



# Virginia CARES

2013-2014  
Annual  
Report

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# Message from the Executive Director

**Now more than ever**, great strides are being made in the area of offender reentry. National, state, and local governments are recognizing the need for reform in the areas of sentencing guidelines, restoration of voting rights, “ban the box” fair employment rights, fair housing, and general acceptance of everyone deserving a second chance. VA CARES continues its 35-year journey of providing active services and much needed support to the Commonwealth’s returning citizens by moving toward an evidenced-based curriculum, the use of Motivational Interviewing techniques, and the continued development of strong supporting resources in the communities it serves. As reentry services have become more accepted as an effective course of action for recidivism reduction, VA CARES continues to prove that supportive services provided by a dedicated, caring team of reentry professionals makes a measureable difference. VA CARES is committed to the positive growth of reentry services in Virginia and a supportive structure for nurturing public safety in its communities. Through the dedicated support of its Board, statewide staff, and administrative staff, VA CARES will continue to push forward to improve its programs in an effort to provide the best available services to its constituency.



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## VA CARES Central Office Staff:

Executive Director – Ann M. Fisher

Director of Programs and Training – Anthony West

Director of Finance and Personnel – Don Jones

Finance and Personnel Assistant – Angella Nicely

Data Specialist – Aisha Kirtley

Program Coordinator (SCA Mentoring Grant) – Shrell Bolden

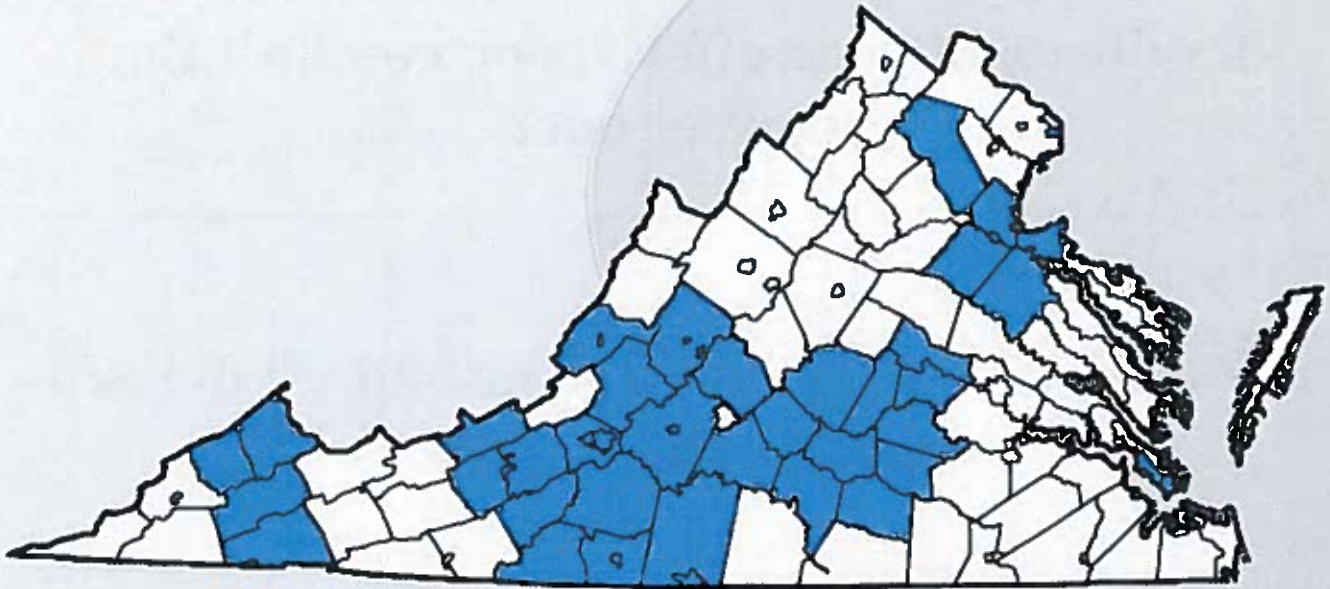
Match Support Specialist (SCA Mentoring Grant) – Stephanie Jett

# Mission Statement

To lead a statewide network of reentry programs that promote public safety by advocating for ex-offenders and providing supportive services to help them live successful lives.



