



2014-2024

10 YEARS OF IMPACT

Transforming Lives After Incarceration

2024 IMPACT REPORT

“ —

“The house didn’t even have furniture when I got here. Now, the program is off the charts.”



Lonnie Cooley,

First resident of The First 72+ Transitional House

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LETTER FROM THE

Co-Executive Directors

There is no better time than now for The First 72+ to exist. In a moment of uncertainty and hesitation about the future, The First 72+ stands as a beacon of hope and a guiding light—not just for individuals returning home, but for the entire New Orleans community and beyond. More than a safe haven, we are a place where people aren't just seeking a second chance but another chance—another chance to live, to breathe, and to build a future with dignity.

Over the past ten years, we have served more than four thousand individuals who are either returning from incarceration or impacted by the justice system. As we embark on the next decade of service, we are prepared for the journey ahead. Challenges will come, as they always have, but we have never shied away from them. Someone's freedom—someone's life—depends on our ability and commitment to push forward, to face obstacles head-on, and to keep fighting for justice.

The First 72+ continues to grow, expanding both our services and programs. This year, we introduced financial literacy classes and coaching, Life Skills programming for transitional housing residents, and expanded both our Pre-Release program and our prevention initiative, B4. Thanks to the support of our community partners and donors, we've also reestablished our food pantry and clothing closet – critical resources for those starting over. And let's not forget our newest addition, the Ben Smith Welcome Home Center, which serves not only as a transitional house but also as a multipurpose space for classes, events, and community gatherings.

In 2025, we are most excited to launch one of our biggest endeavors yet: our culinary program. Designed as a stipend-based job training program, it will provide participants with the opportunity to sharpen their culinary skills and step into the food and hospitality industry. For our founders and board members, this program is a long-awaited dream come true, equipping participants with tangible, marketable skills that will empower them far beyond the kitchen. But what makes this endeavor truly special is its foundation – built by us, for us. After all, our motto remains: "Us Helping Us."

The First 72+ would not exist without the hard work, dedication, and support of our staff, volunteers, supporters, donors, community partners, and most importantly, our greatest champions, our clients. It takes immense trust and vulnerability to accept help from strangers. When our clients enter our program, they are placing their trust in us with their lives, and that is a responsibility we hold sacred.

As we continue to stand on the front lines for our clients, we hope you will stand with supporting the us – supporting the work that remains urgent and necessary. To every individual who has been part of this journey, thank you. We look forward to many more years of transformation and second chances ahead!

With care,
Pastor Tyrone Smith and Courtney Evans
Co-Executive Directors

***We would not be here without our founders, and
we are able to continue this work with the
guidance of our Board of Directors:***

*Blair Boutte, Jack Dilosa, Kelly Orians, Robert Marks,
James Bernhardt, and Regina Bartholomew Woods.*



Our founders, from left to right: Calvin Duncan, Norris Henderson, Pastor Tyrone Smith, Blair Boutte, Jack Dilosa, and Ben Smith.

"For a decade, The First 72+ has been at the forefront of reentry work, not just providing direct services, but radically reimagining public safety and public health in New Orleans. We are committed to ensuring that reentry is an essential part of any conversation about criminal justice reform, empowering our clients to define their own success and pursue their dreams—whether that means going back to school, becoming business owners, or even homeowners."

Kelly Orians

Board Director and previous Co-Executive Director of The First 72+




THE FIRST 72+ WAS FOUNDED ON ONE GUIDING PRINCIPLE: “*US HELPING US*”

In 2014, six formerly incarcerated men used their own hands and money to turn an old bail bonds office into a home. Their mission was to provide a safe place to live for people recently released from prison so that they could grow into independent, self-sustaining citizens.



Prior to our official founding, our founders were already providing ad hoc services to those coming home. They knew what formerly incarcerated people needed to succeed because they had been through it themselves. Most people being released depend heavily on friends and family, but many people coming home do not have the family and friends they need for necessary support. Our founders became that support system. Whether it was driving to Angola to pick folks up, offering beds to sleep in at the church, or providing folks clothing or a bus pass, they were there.



We envision a world where prior incarceration is not a barrier to secure housing, employment, and community acceptance.

Our founders named the organization "The First 72+", a reference to the first 72 hours after someone is released from prison - the most crucial period of the reentry journey.

Since then, our mission has remained the same: to stop the cycle of incarceration by fostering independence and self-sustainability through education, stable and secure housing & employment, health care, and community engagement.

