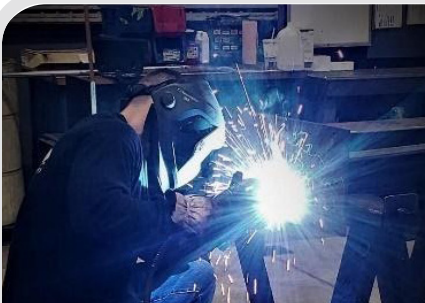


Racine/Kenosha
Vocational Ministry
COMMUNITY REPORT
2021



Futures In Spirit & Hope

20 Years of Service to the Community

TWENTY YEARS!

August of 2021 marked the beginning of our 20th year of service, an accomplishment of which we are all very proud. Reaching this milestone is attributable to our funders and to our community partners. No organization celebrates two decades of success without committed partners.

APPROACHING 5,000!

In 2021, we placed our 4,700th participant. As of today, we have placed 4,794 people in jobs and education. At this pace, we will have placed our 5,000th person in 2023.

SUSTAINABILITY & GROWTH!

In 2020, we entered the COVID19 pandemic putting R/KVM and its partners into a tailspin, threatening growth and sustainability. Agencies closed, small businesses failed, and people weren't being served. In June of 2020, R/KVM relaunched its "safe services" to respond to the needs of our participants while protecting each other from undue exposure. It was a devastating two years! We are on the path of rebuilding our participant pipeline.

SECRET INGREDIENT!

RVM's secret ingredient is the love we have for our work and for the people we serve. The questions we ask of ourselves and of our participants are rooted in identifying the transformative elements that profoundly change participants' perceptions of themselves, their families, their place in our community, and their peers.

HOPE!

Hope is the engine of transformation. Hope is what most of our participants lack when they come through R/KVM's door. Hope is what we offer. This is no trite, hollow offer. We offer hope with the knowledge that we have helped thousands of individuals change from shattered and disconnected to whole and integrated.

VOCATION!

Our work is focused not on employment, but on vocation. Vocation is not a job, or even a career; it is a calling. We believe that all people are gifted with unique skills and abilities to build a life that is both personally satisfying and an asset to the community. At R/KVM, identifying and supporting unique callings is the focus of each participant interaction and staff development opportunity.



Eric Fleming at work. Six years and counting.
Moerke Display & Manufacturing



Racine Vocational Ministry, Inc.

RVM's Mission

Racine Vocational Ministry is proud of the many men and women we have helped along the difficult and treacherous road to a wholesome, productive life. Racine Vocational Ministry is a faith-based organization established to:

- Help individuals discover God's presence and action in all aspects of life, including work
- Prepare individuals for life and work by developing attitudes, habits and skills that reflect human dignity
- Empower unemployed and underemployed citizens to become productive and fulfilled
- Help individuals use their unique callings to powerfully influence their communities



Program Director Lori Life teaches a class at HALO

A Word from the President

It's hard to believe that another year has passed. Even harder to believe is that it's been 20 years since the launch of Racine Vocational Ministry! I'm honored to know that I was there at the beginning and have remained a loyal fan and supporter ever since. Participants who entered RVM's doors with no hope for the day came away from their work with RVM as whole and productive individuals. Former participants often credit RVM with saving their lives. Others are sure that without RVM's interventions they would have never transcended the criminal justice system. The support of RVM's dedicated staff is key to their successes, but I'd be remiss in not remembering that the real work is done by the participants.

Despite two years of pandemic disruptions and adjustments, RVM is in many ways at its strongest! Financially, RVM has managed to secure appropriate funding and is in a strong financial position. RVM staff worked hard to maintain contact with participants and reached out to them in new and different ways. It's a great time to be look-

ing for work, and RVM staff work hard to assure that participants have the skills they need to take advantage of higher wages and secure employment.

RVM would have accomplished none of this without community support. I want to thank my fellow board members for getting behind this important work. If you think you have skills to offer and would be interested in serving on the board, let us know.

I want to also thank those of you who offer financial support. Without it, this strong financial position wouldn't exist. Your continued support is always needed.

Happy 20th Anniversary RVM! May you continue to thrive. The impact of your success is humbling.

– **Pamala Handrow**
RVM Board
President



Racine Vocational Ministry, Inc.

