“I didn’t need someone to pat me on the back and tell me everything is going to be all right... I needed someone to grab my shoulders and keep me straight.”

Until he was released in 2014, Leroy Bernsten had spent 34 years incarcerated in South Carolina prisons, which was more time than he had ever known on the outside. Addictions were at the root of his crimes and they carried over into prison where he spent his time gambling, loan sharking, running sports parlay, along with selling and using drugs. One day Leroy found himself injecting a bag of dope and cursing God, blaming him for everything. It was in that moment that he started begging God to take his life, and in an unexpected way, God did.

An Old Life Ends and A New Life Begins

Slowly, his life started changing and he became involved in a prison ministry where he was exposed to the true love of God for the first time in his life. Leroy’s old life had ended and his new life had begun through prayer groups and bible studies before finding JUMPSTART. When asked what made JUMPSTART so different, he said, “It’s accountability! All the men in the group live together day in and day out, so if you get in there ‘heart faking’, you have 6 or 8 guys hollering at you.” Leroy points to JUMPSTART who makes an inmate truly evaluate themselves where they ‘get real’ with themselves and the group.

Upon release, Leroy was overwhelmed with fear of the outside after having been incarcerated for over three decades. Leroy said that everyone at JUMPSTART, from other participants to staff, were there for him, comforting him, even checking in on him, because through their unique life experiences, they truly knew and understood the fear and anxiety Leroy was feeling. They also made it very clear what was expected of him, showed him how to do it, then held him to it.

Accountability When it is Needed the Most

“One thing I admire about JUMPSTART, more than anything else, is the accountability, not only on the inside, but on the outside. For a guy like me, that’s one of the things I needed. I didn’t need someone to pat me on the back and tell me everything is going to be all right. No, I needed someone to grab my shoulders and keep me straight.” JUMPSTART’s mentoring and accountability taught Leroy how to be a free man. “That was what I needed! JUMPSTART helped me understand that it is okay to have a life, regardless of past mistakes I had made.”

Leroy credits the many donors and volunteers at JUMPSTART who make it possible for people like him to have a better future than their past. Today, he has a good job, is married, bought a home and owns his own vehicle. “I pray that JUMPSTART is able to expand and fill all of their beds. I pray that men who are offered the opportunity to come to JUMPSTART will realize what a privilege it is because of the difference it makes in a life like my own. I’m grateful for everyone and for showing me the love of Christ.”

We are always in need of more inside prison volunteers, outside mentors, prayer warriors and donors to meet our growth challenges. To learn more, please email me at tommy.moore@jumpstartvision.org or call 864.704.8468.

Read About Our Restoration Village Campaign Kick-off!
COMING SOON: Campaign Kick-off!

Our growth projections for the next three years require an increase of current beds to meet the demand of transitional housing. To proactively address this welcome challenge, we are moving forward with our Restoration Village initiative to develop a single campus for our transitional housing that will dramatically streamline our operations and expand available space for future growth. Cost per participant will be reduced, increasing the organization’s financial stability.

The Restoration Village capital campaign will officially kick-off soon to generate the funds necessary for our infrastructure and long-term growth to sustain our ministry. We will continue to deliver and improve the nation’s best prison to re-entry into society program by helping transform prisoners from the inside out. Stay tuned for additional information and details as we launch the capital campaign for this exciting development!

HOW YOU CAN HELP
Serve
Get plugged in: volunteer@jumpstartvision.org
Give
Give online: jumpstartvision.org/financialsupportoptions
Pray
Join our prayer team: team@jumpstartvision.org

418 Old Greenville Road  •  Spartanburg, SC  29301-4756  •  jumpstartvision.org  •  888.403.3815  •  info@jumpstartvision.org

JUMPSTART is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to providing a Christian environment for ex-offenders that will allow them to transition from incarceration to a productive life.