



CJM *Connections*

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SAVE THE DATE!

- CJM is hosting its first annual Recognition Dinner on **June 1st, 2017**. This event is in addition to the Volunteer Celebration held in early March. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.
- This event will highlight CJM's great work and the people who make it possible. More info will be available on the website and the next newsletter.

NEW WEBSITE LAUNCH!

- Thanks to the generosity of our website designer, Paul E. Jost, CJM has a new website. Please take it for a test drive and let us know what you think:

www.cjmstlouis.org

The Journey from CJM Client to Employee

Today, Stanley Johnson has a sense of stability and direction. He has his own apartment, a janitorial job at CJM, a healthy diet and exercise regimen, and a set of goals for his future.

This was not always the case for Stanley. When he was 17, Stanley dropped out of school and joined the Marines. According to him, "at the time, I didn't know what I was doing." Nevertheless, Stanley served his country and received an honorable discharge.



Somewhere along the way, however, Stanley started making some bad decisions. He started drinking and eventually landed himself in prison. During his time there, he decided to quit drinking and turn his life around. When Stanley was finally released from prison and found himself in the Community Release Center (CRC) in downtown St. Louis, he experienced the tremendous challenges associated with reentering society. Stanley was on his own; he couldn't find employment, secure housing, or develop the skills necessary to succeed on the outside. According to Stanley, he was "stuck in a place worse than prison."

All of this changed when he became a client at CJM. Stanley said, "they picked me up from the CRC and immediately found me a place to stay. Suddenly, there were people who cared about me."

After a year of being in CJM's Release to Rent program for Veterans, Stanley is full of hope and optimistic about his future. In his words, "I have been given the help to help myself. For that, I am eternally grateful to everyone at CJM."

To Friend-raise, Not just to Fund-raise

"To serve, not to judge" is the Vincentian motto that guides CJM, and it was on full display at the annual Trivia Night on August 20th. Almost 300 people filled the gym at St. James the Greater elementary school in Dogtown. From volunteers to former clients to friendly acquaintances, the crowd consisted of individuals and CJM stakeholders from all walks of life.

Contact Us

- To learn more about CJM, donate or volunteer, please visit our new website:

www.cjmstlouis.org

- Also, feel free to call us at 314-652-8062 or email at:

info@cjmstlouis.org

Director's Corner

- Thanks to the leadership of Sister Carleen and hard work of the staff, CJM has cultivated a long list of dedicated stakeholders who donate their time and money to help CJM provide essential services to its clients. As the new Executive Director, I look forward to meeting everyone personally. Please do not hesitate to contact, even if it is just to chat/meet:

anthonyd@cjmstlouis.org

While the event raised almost \$10,000 to help fund CJM programs, that is not the only reason for the event. Like many non-profits, CJM has realized that a trivia night's real value derives from connecting with individuals who have a passion for its mission – often called "friend-raising".



The night highlighted CJM's tremendous work in the community and provided an opportunity to recognize and thank those individuals who make it happen. In fact, the night began with an introduction by the new Executive Director, Anthony D'Agostino, who focused on thanking everyone in the room, especially the volunteers. According to Anthony, "from its creation to its execution, CJM's trivia night is led by volunteers on the Trivia night committee, and they are the main reason why it is such a success." Additionally, Anthony began the night recognizing recently retired Executive Director, Carleen Reck, and her tremendous contributions to CJM over her 17 years at the helm.

As CJM reflects on the success and connections made at this year's trivia night, everyone is already looking forward to next year's event and an opportunity to do more friend-raising.

Obama Impacts CJM

In an increasingly polarized America, just mentioning the current President's name can evoke strong opinions on both ends of the spectrum. Whether you agree with the Obama administration's approach to most issues or not, their approach to criminal justice reform is receiving unanimous praise from the criminal justice community and bi-partisan support.



Furthermore, the actions taken by President Obama are impacting criminal justice organizations throughout the country, including CJM. When He commuted the sentences of 214 federal inmates on August 3rd, CJM received a phone call concerning one of those individuals. "This man had spent over 20 years in prison for drug-related offenses," explained Aaron Laxton, CJM

Director of Client Services. "When he was convicted and incarcerated, drug offenses carried heavy sentences. Today, the same offense would warrant a much shorter sentence." The extended time inside not only affected him as an individual, but impacted his whole family.

Now, thanks to the pardon and CJM's help, he is successfully reentering society, reuniting with his family; and primed to become a positive, productive member of the St. Louis community.