

EVENTS
VACCINATED BEHIND BARS
CITIZEN SPOTLIGHT
COMMUNITY SUBMISSIONS
RESOURCE OF THE MONTH
TEAM HIGHLIGHT
READ WATCH LISTEN
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

UPCOMING EVENTS

SADO REENTRY WORKSHOP WITH CR8 THE SPACE

Monday, July 19th 6:00-7:30pm

Register: sado.org/go/cr8

July is mental health awareness month
for Black, Indigenous, and People of
Color (BIPOC). Join us this month to hear
from Denzel Herrera-Davis the founder
of CR8 the Space and learn what his
organization is doing to bring Black
mental health and wellness to the
forefront of awareness and access.
Questions? Reach out to SADO Reentry
at reentry@sado.org.

SOUTHFIELD COALITION FOR PROGRESS COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RACIAL HEALING: A SAFE SPACE FOR OUR MENTAL WELLBEING

Saturday, July 24th 6-7:30pm, virtual **Register:** Bit.ly/365sNvF

In partnership with A4D, A38 Films and MI Lib. Come together in solidarity to begin to heal from oppression against our communities, between our communities. Learn about healing, reduction of racial harm, self-care, and participate in group discussions. This event will be facilitated by community members and healers. It'll also provide an opportunity to learn about upcoming films to look out for that focus on the layers of racism and its links to mental health. This is a safe space for people who identify as Black, Indigenous, or other communities of color.

FRESH COAST ALLIANCE COMMUNITY EVENT

Saturday, July 24th, 12-5pm
350 W Webster Ave, Muskegon, MI 49440
Don't miss out on this event hosted by
Fresh Coast Alliance and other great
community organizations. This will be a
fun filled day with street bike
performances, non-profit vendors, food
trucks, praise and worship with local
band, and activities for families and
children.

VACCINATED BEHIND BARS

By Riyah Basha, State Appellate Defender Office Legal Intern

"Chaos."

That's how Kevin Cottingham described the first wave of COVID-19 inside prison. As Kevin and others on the inside tell it, everyone—incarcerated people, staff members, and administration alike—was paralyzed with fear.

"It was that fear added on to guys didn't want to tell that they had it because they put you in a segregated area, they put you in the hole, take away half your properties," said Ronnie Williams. "It was like a punishment."

Michigan officials attracted nationwide praise for the state's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic — but that success didn't extend to its prisons. The infection rate in MDOC facilities was 7 times the overall rate in the state — Michigan ranked third in the nation for incarcerated individuals who tested positive for COVID.

Now, though, as more incarcerated people receive the vaccine, there is hope on the horizon. At least 60 percent of incarcerated individuals in Michigan have received at least one dose of a vaccine, a measure that is even more important as the B117 variant spreads through prisons. Kevin, who got sick with COVID in April 2020, was grateful for the protection that the vaccine offered.

"I didn't want to be put (on a) ventilator...I thought, "you can't give up now, there are too many people fighting for you." My roommate and I decided not to give up. We got a little bit more freedom...it was better than what it was when the pandemic first hit," he said.

For Leonard Williams, the vaccine was also a matter of personal safety, for him and his family members.

"I have a fear about new variants and you must prepare yourself for all these possibilities," Leonard said. "I want my people to be safe and live as long as possible, especially if I'm not out there."

Continued...

For many, though, it was difficult to trust the vaccine as administered by the facility. 40 percent of people inside struggle with chronic health conditions, but only 20 percent of this group receives medical examination after being incarcerated.

Leonard was also worried about getting the vaccine at first, "thinking, what if they didn't use the real vaccine and put something else in it?"

His concerns are understandable. Over the years the Associated Press has uncovered many examples of unethical medical practices in prisons. The lack of access is further limited for people of color, as 70 percent of Black Americans say they've been treated unfairly by the U.S. healthcare system. With the combination of rampant medical issues, historically inequitable healthcare, and prison conditions ripe for COVID transmission, it's no wonder that many people inside fear the vaccine.

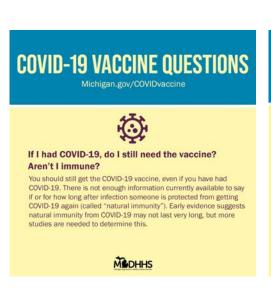
Reflecting on this lack of trust, Kevin, Ronnie, and Leonard all took matters into their own hands. Conducting their own research on the COVID vaccine empowered them to take the shot. Ronnie said, "I wouldn't tell somebody to trust the MDOC on nothin.' But I'm saying trust the medical science because it's worth it."

