



MAKING UP FOR LOST TIME

Mark Schand is a life-long NY Yankees fan who served 27 years in a Massachusetts prison before Centurion brought him home on October 4, 2013. On that day, the Hampden County MA District Attorney dismissed all charges against Mark stemming from a 1986 Springfield, MA murder he did not commit. Awaiting Mark was Mia (pictured above), his wife of 27 years, and their three sons, now all grown men with their own families, along with over 30 family and extended family members, as well as Jim McCloskey and Richard Hepburn, who was the intrepid investigator in Mark's case. The extraordinary thing about the Schand family is Mia's determination from the beginning of his incarceration to have the sons truly know their father. She visited Mark every week (weather permitting) for 27 years, almost always with one or more of their young sons in tow. Mia also kept the entire Schand clan in touch with each other and with Mark. Consequently, Mark was lucky to have a strong network of support available to him, making his transition from 27 years in prison to freedom as seamless as possible – a gift many of our exonerees don't get.

When Centurion won Mark his rightful freedom, he settled back in Connecticut near Hartford and immediately committed to taking fellow Centurion exoneree Richard Lapointe to lunch once a week. They were certainly the odd couple: Mark, lean and fit, always impeccably dressed, and Richard a bit rounder in stature and more relaxed in his attire. Richard has an intellectual disability and really needed assurances and support from someone who experienced the same nightmare he had. Mark was sweet and patient with Richard, and somehow Richard knew Mark was a fellow traveler. We often try to create opportunities for our exonerees to form this sort of brotherhood, but this one happened so organically. Their friendship is a special one.

Mark is a family man and an entrepreneur. Upon being freed, he immediately started thinking about starting a business. He settled on a smoothie shop (Sweetwater Juice Bar and Deli) and scouted locations until he found a storefront across from a courthouse and an office complex in New Britain. Mark has filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the city of Springfield and Hampden County. When he gets his settlement, he would like to start a non-profit that helps parolees in Connecticut learn necessary skills to get and stay employed.

We are proud of Mark and are grateful to him as a mentor for other exonerees and an ambassador for Centurion. To learn more about Mark's story, visit our website at www.centurion.org

CENTURION

seeking freedom for the innocent in prison

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A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

Wow! Another six months just zoomed by as we pursue our fight for justice. We continue to respond to the never-ending stream of letters that flow in from people seeking our help. We also continue to develop cases within the office and go into the field to knock on doors trying to unearth some nugget of information to help us free an innocent person from their unjust incarceration. Paul Casteleiro and Jim Cousins continue to write petitions to get some relief for our incarcerated innocent clients.

As those of you who have been following our work know, our freed and incarcerated clients are family to us. Once we take on an innocent person's case, we commit to walking beside them for the rest of their lives, whenever they need us. A big part of that relationship involves getting to know those who have stood with them long before Centurion stepped in – their mothers and fathers. The ripple effects of the failings of the criminal justice system to put the right person behind bars have never been measured, but we see it clearly in the faces of the family members we come to love as we fight with them for their child's rightful freedom. The time, grief and fortitude it takes to get an innocent person out of prison exacts a terrible toll on the parents: too often, we lose them either just before or just after the vindication. Imagine knowing your son or daughter is innocent because you are his or her alibi – they were with you at the time of the crime – and yet you are forcibly separated from them for decades. Rosie McIntyre and Frida Restivo are two perfect examples of this. They fought to see their sons freed...and they won.

Not all have the same outcome as the McIntyres and Restivos. Wayne Eastridge, for example, worried about his mother who developed dementia towards the end of his incarceration. When he got out and visited her, she knew he was someone important to her, but did not know he was her only child. Then his father suffered a massive heart attack and was gone too soon. The list goes on and on. There's often no compensation for the families of the wrongly convicted, and they can never get back the time lost with their loved one. And their torment and heartache go virtually unreported.

With your help, Centurion will continue the fight to reunite families and help them untangle the emotional and logistical challenges involved in bringing a loved one home...where they should have been all along. During this season when we celebrate the Mothers and Fathers, raise a glass, light a candle, or say a prayer for the parents of the wrongly convicted, incarcerated or freed; they are still tormented because their child spent years in prison for a crime they did not commit. Thank you for caring.

