



TYRO TIMES

SPRING 2014
VOLUME 6 ISSUE 6

*Finding **Your** Place In **Your** Community*



**HONOR
RESPECT
DISCIPLINE
ACCOUNTABILITY**



TYRO

Do You Have What it Takes To Be a TYRO Dad?

Who is there for your family while you're locked up? If you want to take control of your life, to help your family and yourself, then you **NEED** to become a TYRO father. Classes include:

- Fatherhood
- Workforce Ethics
- Couple Communication 1 & 2
- Job Training & Placement

RIDGE | The
Ridge
Project
Building a Legacy of Strong Families

**For more information, or to sign up, contact
your local RIDGE Project Facilitator or
your institution's staff**



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SPRING 2014

Contents

Welcome	4-5
TYRO Spotlight	6
Facilitator Spotlight	8
Warden of the Year	9
TYRO In Your Community	10-11
TYRO Spotlight	12
Southwest Grand Opening	14-15
Family Visit Activity	17
Mailbag	18
Coming in the Next Issue	19

Featured In This Issue



Warden of the Year 9



TYRO In Your Community 10-11



Southwest Grand Opening 14-15

On The Cover

Cover Illustration & Design by Kristin Peugeot, The RIDGE Project

The RIDGE Project Mission

To establish a path of honor, discipline and integrity by way of education, motivation and inspiration to lead families into a future defined by hope, peace and righteousness for generations to come!

TYRO Times

Vol. 6 Issue 6

TYRO Times is a quarterly publication of The RIDGE Project and is distributed to institutions throughout the state of Ohio as well as to friends, supporters and partners of our work. The RIDGE Project is a 501(c)(3) Christian non-profit organization with main offices at J169 State Route 65, McClure, OH 43534.

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About The RIDGE Project

Ron and Catherine Tijerina are Co-Executive Directors of The RIDGE Project. They founded the agency in 2000 with a focus on building strong families in the state of Ohio. The RIDGE Project is an organization dedicated to empowering youth and families to overcome all obstacles in the process of building strong families and relationships, building a future through strong children who will pass that legacy along for generations to come. The RIDGE Project has comprehensive prevention, intervention and redirection programs offered throughout Ohio. The agency's focus is Building A Legacy Of Strong Families.

BECOME THE ANTIDOTE

*Ron Tijerina,
Co-Executive Director, The RIDGE Project*

One of the hardest things to accept when I was locked up was the damage I had caused within my own family. The number one reason a man goes to prison is because he is selfish, and that word – selfish – described my lifestyle before I became a TYRO.

We all know people who waste their entire lives being bitter at their circumstances, and that could have been me. I was incarcerated for a crime I did not commit. But as time went by I began to realize that I was still at fault. Ultimately, it was my poor decisions and selfish lifestyle that ensured that no one could take me at my word. Unfortunately, I wasn't the only one affected, or infected, by my selfish lifestyle.

Like so many others, when I went to prison my family became a target for shame, ridicule and hardship. I did that to them. My selfishness was poison in my family's life. When I first realized this, it was a difficult pill to swallow. But when I came to terms with this, determination began to build inside of me.

I determined that if I had been the poison for my family, I could be the antidote. That was it, that was the beginning of the idea that would eventually become TYRO. For the readers who are TYROs, you know that TYRO is a way of looking at the world through the lens of self-sacrifice. It means wanting everything for your family and nothing from them. It took hard work and a lot of love and forgiveness, but our family began to heal while I was in prison. Eventually, our family founded The RIDGE Project,



which allowed more and more men to become TYROs, and we began to see the amazing impacts of this way of looking at the world. Cathy and I realized that being the antidote could mean so much more than what I originally considered – a way to save my family. What if a TYRO could become the antidote for not just their family but their community?

Today this question has been answered with a resounding “Yes!” TYROs--working on their own and through TYRO Accountability Fraternities-- are speaking out against gang violence, volunteering at community events, and helping those that are in need.

