

## WE'RE ON THE MAP!

You can put a pin in it! In May, after well more than a year of planning and coordinating with the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC) and actively reaching out to register a critical mass of reentry service providers, we launched ION and went live in Oregon. Our launch goal was to register an initial 70 service providers, and we reached that in May. We're now at 75 providers in 92 locations, and adding more each month.

We're doubly excited about this, because *our launch in Oregon also involves an unprecedented level of access for returning citizens.* During their last six months of incarceration, adults in custody (AICs) can *directly* access the ION platform without staff intervention. Using new computer labs inside each prison facility furnished and staffed by WorkSource Oregon, AICs are registering themselves, searching for help, and messaging with service providers. We launched at two pilot facilities and have now expanded into nine facilities across the state.

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## THIS IS BIG HUGE!

In our spring newsletter we reported on the four months of "interlocking complexities, legalities, technological issues, security concerns, operational challenges, scheduling conflicts, and layers of communication between and within government bureaucracies and for-profit corporations" that went into inking an agreement to bring the ION platform to inmate computer tablets. Well, it took several more months to pull off, but we did it. In mid-June, we finalized an agreement with ViaPath Technologies, one of the two largest inmate computer tablet companies in the country. (We're also in conversation with a number of other tablet distributors.)

With the ViaPath agreement in hand, we were finally able to spring into action with WebCitz, our contracted tech development team. And, in the first six weeks, we've managed to make rapid progress toward developing a new "inmate tablet experience" of the ION website. In a nutshell, this involves making a clone of our current,

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It's important to note that none of this could have happened without our donors, especially Ministry Partners for Christ, who seeded our efforts in Oregon with a generous grant, or without our Director of Operations, Maddi Briguglio, and her team of student interns. They've been reaching out—patiently but relentlessly—to prospective service providers to explain ION and encourage them to participate. All that generosity and all that hard work have finally paid off. We're on the map, and we're so grateful.

For our official launch in May, I was able to spend a week traveling across the state, meeting with ODOC and WorkSource staff, some key service providers, and leaders from Oregon Correctional Enterprises, the state prison industry organization. All those meetings were extremely enjoyable and productive. But the main purpose of my going in-person was to do user testing in computer resource rooms inside the two pilot prison facilities (Deer Ridge and Warner Creek). This involved sitting alongside, asking questions, and closely observing how AICs navigated the ION platform as they searched for services and exchanged messages with services providers. The idea was to observe how people actually interact with our site, to see what might be unclear or confusing and how we might improve its design. Over the course of two days, I met with more than 25 inmates, and I want to tell you about two of them.

"Carl" is really motivated to change his life, but he admits that he lacks confidence. He said that he was embarrassed and scared, that he had been locked up too long and feared he wouldn't be able to adapt to new technology. Though he started out slowly and hesitantly on the site, he started finding his bearings, and, by the end, he was doing fine. Not only that, during his 30-minute session, two providers messaged him in real time to offer their services. As he logged out to go back to his cell, he turned to me and said, "Huh! You know, I just might be able to do this!" And then he promptly made an appointment to come in the following week.

"Danny" had registered and created a profile for himself in the morning, but he had to leave early to get back to his prison job. In the afternoon, he came back to the computer lab just before it closed, on the off chance that there would be an update for him. There was. When he logged in, there were messages from four different providers waiting for him. He was almost speechless when he told me, "For five years, I've heard nothing from anyone, and now, in one day, THIS!"

We're on the map in Oregon in order to help Carl and Danny, and countless others like them, flip the script from invisibility to connection, from fear to confidence, and from failing to thriving.

~Fred Nelson, executive director

## COLOR US GRATEFUL FINAL TALLY OF OUR FIRST "COLOR ME YELLOW" CAMPAIGN

In the fall of 2023, a wonderful grantmaker that we were building a relationship with offered us a grant. But this one came with an important qualification: They would generously give ION up to \$20,000, but only as a matching grant for new donors. That was both welcome news and a big challenge. That's because, since our inception, we'd counted exclusively on grants to fuel our work and hadn't worked to build relationships with individual donors. The matching grant was given to provide funding and to help us build our capacity to seek and secure donations going forward.

It's not that we were totally lacking experience with fundraising. Years of work at our founding congregation, Redeemer Lutheran Church, had seen us successfully raise money for mission and capital campaigns for church planting and other causes. But raising donations for ION was a new challenge.

