested and magnanimous individuals donate their gently used clothing to us expressly for this purpose. Friends, neighbors, families, acquaintances, even famous football stars have donated to this cause. We are in constant need of **generously-sized clothing** for our clients, **particularly pants**, and we always need funds for boxes and postage. If you are able to donate, or pass along this information to someone who can... please contact us!



Green Career Fair this Summer at San Quentin!

This summer the California Reentry Program, in collaboration with the Insight Garden Program at San Quentin, will sponsor a Green Career Fair for the main population at San Quentin. Invitees will include job training specialists, job placement agencies, and employers. Generously funded by the Mitchell Kapor Foundation of San Francisco, we hope to present our clients with ideas and inspiration for green careers throughout the Bay Area, particularly as entrepreneurs who will hire free from discrimination that is so rampant in today's job market. Look for updates on our Facebook page for details!



CRP's
2009

- ◇ Saw 1,026 clients in all
- ◇ Saw 808 new clients
- ◇ Hosted 13 employment workshops and county resource fairs
- ◇ Provided parole clothing to 179 clients
- ◇ Brought in 49 community volunteers to work with clients

Thank you for your support!

Support for the California Reentry Program comes from individual donations and foundations including the San Francisco Foundation, van Loben Sels/RembeRock and Next Fund

California Reentry Program
P.O. Box 483
San Quentin, CA 94964