



# Covington DRC Update



OCTOBER 2020

## WELCOME



Annette Ellis  
Program Manager

While normalcy has been disrupted for many during the pandemic, the Covington DRC has made great strides in continuing our services, including our engagement with the local community. After DRC staff were informed that two of the parole and probation officers we work with had lost everything as a result of Hurricane Laura, we decided to gather a portion of the donations we receive twice weekly from our local Target and drop them off at the Lake Charles District Office. On September 30, we drove over a total of 12 boxes of clothing, including coats, jackets, school uniforms, underwear and shoes, as well as six or seven boxes of toiletries. After taking what they needed, the officers distributed the leftover items to their parolee and probationer clients. After the hurricane, the DRC was also able to use our Target donations to provide the Baton Rouge DRC with an abundance of food, groceries and clothing. In other positive news, the Covington DRC recently had a successful audit and received an operational excellence classification, as much for our excellent operations as for our regular service to the community. Thank you for reading our October update, and please stay safe!



## SPOTLIGHT ON... CASE MANAGER GUILLERMO PINA



Reflecting on his one-year anniversary working with GEO Reentry, Case Manager Guillermo Pina said he has most enjoyed being of service, not only to program participants, but to the local community. For example, he recently took the time to drive a van full of Target donations to two parole officers in Lake Charles who had lost all their belongings during Hurricane Laura, "When we get our weekly donations from Target, first, we find out what our participants need and separate that out, but we always try to figure out how we're going to distribute it in the community. We have a good collaboration with probation and parole, so we wanted to do what we could to help." In his role as Case Manager, Mr. Pina takes every opportunity he can to help participants, even off the clock. "When I'm driving home or going to work, I'm always looking for resources, like snapping pictures of for hire signs so our participants who are looking for a job can have that information," he said. Mr. Pina previously worked in the mental health field and has a master's degree in counseling from California Baptist University; he is also a certified marriage and family therapist and professional counselor. "I think that's where my empathy comes from," he said.

## DID YOU KNOW?

GEO Reentry Services' **Community Connections** program links parolees with representatives from social services, governmental agencies, faith-based organizations, community groups and businesses. These valuable local service providers offer participants useful information about employment, vocational training, education, family services, food, clothing, housing, mental health, identification, substance abuse, support groups, mentoring and legal assistance. During the pandemic, staff at GEO Reentry centers nationwide took initiative to develop additional programming so that participants could access such essential resources while centers' in-person services were modified or suspended. Efforts included bringing in representatives from the state workforce commission to help participants fill out job applications, connecting with nearby community colleges to offer remote and in-person GED tutoring and building relationships with local retailers and restaurants to donate food and hygiene items, which program staff delivered to participants' homes. Through compassion and innovation, GEO Reentry staff helped program participants hold onto progress made prior to the pandemic and continue their reentry journeys without interruption.



By Wendy Dressler, GEO Care Research Analyst