

 Sponsors

Transformation Happens Here

Summer 2022 | Newsletter



Little by Little, Louisa Puts the Pieces Back Together

Louisa helps customers try on prescription glasses. Even when they wear masks, she can see the smile creases form in the corners of their eyes—that's when she knows they found a winner, the pair they will take home!

If you met Louisa today, working in a local optometrist's office, you would never know she was released from prison just two years ago... weeks before the world around her would change, because of COVID.

Louisa earned her optician certificate while she was in prison, hoping it might offer her a path to employment and stability. Two things she didn't have before she entered prison.

As Louisa describes it, an abusive relationship led to addiction, and then homelessness and the loss of her family connection. She knew her only chance at a life after prison was to figure out how to get sober and become self-reliant. As her release date neared, her counselor suggested Sponsors. She applied and was accepted.

On the day Louisa released from prison, she sat quietly, looking out the window of the car that drove her from prison to Sponsors. The drive was a tearful blur, many tough memories and emotions swirled in her mind. She was anxious and overwhelmed thinking about her life goals. *Will I fail?* She wondered.

Louisa settled in at Sponsors and took the first job she was offered, working as a housekeeper in a hotel chain. She also participated in every program she thought might help her succeed, which included working with a peer mentor, participating in group counseling, and continuing in a drug treatment program. She was determined!

And then the pandemic shut everything down. She was laid off at work. Her stress and anxiety soared. But Louisa persevered. She dedicated herself to maintaining her sobriety and worked on repairing relationships with family. When she successfully completed Sponsors' Transitions Program, Louisa's mother invited her to stay with her, while she planned her next steps.



“Sponsors impacts so many people's lives for the better and I am one of them.”

Within a few months, Louisa found a job that utilized the optician training she received in prison. Little by little, the pieces began falling into place.

Today, Louisa lives with her partner and together they are setting new goals for the future. She is proud knowing she has accomplished everything she wanted to when she left prison.

Louisa and hundreds of other formerly incarcerated people begin their unique reentry journey here at Sponsors.

Thank you for continuing to offer your support, even—and especially during—an unpredictable global pandemic.



From the Director: Paul Solomon

Dear Friends,

Since I began my career at Sponsors nearly 21 years ago, the one constant in our work has been change. During the past few years, we have experienced remarkable change at an unprecedented pace. The pandemic forced us to implement a myriad of changes and to create processes and protocols to ensure the health and safety of our participants and staff while striving to continue delivering the high standard of service we have come to expect and pride ourselves upon. We succeeded in that work,

and your ongoing support helped us to stay the course despite challenges at every step. We remain strong. Stronger, in some ways, than we've ever been. ***Sometimes there are silver linings.***

Along the way, we have continued our journey to advance diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in the organization. We have made significant strides in our efforts to develop policies and protocols that address historical inequities within the organization, foster diversity in all realms of our work, and enhance inclusivity among our staff, board and greater community. Our staff and board of directors have embraced these processes. As an organization that serves marginalized individuals, it is important that we lead on issues of racial and social justice. We can and must do better by the people we serve who carry the scars and trauma from institutional oppressions that foster misogyny, racism, sexism, transphobia, and homophobia. We also must acknowledge and address our own role in fostering inequities, white centeredness, and institutional racism. As an organization, we are committed to dismantling systems of oppression and providing a safe and welcoming environment for all people. It's a long journey that we have embarked upon and one that will never be concluded. We are committed to the course.

Nearly all of our programs have experienced growth and change as well. In our "Transitions Program," which provides transitional housing and behavioral health services, we have restructured to more effectively address the 24/7 needs of our program participants. Mentorship has recently added new life skills curriculum that extends the focus and relationship between mentors and mentees, and our Reentry Resource Center is offering a cadre of new workshops and services to individuals seeking housing and employment. Our work is never static. We are constantly evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of our programming and services. And we are ever responsive to the people before us, who remind us of the importance and necessity of our work, each and every day.

I announced in May that I will be stepping down from my role as Executive Director (ED). It has been the greatest privilege to lead this organization and be a part of developing a national model for reentry. After more than two decades with Sponsors, I am ready to make way for new leadership and explore other opportunities as I inch closer to retirement. I couldn't be more excited about the current leadership in the organization and what the future holds for the next director. Sponsors' board of directors has engaged in a rigorous nation-wide search to find the next ED. They are currently in the recruitment phase and, if all goes well, they hope to welcome on the next ED in the coming months. I am committed to staying to on-board the new ED and will transition to a Senior Advisor role to work on a few projects. We look forward to sharing more information about the hiring and transition process as we move forward.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul Solomon". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.



THANK YOU!



STUDENT CLASS AWARDS SPONSORS \$25,000 GRANT!

Mia and Abbi (pictured on the left) reached out this past Spring to gather information for their grantmaking class at the University of Oregon. They selected Sponsors as one of five possible organizations to receive a \$25,000 grant from the Faye Lucille Stewart Foundation. We invited them to tour Roosevelt Crossing and meet our Staff and Directors. Mia and Abbi then presented to their class the challenges of reentry and the transformative power of second chances. Drum roll, please: **WE WON!** They were both thrilled to share that we had been chosen! We are beyond humbled and so grateful for these passionate students and their dedication to supporting folks on their reentry journeys. **AMAZING!**



Director of Program Development, Laura Johnson, visited the class to share our gratitude and answer questions. The \$25,000 gift will go right to work offering hope.

YOUR SUPPORT IS EMPOWERING...



