

# TRANSFORMATIONS

## From the Executive Director

Last week I had the most remarkable encounter. A man about forty years old came to see whether he wanted to buy our cargo van. When we met he said he had looked at OAR's website and was impressed with what we do. He then told me this story:

He used to be in the Merchant Marines where he, an engineer, would go out to sea for six months at a time. After many years, he noticed that it was getting harder and harder to transition back to civilian life. He said, "You have to understand. When you are at sea, they tell you when to wake up; when and what to eat; when to go to bed; and what to do in between time."

He said that when he would come home, he found himself lounging around, not able to motivate himself to do anything- no structure to his life, no friends. So, a few years ago he decided he should stop going out to sea.

"That was the hardest transition of all for me," he said. "I did not have a job; I had no schedule; I had to think about my own clothes and cooking, and find a place to live. Thankfully, I at least had a good education, a skill, and a family."

"I cannot imagine the difficult transition that people must have coming out of incarceration," he said. "It's amazing anyone can accomplish that."

I was amazed. How could he, an educated professional working and living in our community, know so intimately the journey that our OAR clients are on when they come to us? But he had read the information on the website and made the connection to his own life's experiences.

Wow!

**Gail C. Arnall**

## OAR OPENS OFFICE IN DC ON GEORGIA AVE. NW

Last fall, OAR received a grant from the DC Justice Assistance Program designed specifically to work with juveniles who have been assigned Community Service hours by the DC courts, court agencies, the Metropolitan Police, and other city agencies.

"This is the first time in OAR's 35 year history that we will be providing services in DC," reported Gail Arnall, OAR Executive Director. "We have been managing the Community Service function for the Arlington and Falls Church courts for years. We will bring our skills and experience to help young people and the courts in the District."

OAR is working in Ward 1 initially, in hopes that in future years, it will have resources to expand to other parts of the city.

"Our objective is to provide creative and appropriate Community Service opportunities for young people so that they will begin to experience first hand what volunteering and Community Service is all about," said Arnall.

Judges will give juveniles 90 or more hours to complete. "We want the experience with OAR's Commu-



Grand Opening celebration held January 13, 2010 at the Georgia Avenue NW location. Over 30 supporters were present to celebrate!

nity Service Program to be the last time these children are involved with the courts," she said. "Unless, of course, they want to pursue a career in the legal profession," she added.

Community Service youth will work at food banks, libraries, nursing homes, soup kitchens, affordable housing sites, boys and girls clubs, church ministries and universities.

The OAR staff is developing relationships with the nonprofits, churches, schools and government agencies in Ward 1 in order to find suitable places for youth to complete their hours. OAR will also work with churches and civic organizations to set up and tear down for events and parades, and possibly help run events.

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## "MAN YOU LOOK COOL"- MEN'S WEARHOUSE DOES IT AGAIN

By Will Wilson, OAR

A man wearing beige pants and shirt sat in the waiting area when I came in. I said hello and we talked for a few minutes. I knew he had just come from prison because of what he was wearing. He was waiting to see a case manager, so I left him and went back to my office to go to work.

About an hour later, the case manager brought a man back to

meet me. I thought perhaps he was a potential employer who might want to hire some of our clients. I shook his hand and when he spoke I remembered his voice. "Didn't I meet you out front?" I asked. "What happened to you? I didn't recognize you."

It turns out that he had gone to the clothes closet and found a

really good looking suit, shirt, and tie, along with some shoes.

Men's Wearhouse again made it possible this fall for OAR to receive 900 suits, and also contributed 900 new dress shirts so our clients can look their best on interviews.

What a gift this is to OAR!

Join us in Breaking the Cycle of Crime: Volunteer!

Contact OAR's Director of Volunteer and Education Services, Rachel Sparico, at [rsparico@oaronline.org](mailto:rsparico@oaronline.org)

## WE LOST THE CONTEST... BUT WON SO MUCH MORE!

In January, many friends around the country signed on to **Facebook** and voted for the **A-SPAN coalition** so we could raise \$1 million for those in Arlington who are homeless. The contest, sponsored by **Chase Bank**, allowed the top 100 winners of the first round to compete against one another for the \$1 million prize. We received 3,765 votes over one week. We did not win the contest but we won something perhaps

more important! Over 100,000 residents of Arlington now have postcards and t-shirts that have **OAR** listed— along with **A-SPAN**, **AFAC** (Arlington’s food bank), **Doorways** (shelter for battered women), **Arlington –Alexandria Coalition for Housing**, **AMEN** (Arlington Meeting Emergency Needs), and **Borromeo Housing** (for pregnant teens and teen moms)- as organizations working with homeless people. Members of the **Arlington County Government** and citi-

zens alike have the message loud and clear: the Arlington nonprofit community works together to provide the safety-net for those facing homelessness in our community.