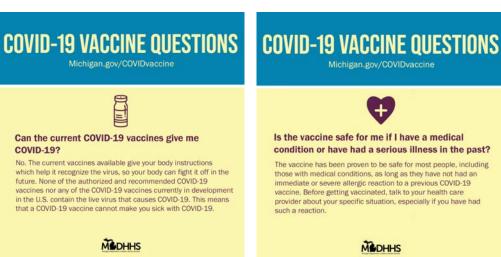
"I did my own research, I wasn't as afraid, and then I couldn't wait to get my vaccine," Leonard said.

"I was keeping steady contact in the world and in the street and listening to people's opinions about the vaccine," Ronnie said. "It wasn't a decision that was made in haste. I thought about it, pondered it. but I thought it was better for me to have it for a clear state of mind than to not have it."

For all the initial hesitation and side effects, the three men are glad they did their homework. But still, the pandemic brought to light how urgent it is to fight for healthcare that incarcerated people can trust — both for themselves and their loved ones.

"I keep going back to the shot," Kevin finished. "Get it anyway for the people that care about you and that want to see you well, family, officers, and friends. I had a special friend, my lawyer, I felt like I owed her that – not to just lay down and let this thing beat me."





Continued...

INTERVIEW WITH RONNIE WILLIAMS

Ronnie Williams was a juvenile lifer who was incarcerated with the MDOC for 40 years. He was at Macomb Correctional Facility when the pandemic hit. He was resentenced in April 2021, and was discharged from the MDOC on April 13. Katherine Root, SADO attorney and mitigation specialist worked with Ronnie on his case for 3 years and submitted this interview.

Q: Can you say a little bit about what it was like at Macomb when the pandemic hit?

A: It was horrible. Everybody in the whole unit seemed to be sick on something. I wound up having antibodies, but I don't remember being sick. Everyone was scared. The police was scared. We were scared And it was that fear added on to guys didn't want to tell that they had it because they put you in a segregated area, they put you in the hole, take away half of your properties and possessions, your food, and you can only shower once a week. So it was like a punishment and people were scared to say, 'I got COVID.' Because they didn't want to go through being locked up and all that type of stuff. And it was a horrible thing. I seen three of my friends die from it. One of my friends was a juvenile lifer who was just supposed to be going home. I think in September he was supposed to max out, and he died of it. You know what I'm saying? And he never even left the cell. His bunkie came in with it and gave it to him. It was horrible. It was horrible.

Q: Did you take the vaccine?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you want to get it?

A: Yes. I was excited to get it because to me it would be one less thing I had to worry about. It would take away the fear and being scared of it. I take the flu shot every year, so I was ready for it. The DOC was administering it, but I don't believe it was from the DOC. I was keeping steady contact in the world and in the street and listening to people's opinions about the vaccine, and I decided it was best for me to take it. It wasn't a decision that was made in haste. I thought about it, pondered it. but I thought it was better for me to have it for a clear state of mind than to not have it.

Q: What would you say to someone who's afraid to get it because they don't trust the DOC?

A: I recommend that they make the best medical decision for themselves. Study up on it. All you gotta do is look up on the science of what it is and stuff like that. especially if you take a flu shot. It's the same thing It's basically the same process. I wouldn't tell somebody to trust the MDOC on nothin. But I'm saying trust the medical science because it's worth it. For those who took it, it's worth it. Also, the officers is taking the same thing you taking. They giving them the same hookup you getting. The police was scared, too. The officers was just as scared as we were. This is something new to everybody. This wasn't something they planned or put together. It hit them just like it hit us. There's officers that died from this. And there's officers that's scared just like you are to take the vaccine. They got as much distrust as you got. But do your homework. Study up on it and take it.

Continued...

INTERVIEW WITH KEVIN COTTINGHAM

Kevin Cottingham was a juvenile lifer who was incarcerated with the MDOC for 47 years. He was at Macomb Correctional Facility when the pandemic hit. He was resentenced in April 2021, and was discharged from the MDOC on April 14. Jackie Ouvry represented Kevin for 5 years as his attorney while his case was on appeal and submitted this interview.

