

STANLEY HELTERBRAN: CHOICES

Stanley Helterbran had a decision to make as his release date neared – return to the life he knew before prison or seek an opportunity for change. “I could have made a phone call and had people meet me at the prison, but I didn’t want that life any longer.”, he says. Stan did not make that phone call. Instead, he traded-in the amenities he enjoyed from his previous life-style for a chance to start over.



In order to begin his new journey on the right foot, Stan knew he needed to immediately feel comfortable in his new environment. Not only did he feel comfortable at Dismas, he says, “I thought it was too good to be true.” He knew Dismas has a good reputation among those within the prison system, but he still had concerns, “I wanted to go to a place where I could get myself together without being pressured.”

What Stan found at Dismas is a safe environment within a caring community willing to give him time to relax and start anew. “There’s a fine line between someone re-turning to crime or not.”, Stan suggests, “If you put too much pressure on someone who has just been released, they’re going to snap.” At Dismas, he had the luxury of knowing he would be given time to find work without the worry of meeting basic needs.

As is for the majority of former offenders, Stan was at times discouraged while trying to find employment, “I interviewed well and they seemed excited to hire me, but then they would do a background check and it was over.” As such, he would like to see Dismas have more partnerships with job opportunities for residents. He explains that the benefits of employment extend beyond the person, that our communities are better off when former offenders are able to earn a comfortable living.

Today, Stan does not stress over background checks, he is self-employed and otherwise stays busy advocating on behalf of former offenders. He is always willing to share his story and discuss the challenges of reentry. Most of all, he wants mainstream society to know that the majority of those who have been in prison are not bad people,

they’ve just made poor decisions.

One of the many wise decisions Stan has made was choosing to not make that phone call to old friends, but instead to come to Dismas. He says, “You’re treated like family when you get here. Family gives you unconditional love and support and that’s what Dismas does.”

“We can’t change what has been done, but we can stop it from happening again. Because of Dismas, society is safer and more knowledgeable about people who have been in prison.”

– Stanley Helterbran

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is family.

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Nashville, TN 37212

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Patrick and Cecelia Theobald

Rob Gabbert



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FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF FORGIVENESS

When our founder, Father Jack Hickey conceived the idea of Dismas House, it was based on the concept that former offenders and college students were going through a similar phase in life – each searching for their respective role in the community. As Dismas opened its doors in 1974, a group of folks who had just been released from incarceration moved in with students from Vanderbilt University to form a community in which each member helped and learned from the others.

Forty two years later, our newest student resident from Vanderbilt has joined the Dismas family to follow in the footsteps of those who laid the groundwork for this unique Dismas tradition. Wesley Dozier will spend the summer between his undergraduate and graduate studies living at Dismas to support his housemates while garnering a deeper understanding of the population he hopes to serve as a public interest lawyer.

This past May, Wesley celebrated graduation day with friends and family. Unbeknownst to him, on that very same day there was a gentleman celebrating release after nearly two years of incarceration in a Tennessee State prison. In just a matter of days, the two would share a house.

Wesley admits the first few days were awkward, that the other residents didn’t really understand his role and they were convinced he was brought in by staff to supervise them. Regardless, he says



Wesley (center) enjoying a ball game with his new Dismas family.

everyone welcomed him and he now enjoys conversations about the progress others are making. “I’ve never started a conversation about their past.”, Wesley adds, “They’ve told me more than I’ve ever asked. It has given me a clearer picture of the obstacles they encounter.”

Just as Father Hickey envisioned, Wesley’s presence has made an impact at Dismas. One of his newfound friends says that having Wesley around has inspired him to make something of his own life. Wesley believes there is something unexplainable about Dismas that makes it unlike any of the other programs he visited as part of a research project, “There is a culture here that allows someone to autonomously build their life back up very naturally. It is a very family-like environment that not only gives people an opportunity to improve their life, but also a voice to be an advocate for themselves and the others.”

“I wish everyone could have this experience.”, Wesley concludes, “The interaction is the most important part of the experience.” He believes the interactive nature of the Dismas program, among the household and within the community, introduces residents to opportunities and alleviates the disconnect many in mainstream society have with former offenders. Wesley thinks so highly of the Dismas model that he has a message for those who thought he was crazy for moving in – “You were wrong!”



