TWO ROADS VOL. 43

THE PREPARING FOR RELEASE ISSUE



Table of Contents

A New Editor - Patrick Lynn Johnson	9
The Re-Entry Plan - Patrick Lynn Johnson	10
The Law And Us - Patrick Lynn Johnson	11
Union Strong! Opportunities After Prison - Cole Stevens	13
Accountability For The Past And Future Opportunities - Patrick Lynn Johnson	15
3 Types - Devon Bennett	16
My Re-Entry - Walter Russell	18
Making A Difference - Twana Carroll	19
Re-Entry - Willie Ezrah Hunter	20
Re-Entry And Brainstorming Techniques Lewis University	22
My Re-Entry - Raphael Kennedy	23
Challenges - Jesse Smith	24
My Preparation For Release - Patrick Lynn Johnson	25
Re-Entry Zach Simmers	26
The Algebra of Successful Re-Entry - Chaka Richblood	27
The 5 Whys - Lewis University	29
Relationship Management - Lewis University	30
Trucking Along - Terrence J. Clay	31
Re-Entry And Me - Marquell Williams	32
The Library And Your Re-Entry - Ms. Coulter, Kewanee LSRC Librarian	33
Investing In Re-Entry - Bobby Luga	35
Relative Positioning - Steven London	38
Accredited Educational Correspondence Programs - Patrick Lynn Johnson	40
Re-Entry Employment Services Program	43
Life Skills Re-Entry Program	45
What Is "Ready To Go Home?" - Walter Lee Webster	47
Preparing For Release - Deven Weathers	48
What Does Re-Entry Look Like? - Montanez Bozeman	49
Preparing For Release - Jeremy Yates	50
An Open Letter - Patrick Lynn Johnson	53
Sarah Mecum Shoutout And Poetry	54
Two Roads Find Us Page	55

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Two Roads....

...**WANTS YOU** TO SUBMIT A 2-3 PAGE ARTICLE, OR SHORT POEM, TO OUR E-ZINE ON THE FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

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- "THE DASH" – LIFE BEGINS AND THEN IT ENDS – WHAT ARE YOU DOING IN THE "IN-BETWEEN"?
- FACTORING SUCCESS: WHAT TOOLS DO YOU NEED TO SUCCEED IN THE FREE WORLD?
- HOW HAS PRISON IMPACTED YOUR RELATIONSHIPS?
- WHAT ARE YOUR DAILY HABITS FOR HEALTHY GROWTH?
- HOW DOES FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP AFFECT YOUR BEING? BE SURE TO SHARE ANY MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT YOUR FAITH, AND PROVIDE YOUR TRUTH!

WE BELIEVE THAT BY SHARING OUR STORIES WE CAN EMPOWER AND INSPIRE OUR FELLOW MEN AND WOMEN IN PRISON TO BECOME DYNAMIC LEADERS AND AGENTS OF CHANGE IN OUR JOURNEY OF REHABILITATION, RESTORATION, AND RE-ENTRY.

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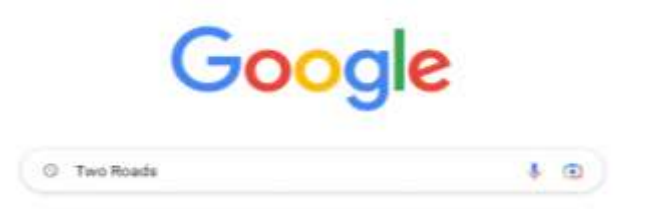
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TWO ROADS

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Our Mission Statement

We are committed to empowering those most impacted by harmful systems to become dynamic leaders and agents of change. Using the connecting, restorative power of these stories we hope to do our part in bringing us all together to overcome societal ills, such as violence, poverty and mass incarceration.

DISCLAIMER

TWO ROADS is built for bringing integrity and honesty about the people who are submitting their stories. There are times where the editors are required to make changes due to spelling errors or grammatical structure. Please know that we will never take away your voice; however, understand that we take pride in our work and strive to be the best in our representation of your voice. Thank you.

To All Readers

Our monthly e-zine focuses on three phases: *Rehabilitation, Restoration and Re-Entry*. These are the necessary phases of a successful incarceration and transition back to society.

Rehabilitation involves the struggle for change one confronts during incarceration.

Restoration reflects the refined version of one's self that we've become and our restored self seeks service of self-worth to the world.

Re-Entry is the ultimate goal one accomplishes through class study, self-study or modification programs completed during one's incarceration.

WE ARE TWO ROADS, and we want to be a viable resource for our readers. We serve you by sharing the honest chronicle of the stories and service of the incarcerated women and men of the Illinois Department of Corrections. Join our movement.

TWO ROADS Editorial Staff

**Please Note: All letters, emails and photos will be reviewed by personnel PRIOR to being received by the TWO ROADS editorial staff. All information that is not pertaining to TWO ROADS will be discarded. Thank you for respecting the guidelines.

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

WHAT A SUCCESSFUL RE-ENTRY LOOKS LIKE



A NEW EDITOR



Hello to all readers of the Two Roads publication. I would like to take a brief moment to introduce myself. My name is Patrick Lynn Johnson. I arrived at Kewanee LSRC in late October 2025. After about six months of programming, I was offered an opportunity to be an Editor at the Two Roads publication. I accepted primarily because I like the idea of the women and men in IDOC custody having a platform to address issues of importance. I also wanted to be part of the process of facilitating the amplification of incarcerated voices.

I chose the topic of preparing for release as the theme for this issue for two reasons. First, the vast majority of people in IDOC custody will ultimately go home. Second, I wanted us to learn from each other as we all prepare for release.

It is commonly said that "two heads are better than one." Having more than one person thinking about an issue means essentially that more brain power is being used to bring resolution to an issue of concern.

If two heads are better than one, what will be the impact of many in IDOC custody addressing an issue that affects the vast majority of us? I am thoroughly convinced that we all have something substantive to say to one another. This will be done by each of us telling our stories of preparation for release and what that ultimately means for us and those in our lives.

The hope, and that hope is completely rational, is that when we read each other's strategies for re-entering society, it will give each of us something to consider that was not necessarily considered by us when we formulated our own re-entry plans. That outcome will prompt each of us to incorporate other ideas into the plans that we are making or have already made. We will essentially be aiding one another in our collective effort to go free.

That, I think, is the fundamental spirit of the Two Roads publication. Ya'll be good.

THE RE-ENTRY PLAN

By: Patrick Lynn Johnson

The sole purpose of this article is to introduce you, if you are not already aware, to the re-entry plan. What is a re-entry plan? A re-entry plan is a roadmap of sorts that contains well thought out plans for your life after you are released from prison.

There is no fixed format for the re-entry plan. It can be as broad and detailed as you would like to have it or you can simplify it in the name of brevity. Every re-entry plan must have at a minimum five essential sections.

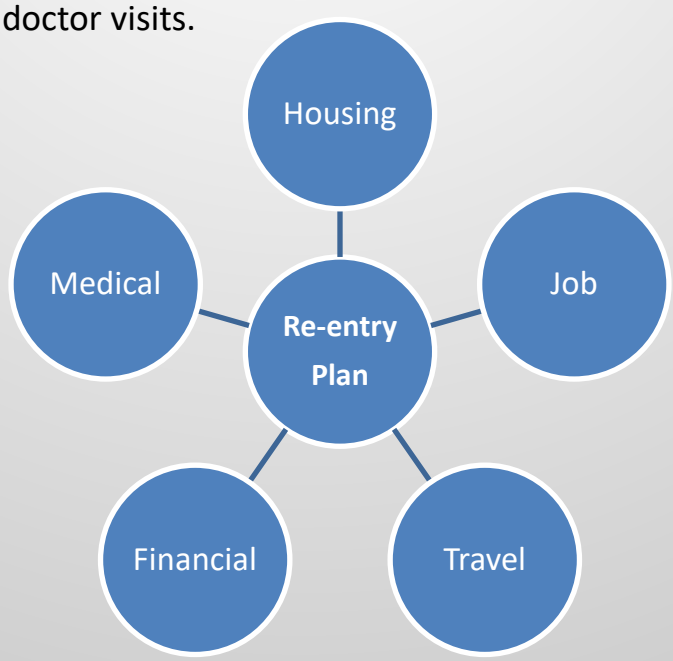
The Housing section of your re-entry plan should contain details about your residency. You want to make sure that all bases are covered and that you have a place to live.

The Job section of your re-entry plan must lay out your plans to either look for a job or report to work right away if you have taken the initiative while still imprisoned to connect with employers. It is vitally important to have a resume as well.

The Travel section of the re-entry plan should have details about how you will move about the area where you will live. You have to know how you will travel to and from work, school and/or recreation.

The Financial section of the re-entry plan is paramount. You must be aware of what you will do with the money you will earn at work. Researching the 50-30-20 rule could be useful.

The Medical section of the re-entry plan is equally important. You want to list which medications you will need as well as how you will pay for your medications and doctor visits.



PREPARING FOR RELEASE

THE LAW AND US

By: Patrick Lynn Johnson

This article will demonstrate how the law applies to every aspect of American life. This is a true statement whether you know it or not; whether you accept it or not; whether you care or not. The fact of the matter is that not very much happens in the United States that is not regulated by law, and you should be cognizant of that fact.