Q: Can you talk about when the COVID pandemic came to prison?

A: Chaos. Because nobody knew what to do. It was scary, it was very scary with inmates and with administration. They had never dealt with anything like that before, they didn't know what to do, they had to learn as they went along. They made mistakes and may have cost lives. As it went along they are better able to handle it.

Q: Did you take the vaccine?

A: Yes. Yes. It's nothing to laugh about. I got Covid in April 2020. Having COVID, when I had it, it feels like that everything is gone. You don't have an appetite. You don't want to be bothered. You can't smell, can't taste. Your breathing is shallow. You just lay there and can't do anything. My roommate told me, "You gotta eat. You ain't eat nothing in 5 days!" You don't want to eat when you have COVID. You don't wish it on your worst enemy. This is something you don't play with.

Q: How did you hear about the vaccine?

A: The nurses. MDOC informed healthcare that they would give shot to anyone who would take it. Free of charge. Some were skeptical, some officers when they went home, they refused the shot. Everyone was afraid of after-effects. Some were not concerned; they were more worried about virus. When they offered, I was the first one. I said, "Yeah! I'll take it."

Q: What did you think about this new thing?

A: I don't know if it works, but what's the harm. If the MDOC is giving you something and not charging you, you should take it. They charge for everything else. Plus, the more COVID cases they had, the more money they got [from the feds]. Why not be safe than sorry? Everyone I know who got the shot, they fine.

Q: Why did you decide to be one of the first ones to get it?

A: One of the reasons I took it was that I didn't want to go through the virus again. I saw people put on a ventilator. I didn't want to be put ventilator. I thought about my sister and all the time she spent... sacrificing, coming to see me, to write to me, to accept phone calls, to write letters on my behalf, all that came into my thoughts. I thought "you can't give up now, there are too many people fighting for you." My roommate and I decided not to give up. My advice to anybody, if you haven't got vaccine, take it. If you don't take for yourself, take it for people around you. if got a chance to get a COVID 19 shot, take it. Take it, you might be sorry that you didn't. You'd be crazy not take it.

Q: Anything else you want folks to know?

A: Really, I mean...I keep going back to the shot. Get it anyway for the people that care about you and that want to see you. People that want to see you well, family, officers, and friends. I also had a special friend, my lawyer, I felt like I owed her that – not to just lay down and let this thing beat me.

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Continued...

INTERVIEW WITH LEONARD WILLIAMS

Leonard Williams is currently incarcerated at Central Michigan Correctional Facility serving 35-60 years for a crime he was convicted of at the age of 16. SADO's Reentry team is working with him to prepare for his future out date. When he gets out he hopes to continue working out and open his own gym providing programming and mentoring for youth in is community.

Q: What type of vaccine did you get?

A: Johnson & Johnson

Q: When did you get it?

A: March 2021

Q: Did you have you side effects?

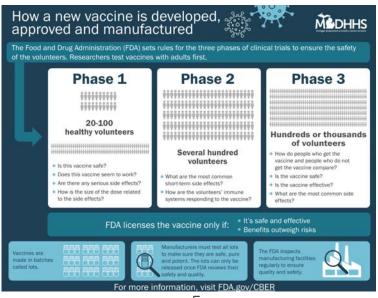
A: No, none

Q: Did you have concerns about getting the vaccine?

A: Yes, I did at first because of the MDOC, thinking what if they didn't use the real vaccine and they put something else in it, but after I did my own research, I wasn't as afraid and then I couldn't wait to get my vaccine.

Q: Why did you choose to get the vaccine?

A: I think it's very important for people to get vaccinated to help the people that they love because if you say you love someone you have to do everything in your power to keep the people you love safe. I want my mother to visit me, and my nieces and nephews, and I need to protect them. I have a fear about new variants and you must prepare yourself for all these possibilities. Being vaccinated is really in your best interest and your family's interest. I want my people to be safe and to live as long as possible especially if I'm not out there. Period. No if, ands, or buts. I talked a guy into getting vaccinate the other day who was young, just 20 years old. He had a visit with his girlfriend, and I said what if you give that girl corona and she don't die but she has complications, and you leave her scarred for life.... he pondered and in about 10 days he got it. You could be the one to hurt your family, so why not get it. Period.



