

## HUH! ALL THIS TIME AND WE NEVER NOTICED *THAT* BEFORE

Have you ever had the experience when you're driving or stopping longer than usual because of traffic or a red light and taking the time to actually look around at things you would ordinarily speed past? Then, when you do, you start noticing things for the first time: *Huh! All this time and I never noticed that before!*

Sometimes opportunity is waiting for us to slow down and take the time to notice what's already going on around us. Case in point for ION are two new phone-related opportunities we've recognized and will be pursuing in the coming year. More about that in a moment because, first, we need to actually stop.

The thing is, we really, *really* didn't want to stop at all. For several years in a row, we've managed to create and sustain positive forward momentum with the geographic expansion of our online platform, along with plans and agreements to launch ION on inmate tablet computers. We were steadily moving ahead. Until we weren't. Momentum has stalled with the big tech company we're working with, and it's felt as if we've been idling at this particular stoplight for six months waiting for it to finally turn green.

So, what to do while we wait? Well, beyond trying to cultivate the inner gift of patience, we've turned our attention to improving the experi-

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## LINE DANCING IN PRISON

A few weeks ago, I (Maddi) was invited to teach a dance class on the Morey Unit at the Lewis Prison complex in Maricopa County, Arizona. The invitation came via George Nolan, who works for New Freedom, a reentry organization in Phoenix, and hosts a twice-monthly group on Morey called Embrace Your Strength. The men in the group had asked to have a dance class.

Knowing I have a love for country dancing, George reached out to me, and things took off from there. George worked hard to get music and speakers approved by prison staff. Meanwhile, I reached out to my good friend Natalie (a line dancing aficionado), and we began

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ence of our current users and strengthening our already existing relationships. But this extended time of waiting has also created time and headspace for us to turn our attention to a previously unrecognized opportunity and an unmet need.

The unrecognized opportunity was the invitation to create a reentry video podcast in partnership with the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry. I now find myself sitting behind a new podcast-worthy microphone, doing interviews with interesting people. Our director of operations, Maddi Briguglio, is interviewing as well. Together, we're creating interactive resources to share with incarcerated men and women to help inspire, inform, and expose them to reentry services and people on the outside.

Precisely because we were stopped in our progress to deploy the ION platform on inmate tablets, we've had time to say "Yes!" to this adjacent opportunity to deploy helpful information on those same tablets. Had we been going full-steam ahead with an immediate rollout of our reentry platform, we would have sped by this new possibility. Huh! All these years and we never noticed the opportunity to do *that* before.

It's the same dynamic with an unmet need that we started noticing about the same time: the lack of access to a smartphone for many people being released from prison. The article "For Want of a Phone" (below) gives more details. But, in a nutshell, we've

had time not only to notice this unmet need but also to dream up a pilot project to engage faith communities to help meet that need. Huh! All this time and we didn't see either the depth of the need or the potential for faith communities to provide a solution.

So, here we are six months later, with a microphone in one hand and a donated, used smartphone in the other. Unfortunately, the spotlight in front of us is still red. And we're still waiting (more-or-less patiently) to move forward toward our long-term goals with the ION platform on inmate tablets. But, while we wait on that front, all around us is a lot of potential impact for good.

God keeps sending opportunities, disguised as phones, that we're positioned to do something about. We're motivated and excited to be speaking into one (micro)phone, while prepping lots of other phones to give away.

We hope you're motivated too. In fact, we'll be asking for your generous support for these efforts through our 2025 Color Me Yellow fundraising campaign. Emails about the campaign will start going out in early November. We'd love for you to help us not only to continue to bring the life-changing ION platform to thousands but also to bring the new reentry video podcast and Welcome Home Reentry Phone projects to life.

It's amazing what can happen when you stop and really look around.

~Fred Nelson, executive director



## LINE DANCING IN PRISON

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practicing the dances we planned to teach.

Knowing that the guys in the group didn't know what kind of dancing they were in for or what kind of music they would be dancing to, we were all a bit nervous about how it would go. But WOW. It blew us away! The level of participation was so impressive. The men were focused and motivated to learn, but we had so many laughs along the way. And, over the course of two hours, we covered three different line dances.

Morey is a high custody yard that is usually divided by race and overwhelmed with violence, but, for a few hours, none of that mattered. At the end of the session—while we were all more tired than expected, covered in sweat, and had sore cheeks from all the smiling—we shared our highlights from the day. One member of the group said, "I can easily say that this was the most fun I've had in the ten years I've been incarcerated. For two hours today, I forgot I was even in prison."