No doubt you have heard the oft-repeated phrase that “in America we have the rule of law.” In short, that means everything that transpires is regulated by law. Politicians frequently use the “rule of law” phraseology to score political points against their rivals and thereby cheapen the force and relevance of the phrase. Perhaps that is why the subject of the rule of law appears to not have much influence in average American thought and parlance. In any case, we should not discount the truthfulness and impact of the fact that in these United States the rule of law is a real thing. The law rules everything.

It is vital that we understand the role of the law and how it is used by those who are the primary beneficiaries of it. Casual observation shows that the people who are the most powerful in our society understand that the way to achieve an end result is ensuring, generally through the political process, that the law permits them to act in ways that gives license for the acts that are prerequisites to the achievement of their particular goals. In other words, those who benefit most from the law know that the steps they have to take to reach a point must first be legal. If the law does not permit the demographic under discussion to do a certain act, the act is arguably illegal. Can you see how the "rule of law" intersects with life? The law touches everything and nothing is immune from the reach of the law.

Having said that, let's turn to the process of management of law so we can either become beneficiaries of it, or at the very least protect ourselves from being victimized by it. Yes, you heard that right. The law can be both passive *and* injurious. The past and contemporary history of our country is littered with illustrations of injustices happening because the law either expressly allowed the maltreatment to happen or because the law did not expressly proscribe the actions that resulted in mischief.

It is a civic duty for citizens to understand, at the very least, the fundamentals of the law and its applicability to their lives. The rights that citizens possess were not just given. They were fought for by prior generations of Americans who frequently had to make the ultimate sacrifice to ensure that rights were a reality

for all in America and not just the privileged few. Not having a basic understanding of the law's relevance constitutes an abdication of constitutional responsibility.

You are encouraged to take time to ponder the points raised in this article. Do not take the issue of rule of law lightly. Now that you understand that the law applies to your life in more ways than a few, you should begin to think differently about it. As stated earlier, the law has the ability to be both helpful and harmful. Wield the power of knowledge that you now have with courage and responsibility so that you can (1) achieve your re-entry goals and (2) prevent others from sabotaging your re-entry and freedom. Ya'll be good.



JUSTICE FOR ALL? YOU DECIDE!

OVERCOMING ALL CHALLENGES

UNION STRONG! OPPORTUNITIES AFTER PRISON

By Cole Stevens

My name is Cole Stevens, and I am a proud member of the Laborers International Union of North America (LiUNA) Local 773. I grew up in a middle-class union family. My entire life has been structured around the labor movement, and the opportunities unions will provide for anyone who is willing to put in a hard day's work. I've always been told how vital it is to fight for those less fortunate, and to make sure we get rid of the term "working poor" in America. Now that its time to transition to work release, I'm ready to put all my effort into workforce development.

My lifelong belief in organized labor and the opportunities it creates has only strengthened during this time of incarceration. Throughout my life I've always believed that when individuals are provided access to fair wages, healthcare benefits, and retirement security they'll choose that path every time.

Union membership provides structure, accountability, and long-term stability. These elements are essential for successful reintegration into society. I firmly believe that collaboration between organized labor and the Illinois Department of Corrections could serve as a powerful tool in reducing recidivism and strengthening communities through showing our hard work and commitment to being active parts of society.

With the workforce demands increased by the Rebuild Illinois Capitol Plan and the growing need for skilled tradesmen and women across the State, the timing is ideal for the establishment of a formal relationship between union halls and IDOC facilities for the development of a structured pre-apprenticeship program. This initiative would:

* Provide the participants with foundational knowledge of a specific trade;

* Offer exposure to certified journeymen through classroom instruction, training center participation, or structured job shadowing, whenever possible.

* Prepare eligible individuals for direct entry or advanced standing into apprenticeship programs upon release, and

* Create a clear, documented pathway from incarceration to union membership enrollment.

Such a program would not only provide marketable skills but also increase immediate employment opportunities upon release – a critical factor in reducing recidivism. By aligning re-entry planning with established apprenticeship pipelines, the union halls would be positioned to recognize qualified participants for apprenticeships immediately upon release and minimize employment gaps. An added benefit for those returning home would be enforced accountability and establishment of purpose. These benefits are badly needed in our lives as we reintegrate into society as the changed men and women that we are.

This vision represents more than workforce development! It is an opportunity to create sustainable change through structure, skill building and union-backed career pathways. I am confident that a partnership between organized labor and IDOC would produce measurable benefits for participants, employers, and the broader community. An example of this kind of initiative working is the relationship between the State of California and IBEW Local 500. It is possible for Illinois to follow its sister State.

I urge anyone in the State of Illinois with a relationship with union members, business managers, representatives, or leadership to write or call about pre-apprenticeships within the Illinois Department of Corrections.

Lastly, I want to thank the administration here at Kewanee LSRC for permitting us to start peer-led classes like T.R.E.O. (Trade Ready Employment Opportunities) so that we are able to teach issues like prevailing wages and collective bargaining.

Anyone who is serious about a new, law-abiding life after incarceration and is interested in joining the unions should reach out now!

LiUNA prevailing wages in Illinois: northern $54.93 hourly, central $47.61 hourly, and southern $40.76 hourly.



PREPARING FOR RELEASE

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR THE PAST AND FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

By: Patrick Lynn Johnson

Let's be real. We all know right from wrong. No adult can legitimately claim that they are unaware of the difference between right and wrong. The same can be said of past actions taken and words spoken as adults. Irrespective of the facts of your upbringing, or any of the other excuses generally used by people to excuse or justify prior bad acts, you know (and knew) right from wrong. Can we admit that fact and not continue to absolve ourselves from the natural and destructive consequences of our words and actions on the grounds that we were not cognizant of the ramifications of our actions and words?

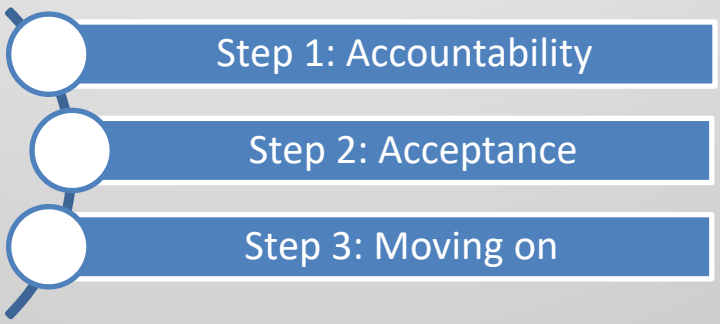
Presumably, the people reading this article have committed all manner of wrong. The goal here is not to put anyone on the spot or embarrass others. No, that is not why we are here. What you feel about your prior bad acts is a personal matter and no one should insist on a different take on the issue.

The point of this exercise is to get adults to be adults so that the process of life can continue. There is a direct and undeniable consequence of being accountable. The result of accountability is acceptance and the opportunity to move on with life. For far too many people not being able to move on anchors them to the hurt of the past. Instead of moving on to the next phase of life, they tend to be tethered to the past for a host of reasons. In other words, they are prisoners of their respective pasts.

Should we allow ourselves to be imprisoned in this manner? Can anyone seriously claim that being tied to the past allows them to move boldly and fearlessly into the future? The answer is obviously no.

In order to make progress on plans for the future, it is necessary to take responsibility for the past with the express goal of moving beyond past mistakes.

It is incumbent on all of us to make the conscious decision to no longer be imprisoned by the past and its attendant facts and factors. It is under such circumstances that we will be positioned to take advantage of future opportunities. Ya'll be good.



3 TYPES

By: Devon Bennett

My name is Devon Bennett, and I have been in prison for 23 years. When I first accepted my cop-out (a sentence that is agreed upon by the court and the defendant) of 26 years at 85% I did not know what to expect. I was mostly trying to convince myself that I was doing (and did) the best thing.

My thoughts would go negative whenever my 6' 5" frame had to enter a 6' by 8" cell. I had regrets that my life was going to be this. It was my first time in prison, and I went through every stage of grief, denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and finally acceptance.

As time went on, I became institutionalized. In fact, being institutionalized was my way of ignoring my situation. I simply refused to think about it. I tried everything to occupy my mind and time. One day while I was letting life's moments tick by, I overheard an argument that would change the way I would do my time.

Two men were arguing over the concept of doing time. One individual said to the other**,** "you got three types of people in jail: those that are waiting to get out of jail, those that are fighting to get out of jail, and those that are preparing to get out of jail. You are the worst type for waiting and letting your life go out the window. A waste."

This interaction made me stop and think. He could have been talking about me. I stopped the gentleman on the yard one day and asked him what he meant by the "three types" comment. He answered that in his mind he was going home any day; that he was fighting to go home; and that he was preparing to go home and the process started with education.

That was seventeen years ago. Since then, I have gotten my associates degree, certificates in emergency medical tech training, roofing, janitorial maintenance, solar panel installation and maintenance, and attended many classes that give me the best chance at success. The numbers say the more education you have the less chance of re-offending.

Wherever you are in your journey, know that things can change. We want to go home, but the question really is "are you ready to go home?" The same factors that led to our shortcomings and misguided decisions still exists. Peer pressure, anger, poverty, mental health, and insecurity are still issues you have to contend with.

My time has come down to single digits and maybe work release. I feel confident that I have prepared to go home. Whatever obstacles I come across will be met with a conquering mindset. I leave you with a saying we have all heard: "stay ready and you ain't got to get ready." God bless.

