



Re-StoreALife Collaborative Community

Expanded to include more ideas and visions submitted by the public at the *Community Opportunities Visionary Mastermind Conference Oct. 1, 2011*

We have a remarkable opportunity in this community to pioneer solutions to meet both local and to set a standard for solving the national challenges of poverty, economic upheaval, incarceration, homelessness, addictions, and joblessness.

The Whatcom County ReEntry Coalition started with a vision to build a ReStoreALife Center that would work in tandem with other organizations to the benefit of the whole community – to restore people to honor and community vitality at the same time. The specific goal for the ReEntry Coalition is to develop a model and produce a financially viable, self-sustaining community enterprise that would reduce the number of people who frequent our jail by as much as 60-80%.

Stage 1 of the project (for the Coalition) is The ReStoreALife Center:

This is modeled after the highly successful DeLancy Street in San Francisco, that would include,

1. **Housing 1st.** This is critical to reduce recidivism...that all reentering citizens have a chance to start fresh by providing shelter and food in exchange for service. The ReEntry University then provides functional literacy training that includes basic life skills education, goal-setting and preparation for employment among other things.
2. **Employment:** The center will have established businesses that do on the job training for specific labor markets, that build fresh habits for employment, and re-education that could lead to entrepreneurial endeavors. The goal? To help people reenter the workforce to become taxpaying citizens.
3. **Recovery Center:** The development of an alternative health and trauma treatment center where people are medically and psychologically evaluated, then receive addiction training, trauma therapy, relationship skills, living foods and nutrition training, family therapy, green and sustainable living education, etc. as appropriate. Dozens of local professionals are ready to provide these services. The models exist locally and around the country, are proven and verifiable.

Stage 2: This Center becomes the hub of an expanded ReStoreALife Community.

The community could include:

1. **A safe way to work with the homeless and displaced citizens** where public services such as food, shelter and simple medical support and bathrooms, laundry, gardening space etc. is available to replace the high expense emergency medical, jail and treatment costs that are currently expended at high rates with “million dollar Murray” type consumption.
2. **A veterans community** inspired by Hearts Toward Home, an international non-profit organization founded by Bridget Cantrell, PHD years ago. Bridget envisions a sustainable farming, recovery treatment, group living, skills building center for returning veterans and their families until they reenter and survive in society successfully.
3. **A farm animal and sustainable living recovery center**, inspired by Animals as Natural Therapy, a local non-profit organization founded 14 years ago by Sonja Wingard. This is a proven therapy model that has been working with veterans, teens, mental health, elderly, traumatized and other citizens. They envision a much larger community that could serve as a huge bridge between those who are unable to enter society effectively.

4. **Free enterprise job skilling businesses** (we have several waiting to launch when funding is available – that are viable, and have already been proven.)
5. **There are sustainable businesses that need viable financial support** as evidenced by Sustainable Connections that has 650 green companies seeking to grow. There are dozens of alternative businesses and recycling projects waiting to emerge with small enterprise funding such as expanding the computer and appliance recycling centers, furniture recycling, sustainable farms, etc.
6. **There are other non-profit organizations and groups** that have visions and projects going in the following areas: Imagine farms with housing and out buildings that support sustainable farm and garden education, food preservation, the learning of survival crafts and more. There could be a satellite community that serves the homeless, and one for the mentally ill.

Stage 3: Implement Restorative Justice models, prevention, and re-education ASAP.

Transform punitive incarceration models that do not compromise public safety into restorative justice and revitalization models ASAP to reduce recidivism, cut costs, reduce consumption of jail services and broaden the number of people going back to work in a viable way. This reduces the taxpayers tax burden, and increases the tax base – ultimately adding revenue to the County Budget.

- **Mental Health options:** Adoption of a mental health diversion program (as proposed by Anne Deacon), adopt a mental health court designed to expedite people getting through the system so their trauma is not accelerated, and they instead can get into recovery and treatment as fast as possible – reducing costs to the county.
- **Expansion of Teen Court, and Drug Court** with options to do more community service that benefits the county – perhaps things like working at the Food Bank, growing food, caregiving, litter clean up, etc.
- **Adoption of a veterans court** (Congratulations to the County for this!) and expansion of diversion options.
- **Implementing a Restorative Justice model in our courts for all non-violent offenses,** which includes options for mediation, conflict resolution, relationships training and more.

These are just some of the proposals and ideas germinating in our community currently. The ReEntry Coalition, in tandem with UnitingCreatives.com will be hosting Visionary Community Events periodically to continue the development of these ideas into formal projects and proposals.