



catalyst

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National efforts to promote fatherhood programs will help Safer Foundation clients.

National effort to increase successful fatherhood initiatives could benefit Safer

Of the more than 10,000 people who seek Safer Foundation’s services each year, a large number of them are fathers. While their past mistakes have resulted in a criminal record, their futures represent an opportunity to become positive role models for their children and prevent the younger generation from encountering the same pitfalls.

“Incarceration and Reentry” is one of the focal points of the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC), which supports the Administration for Children and Families’ Office of Family Assistance’s efforts to encourage states and communities to fund Promoting Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Marriage programs. According to NRFC statistics, more than two million children in the U.S. have a parent in prison and many more minors have experienced a father or mother in jail.

Growing up with a parent in prison can have a destabilizing effect on a child. Besides the separation from their parents, they can also be parted from their siblings and end up in the custody of different guardians. Studies show that children without fathers in their lives are five times more likely to live in poverty and commit crime, nine times more likely to drop out of school, and 20 times more likely to end up in prison. In other words, this often leads to a generational cycle of incarceration.

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From the President's Desk



Each Safer client who doesn't return to prison has the opportunity to become a reliable contributor to his or her family. While the financial impact of another earner certainly is noteworthy, adding a parent to the life of a child is even more important.

Safer Foundation uses statistics to measure the success of its programs. For example, we see a 58 percent reduction in recidivism among our clients who receive our services and successfully complete 30 days of employment.

What can get lost in these numbers, however, is the positive human effect that comes with such a reduction in recidivism.

In this issue of the Catalyst, you can read about the National Responsible Fatherhood Clearinghouse (NRFC), which supports the Administration for Children and Families' Office of Family Assistance's efforts to assist states and communities to support *Promoting Responsible Fatherhood* and *Healthy Marriage* programs. An increase in national attention for programs like these would be a positive development for community-based organizations like Safer, which work with thousands of fathers each year. The fact that "Incarceration and Reentry" is one of the primary themes of the NRFC shows how crucial it is to support fathers and other family members as they make the transition back into society.

You can also read about Warren Phillips, a dedicated father who has used the resources available for him at Safer to find a job at the Office of the Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court. Recently named one of that office's employees of the year, Warren has become a positive role model for his son, Nicholas, and his nephew, Marvin. Struggling to find work

just a few years ago, Warren now excels at his job and is in a position to give Nicholas advice as the younger Phillips prepares to go to college this fall.

The story of Jay Borchert is another that might get lost in the statistics. After years of struggling with drug addiction and repeated trips to prison, Jay began to turn his life around when he arrived at Safer's North Lawndale Adult Transition Center. In the time since, he has graduated from DePaul *summa cum laude* with a degree in Sociology. He will also begin a Ph.D. program at the University of Michigan this fall where

he will continue to study Sociology and Social Demography. He'll also be a research assistant for the *Michigan Study of Life After Prison* where he can use his education and life experience to help investigate and develop new plans to help with prisoner reentry.

These are just a few of the hundreds of individual success stories that we see each year at Safer Foundation. Their achievements are a reminder that while statistics can tell

some of the story, the people behind the numbers show the importance of focusing on reentry. Our clients are fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers, which is why we focus on a successful return not just for their sake, but for their family's, as well.

"Our clients are fathers, mothers, sisters, and brothers, which is why we focus on a successful return not just for their sake, but for their family's, as well."

Sincerely,

Diane Williams

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Cross receives Governor's Award for work in Safer's Resource Room

Matt Cross spends so much time in the Resource Room at Safer Foundation's Chicago headquarters that most clients probably assume he's an employee. Instead, Cross has been one of the organization's most loyal volunteers over the past two years. Recently, Cross traveled to Springfield to receive the Governor's Volunteer Service Award for his work with Safer.

"I think this award was a great opportunity to go down there and promote Safer and what we're doing here, especially on a statewide level like that," Cross said. "I feel like this population (Safer's clients) faces a tremendous amount of stigma, and I think we've been able to do some good things."

A doctoral student in clinical psychology at the Chicago School of Professional Psychology, Cross began volunteering at Safer shortly after moving to Chicago from New York.

"It's been a real eye-opener for me," he said. "I've helped the clients and they've helped me grow just as much."

Enid Johnson, Safer's Director of Volunteer Services, commended Cross's work and detailed some of his accomplishments with Safer.



Safer Foundation Resource Room Coordinator Sheldon Smith, left, and volunteer Matt Cross celebrate Cross's Governor's Volunteer Service Award.