CITIZEN SPOTLIGHT

GERALD MERRELL

CAME HOME

December 29th 2020

HOMETOWN

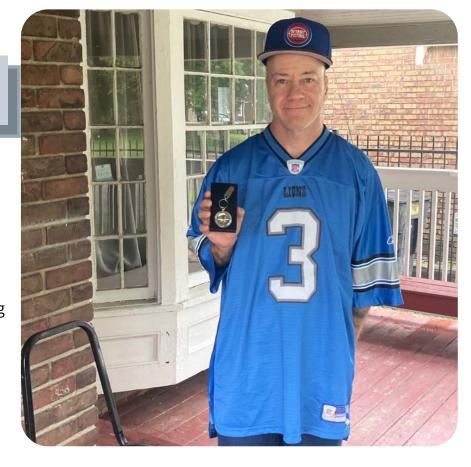
Detroit, MI

HOBBIES AND INTERESTS

I love gardening, walking, jogging, playing sports when I get a chance, swimming, fishing, and doing jigsaw puzzles.

SUCCESSES AFTER INCARCERATION

I climbed the ladder in my job to a manager position and I am in charge of essentially millions of dollars worth of



materials. As a supervisor I've made the team at work a lot better. I also got a bank account, a place to live, and am catching up with a lot of family members. Spending time with my goddaughter who is 2 years old is one of the things I am most grateful for. I have so many family members who have kids that I never thought I'd get to meet. I enjoy being around them and watching them grow. I want to be the cool uncle like my uncle was to me, so every time I'm around my family I spoil all the kids by buying them candy and toys.

STRUGGLES AFTER INCARCERATION

I've had some anger issues and other temptations that I didn't give in to. I do get angry about certain things but I think about my actions first before doing something stupid. Mostly it's just little things at work that come up that I get frustrated with at times, or having to deal with people at work that aren't taking the job seriously. When I first got out I also had a lot of anxiety being around people and going into stores.

MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

Stick with your goals and gather around positive people at all cost because if you surround yourself with positive people positive things will happen. I can never say "you lead me down the wrong street" because I stick around all positive people who truly have my best interest. Stay focused, get a job, get counseling if you need it or enroll yourself in a program if you need it. Keep your network positive.





MASTERS ESSAY: A SERIES Submission By Timothy Greer CHAPTER 3 PUBLIC BENEFITS

There are times when ex-prisoners, who, because of some physical and/or mental disability, are unable to secure and maintain gainful employment. Petersilia (2003), in her preeminent work on prisoner reentry, noted that "[m]ost of those released from prison today have serious ... medical problems". When circumstances such as this arise, what has society offered these individuals to subsist and advance after they have returned from prison and may be, because of an irreversible disability, financially incapable of providing for themselves and possibly a family? Again, this is a question that says more about society itself than those whom it wishes to punish. Nevertheless, when these individuals are physically and/or mentally unable to work, society must step in to ensure that these individuals are provided at least with meager financial and nutritional assistance for themselves or their families. This should also be the case if an individual is not physically and/or mentally incapable of having employment, or, simply, if he or she is able to work but cannot find it. For many of them, governmental assistance is desperately needed.

However, the government has had a longstanding practice of denying assistance to certain exprisoners. As noted by Travis (2005), Congress has created various quasi-legal restrictions on exoffenders and/or prisoners which constitute continued punishment after criminal convictions have been handed down by the court. According to the author, these restrictions are "invisible" because "[t]hey operate largely from public view.... [T]hey typically take effect outside the traditional sentencing framework.... [T]hey are not typically enacted by the same legislative committees that determine a state's sentencing statutes".

For instance, according to Finzen (2005), in 1996, Congress enacted the Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act, which prohibited offenders convicted of an offense involving the "possession, use, or distribution of drugs" (p.309) from receiving food stamps, Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)4, Supplemental Security Income (SSI)5 and/or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSD)6 benefits. It is worth noting that Michigan was one of the few states that opted out of this legislation, refusing to deny ex-prisoners TANF benefits. Without such assistance, how does society expect these individuals and their families – which often include minor children – to successfully reintegrate? Many ex-prisoners do not return to their communities alone; oftentimes, they have left families behind during their incarceration. And if these individuals are unable to work upon their release from prison, be it a product of a verifiable infirmity of some sort or simply a lack of expeditiously securing employment, some form of public benefit should be provided to them to keep them from falling further into poverty and possibly reoffending and/or reincarceration.