SUMMITBANK

**GENEROUSLY MATCHED
OVER \$2,000 IN GIFTS!**

CHANGE! Thanks to your generosity, and to our friends at Summit Bank, we surpassed our fiscal year-end fundraising goal! This allows Sponsors to continue providing essential reentry services such as safe, stable and supportive housing; critical connections through mentoring; compassionate behavioral health services and support for mothers with children.



**Special thanks to our friends
Amanda & Mike at BDA for
helping us far surpass our goal!**

BDA
Business & Marketing, LLC

Learn how YOU can help empower change at sponsorsinc.org/getinvolved

WELCOME ABOARD

— New Members of — Sponsors Board of Directors

Pictured: Staff and established Board members met with new members to mingle, tour campuses and discuss their passion for second chances.



Shareen Springer

Shareen comes to the Sponsors Board with a background in restorative justice, and with a deep dedication to dismantling the pipeline that delivers young people from schools into prisons. She is committed to this work both on the ground through her professional roles, as well as within her emerging scholarship as a PhD candidate at the University of Oregon. Shareen joined Sponsors to serve those most impacted by prisons and conviction histories here in her own community. She sees the work and mission of Sponsors as part of reimagining justice, community safety, and belonging.

Dallas has served on the Eugene Police Commission for the past two years, and was recently re-elected to serve as Chair. He's seen, firsthand, the way that an individual can make a difference when afforded a seat at the table. As an African American man, he possesses a keen awareness of the racial disparity that abounds in Oregon's criminal justice system. That's why he is passionate about Sponsors' mission to help people with conviction histories get back on their feet, and rewrite their stories. As he says, "In life, we can all make mistakes and we should all help in any way that we can."



Dallas Boggs



Trina Renfrow

Trina is excited to be joining the Board of Directors. She has a deep belief in Sponsors' mission of empowering people with conviction histories to transform their lives by providing life-changing opportunities. Having been a recipient of Sponsors' services that she describes as "profound," Trina is a true testament to the power of a second chance. For over a decade, she worked at the Downtown Campus sharing her experience and strength with other women at Sponsors. Now Trina is honored to have the opportunity to give back by serving the agency she says helped save her life.

Mandy believes that compassion and opportunity are critical to community healing. While working at an Oklahoma organization helping justice-involved individuals, she learned the importance of proximity to building compassion—and of compassion in creating opportunities for people to heal. She is dedicated to listening to, and learning from, people who have experienced firsthand the oppressive criminal justice system. A native to Eugene, Mandy is a third-year law student at the University of Oregon working toward a life of advocacy for those whose voices need uplifting.



Mandy Dorman



Doug Bovee

Growing up watching his father run a pharmacy, Doug developed an early interest in pharmacology that led him to pharmacy school at the University of Florida, and medical school at the University of Miami. He became interested in Addiction Medicine while working at the Cabrini Recovery Program in Seattle in the 1980s. After becoming a certified expert, he moved to Eugene in 1992, and spent many years working as an addiction medicine specialist at Serenity Lane. Now retired, Doug is an active mentor at Sponsors and works part-time as medical director of the Lane County Medication Assistance Treatment program.

Jace Supports Residents on Road to Recovery



A rocky path led Jace to his dual positions (Peer Support Specialist and Certified Recovery Mentor) at Sponsors, but he looks back on his journey without regrets. After struggling with addiction and heartbreaking loss, Jace decided it was time for a change. He completed drug and alcohol treatment and headed to Eugene to start his life over.

“I knew nobody here and needed a fresh start in a new place,” he said.

Jace built a solid foundation in Eugene, and quickly realized he wanted to help people experiencing the same struggles he had overcome. When he learned about an opportunity to join the Sponsors staff, he knew it was the right move.

“I thrive off making a difference in the world. I believe that each and every person on this planet deserves to live a happy and healthy life,” he explained. “I’m living proof of the fact that recovery is possible.”

His passion for helping people is evident in Jace’s work at Sponsors. He loves talking to participants, and never hesitates to share both his struggles and his triumphs. He wants everyone to realize that, no matter how unsettling their past may be, they are capable of creating a satisfying future.

And Jace is, most certainly, a testament to that. Every day he expresses gratitude, offers grace, and practices humility—all in the name of empowering folks to transform their lives.

About his journey, Jace says: “Ultimately, I’m so happy to be exactly where I’m at in life at this moment. I’ve made mistakes—but I don’t regret one second of my past, for it is every moment of my past that created exactly the man I am today.”

MENTORSHIP MOMENT

Can you imagine, after being locked up for decades, finally digging your toes into warm sand, walking on the beach and feeling the Oregon Coast breeze against your skin? What a truly freeing feeling it must be for formerly incarcerated people!

The Mentorship Program plans fun and engaging activities all year long, but the coast trips are always a favorite. The views of the seemingly infinite ocean, in addition to hikes and gorgeous blue skies offer a restorative space to reconnect with nature. Participants often report that the trip leaves them feeling inspired and rejuvenated. One mentee said it best as he got his first sight of the ocean:

“This is what I’ve dreamed of for so many years.”

The mentorship community is so special to Sponsors. Connections made can last a lifetime, and be such a powerful lifeline for people rebuilding their lives after incarceration. If you are interested in learning more about the program, or volunteering as a mentor, please contact Amy Myers at amyers@sponsorsinc.org





Be Kind, Give In-Kind

Program participants appreciate the clothing, furniture and other home items available in our warehouse. We are running out of furniture! If you have gently used items taking up space in your business or home, we hope you'll consider gifting them to Sponsors.

**Give us a call and we'll happily find time to pick up your items
(541)505-5651**