

Skills • Transition • Respect • Integrity • Direction • Employment

## **BUILDING BRIDGES REFOCUSSED**

Setting a Course for Reentry in a Second Chance Society



On Tuesday, January 5, 2016 the STRIDE Program, part of the CT Reentry Collaborative, participated in the Building Bridges: Refocused Conference with over 500 guests at CCSU in New Britain. This event was sponsored by Institute for Municipal & Regional Policy in collaboration with the CT Reentry Collaborative and the Malta Justice Initiative. The day opened with special guest speakers CCSU President Jack Miller, BOR President Mark Ojakian,

Under Secretary Mike Lawlor, DOC Commissioner Scott Semple and Mayor Luke Bronin.

We had a group of returning citizens on a panel moderated by Wally Lamb, one of whom was a STRIDE participant named Johnny R. and his employer Ken R. We are so grateful they were willing to share their story as it remind folks why it is so important to provide second chances. Once the panel concluded, there was a performance called "In My Shoes" by the Judy Dworin Project.

The afternoon was filled with several breakout workshops to include trauma, advocacy, faith-based, mental health/substance abuse, and police/community relations. Our key note speaker was Walter Fortson who spoke about empathy, solidarity and the path to justice.

The conference concluded with a passionate wrap-up from Bill Dyson. He expressed the only way we are going to move forward with reentry in the State of Connecticut is for all of us to get up and "just do it". Don't sit back or wait for anyone else but "just do it".

**Submitted by:**  
**Sue Gunderman, STRIDE Job Placement Coordinator**

## **YORK CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION TO OPEN NEW COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION CENTER**



York Correctional Institution (YCI) was founded in 1918 and is currently the only women's prison in the State of Connecticut. Times are changing in the state and with the success of the first reintegration unit implemented in Enfield at the Cybulski Correctional Institution, the women's prison will be the next to institute such a center on their grounds.

The new Community Reintegration Center will aim at providing inmates with a reentry focused environment to give them the best possible chance of returning to society seamlessly and successfully, and furthermore, will assist them in not recidivating. With approximately 1100 inmates, the facility has many important programs that assist the women incarcerated there. From Healing Trauma to a paralegal certification course to the Marilyn Baker Program, a drug treatment program, it seems the prison has something for all inmates. However, the new reintegration center will look to address additional issues perhaps not previously given the appropriate attention at the facility in the past.

The YCI model will follow the first Community Reintegration Center introduced into the state last year in Enfield at the Cybulski Correctional Institution however, with a focus on women and their unique issues. The center at YCI will take over the Charlene Perkins Center, a 100 bed building that has previously been dedicated to inmate programming.

Several community programs are coming to the table and becoming a part of this idea of reentry for inmates and their successful reintegration into society. Joy Vouthoues, Correctional Counselor, believes that reentry goes hand in hand with the Department of Correctional Mission Statement, "Based on the DOC Mission Statement, it is imperative we assist our inmate population with valuable resources upon their release. This assists with their successful reintegration back into society, as well as addresses the issue of public safety."

**Submitted by:**  
**Sarah Therrien, Career Specialist**

# Criminal Justice Incarceration Good Readings

People are fascinated by criminal justice and incarceration. However, many people are intimidated and have misconceptions about the practices, policies and social consequences of crime control. Luckily, there is a wealth of literature that looks at different aspects of crime and punishment. Some recommended readings include:

1. **The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness** by Michelle Alexander. This book explores the ways in which the hardships that ex-offenders in the United States currently face upon release are similar to the racial oppression and segregation that African-Americans have historically faced in the country. Upon release, the formally incarcerated face employment discrimination and legal barriers related to obtaining housing and exercising the right to vote. The book also emphasizes the negative and disproportionate impact that the U.S. penal system has had on African-Americans and other minority communities.
2. **The Justice Imperative: How Hyper-Incarceration Has Hijacked the American Dream** by Brian E. Moran and the Malta Justice Initiative. This book examines the impact that mass incarceration has had on annual spending and public safety in the state of Connecticut. It argues that CT would be able to achieve greater savings to its state budget and a lower recidivism if it adopted certain policy prescriptions to criminal justice.
3. **The Social Order of the Underworld: How Prison Gangs Govern the American Penal System** by David Skarbek. This book discusses how inmates create cliques for protection and to manage illegal activities, both inside and outside

correctional facilities. It also touches on how prisons impact these gangs and some approaches that the criminal justice system can adopt to combat the problems posed by prison gangs.

4. **If Beale Street Could Talk** by James Baldwin. This book is a love story about a young man who was falsely accused of a crime and who was subsequently incarcerated. This novel describes the trials and tribulations that the man and his loved ones experience as they undergo the ordeal of his incarceration.
5. **Couldn't Keep It to Myself: Wally Lamb and the Women of York Correctional Institution (Testimonies from Our Imprisoned Sisters)**. This book is a collection of essays by female inmates at York Correctional Institution in Connecticut, where Lamb serves as a workshop facilitator. The essay describes the difficult life experiences of the incarcerated women.

Although the aforementioned books are stylistically different from one another, they provide insight into the world of incarceration. Some of the books are rich with statistical information about the social consequences of imprisonment, while others provide a glimpse of the challenges inmates' experience. Nevertheless, they will all expand your knowledge base about the criminal justice system.

Submitted by:  
**Ramón Espinoza, Career Specialist**

## Striding Forward Corner...



Andre was released from Radgowski Correctional Institution to his hometown in Fairfield County back in December of 2014. Andre hit the ground running with a positive attitude and strong will to achieve his goals which included resuming his culinary career in a "high end" restaurant and eventually starting his own business.

Not every day or employment opportunity was perfect but Andre made the most of each of his days and learned to look at each one as a blessing. Today, he is employed full time at the restaurant of his choice and has launched his own catering business. He is a better son, brother, father, and member of his community as a result of his hard work. We are incredibly happy and proud, Andre.

Submitted by:  
Rob Hebert, Job Developer Region II

## Goal Setting and Perseverance

When you first get home from prison you have plans, hopes and dreams. You have your own set of ideas for yourself and then your loved ones have their ideas for what they think you should do. Sometimes some of these ideas are the same, sometimes they differ. In spite of everyone's best intentions, the plans you set for yourself are the most important ones. These plans are your guide for your future. If you have done your homework, you came home with at least a general idea of what you want to do with your "second chance". You have determined whether it's a job or school or training you need. You know whether you need to focus on your health or your sobriety. You may have determined which relationships are important to focus on and which ones you might need to avoid.

If you have not already done so, it is important to sit down either with yourself or a trusted accountability partner to discuss and write down your goals, which should include short, intermediate and long term. Ask yourself what your priorities are. Your plans, hopes and dreams are more than pink clouds floating above your head. These ideas and dreams you have are your guides. They keep you on course: review them. When you accomplish a goal, however small, check it off and congratulate yourself! When you have a setback such as that job you really wanted, it falls through, review your goals – take a look at that next thing you can focus on in the meantime. Recently, a young woman I am working with had a great job fall through. Instead of giving up, she reviewed her goals and determined that now would be the perfect time to enroll in school. The next time I saw her, she was already registered for 2 classes in the CT State Community College system and had all of her tuition and books paid for through grants and scholarships. Stay focused, pay attention to your hopes and dreams and always persevere in adversity.

Submitted by:  
**Anne Mehr, Job Developer Region I**

### Would You Like More Information On STRIDE?

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