As TYROs, whether you are incarcerated or have begun a new life in your community, I challenge you to get involved helping others everywhere you can. Become the antidote in your community today!

YOU Are NOT ALONE



*Catherine Tijerina,
Co-Executive Director, The RIDGE Project*

This week I recalled an incident from when Ron was incarcerated. I was shopping with a friend when I received some dreadful news. The voice on the other end of the telephone told me that our latest appeal of his conviction was likely going to be denied. For a brief moment, it felt as if the world ended.

Suddenly, it didn't look like Ron was going to be coming home to me anytime soon, or ever. I remember somehow making my way outside the store and literally collapsing on the curb in tears. The friend who I was with must have been taken aback. How often do you see someone in that condition in front of a store? At that moment, however, it didn't matter where I was. The grief had to come out.

After standing there for a bit, my friend sat down beside me on the curb and said some words I will never forget. She said "I don't know what to say so I'm just going to sit here and cry with you." After a few minutes our tears had turned to laughter in the way that only happens when you are sharing something overwhelming with someone who really knows you and is trying to lift your spirits.

That contact, on that day, helped me hold on to the

hope that sustained me until I saw Ron walk out of prison for good in 2006. Moments like those are what still drive me in the work I'm privileged to do at The RIDGE Project.

Sometimes all we need is for someone to cry with us. To be with us. To remind us that we are not alone. The most important aspect of having a community of support when your spouse or partner is incarcerated is to remember that.

The RIDGE Project has created Ladies Support Groups in communities across the state to do just that. If you are the spouse/partner of an incarcerated father, I encourage you to consider joining one of them. Because sometimes all it takes is for someone to be there. Remember, you are not alone.

“*Sometimes all we need is for someone to cry with us. To be with us. To remind us that we are not alone.*”

TYRO *Spotlight:*

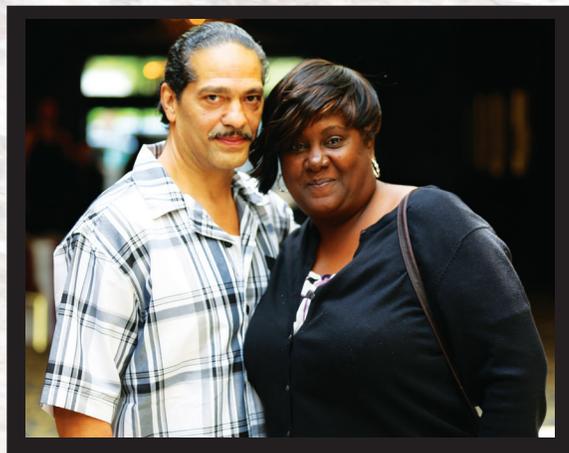
N E I L S M I T H

Editor's Note:

From time to time, we are asked for updates on the men who are profiled in our TYRO spotlight sections. In the winter 2012 edition of *TYRO Times* we profiled TYRO Neil Smith. A portion of his testimonial from that issue is reprinted below.

During this time, I was working at Wayne Rubber as a "temp" because they would not offer me a regular job. [The RIDGE Project] went to my immediate supervisor, asking them to give me a full-time job and give me a chance to prove myself. They were able to be my advocate, describing to my boss the changes they had seen in me and how diligent I was at work. Being a TYRO Dad graduate was a large part of that. So, I was given 30 days to prove myself.

I have now been working full-time for over 6 months and my supervisor loves my work! In fact, they have since hired two additional TYRO graduates because they have been so pleased with my attitude, character, and work ethic. I have "set the bar" on what my boss expects from a TYRO and I have continued to encourage these TYRO men as well.



I tell them how great they are and we challenge each other to excellence. To me, this is what it is all about! It is about having the opportunity to re-capture a life...a real life!

To be a man. I feel that my life has been restored and I thank The RIDGE Project and the TYRO dads who came along beside me and gave me a second chance at life. No one else gave me a chance...no one trusted me and would help me.

