

# TURN AROUND TIMES

Quarterly Newsletter of 180 Degrees

Volume 2, Issue 3  
Spring 2009

180  
DEGREES

*What does it take  
to turn a life around?*

## 180 DEGREES CELEBRATES 35TH ANNIVERSARY



*180 Degrees Staff*

180 Degrees and its board of directors sponsored an Open House at The Women's Club on Wednesday, October 15, 2008 to celebrate its 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Speakers at the event included Joan Fabian, State Commissioner of Corrections, Michael Jordan, Dir. of the Mpls. Dept. of Civil Rights, John Choi, St. Paul City Attorney, Linda Hall, Dir. of Children Mental Health Services in Ramsey County and Dennis Avery Manager of Probation and Parole, Hennepin County Community Corrections.

There was a great turn out of supporters and stake holders who were able to enjoy reading about 180's history, programs and some of their success stories while eating hors d'oeuvres. 180 Degrees and its staff were recognized for their hard work and dedication and for the great outcomes achieved with their clients.

35 years is a tremendous benchmark for any organization. 180 Degrees continues to be a part of a long tradition of excellent service and share the responsibility to continue that tradition as our part of this tremendous legacy and extended family that is 180 Degrees, Inc.

On behalf of the board of directors, we would like to thank all of our supporters, stakeholders and staff who have helped to make 180 Degrees a success. We look forward to another 35 years of service.

## SECOND CHANCE DAY ON THE HILL

On Feb. 11, 2009, at 10 a.m. in the State Capitol Rotunda, hundreds of ex-offenders, their families and supporters of justice reform will come together to highlight the importance of second chances. This effort is being lead by 180 Degrees and a consortium of nonprofit leaders and justice system advocates. This consortium is asking for support in raising statewide and national attention that will increase awareness regarding the barriers facing individuals with criminal records. These barriers affect the social, civic and economic stability of families and communities.

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## WHAT IT TAKES TO TURN A LIFE AROUND

By Will Cremer, CCC Mentor

I met Miguel\* in October 2008. He faced a great deal of challenges including having few friends and connections and not being allowed to have contact with his family. As a result, Miguel was prone to anger and sometimes violent outbursts when he felt wronged. Shortly before his release date, Miguel once again handled an incident poorly and the consequence was that he would have to wait an indefinite period of time before his next release.

During that time we met several times and discussed the fact that, while Miguel had little control over his environment, he did have control over how he responded to it. We talked about regret, and how to avoid it. In all our conversations Miguel did two truly fundamental and difficult things: He listened and changed his way of thinking. The proof of this is in his actions; his second stint at Red Wing came off without incident and he moved back to the group home.

For a month, Miguel has been employed at a fast food restaurant and has received compliments on his reliability, work-ethic, and positive attitude. He will begin classes at a local college this Fall and has applied for citizenship. He has come to see the strengths and advantages he has (he is bilingual and has an unusual aptitude for computers and math) alongside the barriers and challenges he will face as an ex-offender. He understands that he has a difficult road ahead of him but also that he has the tools needed to navigate his future.

Miguel made changes in his thinking that will enable him to overcome the challenges that had kept him in a state of pain and criminality. Triple-C provided him a person to talk to who cares about and respects him; a person who is on his side but also a person he trusts to tell him the difficult truths. He did the work, we gave him the workshop.

*\* Not his real name*

## SPOTLIGHT ON ERIK SKON



*Gazette photo by Elliot Mann  
Minnesota Department of Corrections Assistant  
Commissioner Erik Skon will retire from the state DOC  
later this month, after nearly 34 years of service.*

Erik has just completed his first year as a board member at 180 Degrees. He retired as Asst. Commissioner - Facilities Division, from the Dept. of Corrections, in Jan. 2008, after almost 34 years.

