

# Better People

Not Just Better Workers



2008–09 Annual Report and Program Update

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November 30, 2009,

Dear Friend of Better People,

Congratulation to Founder William 'Chip' Shields on his appointment to the Oregon State Senate. As the Founder of Better People, Chip wanted to help individuals who have legal histories change. Chip started Better People to help participants alter their thinking as a means of changing their behavior, find employment and once hired, maintain employment long-term.

Better People opened June 15, 1998, over 11 years ago. The Board of Directors, Advisory Council, staff and clients thank you for your continued support of our work. Our program extends its profound appreciation to funding foundations, contributors, and volunteers for your contributions.

People who commit crime leave a trail of disappointment, anger, betrayal, hurt and harm. They injure victims, families, friends, society and themselves. However, once they have served time as punishment for such unacceptable behavior, many seek change, that is to think and act differently. Better People offers these individuals opportunities to make much needed and crucial changes. Through our services and the dedication of staff, clients gain honesty, trust, encouragement and hope.

Fiscal 2008-2009 presented difficult challenges in terms of employment services. Initially, during the early quarters of our fiscal year, rates of unemployment were relatively low. However, as the year progressed, employment opportunities significantly decreased. Employers were not hiring and were, in fact, laying off many of their current employees, including Better People placements. The unemployment situation caused our Employment Specialists to struggle in their abilities to place clients. However, despite these hardships, clients continued to attend classes and held hope that employment prospects could and would improve. While the rates of employment did not return to previous levels, our Employment Specialists were able begin to make placements as the fiscal year drew to a close.

Unfortunately, there was also another disappointment. Better People had opened an office in Clackamas County in 2006 in cooperation with the county's Department of Community Corrections. Fiscal 2008-2009 witnessed the struggles of many government agencies impacted by budget shortfalls. Clackamas County experienced this decline, thus rendering it unable to renew its contract with Better People for fiscal 2009-2010. The Milwaukie office closed at the end of August 2009. However, Better People is collaborating with county administrators, who have agreed on a strategy to seek funding to re-open within the next year.

Funding is also an issue for clients and therefore, for Better People as well. While clients are responsible for a one-time nonrefundable enrollment fee of \$35, the fee does not began to financially support our services. The cost to assist a client varies from \$1,500 to \$2,000. Clients cannot afford to pay these costs. As such, Better People accepts the responsibility of raising funds to continue to serve our needy clients. Staff remains passionate about the importance of our work, and of our responsibilities to clients and our communities.

Thus, while Better People experienced some disappointments during fiscal 2008-2009, we are pleased with our achievements. Please review the year's statistics on page 4. Many non-profit organizations are experiencing funding challenges; Better People shares those concerns. As such, we ask for your continued and if possible, increased, support and contribution in helping us to help clients change as we make our neighborhoods and communities safer and therefore, more livable.

Happy Holidays to you and yours.

With deep appreciation,



Clariner M. Boston, MPA, MS AJ  
Executive Director

Yours truly,



Judy Belk, Ph.D.  
President, Board of Directors

**Founder - William 'Chip' Shields – Founding President Board of Directors – Ed Hill**  
**Founding Funders -- Robert C. Warren Jr., Robert F. Kingery, Win McCormack, Black United Fund, United Way Community Investment Fund, Meyer Memorial Trust and the Murdock Charitable Trust**



PHOTO: THOMAS NICO

FALL 2008 GRADUATES

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PHOTO: CHERYL JUETTEN

MRT® graduations are often the first time that many clients have completed anything; it is a milestone in their lives. They are proud, as they should be, of this accomplishment. It means a great deal when members of their families are able to attend graduation and cheer them on. Clients’ children are especially proud to be able to share this moment with their parents as they delight in their successes. Better People also takes pride in being part of clients’ accomplishments as they pass the vital step of graduation while endeavoring to move ahead in their lives.

### Summary of Results

#### 2008–2009

Enrolled	Job Readiness*	Completed Past Step 3 (Job Ready)	Employment	30-Day Retention	90-Day Retention	180-Day Retention	365-Day Retention
275	126	136	80	93%	85%	80%	67%

*\*Job readiness was introduced as a component of service in 2004*

#### 1998–2009

Enrolled	Job Readiness	Completed Past Step 3 (Job Ready)	Employment	30-Day Retention	90-Day Retention	180-Day Retention	365-Day Retention
2704	517	1507	776.6	90%	83%	73.6%	66%

## Mission and Goals

### The Better People Mission

Our mission is...to significantly reduce the rates of recidivism in the Portland metropolitan area. We help our clients change their lives to become more productive citizens. By doing so, we are contributing to the health and safety of our local communities.

### How We Accomplish Our Goals

Better People accomplishes its mission by providing four components of services to clients:

- Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT®), a cognitive behavioral treatment process that assists clients in changing their thinking as a means of changing their behavior.
- Job Readiness classes to enable clients to become more efficient and effective in their job search.
- Job Placement assistance to help clients in gaining permanent, full-time employment.
- Job Retention assistance, after gaining employment, to help clients remain employed long-term.

### Measures of Clients Helping the Community Through Public Service

Clients perform public service as a means of giving back to their communities in a small but meaningful way some of that which was taken away during the commission of their crimes. The performance of public service cannot be for a friend, relative or for pay. Clients often continue to volunteer long after they have met their required 10 hours at Step 6 and again at Step 9. During fiscal 2008-2009, clients volunteered over 1490 hours valued at a rate of \$20.25 per hour. Since opening in 1998, clients have volunteered 20,890 hours in the Portland Metropolitan Area.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> MRT® was designed by Gregory Little and Kenneth Robinson of Correctional Counseling, Inc., Memphis, Tennessee. See [www.ccmrt.com](http://www.ccmrt.com) for additional information.

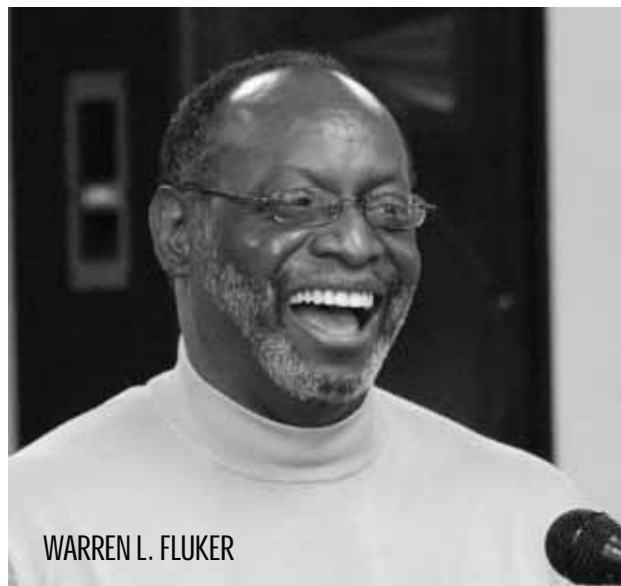
<sup>2</sup> Figures taken from a national survey conducted by Independent Sector, see *Value of Volunteer Time*: [http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer\\_time.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html)



FALL GRADUATION EMCEE AND  
MULTNOMAH COUNTY COMMISSIONER  
JEFF COGEN



BOARD PRESIDENT  
JUDY BELK



WARREN L. FLUKER

## Why We Do What We Do

Everyone is concerned about crime, his or her personal safety and that of their families. When a heinous crime is committed the media shares that information with the public who in return often demand an arrest, conviction and that usually leads to a *throw away the key* mentality. In some instances, a movement evolves to enact another crime law or increase the punishment involved with current law. Neither approach changes the initial circumstances leading up to the demand for change and most research indicates that legal responses do little to decrease the rate of crime. However, it does exhaust the use of tax dollars to the extent that we are spending more on corrections than on public education.

