

Autumn 2019



Issue #13

The STAR Project's **Mission** is to provide persons being released from incarceration with the essential tools to successfully reintegrate into the community as productive, contributing members.

Our **Vision** is to increase community safety and reduce recidivism by assisting persons to successfully transition from incarceration to the community.

We welcome your comments!

The STAR Project
321 Wellington Avenue
Walla Walla, WA 99362

Phone: (509) 525-3612
Fax: (509) 524-8152
Email: info@thestarproject.us

Serving Our Community: *Reinvigorating the STAR Mentor Program*

By Becky Turner, Executive Director

The STAR Project started as a volunteer-based organization in 2004. At that time, volunteers were providing post-release planning for inmates incarcerated at Washington State Penitentiary. These volunteers came from all walks of life, and from various employers. Some volunteers were retired, some were actively in the workforce. All of our original volunteers had the common thread of wanting to help people transition from incarceration to the community. Due to the overwhelming requests for these post-release planning services, the original group of volunteers decided to formally organize as a nonprofit agency - and The Successful Transition and Reentry (STAR) Project was born.

When STAR ramped up operations in 2013 due to a new grant, we switched from volunteer-led to staff-led operations. Unfortunately, the original volunteer program - known as the STAR Mentor Program - fell to the wayside. We hired staff to conduct pre-release transition services, but lost the connections between people who were incarcerated and people in the community.



Washington State Penitentiary was built in 1886.

Today, STAR is working to reinvigorate our Mentor Program. We are actively seeking volunteers in the community of Walla Walla to assist people incarcerated locally with post-release transitional planning, communicating with the STAR office to coordinate efforts, and mentorship of our vulnerable population. We're looking for people from all walks of life; the only common thread is the desire to help people return to our community. If this sounds like something you might be interested in, please give us a call at (509) 525-3612. We would be delighted to have you help us serve our community!

What's New in Housing: *Ready to Rent Classes*

By Lucinda Victorio, Housing Coordinator

Ready to Rent is an education program that lets potential tenants accept responsibility for past rental issues, repair credit, create a workable budget, prioritize housing needs, understand the rental process, maintain clean housing, communicate effectively with a landlord and become a successful renter.

Rental education is important because it decreases the screening barriers that STAR clients might have; including evictions, negative references, lack of income, bad credit and/or criminal history. Ready To Rent is influential among landlords because it teaches clients how to identify and overcome barriers in order to get accepted into rental housing.

Ready to Rent is a free 4 to 6 week program with a total of 12 hours, and the graduate certification is good for two years. Ready to Rent is a great opportunity for all STAR clients, the Walla Walla community, and everyone that has barriers with getting accepted into housing.

Do you know someone who could benefit from taking our Ready to Rent class? Give the STAR Project a call today at (509) 525-3612 to set up an appointment with our Housing Coordinator.



Ready to Rent curriculum helps STAR clients become successful renters.

Just the Facts: *Results in Reentry*

By Becky Turner, Executive Director

In 2018, The STAR Project served 158 people through our office programs. When we look at recidivism statistics in Washington State, it is estimated that 32.2% of people will not be successful in reentry and ultimately return to jail or prison within 3 years. STAR's recidivism rate - calculated using the same measures - is 14.4%. Let's look at the impact of STAR's reduction in recidivism.

If 158 people did not come into the STAR office for reentry support, we could expect about 51 of them would return to jail or prison within 3 years. It costs the state of Washington about \$5.7 million to incarcerate 51 people during the average felony sentence length of 40 months. If those same 158 people receive reentry support through STAR - and they did - we could expect 23 to recidivate.

By providing reentry services in our community, STAR prevented 28 felony crimes. That means 28 people did not return to jail or prison; 28 people stayed the course, kept their jobs, stayed in school - 28 people who would have otherwise faltered without support. Of course, 28 local families were spared the effects of crime. Preventing 28 cases of recidivism in our community saved Washington State taxpayers \$3.1 million in 2018 alone. STAR accomplished this by providing support where people need it most: pre-release transition assistance, case management, employment, and housing.

Upcoming Fundraiser: *STAR's 6th Annual No-Show Ball*

By The STAR Project Fundraising Committee

STAR relies on community-based fundraising to fill the gaps in funding for our important programs. Although we manage grants for our administration, case management, and housing programs, we have critical funding needs for overall organizational stability and direct client support.

From December 1st through December 31st, STAR will be hosting our 6th annual "No-Show Ball." No need to dress up, no need to leave your house - simply RSVP your *non-attendance* by mailing in your tax-deductible donation, or donate online at <http://thestarproject.us/noshowball.html>.

Our fundraising efforts would not be successful without the generosity of our supporters. For those who have donated in the past, thank you! For those who are thinking about making a donation to The STAR Project, the No-Show Ball provides a perfect opportunity to put your charitable contributions to the reentry programs that matter most. We appreciate your support!

Donor Spotlight: *Vacation Bible School Kids Donate Hygiene Products*

By Andy Owens, Executive Assistant

The STAR Project would like to thank the kids at the Walla Walla University Church Vacation Bible School (VBS) for their generous donation of hygiene products. Last year, our Executive Director spoke to VBS about STAR's mission of providing second chances to people in our community. This message resonated with them, and they decided to rally together to donate over 100 packages of hygiene items for STAR clients this summer.

Thanks to their generous donation, this year all STAR clients will receive hygiene packages that include a toothbrush, toothpaste, tissue, and soap. Thanks, VBS kids!

Get Involved!

There are a number of ways to help The STAR Project:

- Donate to STAR online at <http://thestarproject.us>
- Contact us if you are interested in renting to our clients
- Contact us if you are interested in employing our clients
- Contact us if you are interested in joining our Board of Directors
- Contact us if you are interested in helping with our Wednesday night dinner
- Contact us if you are interested in becoming a mentor
- Visit <http://smile.amazon.com> to donate through your regular Amazon purchases
- Sign up for our newsletter online at <http://eepurl.com/b3nEkv>

Thanks to all of our donors, coordinating agencies, staff, and supporters! We can't do it without your help.

STAR Staff

Becky Turner—
Executive Director

Andy Owens—
Executive Assistant

Robert Leigh, C.P.A.—
Finance Director

Lenel Parish—
Reentry Specialist

Karen Gleason—
Case Manager

Lucinda Victorio—
Housing Coordinator

Grace Dublin—
Whitman Intern

Board Members

Jim Barrow—
Board President

Becky HaneyNixon—
Vice President

Stephen Michael—
Secretary

Keith Farrington—
Treasurer

Austin Archer
Director

Melanie Clark
Director

Mike Howell
Director

Lisa Meyer
Director

Sarah Sisk
Director

Susanna Williams
Whitman Researcher

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For more information, or
to donate, please visit:

www.thestarproject.us

We have transitioned to e-newsletters!
Please sign up at <http://eepurl.com/b3nEkv>.

[Mail Merge Field]

The STAR Project
321 Wellington Avenue
P.O. Box 159
Walla Walla, WA 99362