Kate Germond, Executive Director

Volunteer Spotlight...Lori Freedman

Seven years ago, Lori Freedman began volunteering with us as a case worker. We must have done something right to have her choose us as the beneficiaries of her skill and compassionate care. Lori is a social worker by training and we quickly conscripted her to assist us with Richard Lapointe, who we knew would need housing. She worked seamlessly with his supporters and together they found suitable care for him. Over the years she has rolled up her sleeves and jumped into whatever situation needed her help. Her advice and follow-up is invaluable. With Lori's guidance, we are doing much better in our post-release support.

We have known for a long time we needed help in assisting our freed clients. Whether paroled or exonerated, they all have significant needs and Lori has the tools to facilitate locating the correct services. Her expertise has saved us money and time, but most importantly it has enabled our freed clients to have a much better level of care. Lori actually has a fulltime job as a social worker. But she manages to strengthen our family in significant and lasting ways. She literally changes the lives of those she helps. We are grateful to our core for Lori's genuine care and affection for our family.



Lori Freedman with Shawn Henning



Why we give

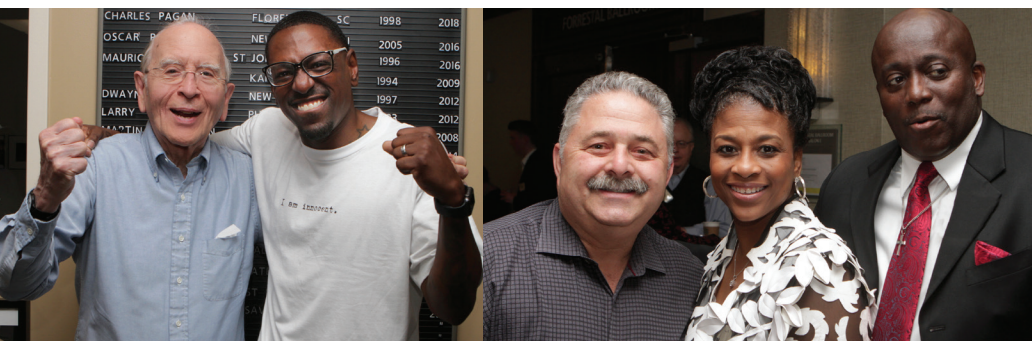
Living in NYC, or frankly anywhere in the world, one can focus on so many causes, so many social, political, economic and environmental issues that need to be addressed, all needing money, time, service and focus of leadership. We are compelled by many issues, but first and foremost is human dignity, the right of an individual to justice and freedom. The work Centurion does is fundamental, and affects all of us.

We don't say this lightly. For some reason many people think that if they do not have family members affected, or do not know communities impacted by such issues, that there must be some reason for an imprisonment, even for an accusation. Instead, what we believe is that if this happens to anyone — this miscarriage of justice, a false accusation and a false conviction — this affects all of us: what we stand for as individuals, and as a nation. Centurion's work is a starting point for reestablishing a just system that values individual rights and believes in justice, no matter the circumstance — the harder cases are specifically those that Centurion takes on, because the hard ones are the ones that need the justice most, the ones left behind, the ones not served by our current system.

Jozelyn & Peter Davis



Clockwise from the top: James Waller with supporter, The Savannah Three with two dedicated volunteers, Richard Miles with his mother, Lamonte McIntyre with two supporters, Kenneth Gardiner with his mother



Once again, our Family Gathering weekend was truly a precious time. Our exonerees came together for a few days of healing, support, and of course, celebration with the only other people who understand what they've been through – each other. Centurion's entire family of exonerees, staff, volunteers, board members, and supporters was renewed and bolstered by this time spent together. It was a powerful reminder of why we do this work.



Clockwise from the top: Lamonte McIntyre with a volunteer; Darryl Burton with his wife, Valerie, and a supporter; Centurion founder Jim McCloskey with Walter Lomax and Willie Green; exonerees and their families with the Bent Spoon crew; Michael Austin with a volunteer



Tyler Spikes with Executive Director, Kate Germond and her husband, Mark helping Herbert Simms and Marcus Washington get settled in new apartments.