Works (2003) indicated that while many ex-prisoners are in need of public assistance upon their release from prison, "[w]ithout the even meager allowances from TANF and food stamps, many will fall prey to the streets". In essence, the very meager means of subsistence – such as food, clothing, and shelter – are being denied to these individuals and their families based upon the ex-prisoner's criminal background. Again, this says more about society itself than the individuals in question.

To Be Continued.

Do you have a message you'd like to send to the community? We would love to share it! Please send any written pieces, artwork or images to reentry@sado.org to be featured in an upcoming Drum!

STAY TUNED FOR MORE OF TIMOTHY GREER'S ENLIGHTENING ESSAY ON PRISON REENTRY AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE REFORM. IF YOU WOULD LIKE THE FULL ESSAY MAILED OR EMAILED, PLEASE REACH OUT TO SADO REENTRY BY EMAILING REENTRY@SADO.ORG.

WHERE DO WE BELONG?

Submission By Anthony Givens

as I pour these literary lines
like a fine
well aged wine
to,

I hope that in Time
your mind

will be able to digest the complexities, that I've set out for us to dine upon.

For I AM.

the center, pivotal position
as colliding oppositions
kinetically change the form of my disposition
demonstrating,
the cause & effect of emotional motion
perpetuated by outside, moon, stars
able to destroy & create like pulsating quasars
emitting from the deep, dark blackness of the universe
signals for the Children of MAN to converse
as birthed

from the deep dark Earth
a binding of above with our skin
that me & my kin
would learn that this place
this world, is our Space.

MEET THE TEAM

RANDI BALDERAMA



HOMETOWN

Hollister, CA

HOBBIES AND INTEREST

Animal rescue, hiking, juvenile justice reforms and staying out of the California heat!

MESSAGE TO THE COMMUNITY

Thank you to this community for giving me the chance to listen and learn. I hope to offer support, understanding and a different perspective in the short time I am here.

AND THE RESOURCE OF THE MONTH GOES TO.....

POWER IN PASSION

Starting the summer off right, Lansing, MI based reentry organization Power In Passion hosted a reentry resource fair for the community. The fair was sponsored by many organizations doing great work including Nation Outside, Michigan Collaboration to End Mass Incarceration (MI-Cemi), and the Youth Justice Fund. One of the best parts of attending was grabbing a bite to eat from the Chow Hall, a business created by Lawanda Hollister. If you haven't tried food from the Chow Hall you are missing out! Aside from spending the day with great people and great organizations, it was also an opportunity to learn about the resources Power in Passion provides. Power in Passion connects returning citizens with employment, housing, transportation, cell phones, and other basic needs. Most importantly they provide a space for community, networking, and connections. If you are in the Lansing, MI area, get in contact and check



SADO Reentry Specialist Jose Burgos and Reentry Coordinator at the fair

Contact: Katy Kelly (Founder/ CEO)

Phone: (517) 619-2460 1300 Eureka St. Lansing, MI 48912 katy@powerinpassion.love www.powerinpassion.love



them out yourself!

READ THE BODY KEEPS THE SCORE

The Body Keeps the Score transforms our understanding of traumatic stress, revealing how it literally rearranges the brain's wiring—specifically areas dedicated to pleasure, engagement, control, and trust.



WATCH LIVING ON L.O.P.: WHAT WE LEARNED IN PRISON

Check this awesome series out on Youtube. Created by Pat Bates and Cozine Welch, this is a series which features the stories of formerly incarcerated people who share lessons they have learned while isolated in prison. The soundtracks within the series are great too!



BLACK MEN HEAL

For the last year we have been doing everything online, does that mean it's here to stay? First, let me say that zoom and online chats do not replace in person meet ups. But the internet gives us to chance to connect with the people who know us best, even if they don't live in the same city or state. Black Men Heal offers black men a space to connect with mental health professionals who understand what it is to be a black man living in the united states today and what it can take to heal and thrive. Two free apps for your cell phone are also offering a chance to connect with other black men and women who are looking to develop life skills, create goals and build healthy habits through online forums and community discussions.

EMPLOYMENT AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

CENTER FOR EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Hiring immediately, felony friendly no matter the convictions, parole eligibility flexible. Transportation to work site from central location.