The exposure we got through this campaign has been substantial and will yield all sorts of benefits. So, thanks to everyone who participated. Your vote really did count!

### How does

### Restorative Justice affect you and your family?

### Bring a friend and join us for a one-hour tour.

Have you ever wondered what happens when folks get out of jail? Come take an OAR tour and find out. This is a “no-strings attached” invitation—really. What you read and see in the media is not the full story.

**Where:** The OAR Office is located at 1400 North Uhle Street, Suite 704, Arlington, VA 22201. The office is a block from the Court House Metro Station.

**When:**

- Wednesday, March 31<sup>st</sup> at **6:30pm**
- Tuesday, April 13<sup>th</sup> at **8am**
- Thursday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at **Noon**
- Tuesday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at **8am**
- Wednesday, May 19<sup>th</sup> at **6:30pm**

We promise to start on time and finish in one hour. If you have any questions or want to reserve a date please contact **Elizabeth Jones** at 703-228-7441.

## OAR OPENS OFFICE IN DC

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“Anytime we can put these youth in contact with active and positive organizations doing great things for our community, we have a chance of capturing their imagination for what they might do with their lives in the future,” said **Arnall**.

If you would like to volunteer or be a mentor at the DC Office, please contact **Rachel**

**Sparico** at [rsparico@oaronline.org](mailto:rsparico@oaronline.org) or at 703-228-7031. We are especially in need of adults who can spend at least two hours a week mentoring a teen. Training will be provided.

If you know of a non-profit in Ward 1 that could use some volunteer help for just about any type of work or activity, please contact **Gail Arnall** at [garnall@oaronline.org](mailto:garnall@oaronline.org) or feel free to call at 202-506-4075.

## REP. JAMES MORAN (VA) VISITS OAR TO SEE TUTORING PROGRAM IN ACTION

**Congressman James Moran** visited the OAR offices in September to see first hand the Post Release Educational Program (PREP) which was partly funded through an earmark he sponsored for the program.

With this funding, OAR partnered with **EdOptions**, an educational software company, and the **Arlington County Sheriff’s Department**. This unique and innovative on-line GED preparation program helps **OAR** clients secure their GED. In addition, clients interact with volunteer tutors who provide assistance with Employment Readiness, Anger Management, Literacy, Computer Skills, and ESL/ESOL among others.

**Moran** noted that 1 in 31 individuals in the United States is incarcerated, on probation, or parole. He said, “**OAR** was founded to help ex-offenders acclimate back into society following time served, and they are doing just that”. In Fiscal Year 2009, **OAR** served 2,332 individuals facilitating life skills courses, obtaining employment, assisting with shelter, helping men and women successfully return to the community, and helping both adults and juveniles fulfill their community service obligations. **Moran** visited with the **OAR** staff, **EdOptions** staff, **Arlington County Sheriff’s Department** staff and the clients who were at the event to thank him for his support.



**Rep. James Moran** during Press Conference at OAR. From left to right **Tom Sawyer** from EdOptions, Sheriff **Beth Arthur** from the Arlington County Sheriffs Office, **John Pettiford** OAR Board Chair, and **Rep. James Moran**.

“The success of **OAR**’s Education Program is a testimony to the staff and the contributions of **OAR**’s many dedicated volunteers,” **Moran** said.

In one year PREP has helped 138 clients to further their education and develop life skills. **Rachel Sparico**, **OAR** Director of Volunteer and Education Services, and **Richard Eldridge**, Assistant Director of Volunteer and Education Services, know that education is the gateway to stable employment . “We know that when these individuals are here in the **OAR** office, studying they are not on the streets engaging in criminal behavior” says **Eldridge**.