# Where We Work



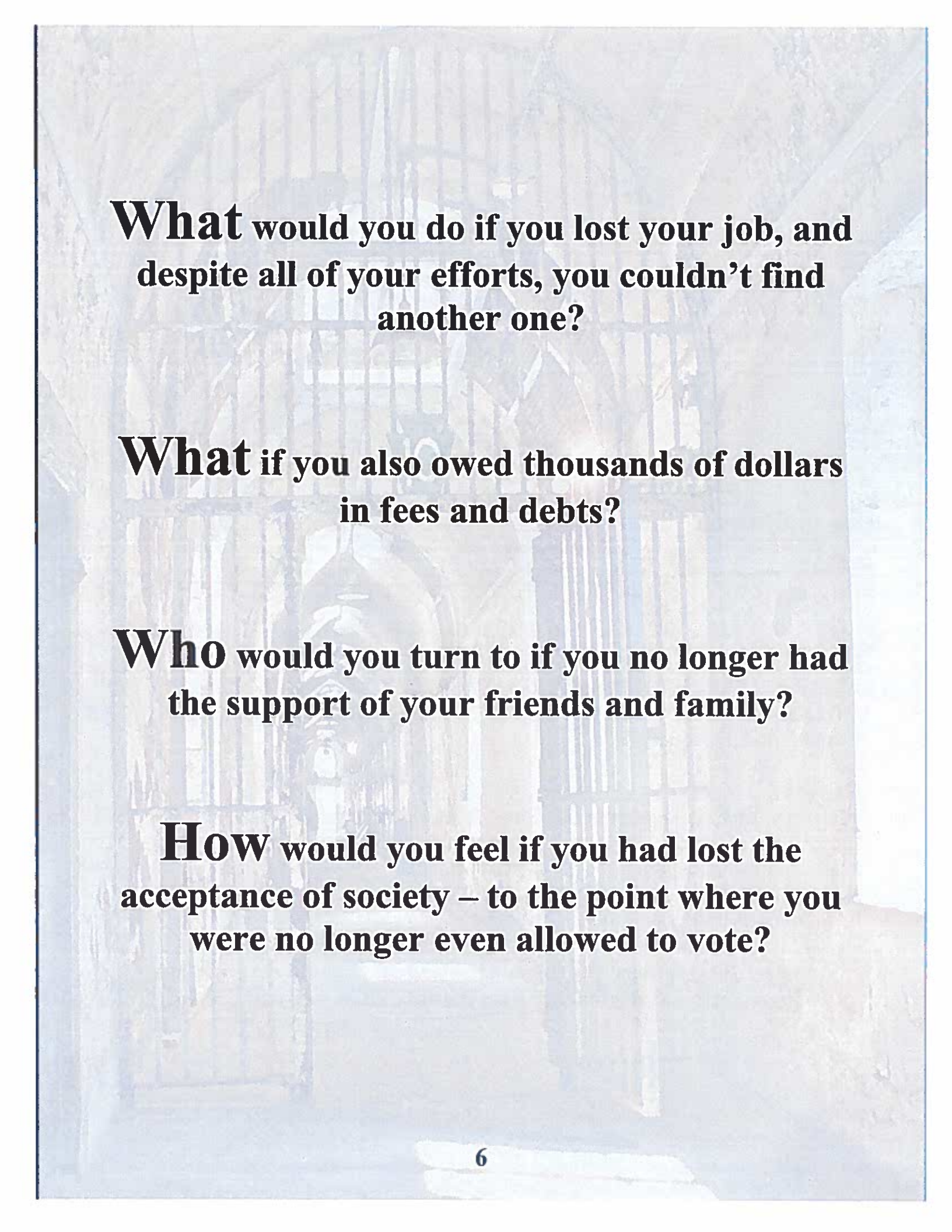
## Cities

Abingdon, Alexandria, Bedford, Bristol, Christiansburg, Danville, Farmville, Fredericksburg, Hampton, Lynchburg, Martinsville, Newport News, Radford, Roanoke, Rocky Mount, Salem

## Counties

Alleghany, Amelia, Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Botetourt, Buchanan, Buckingham, Campbell, Caroline, Charlotte, Cumberland, Culpeper, Dickenson, Fauquier, Floyd, Franklin, Giles, Goochland, Henry, King George, Lunenburg, Montgomery, Nottoway, Patrick, Pittsylvania, Powhatan, Pulaski, Roanoke, Rockbridge, Russell, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Washington

**VA CARES also serves the [entire state of Virginia](#) through our Restoration of Rights and Ban the Box advocacy campaigns.**



**What** would you do if you lost your job, and despite all of your efforts, you couldn't find another one?

**What** if you also owed thousands of dollars in fees and debts?

**Who** would you turn to if you no longer had the support of your friends and family?

**How** would you feel if you had lost the acceptance of society – to the point where you were no longer even allowed to vote?