Why does someone commit a crime? What goes on in the mind of people who break the law? If criminal justice practitioners could resolve such questions the criminal justice system could be proactive rather than reactive- we could stop an act of crime before it occurs.

Criminal laws are made, enforced, and punishment is applied to those who refuse to obey and the cycle repeats itself. So the question is for those who make poor decisions, get convicted and *do the time* yet, get tried of the same old thing- what is available to assist with their desire to change their lifestyles and become productive individuals? Better People!

Better People is specifically designed to work with people who have admittedly committed crime but want an opportunity to change, accept responsibility for their actions, themselves and their families, who want a chance to gain viable employment, go to work, pay their bills and positively contribute to themselves, their families and communities

Better People requires all clients to participate in cognitive behavioral therapy classes using Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT®) to assist client in changing their thinking as they seek to change their actions. Change is not easy. Clients face different challenges as they endeavor to make vital changes in their lives. The need for some

changes is evident and most clients have little difficulty in making their adjustments. However, after years of living negative lifestyles, lying, manipulating, abusing and/or using, many clients find certain changes difficult.

For example, MRT classes are held twice weekly. At the start of class a few clients often want to share their personal challenges to get feed back on ways they could handle those circumstances. Sometimes they have personal stories to share. A client had a story he wanted to share:

*He had gone through the drive thru of a local donut store to purchase a half dozen donuts. He requested his order, got his donuts and paid. His girlfriend happened to be with him in the car. After leaving the premises he proceeded to drive for a few blocks without saying anything. Finally, his girlfriend asked why was he so quiet. He shared that when he paid for the donuts he gave the cashier \$10 but he gave him back change from \$20. He told her that he knew there was a mistake as the cashier was counting out the money but said nothing. He was being quiet because being on Step 6 in MRT® he honestly thought he had changed but yet, in one instance he was back to his old way of thinking and acting. He was disappointed in himself.*

*Some of his classmates were surprised by his behavior while others (mostly new clients) were stunned that he even shared his tale in class. The facilitator asked him what he planned to do with the money? He stated that he knew that he had to return the incorrect change and would do so before the next class in two days. At the start of the next class the facilitator asked the client to report on his incident. The client stated that he returned the money and that the owner (who had missed the money) was so grateful that he offered any baked goods at no cost. The client said he took two donuts.*

*The facilitator asked him how did that make him feel? He replied good but concerned. He really thought that he was a changed person but after that incident realized that at any given moment without giving a situation*

*much thought he could revert to his old ways. He recognized that he had to really stop and think before he acted in order to make change and not take his behavior for granted.*

His situation provided a real life circumstance that enabled other clients to benefit from his lack of changed thinking. MRT® is a valuable tool for change but clients must understand their combined effort is most crucial to their ability to make positive change. Better People provides a venue for change and recognize the impact of our program on clients, our neighbors and broader communities. We seek to help clients make differences in their lives.

### Whispers of Change

Whispers of change  
converse through the leaves.  
Millions of voices carrying  
from tree to tree.

The mirror changes,  
the faces remain the same.  
Born into bondage until the  
spirit is set free.

Sitting at a gravestone, late at night  
next to someone from another time.  
I wonder if his life  
was anything like mine.

Did he take for granted  
the love he was given?  
Did he live in the moment?  
Or pass by the hour?

A leaf floats down from the tree above  
Whispering change is it came to rest  
on his stone.  
I prayed I'd never again take for granted  
All the love I've been shown.

Poem by Charles Wood

## Alumni Club Offers Support to MRT® Graduates

PHOTO: CHERYL JUETTEN



### The Alumni Club's Mission:

*People recovering their lives and reaching out to help others.*

One of the most important things people need as they strive to change their lives is the support and understanding of others who have walked the same path. At Better People, clients receive such support as soon as they enter a Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT®) group.

The counsel and encouragement of others is a valuable resource as clients progress through the 12 Steps of MRT®. But that need for support doesn't go away after an individual has graduated. Beyond that, it's critical for successful graduates to give something back to others walking the path. This is why the Better People Alumni Club exists.

Since its founding in 1999, the Better People Alumni Club has grown to include a large, active membership.

The Club's mission is People recovering their lives, reaching out to help

others. Money raised through summertime car washes is distributed to other agencies working with people having legal histories. These organizations include Rose Haven, a day shelter for homeless women, and Recovery Association Project, a community and civic activist group.

The Alumni Club has also established a loan program to assist members in need of small, short term loans. In addition, Club members may obtain legal services for just \$25 an hour.

The Alumni Club meets on Saturday, once a month, alternating between Better People's offices in Portland and Milwaukie. Members also socialize at a monthly bowling party and at potlucks during the holidays.

We have committed members, but our membership is open. If you are a graduate, join us; if you are an interested party, thank you for your continued support of our work.

David Kirby joined the Clackamas County Sheriff's Office as Undersheriff in October of 2007. Kirby holds a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from the University of Oregon, as well as advanced certifications from the Oregon Department of Public Safety

Standards and Training in both police work and corrections. A graduate of the 230th session of the FBI's National Academy, he attended Portland State University's Mark O. Hatfield School of Government, earning a Public Safety Management Certificate. He holds additional certificates from the United States Department of Justice, the Southwestern



Law Enforcement Institute and the Oregon State Sheriff's Association, and graduated from the Sheriff's Command College, a statewide leadership training program. He has served as a member of the advisory council for his children's school, and also as President and Vice President of the Oregon City Soccer Club, a non-profit organization that serves nearly 1,000 children in Oregon City.



## Thank You, Better People Referral Agencies

Cascades Aids Project (CAP)  
Cascadia Behavioral Health Care  
Catholic Charities Housing Transition  
Central City Concern  
Clackamas County Mental Health  
Clackamas County Community  
Corrections  
Clackamas County Juvenile Judicial  
Family Drug Court  
Clark Co. WA Dept. of Corrections  
Circuit Court of the State of Oregon  
Confederate Tribe of Grand Rende  
Columbia County Parole & Probation  
Community Action Center  
Community Solutions  
Connections Ministries  
DePaul Treatment Center  
Easter Seals Oregon  
Federal Public Defenders Office  
Friendly House  
Goodwill Industries  
IAM CARES  
Independent Living Program  
IRCO  
Irvington Covenant Community  
Development Corporation (ICCDC)  
JOIN  
Kon-A-Way Til-Li-Kum PC  
LDS Employment Service Center  
Legacy Emanuel Hospital  
& Health Center  
Lifeworks Northeast  
Marion County North Office Parole  
& Probation  
Metropolitan Family Services  
GEARS Program  
Metropolitan Public Defenders  
Mt. Hood Community College  
Multnomah Co. Community Court  
Multnomah County Circuit Court  
Multnomah County Department of  
Community Justice  
Multnomah Co. Department of  
Community Justice

