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Recognizing April as Second Chance Month

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition held a Community Wide Meeting on April 1, 2025, in recognition of April being National Second Chance Month. Eighteen community members attend in-person and 14 attend on-line, totaling 32 community members.

Three community organizations presented on their program and services and a lived experience panel shared their success stories:

- **MyHouse presented by Isaac Smoldon**

Isaac outlined the services that were provided by MyHouse, including housing and mental health support for at-risk youth. Their residential treatment program focuses on young adults with co-occurring substance abuse and mental health issues, aiming to facilitate smooth transitions into sustainable living. Ongoing projects include the construction of a new facility that will add 64 beds and retail space for job training partnerships.

The organization also discussed job training opportunities available to clients, including paid internships at local businesses and in-house programs, ensuring that all participants receive fair compensation for their work.

- **Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) by Stacy Kimbrough**

The MASST program is designed for low-income individuals aged 55 and older who are unemployed and seeking work. The program provides participants with paid community service training at nonprofit or public agencies. Stacy highlighted the program's prioritization of certain populations, including those recently incarcerated. Stacy also mentioned the MASST program's goal to recruit 10 more participating agencies in the Mat-Su area to be able to provide more training opportunities for individuals enrolled in the program.

- **Set Free Alaska's Crisis Stabilization Program by Terrence Svoboda and Shaela Loncosky**

They shared insights into their program and client intake process, addressing challenges in accommodating individuals with complex needs. They also shared some success stories from their crisis stabilization program to illustrate the transformative potential of community support.

- **Lived Experience Panel was facilitated by Cindy Yeager, the Mat-Su Reentry Program Coordinator**

The Lived Experience Panel featured two individuals who have successfully reintegrated into society after incarceration. One of the individuals was a man that had been incarcerated for approximately 14 years. He has been out for a little over a year and is currently employed and has permanent housing. The other individual was a man who had been incarcerated for over 13 years and had been out for about 10 months. He was able to get his Social Security benefits started and is in a stable living situation. Both individuals are currently doing well and stated that without the assistance they received from the Mat-Su Reentry Program this might not have been the case.

Recognizing Second Chance Month is important because it highlights the need to provide support to individuals being released from incarceration, so they really do get a second chance. Access to support and services increases the likelihood of individuals successfully reentering back into the community after incarceration and successful reentries means safer communities.

Barbara Mongar,
Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Coordinator



Bipartisan Resolution Introduced Declaring April as Second Chance Month

By: PRESS RELEASE, April 1, 2025

Washington, DC - Today, U.S. Representatives Lucy McBath (D-GA), Bruce Westerman (R-AR), Don Bacon (R-NE), Barry Moore (R-AL), Danny K. Davis (D-IL), Carol Miller (R-WV), and LaMonica McIver (D-NJ) alongside U.S. Senators Kevin Cramer (R-ND) and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) reintroduced the bicameral Second Chance Month Resolution. The members released the following statements:

“Hard-working Americans should be compensated fairly for the work they do,” **said Rep. McBath**. “Declaring April as Second Chance Month highlights the importance of opening opportunities to formerly incarcerated workers and reducing obstacles to gainful employment so that we all have safer communities and our country is made stronger by a thriving workforce.”

“Recognizing April as Second Chance Month is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness on the importance of creating pathways for the millions of Americans previously and currently incarcerated, who have paid their debt to society, and experience the innumerable barriers to re-entering their communities,” **said Rep. Westerman**. “Each of these Americans have an intrinsic value and are worthy of the dignity that comes with establishing hard-earned jobs and gaining sought-after respect. Everyone deserves a second chance, and Congress must work to break down the stigmas attached to incarceration and reducing recidivism rates. I’m honored to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this resolution to restore the dignity of these reformed individuals.”

“Second Chance Month is a representation to all of us about the power of forgiveness and the Second Chance programs are key in that,” **said Rep. Bacon**. “They have helped reintegrate people back into society, heal families, and give much-needed mental health services. With the help of these support systems, individuals can become productive members of society, restoring dignity and respect to those who have served their time and want to contribute back to their communities and families.”

