



## ***Durham Local Reentry Council Minutes March 19, 2025***

Ontario Joyner, LRC Coordinator, began the meeting by welcoming everyone and thanking them for their time and participation.

Mr. Joyner stated the house rules and the purpose of the LRC. Mr. Joyner also explained that LRC aims to make positive connections with community members to serve and provide opportunities and resources for people returning from incarceration. The LRC's main goal is to reduce recidivism and provide ample support for justice-involved individuals in Durham. Mr. Joyner then asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

Mr. Joyner introduced Mr. Joel Hill from Easter Seals for the first presentation.

### **I. Easter Seals:** presented by Joel Hill, Peer Support Specialist

Mr. Hill began by stating that individuals who are reentering society will be his focus for this presentation and will be referred to as clients. Mr. Hill introduced three (3) key terms to the attendees:

1. Growth
2. Joy
3. Integration

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is the name of the team at Easter Seals that aids clients to gain employment by matching reentry individuals with Employment Specialists. Clients have the option of having Employment Mentors as well. Specialists give assistance with:

- ✓ Work skills
- ✓ Obtaining therapy for PTSD and other mental challenges.
- ✓ Housing
- ✓ Obtaining a phone
- ✓ Transportation
- ✓ Applying for food stamps and accessing food banks
- ✓ Obtaining identification such as social security cards and birth certificates
- ✓ Developing a budget
- ✓ Re-adjusting to society
- ✓ Finding competitive employment in conjunction with The Employment and Independence for People with Disabilities (EIPD) organization utilizing 'Rapid Job Search' techniques

In addition to Durham, all of the above assistance is available in Wake, Cumberland and other counties.

Mr. Hill went on to report that Easter Seals has a 'Zero Exclusion' policy – services are granted to all individuals who have a desire to work. This includes individuals with mental health and substance use disorders diagnoses, parolees and the homeless.

In conclusion, Mr. Hill began sharing his personal experiences with the justice system and mental health challenges where he found targeted psychiatric treatment through the National Association of Mental Illness (NAMI). After several failed attempts through other resources, this organization was instrumental in aiding him to reenter society successfully. Mr. Hill went on to study nursing and eventually gained his current employment as the Peer Support Specialist with Easter Seals.

Mr. Joyner stated that anyone who has worked with reentry individuals has worked with someone who has had some sort of disability at one time or another. Easter Seals is another resource that can be utilized to assist disabled individuals once they reenter the community. LRC is strongly interested in networking in this arena and building this particular relationship to ensure that individuals are actually receiving the assistance needed once referred. Mr. Joyner then thanked Mr. Hill for his presentation and introduced the next presenter – Lile Stephens with the Kramden Institute.

## **II. Kramden Institute:** presented by Lile Stephens

Mr. Stephens began by stating that the Kramden Institute is a computer refurbishing organization that has been operating since 2003. Their mission is to advance equitable access to devices, connectivity and technology education by providing low-cost or free devices to the community, students and adults with low income.

he programs that are offered are:

- **Getting Technology:**
  - Free desktop computers are provided for students
  - Qualified adults with children can receive free desktops as well
  - Low-cost desk and laptops are provided to qualifying individuals for \$30 - \$70 (must apply online).
- **Computer Basics Program:**
  - Provided for individuals with no or little experience and those who are re-entering the community
- **Donations:**
  - Unused devices are accepted from government organizations, wiped clean and restored for use; some parts are re-used; older devices are responsibly recycled
  - Devices are provided to non-profit organizations at subsidized pricing
  - Surplus sales are available to the public once a month from 4pm – 5pm
  - Easter Seals is working on a 'device distribution model' with another refurbishing company in Charlotte for the state of North Carolina
- **Volunteer Program:**
  - training is provided onsite for volunteers who do most of the refurbishing - registration is available online

Opportunities and projects that are currently ongoing are:

- The American Rescue Plan Act: funding that has been distributed to the City of Durham which is used for the ‘Train the Trainer Program’.
- The Central Pines Regional Council of Governments Grant: provides funding for the training of 500 volunteers in Chatham County and 500 volunteers in Durham
- There are ongoing classes held at Kramden Institute on Mondays (there is a wait list)
- There are free online classes available through NorthStar Online Learning; certificates are provided upon completion to assist in job searches
- 90-day tech support is provided after the laptops are given away; after 90 days, there are low-cost option plans available

In conclusion, Mr. Stephens offered to provide on-site services to anyone who has the space at their or other locations to accommodate reentry individuals and their schedules.

Mr. Joyner expressed that The Kramden Institute has and is continuing to do great work with LRC’s client referrals and thanked Mr. Stephens for his presentation.

### **III. LRC Updates:** presented by Ontario Joyner

Mr. Joyner reported:

- Clients Served:
  - received 42 referrals
  - completed 32 intakes
  - 17 clients gained employment with an average salary of \$14.17/hr. Mr. Joyner stated that LRC is working diligently on trying to secure wages above the \$14.00/hr. average that is consistently being given for clients
  - Three (3) clients are enrolled in the Durham Tech GED program; five (5) clients **received** their Forklift Certification; three (3) clients completed their Serve Safe Certification where one (1) client was offered a managerial position upon completion
- LRC is preparing for Second Chance month in April as follows:
  - LRC staff will attend a Reentry Conference from April 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2025 in Raleigh
  - In partnership with StepUp and NC Works there will be an Employment Resource Fair on April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025, at the Main Library from 1pm – 4pm. This event is open to the public (not limited to justice-involved individuals)
  - April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025 – there will be A1c testing and dieticians on-site for early detection of diabetes from 10am – 1pm at HHS
  - A Backpack drive will be conducted during the month of April from the 7<sup>th</sup> – the 30<sup>th</sup>. All items will be collected at 326 E. Main Street. Also accepted are other types of bags such as draw-string bags and duffle bags so that reentry individuals can carry their belongings and documentation safely.

#### **IV. Subcommittee Updates:**

- **Housing Update:**
  - Mr. Joyner reported that for the month of March, LRC assisted six (6) people with long-term housing.
- **Employment Update:**
  - (Inaudible)
- **Supportive Services Update:**
  - Mr. Joyner stated that volunteers are still needed for the distribution of food to the community on a weekly basis.

Mr. Joyner requested that anyone who has events scheduled for Second Chance Month please forward that information to him for community distribution.

#### **V. Adjournment – Ontario Joyner**

Mr. Joyner thanked all for attending the meeting, for their services to the community and adjourned the meeting at 4:16pm.

**Attendees:**

Ontario L. Joyner – LRC Coordinator - [ojoyner@dconc.gov](mailto:ojoyner@dconc.gov) - 919-560-7589  
Rasheeda Royster – LRC Housing Case Manager - [rroyster@dconc.gov](mailto:rroyster@dconc.gov) – 919-560-0543  
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Lile Stephens – Kramden Institute – [lstephens@kramden.org](mailto:lstephens@kramden.org)  
Rikki Gardner – Community Development Department – [rikkigardner@durhamnc.gov](mailto:rikkigardner@durhamnc.gov)  
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