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

WHAT A SUCCESSFUL RE-ENTRY LOOKS LIKE



MY RE-ENTRY

By: Walter Russell

I am a highly motivated individual who has learned to treat each opportunity with the utmost respect. As a man of YAH, I do not live in negative spaces. “I am winning” is my mentality. I push myself towards a better future. In point of fact, because of my proactive decisions, I have arrived at a place of growth and positivity.

I was locked up in 2000, and at that time I took ownership of my life. I came to prison and took my rehabilitation seriously. This was done for myself and my family. Today I am at Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center. I am working hard to get work release.

I am accomplished but I am still working on other goals in the areas of education, religion, self-help programming, and employment. These are all the opportunities that the Illinois Department of Corrections has provided.

At present I have an associates degree in Liberal Studies from Lake Land College along with certifications in Environmental Health and Safety Services and Print Management.

I am also a Defy Ventures, Inc. program graduate, which allowed me to learn entrepreneurship. The program required me to attend classes for 15 hours per week. We received training, coaching, and mentoring from business executives that resulted in team-building skills, emotional intelligence, innovative spirit, and endurance.

I have also acquired marketable job skills by working as a dietary cook, baker, butcher, inventory man, labor pool, laundry and shower porter, janitor, utility man, LTS porter, and print shop worker.

My story is filled with skill acquisition, and I intend to utilize these skills as I execute my re-entry plan. I will become gainfully employed and establish myself in the community. I will not be the face of recidivism.

I want to thank the Two Roads people (staff and fellow Individuals In Custody) for the opportunity to say a few words about my own re-entry preparation.







MAKING A DIFFERENCE

By: Twana Carroll

Honestly, I was hesitant to write this article. I had to ask myself what could I say that could make a difference? The difference I speak of is one of conscious awakening. During my seven years of incarceration, I was blessed with this awakening as the Covid-19 Pandemic was going on.

It's funny how the shortcuts we take to “come up” bring us down so low. Temporary mistakes lead to permanent pain. We are the sum of our decisions, the decisions others make around us, and the decisions made before us (past generations). I had to dig deep within myself to find myself.

As a Hebrew Isrealite I believe YAH/SALVATION is inside me (“For as he thinketh in his heart so is he” Proverbs 23:7). For more than a decade I believed that my heart and life belonged to an unholy lifestyle. I died the same mental and spiritual death over and over in the process. The manifestation of it came in many different forms like continuous imprisonment and failed relationships with women, my kids, friends, and community. What’s more, I was lying to myself about who I was.

As I prepare for re-entry, I am aligning myself with my purpose. I realize my purpose is being a great husband and father. My vision is having stability in every facet of our lives. I am diligent in my studies, in my programming, in self-mastery, in poetry and music, and in being different.

In my heart I know I am not the same person I was. My morals, values and principles are now founded upon a totally different foundation. I just have to be willing to not compromise for anything or anyone. I am going to use my voice and platform to deliver this message to some of my conscious brothers and sisters.

In conclusion, success looks different to me. My mission is seeing the people redeemed, getting my household in order, and becoming a productive member of a righteous community. That process starts now with phone calls to my family, building instead of destroying, not being toxic in Kewanee LSRC (or anywhere else for that matter), and uplifting the community.

It is said that one should “know thyself”. That’s what I am putting in the work for.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR LIVES

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

RE-ENTRY

By: Willie Ezrah Hunter

Preparing for release for me started the day I was wrongfully arrested. I have held on to hope every single day believing that my freedom was in reach. There were plenty of times over the years when I would sit and wonder what was ahead for me. I desperately wanted to put this miscarriage of justice behind me.

It has been 28 years that I have been on this journey and I am almost home. This moment isn't just about me though. It's about my family and those who share the same fate and destiny as me.

Being incarcerated can cause one to want to give up. You suffer loneliness and loss of relationships. I decided that I needed to be better than my circumstances and that I needed to change the way I thought. Let me tell you something. The only way things in your life are going to change is you have to first change your mindset. We should all be preparing for release no matter the circumstances. If you are called to go home tomorrow, will you be ready?

Without the help of the Most High, I know that I wouldn't be the person I am today. I have made some costly mistakes in my lifetime, mistakes that caused my kids confusion and hurt. Today I forgive myself for those actions. Today I make the choice to give 110% with everything I do. Today I am ready to take the world on.

I submitted a transfer request to come to Kewanee LSRC for one reason: to get the tools I needed to prepare for release. In the past eight months at Kewanee LSRC, I have thus far completed the following programs: communications, financial literacy 1 & 2, health and nutrition, and coping through arts.

I have obtained certificates for CAT simulator, CDL study group, anger management, warehousing, trauma, and healthy love. At the present time I am enrolled in the following programs: CDL business, Moneysmart, T.R.E.O. (Trade Ready Employment Opportunities), virtual reality, job skills, custodial maintenance and Defy Ventures.

With the information I have and the information that I am acquiring I know that success is possible. I encourage everyone who is incarcerated to prepare for re-entry. I know it can be hard surviving in prison. I went through those days. If you haven't begun the re-entry preparation process, please change your mindset and start now. Your day is coming soon. Some of you just don't see it.

PREPARING FOR RELEASE





NOT PREPARING FOR RELEASE

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

WHAT A SUCCESSFUL RE-ENTRY LOOKS LIKE



PREPARING FOR RELEASE

RE-ENTRY AND BRAINSTORMING TECHNIQUES

(Lewis University Course Material)

1. **Classic Brainstorming:** A group gathers, shares ideas freely, and lists them. Its best used for situations where open, unstructured creativity is needed.
2. **Mind Mapping:** Start with a central idea and draw branches to related topics or sub-ideas. This technique helps visualize the connections between different thoughts and can stimulate more creative thinking.
3. **Brainwriting:** In this silent brainstorming technique, each participant writes down their ideas on paper or in a shared document. After a set amount of time, everyone passes their paper to someone else, who builds on the idea. This continues until the group has shared and expanded on all the ideas.
4. **Reverse Brainstorming:** Instead of asking how to solve a problem, reverse the question to focus on how you could make the problem worse. This often leads to insights about the root causes of the problem and can help in identifying counter-intuitive solutions.
5. **Round Robin Brainstorming:** Participants take turns sharing one idea at a time in a predetermined order. This method ensures that everyone has an opportunity to contribute and prevents any one person from dominating the discussion.
6. **Nominal Group Technique:** This structured brainstorming method involves participants generating ideas independently, then sharing them one by one in a round-robin format. Each idea is discussed, and participants vote on the best solutions. This technique ensures that all voices are heard and helps avoid groupthink.







My Re-entry

By: Raphael Kennedy

After serving 17.5 years I am finally on the way to work release. This has been a journey. I've gone from Stateville CC to Mt. Sterling CC to Illinois River CC to Centralia CC to Kewanee LSRC. The greatest things about the Kewanee Experience were the interpersonal skills, financial literacy, and communication programs that made re-entry meaningful for me. I am a student pursuing my bachelor's degree with a major in professional studies and a minor in business administration. I have come from Orange Crush to shakedowns to 4-month lockdowns to finally being able to spread my wings.

At the present moment I am part of an organization called One In A Million. We mentor kids ages 10-18. I am also a member of CMMP (Credible Messengers Mentorship Program) that mentors kids in the IYC (Illinois Youth Center) at Harrisburg and St. Charles. I am grateful for the opportunity to help these troubled youth improve their lives. One of my main goals is continuing my work with at-risk youth.

Now as I go through the re-entry phase of my journey, I will take everything I have learned and thrive. Because I have been away from society so long, this part of the re-entry process was necessary to help me reintegrate into society. Now that I have a solid foundation to stand upon, I can make the rest of my life the best of my life.



CHALLENGES

By: Jesse Smith

Everyone faces challenges in life. Some of us will face them based simply on the stigma of being ex-prisoners. The first step in overcoming challenges is to understand the challenges you're facing. The next important step is preparation.

In my case, the challenge will mostly be how different and fast things are now. When I left the world, everyone was still using beepers and pay phones to communicate. Now my grandkids have cell phones. I'm fortunate enough to have a support system out there that can give me a heads up about the possible/probable challenges I will face upon release. But for those of us without that support, I encourage you to get to know some of these brothers who aren't that far removed from the streets and try to get a general idea about the things you will encounter. Then you can do as much studying/preparation as possible about specific areas of concern. Also, talking to the younger brothers and getting an idea of how they view things is beneficial as well because it gives necessary insight into the generational gap that exists between old and new ways of thinking. Insight helps bridge that gap. It isn't about a right or wrong way of thinking; it's about understanding the different ways of thinking. Most of the time both ways achieve the same conclusion. It just takes different paths to get there.

I'm trying to learn as much as I can as soon as possible because the one thing I'm sure of is that the world is a whole lot different now than it was 35 years ago. A main concern of mine is financial independence. I've been in here, for the most part, relying on others for support for 3.5 decades. So, my goal is to learn about debt, credit, savings, and investments. One thing I do have practice in is budgeting. Some, if not most of us, have learned how to live on a budget (not knowing when that next M.O. receipt was coming). Some of us have had to live on a fixed income (state pay), and still managed, so we definitely know the fundamentals of budgeting.

One other challenge that gives me great anxiety is dealing with social media. I have no experience with it at all, but it seems like it can become very time consuming, addictive, and lead to isolation unless you create some self-imposed guidelines. Having that much information and entertainment at your fingertips can be as detrimental as having no access at all. I don’t want to fall victim to it, especially the isolation part, because I already have the challenge of relearning how to interact with people as it is. These are some of the challenges I'll face when released. I realize that overcoming them will be easier said than done, but I know that my best chance of successfully overcoming any challenge I might face is through gaining knowledge and the preparation I make before tackling them.