Day Reporting Center  
Domestic Violence Unit  
Multnomah County Sheriff's Office  
Inverness Jail  
Multnomah County Dept.  
of Aging & Disability Services  
Multnomah Co. Pre-Trial Services  
National Council on the Aging  
Native American Rehabilitation  
Association (NARA)  
Native American Program  
Native American Youth Association  
(NAYA)  
New Avenues For Youth  
Northwestern Pilot Project  
Providence Health Systems  
OHSU  
One Stop Career Center  
Central City Concern  
Southeast Works  
Open Door  
Oregon Dept. of Corrections  
Columbia River Correct. Facility  
Coffee Creek Correct. Facility  
Santiam Correctional Facility  
Oregon State Penitentiary  
Oregon State Correction Insti.  
Mill Creek  
Eastern Oregon Correction Institution  
Snake River Correct. Institution  
Two Rivers Correctional Institution  
Oregon Commission for the Blind  
Oregon Criminal Defense Lawyers  
Oregon Dept. of Human Services  
Div. of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Central Branch  
East Branch  
Milwaukie Branch  
North Branch  
Tigard Branch  
Adult & Family Services  
Child Welfare Dept.  
Self-Sufficiency  
Oregon Employment Department  
PCC- Dislocated Workers Program

Oregon Youth Authority  
MacLaren Youth Correct. Facility  
Parole/Probation  
Out Side In  
Partnership For Safety & Justice  
PEAR  
Portland Community College  
Skill Center  
Workforce Development  
Connection  
Portland Habilitation Center  
Portland Impact  
Portland Police Bureau  
Portland Youth Builders  
Providence Health System  
Recovery Association Project (RAP)  
Rose Haven  
St. Andrew Catholic Church  
St. Francis Catholic Church  
Salvation Army  
Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI)  
Seniors Make Sense (SMS)  
St. Vincent de Paul  
St. Vincent Chemical Dependency  
Southeast Works  
Transition Projects, Inc.  
Jean's Place  
Clark Center  
Tualatin Valley Center  
Uhuru Sa Sa  
Unity, Inc.  
US Federal Prison - Sheridan  
US Pre-Trial Services  
US Federal Public Defender  
US Probation Office  
US Veterans Administration  
Volunteers of America  
Men's Residential Center  
Women's Residential Center  
Washington Co. Dept. of Corrections  
Washington Co. Parole  
& Probation  
YWCA



Clariner Boston, Executive Director

**INDEPENDENT AUDITOR'S REPORT**

To the Board of Directors — Better People  
 Portland, Oregon  
 June 30, 2009 (With Comparative Amounts for 2008)

The Board of Directors  
 Better People  
 Portland, Oregon

We have audited the accompanying statement of financial position of Better People as of June 30, 2009, and the related statements of activities, functional expenses, and cash flows for the year then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of Better People's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audit. The prior year summarized comparative information has been derived from the financial statements of Better People as of June 30, 2008, and in our report dated December 3, 2008, we expressed an unqualified opinion on those statements.

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Better People as of June 30, 2009, and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the year then ended, in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

*James E. Richman, CPA, PC*

November 14, 2009  
 James E. Richman, CPA, PC  
 Certified Public Accountant  
 One SW Columbia, Suite 777  
 Portland, Oregon 97258

*Better People is a 501 (c) 3 charitable organization.  
 Donations, bequests and gifts of stock accepted. Federal Tax  
 ID number 91-1824478. Legal name is Better People.  
 4310 NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Portland, Oregon 97211  
 www.betterpeople.org*

*The books are in the care of Richard C. Harris, CPA, of Portland.  
 Audit and/or current financial statements gladly furnished by  
 calling (503) 281-2663. The board treasurer is Mark Walker, Division  
 Director of Public Affairs, Northwest Power and Conservation Council.*

Better People—Statement of Financial Position  
 Year Ended June 30, 2009

ASSETS	2009	2008
<b>CURRENT ASSETS:</b>		
Cash and equivalents	\$ 113,458	\$ 94,358
Grants and Contracts and other Receivables	12,000	24,777
Prepaid Expenses	8,743	16,455
Total Current Assets	134,201	135,590
<b>EQUIPMENT AND FURNITURE</b>	6,154	9,205
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u>\$ 140,355</u>	<u>\$ 144,795</u>
<b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES:</b>		
Accounts Payable	\$ 1,127	\$ -
Accrued Payroll and Taxes	6,348	4,576
Accrued Vacation	17,092	19,421
Total Current Liabilities	24,567	23,997
<b>NET ASSETS:</b>		
Unrestricted	115,788	120,798
Total Net Assets	115,788	120,798
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>	<u>\$ 140,355</u>	<u>\$ 144,795</u>

Better People—Statement of Activities  
 Year Ended June 30, 2009 (With Comparative Results for 2008)

SUPPORT AND REVENUE	2009	2008
Grants and Contributions	\$ 123,007	\$ 155,648
Contract Revenues	247,470	217,685
Program Service Fees	7,071	2,528
In-Kind Contributions	5,850	16,715
Interest	491	1,228
Total Support and Revenue	383,889	393,804
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Program Services	311,800	360,079
Management and General	58,894	56,728
Fundraising	18,205	33,434
Total Expenses	388,899	450,241
<b>CHANGE IN NET ASSETS</b>	<b>(5,010)</b>	<b>(56,437)</b>
<b>NET ASSETS, BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>120,798</b>	<b>177,235</b>
<b>NET ASSETS AT END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 115,788</b>	<b>\$ 120,798</b>

## Contributors and Grantors

Richard & Carylyn Alexander  
 Roberta J. Allen  
 Jonathan & Deanne Ater  
 Autism Society of Oregon  
 William Bache  
 Michael Warwick & Susan V. Bailey  
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 Dave Barrows & Associates Inc.  
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 Broughton & Kelly Bishop  
 The Black United Fund of Oregon  
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 Laurens & Judith Ruben  
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 Lynn Sullivan  
 Marc Sussman  
 Ingrid Swenson  
 The Swigert Foundation  
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 Gwen Tarbox  
 Barbara A Taylor  
 The Taylor Family Trust  
 Keith E. Tichenor  
 Tichenor & Dziuba LLP Lawyers  
 Rose E. Tucker Charitable Trust  
 Catherine & Mark Turner  
 Taylor Family Trust  
 Betsy Tucker  
 David & Carol Turner  
 US Bank Charitable Services  
 Helen Walker  
 Mark Walker  
 Joy M. Wallace  
 Richard B. & Judith Wandschneider  
 Bob Warren  
 Robert C. & Nani S. Warren Foundation  
 Wendy Warren  
 Howard Waskow  
 Jean & John Weigant  
 Eugene & Candace Wheeler  
 William & Thelma Wiest  
 Joseph Adrian Williams

John & Rachelle Wish  
 Wyss Foundation  
 J.O. & R.D. York  
 Juan Young Trust  
 Sylvia Zingester

## Tribute

Louis J. Boston

A grateful Thank You to those who contributed to Better People in memory of Lou Boston. Your gifts are deeply appreciated and will be further acknowledged in the 2009-2010 Annual Report.