# This is why reentry matters

**This is the plight** faced by many ex-offenders in the state of Virginia. Many are released from prison only to find themselves unable to find a job, thousands of dollars in debt due to court restitution fees, lacking a support network, and even stripped of their right to vote. Even after serving time in jail or prison, they are still not free. Although offenders only legally owe the time that they are sentenced, most will pay for their crimes for their entire life.

According to the Sentencing Project, 63,406 Virginians were behind bars in 2013 alone. Maintaining the incarceration of tens of thousands of people is a significant expense for society. The annual cost of incarcerating just one individual in Virginia is \$25,000 – the state spends roughly \$1.5 billion per year to maintain its extensive penal system.

And it is no surprise that due to the difficult circumstances of reentry, many offenders will return to a life of crime upon their release. According to the Pew Charitable Trust, **more than 4 in 10 individuals who have been incarcerated or on probation or parole can expect to return to jail (or “recidivate”) within three years.**

Supporting ex-offenders during their reentry is a proven way to break this detrimental and expensive cycle of imprisonment. If Virginia is truly dedicated to lowering crime and improving quality of life, we must commit to supporting ex-offenders so that they can succeed.

# What We Do

## **Pre-Release Client Services**

### **SCA Mentoring Program – Pre-Release Mentoring**

VA CARES offers six months of pre-release, penpal-based mentoring for fathers who are incarcerated at Bland County Correctional Center. Mentoring prepares participants for the challenges of reentering society and reuniting with their families.

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## **Post-Release Client Services**

### **Thinking for a Change (T4C)**

VA CARES incorporates the Department of Corrections' Thinking for a Change (T4C) model into case management sessions and support groups. T4C is a cognitive-behavioral change program that discourages criminogenic thinking and behaviors, reducing the likelihood of recidivism.

### **Support Groups**

Support groups are the foundation of the VA CARES experience. Participants work in a group setting with case managers to discuss the challenges and successes they encounter while reintegrating into the community. Support groups also incorporate life skills training to prepare participants for self-sufficiency.

### **Emergency Aid**

VA CARES provides emergency assistance to participants in need, including food, clothing, transportation assistance, and funding to apply for identification and other important documents.



# What We Do (cont.)

## **Post-Release Client Services** (cont.)

### **Job Readiness and Employment Assistance**

Job readiness training includes resume and cover letter writing, interviewing skills, workplace etiquette, and more. After completing training, VA CARES can connect participants to a wide array of employer partners who are willing to train and/or hire those who are qualified.

### **SCA Mentoring Program - Post-Release Mentoring**

VA CARES offers six months of post-release mentoring for our SCA Mentoring Program participants. Mentors meet with participants at least weekly to foster successful reentry, responsible parenting, and employment.

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## **Statewide Advocacy**

### **Restoration of Rights**

VA CARES assists participants with applying to have their voting rights restored, as well as serves as an organizational advocate for voting rights reformation in Virginia.

### **Ban the Box**

VA CARES participates in the international Ban the Box campaign, which encourages employers to stop requiring that job applicants check a box indicating their criminal history on job applications. Employers are encouraged to inquire about criminal history later in the application process, in order to encourage fair hiring practices for ex-offenders.

# Restoration of Rights: A Landmark Year in Virginia

**The right to vote** is the cornerstone of our democracy. Yet as of 2013, 7% of the Virginia population - nearly 450,000 individuals - no longer had that right. Virginia is tied with Kentucky as having the highest disenfranchisement rate in the United States. This is partly due to our stringent restoration of rights requirements. Virginia requires that an applicant wait at least five years after finishing his or her sentence before applying for rights restoration, whereas in many other states, voting rights are automatically restored upon completion of probation and payment of court-ordered fees.



Why does this matter? It matters because voting is a fundamental right and a crucial component of living in a democracy. Being unable to participate as an active citizen - years, sometimes even decades, after a crime has been committed - is harmful to an ex-offender's self-worth. Disenfranchisement further distances them from society at a time when they are meant to reintegrating, which in turn raises the risk of recidivism. How can we ask individuals to follow the rules set by a democracy in which they can no longer participate?