**“TYRO...
has given us
something
to build and
strive for.
It gave us
our focus
back.”**

Update:

Neil Smith has continued at Wayne Rubber in Wooster, Ohio and is now a shift supervisor at the plant. One of his responsibilities is hiring, and he has been responsible for several TYROs being hired. Smith still attributes his success to what he learned from The RIDGE Project. “Ever since I’ve been a TYRO, he said, “it’s been tremendous. It has definitely been a great turnaround for me.”

Due to his ongoing success at work, Smith has been able to recently purchase a car and qualify for a mortgage on a new home. For the first time in his life, he is a homeowner. Neil says he is at a loss to express his thankfulness to the TYRO program for the changes in his life. “I have no words to express it.”

Mr. Smith believes that everyone that has taken seriously what it means to be a TYRO has been positively impacted by the program. “TYRO definitely woke us up. It has given us something to build and strive for. It gave us our focus back.”

This focus has led him to continued success at work and at home, and Neil is not shy about the reason for it declaring proudly “I’m definitely a TYRO.”

*By: Scott Moore
The RIDGE Project*

EARN YOUR CDL NOW!

RIDGE The Ridge Project
Building a Legacy of Strong Families
www.theridgeproject.com

TRUCKING COMPANIES CURRENTLY HIRING! ALL QUALIFIED EX-OFFENDERS ARE WELCOME
FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT THE RIDGE PROJECT: 419-278-0092 INFO@THERIDGEPROJECT.COM

**NOW
ALSO AT
GRAFTON
CORRECTIONAL!**



REQUIREMENTS:

- Father of a minor child (the child must be 21 or younger)
- Successfully complete the TYRO Dad's training
- Have a driver's license or be able to get a driver's license

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WALTER VENTRICE

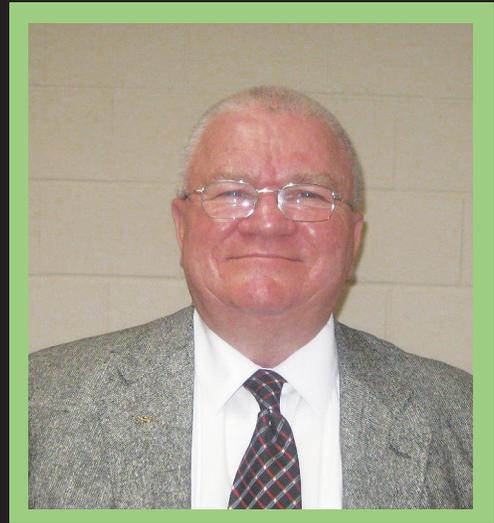
Life After Retirement

Most people’s plans for retirement involve rest, relaxation and perhaps some warm weather; but for RIDGE Project Facilitator Walter Ventrice, leaving a job of 17 years meant he suddenly had time to do something he always wanted. Mr. Ventrice is a Case Manager for the RIDGE Project’s Northeast region where he primarily teaches TYRO Dads courses at correctional facilities in Lorain, Grafton, and Mansfield.

Although Walter enjoyed his time as a Financial Aid Administrator with Cleveland State University, he craved a position where he could make a more immediate impact on people’s lives.

“I got to the point after retirement where I felt like I needed to do something that mattered,” he said. He has found that at The RIDGE Project. “I love working at a place where I get to bring hope to the hopeless in a practical way.” Ventrice said he gets to do that every day with his clients.

“Each class is different, and I see positive change in each set of students.” Most often that comes in the form of discoveries they make about themselves, especially in an exercise known as “The Mirror.” In this assignment, participants are instructed to look at themselves in the mirror and speak honestly and openly about their past including any poor decisions they might have made. “[The Mirror] allows men to be reflective in a deep and meaningful way” he added.



Ventrice is very thankful to be able to experience these types of breakthroughs at work regularly, and attributes hearing about the agency to a unique source. “I am so thankful for this opportunity which I heard about from the Warden of Lorain Correctional. She thought I would be a fit for this position, based what she knew about my past work experiences.”