*We try very hard to make this list as accurate as possible. If you see an error, please call Clariner Boston at (503) 281-2663.*

## Employment Placement

People who have legal histories are initially attracted to Better People because they want a job. Work is one of the main ways in which we define ourselves and, often, how we are defined by others. When our clients are unemployed, they feel worthless, unattractive, unproductive and irresponsible. At least, those are some of the adjectives used by clients to describe their self-image.

*Work provides income, but it is also important to a person's mental wellbeing and self-belief. The roles people play in their family and in society are partly shaped by their work....Work is important for people's health and well-being.*<sup>1</sup>

Research indicates that for people who have legal histories, being unemployed has a detrimental effect on their ability to make positive decisions and display acceptable behavior.

*...young adults employed in what dual labor market theory describes as "secondary sector jobs" are more likely to engage in crime than those in more stable jobs...time out of the labor force is positively related to criminal involvement, and that when workers expect their current employment to be of longer duration, they are less likely to engage in crime. We also find that the interaction between the amount of time that workers spend out of the labor force and the labor market participation rate of the population in their county of residence is significantly related to criminality.*<sup>2</sup>

Better People believes that to be successful in employment and other aspects of life, people who have legal histories must change their actual behavior in order to pursue and maintain meaningful employment and personal relationships.

As a result, Better People's program strategy is not based on a quick fix ideology. Instead, we maintain that gaining a livable wage-paying job is more likely to keep a client engaged in employment and therefore, more likely to succeed in other aspects of



*Employment is an essential piece in helping clients put their lives together...*

life. We seek to work with employers who pay at least \$9 an hour with health benefits. Health has become a major focus of attention over the past few months. It is evident that healthy people make better employees. Being physically healthy is vital to being a productive employee but other attributes are also as important.

As such, clients must demonstrate that they are responsible, reliable, ready and willing to work. Once clients attend Orientation, satisfy the enrollment fee, and start attending Moral Reconnection Therapy (MRT®) classes, the facilitator observes whether they are prompt, have consistent attendance, have a positive attitude, are able to follow through and keep their commitments, and are conscientious, all characteristics of a convincing work ethic. In addition to their employment qualifications and work experience, these are the attributes used by an Employment Specialist (ES) when advocating for employment with potential employers.

A supportive relationship between the ES and the client is essential. A trusting relationship between the ES and a potential employer is just as crucial. Better People is proud of the professional associations we have garnered with clients and employers over time.

We are aware that not every client can be placed in employment. During this past fiscal year the rates of

unemployment in Oregon exceeded national numbers. Employment placements were significantly impacted. In addition, there are a number of clients who are not as seriously interested in work, have no faith in their ability to gain employment and are convinced that no one will give them a chance. Staff works constantly and consistently to influence change in these attitudes and encourage self-confidence while promoting the essence of a program empirically proven to help develop better people, not just better workers.

We are hopeful that fiscal year 2009-2010 will see an increase in Oregon's rates of employment. We are seeking to place our clients in positions that elicit opportunities to increase their skills, enable their progress and eventually earn promotions. Our clients, like all workers, want to become financially self-sufficient, and to be able to support themselves and their families as they decrease their need for government services. They want to feel that they can be, and are, productive members of their communities.

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> Waddell, G., K. Burton and M. Aylward, (2007), The health effects of being out of work, *Journal of Insurance Medicine*, vol. 39(2), pp. 109-120.

<sup>2</sup> Crutchfield, Robert D. and Susan R. Pitchford, (2007), *Work and Crime: The effects of labor stratification*, *Social Forces*, Vol. 76, p. 93. *Whispers of Change*

And a Very Special Thanks To ...

Rafael Acosta Aranda  
 Cynthia Adams  
 Habeebah Akbar  
 Mike Albers  
 Richard & Carilyn Alexander  
 Roberta J. Allen  
 Amina Anderson  
 Brian Anderson  
 Eric Anderson  
 Lilia Araujo  
 Andrea Archleta  
 Gene A. Arciniega  
 Dylan Arthur  
 Connie Ashbrook  
 Samuel L. & Cyreana M. Boston  
 Ashby  
 Jonathan & Deanne Ater  
 Autism Society of Oregon  
 William Bache  
 Shelly Bailey  
 Michael Warwick & Susan V. Bailey  
 Darcey L. Baker & Byron Philpot  
 Sammy Baker  
 Maria Bakó  
 David C. Balding  
 Melissa Ballard  
 Kathy A. Bambeck  
 William Bard & James Donder  
 Donna Barlow  
 Gary Barnes  
 Michael & Linda Barnes  
 Penny Barnes  
 Dave Barrows & Associates Inc.  
 Pat & Dave Barrows  
 Jessica Beach  
 Kevin Behrman  
 David Bellwood  
 Judith B. Belk, Ph.D.  
 Paul Bellatty, Ph.D.  
 Matt Bellet  
 Nancy Bergerson  
 Jim Bernard, Commissioner, Clackamas  
 County Board of Commissioners  
 Julie Bessie  
 Tena Hoke & James Binkley  
 Arwen Bird  
 Broughton & Kelly Bishop  
 The Black United Fund of Oregon  
 Bracken Revoc Trust  
 T. Dan & Jeanne Bracken  
 Patricia & Reg Bradley  
 Paul & Nancy Bragdon  
 Linda Brandt  
 Robyn Branzell  
 Pat Brasesco  
 Breaking the Cycle  
 John & Jane Braunger  
 Maurisa Breton  
 Stephen B. Bright  
 Willa Brooks  
 Alvenice Brown  
 Sandra Brown  
 Trisha Brown  
 Wendy Brown  
 Randi Brox  
 Victoria Bryce  
 Denise Burkenbine  
 Rex Burkholder  
 Roger & Jeannie Burt

Roger Burt  
 Gary Byer  
 Robert (Bob) N. Byrne & Jean A.  
 Eilers  
 Erin Cain  
 Laurie Calderbank  
 The Campbell Group  
 J. Duncan & Cynthia Campbell  
 John Canda  
 Lorena Connelly  
 Steve Canter  
 Todd A. Caponetto  
 Don Carbonari  
 Brooke Cardin  
 Devlin W. Carothers  
 Lucinda Carroll  
 Eric B. Carson  
 Thomas & Anne Caruso  
 Mary Jo Cartasegna  
 Greg Carver  
 Cascade Corporation  
 Cascade Technical Sciences Inc.  
 David Celuch  
 Willie & Vanessa Chambers  
 Teresa Chancy  
 Arthur W. & Patricia A. Chaney, Jr.  
 Tony & Yvonne Chandler-Chastain  
 John & Carol Chism  
 Carol & Larry Christensen  
 Tony Christopher  
 Gina Clanton  
 Mary Clark  
 Al Clawson  
 B. Elisabeth Burdon & Craig Clinton  
 Danelle Cloyes  
 Coast Industries, Inc.  
 Jeff Cogan, Commissioner, Multnomah  
 County Board of Commissioners  
 Scott Collins  
 The Collins Foundation  
 Commerce Bank of Oregon  
 Lara Conley  
 Dr. William & Sonja Connor  
 Nancy Conover  
 Contractors Employment Service  
 Josh Gonzales  
 Charles & Lucy Cook  
 Doug Cooper  
 Kathleen Cornett  
 Correctional Counseling Inc.  
 Bob Costas  
 Robert Costello  
 Julia Covert  
 Michael Crowe  
 Dan Curtis  
 James & Marsha Curtis  
 The Hon. Deanne Darling  
 Jim Darnall  
 Pat Daniels  
 Crystal Davis  
 Berhanu DeBoch  
 Ben DeHaan, Ph.D.  
 Natalie Delord  
 Robert H. Depew  
 Kate Desmond  
 Karen D. Devallet  
 D.I.V.I.N.E 35, Delta Sigma Theta  
 Sorority Inc., Eta Kappa Chapter  
 Bert F. Diamond  
 Maggie Diaz