**Virginia's restoration process takes years and is rarely accomplished. Before May 2013, only 2.77% of people had ever had their voting rights restored throughout Virginia history.**

VA CARES has always been an active proponent of rights restoration. Working with the Virginia PAPIS coalition, VA CARES has petitioned state and local government to change regulations regarding ex-offender voting rights. Finally, years of advocacy has paid off.

In May 2013, Governor McDonnell made several landmark orders that have altered rights restoration Virginia. McDonnell made an order to automatically restore voting rights to nonviolent offenders who have completed their sentence after May 2013. Additionally, all drug-related felonies (which were previously categorized as a "violent conviction") have been moved to the "non-violent conviction" category. Finally, ex-offenders with violent convictions now only have to wait three years, rather than five years, before applying for rights restoration upon completing their sentence. This is a victory not only for ex-offenders, but also for democracy in Virginia.

# The VA CARES Difference

VA CARES served 1,680 post-release participants in 2013-2014. Most of these participants were considered *high-risk* offenders and/or had barrier crime convictions.

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One of the most difficult tasks for ex-offenders after release is finding work. In 2013-2014, **VA CARES helped 438 participants find a job** and provided 657 employer contacts to participants who were seeking employment. VA CARES also provided 364 job readiness workshops to prepare participants for the job search process.

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VA CARES provides intensive case management to help participants socially, emotionally, and financially prepare for reentry. **We provided 2,177 case management sessions** in 2013-2014, including 1,149 sessions centered on career development and 1,028 sessions focused on family support.

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Ex-offenders may face a multitude of problems after release, including substance abuse and mental health issues, lack of housing, and limited financial resources. **VA CARES provided 1,973 referrals** to local agencies that can address these issues, including 538 referrals to substance abuse and mental health treatment providers, 520 referrals to housing providers, and 915 referrals to agencies that can provide financial assistance (such as financial literacy classes).

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VA CARES provided **459 peer support group sessions** and **151 educational workshops** on topics including responsible parenting, financial management, the restoration of rights process, and more.

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Finally, the recidivism rate in Virginia in 2011 was 26.9%, according to the Virginia Department of Corrections.

Among 2012 VA CARES participants who were tracked in 2014, **only 14% of participants had recidivated**<sup>1</sup> - almost half of the state average.

# Changing Lives, One Story at a Time



*“Every day has two sides – I choose the bright side, every time.”*

*– Melvin Robertson*

In the fall of 2013, **Melvin Robertson** received bad news. The landlord of the home he rented had decided to sell the property, forcing Mr. Robertson to find a new place to live within 30 days. The difficulty of the situation was exacerbated by the fact that Mr. Robertson is an ex-offender, making it hard for him to find housing.

Finding himself with nowhere to go, he enrolled in the VA CARES program at New River Community Action (NRCA). VA CARES staff were able to place him in NRCA's In Our House program, allowing him to stay in a boarding home until he moved into his own apartment.

VA CARES staff provided Mr. Robertson with transportation, referrals, and assistance acquiring the identification documents he needed to get an apartment, which he was able to find in 2014.

Mr. Robertson believes that with a positive attitude and the help of others, he can continue to accomplish his goals. Inspired by the help that he received at VA

CARES, he is now giving back to the community. He has joined NRCA's AmeriCorps Program and also works with In Our House participants. He says that he is able to relate to the homeless men in the program and provide the compassion they need. “Being homeless makes you feel lonely and you feel like the world is against you,” he says. He’s now able to share his personal experience with them and “give the men a feeling of hope.”

Mr. Robertson has bigger dreams for the coming years. He wants to continue to address the growing problem of homelessness in his area and would eventually like to continue his education by taking courses in technology. For Melvin Robertson, it’s about lending a helping hand and remembering that all is possible. “Every day has two sides,” he says. “I choose the bright side, every time.”

*"We can't change our past, but we can change our future."*

*– Billy Henderson*

After his release from Deep Meadows Correctional Center, **Billy Henderson** was in a seemingly impossible situation. He had no job and owed over \$127,000 in court costs, fines, and restitution. Mr. Henderson had already taken a pre-release class with VA CARES while he was incarcerated, and after his release, he enrolled in his local post-release program for help. VA CARES supported Mr. Henderson with his job search by providing dozens of job leads, but none of them were the right fit. Mr. Henderson began to realize that he would prefer to work for himself. With the support of VA CARES staff and other community leaders, he started his own business called Henderson Mulch Works. Business boomed, and as mulching season came to an end, Mr. Henderson expanded to offer other landscaping services year-round.