Keep your heads up and prepare for the next part of your journey.

My Preparation For Release

By: Patrick Lynn Johnson

I only mention how long I have been locked up for context. It has been 31 consecutive years that I have been in prison. The world as I knew it no longer exists. Everything is different. I'm okay with that reality. In fact, I consider myself adaptable. I will find a way to make it no matter what the circumstances are.

Having said that, I want to mention briefly what I have been doing in recent years to prepare for release. In 2018 I began my studies for an Associate's Degree in Liberal Studies. At the present time I am six credit hours shy of the degree. In fact, I am taking one of the courses I need to acquire that degree right now, and I am scheduled to start the last course late summer or early fall, 2026. So, by the end of 2026 I will officially be a college graduate. YES!

In October 2025 I was transferred to Kewanee LSRC. Since that transfer date I have enrolled in Lewis University's Bachelor's Degree program. I will not be able to finish that degree by the time I transition to work release in mid to late 2027 (not having enough time in prison is a nice problem to have though). By the time my MSR term arrives I will have my Bachelor's Degree with a major in professional studies and a minor in business administration.

Since I have been in Kewanee LSRC, I have completed the following programs which I believe is helping to prepare me for release: interpersonal skills, communications 1, computer concepts, financial literacy 1 & 2, forklift, keyboarding, wellness/health & fitness, and peer-led groups called T.R.E.O. (Trade Ready Employment Opportunities) and CDL study group. I have also completed the Caterpillar simulator. I am currently enrolled in welding class, and CDL simulator may come later next year (2027).

In sum, I have taken the steps needed to ensure gainful employment when I get to work release and MSR. I have, and will acquire more, employable skills and knowledge to make my transition to free society easier than it would be had I done nothing.

I would like to take a moment to encourage all in IDOC custody to prepare for release. This advice applies no matter what your circumstances are. When your day comes you will want to be prepared. Ya'll be good.



Re-Entry

By: Zach Simmers

Re-entry is a special thing to all of us serving time. To some of us it may simply mean going home, seeing family or friends again, or even working a job. For someone like me, re-entry means all of that and more. If not for Kewanee LSRC my opinion of what re-entry is would be much simpler.

Today re-entry is an opportunity to give back to a community that I helped destroy. After being exposed to a place where I can volunteer my time to better our environment**,** I've learned how fulfilling it can be for myself and others.

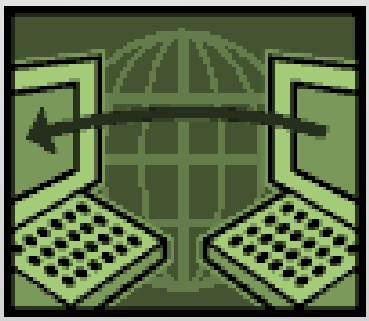
Look at the world that we are re-entering. It is filled with poverty, drug addiction, and mental health nightmares. There are people so poor that they cannot believe that there is a way out. There are addicts so submerged in their addictions that they don't realize the footprints left on the people around them until it is too late.

I want to talk a minute about proper uses of search engines and their relevance to this article. A Google search of a person who cries when they watch a sad movie will probably get a "manic depressive" response. However, that same search engine, when used for good purposes can be a tremendous help. I will provide a few examples. For the struggling addict having a hard time resisting the pull of drugs, a search engine can be used to find treatment or a meeting. Someone in poverty can use it to find a job, a legitimate side hustle, and a way out. Our "manic depressive" friend mentioned earlier can find a mental health professional to help prevent a downward spiral.

Most important of all, to someone like me, technology, whether social media, search engines, or cell phone, is a way to reconnect and give back. I can easily find a food bank to volunteer at or a community project to get involved in. Although I plan to start a career as an electrician, I know that I can use technology to find other avenues for employment and volunteer work. In conclusion, I want to ask all the Two Roads readers to use technology as a tool to aid your re-entry efforts.

I hope that I have given some of you something to think on. Thank you.







$P^q + o = s$, THE ALGEBRA OF SUCCESSFUL RE-ENTRY

By: Chaka Richblood

Some people reading the title of this essay might think "I hate math**!** Why is this brother writing about algebra in a Two Roads article on preparing for release?" Hang in there, let me explain what I mean.

The algebraic equation $p^q + o = s$ is my creative way of expressing the quote "preparation plus opportunity equals success." I contributed the power q on the base p to represent the exponential value of quality on your preparations.

This equation may seem like simple math, like the equation 1+1=2. Yet, how often do people who possess knowledge fail to follow through on rational actions? Based on the recidivism rate, this is a problem that some returning citizens clearly do not comprehend.

I know, I know. Everybody's circumstances are different, but statistics are real. What do I mean by "statistics are real"? Well, based on different variables in any person's circumstances (e.g. household income, race, location, adverse childhood experience, etc.) researchers can reasonably predict the likelihood that you will be incarcerated. Therefore, you are a statistical number. Have you ever heard that expression before?

The purpose of this essay is not to remind you of the odds against you. It is written to encourage you to act. If you are to be released from prison one day, how important is becoming successful when you get there? How bad do you want to succeed in life after having lost so much time being locked up? The only rational course of action you can take while incarcerated is to manage the variables within your control (i.e. education, networking, programmatic resources, etc.).

Evaluate your life honestly and ask yourself whether you have your affairs in order as it concerns re-entry. If you do not have a good education, a reliable network, or resources, then you need to start taking the necessary steps to create a better reality for yourself. It has to be your top priority. Period!

Personally, as soon as I was in the bullpen after a 24-year plea deal at 100% I said to myself, "I cannot cry over spilled milk (even though that was quite a large spill)." I resolved from that day that I would do whatever I could do to prepare myself for success. That task has not been easy, but I am relentless.

At the end of the day no one can solve this problem for you. There will be tutors but ultimately *you* have to answer the questions in the test of life. My final words of encouragement are those of a billionaire from Marcy Projects: "If you want to do numbers, you got math to do."

Let's do it!

$$f(x) = a_0 + \sum_{n=1}^{\infty} \left(a_n \cos \frac{n\pi x}{L} + b_n \sin \frac{n\pi x}{L} \right)$$

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

WHAT A SUCCESSFUL RE-ENTRY LOOKS LIKE



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THE 5 WHYs

(Lewis University Course Material)

Define The Problem



Why Is That?



Why Is That?



Why Is That?



Why Is That?



Why Is That?



Root Cause of Problem

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Lewis University Course Material

* **Relationship management** refers to the ability to manage interactions and relationships with colleagues, teams, departments, and external stakeholders in a way that:

* **fosters cooperation**

* **resolves conflicts**

* **enhances trust and communication**

It further involves understanding the dynamics of human interaction, managing diverse personalities, and navigating various communication styles while maintaining focus on shared objectives. (Goleman, D. 2000).

IMPORTANCE OF RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT

Stronger connections: By fostering positive interactions and handling conflict with care, you build lasting and meaningful relationships, whether with friends, family, coworkers, or clients.

Better collaboration: In professional settings, strong relationship management promotes teamwork, increases cooperation, and improves productivity.

Increased influence and leadership: Effective relationship management is a hallmark of good leadership. Leaders who manage relationships well inspire loyalty, trust, and motivation among their teams.

Reduced stress: Effective relationship management helps resolve conflicts quickly and fosters an atmosphere of understanding, reducing the emotional toll of unresolved issues.

Improved well-being: Positive relationships contribute to emotional and mental well-being. Strong relationships provide social support, boost self-esteem, and improve overall happiness.

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NOTE: This information is provided in light of the fact that re-entry involves constant interaction with all kinds of people. Let's face a fact. People have personalities, and some are challenging. Not having relationship management skills could very well compromise your efforts to prepare for re-entry as well as your freedom once you re-enter free society. None of us can stand to lose that battle. We all know what that means. Utilize this information. It is vital.

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

Trucking Along …

By: Terrance J. Clay

"How are you preparing for release, Mr. Clay?" I've been asked that question many, many times before. My answer used to be "I'll deal with that when it comes closer."

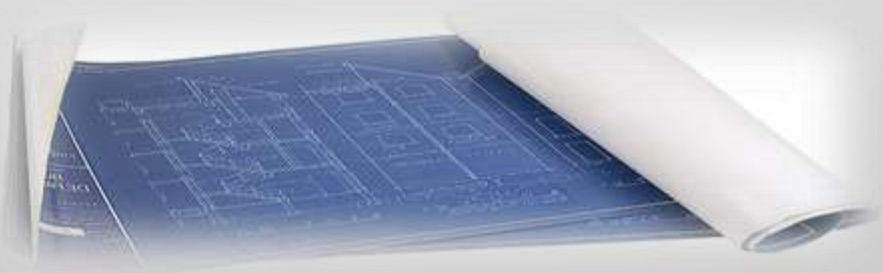
I see myself owning my own company, but before that can be achieved, I have to go through the proper steps to obtain experience in driving big rig vehicles. Here at Kewanee LSRC, you have to go through several classes before you can get access to the CDL simulator. First, there is the CDL Study Group which is an introduction to the truck driving occupation. We study for the actual CDL tests that are administered by the Illinois Secretary of State's Office. Then there is a great class called CDL Business. The name of the class is self-explanatory. This class is important to me and my future because my plans are to own a trucking and transport company.

