

SPOTLIGHT on the Corridor

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By Demetrius O. Williams
OC Communications Consultant

The Opportunity to Find One's Purpose

Throughout life there are many peaks and valleys, opportunities and simply being in the right place at the right time. For Raymone Gardner, 15 years ago, he implied that he was in the wrong place at the wrong time. This regrettable occurrence resulted in Mr. Gardner being incarcerated for a short period of time due to a felony offense. Favorably, after three months of incarceration, Mr. Gardner took advantage of an unforeseen opportunity and received early release. Even though he wasn't imprisoned for a long period of time, he now has the unfortunate felony on his record. Mr. Gardner vividly recalls his time in prison. "I can remember on visiting day seeing my two year old come visit me and thinking, *I need to be a better example and show him the right way of living.*" That moment stood out for Mr. Gardner. He knew that it wouldn't be easy, but he had to put in the work to be a positive role model for his children.

Ironically, shortly after being released, Mr. Gardner met Maurice Stevens, a gentleman who was and still is passionate about assisting individuals who are recently released from incarceration. He has either started or participated in numerous programs that have helped their transitional process back into civilization through job training and life skills.

Over the years, Mr. Gardner has been involved with several programs that Mr. Stevens has been a part of. It wasn't until recently that Mr. Gardner finally felt like he was in the right place at the right time. Because of funding from the Opportunity Corridor Roadway Project, Mr. Stevens was able to provide an opportunity for Mr. Gardner to learn how to be a carpenter.

For Mr. Gardner this was a life altering moment. "I can remember the first time my grandfather put a hammer in my hand. When I told him that I signed up for this program; I saw how proud he was of me. I knew this was the right place for me," said Mr. Gardner.

The carpentry program is a 7-week course that is designed to teach individuals the intricate skills of carpentry while preparing them for employment in that field. "Being in this program is giving me a purpose in life; I'm making my grandfather proud, inspiring my brother and being that positive role-model to my children," said Mr. Gardner.



Raymone Gardner

He is currently one of the top students in his class and looking forward to finishing and starting the next chapter in his life. A father of three boys and one beautiful daughter, Mr. Gardner has finally found his purpose in life. Although it has taken some time, he believes the best has yet to come.

Maurice Stevens of Career Development and Placement Strategies with the help of the Opportunity Corridor Roadway Project wants to give every resident the opportunity to find their purpose and improve upon their life just like Raymone Gardner.

For more stories like this one and to find out additional information about the Opportunity Corridor go to <http://opportunitycorridor.transportation.ohio.gov/>.