How free is free? Paroled but not exonerated

Centurion celebrates the freedom of all our clients, which includes a small number of individuals who were paroled and not exonerated in a court of law. There are a variety of reasons why we were not able to exonerate these innocent men and women, which chiefly revolve around procedural barriers constructed by statute or court rule. These barriers prevent us from being able to have a court judge their cases on the merits as opposed to whether the individual did or did not fulfill some procedural rule at some point in what is generally a decades long history of their case. Too often, the foundation of this issue starts with the fact that in many states, a wrongly convicted individual has no right to post-conviction assistance of counsel and is left to litigate his/her case on their own from their jail cell. The result, as anyone can readily imagine, is that the individual will err in some way in submitting his/her post-conviction petition, and that error will become a procedural barrier later in their case which the prosecution will use to obtain a dismissal of a subsequent petition we may submit specifically addressing the individual's innocence. In other words, their uncounseled petitions are held to the same exact standard as are petitions submitted by experienced post-conviction attorneys. These individuals lose their legitimate claims, because early on in their case they committed an error, according to the courts, that in some way bars their present right to petition to overturn their wrongful conviction, leaving us without a way to get an innocent person exonerated.

But here's the thing: most of our paroled innocent clients suffer mightily. Despite our best efforts to assist them post-release, they struggle to find work, housing, and where they fit in the world. We can help them with the day-to-day stuff, but we cannot help them internally. They have a yearning to be exonerated. That longing to be vindicated is deeply ingrained and unseen by the world. The few who move back to a community that knows they are innocent fare much better, but the desire to have their conviction dismissed through the courts never goes away.

The only possible solution on the horizon are Conviction Integrity or Conviction Review Units (CRU). The problem too often is after an election and the installment of a new DA, the CRU collapses. Those agencies are generally run from a prosecutor's office, but a few states have successful state-wide CRUs that can overturn claims of actual innocence. Currently in New Jersey, the newly elected Governor has established a state-wide CRU which we are offering our assistance in setting up. We will keep you posted on our progress as we work to support this important entity.



In the photo: Rinaldy Smith, Tyler Spikes, Heather Kunkel, and Ralph Lee - filling Ralph's new home.

Post Release... What Now?

It's not hyperbole when we say that exonerees leave prison with nothing. After suffering the most unthinkable injustice imaginable – being torn from their families for a crime they did not commit and wrongfully incarcerated for decades – many are simply set free, and left on their own to re-enter a dramatically changed outside world. They are not eligible for any of the services available to parolees receive upon their release. They have no money, no identification, and too often, no place to go. If they have a family, the addition of another person may create a burden. However, we are there.

From the moment one of our clients is released from prison, we are there to walk beside them and help them navigate the free world – for as long as they need us, for the rest of their lives. Thanks to your support, Centurion is able to step in and fill the formidable gaps between release and a safe, stable life. Centurion's team helps them find housing, jobs and training, and get medical and psychological care. We provide our clients with direct financial support to pay for food and personal items, travel, medical expenses, and a safe, comfortable place to live so that they can immediately meet their basic needs in the free world.

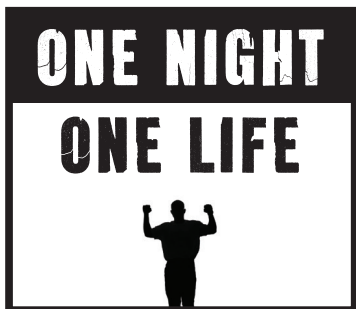
Centurion needs you to help us provide these invaluable services for our exonerees – our family. We know you agree that the men and women we support deserve a fighting chance when they are released from their decades-long nightmares. Please consider making your gift today.

DONATE ONLINE ➡ **centurion.org/donate**

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save the date... *an Autumn Dinner and Auction*

Saturday . September 28 . 2019 • Cherry Valley Country Club . Princeton, NJ



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