Once the CDL Study Group and the CDL Business classes are completed I will qualify to get placed on the CDL Simulator class list. This machine simulates driving and conditions. Being in this class actually allows me to learn to drive a semi in virtual reality.

These are some of my goals that can be achieved in Kewanee LSRC. I will use my time to make progress. I have to be willing to invest in me. The tools and skills I will acquire will be the foundation upon which I will build my future trucking company. With all the skills I will learn at Kewanee LSRC, I can be confident when I get out to go and take the CDL test.

Now I know I made it sound easy, but I am aware that achieving my CDL goal will have its challenges. As an inexperienced CDL-holder I have to use my interview and interpersonal skills (I see you, Ms. Rowan) to persuade a company to take a chance on me. I believe that is very achievable though. The shortage of drivers that the trucking industry is experiencing right now positions me, even as an inexperienced driver, to be hired. Once hired I plan to company drive for about four years. By the end of that four-year period, I will have the money and experience to become an owner-operator.

That is what I am doing here at Kewanee to prepare for re-entry.



RE-ENTRY AND ME

By: Marquell Williams

My name is Marquell Williams. I am a resident at Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center. Forty-five days after I was arrested, charged, and transported to DuPage County Jail, I concluded that I wasn't going to spend the rest of my life in prison. Nor would I continue running in and out of them, so I began preparing for an everlasting re-entry. It started with me taking a real honest look at myself. I needed to come to terms with what I actually stood for, believed in, and valued up to that point, and how it'll look moving forward.

I discovered I had this wagon of unresolved trauma hitched to me and its contents perpetuated a thought, feeling, and behavioral pattern that led me back to prison time and time again. It was my "aha" moment. For me, my physical incarceration only aligned and complimented my mental and emotional imprisonment. Upon that revelation I began taking classes such as Anger Management, Building Confidence, Criminal & Addictive Thinking, Life Skills, CBT & DBT training, Small Engines Vocational Training, and Horticulture/Urban Farming Vocational Training, etc. I began using the resources available to me to liberate myself and become the best version of Marquell possible.

I've been to prison four times prior to this time and each time I did what needed to be done to get home faster (mainly school) only to come back even quicker, but I never addressed the thinking that brought me to prison. This time I have and it's been one of the most freeing experiences of my life.

Successful re-entry depends on the character of the individual. If we re-enter society being who we've always been, we'll get what we've always gotten, so take this time and the resources around you wherever you are and maximize them.

I forgot the person who made this statement, but I internalized it: "Be yourself because everybody else is taken." We learn to wear our masks well to survive. I have decided to take mine off to finally start living, and I hope you choose to do the same.



THE LIBRARY AND YOUR RE-ENTRY

Ms. Coulter, Kewanee LSRC Librarian

Access to books and information in prison can have a profound impact on a person's opportunities and choices after release because it equips them with knowledge, skills, and confidence that can help them build a more stable future. Research has consistently shown that education and literacy are associated with lower rates of recidivism and better employment.

Here are some of the key reasons prison libraries matter:

1. **Improve literacy and education**
   * Many incarcerated people enter prison with below-average reading and writing skills.
   * Libraries provide books, dictionaries, GED study materials, college textbooks, and other educational resources.
   * Improved literacy makes it easier to find employment , continue education, and navigate everyday life after release.

2. **Support job readiness**
   *Libraries often provide resources on resume-writing, interview skills, career planning, and books on entrepreneurship, financial literacy, and workplace expectations help prepare individuals for employment.

3. **Provide legal information**
   * Law libraries help incarcerated people understand their legal rights, court procedures, parole requirements, and post- release obligations.
   * Access to legal information allows people to participate more effectively in their own legal matters.

4. **Develop life skills**
   * Libraries offer materials on parenting, budgeting, healthy relationships, communication, nutrition, and conflict resolution.
   * These practical skills are essential for successfully reintegrating into families and communities.

5. **Support mental health and emotional well-being**
   * Reading can reduce stress and anxiety while providing a healthy escape from the prison environment.
   * Self-help books, memoirs, and literature can encourage reflection, resilience, and emotional growth.



PREPARING FOR RELEASE

6. **Encourage lifelong learning**

* Libraries foster curiosity and independent learning.
* Developing a habit of reading often continues after release, helping individuals adapt to changing careers and technology.

7. **Increase digital awareness**

* While Internet access is typically limited in correctional facilities, some prison libraries provide supervised access to educational technology or digital learning platforms.
* Exposure to technology helps prepare people for a society where many jobs and services are online.

8. **Promote positive use of time**

* Reading and studying provide constructive activities that reduce boredom and encourage positive behavior.
* Participation in educational and library programs can contribute to a more productive prison environment.

9. **Build critical thinking and communication skills**

* Reading a variety of materials strengthens comprehension, reasoning, and problem-solving abilities.
* Book discussions and educational programs help participants practice respectful dialogue and communication.

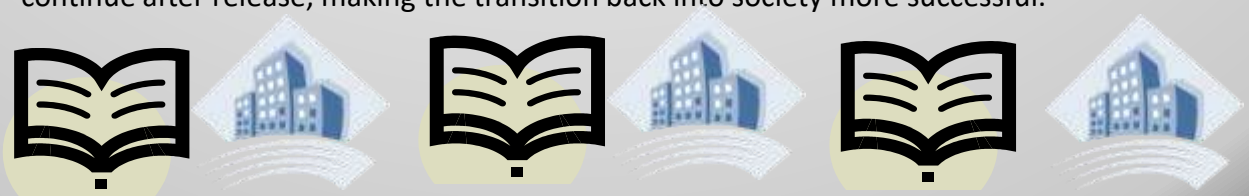
10. **Build dignity and hope**

* Libraries offer opportunities for personal transformation by exposing readers to new ideas, cultures, and perspectives.
* Access to books reinforces the belief that people can continue learning and growing regardless of their circumstances.

Why this matters for re-entry

Successful re-entry depends on much more than simply being released. People returning to the community often need to find housing, secure employment, manage finances, reconnect with family, comply with supervision requirements, and access healthcare and community services.

Prison libraries help build the knowledge, confidence, and practical skills needed to navigate these challenges. They also connect individuals with educational opportunities that can continue after release, making the transition back into society more successful.



PREPARING FOR RELEASE

Investing in Re-Entry

By: Bobby Luga

"I don't trust banks."

"My money's safer with me."

"You have to be rich to invest in the stock market."

How many times have you heard these statements or similar ones during your life? The most likely result of this ideology prevents anyone who thinks like this from rising above the poverty line or having a chance at creating generational wealth.

What many people who suffer from this mentality fail to realize is that that they are losing the real value of their money by not partaking in these financial institutions due to inflation. Inflation affects the real value of money in a negative way. The real value of money is defined as, "the value of an amount of money in terms of the quantity of goods the money can buy". The Consumer Price Index (CPI) is the statistic widely valued as the standard at which inflation is measured. From the 1980s through the 2010s the average CPI was roughly 3.25%. During this same period, the average return on a savings account was slightly higher at roughly 3.28% meaning if you had your money in a savings account the real value of your money actually increased, albeit by only 0.03%. Within the last five years the numbers have changed drastically to 4.0% and 1.8% respectively. These are just averages though. Today you can start a savings account with a plethora of different institution types:

Institution Type:	Typical Savings APY:	Notes:
National Banks (Chase, Bank of America, Wells Fargo, ect.)	0.01%-.010%	Many flagship savings accounts remained near zero
All banks & credit unions combined (FDIC national average)	0.38%-0.40%	Weighed average across all institutions
Credit Unions	0.5%-1.0%	Usually better than large banks but below top online rates
Online banks/High Yield Saving Accounts (HYSA)	3.8%-4.8%	Marcus, Ally, CIT, Discover, ect. Generally clustered here
Neobanks	4.0%-5.0%+	Often the highest advertised rates, sometimes with direct-deposit or balance requirements

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

Starting a savings account is a no risk, guaranteed way to put your money to work. A savings account is the instrument you use to store your money in if you plan to leave it there for a long time. You always have access to your money, but you really should only pull it out in an emergency, or if you've kept it to reach a goal and you've completed it.