These experiences include the work he performed at Cleveland State, as well as various management positions he has held. Walter believes the work he currently performs at The RIDGE Project is some of the most challenging of his career and that it demands that he “put all of (his) skills and talents to use.” The hard work is worth it, however, when measured against the lives he gets to impact. He summed up this belief in his description of The RIDGE Project as “an oasis in an unreasonable world where skills are received and hope is restored.”

*By: Scott Moore
The RIDGE Project*

WARDEN OF THE YEAR

Ohio Official Named National Warden of the Year

The warden of the Southeastern Correctional Complex in Lancaster, Ohio received national recognition for her work.

Sheri Duffey was recognized this year as National Warden of the Year by the North American Association of Wardens and Superintendents. Warden Duffey received the award based on the innovative programs she has instituted during her tenure at SCC, many of which included TYROs.

An example of this is the prison's recycling plan which transforms waste from football games held at The Ohio State University into reusable paper products. Proceeds from this program allowed SCC to begin a trout farm that supplies food for penguins and polar bears at the world renowned Columbus Zoo and Aquarium.

Vince Jones, a TYRO and resident of SCC was highlighted as one of the key members of this innovative program in an article published earlier this spring by Cleveland.com (<http://tiny.cc/p367fx>).

The RIDGE Project is proud to partner with visionary leaders such as Warden Duffey in our efforts to build a legacy of strong families.

