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Two Roads

Stories and Service



MONTHLY E-ZINE

Written by and for the Men and Women of the Illinois
Department of Corrections

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When I say "I",
I speak for the billions of neurons
in my mind collectively expressing their existence.
No one can say about me,
"He is this, or he is that."
See,
I am everything.
And I will make of myself what I must.
-anonymous



Our Mission

Thank you for taking the time to read our first state-wide edition of the Two Roads E-Zine. We are Kewanee LSRC's Two Roads Restorative Justice program . This e-zine is our voice. Our mission statement reads in part “... we are committed to empowering those most impacted by challenging systems as servant leaders and agents of change. Using connecting tools such as stories and service, we will build the road that brings us together to conquer many of our societal ills such as violence, poverty and mass incarceration.” We are blessed to share our message of positive change, and do our small part in this monumental task of criminal justice reform.

We are Two Roads, and we are becoming a valuable resource for our readers. We will serve you by sharing the most meaningful information, stories, and resources we can develop.

Join our movement.

Two Roads Editorial Board



Two Roads

The people who write this e-zine live and work at Kewanee L.S.RC.

Two Roads is our effort to craft stories and retell narratives that liberate the teller and give a hard-earned gift to the listener. The Men who bring you Two Roads know the restraints and false limits of a hard world, and keep on anyway. They serve a vision greater than themselves and have become Servant Leaders.



Every soul has it's pulse points, those moments when life rises closer to the surface and makes itself more sharply felt. These moments may be remembered as revelations or wounds. We learn from both. I suppose that all we can draw from a loss is the belief that what's left matters, and we owe it our best. This can seem a lean reason to keep on. But really it is the belief that matters.

That, and the story we make up about what happened. Our stories remind us we live and have something to give. After everything else is behind us, our stories remain and we need them to have meant something. Herman Hesse wrote, "Most people think holding on as hard as you can is strength, but sometimes letting go takes more strength than anything."

The men committed to this newsletter have given many long years' thought to the meaning they seek in their stories. I am moved everyday as I learn their stories of revelations and wounds. Now they draw near their return to the bright sun of our world, and they will hold onto what matters and let go what they must. Because they are strong.

Jim Estes, Publisher

Editorial

For this issue of our e-zine we are introducing the GO B.L.U.E. Campaign. Giving representation to those without a voice is a major component of the Two Roads philosophy. Our plan is to use the GO B.L.U.E. Campaign to reach out to Illinois businesses, social organizations, and non-profit agencies. The more aware they are of the benefits of hiring those of us in need of a second chance the more likely they'll be to give us an opportunity.

If we want companies to believe in us we have to change the narrative and show them why it's important for them to hire us. Don't be afraid to turn to social organizations and non-profit agencies for help with work clothes, housing and job training. You may want to consider a career of service with one of the many organizations that help those most in need. Our redemption helps the state by adding contributing members to society.

When someone really needs a break and is given an opportunity it engenders loyalty and dedication. Our mission with the GO B.L.U.E.

Campaign is to get that message out. Every day there are men and women being released from Illinois' prisons that need jobs that pay a fair wage. Most movements start from humble beginnings. We need you to help fan the flames. Spread the message to others. The more eyes reading these e-zines the easier it will be to get the word out once we have partners and jobs lined up.



We'll do our part to be advocates on your behalf, but we need you to help us show society how positive and productive we can be when we're given a fair chance. GO B.L.U.E!

Writing on behalf of the editorial staff,

-Dylan Metzger

Letter to the Leaders

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

This letter is dedicated to all men and women of the struggle inside and outside these cold prison walls. To all men and women with a sense of morality that detest the state of affairs in the streets and within these cold prison walls. To those who feel it's not enough to complain about the state of affairs and never do anything about them. This letter is dedicated to those people of action who realize nothing can change without the bold actions of a few. You realize that, in order for the world to change, it must start with you. This letter is dedicated to those who realize all of these things and begin their journey with one simple act.

During my incarceration I have undergone a dramatic change in my overall being. I came into this place like many others, with a mind state and being designed by a culture of lawlessness, and negativity. I believed what I knew and understood was the right path but now I realize how backward and destructive this thinking was for my community and me. I realized this kind of negative thinking created the harsh conditions I grew up in. Once I realized this it all made sense!

