



NEWSLETTER

June 2022

We are a nonprofit organization - based in Los Angeles but serving all of California - powered by care, commitment, hard work, and a calling. We are dedicated to building community and healing individual and collective harm.

We wanted to express how much the news shared below is a direct reflection of the choices, support, and heartfelt acts of all of you that donate, volunteer, and support this meaningful work.



View of Los Angeles, captured during ReEvolution's trip to The Getty.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

While we have not been able to resume consistent programming in person inside the prisons and across the state, we are happy to report that so much is happening!

Junior Mentors

Our Junior Mentors youth leadership program completed our first full two-year program at California Rehabilitation Center (CRC), along with our second group of first year participants. At Valley State Prison (VSP) we're well under way with our third cohort and identifying participants to start further expansion of this program as we speak! We are slated to begin offering Junior Mentors in four additional institutions in the *very* near future.

Sanctuary Program

The Sanctuary Program recently completed a full cohort at both CRC and Substance Abuse Treatment Facility (SATF), which received great feedback from participants and rich reflections all around. The program addresses the cycle of harm and focuses on raw and personal topics, often wrought with shame. We were humbled to see the depth and trust these participants built with one another based on the vulnerable moments they shared.

Restorative Mentor Training

An effort to have older mentors, who have been navigating prison and rehabilitation successfully, guide youth has been a growing trend throughout the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). To that aim, we started a Restorative Mentor Training at VSP years ago that was put on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We are continuing that training at VSP and will begin offering trainings at three additional institutions.

All in all, ReEvolution will be offering three distinct programs across six prisons - and it's all starting July 1st. Of special importance is the start of our programs at the California Institution for Women (CIW) - the first women's facility we'll be programming in! We've also started an official "reach-in" program to allow individuals to receive individual coaching and support, be it curriculum, parole prep, or something else.



Claudell, Ventura, Eddie, Adam, and Kamal exploring new depths during ReEvolution's "Ocean Adventure".

All Things Reentry

In terms of our reentry work and community building, we've received a state grant to bolster these efforts and provide intensive case management, substance abuse treatment and more to hundreds of people over the next three years. In March, we initiated a monthly restorative circle in San Mateo County, supported by a grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. The Freedom Bus continues to usher people home with a warm welcome back to the free world.



Perry enjoying his first meal out, a much-desired steakhouse burger, and Jaime, his Freedom Bus driver.

Some recent highlights include a workshop discussing "The Work" of Byron Katie, a picnic and trip to The Getty, an Ocean Adventure sea kayaking/paddle boarding day, and a movie night.

Creative Writing Contest

Recognizing the power of the written word, and the need to center the voices of our community members - currently and formerly incarcerated alike - we are hosting a creative writing contest. We are in the process of soliciting creative writing pieces, poems, short stories, mini-memoirs, etc. that focus on one's "story" of incarceration. Selected works will be featured in our upcoming anthology. Writers will also be invited to present their work at our story slam/poetry jam this fall in Los Angeles - stay tuned! Learn more about our creative writing contest [here](#).

TEAM MEMBERS

ReEvolution says farewell to Anna Olinova and Dani Barcheers while we welcome Parker Chamberlin, Bryan Maccoy and Johanna Rasmussen to the team.

Anna has been our resident art therapist this past year, having offered various community workshops and activities as well as weekly one-to-one counseling sessions to individuals. Though Anna's internship is coming to an end, we are certain her dedication to this work will not waver as she further pursues her passions in expressive arts therapy.

Dani has reconnected with her love of dog training, a skill she learned while incarcerated, and has landed the jackpot training under Tia Torres in Louisiana and the infamous show "Pitbulls and Parolees." Her insight and contributions will live on as she has undoubtedly upleveled our programs and values in her time here. Losing Dani is no doubt a big loss, but we're grateful to see her build a life of purpose and wish her all the best. Watch for her on TV you all!



Parker Chamberlin



Bryan Macoy



Johanna Rasmussen

We are delighted to welcome Parker home and to our team. Parker, who recently paroled in February, has been a partner in creating our Junior Mentors program from inception while he was an inside facilitator at VSP. We are especially proud of Junior Mentors as it was our first flagship program and the stepping stone from which the rest of ReEvolution has grown. His talents are many... Parker has great skills in mentoring, facilitating, and community building. We'd be remiss if we didn't mention that Parker is also a certified substance abuse counselor, obtained a bachelor's degree while incarcerated, is working on a Master of Social Work AND possesses excellent logistics and managerial skills. Parker couldn't come at a better time, as we're expanding programs exponentially this summer where his skills, insight, and heart will be crucial elements of success.