Another option is investing in the stock market. For starters, you do **NOT** have to be rich to invest in the stock market. The fact is you can start a Robinhood account with zero dollars (there are incentives when opening up certain brokerage accounts so do your research before opening one, **READ** the fine print). Whenever you choose to start investing your money you will have to transfer the amount of money set aside for investing to your account at that time. There are generally four different indices (compilations of different stocks) that people invest in based upon their appetite for risk: Standard & Poor's 500 (S&P 500), Dow Jones industrial Average (Dow), The Nasdaq and The Russell 2000. You can also invest in individual stocks, sectors and exchange traded funds (ETFs). I have provided a breakdown of how all four indices compare to both the CPI and savings accounts decade-by-decade (these are average annualized total returns including dividends where available):

Decade	CPI	Savings Acct.	S&P 500	Dow	Nasdaq	Russell 2000
1960s	2.5%	4.0%	7.7%	7.8%	N/A	N/A
1970s	7.1%	5.5%	5.9%	4.8%	8-9%	N/A
1980s	5.6%	6.5%	17.3%	15.5%	18.5%	15-16%
1990s	3.0%	4.5%	18.2%	15.8%	24.6%	16.4%
2000s	2.8%	2.0%	-1.0%	-0.2%	-3.9%	6.9%
2010s	1.8%	0.1%	13.6%	11.9%	17.9%	11.4%
2020s	4.0%	1.8%	14-15%	10-11%	16-18%	7-8%

These returns are annualized returns (per year). Let's see how the real value of $1,000 changes when invested in these different indices starting in 2010 while reinvesting any dividends (I've taken the liberty of subtracting the CPI from the returns already to capture the real value only):

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

Decade	Savings Account	S&P 500	Dow Jones	Nasdaq	Russell 2000
2010s	$834.75	$3050.83	$2617.42	$4449.61	$2500.95
2020s	$746.88	$5140.82	$3671.07	$8567.35	$3042.79

As you can see the real value of the $1,000 in a savings account over that period of time actually decreased (remember I subtracted the inflationary value, CPI, from the average interest rate the banks were offering). Investing in the Nasdaq would have created the greatest return on investment, as the compounding rate of return would have yielded you $7,567.35 in real value (the nominal value—defined as, "the face value of any amount of money"—would be $10,329.89 before CPI is subtracted), however that index is also the most volatile (you assume the most risk). (Note: The current use of Online Banks and Neobanks would result in a substantially different valuation on your savings account as they both generally have interest rates that are higher than inflation, I used the average rate of return for savings accounts shown above.) For those of you that don't trust banks or the markets, that money you would have stored under your mattress during that time would now have the real value of $679.94 (nominal value still of $1,000), that's if your mattress doesn't start on fire or your crackhead girlfriend doesn't find it. The money in your mattress isn't insured; the money you keep in your bank account is federally insured.

This is just a quick glimpse of how these financial institutions can benefit you over the long run. I'd imagine that most people reading this article have wasted at least $1,000 over their adult life span. While $7,567.35 isn't exactly life changing, if the Nasdaq continues to return the way it has over the last five years and inflation stays the same that $1,000 investment would be worth $31,761.58 in 2035, $61,153.21 in 2040, $117,745.30 in 2045 and $226,708.50 in 2050 (the nominal value would be $647,360.30). This sounds like life changing money. This is why understanding how financial institutions can benefit you is so important. Why would you only work for money when you could let your money work for you? Investing in your future starts now!



"Why would you only work for money when you could let your money work for you?"

RELATIVE POSITIONING

By: Steven London

Full disclosure, I've never considered myself an optimist. It is for this reason, after serving nearly two and a half decades in IDOC that I initially balked at the idea of sharing what I've been doing during this agonizingly brutal amount of time, to prepare myself for re-entry. One thing I learned a long time ago is that it is absolutely a waiting game. For the first decade of my sentence, it was difficult enough to get a job, and nearly impossible to get one that paid anything resembling a respectable wage. For anyone reading this that isn't aware, the upper 90% of work assignments in Illinois prisons pay between less than $1 to sometimes just over $2 a day. To think this is 2026, right? It might as well be 1926 in Illinois.

Eventually I learned a little term that I try to pass on to my family, friends, and especially to my peers imprisoned, reminding them that opportunities for growth are out there; it is all about bettering your relative positioning. I had to become extremely analytical of my personal situation and educate myself in the art of attaining patience. To do this, I quickly embraced the old adage about life being full of having to do all of the things that you don't want to do. I could have sat around stuck on stupid or become an even worse version of the troubled person I used to be, and it would never really matter in the eyes of the law, the courts, or the prisoner review board at all. It became evident to me, that no matter how I felt about my situation, I was on my own here. I absolutely had to begin investing in myself and think differently about my situation in order to survive this ordeal.

It took thirteen years (and two prison transfers) for me to get a job with Illinois Correctional Industries, (ICI, hereafter). Working for ICI gave me the opportunity to receive vocational training, earn pseudo-fair compensation for hard work, and receive formal certifications through apprenticeship programs sponsored by the United States Dept. of Labor. Prior to my transfer to Kewanee LSRC, I worked easily a dozen positions with Illinois River Correctional Center – ICI, back when it was an industrial bakery, continuing through their post-Covid transition to a Warehousing Program. I worked there for 10 years and 2 months, and in that time, I encountered opportunities to prepare myself for re-entry by mentoring my peers.

If you're wondering what this looked like, allow me to explain. I signed up for every peer mentor training opportunity I could fit into my schedule. I became a certified mentor and facilitated cognitive behavioral therapy classes such as Anger Management, Self-Management, Conflict Resolution, Effective Communication, and Criminal & Addictive Thinking, to name a few. I was given the opportunity to train as a Certified Recovery Support Specialist through the Illinois Dept. of Public Health. All of this came on top of the peer mentor opportunities such as becoming a journeyman for apprenticeship programs I completed for the occupations of Office Manager/Administrative Services Professional and Distribution Center Specialist (Dock Worker). I taught my peers how to operate forklifts, simulators for CDL training and Heavy Equipment Operators, as well as how to manage inventories, use computers efficiently, and learn how to use Microsoft programs like professionals.

I say all of this to illuminate the fact that my re-entry journey is comparatively winding down. I still have 6 years left to complete, but I continue to better my relative positioning by jumping headfirst into opportunities where I can give back to my peers within the prison community. This has served me well, considering that I have only been in Kewanee LSRC for 8 months, and I'm experiencing things like the enrollment in programs such as Virtual Reality, the Welding Program, as well as becoming a facilitator for a peer led mental health support group called "Lost Time". I also become an editor for Two Roads publications. These are all ways I'm staying busy as I prepare for upcoming opportunities such as Kewanee's Day Release work program, and then ultimately, Work Release. Along the way I'm learning financial literacy and tons of resume workshop skills. Additionally, I'm enrolled in Lewis University's Bachelor's Degree program, and I work with ICI again, so I've opened a bank account for the first time in over 25 years. I'm literally positioning myself for greatness, and it all started with the realization that nobody was coming to save me from myself.

"I absolutely had to begin investing in myself and think differently about my situation in order to survive this ordeal."



Steven "Lo" London,
Editor – Two Roads

ACCREDITED EDUCATIONAL CORRESPONDENCE PROGRAMS

By: Patrick Lynn Johnson

Adams State University
Prison Education Program
208 Edgemont Blvd., Suite 3000
Alamosa, CO 81101
Degrees: Associates of Arts, Associate of Science, Associate of Science with a Business Emphasis, Bachelor of Arts in disciplinary Studies, Bachelor of Arts in Sociology, Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Master of Arts in Business Administration.

California Coast University
925 N. Spurgeon St.
Santa Ana, CA 92701
Degrees: Printed course material can be mailed to student upon request.

Colorado State University at Pueblo
2200 Bonforte Blvd.
Pueblo, Co 81001-4901
Degrees: Bachelor of Science in Business Administration, Bachelor of Science in Criminology, Bachelor of Science in Interdisciplinary Studies, Bachelor of Science in Sociology.

Northeast Wisconsin Technical College
2740 W. Mason St. PO Box 19042
Green Bay, WI 54307-9042
Degrees: None. Courses may be applied towards the completion of a program after incarceration.

Upper Iowa University
PO Box 1857
Fayette, IA 52142-1857
Degrees: Associate in General Business, Bachelor in Business Administration, Associate in Liberal Arts, Associate in Psychology, Bachelor in Psychology, Associate in Criminal Justice, Bachelor in Criminal Justice, Bachelor in Social science.

Definition of Correspondence Course: Means a text-based distance learning program provided by an outside entity designed to increase knowledge or gain credit in areas including, but not limited to, independent study, accredited college courses, language courses and Career and Technical Education courses. For the purposes of this directive, correspondence courses shall not include non-academic subject areas including Bible study and self-improvement.

Not all correspondence courses will provide Earned Program Sentence Credit. If the institution is not accredited or the certificate is not recognized, EPSC will not be awarded for the program. If IDOC provides the program, EPSC will be earned only through the IDOC approved program and not a correspondence course. (Source: Illinois Dept. of Corrections).

Note: This information is provided so that the incarcerated community can know exactly what their higher education options are. Although there are a number of colleges and universities that are operating in Illinois facilities, there are other avenues available to help you attain your educational objectives. You are encouraged to accept the challenge that higher education offers and if you are financially able to embark on the journey of enlightenment, please do so.



WHAT A SUCCESSFUL RE-ENTRY LOOKS LIKE



RE-ENTRY EMPLOYMENT SERVICES PROGRAM

Reducing Recidivism Through Employment

Do you think you will have difficulties obtaining employment due to a criminal conviction/record?

If so, the Illinois Department of Employment security (IDES) offers assistance through the Re-Entry Employment Service Program (RESP), designed to assist former offenders overcome employment hurdles.

Adults who are, or have been, subject to any stage of the criminal justice process can benefit from the RESP Program. The offender may or may not have been held in a correctional institution, jail, reformatory, work farm, detention center, halfway house, community-based rehabilitation center, or similar institution designed for confinement or rehabilitation.

RESP PROGRAM EXPECTATIONS

The Employment Service Staff will

*Interview you to identify additional employment barriers as well as give you career development counseling.

* Provide or refer you to job readiness workshop/services (resume and interviewing assistance, etc).

* Assist with **IllinoisJobLink.com** registration, job readiness, and employment opportunities.

As a RESP Participant you are expected to:

* Make and keep all scheduled appointments including job referrals.

*Complete the **IllinoisJobLink.com** Registration.

* Be open and honest with your Employer Services Representative and Employers.

* Present yourself professionally and maintain a positive attitude.

How to get started:

* Go to the IDES (Illinois Department of Employment Security) website at **www.ides.illinois.gov**; enter your zip code to locate the nearest IDES local office and Employment Service Representative in your area.

