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Newsletter

You are Invited to Attend our 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: Building Bridges to Success

Greetings,

We will be holding our 6th Annual Mat-Su Reentry Summit on September 5th and 6th, 2024. We are able to offer these two day trainings free of charge because of funding we receive each year from the Mat-Su Health Foundation.

Why are these Reentry Summits beneficial to Mat-Su Service Providers and Department of Corrections (DOC) personnel? The goal of our Reentry Summits is to help enhance the knowledge of service providers and DOC personnel both in the Mat-Su and throughout Alaska. These trainings help to ensure that Mat-Su community providers and other service providers across the state of Alaska are kept up-to-date on the best practices for building effective partnerships and programs for their clients with criminal justice-involved backgrounds.

Survey results from past Reentry Summits indicate that approximately 94% of attendees stated that the knowledge/skills and information gathered during the Reentry Summit would help them make improvements to their programs/services.

Here is a link to local news coverage of the 2023 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: [Professionals working to reduce recidivism gather at this year's reentry summit in the Mat-Su \(alaskasnews.com\)](https://alaskasnews.com/professionals-working-to-reduce-recidivism-gather-at-this-year-s-reentry-summit-in-the-mat-su)

At our 2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: Building Bridges to Success, our Keynote Speaker on Day 1 is Tanaine Jenkins. Tanaine is the author of "From Prison to President: 7 Ways to Succeed in your Second Chance." She is a Recidivism Strategist/Reentry Expert and has been featured on the CW, Ted Talks, and PBS.

Our Keynote Speaker on Day 2 is Dr. Sandra Smith. Dr. Smith is the Vice President of Via Hope, Mental Health Resource of Texas. Dr. Smith's unique contribution to mental health includes her trademarked "Thrauma®" training, focusing on the comprehensive impact of trauma. This approach forms the foundation of her international Reentry Peer Support certification training, which she conceptualized and co-authored.

We will also have a number of in-state experts presenting on various topics. Some of these topics include crisis and peer support, prison fellowship programs, building resilience, how to obtain free health insurance for reentrants, culture in the community, a reentrant panel, and more.

Our Reentry Summit is free to anyone who wishes to attend, but seating is limited. To view the agenda/sessions or register please go to the event website: [2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: Building Bridges to Success](https://2024mat-su-reentry-summit.com).

If you have any questions please contact me at barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org. I look forward to seeing you there.

Barbara Mongar
Coordinator, Mat-Su Reentry Coalition

Valley Charities Mat-Su Reentry Program provides a path to Success

By: **Randi Perlman, Frontiersman, June 24, 2024**

Our pathway through life can take many twists and turns along the way. Poor decisions can sometimes create serious problems and can lead to prison time for some Mat-Su residents. The focus and goal of the Valley Charities Mat-Su Reentry Program is to help these individuals integrate successfully back into the community by setting them up for success with skills to contribute to society in a positive way. Successful reentry has been noted across the country in reducing crime and imprisonment rates.

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition (MSRC) is a collaboration of individuals, community stakeholders, public and nonprofit agencies, faith-based and business partners who are united and committed to reducing recidivism among

returning citizens to the Mat-Su community. MSRE works on high-end problems, aiming to remove barriers to reentrance for those citizens who are seeking a new start after incarceration. The Coalition is geared toward a very specific target population which is individuals of medium to high risk to re-offend and recidivate to prison. Age can range anywhere from eighteen to ninety. The ultimate goal is to help the individual become stable and efficient on their own. Funding comes in the form of grants through Alaska Mental Health Trust as well as Mat-Su Health Foundation.

Parker said that since writing that poem, she's also reading poetry for the first time. The classes have also taught her to feel comfortable speaking in front of a group, she said, something she's always avoided. And she said that new confidence will help her once she's released, in under a month.