Bryan has joined us as a skilled pinch hitter facilitator, who after being incarcerated for 12 years feels the calling to support both those who are currently and formerly incarcerated. While incarcerated, he attained his G.E.D. and A.A. degrees in Psychology and Social and Behavioral Science and was certified as a substance abuse counselor. After his release, Bryan went back to school to pursue a degree in computer science and now works at NBC as an application software developer. Bryan's hope is to inspire others to reach for their dreams despite their past, much

like his journey from prison to dream career in the tech industry. Above all, Bryan believes that redemption is possible if given encouragement and a chance.

Johanna serves as the community liaison in San Mateo County. She brings to the table ample knowledge and insight gained from her tenure as a juvenile justice and delinquency prevention commissioner and has been crucial to the development and execution of restorative circles in San Mateo County.

REFLECTIONS WITH REEVOLUTION

We talk with some of our community members who open up about life inside, life after, and they generously share some of themselves with the rest of us in the hope that their openness creates a little learning, a little empathy, a little motivation, and a little movement toward living like we're all in this world together. A big thank you to Kristianne and Jeff for sharing themselves with us.

Episode 4 - Kristianne Schell

"Listening. And not just to other people, but listening to ourselves. Listening to myself and learning to trust that. I didn't learn that when I was young. I didn't know how to listen, and I didn't know how to communicate. Communication is key to internal healing and community relationships."

~ Kristianne, on the most important thing she's learned so far in life.



Episode 5 - Jeff Gibson

"Things are happening little by little. It's really a beautiful thing to see. I'm making friends out here and making new memories with my brother, sister-in-law, and my nephew."

- Jeff, on reconciling with his family.



Click the icon above to listen to the full podcasts!

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

“All I know is that my life is better when I assume that people are doing their best. It keeps me out of judgment and lets me focus on what is, and not what should or could be.” ~Brené Brown

<https://tinybuddha.com/blog/everyones-doing-the-best-that-they-can>

Imagine what the world would feel like, what we could all accomplish, if we all assumed that others were doing their best. Suddenly the person who cuts us off in traffic simply made a mistake, or didn't see us there. Suddenly the person who didn't get the directions right isn't difficult, but a manifestation of human diversity that interpreted things differently than you. Suddenly your boss might be someone of value, rather than someone you begrudge. And suddenly a parent who you previously thought to be aloof, is a parent who cares enough not to pass on their bad habits. If we could account for the experiences and historical/cultural traumas which shape the human experience every day and create a foundation of knowing that even when we don't know the fine details of someone's life, those traumas are taking a toll somehow - we just might be able to move toward a practice healing, of inviting people into our values rather than excluding them, and put an end to intergenerational patterns of harm and inequity. The possibilities for love and prosperity are limitless, it is only our collective beliefs and actions which determine how far we can go.



ReEvolution restorative circle in San Mateo County.

UCLA PARTNERSHIP

We continue to work with UCLA interns to help harness each of their skills and interests while introducing or further integrating them into our community and values. We've been lucky enough to benefit from some of their unique contributions, as have some of our community members, and aren't ashamed to say that we've been able to impart some heartfelt learnings.

It's easy to fear the stories and labels - fostering a perspective centered around humaneness and kindness may be more difficult but not impossible - read on for insight from a few of our interns as they reflect on their time with us.

"I came to the first meeting with this core effort of just humanizing everyone. It got kind of disheartening at times. There were several moments when I felt overwhelmed by how bad the [criminal justice] system is. Leading with humanity as a core value made me all the more empathetic and eager to contribute in ways that I can. But then when you start digging into those socio-emotional components of incarceration, you realize how brutal the system is on all fronts, and it's just like - what do I do? What *can* I do?"

- Cortunay Minor

"While I learned so much about different ways to heal after spending time in prison and different ways to resolve trauma in general, I feel like I am inspired to be more open with others and practice kindness first before passing any kind of judgment. I continue to have questions on this issue, but I'm taking this opportunity to do my research and involve myself in the community to honor the short (but powerful) things I've learned with ReEvolution."

- America Soriano

"The struggles within the carceral system [became] even more real to me and made me more empathetic towards incarcerated individuals. In particular, talking with several people who formerly had life sentences about their experiences in prison and very vividly seeing their healing process helped me grasp the depth of how, at the end of the day, we are all human and we make mistakes. I saw that having that mistake define one's identity is not an effective solution in ensuring one never makes that mistake again. It is through working on past trauma, doing healing exercises and taking accountability, that one ensures that the mistake is never made again."

- Defne Gusler

PARTING WORDS

Laughter is healing and fun is healthy - make them a priority!



ReEvolution's trip to the Getty.

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ReEvolution

+1 (323) 391-8351

info@reevolutiongroup.com

www.reevolutiongroup.org

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