* Call the Employment Services Representative to set up your first meeting.

Did You Know?

Employers can receive benefits from IDES when they hire an ex-offender. These are detailed on the next page.

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

Fidelity Bonding

What is it?

A fidelity bond is a no-cost insurance coverage that encourages employers to hire job applicants considered "at risk" due to their criminal record.

To qualify you must:

1. Be of legal age for employment.
2. Have a firm offer of employment (employer verification of a start date).
3. A background check that reflects a conviction.

Federal Work Opportunity Tax Credit

What is it?

It is a tax credit that reduces an employer's cost of doing business while helping those most in need gain valuable work experience. The credit provides tax savings to employers who hire certain target groups including ex-offenders, welfare recipients, veterans, and youth.

To qualify you must:

1. Have been convicted of a felony under any statute of the United States or State.
2. Have a hire date of not more than one year after conviction or release from prison. If you qualify your Employment Service Representative will provide a Conditional Certification Letter.

State Tax Credit

What is it?

It is a tax credit that provides tax savings to employers who hire qualified ex-offenders.

To qualify you must:

1. Have a felony conviction other than Class X or crime of violence.
2. Been sentenced to period of incarceration in an Illinois adult correctional facility.
3. Have been hired by an employer within one year after release from the correctional center.

More detailed information on these benefits can be found on **www.ides.illinois.gov** in the "Employers" Section.

If you do not have access to a computer, call 1-800-244-5631 to find your nearest local office.

Illinois Department of Employment Security Reentry Website:

www.ides.illinois.gov. (Source: Illinois Department of Employment Security).

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

Life Skills Re-Entry Program

Free Personal and Career Development Program

Our PCD Program is an accelerated and engaging series of workshops designed to enhance interviewing and networking skills and provide assistance with creating professional resumes and cover letters. Take advantage of our network of ex-offender friendly employers via our job development staff, and much more!

Only Requirement to Participate:
Have an IDOC Inmate #

Located in Roosevelt's Auditorium Building on the corner of Congress & Michigan Ave.

Roosevelt University

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN AND COMMUNITY RENEWAL
430 S. Michigan Ave.,
Room 124
Chicago, Illinois 60605

A JOINT PROGRAM BETWEEN THE IDOC AND ROOSEVELT UNIVERSITY

CONVENIENT DOWNTOWN LOCATION
*****
CTA/PACE CARDS PROVIDED FOR THE DURATION OF THE WORKSHOP
*****
ACCESS TO EX-OFFENDER FRIENDLY EMPLOYERS
******
CTA/PACE CARDS PROVIDED FOR INTERVIEWS & FIRST TWO WEEKS OF VERIFIED EMPLOYMENT
*****
CAREER DEVELOPMENT CERTIFICATE UPON COMPLETION
*****

To enroll, call
(312) 281-3370

****

Life Skills Center Hours:
Monday through Thursday
8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Visit us at:
www.roosevelt.edu/colleges/human-community-renewal

Follow on Facebook:
www.facebook.com/LifeSkillReentry

(SOURCE: Roosevelt Univ.).

WHAT A SUCCESSFUL RE-ENTRY LOOKS LIKE



What is “Ready To Go Home?”

By: Walter Lee Webster II

During the first year of my incarceration, I heard a conversation between an older man who had been locked up for a while and a younger man who was about to get released. The older asked the younger, "Are you ready to go home?" Without hesitation the young man said, “Yeah!" The older man replied, "I mean, ready - like prepared, not ready - like anxious?"

This all-too-common misunderstanding of the word "ready" left me and the young man silent and thinking. Ever since that day, I have been preparing to re-enter society**,** with a lot of help and support from my fellow brothers in custody, chaplains, counselors, family, friends, volunteers, teachers, etc. Because of the help that I have received**,** I can finally say that I am ready/prepared to go home.

I encourage all individuals to keep striving towards the goal. Stay patient, be humble, get the vices and bad habits under control, find your passion and purpose in life, narrow your career choices down, focus, and keep praying.



PREPARING FOR RELEASE

Preparing For Release

By: Deven Weathers

I want to start off by saying thank you to Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center for allowing me to attend all of the programs that are getting me ready to go home. Preparing for release has helped me in many ways. While it is a blessing going home, I am not unaware that there will be major obstacles coming my way. Some of them I have given considerable thought, but others will not reveal themselves until I am actually free. I am very grateful for the peace and quiet that exists here at Kewanee, because it is under such circumstances I can think clearly about what I must do to prepare, and about what I will actually do once in the free world.

As classes went on in the initial weeks here at Kewanee, I started thinking about the huge responsibility that freedom is. What I have learned from the classes is that when you are prepared there's no real need for anxious thoughts, nervousness, or worries about going home. With the knowledge that I now have, I can make re-entry plans with confidence that I will become free and stay free.

I have learned quite a lot while spending time in these prison cells. The lessons that mean the most though are patience and understanding. With these tools I am armed with the ability to not overreact in any situation. I also have the ability to comprehend when people, places, or things are a threat to my life and freedom. As far as I 'm concerned very few things are more important than these.



What Does Re-Entry Look Like?

By: Montanez Bozeman



Had you asked me this question 10 years ago I would have probably answered "Finally Free!" However, after incarceration over the past 20 years, I know it is much deeper than "finally free." The closer that time approaches for me to re-enter society, the realer it becomes.

Being at Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center has afforded me the opportunity to take the necessary steps towards re-entry and rebuilding my life. I have learned how to type and use a computer, create job resumes and cover letters, search Indeed.com for job listings, install solar PV modules, as well as drive semi-trucks through a state-of-the-art CDL simulator. I have also learned financial literacy (stocks, credit cards, home and car buying, banking, and budgeting).

Now with all the skills I have learned I am sure I will not have a problem applying for, getting, and maintaining a job. I believe that my biggest obstacles will involve technology. Technology is constantly changing and is so much different from when I was last in the free world.

Reconnecting with family and friends is another thing that I must factor in when considering the subject of re-entry. How do those sayings go? "People ain't the same that they were yesterday" and "yesterday's price ain't today's price." Rebuilding relationships with my kids, family, and friends might be one of the hardest parts of re-entry simply because they do not know me. They might know the person I was, but they do not know the man that I have become. To be honest, though, I do not know them either. Therefore, for us to have healthy relationships we must get to know each other, as we exist today.

Then there are the issues of housing and transportation. My reality is that I have people I can lean on for a place to stay and a ride to a destination until I can re-establish myself in the community. The truth of the matter though is there ain't nothing like having your own. I realize that my pride is talking now, but I cannot let my pride control me any longer. Pride is no longer a factor after living in a cell for these past 20+ years. In fact, even if I have to temporarily stay at a halfway house or use public transportation until I get on my feet, then so be it. That sounds better than walking the yard and living in a prison cell.

PREPARING FOR RELEASE

By: Jeremy Yates

What does it look like preparing yourself for release? I believe I started this many years ago when I chose to embark on this journey of making the right choices to better my future. Even in here (re-entry center), just bettering my living conditions, health, and decision-making have all played a big part in my becoming ready for my release.

I have done a lot of time, and now I am in Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center where most of the talk is about what you are doing to prepare yourself for release. Most of the time my confidence is high, and I know there is nothing that can keep me from being prepared for release. However, to be honest, there are times when the questions overwhelm my confidence, and I am left wondering what my re-entry will actually look like.

Don't get it wrong, I am ready. I have a very strong support system, and I am ready for that day. I know this because I am doing everything in my power to make sure that not only is my release day successful but everyday thereafter. Being surrounded by so many individuals with the same mindset is a blessing. Everybody is on the same page as it concerns getting ready to go home. Taking advantage of the opportunities that I have at Kewanee LSRC and the knowledge and experience of my peers is giving me the insight that is needed for my release.

As for now I will keep allowing myself to take in all that is preparing me to be the best individual I can be upon release. So, preparing myself for my release started almost 20 years ago and is still a work in progress. I will be preparing until I am released.



WHAT AN **UNSUCCESSFUL** RE-ENTRY LOOKS LIKE








WHEN IT COMES TO RE-ENTRY, THERE ARE ONLY TWO ROADS



AN OPEN LETTER

By Patrick Lynn Johnson

Dear Individuals In Custody,

I'ma keep it 100. Ya'll tripping right now. Two Roads is one of only two news magazines allowed by the Illinois Department of Corrections that allows for the publishing and amplifications of incarcerated voices. Without these two news magazines your voices are essentially silenced. Where else will you go to hear what people in correctional centers across the State are experiencing and saying?

Having said that I want to explain what the problem is. There are thirty thousand people in correctional facilities throughout the State of Illinois. Whenever a "Call Out" gets issued it reaches every person in IDOC custody that has a tablet. That means that the overwhelming majority of the prison population is notified that we want to hear from them about the subject matters to be addressed in future issues of the Two Roads publication.

I can only speculate about why most people choose not to respond to the Call Outs. It is either because of a belief that your voice or opinion will not be respected or heard, or you think that you have nothing to say about the issues we face as a population. Let me be clear: none of those things are true. Two Roads genuinely wants to hear from as many people as possible on the issues that the Call Outs stipulate. Second, Two Roads as a publication is not committed to the suppression of incarcerated voices. The exact opposite is true. WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU BECAUSE OF OUR BELIEF THAT YOUR VOICE MATTERS! Two Roads is committed to being a space that permits and respects your voices. We cannot stress that point enough.

