

Co-Chairs Winters and Piluso and committee members,

Around 5 months into my incarceration at Coffee Creek my Counselor told me that I was a candidate for an early release-work program that was still in the trial period. I agreed to apply. Within a few weeks I received a phone call from Paul Solomon at Sponsors, we discussed the next steps to come. He explained to me that I would live at the community correction center next to the Lane County jail for 60 days and then on the 61st day I would move into my own room in the Justice Reinvestment Funded program, Bothy Cottage for women and children, as I had a 12 month old child waiting for me. I came to Coffee Creek in February 2015 and because of this new program I was released to the CCC in August of the same year.

After arriving at the CCC in Eugene and settling into my new bunk area I was able to relax and appreciate the opportunity that I had been granted. The next day I was allowed to walk to the Women's campus of Sponsors on 8th and Monroe. This was a day I will never forget! It was a beautiful summer day and I was welcomed so warmly by the women on staff there. I jumped right into volunteer work pulling weeds and organizing the clothes closet. I came every day for my CBT and Parenting classes and to volunteer in whatever I could do for the facility. After the first 30 days I was able to apply for a part time job and take the math classes I needed to complete my GED and prepare for continuing my education.

The day came when it was my turn to move into Bothy Cottage and the same day my little girl came to live with me under my care full time. The help that I had from the program and the staff at Sponsors was warm and supportive. Even people from the community took part in assisting the women there with cooking classes and donations of diapers and crafts for the kids.

After waiting for a "match" I was paired with a mentor through the mentorship program that Sponsors offers. I cannot describe how much that relationship blessed and changed me! I worked hard and did my part in the house and the staff at Sponsors became like family. Sponsors provided stepping stones for me to go back to school and have a safe place to live and care for my daughter for a whole year. By the time it was time for me to go out on my own they had helped me save my own money by requiring half of my earnings be put into a savings account and I had more than enough for my move in costs into my own apartment by September 2016.

It's been 3 years since I successfully completed the program and since that time I have received 12 academic scholarships, work as media arts tutor at LCC, have launched my own photography business, provide volunteer outreach for at-risk youth, and have produced and directed my own films. In June I will graduate with a degree in multimedia design and plan to transfer to the University of Oregon where I will pursue a degree in instructional design and communications.

I take every opportunity I can to advocate for Sponsors because if it wasn't for this amazing organization I do now know how I would have made it back into the community safely and successfully. Justice Reinvestment funding is critical for women just like me. I strongly encourage you to fund Justice Reinvestment at the current service level of \$49.5 Million.

Gratefully,

Sarah Andrews  
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