It's safe to say this is a day we all will remember forever, and Natalie and I will never hear "Boot Scootin' Boogie" the same. A big thank-you to George, Natalie, and the staff who made this incredible experience possible.

~Maddi Briguglio



# OREGON UPDATE

As a reminder, in May of 2024 we launched returning citizen registration in Oregon. We are now up and running at all 11 Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) facilities. All returning citizens who are within six months of release are eligible to register with ION and have the opportunity to schedule regular sessions to log in and use the platform to connect with providers in the community prior to their release. While this is working well in WorkSource computer labs for now, we are looking forward to increasing access even further by hopefully being on the tablets used by adults in custody by next year.

In addition, we've been working with Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE) to ensure that those who are working for them while incarcerated are able to access ION as well, since they don't have the same availability to visit the computer labs during their operating hours.

Total number of returning citizens registered in OR as of Sept. 30, 2025: 902

We also continue to grow our provider network throughout the state. Total (as of Sept. 30, 2025): 91 providers in 110 locations



# ARIZONA UPDATE

As we mentioned in our previous newsletter, we had been working on a prison library rollout in Arizona to increase access for returning citizens prior to their release from incarceration. Beginning as early as 11 months to the gate, individuals can create their personal profiles and begin connecting with providers in the community. We have now completed the initial rollout and are circling back to conduct follow-up visits at each complex. We've completed these follow-ups at six of the eight state complexes. In the process, we've gathered some really helpful information about what's working well and what still needs some improvement. Once we complete the final two follow-up visits, we'll compile our findings and share them with Department of Corrections staff in order to continue to improve this process across the state.

As for our service provider network, we've been working hard to ensure that this list remains as up-to-date as possible for our returning citizens. At the end of July, we removed about 35 providers who were no longer active. However, we've added 47 new providers across the state since the start of the year. Keeping the network updated and ever-growing is essential for a good user experience.

Total number of returning citizens registered in AZ as of Sept. 30, 2025: 11,966

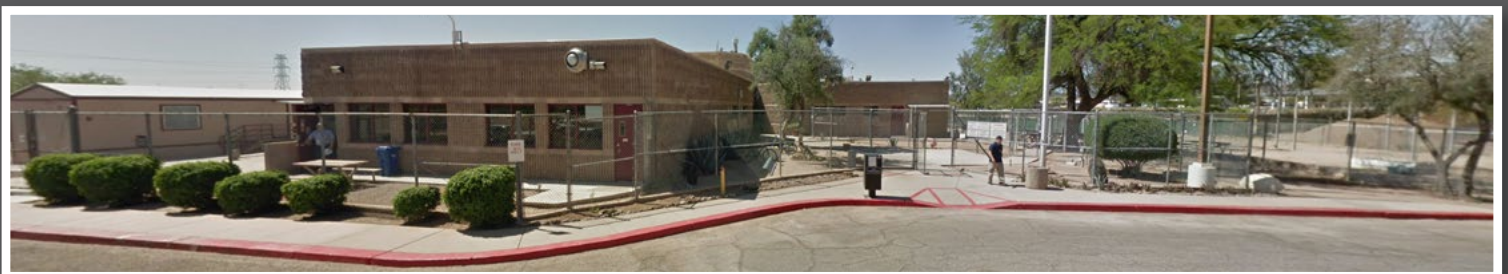
We also continue to grow our provider network throughout the state. Total (as of Sept. 30, 2025): 246 providers

## A DOOR OPENS

Starting in the middle of November, Fred will be joining with another pastor and some church volunteers to launch a new ministry in the Pima Reentry Center with the hope of building relationships with and serving returning citizens.

Approximately 70-90 male returning citizens are housed at the center at any one time. Think of this as a transitional halfway house, operated by the AZ Department of Corrections, for folks leaving prison who need time and a place to rebuild their lives. On average, residents are there for several months. The center is

looking for community partners to help with programs, and there are currently no faith-based partners meeting with the men. When a spot opened up on their calendar, we seized the opportunity. We are now scheduled on Monday evenings from 6:00-7:00pm to offer homemade dessert, life-application Bible study, reentry coaching, etc., as we build relationships with interested residents. For a few months, we'll find ourselves in head-to-head competition with Monday Night Football (what were we thinking?!), but that time slot seems to be a good one over the long haul. We're grateful for the open door and are excited about walking through it and making connections in the coming months. Stay tuned, and we'll give you an update in our next newsletter.



# FOR WANT OF A PHONE

There's a well-known old proverb about how the "want," or absence, of a horseshoe nail leads to the loss of the horseshoe, then the horse, the rider, the battle, and eventually, the kingdom. The idea is that a seemingly incidental factor can have cascading, potentially disastrous effects. It's another version of the "butterfly effect." Or, in the kingdom of reentry, let's call it the "smartphone effect." That is: For want of a smartphone, healthy reentry momentum is lost.