Over the years, Mr. Henderson's business continued to grow, and his company – now known as Henderson Construction Company – has multiple employees and specializes in restoring and renovating million-dollar homes. He has also enrolled at Strayer University and is only three months away from getting his Associate's degree in Business Administration. Mr. Henderson has maintained a place on the Dean's List since he first enrolled in the program.

As an advocate for ex-offender reentry in the state of Virginia, Mr. Henderson has spoken before the General Assembly on behalf of VA CARES and reentry services and also gave a speech in January 2014 at the annual Virginia Community Action Partnership (VACAP) conference in Richmond. He also visits correctional facilities to speak to prisoners about life after release and serves as an example of the success that can result from hard work and determination. Mr. Henderson, who is a veteran, also volunteers with the Virginia Wounded Warrior Project and has been elected as Sergeant at Arms for his church, Regeneration Ministry.

Even more remarkably, he has paid off \$125,000 of the fees and restitution that he owed to the state and now only owes \$2,000. He has also purchased and paid off his home, his company trucks, and his car. Mr. Henderson's mantra - "We can't change our past, but we can change our future" – rings true for all VA CARES participants and serves as a source of inspiration and hope for us all.

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Ex-offender **Joe Workman** was homeless and living in a tent in the mountains of Wise County when he came to VA CARES. He had been saving money to rent an apartment, but with no transportation to get into town, he desperately needed help. VA CARES staff were able to negotiate with a landlord on Mr. Workman's behalf and found an apartment for him with reasonable rent. When it came time for him to move, staff met him at his campsite, loaded his belongings into a VA CARES vehicle, and delivered them to his new home. Now that he lives in town, Mr. Workman has been able to improve his life. He is working several odd jobs and is in the process of gaining custody of his sons.





*"I am volunteering and doing the job of my passion." –  
Mary Jones*

Today, **Mary Jones** is relieved to say that she has finally "made it through." She initially enrolled in the Office of Human Affairs' VA CARES program in March 2014. At the time, Ms. Jones still owed fees related to her incarceration. To waive some of her fines, she enrolled in a program through the Department of Corrections that required she do community services with VA CARES. She volunteered everyday from 8am to 5pm, and to her surprise, discovered a new passion. Months after completing her required community service hours, Ms. Jones is still volunteering regularly with VA CARES and the Office of Human Affairs. "I am volunteering and doing the job of my passion," says Ms. Jones. She loves the work because it allows her to serve families in need and help other ex-offenders reenter society.

Ms. Jones credits VA CARES with helping her to transition back into the community. VA CARES staff helped her find a house, get her identification documents, enroll in computer training, and find counseling services. Staff also helped to enroll her in Bryant and Stratton College, where she earned her Associate's degree in Criminal Justice and graduated with a 3.0 GPA.

Ms. Jones is an active member of her church, where she now serves as Minister of Outreach, Program Coordinator, and Resources Coordinator. Additionally, she was selected to serve as a Peer-to-Peer Liaison for the cities of Hampton and Poquoson. As a Peer-to-Peer Liaison, Ms. Jones works to communicate information and needs between the community and law enforcement. She also participates in monthly soup kitchens and has organized two "Stop the Violence" prayer chains in Newport News.

Although she acknowledges that she made some bad decisions in the past, Ms. Jones has decided to let those decisions remain far behind her, rather than cloud her future. She says that she regrets many of the things that she has done, but she doesn't regret the strong person that she has become today. Now she has an immense sense of gratitude and hope, knowing that she has the potential to soar higher everyday.

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When **Adrian Denise Lee** was released from incarceration in 2010, her top priority was finding a job so that she could support her children. With the assistance of VA CARES, she was able to find not only one, but two jobs, and a place to live. In addition to working two jobs, she enrolled in college to get her degree in Criminal Justice. Later, she was awarded custody of her two sons, who had previously lived with her grandparents.

In August, Ms. Lee will graduate with a degree in Criminal Justice. Her next goal is to work as a mentor for the Department of Criminal Justice, and in order to prepare, she is working with VA CARES to gain volunteer training and experience. Her sons are also prospering, with her oldest son recently graduating from high school as an honor student.

*“Knowledge is power and anyone can change.” – Lenzy Terry*

**Lenzy Terry** came to the VA CARES office at Pittsylvania County Community Action after serving a nearly ten-year sentence for armed robbery. He came to VA CARES with three goals: he wanted to find a job, give back to his community, and start his own service organization. With the help of VA CARES staff, Mr. Terry soon had a plan to make these dreams a reality.