From Our Community Partners

In April, I was fortunate to sit with both staff and participants who work with R/KVM. Our meeting was to discuss plans and ideas for some affordable housing funding received by the City of Racine. Repeatedly, I heard the same sentiment echoed, provide services for people moving out of homelessness, but use the model RKVM practices. All of the participants and staff made it very clear that everyone who walks through the doors is an individual and shall be treated as such. RKVM does not directly change the people they work with, rather they stand beside the people during their change process and help them keep focused on their goals. This model of service and care should be a goal for all social service agencies.

– **Brendan Saunders, Manager of Housing and Community Development**
City of Racine



The Division of Workforce Development has partnered with Racine/Kenosha Vocational Ministry (R/KVM) to provide reentry services for over 6 years. Their outcomes are impres-

sive. Only one of the 51 participants in the past year have been convicted of a new crime after entering the program. Supporting individuals during their transition from incarceration to community is vital to reentry success and reducing recidivism. Resources and referrals are necessary to ensure healthcare, housing and basic needs are met. The caring and knowledgeable case managers are a lifeline of support to the participants. They know the community's resources, they know the pitfalls to avoid, and most importantly they instill hope. R/KVM is a premier, holistic reentry service with a team of employees committed to their participants' ongoing success in the community.

– **Nina Taylor, Director of Workforce Development, City of Kenosha**

The United Way of Racine County understands the crucial role our impact partners have on the community. RVM is a great example of the type of high quality, impactful partners we support.

In 2021, United Way introduced new funding through their Training and Technology Grant. Through a generous donation, UWRC was able to offer RVM an opportunity to upgrade its fifteen-year phone system and aging computers. We were



also able to invest in training programs for RVM's staff. This investment in technology and training will allow RVM to be more efficient and focus its precious resources on offering services.

Over the years, our partnership has helped to place close to 4,800 people in jobs and education. We are thankful for RVM's mission and look forward to continued collaboration as they move into their third decade of service. Happy twentieth anniversary, RVM!

– **Alexa Haigh,**
President & CEO
United Way of Racine County



Racine Vocational Ministry, Inc.

From Our Participants

Matt Weber

Undergraduate intern, employee and business owner

Matt chose RVM after being referred by Dr. Wayne Thompson, his Carthage College advisor. "My fields of study were religion and criminal justice, so RVM seemed like a perfect combination of my two majors." Early in his college career he was hoping to become a minister or go into law enforcement. "Interning and eventually being an employee at RVM allowed me to directly interact with community leaders, state and local law enforcement, ministry professionals, and reentry participants."

Professor Thompson says, "when Matt inquired about internships, to help find the best fit, I asked him about his values and life purpose. Matt was passionate, motivated by a sense of vocation, not just in search of credentials and a paycheck. Matt and RVM were the right match."

Matt interned for about three years. After graduation, he was offered a job at RVM and worked for another year and a half before taking a job out of the area. He stayed on because "the people coming through the doors are in need of real help and RVM is able to provide that help. This work was not only important but fulfilling." Matt goes on to say, "another reason I stayed at RVM was the community built among the staff in the office. As an intern, I felt welcomed by the staff and that I was an important part of the team. I felt trusted with the tasks I was asked to complete and that my work was valuable to the ongoing success of the organization."



"After interning at RVM, my experience helped me to gain a position working with the Milwaukee County sheriff/district attorney/public defender's office collaborative program to use evidence-based research in recommending fair bail and jail release conditions for all inmates at the Milwaukee County Jail."

While Matt did not end up pursuing a career in law enforcement, he took a position as a youth minister at St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Middleton, WI. He continues in this career path at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Sun Prairie. Matt states, "I feel that my time at RVM helped to prepare me for work in service to others through everyday interactions with RVM participants. The skills, knowledge and relationships built through my time at RVM have been invaluable."

In addition to his ministry career, Matt is now a business owner and employer. "I believe that my experiences at RVM have made me a better manager and employer with more understanding of the needs of employees and an openness to give people the time, skills and chances to succeed while recognizing the struggles some face in the employment world because of things in their past or challenges they may currently be facing."

"Having the opportunity to work with such an amazing group of giving, supportive and caring staff was inspiring and uplifting. "I can only hope that I was able to contribute as much as I received."



Racine Vocational Ministry, Inc.

