

UPCOMING EVENTS

Returning Citizens Career Fair October 23, 2023

For more information: development@bcpsreentry.org



Wishlist

Hygiene Items

Some of our clients come to BCPS, newly released, with nothing but the clothing on their backs. They are starting from scratch. At BCPS, we provide both men and women with hygiene kits so they can present their best selves with confidence.

Items Needed:

- Deodorant
- Toothpaste and toothbrushes
- Shaving cream and razors
- Body lotion
- Combs
- Feminine products



Holiday Gift Project

Help make the holiday season brighter for children with incarcerated, justice-involved, or at risk parents. Adopt a family for the HOLIDAY GIFT PROJECT.



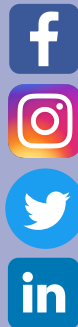
To get involved email: development@bcpsreentry.org

For more info, visit our website: www.berksconnections.org

Berks Connections/Pretrial Services

19 N 6TH ST - 4TH FLOOR
READING, PA 19601

Do you want to support BCPS?
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484-260-3860 BerksConnections.org



SUMMER 2023

A LIFE IMPROVEMENT BUSINESSSM

Rising Above Adversity

Alysa grew up in what she would describe as an "All American" household. She was surrounded by a loving and supportive family that always made her birthdays and the holidays extra special. However, everything started to change in 5th grade.

Alysa had her first cigarette and alcoholic drink when she was 12. At 13, she smoked marijuana. Throughout Jr. High School, she dabbled with various substances, albeit nothing she considered to be "serious." Despite this, she was a good student, enrolled at a technical school for cosmetology, and never missed classes at her regular high school.

When she was 16, her life changed dramatically after being involved in a car accident. The aftermath led her down a path of addiction and into an abusive relationship, eventually culminating in her incarceration. It was a dark period for Alysa, made even more challenging because of her addiction and repeated encounters with the justice system.

After years of battling addiction and being in and out of jail, Alysa found herself on the way to recovery. The last time she relapsed, she was given the option to participate in D.U.I Treatment Court, which she took. She had nothing to lose and everything to gain.



Brianna and Alysa

"I never thought that I would be self-sufficient or even be alive. I am so happy now. I have a lot of help and so many people that I can call for anything."

-Alysa

In December 2022, Alysa came to BCPS looking for employment opportunities, but she quickly realized that she wanted to further her education. With the help of her case manager, Alysa was able to enroll in classes at **Reading Area Community College** for the Spring 2023 semester. However, she was faced with an obstacle: she did not have the financial means to purchase a laptop, an essential tool for her coursework. Fortunately, **BCPS** was able to assist with the purchase of a new laptop thanks to the funding provided by the **Power of the Purse**, a fund of the Berks County Community Foundation dedicated to improving the quality of life for women in Berks County. Throughout the spring semester at school, Alysa was also able to obtain employment in the customer service industry.

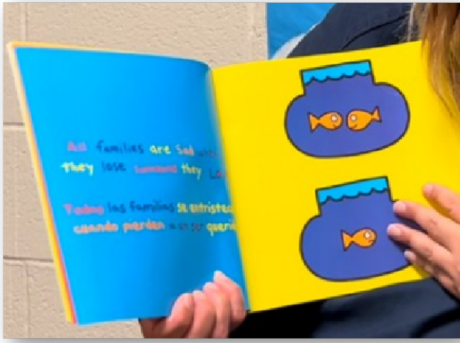
Alysa has been sober for over 11 months. She has successfully finished her first semester at RACC and phased up in Treatment Court; she is halfway through the program.

"I am so proud of how far she's come! She's so driven to change her life and do what needs to be done. I am so happy for her. I know she's going to do amazing things in the future."

- Brianna Perez , Reentry Coordinator - Treatment Court

The Power of Storytelling

Through the **Mother's/Father's Voice Program**, incarcerated mothers and fathers are recorded reading a storybook to their children. The **BCPS** Community Outreach Team creates a DVD and sends it along with the book to the child. The child can then watch the video of Mom/Dad reading while following along in the book. This provides a sense of closeness between the parent and the child that would otherwise not be possible and promotes the importance of reading.



This year, **BCPS** received multiple grants to support this program, including generous contributions from the **Student Philanthropy Council at The Hill School**, **United Methodist Women, (Eastern PA)**, **The Junior League of Reading, Rhoads Energy** and an anonymous donor. These grants have allowed us to expand our library collection, adding more Spanish books and summer reading journals for the children.

We're also excited to share that our dedicated volunteers have returned to the program! Almost half of our volunteers have completed the necessary onboarding at the jail and are eager to make a positive impact on the lives of these children.

Together, we are making a lasting impact on the lives of these children and their incarcerated parents. Through the magic of storytelling, we bring families closer, foster a love for reading, and nurture a sense of connection that transcends physical boundaries.

1.4 MILLION CHILDREN in the United States have a PARENT IN PRISON



Leveling Up!

This year **BCPS** launched **Level Up**, a program that provides in-house classes tailored to **ESL** (English as a Second Language), **GED** (General Educational Development), and **ABE** (Adult Basic Education). Our dedicated teacher is equipped to offer personalized one-on-one support to our clients, catering to their individual needs and helping them thrive in their educational journey. **Level Up** is a collaborative effort between **BCPS** and the **Literacy Council of Reading-Berks** and is funded by the **United Way of Berks County**.