Our "Color Me Yellow" campaign was launched last November.

We requested support for two major initiatives: developing a version of ION for inmate tablets and expanding to Mississippi. Both of those initiatives, we're happy to report, continue to move forward. That's happening because of the generous donations of lots of generous and supportive people.

When we launched the campaign, we didn't have a specific end-point in mind, and we've kept the campaign open for additional donations. But, by the end of June, we thought it wise to close out our first Color Me Yellow campaign, tally up the final results, and begin to prepare for a second campaign. When we launched things in November, we prayed about it and set ourselves an audacious "stretch goal" of \$60,000, not having any idea if that was reasonable or not. Well, as of June 30, 2024, we had our answer: **We ended up raising \$63,113!**

So, color us grateful. Color us relieved. Color us encouraged. And color us hopeful and expectant, as we begin to plan for our second Color Me Yellow Campaign, which we'll be launching later this fall.



## THIS IS BIG HUGE! (continued from Pg 1)

public, returning citizen user experience, and then making a series of internal technical changes to the user interface, so that security features required by ViaPath and departments of correction can be built into the design.

Even as we work on these new security features for inmate tablets, we're also taking the opportunity to revisit our current returning citizen experience to see what improvements we can make. It's kind of like adding a large addition to your home, and taking time for some remodeling of the existing rooms while you're at it. We've come up with a healthy list of things that needed a bit of a facelift, like updating our FAQs and other information. This is part of our commitment to "constant iteration," or continuous improvement.



So, why are we saying that this agreement with ViaPath is so HUGE?

Well, here are three reasons...

1. This removes a major roadblock to access. When ION is available on their computer tablets, inmates will be able to directly access our platform beginning 11 months prior to their release. They'll be able to search for, message with, and connect with relevant reentry service providers without waiting for staff assistance. This is a win for returning citizens, service providers, and departments of correction. Everybody wins.
2. ViaPath is already on tablets in three of the four states where we're already active (Oregon, Mississippi, and Illinois). Barring delays, we expect to be ready to deploy ION on Oregon inmate tablets at the end of the year as our pilot state for tablets.
3. This agreement opens up the possibility of ION being available on every ViaPath tablet in every state where they are active. We're talking about 400,000 tablets in roughly 20 states. This is the strategic turning point we've been working for over the past four years as we eye further expansion.

A HUGE development calls for a HUGE shout-out. Thank you, thank you, thank you to everyone who's been praying for, giving toward, and working for this moment. God has graciously opened a door for us, and we're looking forward to the challenge of walking through it together with all of you.

## LENDING OUR EXPERTISE TO A NATIONAL CHURCH BODY

The Inside Out Network actually has deep roots in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. We were birthed as a church ministry out of Redeemer Lutheran Church in Park Ridge, Illinois. We received significant grant funding from the Metropolitan Chicago Synod to print the first edition of the *Spiritual Survival Guide for Prison and Beyond*, to develop a reentry directory for Chicago, and for other initiatives. Fred Nelson, our founder and executive director, was an ELCA pastor and continues to be part of the denominational Prison and Reentry Ministry Network.

So, it's no surprise that, earlier in the year, when the Network was having difficulty gathering results from a nationwide denominational survey about the state of prison, reentry, and justice advocacy efforts, we stepped in and offered to help with reaching out to synods (similar to districts). After all, one of our key strengths as an organization is the ability to effectively reach out and network with folks.

Fred and a number of our interns began emailing and phoning synodical offices across the country and created a database to track results. It's taken a number of months, but persistence has paid off. We've been able to more than triple the number of synods responding to the survey! There is now enough information to paint a broad picture of what's happening across the denomination. Fred is also currently helping to summarize the survey findings in order to be able to recommend next steps for the ELCA Network. It's been rewarding to be able to give back to those who've so generously given to us for so long.





# MISSISSIPPI UPDATE

## SLOWLY BUT SURELY

We're making headway in Mississippi. And we're feeling very positive about that.

But it's challenging. We're finding that registering service providers is significantly more difficult and takes more time than in the other states where we're active. Some of the reasons we can point to are (a) a near total absence of local reentry coalitions, (b) a relative lack of "starter" databases with reliable contact information about reentry providers across the state, (c) a marked preference by providers to connect by phone rather than email. This has made it almost impossible to present ION to groups of providers. Instead we have to reach each one individually. It's also meant that we've had to rely on our staff and interns to spend a lot of time trying to track down accurate information about potential service providers. And it's entailed leaving a lot of voicemails and playing a lot of phone tag over the past six months.