Even before leaving prison, Mr. Terry had been hard at work preparing for his release. While incarcerated, he earned certifications in forklift operation, genie lift operation, and food preparation and safety. After his release, he also completed job readiness training through VA CARES. Although he feared that he wouldn't be able to find work due to his criminal record, VA CARES was able to help him find both a full-time and a part-time job.

Mr. Terry didn't stop there. He also established a program for at-risk youth called Victorious Ambition. Due to his own childhood, Mr. Terry knew all too well the negative influences that can lead a young man or woman down the wrong path. Through Victorious Ambition, Mr. Terry serves as a mentor to youth and empowers them to make good decisions and build confidence. “Knowledge is power,” he says. “And anyone can change.”

He also serves as a volunteer reentry mentor and works with men who are still incarcerated. He assists with mock interviews, helps other re-offenders connect with their families, and teaches some of the same courses that he took while he was incarcerated. VA CARES staff view Mr. Terry as a model participant for his dedication and passion for giving back. His results have proven that if you give someone a second chance, great things can happen.

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**Ricardo Moreno** joined VA CARES in April 2014. Mr. Moreno came to VA CARES to volunteer and stay focused while he completed his probation requirements. While enrolled, VA CARES staff helped him go back to school and earn his computer technician certification.



Even though he has completed the program, Mr. Moreno remains deeply involved with VA CARES. He has participated in multiple volunteer programs, including Thanksgiving events and Toys for Tots. Staff have noted him as a model participant for his strong work ethic and resilient attitude. Mr. Moreno has a passion for fitness and is now

going back to school for his personal training certification. He plans to help VA CARES staff implement a new fitness program in the upcoming year.

# Board of Directors

## **Elected Officials and Representatives**

Theodore Edlich, III, General Assembly

Jon Morris, Franklin County Board of Supervisors

Tim Allen, Roanoke City Sheriff's Office

James D. Politis, Montgomery County Board of Supervisors

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## **Low-Income Representatives**

Benjamin Lomax, Ex-Offender

Curtis Thompson, Total Action for Progress (TAP)

Derrick Perry, TAP-VA CARES Alumni Association

Rosana Anderson, Low-Income Individual

Linda Moyer, Low-Income Individual

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## **Private Representatives**

Richard E.B. Esquire, Foster Law Firm

Rita Joyce, First Citizens Bank

John K. Bergen, Private Citizen

Superintendent Bobby Russell, Western Virginia Regional Jail

Bobby Vassar, Private Citizen

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## **Executive Committee**

President: Theodore Edlich, III

Vice President: John Morris

Treasurer/Secretary: Tim Allen

Parliamentarian: Bobby Vassar



# Service Sites

## **Alexandria Department of Community and Human Affairs**

2355-A Mill Rd  
Alexandria, VA 22314  
Phone: 703.838.0919/Fax: 703.836.2104  
E-mail: james.green@alexandriava.gov  
Program staff: James Green (Beaver)

## **Capital Area Partnership Uplifting People (CAPUP)**

3930 Anderson Hwy  
Powhatan, VA 23139  
Phone: 804.598.3351/Fax: 804.598.7990  
E-mail: ataylor@capup.org  
Program staff: Audrey Taylor/Ricki Boulden

## **Lynchburg Community Action Group (LynCAG)**

926 Commerce St  
Lynchburg, VA 24504  
Phone: 434.455.1601 ext. 300/Fax: 434.455.1604  
E-mail: jdjones@lyncag.org/mjreid@lyncag.com  
Program staff: Joy Jones/ Margrette Reid

## **New River Community Action (NRCA)**

110 Roanoke St  
Christiansburg, VA 24073  
Phone: 540.382.9382/Fax: 540.633.2585  
E-mail: dlucas@nrcaa.org/slowery@nrcaa.org  
Program staff: Darrell Lucas/Shannon Lowery

## **Office of Human Affairs (OHA)**

2410 Wickham Ave  
Newport News, VA 23607  
Phone: 757.928.3204/Fax: 757.245.2103  
E-mail: cmoore@ohainc.org  
Program staff: Carolyn Moore/Monique Ricks

## **People, Inc.**

1173 West Main St  
Abingdon, VA 24210  
Phone: 276.623.9000/Fax: 276.628.2931  
E-mail: dbryant@peopleinc.net  
Program staff: David Bryant/Travis Groseclose