"Matt Cross exemplifies what a volunteer should be," Johnson said. "He has created an orientation guide for volunteers coming into the Resource Room. He also wrote a letter to Men's Wearhouse that helped get 600 suits donated for our clients. He is truly committed to helping the clients succeed."

ReachOut Wireless helps Safer clients get connected with free phones

One of the significant challenges confronting Safer Foundation clients is the lack of a reliable telephone line. Safer has teamed up with ReachOut Wireless to provide over 200 free monthly-minute phones for clients. Each phone was activated upon distribution and will receive 68 free minutes each month.

"This helps our clients when they get job interviews so the employers have a way to reach them," said Retention Specialist Emma Price, who facilitated the van's arrival at Safer. "A lot of clients can't afford a phone. They have limited resources and this program will be well received, because it provides a resource that will help them be successful."

The ReachOut Wireless LifeLine & LinkUp Program van has become a familiar sight in some Chicago neighborhoods. The program, just over two years old, is an initiative to provide government-assisted cellular service in underserved areas.

"Right now we're doing cell phone programs in 15 states," said Wayne Stewart, who has been working for ReachOut since 2008. "Everybody needs to have some sort of ability to communicate.



Safer Foundation Retention Specialist Emma Price, second from left, and her clients show off the new phones they received courtesy of the ReachOut Wireless LifeLine & LinkUp Program.

People need jobs. There are so many single-parent households and they need to know where their kids are and their kids need to know where their parents are."

Stewart also pointed out that Safer's clients provide the exact target audience for the program.

"These people here are in dire need of jobs," he said. "They need to have a phone number to give to an employer."

Phillips continues to excel at County Clerk's Office

Warren Phillips is quick to discuss his job in the accounting department of the Office of the Cook County Clerk of the Circuit Court. Burdened with a criminal record, Warren thought he might never get this kind of opportunity again. This Safer Foundation client has made the most of it, as he was recognized as one of his office's employees of the year for 2009.

"This award is definitely an honor because it symbolizes what I've been able to achieve," Warren said. "It's something that isn't given out, you have to earn it. Just being nominated is an achievement."

Warren came to Safer Foundation in 2006 after he lost his job when his employer found out about a prior felony conviction.

Determined to find work to support his family, Warren worked with his Retention Specialist and found a job.

"Safer Foundation laid the groundwork for me to get where I am today," he said. "I used their resources to better educate myself, and without that I wouldn't have gotten my job with the Circuit Court of Cook County."

Warren's current success has turned him into a valued contributor for his family and a positive role model for his son, Nicholas, and his nephew, Marvin. Nicholas, a 17-year-old senior at Lindblom Math and Science Academy, will attend the University of

Illinois in Champaign this fall.

"He brought me to his job once and I met his coworkers," Nicholas said. "They tell me he's a good worker. He and my mother are two influential people in my life."

With a strong interest in Chinese, Nicholas plans to major in International Business. He noted that his father has already helped him prepare for the transition to higher education.

"He tells me to keep doing what I've been doing," Nicholas said. "He says I should do my work and if I have any problems, come to him or talk to my professors."

Marvin, who lives with Warren, has noticed a positive change in his uncle.

"Warren is doing great," Marvin said. "He's got a second chance and he knows he's thankful for the opportunity. He's taken on a bigger leadership role in the family and he's a great influence on his son. He's also a good influence on me and he's always there when I need him. In so many ways, he's more like a father to me than an uncle."

Warren received the award on his second nomination.

"This shows that I've come a long way," he said. "It means a great deal to me."



"This award is definitely an honor because it symbolizes what I've been able to achieve. It's something that isn't given out, you have to earn it."

— Warren Phillips



21st Annual Safer Foundation Golf Outing

**July 13, 2010
Ruffled Feathers
Golf Club
1 Pete Dye Drive
Lemont, IL 60439**

**Registration 11:30 a.m.
Shotgun Start 1:30 p.m.**

Levels of Support

- **Sponsor:** \$1,500.00 — Includes green fees and carts for a foursome, a "backyard barbecue" lunch, reservations for dinner, and a hole identified in your or your company's name.
- **Individual:** \$250.00 (Or "early-bird special" price of \$225.00 if received by June 21, 2010) — Includes green fee and cart, a "backyard barbecue" lunch, dinner, silent auction, and raffle.
- **Dinner Only:** \$75.00 — Includes a cocktail reception, silent auction, and raffle.