From Our Participants

Prince Abbott

A willingness to grow and a determination to succeed

Prince came home from prison in February of 2017. He had just finished serving a 21-year sentence. During his incarceration, he decided enough is enough. He voluntarily participated in institution programming to enhance his understanding of the world today. National data says that Prince had a 66% chance of being rearrested within the first three years he was home. He was determined to do whatever he could to not become another statistic. While incarcerated, he worked various jobs throughout his entire prison term, even though he was only making 42 cents an hour. He was motivated to learn and to stay busy acquiring new skills in work and in life. Upon his release, he carried that same work ethic and obtained employment within a few weeks of release. To his credit, he did not let that stop the rigors and challenges of cognitive change. Prince's weekly appointments with his case manager are a central part of his self-care and



opportunity to grow. Learning to live with newfound freedoms is a challenge all long term prisoners face! This was made more difficult by living in a severely under furnished home with not enough money to make real change. Feather-a-Nest, a local non-profit, stepped in and fully furnished and staged his apartment. Prince has learned to reach out when he needs help and takes his freedom very seriously. Since his release he also worked diligently on furthering his education in business management. In 2018, he also began working on obtaining his CDL through a program at the Workforce Development Center. After a few "bumps in the road", he is now comfortable behind the wheel and gainfully employed at Jeff's Fast Freight as a line haul driver. Most recently, he became a homeowner. His ability to remain positive and humble throughout his transition has made it easy to work with him. His attitude and willingness to change have made it possible for him to take the necessary steps to stay out of prison. We are excited to see what the future brings for him and look forward to being a part of the next phase of his life.

Before Feather-A-Nest



After Feather-A-Nest



Prince at work

Our Walk-In Program

For those who maintained a regular connection to programming:

- 51 attained gainful employment, 22 continued employment, 14 continued social security benefits and of those 14, 2 gained employment to increase their income—3 SSI/SSDI cases pending
- 34 participants got a degree/certificate or are presently enrolled in school
- 70 participants gained marketable skills to advance their careers
- 64 maintained employment above the ALICE threshold
- 55 participants improved their job classification via increased wages or job improvement
- 75 homeless participants and their families were served—43 of them moved into permanent housing
- 54 applicants were supported with the aid of emergency services

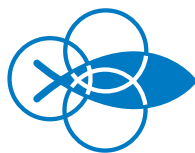
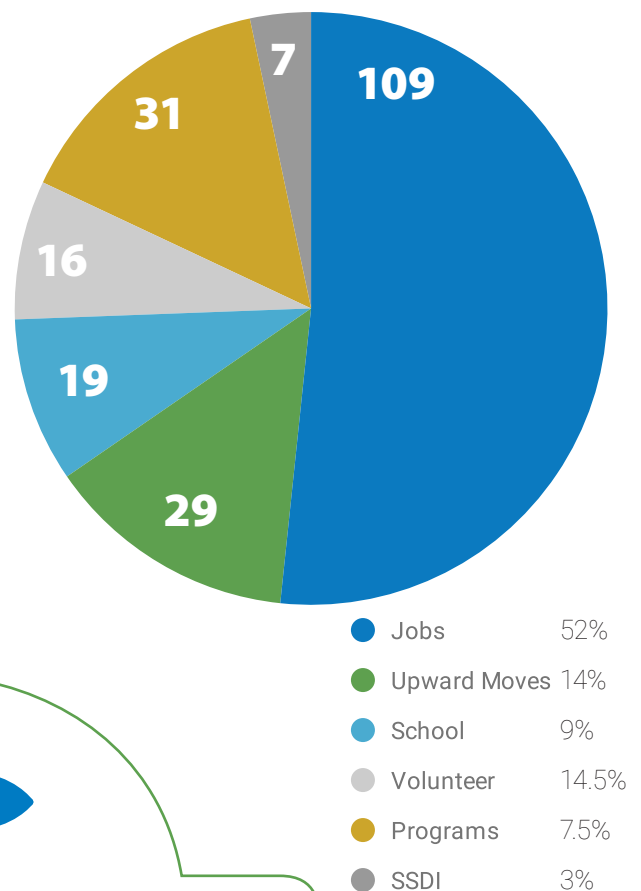
2020 was a very difficult year but 2021 showed improvements in each category above. Placements were up 100% and back over 200 for the year. The COVID pandemic is still impacting services and numbers served but we are gradually coming back to more historic numbers served and placed. The ray of light we saw at the end of 2020 was continuing increases in general wages. This is still the case. In 2021, RVM saw the largest number of participants attaining ALICE wages in our history. Another strong development is that 55 RVM participants were promoted within their respective fields, a 45% increase over last year. RVM served 75 homeless participants and assisted 43 into housing, a nearly 10% increase. At intake, more than 80% of program participants had no employment income and nearly all were at least 200% below the federal poverty guidelines. Responses by participants to the pandemic were chronic overwhelming fear, worries about the future, and a profound lack of hope which is the engine for personal motivation. We are beginning to see this trend turning around. At RVM, our focus is to help participants rediscover hope in a path that is rooted in knowing who they are and what