“There are millions of individuals in our country who have civil and criminal records that serve as barriers to obtaining education, technical skills, training, jobs, and government benefits,” **said Rep. Davis**. “Second chances - and especially the Second Chance Act - help to reduce and remove these barriers. Therefore, I am proud to join my colleagues in recognizing Second Chance Month. Second Chance Month honors the work of non-profit organizations, faith-based entities, communities, governments, employers, and individuals that help those with records gain the skills, education, and employment needed to thrive, thereby strengthening individuals, rebuilding families, and growing our economy.”

“In Alabama, I have seen firsthand how giving someone who is incarcerated hope by training them with a new skill can significantly impact the recidivism rates,” **said Rep. Moore**. “The Lord shows us grace daily, and we should extend that same grace to individuals who have proven they are committed to rectifying their mistakes. This bipartisan resolution highlights the barriers that still exist for those with criminal records trying to reintegrate into their communities.”

“In West Virginia, we know how important it is to provide everyone with opportunities to succeed. Recognizing April as Second Chance Month gives hope to those who are reentering the workforce after serving their time incarcerated. When we invest in our communities and put in place resources and support for people released from prisons and jails, we build stronger and safer communities,” **said Rep. Miller**. “This resolution will bring more visibility to Second Chance programs that are instrumental in helping people across the nation get back on the right path as they reenter their communities.”

“This country was founded on the promise of a new beginning,” **said Rep. McIver**. “This bipartisan resolution to recognize April as ‘Second Chance Month’ will raise awareness for the barriers faced by previously incarcerated people and promote opportunities for them to create a new beginning for themselves.”

“America is a nation of second chances,” **said Senator Cramer**. “Yet too often our criminal justice system focuses on punishment over redemption. I joined Senator Klobuchar in introducing a bipartisan resolution to designate April as Second Chance Month, recognizing those who have paid their debt to society and have earned a second chance to rebuild their lives, reclaim their futures, and positively contribute to their community.” **(Continued on page 3)**

Bipartisan Resolution Introduced Declaring April as Second Chance Month (Continued from page 2)

Background

Millions of American adults with a criminal record face enormous obstacles to successfully re-enter society upon release. When legal and social barriers prohibit a formerly incarcerated person from finding well-paying jobs, this not only negatively impacts them, but also has lasting negative effects for their families. Beyond that, securing gainful employment and being accepted in society has been proven to reduce the likelihood of these individuals returning to prison in the future, ultimately decreasing crime and improving public safety.

This resolution was endorsed by Prison Fellowship.

“Since Prison Fellowship launched Second Chance Month in 2017, we are honored to lead this growing national movement that includes more than 1,000 partners committed to unlocking second chances for the 1 in 3 Americans with a criminal record who face nearly 44,000 barriers to building a productive future,” said **Heather Rice-Minus, CEO and president of Prison Fellowship.**

“We encourage Congress to pass this Second Chance Month resolution quickly because supporting second chances recognizes the God-given dignity and potential of every person and reinforces our nation’s commitment to creating pathways for new beginnings, healthy communities, and increased public safety,” said **Kate Trammell, Prison Fellowship senior vice president of advocacy and legal.**

This resolution is also supported by Brennan Center for Justice, Right on Crime, CPAC, Niskanen Center, FAMM, and National District Attorneys Association.

Permalink: <https://mcbath.house.gov/2025/4/bipartisan-resolution-introduced-declaring-april-as-second-chance-month>



Mat-Su Reentry Events:

- **Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meeting**
Tuesday, May 6 2025
9:00 to 10:30 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition has a virtual Steering Team Meeting on the first Tuesday of each month. All Welcome to attend.