The ultimate point of this Open Letter is not to check anyone. Instead, the goal is to state clearly that you have a tool at your disposal that you are not using as much as you should be using. If you are angry, happy, serious, argumentative, boastful, powerful, combative or otherwise, say something. Don’t sit in silence. TALK LIKE YOU MEAN IT!

I'ma get outta here, ya'll. But first allow me to make a personal appeal. I have been down for 31 years straight, and I'm on my way to the world in a year or so. I'm at the end of my bid. But when I think of past years when I was moving in the joints as a youngster, I distinctly recall that we had no way to politic with the world. Ya'll situation is different. You have two separate publications where you can send letters, articles, and art work. I think ya'll should be putting pen to paper. Standing up means standing up no matter what the circumstances. STAND UP. WE CAN’T HEAR YOU. WHERE YA'LL AT?

ANSWER THE CALL OUTS, YA'LL!

SHOUTOUT TO AN AMAZING POET: SARAH MECUM.

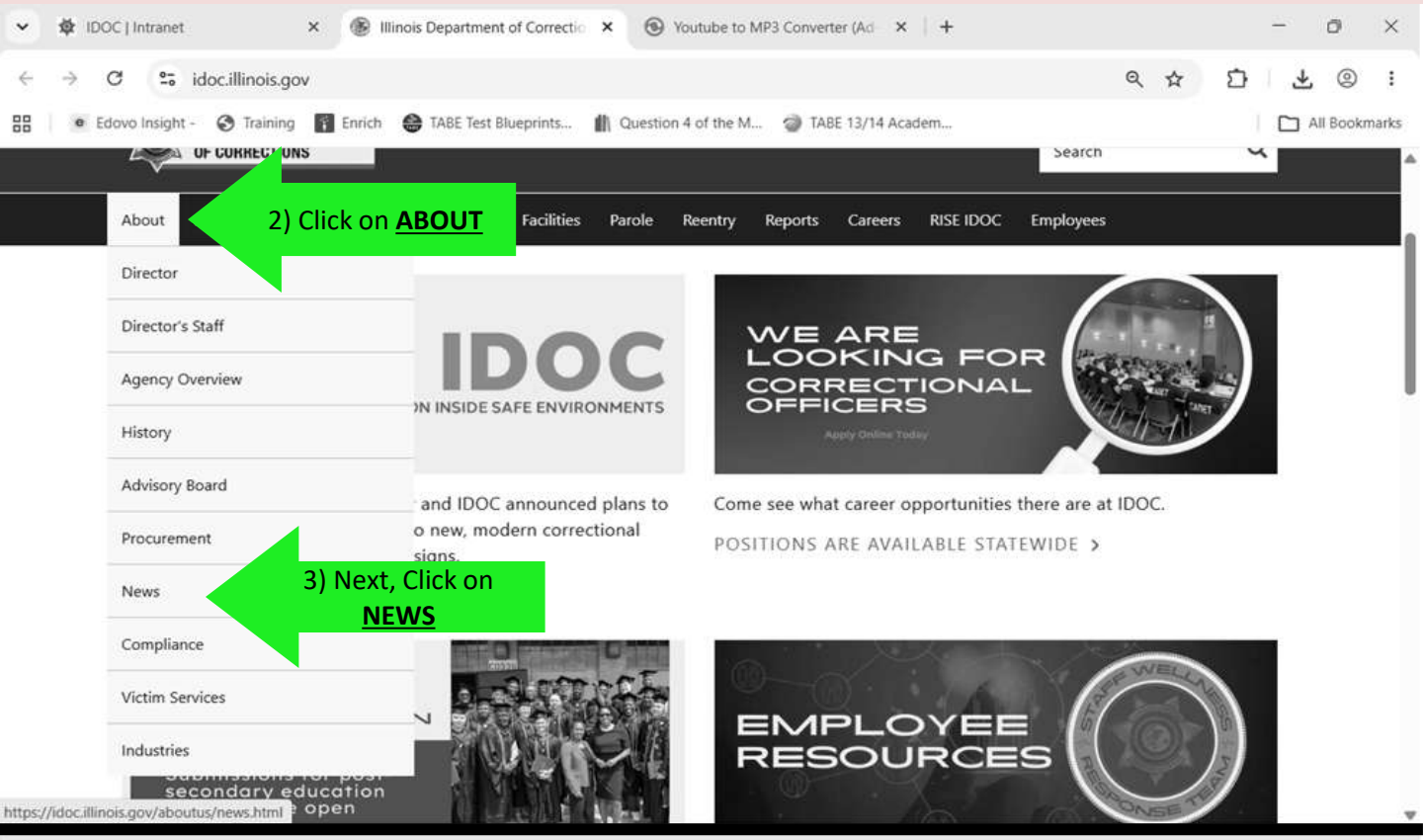
WE HEAR YOUR THUNDER!

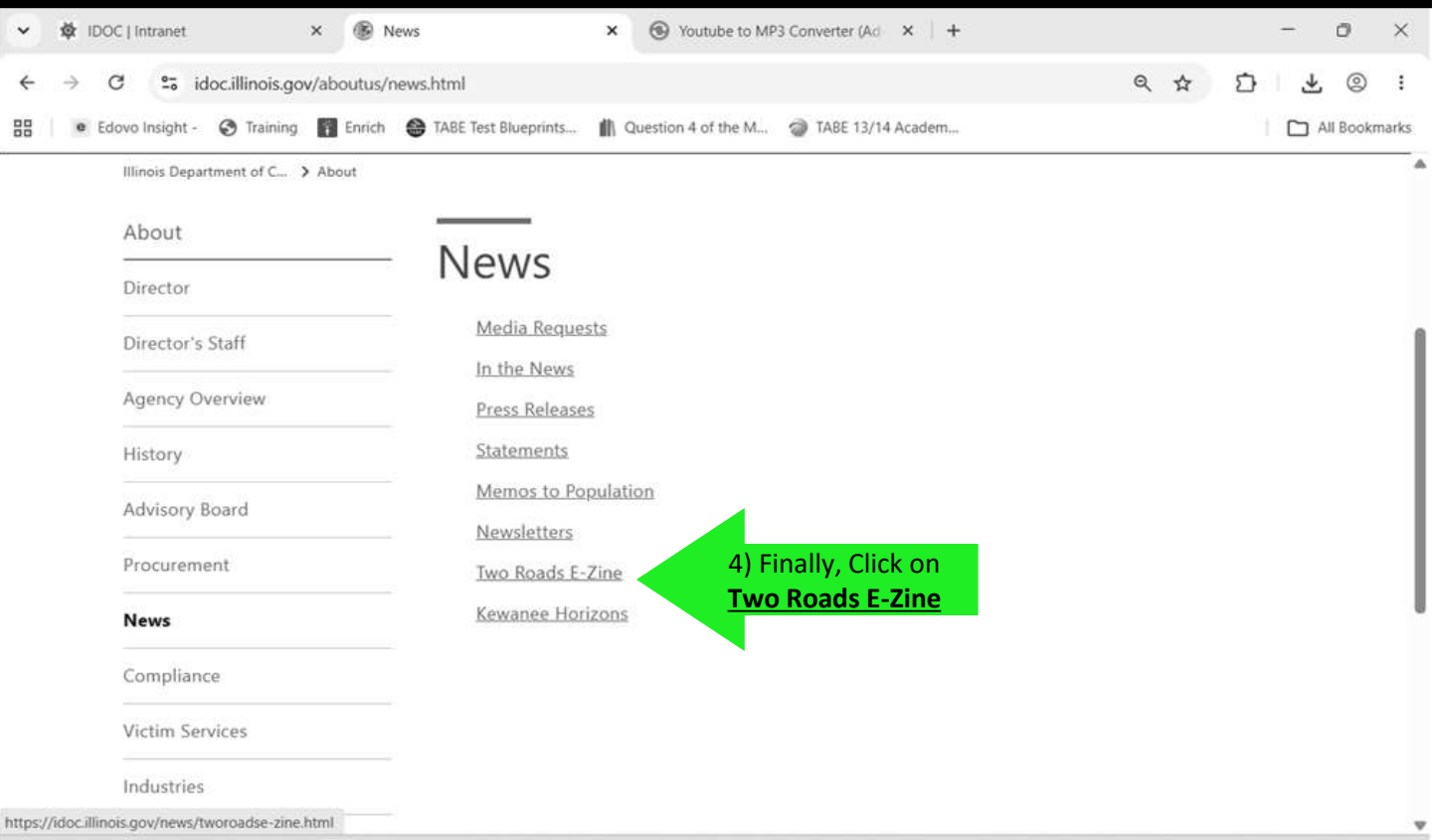
For the Better
by Sarah Mecum

The gates are closed
And I am here
To conquer my fears
As if they all followed me
I'll be proactive
Not allow them
To sneak up
I'll face them head on
Many ways try to hold me
In a twisted way of thinking
If I pray hard enough
Could they be braided instead?
If I try hard enough
Could the gates actually be open?
With the only one holding me here
God
If I believe with him anything is possible
Could I turn all the negative off?
With one rearranged moment of time
For the better of all the minds

Take these steps to find Two Roads On-line

1) Go to idoc.illinois.gov, the page will look like this:





…..or simply type in this link: idoc.illinois.gov/news/tworoadse-zine.html

ISSUE MEME



DANNNNGGGG! Commisary Got Those Iced Honey Buns? For Real?