It wasn't the police, the government, or "the man" that put me (us) in this position. Instead it was the thoughts and mindset I chose.

Whether my choice was made consciously or unconsciously it was still made. With this understanding, I believe we can focus all of our attention on curing the illness rather than making the age-old mistake of simply fighting the symptoms. Yes, there are most certainly entities, organizations, and systems that profit off our misfortune, this is without dispute.

However, their rise only exists due to our mental demise.

Therefore I ask: what if we flipped everything? What if, for every man or woman in this place, we sent out a leader? Someone with a new mind, intent on building instead of destroying. What if these places became true corrective centers; where men and women with the right thinking were churned out by the thousands?

Can you imagine?



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I ask you to contemplate the numbers as they currently stand; how many brothers and sisters would you estimate a year leave prison to become positive leaders or forces of positive change within their neighborhood? Let's say 10,000 people are released from IDOC custody a year, would you say that 1000, 500, 100 become these positive leaders? Probably not; the number is probably closer to ten, right? Well even if we go crazy and say 100 people released become the leaders our communities need, even that is only 1% of the 10,000. Surely we can do better than that, right?

Again I ask: what if we flipped that? What if every destructive, unconscious, uneducated brother or sister that entered the system left as a force of positive change?

I can tell you one thing; I bet it wouldn't be common to hear about another Chicago Public Schools student being killed due to senseless gang violence anymore. I bet then we would see all types of Good Conduct Credit programs getting us up out of these places!

Brothers, Sisters, this letter is a call for all rehabilitated individuals to stand and give us your voice! We must stand for positive change in every facility in the state. Through grassroots efforts we can achieve this goal. We need programs that connect us to our communities. We need substantive educational and vocational programs like those that existed in the joints back in the day. We need a parole system that rewards individuals for taking steps of positive correction and seeking rehabilitation. It's time this state realizes our rehabilitative development is the key to the future health of our communities.

We are designating this Call to Action the "Go Blue" campaign. We already have a "Go Green" campaign, in which people invest in renewable resources such as wind and solar energy. We are an even greater renewable resource in state blues! When we are rehabilitated, restored and renewed we can be this state's, this country's, or even this world's greatest untapped resource. All we need is an opportunity.

Read Bowie-Rivera's "Letter to the Legislators" Use it to draft your own letter to a legislator. Remember to remain respectful because we absolutely need each other. They cannot bring about true change without our help and we can't without theirs. Let's develop a good dialogue and relationship for the good of our common goal.

Yours True, Ricky Hamilton

Two Roads President

GO BLUE!

Go B.L.U.E stands for Businesses Leveraging Under-utilized Ex-felons. There exists a nearly forgotten population of men and women in the state of Illinois who seek an opportunity to contribute to our state in a positive way, both socially and economically.

We call all stakeholders to action -invest in our state's greatest renewable resource: the formally incarcerated men and women of Illinois!

We were, at one point, a burden to society but now hope to contribute in meaningful ways. We want gainful employment and volunteer opportunities to build the same community we once tore down. We want to repay our debt to society with interest. We are citizens. Help us out of our state blue uniforms and into blue collar jobs.

We are calling on all businesses, organizations and communities to Go B.L.U.E.!



Letter to the Legislators

Dear Legislator,

I write to you from inside prison. I've spent enough time inside to see the challenges of the IDOC and to see the unique position we're in to help those it has been charged to house. IDOC's mission statement clearly states a will to rehabilitate yet the rate of recidivism shows the mission has not been realized. The financial troubles our state currently faces are well understood and I think it imperative at this moment to use every allotted dollar to reduce the number of individuals coming back into our system.

The best way to keep costs down and complete IDOC's mission of rehabilitation is by investing in prisoner reformation. Programs that provide education, job training, and soft skills have proven invaluable as seen with the individuals released from the Kewanee Life-Skills Re-entry Center.

The emphasis placed on change at our facility is key to returning a citizen, rather than a criminal. Kewanee has accepted men who would have returned to their communities with poor social and job skills and helped them become men who understand the importance of self-reliance, community building, and have a strong desire to show the world they are more than the number the state assigned them. For the politicians who support prison reform, administrators who make reform possible, offenders who've been traumatized by the our system, communities that can spend less money on social programs that support victims, people who don't become victims of an offender released from prison, Everyone wins.



