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**WELCOME HOME PROJECT: BREAKING THE CYCLE OF
RECIDIVISM**

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**Welcome Home Project:
Breaking the Cycle of Recidivism**

By

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Abstract

*Jesus Set The Captive Free, Inc. (JSCF) has been providing transitional housing and life services to the homeless since 2001. JSCF is a constructive ministry for spiritual intervention based on Godly principals to those seeking a way-out from the cycle of recidivism. The “**Welcome Home Project**” will target ex-offender, veterans and the homeless by providing permanent housing and life services. This paper will discuss the reasons why the “**Welcome Home**” Project is needed.*

Veterans at War

Veterans have a lot to deal with before and after the war. They are concerned with being good enough to fight in the war. After spending four to five years fighting in the battlegrounds, they have to deal with coming home and living as civilians. However, the homecoming trip for these veterans is not as simple as it seems. They have seen others killed and also almost gotten themselves killed. Their mental state cannot be in the right place after all the above occurs with many more factors. There are guides available for veterans when they return home to try and live a normal life.

Nearly twenty (20) percent of the more than two (2) million troops who have served in Iraq and Afghanistan suffer from mental health conditions. Studies shows that there are not enough resources to handle the growing demand from new veterans for mental health services.¹

Aside from dealing with mental health issues, these veterans have to cope with adjusting to society. To help combat stigma and ease the readjustment for service members returning from Iraq and Afghanistan, a historic National Multi-year Public Service announcement campaign with the Ad Council was created.² The ad campaign gives the veterans resources they need through going to a website exclusive to veterans called www.communityofveterans.org. This allows the veterans to communicate with one another and offer services, benefits and mental health resources. Stress and stress injuries such as PTSD may contribute to misconduct in service members and veterans, also.² Military studies suggest that troops who test positive for mental health problems are twice as likely to engage in unethical behavior.²

Veterans Homelessness

Veterans are far more likely to experience homelessness than their civilian peers. Rates of drug, alcohol, and mental illness among the homeless veterans are extremely high.² One hundred fifty-four thousand veterans (154,000) are homeless on any given night.² Forty-five (45) percent of homeless veterans have a psychological illness, and more than seventy (70) percent suffer from substance abuse. Approximately twelve thousand seven hundred (12,700) veterans of Operation Enduring Freedom –Afghanistan (OEF) and Operation New Dawn –Iraq (OND) were homeless in 2010.³

Already, thousands of Iraq and Afghanistan veterans are joining veterans of other generations on the streets and in shelters.² Most veterans don't feel they are part of society and end up living on the street following their service in the military. While living on the street, they end up committing crimes to survive.

Veterans Incarcerated

Here are some statistics about incarcerated veterans:

- There were an estimated 140,000 veterans held in state and federal prisons. State prisons held 127,500 of these veterans, and federal prisons held 12,500.³
- Male veterans were half as likely as other men to be held in prison (630 prisoners per 100,000 veterans, compared to 1,390 prisoners per 100,000 non-veteran U.S. residents). This gap had been increasing since the 1980s.³
- Veterans in both state and federal prison were almost exclusively male (99 percent).³
- The median age (45) of veterans in state prison was 12 years older than that of non-veterans (33). Non-veteran inmates (55%) were nearly four times more likely than veterans (14%) to be under the age of 35.³
- Veterans were much better educated than other prisoners. Nearly all veterans in state prison (91%) reported at least a high school diploma or GED, while an estimated 40% of non-veterans lacked either.³

Let's look at Military backgrounds about incarcerated veterans:

- The U.S. Army accounted for 46% of veterans living in the United States yet 56% of veterans in state prison.³
- In 2004, the percentage of state prisoners who reported prior military service in the U.S. Armed Forces (10%) was half of the level reported in 1986 (20%).³
- Most state prison veterans (54%) reported service during a wartime era, while 20% saw combat duty. In federal prison two-thirds of veterans had served during wartime, and one quarter had seen combat.³
- Six in 10 incarcerated veterans received an honorable discharge.³

Jesus Set The Captive Free, Inc

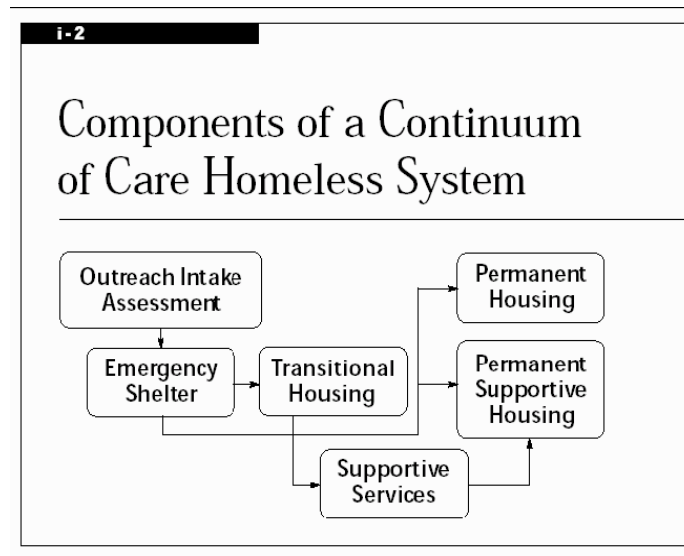
Jesus Set The Captive Free, Inc. (JSCF) is a faith-based non-profit organization established in December 2000, later incorporated in December 2001 based in East Point, GA. We received our full 501c3 tax-exempt status in April 2006. Our Director Barbara Williams sees the rate for ex-offenders relapse into criminal behavior climbing very rapidly. It became painfully clear that incarceration and the cycle of recidivism are indicators of a weak value system and a lack of faith based mentoring. The organizations have grown to three (3) locations in the South Fulton County that includes building a brand new facility on Elmwood Ave in Northwest Atlanta.