they can accomplish. This is the way to positive and life affirming change.

In 2021, Racine Vocational Ministry placed 211 individuals in jobs and job training at an average wage of \$15.83 an hour, our highest mark ever at \$4.52 higher than the County living wage estimate (\$11.31) for a single household. ALICE wages for a single adult are \$10.97 an hour but for a family of four it is \$36.94. For unskilled workers that means that two wage earners need to earn about \$18.50 an hour to sustain a family. This takes planning, new job skills, and well-developed life skills.

ALICE in Racine County

2021 Total Placements of 211



Racine Vocational Ministry, Inc.

David McDermaid—From Prison To Employed Homeowner



David came home from prison on June 4th, 2019, after 12 years of incarceration. He was referred by his long-time Pastor, and former RVM Chaplain, James Peters. He has been an RVM participant with the Second Chance Program since his arrival home. He started working with his Case Manager, Heather, who guides him through his change process. Over the past few months, he has had many triumphs and struggles. Going to prison at 16 years old and growing up in that system has been challenging to say the least. Upon release, his body was 28 but his brain was trapped in a 16 year-old world view. Unfortunately, this can be the result of long-term incarceration. Navigating through the process of

cognitive change was difficult, exhausting, and challenging. There were many tears, and times of anger and frustration.

In spite of these challenges, David knew he needed a way to move forward with his life. He put every ounce of effort he had into his change process. He began working at Premier Aluminum as a maintenance worker, with aspirations of becoming a welder. When he was in prison, he had some opportunities to dabble in welding. David says, “The first time I welded in prison, the guy who was the facility welder asked if I wanted to try it out. I melted two pieces of metal together using electricity and I was HOOKED.” While still working at Premier, he pursued employment with companies that would take him on as a welder. He finally landed a job at Jensen Metal Products where he is living his dream as an everyday welder! After 3 years of steady employment and an increased credit score, David began making plans to buy a home. In 2022 he became a first-time homeowner. It has been such a joy to watch him grow and blossom into the man he previously only dreamed of becoming.



Living wage at Jensen Metal Products, 3 years of consecutive employment, builds savings, buys first home