*By: Scott Moore
The RIDGE Project*



*Scan here to read the full article from
Cleveland.com*



*Warden Duffey with a Columbus Zoo penguin
fed by her institution's trout farm*

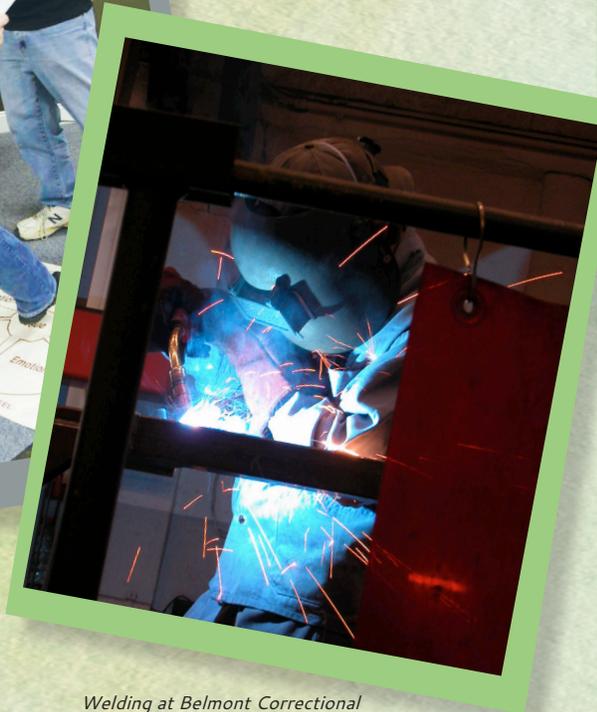
The RIDGE Project Is Active



CarneQ Food Trailer at RIDGE Headquarters in McClure



Couple Communication Weekend in Findlay

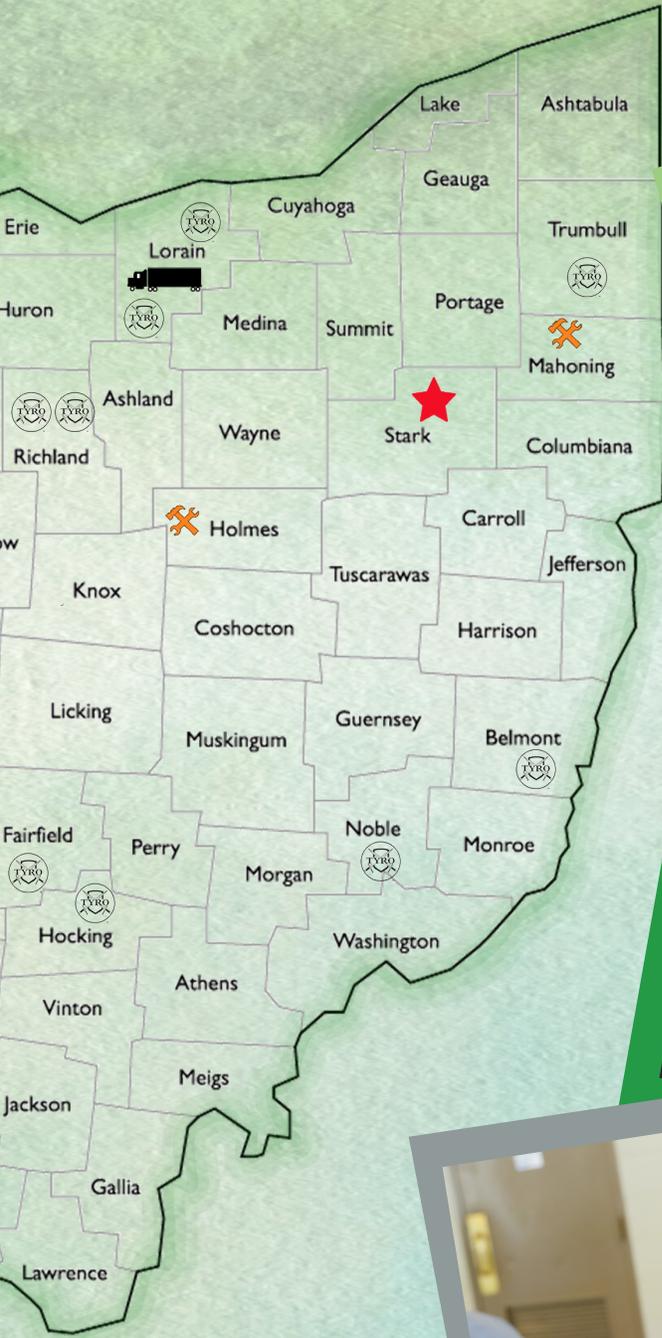


Welding at Belmont Correctional



-  Corporate Office (McClure)
-  Regional Offices (Canton, Columbus, Dayton)
-  Workforce Training Partners
-  CDL Training for PI &I Trucking
-  TYRO Dads and Couple Communication Classes

In A Community Near You!



TRAINCO Graduates at Richland Correctional



TYRO CDL Driver with Truck in Cincinnati



Family Day at Trumbull Correctional

TYRO *Spotlight:*

J O H N W I L L I A M S O N

Men become TYROs for many different reasons. Some come to The RIDGE Project program looking for work. Others, looking for a way to start over. John Williamson became interested in the program when, in his words, his “marriage was going sour.” Like so many others before him, however, he soon realized that becoming a TYRO has changed every aspect of his life.

Williamson and his wife Ruth have 5 children and 5 grandchildren, so they realized there was “a lot at stake” in holding their marriage together. John says they tried several times before to reconcile and felt their marriage “slipping away.” Fortunately, the Dayton resident had previously met RIDGE Project Southwest Region Director Kevin Shehee through family contacts and reached out to him in desperation.

Williamson credits that contact with literally saving his union. “At that point, I came to The RIDGE and the principles we later learned there in Couples Communication changed everything.” He believes this turnaround was made possible because the program helped restore his home. “We use to blame each other for everything. I blamed her, she blamed me and there was no unity. [Couples Communication] got us on the same page, when we decided to reconcile we both decided.”

Couples Communication classes (CC 1 and CC2) are based on a course created by Drs. Phyllis and Sherod Miller that is designed to teach couples collaborative relationship and basic

“...this program gives you a sense of purpose and everyone needs that.”



John Williamson speaking at the Southwest Office Grand Opening

communication skills. Although Williamson attended a RIDGE Project retreat event at a hotel in the Cincinnati area, this class is regularly offered to incarcerated TYROs and their spouses/partners. The Ridge Project, Inc. is the only organization to offer classes in which the partners can participate with their incarcerated partner on a recurring basis during their incarceration.