Our mission:

JSCF strives to empower the ex-offender, veterans and the homeless through information and education, along with emotional and faith-based support that will strengthen your way of life.⁴

Market Evaluation⁵

The need for permanent housing for the homeless and ex-offenders returning is growing at an alarming rate. In the past the term “homelessness” was often times coupled with the word “hopeless”. That association was perpetuated by our habit of looking at the problem and not the solution. Our focus on homelessness was segmented due to approach. Our agencies had not been linked together by our common goal. With the onset of the US Government 10-year plan and Atlanta’s rollout of the “Continuum of Care Plan” hope is now the key word coupled with homelessness



Welcome Home Project

“Welcome Home” is the homeless permanent housing facility where JSCF will host of services including mentoring, in-house GED program, computer literacy and job search. JSCF wants to see a world were hope is restored, love is shown an aid is given, where men, women boys and girls can walk together in love and our families reunited. In line with this vision JSCF’s goal is to build communities where the people are the center of all activities. Through a strong faith-based approach, folk can start living and strengthening their lives and our communities.

On July 15, 2010 the organization was donated property to further our progress. The property is located at 527 Elmwood Road NW, Atlanta, GA in Fulton County. JSCF’s “Welcome Home” program focuses on the construction of our new facility on Elmwood Ave. and expanding our services to new clients. Our strategies are to build financial strategies and a volunteer base to help with every phase of construction of the new facility and to help build our infrastructure as we grow.

*Welcome Home Project Objectives:*⁵

- Provide safe, affordable transitional and permanent housing for the ex-offender and homeless population of Fulton County and surrounding areas.
- Provide faith-based mentoring, computer and GED classes to equip participants with marketable job and life skills.
- Provide supportive services to ex-offenders, offenders, homeless, their families, key members of their support system and affected communities
- Maximize the utilization of organizations and community resources
- Document results and employ the best practices for reducing recidivism
- Become a Key Resource for Atlanta's Continuum of Care initiative
- Increase our number of housing units by 30% every 5 years to reach our goal of 20 units.

*Welcome Home Project Program Design*⁵

Approximately 70% of this population are assessed as having less than functional literacy skills (less than a 9th grade level) and 50% were classified as having only basic literacy skills (4th grade levels). An estimated 60% of all inmates in prison have a significant substance abuse problem. Thirty-two (32.4%) percent of ex-offenders are recommitted to prison or community supervision for a new offense within two years following release. The Department of Justice recently reported that there was approximately a 10% reduction in recidivism after a two-year follow-up for inmates who complete both a primary treatment program and a relapse prevention component prior to release, compared to inmates who completed only a primary treatment program. Inmates who earn a GED are 8.7% less likely to recidivate than those who do not complete a program. Through faith-based mentoring and skill development programs JSCF proposes to provide tools essential to breaking the cycle of recidivism and homelessness. Our program key components are:

Counseling: For development of a "Good Works" attitude. The emphasis is positive and dedicated participation as well as volunteering in the community.

Case Management: Addresses housing, program admission, standard for completion to termination of programs. Address internal and external security matters, staffing requirements, standards and compensation. Facilities / Home Life Sub-Committee: Facilities and home life are essential to the successful transitioning of ex-offenders and offenders. This subcommittee will oversee resident participation and responsibility for cleaning and maintenance of the facility, respecting the rights and property of their peers and sponsoring organizations. This subcommittee reviews all rules and regulations governing residential home life. This will include

such rules as the handling of food, visiting off-site and on site, visiting by family members and friends; zones” closed to outside personnel, and stipend payments. The Facilities/Home Life subcommittee will also oversee the construction and restoration of living space to ensure that all permits are obtained, safety requirements are met, and living areas are in compliance with federal, state and city ordinances.

Skill Development: Our curriculum provides a platform for skills development essential to maintaining intermediate range employment (1-2yrs), and having a successful family life. This curriculum includes a pre-entry program evaluation; continued skill assessment throughout the program, and follow-up evaluations after participants complete the program. Academic programs (ABE classes-grades 0-5, pre-GED classes –grades 5-7.5, GED-grades 7 -.5-12), anger management and people in authority are included.

Spiritual Counseling: Clergy and laymen alike will share in development and administering the spiritual counseling curriculum. This sub-committee is responsible for the curriculum development, training counselors, monitoring counselor and program participant performances. “Good Works” are encouraged and should reflect a positive attitude toward the community where participants live. Each participant is expected to dedicate volunteer time for fund raising of the “Good Works” and other community based initiatives. Bible study (optional) is offered to all participants

In conclusion, our services that target ex-offenders have made us discover a growing population that has been underserved, veterans. Welcome Home Project is JSCF’s solution to this issue.

Bibliography

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² Invisible Wounds: Psychological and Neurological Injuries Confront a New Generation of Veterans by Vanessa Williamson And Erin Mulhall; Retrieved from www.iava.org

³ National Coalition for Homeless Veterans; retrieved from www.nchv.org

⁴ www.jesusetcaptivefree.org

⁵ Jesus Set The Captive Free, Inc. Business Plan