- **Virtual Mat-Su Reentry Services Forum**
Wed, April 16, 2025
9:00 to 10:00 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and Reentry Case Management Program invites you to join us in a virtual Reentry Services Forum. Service providers, PO’s, Case Managers, and anyone interested

For questions, to sign up, or for zoom links to the above events please contact Barbara Mongar at: barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org

Knik Tribe Events:

- **Knik Tribe Family Culture Nights** — Bi-Weekly, Wednesday, 5:30 - 7:30 PM; Location: 758 Shoreline Dr. Wasilla, AK; Open to All Compact@KnikTribe.org 907-373-7991
- **Talking Circle**—Tuesday, at 6:30 and Wednesday at 5:30; Same location above; **Contact Ralph Lewis at 907-841-9773**
- **Youth Wellbriety Circle** — Fridays, from 1 to 3PM; Location: MyHouse, Wasilla

Mat-Su Reentry Coalition

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition is a collaboration of individuals, community stakeholders, public and not-for-profit agencies, faith-based and business partners who are united and committed to reducing recidivism among returning citizens to the Mat-Su community.

Our Mission

To promote public safety by identifying and implementing strategies that increase former prisoners' wellbeing within the community and reduce the likelihood of their return to prison through recidivating.

We will accomplish this by:

- Improved communication and collaboration between Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) and the community.
- Building community partnerships to strengthen local services.
- Identifying barriers for those being released from incarceration and taking an active role in addressing those concerns.
- Promoting community educational and training opportunities for those releasing regarding resources.
- Work in conjunction with Alaska DOC to inform and promote reentry efforts in Alaska.

Note: For more information on the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition contact Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org or go to our Webpage at Mat-Su Valley Reentry Program | Valley Charities Inc



Mat-Su Job Center Update

By: **Amanda Carlson**, Mat-Su Job Center Manager

The Mat-Su Employer Expo was a great success, I hope you had a chance to come by or participate. We had a total of 110 Employer/Partners attend this year and approximately 884 Job Seekers. We appreciate everyone sending out flyers and helping us promote our largest job fair in the Mat-Su, thank you!

The Mat-Su Mature Alaskans Seeking Skills Training (MASST) program is looking for Alaskans 55 and over who are seeking work. As a community service and work-based job training program MASST can help you learn while you earn, work on average 20 hours per week, learn new skills and technology, meet new people, and find fulfillment serving your community. If interested, please call (907) 586-6806 or visit www.akml.orgmasst@serrc.org

The Anchorage Municipal League presents a statewide career fair during the Infrastructure Development Symposium, learn about opportunities to work on infrastructure projects with employers located around Alaska. April 24th at the Dena'ina Civic and Convention Center from 9 a.m.—3:30 p.m.

For the most up to date information on open recruitments, job fairs, and virtual job readiness workshops please visit www.jobs.alaska.gov/jobfairs. The Mat-Su Job Center hosts various recruitments each month, if you want more information about how we can promote and host a recruiting event for your business, or would like to know what employers are participating each month for job seekers please reach out to our Business Connection staff Faith Woosley at (907) 352-2523 or faith.woosley@alaska.gov.



Reentrants, Job seekers, and Veterans interested in funding through Career Support and Training we are open to the public Monday-Friday from 8am-5pm and are located at 877 W. Commercial Drive in Wasilla. Contact us by phone at (907) 352-2500 or email matsu.jobcenter@alaska.gov.

April Trends: Alaska's median rent is now on par with the U.S. and ranks 20th among states after years of much slower rent increases than much of the country. Also in this issue: Population estimates for 2024

Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su (April is National Second Chance Month)

- **Valley Charities Reentry Program:** The focus and goal of the Valley Charities Mat-Su Reentry Program is to help these individuals integrate successfully back into the community by setting them up for success with skills to contribute to society in a positive way.
Phone: 907-521-1854; **Address:** 400 N. Yenlo Street, Wasilla, AK 99654
Website: Mat-Su Valley Reentry Program | Valley Charities Inc
- **Daybreak Reentry Program:** The Valley Reentry Program focuses on reducing recidivism among those people who are coming out of the prison system and returning to society. The program is voluntary and open to those individuals who are scheduled to be released from the Department of Corrections.
Phone: 907-745-2241, **Address:** 550 S. Alaska St, Ste. 202, Palmer, AK 99645
Website: Valley Reentry Program - Daybreak