



1st Annual Reentry Summit

ABOUT THE SUMMIT

Mission

Our mission in hosting this summit is to bring a broad cross section of reentry stakeholders together to promote successful reintegration into communities.

The Event

The Ray Brook Reentry Initiative, Inmate Reentry Council, and Fair Shake invite you to join us on September 23rd, 2015 in Ray Brook, New York as we co-host a national summit, entitled *Reintegration Through Collaboration: The New Normal*.

The Problem

Recidivism is a major problem confronted by the criminal justice system. According to Bureau of Justice Statistics:

- State and federal prisons held approximately 1,598,780 inmates at the end of 2011 – approximately one in every 107 U.S. citizens.
- At least 95 percent of state prisoners will be released back to their communities at some point.
- During 2011, 688,384 sentenced prisoners were released from state and federal prisons.
- Approximately 9 million individuals are released from jail each year.
- At the end of 2011, 4,814,200 adults – one in fifty U.S. adults – were on probation, parole, or other post-prison supervision. Approximately 853,900 were on parole.
- In a study that looked at recidivism in over 40 states, more than 4 in 10 offenders returned to state prison within three years of their release.
- In 2011, parole violators accounted for 30.8 percent of all prison admissions, 33 percent of state admissions, and 7.9 percent of federal admissions.
- In 2011, approximately 12 percent of parolees were re-incarcerated. Eight percent of parolees were re-incarcerated due to parole violations and revocations, and 3 percent of parolees were re-incarcerated for new offenses.

The Reality

It is essential that we reexamine the methods used and pathways for reintegration into society, if the increase in recidivism is to be reversed in this country. Available research confirms that formerly incarcerated people are in need of many services, and a holistic approach, to ensure their successful transition back into their communities.

The Discussion

Addiction	Community Impact and Involvement	Disenfranchisement
Economics and Education	Employment	Family Reengagement
Government Perspectives	Mental Health	Resources and Assistance

The Stakeholders

- Academics, corrections professionals, community-based organizations,
- Currently and previously incarcerated people and their families,
- Service providers and government officials.

About the Ray Brook Reentry Initiative & Inmate Reentry Council

Established in 2014, the Ray Brook Reentry Initiative is a collaborative effort to provide returning offenders with the tools and resources necessary to ensure successful community reintegration.

The Ray Brook Reentry Initiative's Inmate Reentry Council is an inmate led organization representing a diverse cross section of Ray Brook's inmate population, working toward a mission to:

- Make the institution safer by decreasing inmate idleness through the implementation of evidence based practices.
- Reduce recidivism and victimization through opportunities for personal growth and development.
- Assist inmates in becoming productive members of society.
- Institute opportunities for developing personal accountability and understanding of one's criminal impact of society.

About Fair Shake

[Fair Shake](#) is a free Do-It-Yourself reentry center for several stakeholders including: formerly and currently incarcerated individuals, their family and friends, corrections and reentry professionals, employers, and the community at large. We address concerns of stakeholders other than returning citizens so all of us can see how we can participate in safely offering a person a 'second chance'. Nearly everything on the website is available to anyone, including our Resource Directory and lists of reentry guides, the computer basics tutorial, support for resume building and job preparation, financial incentives for employers, and much more. Available only to formerly incarcerated individuals, however, is our free 'office in the clouds' where we offer data storage, an email account, a personal resource directory, our Personal Web Page, and tutorials for our members where they can learn to use each of these tools at their own pace. We also offer a 90-page reentry packet which we send to inmates upon request. Both inmates and educators alike have been known to use the packet for reentry classes, as well as single documents within the packet for a variety of study topics. Fair Shake is a 501(c)3 non-profit. We are viable thanks to generous donors who agree that we need a few radically different tools to improve our financial and social investment in corrections. A simulation of the Fair Shake website is also available as a free software application available to all institutions.



Sue Kastensen

Sue is the founder and director of Fair Shake, a web-based prisoner reentry resource center. She holds a bachelor's degree in Individualized Learning from Viterbo University in La Crosse, WI which she received 26 years after graduating from Walden III, an alternative high school in Racine, WI. Sue created Sun Dog Hemp Body Care, now incorporated into Dr. Bronner's Magic Soaps. She is the founder of Fair World Project and currently serves as a writer and advisor for the biannual publication: For A Better World. She is a board member of Infallible Helping Hands, a women's reentry resource center in Milwaukee, WI and she is also a founding member and current board chair of the Domestic Fair Trade Association.

Testimonials from Ray Brook Inmates



-David "Des" Loper, Philadelphia, serving Life

Unfortunately, it took my taking another's life, and losing my life (my freedom), for me to wake up and grow into a real man. To become someone with integrity and honor, who values the life, freedom, and rights of others as much as my own. Someone who gives more than he takes. I learned this by questioning my beliefs and values, in self-reflection, and from advice from other inmates, as well as certain staff who gave us the benefit of the doubt and a platform to do better.

This is what Fair Shake and The Inmate Reentry Council are about: self-improvement, through an honest look at ourselves, small successes that breed habits in us to change for the betterment of not only ourselves but ultimately our society, and searching out and providing resources that are practical and fundamental in our reintegration into society.

I have been incarcerated for more than 16 years of my life. During that time, I have encountered obstacles both in and out of prison, and for a while I let these obstacles define myself and guide my journey to my own detriment. I can't recall exactly when I began to change, but a series of moments forced me to look at things differently and I began to truly value myself and understand that I controlled my destiny. I learned that change would require a sincere effort and I had to sacrifice all I was taught about being a "man." This was never easy; however, I began to fail successfully, learning from my failures and realizing that it was part of my responsibility to pass those lessons on to the men around me.

My perspective has changed drastically, and I no longer see the place I reside in as a prison, it is, as all my mistakes are, a portal of discovery with unlimited potential for growth and development. Our greatest obstacles aren't the walls that surround us, our greatest obstacles are the ones deep within us.



-Terrell M. Hall, NYC, releasing September 2015, served 16 years

After serving multiple state and federal prison sentences, I was released in 2010 with everything anyone would ever need to succeed: a stable place to live, reasonable financial resources, family support, and most of all, a job helping others succeed. Sadly, I was still missing the belief in my ability to overcome the simplest of challenges. Less than 16 months later, I was rearrested and given another federal sentence, beginning the cycle again.

Now, I work to help incarcerated men believe in themselves and achieve their goals by providing resources and assistance to better prepare them for the reentry obstacles that I faced and was unprepared to overcome. I strive to instill the belief that freedom is not something to take lightly. I believe that reentry success begins with looking within to identify what's really missing – for me that was sincere faith in my ability to be successful in life.



-Shawn Pelley, Boston, serving 10 years

I am very fortunate in that my prison job allows me the ability to help others while helping myself. I work with staff and inmates to create a reentry "culture" from which many will obtain the skills and abilities needed to succeed. Reentry is about preparation, but also about growing as an individual. I believe my ability to effect change on a small scale will ultimately serve a broader audience, and that will spur others to think and engage in prosocial efforts to change the perception of reentry, for themselves and as a society.
