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Wilson Foundation Announces \$1 Million in Prison Reentry Initiative Grants

BATON ROUGE – Spurred by the knowledge that Louisiana has the highest prison recidivism rate in the world, the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation today announced the awarding of \$1 million in Prison Reentry Initiative investments for 2016; a full listing of grantees and their programs are below. The Initiative is designed to create a dramatic reduction in the percentage of formerly incarcerated individuals who return to prison and an increase in the cost-savings to the community associated with successful reintegration.

“We are eager and excited to see these programs begin these enhanced services for clients in our community,” said Dan Bevan, president of the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation. “These programs were selected because the Foundation believes they are the most capable of creating lasting change for returning citizens in the Greater Baton Rouge community. We acknowledge that there are many other organizations serving these individuals – and serving them well – and regret that we are unable to invest in every one of them.”

The Foundation created the Initiative to support each of the 10 parishes in the Greater Baton Rouge area in creating a continuum of care that fully prepares incarcerated individuals for successful reentry and helps those reintegrating remain free. Currently, 95 percent of incarcerated individuals will re-enter their communities, and they need support in making a successful transition. These supports appear in the form of education, job readiness skills, housing, mental health and/or substance abuse recovery, medication and treatment support, financial obligations, parenting skills, and social, family and spiritual supports.

“We recognize that there are gaps in services,” Bevan said. “It is our goal that through this initiative we can close those gaps and remove other barriers that hinder successful reintegration.”

With programs in operation from January 1 through December 31, 2016, grantees are:

- **Awana Clubs International**, \$40,000 for *State Manager, Awana Lifeline Ministries*: Awana operates programs in six Louisiana Department of Corrections prisons focused on strengthening the bonds between incarcerated parents and their free children to stop the generational prison pipeline. This grant will partially fund the creation of a new state-level director to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the programs and replicate the program at other sites.
- **Baton Rouge Community College Foundation**, \$70,000 for *BRCC Corrections Technical Education Support*: BRCC provides welding instruction at four Louisiana Department of Corrections facilities in the greater Baton Rouge area. This grant will provide partial funding for instructors for this high-wage, high-demand career, so that returning citizens will have the skills needed to secure a job and provide for their families upon release.

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- **Capital Area Human Services District**, \$80,000 for *Behavioral Health Reentry Program*: CAHSD has partnered with the East Baton Rouge Parish Prison to ensure those with mental illness and co-occurring substance abuse are identified and assessed upon entering the facility. Those at risk are paired with a peer mentor who assists with a treatment plan that is followed while incarcerated and at least six months post-release.
- **Capital Area Reentry Coalition**, \$250,000 for *Building the Best*: CAPARC provides coordination and outreach for all reentry service providers in the 10-parish region. This grant will provide funding to increase the number of partners and service providers, identify and disseminate best practices, and develop an advocacy plan on behalf of returning citizens.
- **Capital Area Reentry Program**, \$47,000 for *Connecting to Success*: This program supporting hard-to-place returning citizens, partners CARP and Turning Point Outreach Services to provide family reunification, employment and rehabilitation services to returning citizens.
- **Church United for Community Development**, \$50,000 for *Case Manager, Kingdom Men*: Church United serves high-risk incarcerated and formerly incarcerated men from Ascension, East Baton Rouge, Iberville and Livingston parishes through sober living, housing, individual action plans and transitional employment. The addition of another case manager will allow expansion of the program to serve more returning citizens and a broader geographic reach.
- **Connections for Life**, \$20,000 for *Connect2Empower*: Connections for Life provides female returning citizens with a peer mentor and intensive case management, focusing heavily on job readiness, employment identification and placement.
- **Helping Educate to Advance the Rights of the Deaf**, \$30,000 for *Mobilizing Resources for Deaf Offenders*: This project will translate vital probation and parole rules and regulation materials into American Sign Language for use by deaf inmates and returning citizens. There are currently few accommodations made for this special-needs population.
- **Louis A. Martinet Foundation**, \$75,000 for *19th Judicial District Reentry Court*: The 19th Judicial District Court's Reentry Court Program has been in operation since 2014 under Judge Trudy M. White, providing eligible offenders with the opportunity to receive two years of intense education and training while imprisoned at Louisiana State Penitentiary (Angola) and case management for transitioning back to the community upon release. This grant will allow for the expansion of the program to more offenders and more support upon their release.
- **Louisiana Budget Project**, \$30,000 for *Prison Dollars and Sense*: The Prison Dollars and Sense project is a research initiative that aims to change the public conversation from "hard on crime" to "smart on crime," ultimately shifting more dollars into proven rehabilitation programs that reduce recidivism without sacrificing public safety.
- **LSU Foundation**, \$40,000 for *LSU Law Parole and Reentry*: This project includes two components: 1) The *Louisiana Law Review's* free continuing education symposium, Throw Away the Key: Criminal Sentencing Reform in the 21st Century and subsequent working group, and 2) LSU Law School's Parole & Reentry Clinic, where students supervised by professors prepare offenders for their appearance before the Parole Board.

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- **O'Brien House**, \$50,000 for *Relapse Prevention for Successful Reentry*: O'Brien House will expand and intensify its services for returning citizens by formalizing pre-release assessments to expedite referrals, enhancing treatments and formalizing a post-discharge after care program, in coordination with other partners who will provide follow along support.
- **One Touch Ministry**, \$80,000 for *Regional Offender Transitional Housing Program*: One Touch Ministry will expand its current partnerships and educational classes to increase housing options and sustainability for returning citizens, as well as reduce stigma associated with returning citizens.
- **Refined By Fire Ministries**, \$138,000 for *Reentry Benefiting Families*: In this collaboration, Refined By Fire Ministries will be working closely with the Pointe Coupee Detention Center, the Capital Area Regional Reentry Program and the West Baton Rouge Transitional Work Program to provide 60-90 day pre-release programming, including life skills, accredited education and training programs.

Information regarding the Prison Reentry Initiative is available at www.hawilsonfoundation.org/prisonreentry.

About the Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation

Huey and Angelina Wilson established the Foundation with a focus on enriching the lives of the people of the Baton Rouge area. Mr. and Mrs. Wilson believed that communities are strengthened when people begin to see themselves as resources and find successful ways of marshaling their talents and the talents of local people and organizations to solve problems.

The Foundation believes that for people to be self-sufficient and productive members of society they must have basic needs of healthcare and education met. Therefore the Foundation invests in organizations and programs focused on four priority areas: human services, healthcare, education and prison reentry. In addition, the Foundation believes that the most disadvantaged – including the sick and disabled, the indigent, and the formerly incarcerated – need particular resources so they are better able to be competent and productive citizens. The Foundation's staff and trustees seek to invest in organizations and programs that are a solid fit to successfully address these needs and prioritize requests that address the root causes of problems rather than treating the underlying symptoms.

Learn more on the Foundation's website at www.hawilsonfoundation.org.