For more information on PREP and volunteer opportunities please contact **Rachel** at 703-228-7031 or [rsparico@oaronline.org](mailto:rsparico@oaronline.org)

## OAR BOARD

**John Pettiford** (Chairman)- *Arlington County Employment Center*, **Kayra Alhambra**- *Georgetown University*, **Tanya Beauchamp**- *DC Law Firm*, **Christina Biebesheimer**- *World Bank*, **Bruce Blackman**- *Fairfax County Public Schools*, **Michael Carleton**- *US Department of Health and Human Services*, **Garen Dodge**- *Jackson Lewis LLP*, **Mark Ellmore**- *Bank of America*, **Heather Knight**- *Brunner Digital*, **Mondre’ Kornegay**- *Alexandria Sheriff’s Department*, **Michael Petkovich**- *Jackson Lewis LLP*, **Robert Price**- *Law Offices of Robert M. Price*, **Elissa Rumsey**- *Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention*, **Jordan Segue**- *Freddie Mac*, **Tom Ward**- *RockportForVeterans.com*, and **Gail Arnall**- *OAR Executive Director*.

## PULLING BACK FROM THE BRINK: A THANK YOU LETTER

I was let go from my job almost six weeks ago from what I thought was my "home" for a long while. It knocked me down and shut me off, and I don't shut off easily. Right after a glowing performance review and POW, I was out. My felony charge was found? Who knew?

After going through many layoff and cuts you would think I would have been more resilient, but I was down for the count this time. Weeks of inertia. Laying on the couch, eating, sleeping late... thinking way too much. Trying to figure out what I did wrong. A futile search. Then of course the fear of having a felony on my record now. To reenter the job market almost paralyzed my energy and spirit.

It was only the hand that **OAR** staff reached out to me that got me back up and going. You invited me in and for the first time in all these weeks I felt there was light again. I can't even tell you how much your kindness and incredible guidance and professional help has meant to me.

After only two visits my resume was streamlined and ready to send out. The two volunteers that worked with me were terrific. And **Richard**— always giving me a firm and genuine handshake— was leading the pack.

I pray and hope that my next journey in my career has the same non-judgmental, understanding, and knowledge as all of you do: we are human and can make mistakes. People

take missteps but they are not bad people. They may have a mark against them but that mark fades in time.

You have given me acceptance, help, and a step back up into life again. You make a difference in people's lives and I hope at the end of your day you always know that. You may not see immediate results but they are there— building people's strength and acceptance. That is invaluable. That is what it's all about!

Thanks again (and **Richard**— you can streamline this e-mail down to size like my resume if you like)!

Cordially, **EA**

## ALICE RECEIVED A BICYCLE FOR CHRISTMAS

Who says there is no Santa? Try telling that to **Alice**, a six year old who received a new bicycle this year thanks to **OAR's** Project Christmas Angel.

Once again in December, over 250 volunteers showed up at **St. Andrew's Episcopal Church** to wrap about 1,000 gifts for children of parents who are incarcerated. This program, which began in 1977, has been a tradition for many Arlingtonians through the years. It brings together old and young, professionals, ex-offenders, and judges.

**Ernie**, one of our young Community Service clients, helped out all week— setting up for the event and helping to clean up after. He said he had so much fun, and felt so good about what

he was doing, that he plans to help out again next year.

Over 30 volunteers actually delivered the presents over the following days, just before Christmas. Many churches and civic groups gave toys, gift cards, and money for wrapping paper. We could not have done it without that support. And of course, we thank **Toys for Tots** for all of the toys they provided for wrapping. This event is a brilliant demonstration of a community hard at work taking care of the needs of an often forgotten group of children.



Over 250 volunteers showed up at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church to wrap about 1,000 presents for children of incarcerated or recently released parents.

## IT'S NOT ALL THAT COMPLICATED

By **Gail Arnall**, OAR

During the Holidays, I went to see the movie *It's Complicated*, starring **Meryl Streep**. I left the theatre a little disappointed. The movie was clever and humorous, but something was bothering me about it.

The next day I saw an editorial in the New York Times, entitled *Whites Smoke Pot, but Blacks Are Arrested*. I realized then that my problem with the movie was seeing grown white people smoking marijuana and joking about how fun it was to re-live their youth. We even hear politicians referring to their drug experimenting days as "youthful indiscretions." But, it is a different story with our clients — many of whom are people of color who live below the poverty line. So what gives?

According to the New York Times article, written by **Jim Dwyer** and published December 22,

2009: Black New Yorkers last year were **seven** times more likely than whites to be arrested for marijuana possession and no more serious crime. Latinos were **four** times more likely.