Gordon & Mary Ann Dickey  
 Lance Dickey  
 Colin & Joan Diver  
 Kay Doen  
 Traci Dobson  
 Kay Doern  
 Dennis & Marianne Doherty  
 Kevin Doohan  
 Charlotte Dorsey  
 Diane Doty  
 Downtown Dental Associates  
 Zenon Dunaj  
 Thomas Dunne  
 Doreen Earl  
 Corey Ebbin  
 Bruce Edgerton  
 Cynthia A. Edwards  
 Fern Elledge  
 Catherine Ellison  
 Gwen Isaacs & Charles H. Encell  
 The Equity Foundation  
 Dennis Erickson  
 Sally Erickson  
 Aron Faegre & Associates  
 Teresa Findley  
 Cecilia Fiorillo  
 Sue Fischer  
 Kerry Fiscus  
 Nick Fish, Commissioner, City of  
 Portland Board of Commissioners  
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 Page & Fletcher Frisch  
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 Jim Foreman  
 Terry Forester  
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 John & Renata Hahn-Francini  
 Doug Franklin  
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 The Hon. Julie Frantz  
 William Diebold & Deborah Freedberg  
 Marshall Friedman  
 Sarah Frost  
 Dave A. Fuller  
 Paula & Lee Fuller  
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 Barbara Galloway  
 Galloway & Luckett Music Duo  
 Travis Gamble  
 Kimberly Garrett  
 Rainy Gauvain  
 Dr. Barry & Marjorie Gerald  
 Paul Gerald  
 Geneva's Sheer Perfection  
 Susan Gibson  
 Mitzi Go, M.D.  
 Sandy Gooch  
 Carl Goodman  
 Jennifer Graham  
 Jim Gravely  
 Randy Green  
 Jacqueline Gregerson  
 Robyn Gregory  
 David & Terry Griffiths

Kathleen Cornett & Stephen Grove  
 Kristen Gunn  
 Sam Haley  
 Lillian Hambrick  
 Rhonda Hamm  
 Robert & Paula Hamm  
 Victoria Hanawalt  
 Rachel Hansen  
 Jeff Hanson  
 Mychal Harkless  
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 Stewart A. Harvey Photography  
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 Edmund Hayes  
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 Andrew J. & Beverly J. Honzel  
 Honzel Family Foundation  
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 Jeff Horton  
 Felton Howard  
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 Carol Hovley  
 Christopher Hoy  
 David & Lori Hulme  
 Linda Hutchings  
 Yassi Irajpanah  
 The Howard Wallis Irwin & Dorise  
 Carlyon Irwin Foundation  
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 Cheryl A. Juetten  
 Amel Karaselimovid  
 Diane Karpenski  
 Ron Kater  
 Patty Katz  
 Gordon Jr. & Katherine Keane  
 Judy Keans  
 Uly D & Janice D. J. Keener, Jr.

A Very Special Thanks ... (CONTINUED)

Kristen Kelley  
 Michael Kelly  
 Leanne Kerner  
 Ross Kevlin  
 Kim King  
 Nigel Nicholson & Virginia King  
 Undersheriff David M. Kirby, Clackamas County Sheriff's Office  
 Nancy & Wayne Kline  
 Scott G. Klusmann  
 Carol & Michael Knutson  
 Russ Kofferd  
 Christopher Kofi  
 Diane Kopperman  
 David Landis  
 William (Bill) & Marie Langenes  
 Linda J. Larkin  
 Mark Laughlin  
 Regan Lean Valerie & T.S. Lefler  
 Katherine McDowell & Kenneth Lerner  
 Peter Lining  
 Ann Lininger, Commissioner, Clackamas County Board of Commissioners  
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 Ingrid Lewis-Rocks  
 Ross & Sheila Lienhart  
 Jerry & Anita Lindsay  
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 Marianna Lomanto  
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 Kevin & Stephanie Lynch  
 Garrett Maass  
 Sharayah Mackinnon  
 Brenda Mahr-Douglas  
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 Richard & Joyce Malin  
 Ellen Manly  
 Rigaberto Marmaletto  
 The Hon. Michael H. Marcus  
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 Mark Masthoff  
 Krissy Mattson  
 Raymond Allen Mayer  
 Cory McAllister  
 Janet McCabe  
 Alison & Derek McCarthy  
 Stephen & Lee McConnel  
 Jani McCord  
 Winthrop McCormack  
 Alverta McCoy  
 Lieutenant Thomas T. McGranahan, Jr.  
 Lisa McInnis  
 Mike McJunkin  
 Anne McLaughlin  
 Patricia McLean  
 Estella Namahoe  
 Scott Neilson  
 The Men's Wednesday Morning Bible Study, First Presbyterian Church of Portland  
 Madonna S. Merritt  
 Laura Meyer  
 Sandi Meyer  
 Brittany Michelle  
 John Middlesworth  
 Joe Miller  
 Larry Miller

Pamela Miller-Tatro  
 J.C. Milne  
 J.C. Milne Real Properties  
 Gloria F. Milton  
 Barbara Mitchum  
 Kurt & Tamra Mobley  
 John Mollahan  
 Corey Mooney  
 Trinity Monahan  
 Thavy Monn-Hing  
 Eric Montgomery  
 Laura Morgan  
 Tony Morgan  
 Ahmen Muyendo  
 Karen Musica  
 Catherine J. Myers  
 Art Nagle  
 Roxanne Nakamura  
 Frances Nauce  
 Eben Neal  
 Truls Neal  
 Brian Nease  
 Kristine Nelson  
 Debbie Ness  
 Angelika Neumann  
 Allen & Martha Neuringer  
 Jennifer Newy  
 Thomas Le Ngo  
 Alison Novinger  
 Joe Nunn  
 Susan Nystrom  
 The Oregon Community Foundation  
 Amy O'Conner  
 Anne O'Malley  
 Milo Ormseth  
 Lee Anthony Orr  
 Felicia Otis  
 Angela Pack  
 Mauro & Carrol Pando  
 Adrian Parkinson  
 Stephaine Parirsh Taylor  
 Partners for Progress  
 Partnership For Safety & Justice  
 Nathan Patrick  
 Maccio Pettis  
 Lynn Peterson, Chair., Clackamas County Board of Community Commissioners  
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 Marjorie Phillips  
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 Cynthia Peetz-Yochim  
 Dawn Penberthy  
 Kaja Perkowski  
 Ofc. Robert Pickett, Portland Police Bureau  
 Arwen Bird & Tanya Pluth  
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 Saiden Sharif-Karemi  
 Kevin Sheridan  
 Kathy Sherill  
 Steve Sherlag, Esq.  
 Andrew Sherman  
 Anthony Sherman  
 Mary Shevell  
 Oregon State Senator Chip Shields & Shelda Holmes  
 John & Claire Shields  
 Susan Shirey  
 Traci Shofi  
 John Siebenaler  
 Sigma Pi Phi Fraternity, Inc., Delta Phi Boulé Chapter  
 Meri Simmons  
 Karin Guenther & Michael J. Sirtori  
 Bryan Smith  
 Donna Smith  
 Ken Smith  
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 Lewis & Judith Sprunger  
 Janan Stoll  
 Gregory Stone  
 Lynn Sullivan  
 Donna Standing Rock  
 Barbara Stone  
 Bill Sullivan