Once he became a TYRO, John Williamson began to see other benefits from affiliating with The RIDGE Project. “I love this program. When I came home from being incarcerated in 1979, I vowed to give back to the community and being a TYRO lets me do that.”

With that in mind, Williamson has recently been named Director of Recruitment for the newly formed Dayton TYRO Accountability Fraternity (TAF). In this role, John has already introduced several family members including one of his grandsons to The RIDGE Project. “I’m dedicated to being a TYRO” he said, “because this program gives you a sense of purpose and everyone needs that.”

*By: Scott Moore
The RIDGE Project*

ATTENTION TYRO DADS AND SPOUSES/PARTNERS!



The Events Include:



- Couple Communication® classes
The skills you learn will help you in the future, both at home and at work!
- The opportunity to spend quality time with your spouse/partner

For more information contact your TYRO Facilitator or:

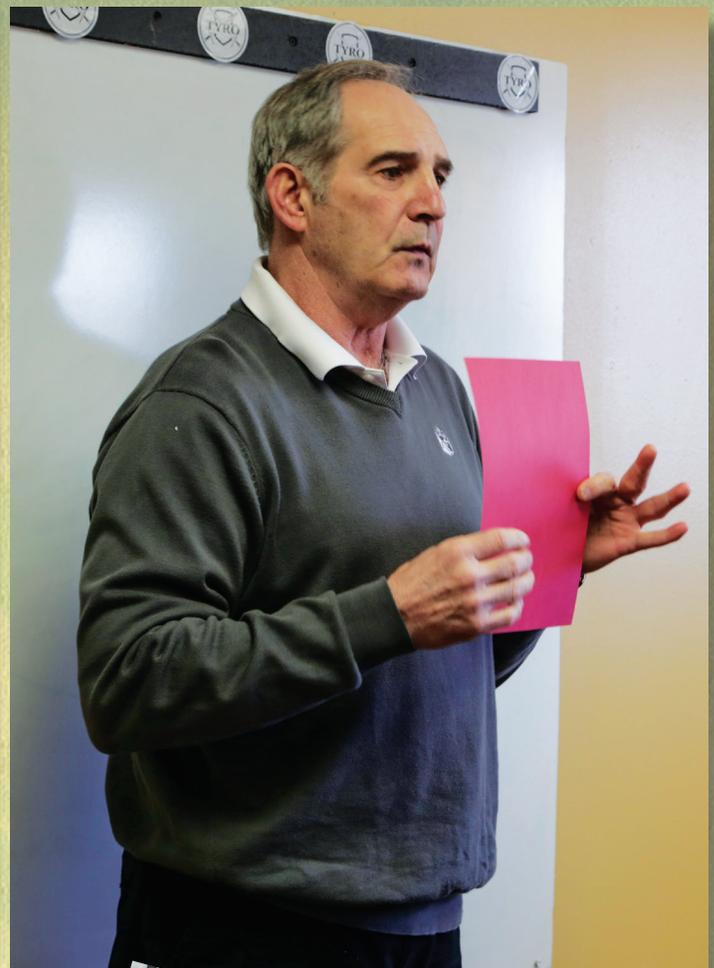
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Southwest Region Office Grand Opening

Guests are treated to speakers & an office tour as The RIDGE Project celebrates the Grand Opening of its Southwest Region Office

TYROs, local community leaders and RIDGE Project employees from across the state gathered at the agency's Dayton office for the Southwest Region RIDGE Project open house held on Tuesday, March 18th. The event was held to both celebrate their new location at 4699 Salem Ave in Dayton and to further inform Southwest Ohioans of the services offered there.

Guest Speakers included former Chief Judge of the United States District Court Walter Herbert Rice, Michael Monos-Vice President of PI & I Motor Express, city of Dayton commissioner Joey Williams, and Attorney Andrew M. Engel.



Judge Rice expressed his admiration and support for The RIDGE Project stating that the organization “has something to say that people need to hear.” He went on to discuss the problem of absentee fathers and the effects that has had on “an entire generation of young men.” “Any male can become a father...what The RIDGE Project is addressing is turning those fathers into men.”

