



# MATTERS

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## Randy's Redemption

**G**rowing up in Brooklyn, Randy was a promising student who planned on enrolling in college. But an untreated mental illness led to substance abuse, and he dropped out. Randy then spent many years in and out of prison while battling his addiction. He feared he would never break the vicious cycle of substance use and incarceration.

In 2009, Randy learned about Project Renewal's Parole Support and Treatment Program (PSTP) as he was being released from prison. **PSTP is the only program to combine transitional housing with targeted support services for parolees with mental illness.**

PSTP provided Randy with an apartment, which gave him a safe place for a fresh start, and with psychological counseling from Project Renewal staff, he found

stability for the first time in his adult life.

Randy credits Robert Blocker, PSTP Director, for guiding him through his recovery. “Project Renewal and Program Director Robert Blocker helped me in a way nobody had before,” he says.

Randy has lived with his partner in Brooklyn for over 10 years, and has a successful career in social services helping others—just like Project Renewal helped him.

## TRANSITIONING OUT OF PRISON

Dear Friends,

New Yorkers with histories of incarceration face steep barriers to housing, well-being, and reintegration into their communities. In fact, those who have been imprisoned are 10 times more likely to become homeless upon their release.

**At Project Renewal, we support justice-involved individuals and help them beat the odds.** We want our clients to re-enter their communities safely and successfully, to achieve health and wellness, and to pursue their education and employment goals.

We offer one-of-a-kind programs; from stabilizing services as an alternative to jail or the emergency room for those engaged by the police, to supportive housing for parolees coping with mental health and substance use challenges. We also provide services at the prisons to help prepare individuals for their transition back into the community. In this newsletter, you will see how we are helping New Yorkers move beyond their traumatic pasts, to pathways of renewal.

Thank you for supporting our life-changing work,

**Susan Dan,**  
Senior Vice President, Programs

# A New Alternative to Jails and Hospitals



Left to right: NYPD Chief Terri Tobin, ThriveNYC Director Susan Herman, Project Renewal President & CEO Eric Rosenbaum, and New York City Council Member Diana Ayala, at the opening of Project Renewal's Support and Connection Center

"I felt safe and at home at the Support and Connection Center. The staff was so supportive and caring. It made me want to become a better person."

— ANONYMOUS CLIENT



Project Renewal's Support and Connection Center in East Harlem, one of New York City's first two diversion centers, opened permanently in late 2020, despite delays caused by the pandemic.

This is a collaborative effort with local precincts and the community to enact long term, sustainable change, and provide stabilizing services, so that police can take individuals experiencing mental health or substance use crises to this facility, instead of to jail or the hospital.

Currently, the Center is operating at reduced capacity due to COVID, with up to 10 people in residence at a time, who can each stay for up to 5 days. **Clients have access to substance use and mental health services, occupational therapy, peer counseling and wellness planning** in addition to meals,

showers, and laundry. Upon completion of their stay, we encourage individuals to engage in our after-care services, which includes assistance in accessing community services, long-term treatment, and housing.

Over 80% of Center clients who have completed their stay have chosen to use these additional life-renewing services, for a total of 677 visits.

## JOSE'S JOURNEY with the Support and Connection Center

NYPD officers approached Jose on the street when they noticed he was having difficulty walking. **The officers were able to bring Jose to the Support and Connection Center instead of to jail or an Emergency Department.**

In this safe space, Jose opened up to the Project Renewal staff, sharing that he had been using heroin for over 20 years, was living on the street, and needed our help. Our team guided him to Project Renewal's Mobile Medical

Van to assess and treat his chronic leg pain, and helped him replace his lost ID. The Project Renewal team then found Jose a bed at a local shelter, where he is receiving treatment and working toward independence.

# "A Second Chance at Life"



Andy at Project Renewal

Childhood trauma led Andy down a path of substance use and incarceration. After his release from prison, he lost contact with his daughter, and experienced homelessness for four years.

Determined to make a change, Andy began his recovery journey in a residential treatment program, where he spent two and a half years. In early 2021, he was referred to **Project Renewal's Next Step workforce development program to help him secure a job.**

Though the market was especially challenging due to COVID-19, Andy thrived in our virtual classes, developing his resume, honing his interview skills, and building job readiness. With help from Next Step, he secured a role in maintenance at Project Renewal's St. Nicholas House, and he has his sights set on becoming a substance use counselor. "Project Renewal gave me an opportunity when I really needed it," he says, "And it was like a second chance at life."

Job stability has given Andy the chance to reconnect with his daughter, who has been his north star. "I'm really proud because she is a great daughter," he says. "She's my motivation to keep going."

10x

Formerly incarcerated individuals are 10 times more likely to be homeless than the general public.



In 2018, over half of people released from New York State prison went directly to New York City shelters.



Nearly half of our workforce development clients have a history of justice involvement.



89% of residents in our Parole Support and Treatment graduate program successfully maintain housing for at least one year.



Our Support and Connection Center, an alternative to jail and hospitalization for individuals experiencing mental health crises, is the first of its kind in NYC.



The Support and Connection Center has received more than 30 referrals per month since April.



# SNAPSHOTS OF RENEWAL



## CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

Our Culinary Arts Training Program prepares low-income and formerly homeless New Yorkers, including those with histories of incarceration, for careers in the culinary field. The program recently celebrated its 100th class of graduates.

## JOIN US

On Friday, October 1, Project Renewal's Junior Board invites you to the 14th Annual Fall Ball at The Bowery Hotel where we will gather to support our health, homes, and job programs. All guests must be vaccinated, and the event will follow CDC guidelines regarding capacity. Please email [events@projectrenewal.org](mailto:events@projectrenewal.org) for tickets.



“As a member of the Committee on Mental Health, Disabilities, and Addiction, I am thrilled that the City of New York has partnered with Project Renewal to bring its first Support and Connection Center to East Harlem. This transformative model helps people with behavioral health challenges to access vital resources, such as mental health and substance use treatment, while avoiding criminal justice system involvement and unnecessary emergency room visits. I applaud Project Renewal’s frontline team for helping these individuals gain stability and successfully reenter their community.”

—NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBER DIANA AYALA



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