Marc Sussman  
 Ingrid Swenson  
 The Swiger Foundation  
 Carl Talton  
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 Taylor Family Trust  
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 Tichenor & Dziuba LLP Lawyers  
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 Eugene & Candace Wheeler  
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 William & Thelma Wiest  
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 Cindy Williams  
 Joseph Adrian Williams  
 John & Rachelle Wish  
 Charles Wood  
 Edie Wooldridge  
 Loren L. Wyss  
 Wyss Foundation  
 J.O. & R.D. York  
 Kent Yost  
 Juan Young Trust  
 Loretta Young  
 Malcolm C. Young  
 Dale Yu  
 Sylvia Zingesser  
 Terri Zook

## This is my story by Charles Wood

An unstable pattern was set early in my life with an alcoholic father and a mother who passed away when I was 9 years old. I had spun through 19 homes by the time I managed to get my first apartment at the age of 15. By then, I had become an alcoholic, took speed, LSD and pot anytime I could get my hands on any of it.

To me, stability was something that only occurred on TV. Society was my enemy. Thus, I led a life filled with jails, hospitals and institutions. In between those was a life spent riding freight trains...I

I entered Better People's cognitive behavioral therapy group (MRT®) in January 2008, not knowing what to expect but willing to try anything that could help me rise above the issues I faced. I was six months sober with a supportive family but no job.

For me, there were only 2 choices left: death or a total change of mind.

I realized upon entering Better People that all of my views were deadly and unhealthy. I desperately needed to change my thinking to have any chance of gaining and remaining with employd long term."

In June 2008, Better People and Central City Concern worked together in my behalf. After proding through my actions, that is determining just how motivated I was to work and the willingness demonstrat just how productive I could be, I became the first Better People client to be hired into Central City Concern's "Downtown Clean & Safe" program.

I was given this opportunity and decided that I would seized it with passion. While working, I continued to attend my MRTé classes to maintain the positive momentum I was making

in my life. "

After gaining work with Central City Concern, I wanted to continue with Better People to accomplish my goal of completing all 12 MRT® Steps that allowed me to continue examining my decision making and to keep moral and ethical commitments.

In December 2008, I completed Central City Concern's six month Janitorial Trainee program with high merit. Through this process together with my MRT® classes, I improved my self confidence, received formal janitorial training and obtained solid references from Better People and Central City Concern satff. I was ready to hit the ground running and aggressively look for new work with little chance of relapse and/or giving in to depression.

Moving forward with MRTé, I completed all 12 Steps in February 2009 and participated in the March 2009 graduation ceremony. Subsequently, I joined the Better People Alumni Club as I continued to actively look for work with the help of my Better People Employment Specislist to find a job/

In April 2009, I interviewed with Columbia Sportswear and based on my qualifications and the accumulated success that I accomplished over the prior 18 months, I was hired.. My motivation to change and my work at Better People along with the completion of Central City Concern's Janitorial program and a reference from CCC Manager Matt Bellet impressed Columbia Sportswear and they gave me a chance. I was hired and wotk as a full time Janitor with benefits at Columbia Sportswear's Distribution Center in North Portland.

I have come a long way from being that man-child who lived a seemingly destined dysfunctional life— I feel I am now a man who has a firm and positive destiny.

Note: Charles is a gifted poet. We present some of his work here:

### The Only Way

I can see no other way to live in the future

I can see no other way to be free

It doesn't begin by looking to others

And it never begins by judging my brothers.

It can only begin right here in the heart of me

If only to reach out in some small way to help another speaks more volumes than words can ever say.

If my right hand reaches out

Letting my kept hand know,

Then unconditional love has been planted

And love can only began to grow



## Educational Forums

There is a great deal of discussion among members of the general public and criminal justice practitioners and advocates about the rates of recidivism and public safety. Generally, crime rates have declined while the rates of recidivism have increased.

Crime rates have gone down since the early 1990s in all the major western nations of the world which have experienced post-World War II baby boom. Crime rates went down in the 1990s simply because the baby boomers “aged out.” They became too old and too married to commit crimes.....recidivism always goes up as a necessary consequence of falling crime rates.

What contributes to increases in rates of recidivism is of vital concern, especially as people who have been formally incarcerated return to their communities. Public officials, families and the individuals who have legal histories all share some concerns related to this issue. So what are some of the contributing factors to this phenomenon?

Many...legal barriers that extend beyond the completion of a prison sentence were adopted by Congress or state governments as part of the “war” on crime and drugs. These include restrictions on occupational licensing that prevent work in many types of jobs; access to public housing and other types of social programs aimed at the poorest Americans; and a variety of political rights (such as the right to vote, to serve on juries and to hold public office). The unintended consequence of these policies can be to promote the very circumstances that led to crime in the first place....Crime policy in recent decades has emphasized harsh punishment over rehabilitation, and the problems of prisoner re-entry have become increasingly difficult to ignore.

There are several factors that prompt people who have legal histories to recommit crime: sociological (interactions with, and influences from, others); psychological (mental and emotional challenges/learning disabilities); administrative (not all laws are severely

enforced as others) demographic (e.g., statistically, younger people commit more crime than those who are older and males are more apt to commit crime than females); and economic (not willing to attain perceived or actual needs legitimately). Several of these factors require a commitment to change and an acknowledgment that legal options and solutions exist whereas others are often barriers which are difficult to overcome.

### Better People Seeks to Inform Through the use of Educational Forums

Better People introduced semi annual Educational Forums in June 2007 as a means of helping to educate the public about a variety of challenges that impact persons convicted of a crime while also offering potential solutions. For these forums, Better People assembles a panel of government and private professional experts to discuss subjects that significantly affect people with legal histories.

Successful programs need to address the fact that inmates and former offenders are a diverse population, and a large proportion face multiple barriers to self-sufficiency—low levels of education, lack of employment experience, physical and mental health problems, and lack of stable housing. Therefore, solutions to the problem of recidivism must be multifaceted.