Welding certificate, and first job at Premiere Aluminum

David commits to two and a half years of cognitive therapy

David is referred to RVM's Second Chance program

12 years of Juvenile and
Adult Corrections

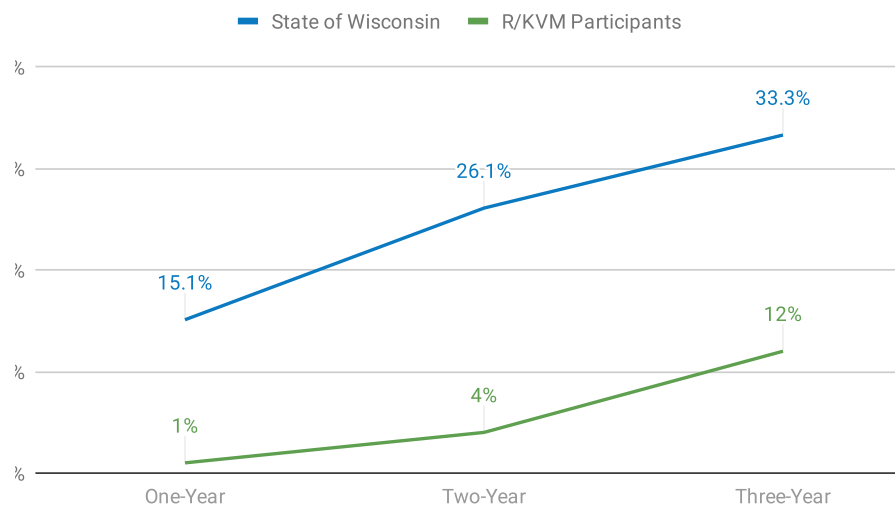
Incarceration
at 16



Our Re-Entry Program

In 2005, with the support of the Wisconsin Department of Corrections, the Racine Police Department and the City of Racine, RVM started the Community Re-entry program. From 2005–2010 RVM served 223 re-entry participants. In 2011, the City received a federal grant to serve 150 more reentrants over the next three years. The principle task of federal 2nd Chance programs are to reduce participant recidivism by 50%. RVM was able to accomplish this and more. To date, RVM and KVM have served just over 600 reentrants in Racine and Kenosha Counties since the inception of the program.

Rate of Reentrant Return to WI Corrections



Impact – Lower Recidivism

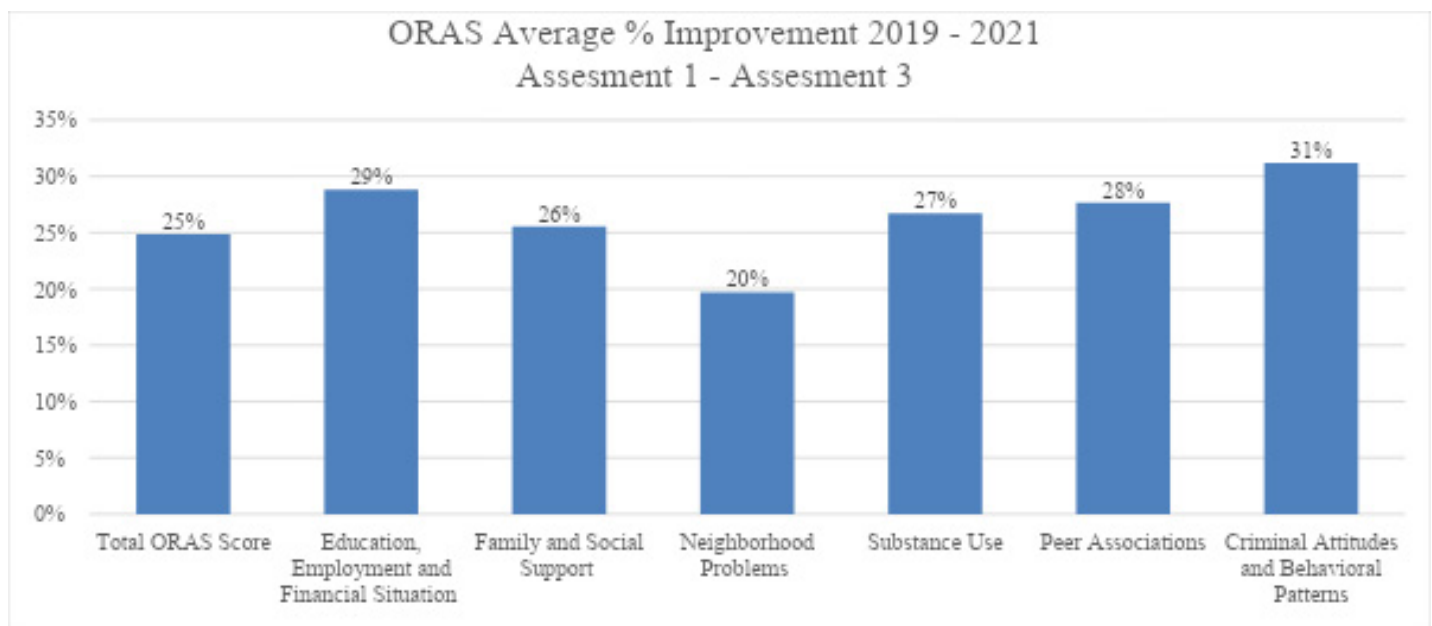
Reducing recidivism has significant civic benefits. First, it keeps people in the community, increasing the effectiveness of program interventions and allowing family and community relationships to be maintained and developed. We believe that keeping families together is the best way to keep our cities economically and socially viable as well as safe. Remaining home also allows reentrants to work, pay taxes, purchase food, clothes, housing and entertainment, thereby adding to the economic vitality of some of our more impoverished neighborhoods.



Racine Vocational Ministry, Inc.