## **Pittsylvania County Community Action (PCCA)**

713 Piney Forest Rd  
Danville, VA 24541  
Phone: 434.793.5627/Fax: 434.793.7129  
E-mail: bmayo@pccainc.org  
Program staff: Barry Mayo

## **Support to Eliminate Poverty (STEP)**

10 E. Church St, Suite JB  
Martinsville, VA 24112  
Phone: 276.638.8311/Fax: 276.632.6391  
E-mail: mitch.nowlin@stepincva.com  
Program staff: Mitch Nowlin  
\*Send mail to: 200 Dent St, Rocky Mount, 24151

270 S. Main St  
Rocky Mount, VA 24151  
Phone: 540.483.5742 ext. 3023  
E-mail: heather.niblett@stepincva.com  
Program staff: Heather Niblett  
\*Send mail to: 200 Dent St, Rocky Mount, 24151

## **Total Action for Progress (TAP)**

302 2<sup>nd</sup> St, SW  
Roanoke, VA 24011  
Phone: 540.283.4901/Fax: 540.777.0225  
E-mail: sam.coles@tapintohope.org  
Program staff: Sam Coles/Shawn Hunter/Michelle Firebaugh

118 South Lexington Ave  
Covington, VA 24426  
Phone: 540.962.6328  
E-mail: lstclair@vacares.org/  
anne.stclair@tapintohope.org  
Program staff: Lawrence St. Clair/Anne St. Clair

## **VA CARES – Fredericksburg Office**

5620 Southpoint Centre Blvd  
Fredericksburg, VA 22407  
Phone: 540.710.2102 ext. 151/Fax: 540.710.2113  
E-mail: mwilliams@vacares.org/dgrimes@vacares.org  
Program staff: Marshall Williams/Diane Grimes

# Financials

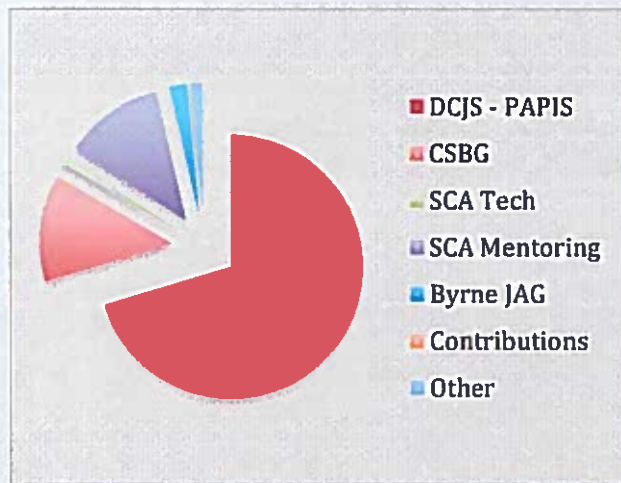
## Revenue

\$1,431,790 – Grants  
 \$1,022,128 – DCJS-PAPIS  
 \$190,588 – CSBG  
 \$13,215 – SCA Technology Grant  
 \$174,359 - SCA Mentoring Grant  
 \$31,500 – Byrne JAG

\$430 – Contributions

\$20,730 – Other

**TOTAL = \$1,452,950**



## Expenses

\$406,069 – Salaries and fringe benefits  
 \$658,698 - Subcontractor operational expenses  
 \$36,945 – Subcontractor client services expenses  
 \$38,608 - Rent  
 \$78,487 – Travel  
 \$36,135 - Equipment  
 \$20,513 – Materials and supplies  
 \$19,590 - Professional services  
 \$11,543 - Telephone  
 \$7,717 - Network maintenance  
 \$27,710 – Payroll taxes  
 \$15,348 - Insurance  
 \$107,598 – Other

**TOTAL = \$1,464,961**

## Subcontractor Expenses

\$49,784 – Alexandria Dept. of Community and Human Affairs  
 \$86,282 - LynCAG  
 \$87,346 - NRCA  
 \$54,253 - OHA  
 \$76,888 - People, Inc.  
 \$45,121 - PCCA  
 \$85,248 - CAPUP  
 \$77,905 - STEP, Inc.  
 \$113,582 - TAP  
 \$3,114 – Fredericksburg Office