It is the absolute duty of our elected officials to protect the people and the people have lived in fear for far too long. Unfortunately, fear is justified. The fact is many people sent to prison will return to the streets, and many of us will live similar lives to the ones we lived before our incarceration unless we're shown a better way. You are invited to be part of the change that must happen in order to secure a future of hope and prosperity for every resident of the Prairie State.

Thank you for your consideration

Anthony Bowie-Rivera

Day Ones

Brothers have been hurting each other and keeping each other down since Day One. Our present day brothers are called Day Ones. This madness goes all the way back to Cain and Abel, where greed, disloyalty and other self-centered actions have deprived and destroyed our culture. The ones closest to us hurt us the most. That's why we haven't gotten ahead within our communities; we often do more tearing down than building up.

Too many are waiting on the government to come fix our problems when we are right here and we can do it ourselves. Our communities are destroyed by the same individuals that come from the homes within it. We need to stop waiting on outside influences to fix our problems. All we need to do is read the story of our lives and come up with a solution to our problems. Let's build each other up, motivate each other and push each other to succeed. As I start with myself I take a moral inventory of who I am.



The bad I must let go and the good I must continually make strides to improve. Greatness and holiness are the process of progress. If I am to lead my household to greatness I must allow God to renew my mind and stand up and be a man, a husband, a father, a son, a brother, a grandson, a uncle. Today I am going to be a real pillar in my family life. I am an advocate for my community. I have chosen to be this new man today, thus for me this is Day One of the rest of my life...

-Timothy Childs

At Long Last, Rehabilitation

The concept of rehabilitation in the IDOC is deeply rooted in theory and founded upon the Illinois Constitution; Article 1- Section 11: ... “Shall be determined both according to the seriousness of the offense and with the objective of restoring the offender to useful citizenship.” The latter portion of this article lends itself to the Mission of IDOC; “To serve justice in Illinois by promoting positive change in offender behavior, operating successful re-entry programs and reducing recidivism.”

“Rehabilitation is the process of seeking to improve a criminal’s character and outlook so that he or she can function in society without committing other crimes.”

[Black Law Dictionary, 10th Ed.].

A program can only assist and guide us through our stages of change. Without a belief in self and our ability to overcome, rehabilitation remains a concept without potential. I once heard it said, “Those closest to the Problem are closest to the Solution.” This means the answer to rehabilitation is within us!



We are witnessing an increasing focus on rehabilitation. We see the beginning stages of a process that faces many challenges. None of these are more difficult than what each of us face on our journey of change. Rehabilitation is forward progress and we must always move forward, never walking backwards. I am reminded of the Australian Coat of Arms, which depicts an Emu and a Kangaroo. It is a common belief that these two animals “cannot” walk backwards, signifying the aspirations and intent of Australia (as a Nation) to always move forward and never backwards into their abysmal past.

Animal stories and personifications teach us about our personal development. Although both animal’s knees face backwards, they cannot walk backward. Forward motion is their nature. Our knees face forward. Why is this significant? Backward or forward is a choice. Our rehabilitative direction will be determined by what we believe and develop within ourselves. As prisoners, we are all in the stages of change. Our choice to take advantage of programs and opportunities is only part of the momentum of rehabilitation. To fully realize rehabilitation, you must discover who you are and do the work to never return to prison again. We prisoners must be mindful, as we hope for change, rehabilitation starts and ends with us

-Samuel C. Harding

Kewanee L.S.R.C.

Restoration

Over the course of these years we've made amends-
now our Prison Sentences are coming to an expected end.
Holding the principal of truth as our advisor-
using the separation from society as an opportunity to get wiser.
Looked at previous errors with self-reflection-
then made the difficult yet necessary modifications and corrections.
Equipped ourselves with the tools that are effective-
building and systematically achieving goals and objectives.
Creating support systems that are firmly in place-
as well as establishing contingency plans just in case.
Through it all determined to think sensible-
remaining steadfast on our core beliefs and principals.
Moving forward with no intentions of stopping-
returning to our former life is not an option.
Totally dedicated to helping others in this life we're living-
to give back to a community we've taken from, there is no better
feeling.....