Next Michael Monos discussed the great record of success TYROs have had working with his company both as employee drivers and more recently as owner operators. He then introduced TYRO Jamel Green. TYRO Green has recently become an owner operator and drove his new semi - complete with a Powered by TYRO logo - to the event.

Commissioner Williams then spoke about the importance of agencies like The RIDGE Project to the Dayton area and encouraged the organization to continue to partner with like-minded non-profits in Southwest Ohio. Attorney Andrew Engel also related how difficult it can be for low income individuals in the current economy. He urged people who are having difficulty in finding employment to use resources like The RIDGE Project to aid them in their search.

In addition to Jamel Green other TYRO speakers at the event included Anthony Smith Jr., president of the newly formed Dayton TYRO Accountability Fraternity, Andre Terrell and John Williamson. After the guest speakers, RIDGE Project Co-Executive Directors Ron and Cathy Tijerina addressed the crowd in front of the building just before the official Chamber of Commerce ribbon cutting ceremony took place.

Ron Tijerina said these kinds of events remind him “of why we do what we do. Seeing the people come out in support of The RIDGE Project because they’ve seen the work we do in their community is amazing. And then to get to spend time one on one with the TYROs at the event, for me that’s what it’s all about.”

Cathy Tijerina echoed that sentiment adding her belief that “The RIDGE Project has just started impacting communities like Dayton. I think one of the reasons we’ve been so successful is that we’ve been where these people are at and we can tell them that there is hope for their family and not to give up.”

*By: Scott Moore
The RIDGE Project*

“...What The RIDGE Project is addressing is turning those fathers into men.”

~Judge Walter Herbert Rice



Women's Support Network



How Is Your Partner, Wife Or Mother Surviving While You're Incarcerated?

We Can Help!

Ladies Support Groups are offered as a system of support for partners, wives, or family members that have a loved one who is incarcerated. Our support groups bring these women together to share experiences, create new friendships, be encouraged and develop new hope with others who are walking the same path as them.



Contact one of our 4 regional offices in Ohio and ask for the meeting location and times nearest you! Our staff will help you, encourage you, assist you, and guide you.

Northwest

Alicia Hernandez
419-278-0092

Central

Elizabeth Brown
419-278-0092

Northeast

Jennifer Ntia
330-456-8220

Southwest

Michele Shehee
937-279-9994

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FAMILY ACTIVITY

Use this TYRO Word Search as a fun activity during a family visit! Find as many of the words below as you can and see who can find the most in your family!



BROTHER

HAPPY

PROJECT

DAD

HOME

PROMISE

DREAM

HONOR

RIDGE

FAITH

HOPE

SISTER

FAMILY

INTEGRITY

TYRO

FOLLOWING

LOVE

WORTH

FUTURE

LOYAL

GRATEFUL

MOM

Mail Bag

Welcome to Mail Bag, a new section of TYRO Times! In each issue we will ask a question on a topic about you, your family, your future, etc. Please take time to think about the topic and write a response to us. Responses will be featured in the next issue of TYRO Times. We look forward to hearing from you!

Question #1



What are your hopes for your children's future?

Please send your thoughts & response to:

The RIDGE Project
Attn: Media Department
J169 State Route 65
McClure, OH 43534



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BE A PART OF THE CHANGE

WOULD YOU LIKE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE
IN THE LIVES OF YOUR CHILDREN
AND OTHERS LIKE THEM?

Right now there are millions of forgotten victims in the U.S. ~ children & families of the Incarcerated. Will you help support making the Forgotten Victims of Crime Awareness Month a national event? Together we can help families from coast to coast who feel forgotten and have been viewed as the problem by default because of something they had no control over. Thank you for joining in the fight to save America's next generation.

A new website, www.FVC2015.org, is dedicated to the fight for these forgotten victims of crime. Please visit this site to learn more about the movement!

THE SUMMER 2014 ISSUE OF *TYRO TIMES* WILL BE
DEDICATED TO THIS CRITICAL ISSUE.

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