Please make all checks payable to:
Safer Foundation
571 W. Jackson Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60661

To make your reservation today:
Contact Carla McConkey
at 312-341-8747
or carla.mcconkey@saferfoundation.org

Please RSVP before June 30, 2010. *Space is limited.*

Raffle victory another successful point on Borchert's road back

When client Jay Borchert checked his raffle ticket and discovered that he had won the grand prize at Safer Foundation's Volunteer Appreciation Event, he quickly jumped to his feet and broke into tears. Minutes earlier, he somberly shared his story of successfully battling addiction despite repeatedly finding himself in trouble with the law. Now, he'd just won a new computer, which would help him on his way to a Ph.D. at the University of Michigan.

"I never imagined I'd be where I am now," said Borchert, who began to turn his life around as a resident of Safer's North Lawndale Adult Transition Center. "I had no idea how to get to this position."

After his addiction landed him in the penitentiary a half dozen times, Borchert was determined to get clean and move on with his life. North Lawndale ATC Operations Chief Debra Higenes knew that he would succeed.

"When he came to us, he made up his mind that it was the last time he'd be incarcerated," Higenes said. "He took advantage of everything we have to offer. He got involved with the church, volunteered to do readings, and eventually joined the choir."



Safer Foundation President / CEO Diane Williams, Jay Borchert, and North Lawndale Adult Transition Center Operations Chief Debra Higenes at Safer's annual volunteer appreciation dinner.

Borchert also went back to school and recently graduated *summa cum laude* from DePaul with a degree in Sociology. He will pursue a Ph.D. in Sociology and Social Demography in Ann Arbor this fall. Since DePaul required him to return his computer upon graduation, the new laptop he won in the raffle came at the perfect time.

"This is kind of like a verification of all the hard work I've done and a reminder that I'm going in the right direction," Borchert said. "Safer's been a huge source of support for me. They've always been supportive, and truthful as well."

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Safer Foundation is one of the leading providers of employment, educational, and supportive services for people with criminal records in Illinois and has long believed in the importance of family for reentering individuals. With programs like family-inclusive case management and family reentry planning at its two adult transition centers, Safer encourages its clients to reassume prominent roles in their dependents' lives in an attempt to ease transition and rebuild parental bonds.

Over the past year, with leadership from President Barack Obama, parenting initiatives, especially for fathers, have received a great deal of national spotlight. The NRFC has partnered with ESPN on a series of public service advertisements showing the importance of fathers spending time with their children. A year ago, on Father's Day 2009, legislation was introduced by local Congressman Danny K. Davis (D-IL) and Senator Evan Bayh (D-IN). The Julia Carson Responsible Fatherhood and Healthy Families Act of 2009 provides for job-training through community partnerships, financial literacy programs and budgeting

education, employment services, and mediation and conflict resolution for low-income parents.

"The absence of fathers or a father figure often contributes to negative behavior in children and disrupts the normal pattern of social and emotional development," Davis added. "In many instances it also limits the child's ability to have necessary economic resources with which to feel secure."

Bayh concurred with his House colleague, stressing that something must be done so that younger generations don't repeat the same mistakes of their forebears.

"It is a sad and sobering fact that one out of every three kids in America will wake up this Father's Day without their father present," Bayh said in a press release at the time. "Conceiving a child doesn't make you a man, but raising one responsibly does. Unfortunately, absentee fathers have become a national epidemic. The result is that millions of American children are more likely to struggle in school and have emotional and behavioral problems."

Safer works to implement new Certificates law

Safer Foundation is thrilled to report that Public Policy and External Relations will be busy in FY 2011 helping to implement the new Illinois law of Certificates of Rehabilitation.

Safer Foundation saw the fruits of its FY 2009 advocacy when Governor Pat Quinn signed Senate Bill 1050 into law, effective January 1, 2010.

By expanding the range of offenses that are now eligible for Certificates of Rehabilitation, Illinois has emerged as the only state in America that gives employers immunity from liability arising from employing a person with a

criminal record, as long as that person has a certificate.

Certificates of Good Conduct now come from the Circuit Court. If the Circuit Court finds that an applicant is rehabilitated, and deserves a Certificate of Good Conduct, then that person now stands on equal footing with an occupational license applicant who never had a criminal record.

To ensure our clients are able to take advantage of the new law, Safer Foundation and its partners has begun assembling a top notch pro bono panel of local attorneys to represent many deserving Certificate applicants.



Catalyst is published four times a year by Safer Foundation. Questions or comments regarding this publication may be addressed to: info@saferfoundation.org

www.saferfoundation.org

(312) 922-2200

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