Contact SADO Reentry or email Maggie Hall at mhall@ceoworks.org

7310 Woodward Ave #701b Detroit, MI 48202 313-752-0768

BRIDGEWATER INTERIORS: MULTIPLE POSITIONS

Bridgewater Interiors is a Black owned automotive interior design company that hires returning citizens. They have locations in Detroit, Lansing, and Warren Michigan.

Visit

bridgewater-interiors.com to learn more about the company and find available job opportunities.

FAURECIA: MULTIPLE POSITIONS

Faurecia is a global automotive supplier. They have plants in Saline, Sterling Heights, Auburn Hills, and Highland Park, and hire returning citizens.

Visit https://careers.faurecia.com/ for full job description and how to apply

SAFE AND JUST MICHIGAN: SOCIAL MEDIA SPECIALIST

The community Social Media Specialist is responsible administering existing and future social media accounts in a cohesive way that reflects our organizational goals, values, perspective, and brand. This work includes creating original text and video content, managing posts, and responding to followers.

Visit: www.safeandjustmi.org/about/staff/ and find the link to the job posting at the bottom of the page to apply

PLUM MARKET: ANN ARBOR. MI

Plum Market hires returning citizens and offers many on the job "perks" to support their staff such as paid time off for ALL employees, great retirement and medical benefits for ALL employees, and store discounts!

Visit: www.plummarket.com/careers to check out available positions and apply

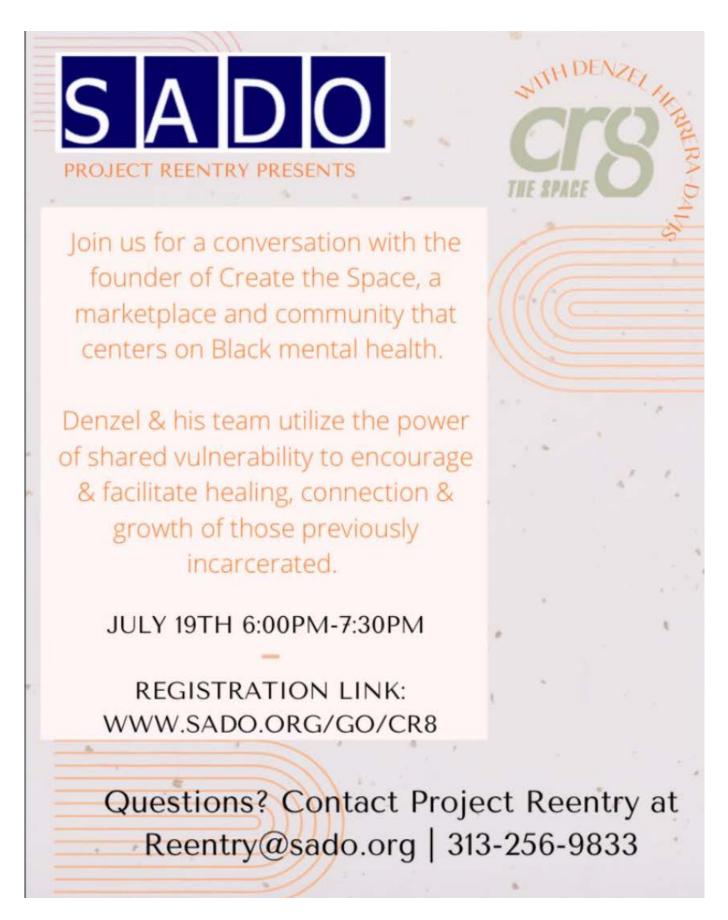
MAGNA LIGHTING

Magna lighting is a global manufacturing company with factories throughout Michigan including Plymouth, Shelby, Sterling Heights, and Hyland Park. They offer competitive wages and benefits.

Visit magna.com to learn more about the company and available find available job openings near you

FOR ASSISTANCE APPLYING TO JOBS OR TO BE CONNECTED TO EVENTS AND RESOURCES IN YOUR AREA, PLEASE REACH OUT TO PROJECT REENTRY.

UP NEXT! PROJECT REENTRY JULY 2021 WORKSHOP



To see past versions of The Drum, visit www.sado.org/go/drum

Follow SADO on Facebook and Twitter!

@sadoreentry and @sadomich

Have QUESTIONS OR something to contribute?

Email reentry@sado.org 313-256-9833