

Project RETURN

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Helping men and women leaving prison make a positive and permanent return to our community.

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You can now make online donations to Project RETURN. To make a donation, visit our website at www.projectreturnmilwaukee.org

Project RETURN's 9th Annual Golf Outing to be held June 13, 2017

In just a few short months Project RETURN will be hosting our 9th Annual Golf Outing. We have been blessed to see this event grow every year.

This year's event will again be held at Western Lakes Golf Club (W287 N1963 Oakton Road) in Pewaukee, WI. The event will start at 8:00 am with a shotgun start with a meal to follow catered by Saz's.

Donation of \$100/person includes:

- Golf Fees with Cart
- Catered Buffet Lunch
- Locker Room Facilities Available
- Driving Range Opens at 7:00 am
- Prizes & Golf Awards
- Par 3 events
- Continental Breakfast
- Beer & Soda sold on the Course
- Raffle Prizes to be Won

If you are interested in registering a foursome please fill out this form and send your check payable to Project RETURN in the enclosed envelope. We hope to see you there!

Golfer #1: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Golfer #2: _____

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Golfer #3: _____

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Golfer #4: _____

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City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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NEWSLETTER

Spring, 2017



Marquette University <> Project RETURN

Internship Program

Ed de St. Aubin

Marquette Psychology Department Faculty Member

Project RETURN Board of Directors

Director of the Internship Program



The four Marquette University students highlighted here – Alex, Darlene, Corey, and Max – have all been interning at Project RETURN since late August of 2016 and will continue to do so until May of this year. Each has worked with a mentor – Wendel, Teri, Andre, and Brian – in various ways that achieve the mission of Project RETURN. They have walked with clients in getting jobs, finding housing, working through personal issues, and rejoicing in victories. They have also visited prisons, canvassed neighborhoods, updated office records, advocated with community leaders, met a parole officer, organized a community mental health day, and witnessed a reentry court run by a Federal Judge.

Each has had these experiences and more under the supervision of a mentor. All the mentors are examples of passionate and effective change makers - men and women dedicated to helping those returning from prison and to advocacy work towards social justice in the judicial system. All but one of the mentors has themselves served time in prison, as have many of the Board members of Project RETURN.

None of these experiences could be replicated in a classroom. As a professor, I really believe in the power of the classroom – I have seen insights emerge, perspectives deepen, and lives change based on classroom interactions. I have also seen textbook and research article readings expand students' knowledge. But I have seen as much transformation in students outside of the classroom and beyond the books and articles in this internship. It is gratifying to witness the growth that occurs. Each takes a different path but there is generally a movement within the interns over the 9 months from trepidation to confidence. They gain a sense of self-efficacy. A proactiveness.

And they make significant contributions to the goals of Project RETURN. The students learn so much from these mentors. And the mentors and Project RETURN itself benefits from the efforts of the interns. These are passionate and bright young men and women who have much to offer. Who better, for example, than a group of college students to help the agency build and maintain a presence on social media? And who better to figure out how new technologies can help us better achieve our mission? Further, the students can apply material learned in classes to the internship experience. It truly is a reciprocal dynamic in that both the interns and the site mentors gain from the relationship.

Earlier this month, during Marquette's Mission Week, there was a dinner and storytelling event with the theme of RACE AND INCARCERATION. This was a partnership between Marquette, Project RETURN, and Ex Fabula, the Milwaukee non-profit that promotes storytelling as a way of strengthening community bonds. Two of the interns featured in this newsletter took to the stage and told their stories. Other story tellers included Project RETURN board members, staff, and clients. I was in the audience, taking it all in, feeling grateful. I have learned so much from the interns over the past several years and have gained insights again and again from the mentors at Project RETURN. As director of this program, I continuously witness great things. I see interns grow in confidence. I see clients desist from crime and take ownership of their lives. I see staff who work with an unbridled passion and commitment. I see board members dedicating time away from career and family. For that, I am grateful. Thanks to all who make this internship program all that it is.