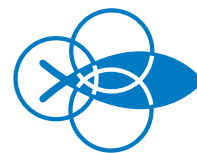
Measuring Cognitive Change

The key to creating a path to long term success is cognitive change. If you cannot think about something differently you will not be able to react to it differently. We begin this process of change by simply meeting participants where they are. We then help them negotiate their stages of change, which is a theoretical framework that allows RVM staff to meet participants where they are in relation to their readiness to change. Change is the lynch pin of all program success. Research from the University of Cincinnati identified six key domains of influence impacting the risk of recidivism and facilitating cognitive change. R/KVM's data report for 2019-2021 showed some very positive improvements in prosocial thinking patterns.



All 6 non-static ORAS subfields show significant improvement for those RVM participants being assessed 3 times between 2019 and 2021. The average score across all participants for each of these 6 categories improved by at least 20% with a maximum improvement of 31%. Marked improvement across 6 critical domains by nearly 25% is something of which we are very proud. The consistent improvement across all 6 fields speaks to RVM's commitment to a holistic transformation of lives and most importantly, the commitment of participants to make the incremental changes to succeed.

Especially prevalent are the 28%+ improvements in the categories of Education, Employment and Financial Situation, Peer Associations, and Criminal Attitudes and Behavioral Patterns. These areas of growth underlie RVM's dedication to ensuring that participants have a strong support system and the tools necessary to make positive changes.



From Our Community Partners

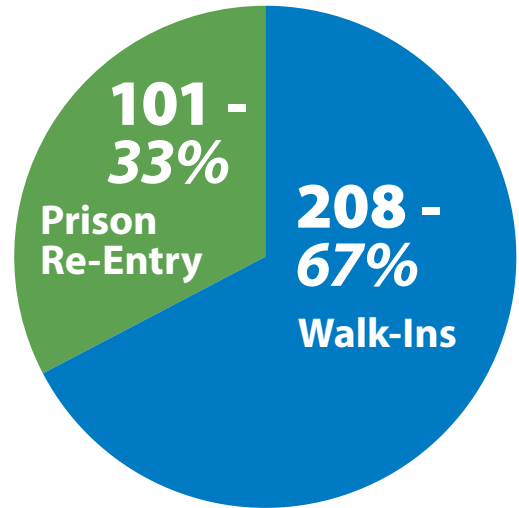


SC Johnson has been a proud supporter of Racine Vocational Ministry since 2002. We have watched them grow from concept to execution and through to a fully

mature and highly respected social service organization. The services they offer are unique and significant. RVM offers a pathway back to dignity and health by cultivating a strong sense of self-determination in its participants. They understand that this is done by building and maintaining a foundation on the three pillars of civic engagement: personal responsibility, a healthy family life and a desire to live as a community asset. SC Johnson believes in helping to create a world with more opportunity by building paths to economic and social mobility. RVM is

a partner in this mission. All the best in your 20th year of service to our community.

2021 Program Participation



Heather Bennett, 2nd Chance Program Director and Karl Erickson, Outreach Director, at Urban Outreach Center in Kenosha



Alfred at his job at B-WAY



Executive Director James Schatzman and former participant Endel Williams talk to employers at the Kenosha Job Expo



Racine Vocational Ministry, Inc.

Kenosha Vocational Ministry (KVM)

Is Firmly Established

In late 2015, RVM and a group of Kenosha citizens met to address the issue of prison reentry challenges. With support from Kenosha County Human Services, Kenosha United Way, the ELCA Outreach Center and Light of Christ Anglican Church, KVM is now a key player in Kenosha Human Services community. 2021 began KVM's 5th full year of service. We served 51 reentrants. 26 participants have completed AODA treatment, and 32 others are currently in related programs. 51 have participated in cognitive services offered by KVM and 34 have obtained their driver licenses. 28 were currently employed, 5 had a job at some point during the year and 2 qualified for SSDI. Nearly 68% of the reentrants had jobs and income in the worst part of the pandemic. KVM is aggressively seeking new funding to expand the program. We are thrilled with the outcomes that are a result of our participant's tenacity and dedication to KVM's programming.