## Assets and Liabilities

\$76,780 – Cash and cash equivalents  
 \$153,717 – Accounts receivable

**Total assets = \$230,497**

\$217,747 - Accounts payable  
 \$14,739 - Accrued expenses

**Total current liabilities = \$232,486**

(\$30,176) – Unrestricted net assets  
 \$28,187 - Temporarily restricted net assets

**Total net assets = (\$1,989)**

**Total liabilities and net assets = \$230,497**



### **Image Citations:**

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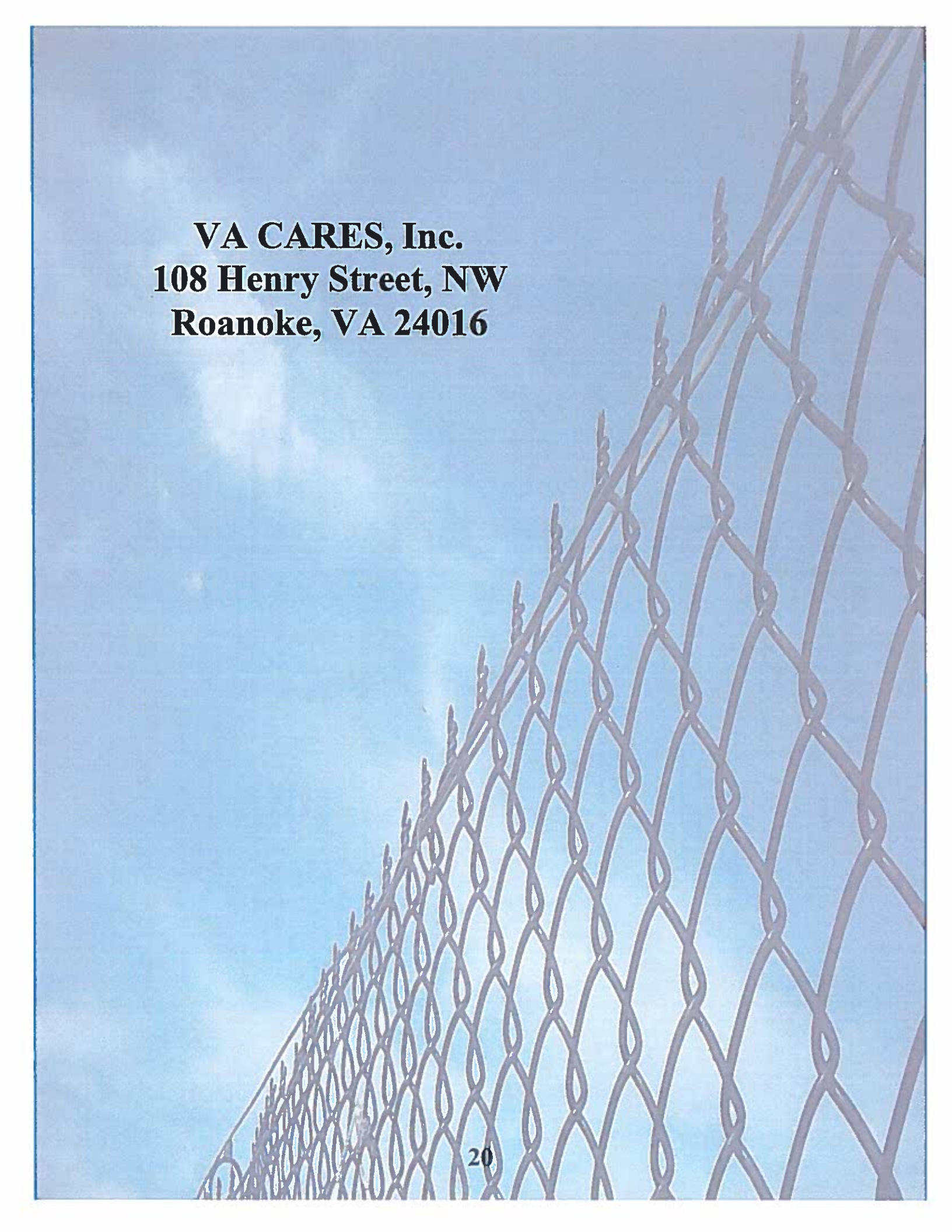
**Pg. 4** – Victor. “Handcuffs.” January 17, 2012. Online Image. Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/v1ctor/6711234961/>. Modified.

**Fgs. 5-6** – Antondra Hall. Eastern State Penitentiary. April 17, 2009. Online Image. Flickr. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/projectart69/7687846330/>. Modified.

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