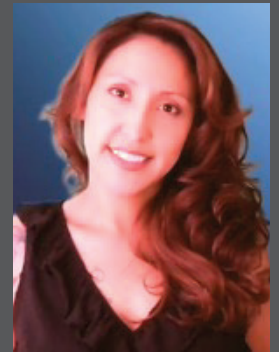
Still, we're making progress. In June and July, we added nine new service providers and are nearly at the halfway point of our target of 40 registered service providers to launch with the Mississippi Department of Corrections (MDOC). We're now up to an operating database of nearly 300 providers and probably have the most accurate list of Mississippi reentry providers of anyone. We've made some helpful and important new connections, including with three criminology professors at Mississippi State University. Madison Snider, a former intern who has since joined our staff, has turned her full attention to reaching out in Mississippi, and we're about to add a new intern from the University of Mississippi (our first from Ole Miss). This should give us some much needed boots on the ground.

Importantly, MDOC uses ViaPath inmate tablets in all their facilities. That means that, by the time we've registered a critical mass of Mississippi providers and are ready to roll ION out to inmates, we can launch directly onto inmate tablets, which should lead to greater engagement all around.

Through it all, here's an important takeaway. The challenges we're facing in Mississippi may prove to be some of our hardest work, but it may also prove to be some of our most consequential in the long run. Thanks for sharing our vision and for supporting us with your Color Me Yellow donations over these recent months.

# THANK YOU TO MIRANDA CAMPOS

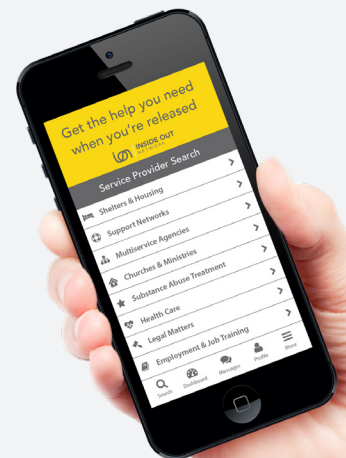
After four wonderful years, ION Program Manager Miranda Campos has decided to part ways with ION. She has been an incredible asset to our team since 2020 and has been instrumental in our growth in Arizona and as an organization. We are so grateful for all of the time and effort she put into our work. Miranda plans to remain working in the reentry space in Pima County, so, if that's your location, you may still see her around. Thank you, Miranda, for all that you have done over the years. We will miss you tremendously but wish you all the best in your future endeavors!



## MAJOR MILESTONE REACHED AND EXCEEDED

Officially incorporated in April 2020, the Inside Out Network saw its 10,000th inmate registration on April 23, 2024. We are very grateful to everyone who has helped us to make a difference in the lives of so many returning citizens: everyone who's given moral support and encouragement, our donors and grantmakers, our staff members, interns, and volunteers. Thanks to you all!

Of course, we didn't stop at 10,000. As of July 31, 11,035 inmates and returning citizens are registered on ION, along with 575 service providers. Onward!





## RETURNING CITIZEN SPOTLIGHT: GEORGE NOLAN

In this newsletter we're pleased to shine a spotlight on a returning citizen who has been a supporter of ION since our early days in Arizona.

**Background and initial involvement with the system:** Growing up, George had a difficult time connecting to others. As a way to try to find a community, acceptance, and a way to serve, he joined the Marine Corps. During this time, he began drinking, fighting, and getting involved in high-risk situations. One night, his friend made some poor decisions and an incident escalated, leading to a Court Martial and a general discharge under honorable terms. Unfortunately, due to some of the ramifications of this incident, he was no longer able to pursue the firefighting career he'd always dreamed of. He felt he had lost his purpose and relied heavily on substances to cope. These challenges led to three separate prison sentences totaling 17 years incarcerated.