We think there's *both* a significant problem *and* a possible solution out there that we want to try to address.

## First, the need.

Access to a smartphone or tablet is now an *essential* element in successful reentry. However, we've been hearing, more and more often, that gaining access to a smartphone upon release from incarceration is becoming more difficult for returning citizens. In fact, from our informal straw poll of Tucson-area parole officers, we discovered that they estimate that roughly 50% of returning citizens leaving Arizona prison facilities (that is, about 6,000 men and women a year) are having trouble securing a smartphone even a full month after their release. Nearly all of the longer-standing government programs that were providing phones are no longer being funded or are closed to new enrollments. There's still a government LifeLine phone program, but we're hearing that many people are experiencing significant delays with this. The problem is widespread, and existing solutions in the marketplace are prohibitively expensive. But, on the upside, we think faith communities are uniquely positioned to help meet this challenge.

## Second, the plan.

In a nutshell, our plan is to coordinate with congregations, parole offices, and community reentry service providers to collect donated used smartphones from congregations, send them to

a volunteer "prep team" to make sure things are working and secure, and then distribute them at no cost to returning citizens who need them. These "Welcome Home Reentry Phones" will be WiFi-only phones (i.e., no SIM card). They will allow users to use WiFi to browse websites, apply for jobs, use social media, and even make and receive calls and text using VoIP services like Google Voice.



These phones are intended not as a permanent solution but as a bridging device and a valuable tool during a very vulnerable period of a person's reentry. As for distribution, participating congregations and select service providers can, if they wish, partner with parole to distribute these Welcome Home Phones to returning citizens. This could be done as part of a gift bag at an in-person meeting with a member of a local congregation, providing not merely a service to a "client," but an opportunity for a personal connection and a bridge to further interaction.

## What happens next?

We're just beginning a pilot project in Tucson this fall and winter to see if this is, in fact, something that's valuable to returning citizens, logistically feasible, and potentially sustainable on a larger scale and ongoing basis. To do that, we're experimenting with an initial collection of donated smartphones from a number of congregations. We have a lot to learn, of course. There are plenty of logistical and technical challenges involved in a project like this, but, if we can pull it off, it'll be a huge blessing to a lot of people. Right now, we're looking for folks who'd like to get in on the ground floor by donating a used phone, helping with the technical side of things, or helping on the administrative side. If that's you, let us know at [fred@insideoutnetwork.net](mailto:fred@insideoutnetwork.net).

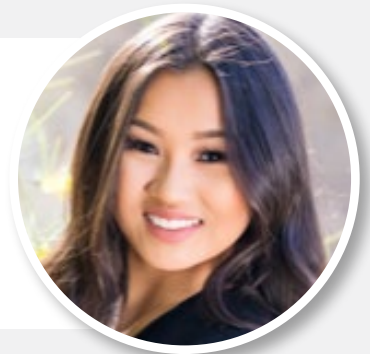
# THREE FAREWELLS AND A WELCOME

We are sorry to have to share the news that one of our board members and two of our valued staff members are leaving the Inside Out Network.



**Sara Trivedi**, our Financial Administrator, has been doing a fantastic job for ION for five and a half years. Her skill, attention to detail, rock-solid reliability, and unfailing good humor have been a blessing as she handled everything from payroll to grants administration. Sara has landed her dream job at the Park Ridge Public Library, Park Ridge, Illinois, and we wish her all the best.

Also moving on from ION is our Inmate Registration Coordinator, **Emilee Martin**. Emilee was an ION intern in the fall of 2021 while studying at Arizona State University, after which she took the part-time position assuring that inmates who filled out a paper registration form were entered into the system. As part of this work, she coordinated the efforts of volunteers around the country. A big thank-you to Emilee for nearly four years as part of the ION team.



We are also saying goodbye to one of our original board members, **Evan Freund**. Evan has been a wise and faithful presence on the ION board since the fall of 2019, even before we formally organized as a nonprofit. He has a lot of pressing commitments in his life and felt it was time to step away from his director role at ION. Evan was a helpful, reliable, steady hand in our early years and we owe him a huge measure of gratitude for his service to the board over the past six years.



Along with our great gratitude for Sara, Emilee, and Evan's presence with us over the years, we are thankful for the new addition to the team of **Cody Zindler**, who is taking on the bookkeeping and financial administrator responsibilities. Cody manages a boutique asset management and financial coaching firm and was drawn to work with ION because of our mission. We're excited to be working with him moving forward!