"In 2001, during his first campaign for mayor, **Michael Bloomberg** was asked by New York Magazine if he had ever used marijuana. "You bet I did," he replied. "And I enjoyed it." Like most white New Yorkers, he stood almost no chance of being locked up for his pot use, then being handcuffed, fingerprinted and spending a night in Central Booking.

Despite this admission, in just one year — 2008 — **Bloomberg's** administration made more pot arrests than in 18 years of **Koch**, **Dinkins** and **Giuliani** combined. The cost of

such arrests ranges from \$53 to \$88 million annually.

**Mr. Dwyer** concluded by quoting **Edward McCarthy**, a lawyer for the **Legal Aid Society**: "The handful of white pot smokers who do get arrested can be found in court on Mondays and Tuesdays, when they must answer tickets typically issued for smoking pot in a park. The rest of the week is taken up with blacks and Latinos, who are more likely to have spent a night in jail before court".

Americans believe in fairness. What's fair about this?

### OAR's on Facebook

Search: **Offender Aid and Restoration** and Become a FAN! We are posting online daily, so be sure to check in often to read about upcoming events, information, and updates on what **OAR** is doing in the community... and how you can be involved!

# OAR Offender Aid and Restoration

Serving the County of Arlington, the Cities of Alexandria and Falls Church in Virginia, and Washington DC

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Designation # 8078



Designation # 26226

## OAR MISSION

OAR, a community-based restorative justice organization, blends compassion and accountability to assist offenders in leading productive and responsible lives, to the benefit of all.

## HISTORY AND PURPOSE

The OAR movement began in 1968 when a group of concerned citizens led by Jay Worrell Jr. responded to a prison riot in Charlottesville, Virginia.

These citizens envisioned an improved criminal justice system in which inmates are assisted by trained volunteers from the community. Through ongoing contact with community volunteers it was hoped that inmates would be empowered with information and encouraged to transform their experiences toward responsible and productive lives. The ultimate goal was to break the costly cycle of recidivism and create a more just system. OAR serving Arlington County, the Cities of Alexandria and Falls Church in Virginia, and Washington DC, began in 1974. OAR restores individuals to wholeness, supports families and children, and strengthens our community and our youth.

## SAVE THE DATE!

### Second Chance Fundraising Breakfast

June 17, 2010

Over 175 attended our first Second Chance Breakfast last June. It was a huge success. One attendee responded: "I was so impressed; I will be responsible for filling a table next year."

This year's event is approaching! We have set the date: June 17th from 8 a.m. to 9 a.m. Please save this date. Many of you will be contacted personally in hopes that you can come.

## OAR IS ON FACEBOOK

Search: **Offender Aid and Restoration** of Arlington County, Inc. BECOME A FAN!!

## CONTACT US

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Washington DC/ District of Columbia:

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E-mail: info@oaronline.org

Website: www.oaronline.org

## VOLUNTEER NEEDS

- Computer Lab Mentors
- Spanish Life Skills Instructors
- Stress Management Facilitators
- GED & High School Completion
- Critical/ Life Skills Instructors
- PREP Volunteers
- Anger Management Facilitators
- ESL and ACDF Facilitators
- Employment Readiness Tutors
- Juvenile Mentors
- Researchers
- Special Events Volunteers

## OAR'S WISH LIST

- Household Cleaning Supplies
- Household Items
- 2 Small or Medium Shredders
- Standard Xerox Copy Paper
- Resume Paper
- #2 pencils and Color Pencils
- Manila & pocket folders
- Composition Notebooks
- Dry erase markers and White-board erasers and cleaners
- Backpacks and travel sacks
- Portable USB Flash Drives
- \$10 Fast Food Restaurant Cards
- \$15 Smart Trip cards (metro and bus) to get to job interviews
- Printing assistance

## SUPPORTING OAR

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to support the good work of OAR. 1- Visit [www.OARonline.org](http://www.OARonline.org) to make a secure online payment. 2- Designate OAR on your Combined Federal Campaign (#26226) or United Way (#8078). 3- Send checks made payable to OAR to 1400 North Uhle Street, Suite 704, Arlington, VA 22201. Call us for more information at 703-228-7030.

Join us in Breaking the Cycle of Crime: Volunteer!

Contact OAR's Director of Volunteer and Education Services, **Rachel Sparico**, at [rsparico@oaronline.org](mailto:rsparico@oaronline.org)