**Turning point and discovery of ION:** During George's thirteenth year of incarceration, he had an epiphany and discovered a desire to change. He realized that he wanted to show up for his family and others he cared for and, overall, just do better than he had been doing. He decided to surround himself with others who were in recovery, like Jerry Trafny of FreeBird Auto ([see our Fall-Winter 2023 newsletter](#)), listen to podcasts, and read books. He also became a Recovery Support Specialist (RSS) and was the first peer involved in Convergent Case Management (CCM) which was a program designed for peers to help support others in recovery. During his time with CCM, he was introduced to ION. This

was back in 2021 when we had only 85 providers listed on the network, but George was able to see first-hand the hope that this network brought to individuals preparing for release. As he stated, "When the guys would see that there were 85 organizations who were not only willing but excited to offer them support, you could just see the light turn on and feel the hope they had for a better future." Fast forward two years and George was able to co-lead a weekly reentry class with our director of operations, Maddi Briguglio, at the Phoenix West Prison Second Chance Center, during which George and Maddi would share information about ION and other reentry resources.

**Current update:** George was released from prison in April of 2024 and has been busy at work since. He currently volunteers by going back every week into the prison he just left. He has presented at the Correctional Officer Training Academy (COTA) to future officers and spoke to students at Arizona State University. He's started his own personal development company (Refine 2 Inspire) and is active in peer support in the recovery community. He also recently accepted the role of Network Outreach Manager with New Freedom which is a well-known reentry organization based out of Phoenix.

Thank you, George, for sharing your story with us and for your constant support of ION!



## STAFF SPOTLIGHT: MADISON SNIDER

Madison Snider started as an intern for ION in the fall of 2023 during her senior year at Arizona State University. She became interested in helping returning citizens because she felt there were not enough resources available to people getting released from incarceration. She also had a passion for helping others discover who they are really meant to be and wanted to be a part of their second chances. In addition to the wonderful job she did as an intern, Madison developed an even greater passion for reentry and decided to come on board as a program assistant.



**Favorite ION experience:** Madison's favorite experience with ION thus far was attending the Second Chance Center graduation at Phoenix West Prison in April of this year. She loved hearing the graduates speak about their growth after completing the eight-week self-development program.

**Current career goals update:** Madison recently graduated *magna cum laude* from ASU with a bachelor's degree in Criminology and Criminal Justice. She is hoping to eventually work toward creating positive policy changes in the criminal justice system, especially in the area of corrections.

# MADDI ON SITE IN ARIZONA

Since ION's director of operations, Maddi Briguglio, is located in Arizona, she is able to visit a variety of facilities on a regular basis to engage with returning citizens prior to their release. Here is some additional information about the institutions, their programs, and her visits. A huge thank-you to our partners at the Arizona Department of Corrections, Rehabilitation and Reentry (ADCRR) and the Federal Bureau of Prisons (FBOP) for giving us these opportunities!

## Phoenix West Second Chance Center

Since May of 2023, Maddi has visited the Second Chance Center at Phoenix West Prison on a near weekly basis to share information about ION with inmates preparing for reentry. Phoenix West is a minimum custody ADCRR facility where the primary focus is the reduction of recidivism. The facility includes a 200-bed Second Chance Center where inmates serving the last 8-9 weeks of their sentence take a variety of classes designed to prepare them for reentry into society. The Second Chance Center is a partnership between the ADCRR, the Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES), and the GEO Group, Inc., which operates Phoenix West.

## Lewis Prison Residential Substance Abuse Treatment

For the past year, Maddi has visited Lewis Prison on a quarterly basis to present to men in the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program and share information about the Inside Out Network. RSAT is a six-month intensive program focusing on cognitive behavioral treatment for high-risk/high-needs individuals. Recovery Support Specialists (a peer held position), security staff, and treatment staff all work together to offer this programming. [Click this link](#) to watch an inspiring video showing how lives have been changed as a result of RSAT.



## Maricopa Reentry Center

Every third Thursday of the month, Maddi visits the Maricopa Reentry Center (MRC) to offer support to their residents. MRC has been designed to help those who are not quite ready to be back in the community by providing the treatment they need in order to have a successful reintegration. Typically, those who experience substance challenges while on parole will be sent to MRC to receive this support instead of being sent back to prison.

## Federal Correctional Complex in Tucson

Once a year, ION staff participates in the Mock Job Fair and Community Resource event hosted by the Education Department at the Federal Correctional Complex (FCC) in Tucson. During these visits, we volunteer as part of a group of individuals who help those who are incarcerated with mock job interviews, give feedback on their resumes, provide professional development tips, and share information about the Inside Out Network. These men always work hard to prepare, they want to make changes, they are full of hope, and they are eager to learn. FCC Tucson has different levels of facilities: the United States Penitentiary, the Federal Correctional Institution, and the Satellite Prison Camp.



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

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