



## **WCS Connection**

**April 2019**



*From the desk of the WCS Executive Director:*

### **With a Shrinking Workforce, Broadening of Criminal Expungement Makes Sense**

At the end of February 2019, there were more than 7.1 million job openings across the United States and not enough job seekers to fill them. In fact, according to the US Department of Labor, this marked 12 straight months where the number of job openings outpaced the number of available workers. In Wisconsin, the Legislature is taking a step toward addressing the dearth of job seekers by broadening the eligibility for criminal expungement.

It is well known and understood that a criminal record has a negative impact on one's life, including limiting employment prospects. Current state law requires a judge to grant expungement at the time of sentencing and restricts the eligibility to individuals under the age of 25. Under a measure being considered by the Wisconsin Legislature, judges could consider possible expungement after individuals serve their full sentence, as well as open up the opportunity for expungement to individuals of any age. If passed, the measure would provide renewed hope for many non-violent offenders who do not present a threat to public safety but could significantly strengthen Wisconsin's workforce. Finding and remaining gainfully employed is one of the most effective ways to reduce the likelihood of recidivism. Helping to grow the state's economy is just one of the many reasons why this bill makes sense for residents across the state of Wisconsin.



*Clarence Johnson*



## BMAC Hosts Motivational Event for Residential Reentry Center Participants

The WCS Black Male Advisory Council (BMAC) hosted a special inspirational event for more than 50 residents of our Parsons House and Joshua Glover Residential Reentry Centers on

March 26, 2019. The “Iron Sharpens Iron” event was designed to give hope, encouragement and practical advice to Residential Center participants as they transition from incarceration back into their communities.

Featured speaker David Cooks encouraged participants to find what they are passionate about and set goals for themselves to achieve a successful reentry. Cooks, author of the book *“Getting Undressed: From Paralysis to Purpose,”* talked about how he has overcome many obstacles in life. He assured the men that they can move beyond their pasts and live with a positive purpose. Cooks told the audience, “Excuses don’t stop you. Obstacles don’t stop you. Stopping stops you.” Co-speaker Eric Thompson shared his personal experience of reentering the community after incarceration. He urged the men to challenge themselves and to think differently than they did when they were incarcerated. Many of the program participants said that the event inspired them to stay on a positive path after release.



## Longtime WCS Employee, Mike Balda, Recognized for Exceptional Victim Advocacy

Michael Balda, Director of Electronic Monitoring and Drug Testing Services at WCS, recently received the Waukesha County Exceptional Victim Advocacy Award from the Waukesha County District Attorney’s Office and Victim/Witness Assistance Program. He was recognized for his outstanding dedication and service to victims of crime on April 10, 2019 during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week. Mike oversees WCS’ 24/7/365 GPS/location monitoring for individuals who are charged with domestic violence in Waukesha County. In his position, Mike works to protect the victims of these crimes by ensuring that he and his team diligently monitor and immediately report any GPS violations. We are proud of Mike’s work to make our communities safe for everyone. Mike has been a dedicated WCS employee for more than 15 years. This award symbolizes his longtime commitment to the mission of WCS in advocating for justice and community safety.



Pictured (left to right): Jerry Solem, Denise Rawski, Katie Hanson, Mary Wittwer, Mike Balda, Sara Carpenter, JoAnn Eiring, and Jeff Styka.



## WCS OCA Supervisor, Shirley Drake, Chosen for CPS Advisory Committee

Shirley Drake, Supervisor of the WCS Office of Consumer Affairs (OCA), has been selected to serve as a member of the newly created Certified Peer Specialist (CPS)

Advisory Committee. The committee advises the Wisconsin Department of Health Services in its support and oversight of all Certified Peer Specialists initiatives. The committee reports to the Division of Care and Treatment Services, Bureau of Prevention Treatment and Recovery (BPTR). As a Certified Peer Specialist Trainer (Substance Use Focus) committee member, Shirley will educate, inform, and advise the State BPTR in matters regarding the utilization of Certified Peers, the training and certification process, expansion of services, and other important areas affecting peer services.

WCS began the OCA program in 2018 with funding from the Milwaukee County Behavioral Health Division (BHD). As the program supervisor, Shirley oversees eight Certified Peer Specialists who provide services to individuals from four inpatient units, two stabilization houses, Team Connect (aftercare community services), and You Matter (opioid referrals from Froedtert). On April 9, 2019, she presented the program to the Mental Health Task Force and was recognized for the valuable and dedicated work of the WCS OCA program. Under Shirley's leadership, OCA has become a highly respected service that has been recognized by our funder, community, and those we serve!



## Join Us - On the Road Again!

WCS is excited to announce the upcoming *On the Road Again* fundraiser for the Center for Driver's License Recovery & Employability (CDLRE)! This new event aims to promote awareness of CDLRE services as well as raise money to provide these critical services to those in need. The overall goal of CDLRE is to increase the number of licensed drivers among low-income residents in Milwaukee County, thus increasing their ability to find family-sustaining employment, care for their families, and participate more fully in their communities.

Please join us on **Thursday, May 30th from 5:00 to 8:00 pm** at Saz's State House Restaurant in Milwaukee for an evening of delicious food, a great silent auction, a fun raffle, and a cash bar. Tickets are \$42 each and include 1 drink ticket.

**To purchase tickets, click on the link below!** Just call us at 414-290-0400 if you have any questions!

A big thank you to our event sponsors: [Wipfli](#), [Husco International](#), [Legal Action of Wisconsin](#), [Mutual of America](#), [MWH Law Group](#), [Infinity Telecomm](#), [M3 Insurance](#), [Noble Diagnostics, Inc.](#), [SCRAM Systems](#), [Vistelar](#), <https://www.160drivingacademy.com>, [Athena Communications](#), [BestEd](#), [Fess Properties LLC](#), [WRTP/Big Step](#), Benedict Center, Financial Solutions, Heller Consulting Inc., Historic Concordia Neighbors, Mortle Trucking Inc., Near West Side Partners, Scrub 'n' Shine, John Pawasarat & Lois Quinn, Sue Holm, Robert Bartos, Dimitri Topitzes, and Friend of the CDLRE.

**Buy your On the Road Again tickets here!**

## Thank You to Our Sponsors





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Dimitri Topitzes



## Career Opportunities at WCS

WCS is currently looking for hardworking, energetic people to fill these positions:

### Forensic Specialist - Case Worker III

This position is in the Opening Avenues to Reentry Success program at WCS. As a specialist you would provide wraparound case management services to high risk/high need individuals with mental illness who are released from the Wisconsin state prison system. Applicants must have past experience in case management and service coordination.

### Resident Support Case Manager

A case manager provides supportive recovery-oriented interaction and monitoring of previously homeless individuals with substance abuse and mental illness, residing in the WCS Thurgood Marshall Apartments. This program utilizes Housing First and Harm Reduction models. A bachelor's degree in a behavioral health field is required for this position.

Visit our website to learn more and find a listing of additional opportunities!

## Did You Know?

Since its founding in 1912, Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. (WCS) has had 3 other names; Society of the Friendless, Wisconsin Service Association, and Wisconsin Correctional Services.



**Wisconsin Community Services, Inc.**  
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*Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. (WCS) advocates for justice and community safety, providing innovative opportunities for individuals to overcome adversity.*

WCS is a 501(c) 3 non-profit agency that provides services in southeastern Wisconsin.  
WCS has been serving the community successfully for over 100 years.



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