Senator Wirch and Charnell Hicks at an RVM Recognition Event



Yahynass
Tubbs
– KVM
Rising Star

A love for the streets and the lifestyle that goes with that, led Yahynass to spending the last 15 years in prison. In and out, no stability, no care for life, and no care for himself. Life was about getting what he needed, whether legal or not. In 2021, after multiple stints in prison, he decided enough is enough. He came to the Second Chance Program ready to do something different. Asking for help was not something he was used to. However, Yahynass did exactly that. He started to see some real changes taking place. He began working at Subway where he quickly earned certificates in safe food handling and more. Every certificate brought a new level of hope and energy. He participated in the Racine/Kenosha Community Action program and was able to secure funding for housing. Most recently, he has enrolled in college courses in Business Administration. We are extremely excited to see what the future holds for him. Yahynass exhibits everything we look for in a "rising star". He's not where he wants to be but is definitely on his way!



Yahynass with his children



More R/KVM Success Stories



Sharon Arscott – Overcoming Covid Challenges

Sharon came to RVM in October 2019. She was intelligent and engaging. Due to some family and personal struggles, she lacked the confidence to market her skills. After her first few meetings with an RVM case manager, Sharon's confidence and hopefulness increased. In her free time, she sharpened her office skills. Within a few weeks, Sharon landed a part-time job. She looked forward to growing into her job until a shutdown for COVID was instituted at her company. Sharon remained resilient and focused on keeping her family financially stable. She was able to find a new position at a \$4.00 an hour pay increase. After completing her probationary period, Sharon received an additional increase of \$3.00 an hour and was made full-time with benefits. In October of 2021, Sharon and her daughter moved into a larger home and had saved enough money to bring her mother from Jamaica to the U.S. for a long-awaited visit. She treasured the time she was able to share with her mom and daughter. Sharon is currently investigating home ownership, developing her relationship with her teenage daughter and her community of faith. Brick by brick, she is building a life that supports her family, builds and maintains important relationships, and allows her to become a full participant in the economy.



Carlos Austin – A Decade of Success – A Life of Purpose

Carlos came to RVM as part of the Community Re-Entry Program in May of 2005. He was one of the first reentry participants the program took in. Carlos spent 11 years in correctional facilities for felony charges and was ready to make a new start. He knew he would face numerous obstacles but was ready to make a change and do what he needed to do to create a new and successful future.

From the beginning he displayed tenacity and a positive, upbeat attitude. This approach landed him a job at Northlake Engineering in Bristol where he worked for over two and a half years at just \$9.00 an hour. Despite the fact that he was not making a living wage, he commuted 50 miles a day at a time when gas prices were approaching \$5.00 a gallon. He was intent on reestablishing his work history. He stayed focused and it helped create a new opportunity through Express Personnel Services at a slightly higher wage than he was making at Northlake with 200 less miles a week in gas and wear and tear on his car and more time to spend with his family. In 2007, he began his service as a long seasonal worker with the City of Racine and a substantial hourly raise. After three years of successful employment in the seasonal program, he was offered a full-time job with a pay increase and health benefits in August of 2010. His

tenacity and work ethic made him a success at this company. Carlos continued to focus on his career and in 2021, he was promoted to supervisor.



Funding History

FUNDERS

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG)
SC JOHNSON FUND
STATE EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT
CITY EMERGENCY SOLUTIONS GRANT
STATE GANG DIVERSION
RACINE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
UNITED WAY OF RACINE COUNTY
THE BRADLEY FOUNDATION
DOMINICAN MISSION FUND
E C STYBERG FOUNDATION
ELCA DOMESTIC HUNGER FUND
LIGHT OF CHRIST ANGLICAN CHURCH
KENOSHA COUNTY HUMAN SERVICES
UNITED WAY OF KENOSHA COUNTY
BOB BARKER FOUNDATION

DATES

2005 – 2021
2002 – 2021
2006 – 2021
2006 – 2021
2005 – 2021
2002 – 2021
2003 – 2021
2017 – 2021
2002 – 2021
2017 – 2021
2017 – 2021
2017 – 2021
2017 – 2021
2019 – 2021
2021

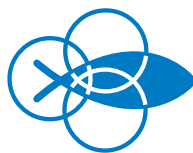


We are grateful to all of our funders. If you would like to support our mission you can make a donation by clicking the button below:

[GIVE NOW](#)

Or mail your check to:
Racine Vocational Ministry
214 7th Street
Racine, WI 53403
262-633-8660

rvmracine.org



Racine Vocational Ministry, Inc.