Barbara Mongar is the Coalition Coordinator, working closely with partner agencies as a 10-member Steering Team that meets at least monthly. The organizations that make up the Steering Committee are: True North Recovery, Goose Creek Correctional Facility, Palmer Probation Office, Alaska Veterans Assistance, Mat-Su Job Center, Access Alaska, Mat-Su Housing & Homelessness Coalition, Knik Tribe, Mat-Su Health Services, and Set Free Alaska. Other organizations that are part of the coalition include: Alaska Legal Services, Mat-Su Public Health Services, AK Dept. of Corrections, Connect Mat-Su, Victim Advocacy, AK Div. of Vocational Rehabilitation, Chickaloon Tribe, and Alaska Family Services. They are currently planning the annual Reentry Summit that provides free training for anyone interested in learning more about the reentry program. At the Summit, 'Building Bridges to Success', several knowledgeable speakers will impart valuable information that can help with the reentry process, such as employment, housing, mental health and more. This year's Reentry Summit is funded by the Mat-Su Health Foundation and will be held at the Menard Center in Wasilla from 9:00am to 3:30pm on September 5 & 6. The public is invited to this free event and lunch is included! Registration information will be forthcoming and seating is limited. For more information on the Summit, contact Mongar at 907-414-4077 or barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org.

Cindy Yeager is a Case Manager for the Mat-Su Reentry Program, along with Brian Galloway. Galloway executes the State of Alaska (SOA) reentry program while Yeager is Coordinator and Case Manager for the Second Chance Program and works closely with fellow Second Chance Case Manager, April Cheek. Yeager makes contact with potential candidates looking for services after release from prison, verifies their eligibility, and gets them set up through a phone conversation that helps establish their specific needs and release plans. Yeager can assist with the services they may need to connect with, such as transitional living, job placement resources, or a driver's license. **(Continued on page 3)**



The 4-person Mat-Su Reentry Team of Barbara Mongar, Cindy Yeager, April Cheek, and Brian Galloway runs the Reentry Program for the entire Mat-Su Borough.

Valley Charities Mat-Su Reentry Program provides a path to Success (Continued from page 2)

By: **Randi Perlman, Frontiersman, June 24, 2024**

The program will not cover the cost of things such as tuition, attorney fees, fines, restitution or taxes, however anything that will assist the client's stability in reentry through connection to the right agency or resource can be accomplished. In the 4 years Yeager has been involved with this program, it has grown exponentially. The true scope of the program is to help promote integration into the community and for individuals to be successful in their own right, which looks different for everyone, and to not be dependent on public assistance or substance use.

The Reentry Program often sees a spike in reentrance and need in the fall as temperatures start to drop, and conversely a large number of prison releases tends to happen in the spring. Approximately 500 reentrants are released each year from 4 facilities in the area: Goose Creek Correctional Center, Palmer Correctional Center, Pt. Mackenzie Correctional Farm, and Mat-Su Pretrial. The recidivism rate for Alaska right now is 60%. This means that of the 5,000 or so incarcerated persons across the State of Alaska, 60% will return to prison within 3 years. However, when offenders receive the help they need through a reentry program, that rate drops significantly. Lower recidivism rates equate to less crime and a safer community. Mental health and substance use issues often go hand-in-hand in many cases and can lead to criminal charges.

Valley Charities' 2 case management programs, Second Chance and Community-Base to Reentry, both run for 6 months. The 4-person team of Mongar, Galloway, Yeager, and Cheek runs the Reentry Program for the entire Mat-Su Borough, an area the size of West Virginia. Both Mongar and Yeager point to their many partnerships in the Valley as their biggest strength. The coalition agencies all work together to provide, or find, the resources needed to help a reentrant find a pathway to success.

Monthly Highlight of Resources in the Mat-Su National Nonprofit Day is August 17th

- **Mat-Su Health Foundation:** They invest resources on select populations and defined issues and/or systems that will have the greatest impact on their goal to create the healthiest borough.
Address: 777 N. Crusey St., Suite 201, Wasilla, AK; **Phone:** (907) 352-2863
Website: [Home - Mat-Su Health Foundation \(healthymatsu.org\)](https://healthymatsu.org)
- **Valley Charities, Inc.:** "Connecting those who need help with the help they need". Programs that fall under them include turn-A-leaf Thrift Store, Durable Medical Equipment Lending, Housing Assistance Partnerships, and the Mat-Su Valley Reentry Program
Address: 400 N. Yenlo Street, Wasilla, AK; **Phone:** 907-376-5740
Website: [Valley Charities](https://valleycharities.org)

Mat-Su Reentry Events:

- **Virtual Mat-Su Reentry Services Forum**
Wednesday, August 21
10:00 to 11:00 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition and Reentry Case Management Program invites you to join us in a virtual Reentry Services Forum. Service providers, PO's, Case Managers, and anyone interested in attending are welcome.