Corey Perona

Major: Psychology Minor: Political Science
 I am interested in mental health, policy, and looking in to the effects of race relations and social welfare in Milwaukee. Although these are three very complex subjects, I have learned over the course of my education that they are exceptionally interrelated. I think there is a lot to be learned from broadening one's knowledge throughout these topics in order to find solutions to better our community.
 I wanted to work with Project RETURN because of how passionate I am about the organization's mission. With the prison population being at a disadvantage once they return to their communities, I believe it is essential that services are provided in order to assist our clients during this transition. Through personal connections and careful planning, I firmly believe that over time, the organization will be able to improve the overall well-being of the community by reducing recidivism rates and encouraging the community to take advantage of the various opportunities Project RETURN provides. At Project RETURN, I work with Andre Brown. Together we work to ensure that clients are consistently up to date in services. Some of my projects this year have included reaching out to employers, employment agencies, and organizations that provide accessible services that would potentially benefit clients. Andre and I have also been working on launching a mental health initiative within Project RETURN, in order to eventually accommodate clients that are in need of psychological services. The initiative is in its early stages, but there will be a high focus on incorporating the program into the organization in the coming months.
 After graduation, I plan on attending law school. The experiences I have gained throughout the duration of my internship will definitely stick with me for years to come. They have already influenced me on a personal level, and I am positive they will play a huge role in my future career and will benefit me throughout my further education.

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Majors: Criminology Law Studies and Psychology

My interests include learning about how crime is developed into further detail such as the intent behind criminal activity, whether it's for malicious reasoning, in means of survival, etc. As I continue to study about criminal justice certain flaws seem to be highlighted and Project Return gives proves these statistics that cannot be found inside a classroom. It always interested me to work with this specific population, and as I continue my academic career, my classes and the university have made me aware of the conflicts and struggles that are happening across the country that aren't often seen in the media spotlight, especially about the effects of mental illnesses and how they affect people. I currently work with a nonprofit organization that tries to promote success and excellence to adolescents but through interning at Project Return I'm dealing with the aftermath of that same system. Trying to help not only ex-offenders return to society, but also with those in need has been an eye-opening experience. I work closely with Teri Woodley the case manager at Project Return. My role consists smoothing out the reintegration process for this population by means of job and house searching. I'm also an active member in our weekly women's support group "Queens of Destiny". I am currently a sophomore and in hopes to continue my education at Law School. After admitted to into law school, I aspire to practice in my own firm one day around the Chicagoland area. My backup plan is to go to graduate school and become a forensic psychologist. Anything pertaining the criminal system intrigues me so whichever career I pursue will deal with the criminal system.



Darlene Valdez



Alex Krouth

Major: Psychology Minors: Women's and Gender Studies and German

As a psychology major, I went into this internship with a focus on mental health. But through this experience I have gotten to see many of the other needs that our clients have. Many people do not realize how big of an issue return from incarceration is in the Milwaukee community and how difficult it can be for ex-offenders to attain jobs and housing. At Project RETURN, I work with Wendel on a variety of different tasks. I help edit documents, sit in on meetings, and occasionally work with walk in clients. I have been able to review many different pieces of research to see its effect on our community, as well as surrounding areas. This has honed my interest and knowledge in incarceration. However, my favorite experience thus far was getting to enter a prison for a job fair. Getting to see people while they are still incarcerated and also after when they are looking for services is a great reminder of how large the need is for organizations like Project RETURN.

The experiences I have had as an intern will be usable for the rest of my life in both my career and personal life. My future goal is to go to graduate school to get a master's in Clinical Mental Health Counseling. My experience at Project RETURN has taught me a lot about what people can go through and the unique factors that can be created through previous incarceration. I haven't fully decided which population I want to work with once I am done with school, but working with an often underrepresented group here has sparked my interest in working with minorities or people who may be misunderstood by the general population.

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Major: Psychology Minors: Criminology and Studio Art

I've always been incredibly interested in mental disorders and what sort of factors influence abnormal behavior in people with and without mental disorders. Along with that, crime and the situations that lead to people committing crime led me into my interest with prisons. From there, I started discovering the positive results that therapies in prisons were seeing and that made me want to be able to provide those kinds of services to people, which is why Project RETURN interested me so much. I knew that prisons and incarcerated individuals were interesting to me, but I had never really experienced the prison system or really met anyone who had been incarcerated. I felt like Project RETURN was the perfect opportunity to learn a lot about the Milwaukee Justice System as well as to experience many of the trials and tribulations previously-incarcerated individuals have to go through. From this, I hope to also gain a perspective on mental health in the prison community, and I wanted to provide all the knowledge and help I could to those who were struggling from mental disorders.
 I'm currently working with Brian Osei, and have been fortunate enough to get to know many clients and hear their experiences and struggles. I have helped people complete resumes, fill out job applications, and find job resources. I have also scheduled appointments for Brian, updated client intake information, and contacted old clients to find out how they are doing. Last semester, a large part of my work with Brian involved going to Hephatha Church and offering our resources to people in the neighborhood.

Max Hughes-Zahner