# STATS SNAPSHOT

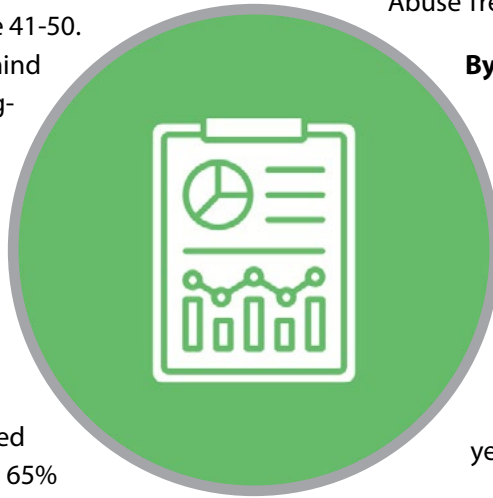
It's been a while since we brought you some interesting statistics compiled by Sean Doyle, our awesome volunteer data analyst. We've been digging through the reports he's created and found some interesting information.

We thought it would be informative to see what trends, if any, we could discern in how age and gender cohorts expressed interest in different service categories. We looked at the data from 15,436 men and women who registered on our platform through the end of September of this year.

**By age cohort.** The headline here is that, as people age, they tend to request more services, increasing by roughly 10-20%. For example, interest in Shelters and Housing started at 61% for the 21-30 age cohort and climbed steadily to 73% for those aged 61-70. For Multiservice Providers, the numbers were 60% for ages 21-30 and 71% for those 41-50.

We don't have research on the reasons behind these trends, but anecdotal evidence suggests that younger age cohorts are more likely to have more family support available, as well as a mindset of "I got this." Older cohorts, on the other hand, start to lose an effective family support structure and are more likely to ask for the help they refused when they were younger.

Note: The only service category that reversed that trend was Education, which peaked at 65%



in the 21-30 age cohort and decreased steadily to 36% in the 61-70 age cohort. While that makes sense, it's interesting and encouraging to see how many people in their 60s are still interested in educational opportunities.

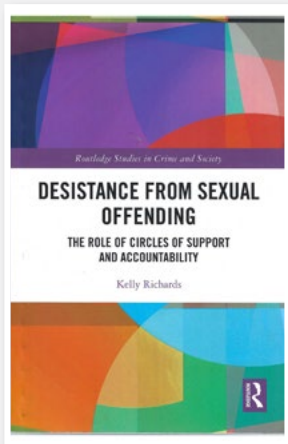
**By gender.** The headline here is that women generally tend to request more services than men. Several years ago, our research showed that males requested roughly 4 of the 9 service categories, while females requested an average of 5. Our current numbers show that the average male is now requesting 5 service provider categories, while females are requesting about 5.5 categories. While a number of provider categories are selected roughly equally by both, females showed marked increases over males in the following categories: Support Groups (59% to 54%), Multiservice Agencies (73% to 67%), and Substance Abuse Treatment and Recovery (51% to 42%).

**By engagement.** Finally, we thought you might be interested in seeing the steep statistical jump in engagement by returning citizens since the rollout in Arizona prison libraries, which made the ION platform directly available to inmates to work on their reentry. The numbers below also include marked increases in registrations and engagement by Oregon adults in custody. The comparative time period for each year is January 1 – September 30 of each year.

## YEAR-TO-DATE (JAN-SEPT) RETURNING CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT ON ION

ENGAGEMENT METRIC	2024 (JAN-SEPT)	2025 (JAN-SEPT)
New Registrations	2,936	3,114
Logins	3,628	13,012
Searches	8,318	38,772
Messages Sent	4,902	27,331
Messages Received	7,963	17,563

# WHAT WE'RE READING



*Desistance from Sexual Offending: The Role of Circles of Support and Accountability.* Kelly Richards. New York: Routledge, 2022. 182 pages.

Here are a couple of uncomfortable truths. Sexual abuse is widespread. Most of it is never reported to authorities. For the small percentage of people who are convicted and incarcerated, the social stigmatization, rejection, and barriers mounted against them are often

overwhelming. A widespread assumption is that *nothing* works when it comes to sexual offenders.

The research in this book challenges that reflexive “nothing works” assumption and points us in a positive and practical direction. Richards tells the story of how Circles of Support and Accountability (CoSA) emerged among churches in Hamilton, Ontario, in the mid 1990s. CoSA are groups of trained volunteers who gather to actively support those who have sexual offense convictions and help them reintegrate into society. Research into 30 years of experience of CoSA programs in Canada, the U.S., and beyond has shown that these groups significantly aid in the process of desistance from crime (i.e., winding down and stopping criminal activity). CoSA works. But *why?* Richards’ study explores the underlying processes and dynamics of CoSA to answer that question.