Erik began his career at the St. Cloud prison as he was completing a BA in Social Work. He transferred to Oak Park Heights in 1982, as the first Case Manager and was promoted through several positions before becoming the warden 14 years later. He served as warden at the state's maximum security prison for 3 years and at the Stillwater facility for one year. He then became the Asst. Commissioner and spent the last 10 years of his career at Central Office. He was responsible for the daily operation of the state's prison system, supervising 10 wardens and several other areas.

Erik lives with his wife Kathy in Stillwater. They have two daughters who are both married and raising children in California. Erik's favorite pastime is visiting his three grand children and playing poor golf!

## SPOTLIGHT ON THERESA SIMS, ON-TRACK CASE MANAGER



*Theresa Sims*

While a student at St. Cloud University, Theresa attended a job fair and stopped at 180's table for information. A short while later, in June 2005, Theresa was hired as a part-time Monitoring Technician and three months later - started working full time. After Theresa graduated in 2006 with her degree in Criminal Justice, she moved over to JDU to work as a Case Aid and as an assistant to the Mentoring Program.

Theresa worked on a wide variety of tasks ranging from helping to hook kids up on electronic monitors, doing court reviews, orienting volunteer mentors, transporting and visiting kids and doing data entry, all of which served to equip her with growing experience and knowledge about the juvenile justice system. Her reputation of being a hard worker who is very patient, understanding and always willing to assist others also grew.

In February, 2008 – Theresa was promoted to work as a case manager for the On Track Program located at Hazel Park High School on the east side of St. Paul and is now responsible for a case load of approximately 20 clients. She loves working with kids and despite the sometimes stress-full job finds a lot to laugh and love about her kids. Someday she hopes to work as a probation officer and maybe teach.

In her off time, Theresa belongs to both a bowling and volleyball league and plays softball for the St. Paul City Women's Softball League. Needless to say, she is a big Twins fan and this year became an avid participant in Fantasy Football.

We feel very fortunate to have Theresa as part of our 180 team and we are proud to be able to provide and support a work environment that allows people like Theresa – to grow and develop into the skilled professional that she is. We know that our clients are being well served!

## WEIGHT LOSS COMPETITION

In an effort to improve our own lives as well as those we serve, 180 Degrees has sponsored a winter and spring weight-loss competition for staff. A dozen participants, including the CEO and COO, competed to lose the greatest percentage of weight based on the initial January weigh-in.

With the competition finishing up at the beginning of April, Lead Shift Coordinator Tommie Powell claimed victory, losing 28 pounds by eliminating beer, pop, and fast food from his diet and by working out, sometimes going for "two-a-days." Shift Coordinator Travis VanDeWiele finished second by losing 13 pounds, though he would not divulge the details of his regimen.

Future plans for health and wellness promotion include a smoking cessation competition, bowling and softball teams this summer, and a fun run.

## CONGRATULATIONS!

JDU Case Manager Stacie Paquette and her husband James welcomed their first child - daughter Cassandra Lynn on October 8, 2008 weighing 7 lbs.6oz.

Shift Coordinator Nuwoe Cooper and Kristen Halvorson also welcomed their first child, Kyiaa on November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2008 weighing 7 lbs 11 oz.

JDU Manager Heather Cochran married Andy Provo on Friday, Sept. 12, 2008 in Otsego, MN.

Ian Shain and Michael Walton have each been promoted to Residential Case Manager.

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the World”

Gandi

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[www.180degrees.org](http://www.180degrees.org)

## DID YOU KNOW THAT:

- Currently 155,000 Minnesota adults are under some form of correctional supervision; 142,000 on probation, 4,200 on some level of supervised release, and 9,100 in prison.
- One in sixteen Minnesotans must overcome the stigma of a conviction to qualify for housing, employment and student loans, among other things.
- The prison population is now five times larger than it was only 25 years ago.
- Every year, more than 6,000 people are released from Minnesota prisons and expected to reintegrate into society. Two-thirds of those people return to prison within three years of release for committing a new crime.

*Minnesota Dept. of Corrections*

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