In June, **Level Up** had its first graduate! Since joining **BCPS** in February, **Brett** has gone down a transformative path. While initially seeking assistance with obtaining his ID, he seized the opportunity to enroll in **Level Up** classes. Through his dedicated commitment and diligent studying with his teacher, **Brett** successfully completed his exams, proudly earning his **GED**.

Brett's accomplishment marks a significant milestone in his educational journey, opening new doors and possibilities. With his **GED** in hand, he is ready to enroll in the upcoming cohort of the **R3** program.

“I have always wanted to do this. I just needed that little push. I am really looking forward to continuing my education.”

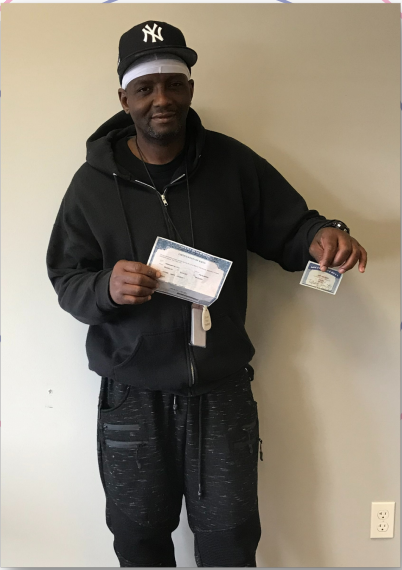
-Brett



IDs Unlock Opportunities

When individuals are incarcerated, especially for long periods of time, the government ID they once possessed may no longer be valid upon their release. In some cases, they may even lose their identification while incarcerated. Having proper identification is just one of the many important documents that individuals need to successfully reintegrate into society. Post-release, one of the top priorities for reentrants is acquiring valid identification and essential documentation. It serves as a crucial step towards rebuilding their lives, removing significant obstacles in accessing vital community resources and securing employment.

John's story is a prime example of the obstacles individuals face when seeking proper identification. After relocating from **South Carolina**, **John** encountered a daunting challenge. His identification documents had different names, requiring a name change to obtain the necessary identification. This issue further complicated the already challenging process of acquiring essential documents. However, **BCPS** was there to guide and support **John** throughout this journey. Within just a month of working together, **John** successfully obtained his birth certificate, social security card, ID, and Medicaid card. This achievement required immense patience and hard work, as **John** had to visit multiple government offices to gather the proper documents. At **BCPS**, we facilitated the process by assisting **John** in obtaining all of the necessary paperwork to support his claim and change his name.



Creating a Community

R3

REBUILDING REENTRANTS & READING



Cohort 27

During every cohort, the **R3** program hosts an alumni dinner. This intimate gathering serves as a platform for past **R3** graduates to share their valuable experiences and provide guidance to the current cohort, fostering an uplifting environment of lifelong learning.

These dinners are filled with moments of reflection, celebration, and inspiration. Alumni have the opportunity to talk about their personal journeys, emphasizing the transformative power of the **R3** program and how it has positively impacted their lives. Their stories resonate deeply with the current participants, providing them with a sense of hope, motivation, and a clear vision of the possibilities that lie ahead. The **R3** program is just one step in the right direction as there is still more work that needs to be done post-graduation. The path to success is not easy, but having a supportive community, like the **R3** participants, cheering you on definitely makes the journey easier.

BCPS takes great pride in fostering a supportive community of reentrants, empowering them to break barriers and become productive members of society. The **R3** alumni dinners serve as a testament to the enduring impact of the program and the collective strength that emerges when individuals come together to uplift and empower one another.



Allyn and Stanley, Cohort 25

“I was having issues with everyone, I was very depressed and then I came here and everything changed. R3 will change your life, one way or another. I wasn't motivated before, but now I am. I feel successful.”

-Eddie, Cohort 31



Cohort 28

The **R3** program has a lasting effect, it shows you that you cannot become complacent, you have to keep pushing towards the things you need and want.

-Allyn, Cohort 25



Timothy's experience also highlights the importance of identification. Just five days after being released from jail, **Timothy** sought support and resources from **BCPS**. He had aspirations of applying for jobs and finding alternative housing, but a major hurdle stood in his way - the lack of a valid ID. **Timothy** had lost his old identification, making his goals seemingly unattainable. **BCPS** stepped in to provide him with a money order and a bus pass, enabling him to make his way to **PennDOT**. Within a few hours, **Timothy** returned with his new driver's license in hand. This small victory was a significant step forward in **Timothy's** journey, empowering him to pursue further opportunities.

By covering the costs associated with acquiring identification and streamlining the process, **BCPS** ensures that reentrants can navigate their reintegration journey with confidence. Through our dedicated efforts, we empower individuals like **John** and **Timothy** to overcome the challenges they face, enabling them to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society successfully.

\$9,830 ID ASSISTANCE



In 2022, **BCPS** provided \$9,830 in ID assistance to our clients. A valid ID is required to become employed in the state of Pennsylvania. To get an ID, individuals need to provide their social security card, birth certificate (or other form of ID), and two forms of proof of residency (utility bill, lease agreement, etc.).