



CRP California Reentry Program

Letter from the Director

Realignment. That's the word that all of us in California's criminal justice system hear and talk about these days, but I'm regularly reminded that many Californians are unaware of it entirely or don't know what it really means. For details, you can do a simple internet search on "realignment" but here's my take on what it means for reentry. With the exception of the many fine programs at San Quentin, reentry preparation is not part of California state prisoners' day-to-day lives. With realignment, parole violators will be sentenced to county jail, and many being released from prison will be under local (usually probation) supervision. In counties with visionary Probation Chiefs and Sheriffs this will mean better connection to local programs and services and evidenced-based supervision, and, over time, a reduction in recidivism. In other counties, it means shifting overcrowding from state prison to local jails and all the attendant problems: health issues, violence, budgetary conflict that impact schools and other public services.

For the California Reentry Program, this will mean a shift in our focus to prisoners serving time on new prison commitments, facing longer terms; we will see fewer and fewer parole violators. And we will still have the chal-

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How High Can I Climb?

By David Marsh

That's the question I keep asking myself these days..."How high can I climb?" My life these days has been an unbelievable succession of amazingly GIANT steps!!! My 20-year-old daughter, Becky, has moved in with Nolan and me, and we are just enjoying life tremendously, one day at a time!

In addition, recently I submitted my proposed pilot column for our local weekly paper, and the editor just LOVED it! Cool! The column will be featured on a regular basis, each week, for which I will be paid! Imagine that!!! 14 months out from behind those old forbidding walls and I'm a regular columnist for a local paper in the free world!!! The initial run of the column is featuring a series on inmate realignment, and my column carries the name of the old column that I wrote on the staff of the San Quentin News, "As I See It..." Prit - teeee damn cool if you ask me! Carried that column out from behind the walls of the prison and on to a whole new life for it out in the free world!!!

I've had quite a bit of work published in this very same paper, six or seven feature stories carried on the front page, so the readers are somewhat familiar with my work. Folks really seem to have quite a high opinion of my work, they do!!!

It's like living a dream! I'm currently holding down three jobs, including the new newspaper gig. I have a full-time job doing marketing



David Marsh

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and sales for a start-up computer business, and I do some lawn care on the side. And now this newspaper thing! It's truly awesome to be able to enjoy this kind of success! Of course, I work very hard to achieve the goals that I have set for myself, but God, fate, luck, whatever you should choose to call it, plays a major role in the blessings that we have in our lives!

Parolees do make good out in the real world if they can just get a break when they need it! Folks REALLY need to know that, and now that I have attained a decent forum for my work, I intend to spread the word! You just watch me!!!

"Parolees do make good out in the real world if they can just get a break when they need it!"

To read more of David Marsh's work, see: <http://www.valleyvoicenewspaper.com/columns.htm>.
For his excellent article on realignment see: http://www.valleyvoicenewspaper.com/marshcolumn/2011/marsh_082511.htm

Second Green Career Fair at San Quentin in 2012

The California Reentry and Insight Garden Programs at San Quentin will be hosting San Quentin's second annual Green Career Fair on Saturday, January 21, 2012. Inspired by a talk given by Van Jones in 2009 to prisoners and staff at San Quentin, we aim to inspire, educate, and motivate our clients to "go Green" when they return to their communities.



Last year's Green Career Fair

It will be a morning of education and information-sharing at San Quentin State Prison so men can learn more about participating in the "Green" economy when they parole. With finding a job after leaving prison high on the list of pressing concerns for parolees, this is a chance to introduce them to employment avenues they otherwise might not discover. The goal is to educate and connect our clients with Green employment, Green jobs training, Green job placement, employment advocacy for the incarcerated, entrepreneurship, food, farming and urban agriculture.

In addition to educating inmates on Green opportunities, the Green Career Fair last year enabled service providers, educators, and employers inside and outside San Quentin to network and make connections. We look forward to continuing that progress in community-building.

Last year we had more than 25 organizations take part and meet with over 200 attendees. We hope that this year will see an even larger turnout. We are looking for connections to local green businesses, so please contact us if you would like to participate!



Q & A with Volunteer Chase Finney

When people find out that you volunteer at SQ, what do they say or ask?

By now most of my friends and family know how important the work is to me and are very supportive. When I tell new acquaintances they are usually surprised. Some of the first questions are always “What are they in for?” or “Is it scary?” **I take the opportunity to explain that the majority of incarcerated people in this country are nonviolent offenders and that the United States makes up less than 5% of the world population but about 25% of the world’s incarcerated population.** I tell them I usually don’t know what my clients’ crimes are because

“He said he only wished his mother could see him now and see how much he’s grown..”

I don’t ask; all day and for the rest of their lives they will be defined by the crime they committed and they are so much more than that.

Describe some of the people you’ve met while working at SQ.

I remember one client, probably in his 50s, beaming with excitement the week before his release. He had a resume, a cover letter, and a job connection. **He said even if they didn’t hire him, he now had the confidence to pick himself back up and try again.** He said he only wished his mother could see him now and see how much he’s grown.

What do you find most challenging about working with prisoners?

With CRP, it’s definitely hard not knowing what happens to clients after they’re released. We can only support clients as much as possible while they’re at SQ and try to plug them into resources on the outside. Then, we just have to hope for the best. It’s also a challenge to be both optimistic and realistic with clients. **The reality is that reentry resources are scarce, so I don’t want to give them false hope, but I also want to support their belief in themselves and their ability to pursue a new path.**

What’s the best/worst thing to happen since you started working with the program?

It’s nice when we can help them with concrete tasks. I helped one client get a warrant cleared through his parole agent and he was so grateful. I’ve also helped a couple clients write resumes and when I bring in a typed copy you can feel their self-esteem boosting. Those are great moments.

One night I was helping a client fill out his FAFSA. When we got to the question, “How many people are in your household?” his head fell into his hands and he started crying. He apologized and told me that his wife had died two months ago and that he had seven kids who he didn’t know if he would be able to see when he got out. **That was another moment that has stayed with me, and I think those difficult moments fuel my commitment to the work just as much, if not more, than the gratifying moments.**

What would you tell someone who is thinking about volunteering?

Do it! It’s such a great program and there’s such a huge need. I would also say it’s important to make sure it’s something you want to commit to. It’s a decent time commitment and I think the volunteers who stay long-term and show up each week are able to make the most impact.

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lence of trying to assist men paroling all over the state. But there will still be over 100,000 men and women in the state prison system when all is said and done. Most will be released to their local communities. The need for reentry services in state prisons is far from over, and is one that is poorly addressed at best.

The same issues need to be addressed in county jails. State realignment funds are often not being allocated to reentry planning PRE-release, and case management POST-release. There is no legislation that mandates such funding, so it is up to each county and may result in vast disparities. It is more critical than ever for the state *and* counties to focus on reentry planning.

-Allyson West, Executive Director



2010 Fundraiser

2012 Fundraiser— Save the Date!

When: Sunday, January 15, 2012 5:00-7:00 pm

Where: The Women's Building, Auditorium, 3543 18th St., San Francisco

What: Raising awareness about reentry, inspiration, mixing with like-minded people

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