

The STAR Project: Successful Transition And Reentry

# STAR STORIES

The STAR Project is funded by The Sherwood Trust, Walla Walla County, Community Trade and Economic Development, Blue Mountain Community Foundation, and numerous individual donations from the community. Office is located at 127 West Poplar  
Open: 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays  
E-mail: starproject@my180.net  
P.O. Box 159 Phone: 509-525-3612  
Website: starproject.awardspace.com

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### *Just talking with kids...*

Do you guys remember what it was like to have your Mom away at prison?

**Yes.**

What's it like now that she is home?

**Austin: Great. It's nice to have a mom again.**

**Samantha: It's nice to have a family again.**

(We often forget the impact that incarceration has on the youngest members of our community.)

**Our clients almost always need a backpack when they get out of jail or prison. We appreciate all backpack donations:**



### *Working with The Department of Corrections.*

“STAR has served this community by bridging the gap between an offender's release from prison/jail and their successful transition back into the community. STAR's commitment to provide resources such as offender mentoring, job readiness training, financial management instruction and interim housing options prepare the client to re-enter the community rather than rely upon their less than successful previous experiences. Overall, the STAR Project is a valued collaborator in this community.”

Ben Brink, Community Corrections Supervisor

Mentors always needed



*Last week, a young woman dropped by the STAR office. “I was just wondering if you found me a mentor yet” she said. We told her that we had not found a volunteer and told her we would keep looking. When we asked her if she was ok, her eyes welled up with tears and she said “no”....*

**“I worked long overtime hours all month so I could get a couple of hundred dollars for school supplies and clothes for my kids. I was eager to see my paycheck today, but they had garnished all the extra wages for child support and legal financial obligations that wasn't paid when I was locked up. I got \$300 less than I expected. I just need to talk to somebody. I felt really weak today, like ‘what is the point in trying?’ I just need to talk to somebody.”**

**If you could offer a listening ear to one of our clients, please call 386-8156. We will have a mentor training soon.**

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Financial Donations are always needed. Checks can be made out to STAR Project and mailed to P.O. Box 159., Walla Walla, WA 99362

## WHY DON'T THEY....

### 1. Why don't they just go and get a job the day they get out of prison?

Many try to do this, but many retreat after the first hour in public. One woman stated "The outside world was overwhelming. For three years, I was told when to get up in the morning, when to shower, when to eat, what to eat, and when to go to bed. This may not sound like a big deal, but it is a huge shock to begin making those decisions. I was so overwhelmed, I couldn't leave my house for three days. I felt like such a failure that I didn't have the guts to get out there and right away." Most releasing individuals need a couple of days to deal with the culture shock of free society.

Some of them are homeless and it is next to impossible to look for work until they have found a place to live. They need showers, clothing, and a good nights rest to make it through an interview. That is one reason that Emergency Housing is so important. The STAR Project is grateful to Walla Walla County Commissioners, The Walla Walla Homeless. Coalition and Washington State agency for Community Trade and Economic Development for helping us fund two emergency housing apartments. We are also grateful for landlords willing to stand beside our program.

Many have very low opinions of themselves. At the STAR Project, we work hard to encourage them. When they go to the STAR Client Support Group, they get a big dose of optimism when they see how many other clients are employed and doing well.

### 2. Why don't they leave town and start a new life away from their old friends?

Most newly released people are on probation because they committed their crime in Walla Walla or Columbia Counties. They must stay here to report to their probation officers every week. . So, they often need help making new friends right here in the same valley. Faith based organizations, clubs, and support groups can be of help by inviting these folks to social activities where they can meet new friends..

### Renters with Mentors

**In the last 13 months, the STAR project has helped 16 clients get into an apartment by working with landlords and helping with first months rent. Out of those 16 clients, 14 have maintained their housing. We are proud of the fact that some landlords actually seek out STAR clients. We are also excited that we are receiving substantial funding from WA Community Trade and Economic Development, the Walla Walla Homeless Coalition, and Walla Walla County to support this Renters With Mentors program, and reduce homelessness.**

## From Stripes to Snow Cones

My life was hell. I spent my days using meth and selling it to others. When Judge Zagelow sentenced me, I told him that I would never be in front of him again. Then, I did 13 months in prison

I got out of prison in May and the STAR Project worked with my mother to help me get a place to rent. It was wonderful to have a key to a place of my own. I volunteer almost every day at the STAR office. I try to help other individuals like myself who are working diligently to stay clean and sober every day. I like giving back to the community where I offended. It makes me feel good about myself.

I volunteered at the STAR Snow Cone booth at the Multicultural Arts Festival in June.. When I saw Judge Zagelow come up to our booth, I felt nervous. I felt weird not wearing stripes in front of him. But, I managed to say, "Judge, your sentencing did some good. The time in prison helped me reflect on all the things I took for granted and how my poor choices had effected others." He smiled at me and it felt good because I knew that he could tell I was doing a lot better.

Billie Jean Marr - Was a first time offender. Is now a community volunteer.



"For three years, I was told when to get up in the morning, when to shower...."



Paul Snider and his daughter volunteered at Christian Aid Center last year. Paul was a "Renter with Mentor". Now, he volunteers at the STAR Project by helping with yard work and helping homeless clients.

