We Believe Second Chances Matter

People face many challenges integrating back into the community after incarceration - employment barriers, lack of affordable housing and available transportation, and limited education opportunities. This has led to a national epidemic of recidivism and adversely impacts the already disadvantaged communities to which they return. To break this cycle, the formerly incarcerated need a second chance to gain sustainable employment and the social skills to become productive citizens. There is a solution that works with a 20-year track record of reducing the recidivism rate in half. Our Ready4Work® program is successful in helping the formerly incarcerated get a job, reunite with loved ones and make their Second Chance Matter®.

Our mission at Operation New Hope is to provide support, life and job skills training to the formerly incarcerated and place them in employment that offers a sustainable quality of life. Implementing a four-pronged approach (case management, supportive services, job training, and job placement assistance), Ready4Work ensures each client receives custom holistic care. Additionally, strategic partnerships with faith-based organizations, local businesses, community partners, and the judicial system motivate and move individuals to become productive, responsible citizens within the community.

With 20 years of boots on the ground experience in providing reentry services, we have seen first hand that there is a serious need for expansion of our Ready4Work program. When Operation New Hope learned about the great work of St. Paul AME Church, Compassionate St. Augustine, and many other community leaders and volunteers, a plan was set in motion to expand reentry services in St. Johns County. The project has been bolstered by the support of the City of St. Augustine and a commitment of support from the St. Johns County Sheriff's Department, and we began providing services to the community in March 2020.

Ready4Work saves taxpayers millions of critical dollars a year that can be reinvested back into communities to help address the root causes of incarceration, like poverty, lack of quality affordable housing, limited education, mental illness, and substance abuse. The success of the program is evident in the transformation stories of its clients, enhanced hiring practices for the employment partners, healthier communities and families, and better public safety through reduced recidivism.
After three years of unemployment, with two children to support and the threat of returning to jail looming because of her inability to repay restitution totaling $10,000, Danielle Pryor felt hopeless. The memory of that difficult period brought tears to her eyes. “I had done my time, learned my lesson, and been forgiven by God, but I still needed help to receive forgiveness from others. I needed someone to intervene.”

“That’s when Operation New Hope came in,” she recalled as a broad smile spread across her face. “Once I was able to surrender my doubts about being a former felon and accept help, the barriers started to come down.”

Danielle entered the Ready4Work program in 2013 with determination to make the most of her second chance. Her hard work and dedication paid off; she was awarded Student of the Week and quickly earned a job at Venus Swimwear. “I started at the bottom, picking and packing orders, but I didn’t lose focus.” After only six months of employment, Danielle applied for and was promoted to the computer division. Shortly after that, she was again promoted to Administrative Assistant and has worked hard in that role ever since.

Tears welled again, but this time Danielle’s eyes sparked with joy. “I remember God’s promise to me that he would be my lawyer, judge, jury, and employer. It was my faith in him that led me to where I am now. That and Operation New Hope.”

Wanting to give back and help others overcome the barriers to reentry, Danielle recently shared her success story with the current Ready4Work class. “If I had not been given the opportunities here at Operation New Hope, I wouldn’t be where I am today.” Her distinctive broad smile returned. “I promise each of you – there is hope!”