### January 2009 Forum

The subject of the January, 2009 Forum was Substance Abuse in the Community and the Workplace: The Impact of Drugs, Alcohol, and Tobacco. The Forum was held at Irvington Covenant Community Church, Portland, Oregon. Lt. Tom McGranahan of the Portland Police Bureau, East Precinct, served as moderator. Panelists included: David Poppleton, MA, LPC, Kaiser Permanente, Employee Assistance Program; Gregory Stone, LCSW, Program Director, Volunteers of America, Men’s Residential Center; Gary Barnes, MSW, LCSW, CEAP, Senior Clinical Manager, Reliant Behavioral Health, Employee Assistance Program; Mitzi Go, M.D., Fellow, Division of Neonatology,

Oregon Health Sciences University; and Barry Maletzky, M.D., retired psychiatrist, Clinical Professor of Psychiatry, Oregon Health Sciences University. This forum noted a multitude of problems in this area but also provided a number of workable solutions.

### June 2009 Forum

The June, 2009, Forum topic was Housing Solutions for People with Legal Histories. This Forum was held at the Multnomah County Central Library, Portland, Oregon,. Sally Erickson, MSW, Manager, Ending Homelessness Initiative, City of Portland, Bureau of Housing & Community Development, served as moderator. Panelists included: Fern Elledge, Community Service Center Director, Transition Projects, Inc.; Sharon Fitzgerald, Assistant Director of Supportive Housing, Central City Concern; Rainy Gauvain, Homelessness Programs Analyst, Oregon Housing & Community Services; Marc Jolin, Executive Director, JOIN: Connecting the Street to a Home; Officer Robert Pickett, Neighborhood Response Team, Southeast Precinct, Portland Police Bureau; and Barbara Stone, Program Manager, Shared Housing, Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon. Over 125 people in attendance learned more about then issues and became increasingly aware of a significant number of community resources available. This interchange of information shared among participants and attendees was both beneficial and valuable.

Individuals can review video of our June Forum online at:  
[www.betterpeople.org](http://www.betterpeople.org)

Special thanks to  
Mitzi Miller for the video.

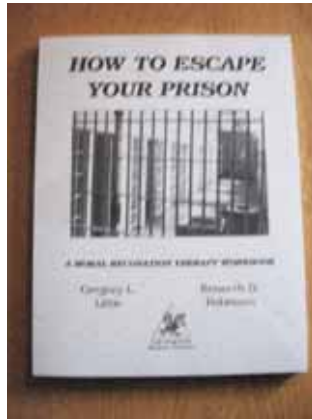
## Moral Reconciliation Therapy

Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT®) is a cognitive behavior therapy process developed in 1985 by Drs. Gregory Little and Kenneth Robinson of Correctional Counseling, Inc. MRT® was specifically developed for use by people with legal histories seeking a means with which to change their thinking and ultimately, their behavior.

Little and Robinson used Ron Smothermon's concepts that help reach an understanding of the world as it is as opposed to the world the participant experiences to learn how to positively span these two. These concepts are then combined with a number of other theoretical underpinnings: Lawrence Kohlberg's theories of moral development: elevating from doing the right thing because of fear of punishment to doing the right thing because it is simply the right thing to do; Eric Erikson's theories of identity development: knowing who you are is not totally based on your past experiences; Abraham Maslow's needs of hierarchy, ego and identity development— an understanding that innately we put natural needs before others; and Carl Jung's concepts of analytical psychology, such as establishing a healthy relationship with one's conscious and unconscious self.

MRT® is a treatment process designed to improve one's ego, social, and moral thinking while influencing positive behavior in a progressive graduated process. This form of therapy seeks to change one's desire for constant pleasure and avoidance of pain to where there is concern for social rules, others and society as a whole.

This program incorporates several basic treatment issues: confrontation of beliefs; attitudes and behaviors; assessment of current relationships; reinforcement of positive behavior and habits; positive identity formation; enhancement of self-concepts; decrease in hedonism; development of frustration tolerance; and higher stages of moral reasoning.



MRT® is a progressive process that enables participants to re-examine their thinking as they endeavor to change their lifestyles. It is an evidenced-based process proven to decrease rates of recidivism by 25 to 60%. Little and Robinson wrote the MRT® book *How to Escape your Prison* to be used by all participants. This handbook enables the reader to better understand the process of change and how self-made and other barriers can hinder that progress.

Correctional Counseling, Inc. provides a one-week training program during which participants become certified facilitators trained to adhere to MRT® principles and guidelines. Better People staff are each certified MRT® facilitators. In addition, staff assuming the responsibility of an MRT® class have a minimum of a bachelor's degree and professional experience pertinent to working with clients with legal histories.

Better People staff have more than 50 years of combined experience in working with persons who have physical, mental, and/or emotional challenges, and/or addictive behaviors. Staff are required to establish and maintain professional boundaries, be sensitive to client challenges while seeking appropriate solutions, and be adept at utilizing suitable resources when and as needed to assist clients with resolving problems pertinent to their individual progress and growth.

Better People hosts semi-annual MRT® graduations in March and September. These occasions often mark the first time many clients have completed anything. Attending graduation provides an opportunity for judges, parole and probation officers, counselors from other social services agencies, and family members to hear clients' testimonies as another stage in their transformations.

Also in attendance are members of the Better People Board of Directors, Alumni Club, active clients and staff. This event gives clients a chance to feel proud of their accomplishment with the knowledge that they can succeed.



Board, staff and Alumni members congratulating graduates

## Job Readiness

Individuals with legal histories, having limited exposure to the world of work, and having difficulties in securing employment too often lack the “soft skills” needed to get a job, stay employed, and advance in their position. Soft skills are the non-technical skills, abilities, and traits that workers need to function in a specific employment environment. Better People provides these soft skills as they pertain specifically to clients who have legal histories.

Better People’s Job Readiness (JR) curriculum includes five major sets of workplace competencies: problem-solving; oral communication; strengthening one’s interpersonal skills; developing a strong work ethic; and, the relevancy of being a team player. These skills are achieved through the application of the JR book using Moral Reconciliation Therapy® (MRT®) standards, pre- and post-testing of video-taped mock interviews, synthesized panel interviews, pre- and post-testing of a sample application completion, resume building, cold-calling methodologies and employment retention conduct.

Job Readiness training is presented over 4 days at 4 hours per day. The 16 hour course is designed to enable participants to understand and experience standard formalities involved in an actual job search and typical questions often asked during an interview. In addition, clients gain valuable insights about the misconceptions and negative perceptions often projected toward people with legal histories. This course includes how to successfully manage and, when needed, appropriately respond to these inequities. The tools provided in the JR workshop include discussions related to these issues, thereby, enabling participants to be better informed about how to prepare for and follow through with a more thorough approach to gaining employment.

When first entering a JR class on Tuesday many participants are reluctant, do not appreciate the need to attend and are apprehensive about what benefits classes will provide. However, after taking part in all four days, by Friday participants

fully appreciate what they have learned. They have an improved understanding of what is needed to conduct a more thorough job search, complete an employment application that can be given serious consideration, and be impressive during an interview among other job search techniques.

Studies have shown that individuals with prior legal histories who have full-time jobs are less likely to go back to prison. Many clients believe that having a legal history in itself, is what hinders them from obtaining employment. However, research indicates the main reason people who have a legal history are unable to find employment is simply that they are not looking and if they are looking, they most likely are not seeking jobs with employers open to hiring people with their type of background.. Knowing how to make a critical cold call to clarify an employer’s hiring policies eliminates the expenditure of useless time, effort and embarrassment

Semantics are also important; it determines how clients see themselves which is often a precursor as to how they conduct themselves. How clients refer to themselves and present themselves during interviews may be the deciding factor in whether to hire or not. Using terms such as felon; ex-con, criminal and offender are all negative references. Using negative terms places distracting emphasis on the person’s previous actions and not their current behavior. Better People advances the philosophy that past behaviors do not have to be repeated, people can and do change.