- **Mat-Su Reentry Coalition Steering Team Meeting**
Tuesday, September 3, 2024
9:00 to 10:30 AM

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition has a virtual Steering Team Meeting on the first Tuesday of each month. All are welcome to attend.

Register Now!

September 5 & 6, 2024

The 6th Annual Mat-Su Reentry Summit will be on Sept 5 & 6 at the Menard Sport Center, Wasilla.

[2024 Mat-Su Reentry Summit: Building Bridges to Success Registration \(whova.com\)](#)

For questions or zoom links to the above events please contact: barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org

Knik Tribe Events:

- **Talking Circle**—Tuesday, at 6:30 and Wednesday at 5:30; Same location above;
Contact Ralph Lewis at 907-841-9773
- **Talking Circle**—Thursday, from 12 to 2PM; Location: Willow Library, Willow, AK

Mat-Su Reentry Coalition

The Mat-Su Reentry Coalition is a collaboration of individuals, community stakeholders, public and not-for-profit agencies, faith-based and business partners who are united and committed to reducing recidivism among returning citizens to the Mat-Su community.

Our Mission

To promote public safety by identifying and implementing strategies that increase former prisoners' wellbeing within the community and reduce the likelihood of their return to prison through recidivating.

We will accomplish this by:

- Improved communication and collaboration between Alaska Department of Corrections (DOC) and the community.
- Building community partnerships to strengthen local services.
- Identifying barriers for those being released from incarceration and taking an active role in addressing those concerns.
- Promoting community educational and training opportunities for those releasing regarding resources.
- Work in conjunction with Alaska DOC to inform and promote reentry efforts in Alaska.



Mat-Su Job Center Update

By: **Amanda Carlson**, Mat-Su Job Center Manager

Mat-Su Job Center Staff are available Monday through Friday 8am-5pm for both job seeker and business services. We offer various workshops at our job center anytime upon request, in addition we offer interest assessments through WOWI (the world of work inventory), WorkKeys testing (required for most apprenticeship positions), and typing/10-key certifications. Those who experience barriers to employment receive priority for funding under the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Adult & Dislocated Worker program, this funding is administered by our Career Support & Training staff and can be used for workforce preparation, career services, training services and job placement assistance needed to increase occupational skill attainment, obtain industry recognized credentials, and secure a good job that provides earnings that lead to family- sufficiency. Contact us at 907-352-2500 or stop in at 877 W. Commercial Drive in Wasilla

For up-to-date information on open recruitments, job fairs, and virtual job readiness workshops please visit www.jobs.alaska.gov/jobfairs. The Mat-Su Job Center hosts various recruitments each month, if you are an employer looking to hire and would like more information about how we can promote and host a recruiting event for your business, please reach out to our newest staff member Anna Beebe in our Business Connection unit (907) 352-2523 or Anna.Beebe@alaska.gov.

Alaska Works Partnership has a new training schedule for free, hands-on, introductory training in construction, mining, oil & gas, maritime and transportation industries. In addition to pre-apprenticeship training, they offer the Alaska's Helmets to Hardhats program designed to serve veterans, transitioning service members, and active-duty spouses to connect them to quality careers and training in construction. If you're a woman looking into a well-paid construction career, the Women in the Trades Program offers hands on training in a female-only learning environment. Youth Training will be available again this year during Spring Break for Carpentry. Mat-Su courses include Heavy Equipment, Heavy & Light Duty Mechanics, Residential Wood Framing, Carpentry, Power Tools, and Framing & Sheetrock. To learn more visit www.alaskaworks.org

Mat-Su's Adult Education program at Nine Star provides several services for those 16 and older. GED preparation classes to obtain an Alternative High School Diploma by GED exam, College, and Career Readiness classes for preparation into post-secondary education, and English Language Learners classes that cover basic reading, writing, language, and conversational skills. To learn more about upcoming courses/schedules visit Nine Star at 899 W. Commercial Drive, email at matsuadulted@ninestar.org, or call (907) 373-7833.



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[Trends In Household Debt](#)

Also Inside

Jobless benefits are out of sync

Note: For more information on the Mat-Su Reentry Coalition contact Barbara.mongar@valleycharities.org or go to our Webpage at [Mat-Su Valley Reentry Program | Valley Charities Inc](#)