Dismas, Inc. is a not-for-profit 501.c.3 organization. Donations are tax deductible.



is family.

A RECORD BREAKING DAY

Nashville Mayor Megan Barry and Sheriff Daron Hall were joined by more than 300 guests at Rocketown to raise awareness about Dismas at our annual Forgiveness Luncheon. An event-record \$75,000 was raised in support of programming. "The money raised today will really help us serve our clients better," says Gerald Brown, CEO of Dismas, Inc.

In addition to a keynote speech by Mayor Barry, current Dismas residents and Board members shared testimony about their experiences at Dismas. Commissioner Derrick Schofield accepted recognition on behalf of Tennessee Department of Correction for its long-term support of Dismas. Sheriff Hall emceed the event.



Brown & Hall recognize TDOC



Guests fill out their donation cards



Brown & Hall thank Mayor Barry



Kevin Knowlton shares what Dismas means to him



Sheriff Daron Hall gets the event started



Nashville Mayor, Megan Barry



Over 300 came out in support of Dismas



Board President, Patrick Theobald, introduces Gerald



Herman Hester, "Dismas is much more than a halfway house."



Mayor poses with young Dismas supporter



Gerald speaks with local media



Dismas staff and volunteers having fun before the event

RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY

The results are in and the Dismas program preview tours are a hit. Since beginning these tours in March, more than 40 people have enjoyed our new tradition. On the third Thursday of each month, guests are treated to lunch while learning about our history, what we do, and the impact Dismas has, including testimony from a current or former resident.

First time visitors and those who have been involved for years have all walked away with a deeper understanding of how Dismas' unique approach to reentry works.

Call (615) 297-9287 or email info@dismas.org for more information or to reserve your spot at one of the upcoming tours on **July 21st, August 18th, or September 15th**. The tours begin promptly at noon and conclude by 1:00pm



Davey explains the 'Pillars' of Dismas programming

A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

According to the Department of Justice (DOJ), more than one-half of those incarcerated in the United States meet the criteria for having a mental disorder – this is nearly five times the rate among the American population as a whole. In addition, nearly three-quarters of inmates who have mental health problems also struggle with substance dependence or abuse.

As part of our holistic approach to empowering those we serve, Dismas residents address these concerns through a partnership with Family Reconciliation Center (FRC). Every new resident completes a panel of assessments administered by FRC staff and student interns that are used to develop an individual-based treatment plan followed by therapeutic sessions every other week. Since launching this program in 2015, over

20 residents have received treatment at no cost to them.

Executive Director, Dr. Malinda Davenport-Crisp designed FRC's programming to help those involved with the criminal justice system and their families meet physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Dr. Davenport-Crisp believes these services are critical for those facing the harsh realities and stress of reentering society after incarceration. She explains that most returning citizens are self-medicating in order to cope with deeper issues while lacking the tools and skills needed for recovery.

As one Dismas resident acknowledges, the services received at FRC have "greatly helped me understand myself and how to maximize my efforts to becoming a productive citizen." Dr. Davenport-Crisp agrees that whether or not a returning citizen receives proper care can make or break their reentry process – that it can be the difference between surviving and thriving.

"Just because someone commits a crime", says Dr. Davenport-Crisp, "does not mean they deserve a life sentence by neglecting their health care." She is enthused by the collaboration between FRC and Dismas and would like to see this model replicated throughout middle Tennessee.



Dr. Malinda Davenport-Crisp

Suffering from a mental and/or substance use disorder increases the likelihood a former inmate will experience homelessness or abuse, commit a violent crime, or return to incarceration (DOJ). Dr. Davenport-Crisp commends Dismas for innovative approaches to reducing recidivism. She points out that "community" is often a neglected need of returning citizens and is convinced the collaboration between Family Reconciliation and Dismas has been a "recipe for success since the beginning."



Malinda working with female prisoners.

To learn more about Family Reconciliation Center, visit www.familyreconciliationcenter.com

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