Confidence building is a major component of the curriculum. Overcoming unhealthy self esteem issues presents major challenges. Clients’ low opinions of themselves exacerbated by societal condemnation and under some circumstances, family rejection are difficult to overcome. The JR program coupled with regular MRT® classes supports clients in their efforts to see themselves differently and therefore, helps them to become more self-assured.

The following statements represent client responses to the course and instructor.

*...you changed my life...everything...said in job readiness actually happened when I had my interview yesterday. I got the job.*  
Brian M.

Nobody ever asked me about my legal background before, but when they do I will be ready for the question.. Robert E.

*...you need to teach this class in prison too...that way we can be ready right when we get out!!!* Juanita A.

*I hated the mock interviews, because I don’t like how I look on camera. But I have never been in a program before that really helped me look for a job and made me feel like I can actually be somebody. [the instructor was]... good and funny in the teaching. I was always interested in [her] stuff.* Jessica B.

Employment Training Specialist  
Valerie Peterson



## My name is Ken Walker

**M**y name is Ken Walker. I would like to take this time to thank everyone at Better People for asking me to share my story.

When I was growing up in South Dakota, my mother was my role model. She taught me life's values, love, family and a good work ethic that focused on sacrificing your own needs in order to support your family. However, soon after my entry to prison those values soon were smothered with hate, anger, violence and segregation from all walks of life. Not being a prejudiced person, I thought I could never reach the levels of fear, anger and alienation that I did in prison.

Because of the detached world I had lived in while incarcerated, when I was released I felt as though I was still in prison...unknowingly, a prison I had built. I felt like a puppet with a painted smile on my face. Felt like I was supposed to be happy that I was out of prison. But what I felt was... alone- lonely. Everyone I knew had left Oregon and all I wanted to do was go home. I felt looking for work was hopeless because nobody was going to hire a man with a legal history but there I was with my painted smile pushing forward in the community to no avail.

Then it was suggested to me by my parole officer that I go to Better People. I thought, "Oh no, not another program" and couldn't have cared less about participating. I'd been to twelve step programs before and they didn't work because I was not ready to change and back then I thought I could handle anything as long as I had a bottle in my hand. When I was told I had to give testimonies in group, the old negative feelings I had shot through me like lightning. I hated the thought of letting anyone into my world. Nothing was going right at this point and I felt

trapped. But when I was challenged in group to stand up in front of complete strangers to share my feelings during my Step One testimonial, something happened to me inside. I started to feel free. I started to feel a sense of pride and it felt like a brick had just fallen off that wall I had built around me.

As I continued on with the program, my confidence grew and the values my mother taught me returned. More and more bricks were coming down and the fog I was in from 30 years of drinking and not thinking right began to lift. The message of MRT® sank in and I began to see things clearly and to open up and allow people to help me. When the staff at Better People helped me land a job with Central City Concern's "Clean and Safe" program my heart soared like a hawk. It was a big relief to me and my family who, to that point were helping to support me until I got on my feet. I am currently scheduled to return home on the day my six month commitment with Central City Concern ends.

I am proud to write that I have a job and a home waiting for me upon my arrival in South Dakota but had it not been for the efforts of both Better People

and Central City Concern, I would not have this opportunity to return home so early nor do I feel I would have been able to return home with my values in tact and so much hope for a brighter future. I am looking forward to showing my mother that the values she taught me are strong and that I will now work to help support her, my daughter and the rest of my family.

My message to those starting out in Better People is simply this: "Believe in yourself". You have three things going for you while you're there...the staff, your group members and yourself! Together, if you listen and challenge yourself to step out of your comfort zone, there should be no stopping you from reaching your goals.

Thank you to the Better People staff, my MRT® group members who challenged me to look at things in a different light and to Matt S. and Matt B. at Central City Concern for giving me an opportunity to work and show how productive I can be in the community. I'm in a better place because of our teamwork. My smile is real now! Peace

Ken Walker



## Staff

**Clariné M. Boston, Executive Director & Certified MRT® Facilitator.** Ms. Boston has been with Better People since its opening in 1998. Originally holding the position as Recruitment Specialist, she was selected by the Board of Directors to succeed State Rep. William ‘Chip’ Shields, founder and former Executive Director in 2004. Ms. Boston has a BS in Marketing, a Masters in Public Administration, and a Masters in Administration of Justice, from Portland State University. She enjoys playing duplicate bridge, trivia games and solving puzzles.

**Todd Caponetto, Volunteer Alumni Club Coordinator & Certified MRT® Facilitator.** Mr. Caponetto has a BS degree in history from Portland State University. He has over 9 years experience in working with families dealing with issues of incarceration. Mr. Caponetto also has over 8 years experience in marketing and sales. He is currently a full time student pursuing a Master’s degree in Social Work from Portland State University. Mr. Caponetto volunteers his time to work with the Alumni Club. He enjoys hiking, snow boarding, and bird watching.

**Warren L. Fluker, Certified MRT® Facilitator.** Mr. Fluker has over 30 years experience in the areas of government, human resources, education, and work force development. He received his MS and BS degrees in Counseling Psychology and Psychology from the University of Oregon. Mr. Fluker enjoys reading, cross country hiking, deep sea fishing excursions, family and quiet time.

**Lee Anthony Orr, Employment Specialist & Certified MRT® Facilitator.** Mr. Orr received his BS degree in Political Science from Portland State University. He has over 15 yrs experience in working with underserved families and at-risk youth in the Portland-Metropolitan area, over 5 yrs experience in case management working with TANF clients and individuals with legal histories

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and over 19 years experience in job development.. Mr. Orr enjoys composing music, writing poetry and studying world history.

**Valerie Peterson, Employment Training Specialist & MRT® Facilitator.** Ms. Peterson received her BA in Administration of Justice from Portland State University, and is currently working toward her Master’s degree in Conflict Resolution. Ms. Peterson has over eleven years experience in working with people having challenges in their lives, including several years with youth. In addition, as a practicum student, Ms. Peterson worked with minority youth, extensively with females, for Multnomah County’s Donald E. Long Center. She enjoys acting and writing and is a published author.

**Tanisha Wells, Financial/Program Administrator and Certified MRT® Facilitator.** Ms. Wells has been with Better People since 2003. She earned a Business Technology Certificate from Chemeketa Community College and attended Portland Community College. Ms. Wells has more than 15 years of extensive experience in diverse business administration practices and procedures. She enjoys spending quality time with her family.

## Board of Directors

We thank **Mark Walker** for his years of dedicated service and valued contributions. He served the Board with integrity and provided strategic balance. Thank you Mark.

The Board is pleased to welcome back **Sue Fischer** and also extends a warm welcome to new members **Devlin Carothers, Lt. Tom McGranahan, Annette Jolin, Sam Haley and Janan Stoll.**

The Board provides broad oversight of the agency and its operations.