

## WCS Connection January 2020



*From the desk of the WCS Executive Director:*

### Criminal Justice Reform

More than 2.2 million people are currently in America's prisons and jails, according to The Sentencing Project, a Washington, D.C.-based research and advocacy center. That number reflects a 500% increase since the mid 1980's, a phenomenon which has now become widely known as mass incarceration.

On Tuesday, January 14th, Jared Kushner, senior adviser to President Trump, was in Milwaukee with U.S. Senator Ron Johnson to meet with central-city faith-based institutions to discuss criminal justice reform. Staff and participants from Parsons House, a federal residential reentry center operated by WCS, were invited to be a part of the discussion. This meeting was a signal that leaders at the highest levels in our country are interested in reforming criminal justice.

There are several factors that have brought us to this point in our history in this country. Harsh sentencing laws in the criminal justice system, drug policy reform, and the war on drugs all enacted in the 1980's have been significant factors in the rapid acceleration of incarceration rates. Other factors point to over-policing in poor and minority communities. Wisconsin, unfortunately, has the distinction of being one of the states with a very high rate of incarceration, especially when it comes to disproportionate rates of incarcerating people of color.

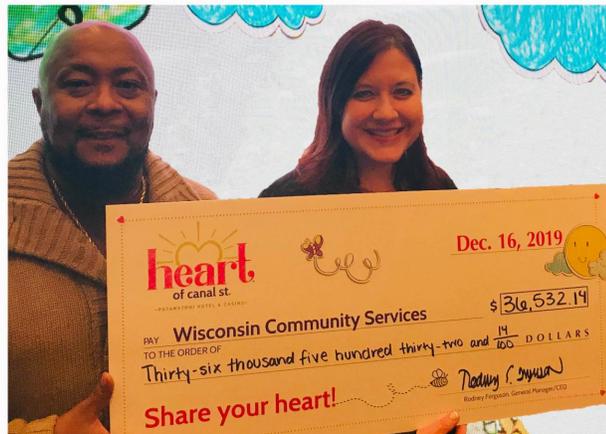
It is encouraging to see that this issue has the attention of the public and lawmakers alike. We should all realize that this country and the State of Wisconsin cannot sustain another 500% increase in the rate of incarceration over the next 20 years. WCS encourages all stakeholders and private citizens to continue their efforts to improve the criminal justice system. Doing so in the short and long term will make our communities safer and will allow us to invest the dollars saved in positive areas such as education, healthcare, housing and workforce development.





## WCS is a 2019 Potawatomi Heart on Canal Street Winner!

WCS is excited to be one of 20 charities that was selected in the Potawatomi Hotel & Casino 2019 Heart of Canal Street Contest! WCS received a donation of \$36,532 to provide an aftercare program consisting of mentors which will provide youth with living examples of hope and transformation, as well as, youth and family advocacy support. These services will be provided through Project Excel, a WCS program which provides innovative services for youth in Milwaukee County. This was the most successful year of the 26-year contest to date, raising \$1,195,964 to help improve the lives of children in Southeastern Wisconsin. WCS is honored and grateful to be a Heart of Canal Street partner organization!



Rodney Campbell, Project Excel Youth Advocate, and Nichole Yunk, WCS Youth Services Administrator, hold the check from Potawatomi Hotel & Casino.



## CLASP - New Programming at WCS

On January 1, 2020, WCS began operating the Community Linkages and Stabilization Program (CLASP). CLASP is a community-based peer specialist program providing strength-based and individualized services for people beginning the process of recovery from their mental health, substance use, or co-occurring needs. The program utilizes the very powerful and valuable services of trained and certified peer specialists to support engagement in the recovery process and reduce the likelihood of future crisis. Utilizing their own lived experience and successful recovery, peer specialists support individuals as they move forward in their journey to recovery.



## WCS and Mindfulness

Mindfulness is often described as the ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not being overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. Research has shown that practicing Mindfulness regularly reduces stress and rumination,



boosts working memory and focus, decreases emotional reactivity, and helps people become less reactive.

With this research in mind, WCS has implemented Mindfulness as an effective therapeutic intervention in programs and promoted Mindfulness as an important self-care practice for staff. Many programs use a few moments of Mindfulness to begin staff meetings. This practice reminds staff to be fully present during the meetings, allowing them to focus, develop an increased awareness of the present, and provides them an opportunity to identify

and discuss things that may be preventing them from being fully present. WCS also created Mindfulness rooms, a quiet place for staff to go to practice mindfulness and engage in brief moments of self-care. As a result, staff model the practice with participants and provide them with practical ways to cope with stress and increase their ability to regulate their emotions in order to avoid making impulsive decisions.

“It’s always interesting and encouraging to see program participants using mindfulness techniques. No two participants are the same, with the same types of needs, so having many different ways to practice being mindful is a valuable resource, said Coey Sephus-Chapman, Restorative Community Service Coordinator at the WCS Milwaukee County Day Reporting Center (MCDRC). “In my classroom, I have a Zen garden and a mind jar available for participants to use at any time. Many people would think that having these items available during a session would be too distracting. To the contrary, I’ve found that using these items during class helps individuals to maintain a calm demeanor and strengthens focus on the lesson that day.” Coey also emphasizes the importance of Mindfulness for staff. “Knowing that WCS staff members practice mindfulness as well, serves as a great reminder that mindfulness is for everyone,” she said. “It is not a sign of weakness, rather a sign of courage which reinforces the importance of self-care.”



## Career Opportunities at WCS

WCS is looking for compassionate and reliable people to fill these positions:

### Community Services Options Coordinator – Waukesha Adult & Juvenile Services

The coordinator processes all new court-ordered community service referrals. This position works with adult offenders, community services sites, Waukesha Huber facility staff, court personnel, attorneys, Wisconsin Probation & Parole, and Waukesha County officials. Travel within Waukesha County is required in this job. Applicants must have a bachelor's degree in the human services field and knowledge/experience in the adult criminal justice system.

### Supervisor/Clinician – Coordinated Opportunities for Recovery and Empowerment (CORE) Program

This leadership position focuses on providing direct supervision and clinical services to the people being served by the CORE Program. The supervisor and clinician responsibilities are two equally essential roles. The supervisor responsibilities include direct supervision of the CORE staff to ensure comprehensive services are being provided to meet the individualized needs of each CORE participant. The clinical work includes providing direct clinical services to each CORE participant.

## Did You Know?

**You can make a tax deductible donation to WCS and help us carry out our mission.**

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



**Wisconsin Community Services, Inc.**  
3732 West Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 320  
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[www.wiscs.org](http://www.wiscs.org)

*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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