She outlines some key factors involved in how CoSA effectively supports the person (whom they call the “core member”) to...

- develop a “redemption script” where the person sees themselves with a healthy future,
- receive encouragement and positive reinforcement when they engage in steps toward a more prosocial future,
- find practical ways to act on their motivation to give back in some positive way, and
- adopt the role of a “wounded healer” and move from being a recipient of help to providing help to others.

Richards points to the centrality of relationships as a catalyst for personal growth. In fact, anyone who’s ever experienced the transformative power of an intentional small group can testify to the relational dynamic that’s part of it. The shame-busting activity of the circle members offers the core member a turning point, a hook for change, and a space for healthy identity work.

Importantly, the takeaways from this book aren’t just for criminological researchers. The very fact that CoSA was birthed in ordinary congregational life points to its potential implementation beyond the orbit of the professional counseling office. CoSA works, and it deserves to be more widely known, adopted, and practiced by healthy groups of volunteers out there who are ready to do their homework and commit to some courageous, life-changing work. *Those who have ears to hear, let them hear.*

# THANKS TO A NEW GRANTMAKER

On a recent trip to Oregon, ION’s executive director, Fred Nelson, and his wife, Carol, had a chance to meet with Angela Schlappie, program director for the Spirit Mountain Community Fund, the philanthropic arm of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

In March 2025, Spirit Mountain awarded a \$5000 grant to ION in support of our work in Oregon. Angela shared information about the foundation, which awards grants on behalf of the Confederated Tribes. ION will join other grantees on a display wall in the Spirit Mountain Casino.

We are grateful for the financial support and also for the opportunity to make a personal connection.



# IN THE COMMUNITY AND THE ACADEMY

Director of Operations Maddi Briguglio is often asked to share her expertise and experience. Here are some recent examples:

## Florida Prison Education Project

Earlier this year, the Florida Prison Education Project (FPEP) reached out and asked Maddi to submit an article. This has now been chosen to be featured in the Spring 2026 edition of the *FPEP Post*. The article is titled "Proximity: Bridging the Gap Between Our Communities and the Incarcerated Population."

## Blessings Balance Breath Yoga Event

In November, Maddi will be the guest speaker at "Mingle on the Mat," a yoga fundraising event hosted by the non-profit Blessings Balance Breath Yoga. They bring yoga and healing to hard-to-reach populations who are in great need, particularly those who have been justice-impacted.

## ASU Pre-Law Society Panelist

Also in November, Maddi will be a panelist for a Second Chance: Life After Prison event hosted by the Arizona State University pre-law society to share about working with the justice-involved population.

## Journeys of Teaching Podcast

Maddi was recently interviewed by Dr. Aaron Gierhart for his podcast, Journeys of Teaching, where she talked about her work at ION and her role as a faculty associate at ASU. The episode is expected to release in Spring 2026. From the podcast description: "In Journeys of Teaching, we explore the narratives of different educators and how their experiences across their lives and careers inform their pedagogy and teaching approaches."

# WE LOVE NETWORKING



We were happy to be able to recommend and facilitate a recent conversation between reentry leaders and specialists in the Arizona and Oregon Departments of Correction. They got together to discuss the potential role of in-prison Peer Support Specialists (already happening in Arizona) to help other inmates prepare for reentry. Our own board members Tory LaRoche and Justin Benjamin were a key part of that discussion, and they are preparing a follow-up document to share with the Oregon DOC leaders, after which we will reconvene for ongoing conversation and discussion about possible implementation in Oregon prisons.

## UPDATE ON SPIRITUAL SURVIVAL GUIDE READERSHIP



Quietly, in the background of all of the work of the Inside Out Network, we continue to fill requests for cases of the *Spiritual Survival Guide for Prison and Beyond* from prison chaplains and volunteers. In addition, lots of inmates read the Survival Guide on their tablets. As of the time of writing, approximately 63,000

hard copies are out there, and the online version has been accessed approximately 10,700 times in 832 different jails and prisons across the country. It's encouraging to know that this resource, now 13 years old and in its second edition, is reaching so many individuals throughout the United States.

If you're interested, you can read and/or download the eBook, or order the paperback version, from the resources tab on our website.

## THE MORE YOU KNOW...

Not quite sure how the ION platform works? Or having trouble describing it to a friend? You can watch an explanatory video at [insideoutnetwork.net/overview](https://insideoutnetwork.net/overview) or on [YouTube](#).

The Inside Out Network is always a free service for returning citizens

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