- Jeffrey Price

Paving the Road



Welcome to Two Roads “Paving the Road” re-entry section.

The American Job Center is a federal program with 22 local areas in the State of Illinois, with branches located everywhere in the USA. Our local branch serves Rock Island, Mercer, and Henry Counties. On October 24, 2018, Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center hosted a job fair for its residents. At the job fair, I conducted interviews with the representatives of the agencies who participated. American Job Center was impressive. For the December edition of our e-zine we enthusiastically spotlight the “American Job Center.”

The American Job Center is truly a one-stop shop career center. They offer a plethora of support services (employment, housing, vocational training,..) through their collaborative partnerships with businesses, social agencies, State Departments, and colleges throughout Illinois.

At the helm of this amazing human resource organization is local Executive Director, Mark Lohman, who shared very important information about the services and opportunities the American Job Center provides to every returning citizen in the IDOC.

Two Roads was so impressed with Mr. Mark Lohman during his presentation at the job fair, we invited him to come back for an in-depth interview with Two Roads. Here is some very revealing information we gleaned from our in-depth interview with Mr. Lohman. Currently, the American Job Center is putting forth a concerted effort in the IDOC beginning with Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center, Murphysboro Life Skills Re-Entry Center, and Logan C.C.

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American Job Center promotes rehabilitation by providing vocational training for specific trades such as welding and manufacturing to fill vacant jobs at companies such as Great Dane in Kewanee, Illinois. These opportunities are federally funded and made possible by employers contracting to hire returning citizens after they successfully complete certification programs prior to release. This concerted effort in the IDOC will not only reduce the recidivism rate, but it will also strengthen Illinois' economy by equipping returning citizens with the skills needed to fill vacant jobs with companies all across the state.

Kathy Lively, CEO of Man-Tra-Con Corporation serves Southern Illinois and is a collaborative partner in the American Job Center's extensive network, told us, "We have more jobs in our area of the State than we have people to fill them. We strongly urge you to please relocate to our area and fill jobs we have waiting for you upon your release." Likewise, Dan Rohr, owner of Certified Tank & Manufacturing, located in Springfield, another collaborative partner in the American Job Center network told us, "This past year we turned over 20-30 jobs. We need dependable people that are ready to work. We employ returning citizens from the IDOC and offer opportunities for you to advance. We have 4 previously incarcerated employees from the IDOC who are now Supervisors in our company. We urge you to relocate to Springfield and work for us."

Mr. Lohman and his collaborative partnerships recognize that returning citizens can be utilized as viable, renewable resources both economically and socially.

Economically, hiring rehabilitated returning citizens is an effective solution to an evolving problem businesses across Illinois are having with maintaining a dependable workforce which would enable them to maximize production, thereby resulting in maximum company profits. Filling this void with much-needed laborers and skilled workers strengthens our state and national economy.

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Socially, it's evident returning citizens return to communities, and, if effectively rehabilitated, are an asset to their communities. We become socially-conscious, law-abiding, tax-paying citizens, rather than as recidivists returning to prison after committing more crime and harming our communities. in which they return to, This program gives us a chance to give back and make Illinois a safer place for all of its citizens.

If you are sincere and serious about getting your life on track and headed in the right direction, never to return to prison ever again, we strongly urge you to take full advantage of the services and opportunities provided by the American Job Center in order to give yourself the best chance of accomplishing your goals.

Mr. Lohman is a leader who is passionate about humanitarian work. American Job Center addresses economic and societal ills in a holistic way that strengthens individuals, families, and communities. The American Job Center and its network of partners are economic and social saviors leading the way for a better tomorrow in Illinois and America for all citizens.

Mr. Mark Lohman and the American Job Center may be contacted at:
Mark Lohman (309) 793-5206, Mark.Lohman@AmericanJob.Center

-Michael "Saadiq" Cannon
Vice-President, Two Roads



Two Roads

Restorative Justice Program

Kewanee LSRC Chapter



Left to Right,
Back row

Estes, Harding, Arrington, Price, Booker, Riley, Metzel

Center Row

Rosario, Brown, Taylor, Cannon, Bowie-Rivera, Hamilton

Front Row

Pizzello, Wharton, Chew