By us, for us

Through the leadership and wisdom of formerly incarcerated people themselves, The First 72+ has continued to transform the re-entry experience into one that builds on the strengths and abilities of people returning home from prison and ensures that they, their families, and their communities are given the greatest opportunity to grow and thrive.

Our Timeline



Pastor Tyrone Smith and Ben Smith are incarcerated at Louisiana State Penitentiary.



The First 72+ hosted the opening of its first transitional house, in partnership with The Next Generation of Original Morning Star Baptist Church, on Perdido Street.



The First 72+ partners with Orleans Parish Criminal Court Judge Laurie White for their Reentry Workforce Development Program.



Kelly Orians and Calvin Duncan are selected to participate in a Propeller startup program, leading to the launch of the First 72+ business incubator.



Through his #FreeAmerica campaign to end mass incarceration, Grammy Award-winning singer John Legend visits prisons and communities across the nation, working for reform of the criminal justice system.



The First 72+, in partnership with Rising Foundation, is featured on the front page of The Times Picayune highlighting the work being done to support formerly incarcerated people launch small businesses.



To add capacity and extend impact, The First 72+ begins a partnership with Avodah's Jewish Service Corps.

1992

September 2014

July 2015

October 2015

February 2017

August 2018

September 2018



July 2014

The First 72+ opens its first transitional house for men coming home from prison, with five beds dedicated to housing men returning home from the Louisiana State Prison System. Our founding team - Pastor Tyrone Smith, Ben Smith, Norris Henderson, Blair Boutte, Calvin Duncan, and Kenneth "Jack" Dilosa - joined forces to prepare the first transitional house for its very first tenant, Nathan Brown. Mr. Brown served 17 years in prison for a crime that he did not commit.



March 2015

The First 72+ hosts its first annual Lenten Fish Fry Fundraiser! Plates of fried fish, mac and cheese, and peas raise money to pay for the utilities of the transitional house.



September 2015

The First 72+ forms an official partnership with the Orleans Public Defenders (OPD) Office; Staff attorney Kelly Orians begins supporting OPD by providing direct legal services to people coming home from prison.



February 2016

The First 72+ begins renovating a 100-year-old property in Central City, dubbed the Keller Mansion, to create space for free transitional housing for men coming home from prison, as well as reentry support services and substance abuse counseling for residents and the surrounding community.



October 2016

The First 72+ house/office begins the building process.



November 2017

In response to The Justice Reinvestment Initiative, The First 72+ sets up 10 beds at Next Generation of Original Morning Star Baptist Church to support efforts to accommodate part of the nearly 1900 people released early from prison across Louisiana.





The First 72+ hosts its first gala honoring the organization's four-year anniversary. As part of the gala, The First 72+ announces the Ben Smith Welcome Home Center build plans.



Ben Smith and Kelly Orians win a J.M. Kaplan innovation prize, officially making Ben Smith the first formerly incarcerated person to ever earn this award.

In partnership with CEO Works, The First 72+ starts a stimulus program, distributing more than \$1M in emergency financial assistance.



The First 72+ breaks ground on the Ben Smith Welcome Home Center.



Congressman Hakeem Jeffries and Congressman Troy Carter visit.



The First 72+ receives a \$1 million grant from Makenzie Scott's Yield Giving.



The First 72+ receives \$13k donation in supplies from the Federal Reserve, including hygiene supplies and laptops for clients.

October
2018

November
2019

May
2020

May
2021

August
2023

March
2024

August
2024

November
2018

The First 72+ becomes an Impact 100 Winner earning \$100K to support the work of the organization.



March
2020

The First 72+ provides support virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The First 72+ partners with the Orleans Public Defenders Office and CADA to provide housing and wraparound services to people managing substance abuse disorders and mental health diagnoses.



November
2020

Founder and Executive Director Ben Smith, Jr. passes away at age 69.



July
2022

The First 72+ receives \$30k from NOLA to Angola to provide housing vouchers to clients. NOLA to Angola is an annual three-day, 170-mile bicycle ride fundraiser from New Orleans to Angola. The bike ride raises money for Cornerstone Builders Bus Project, which provides free bus rides to family members to visit their incarcerated loved ones.

September
2023

The Ben Smith Welcome Home Center officially opens.



June
2024

The First 72+ hosts its first ever Job & Resource Fair, taking place at the John Thompson Legacy Center.

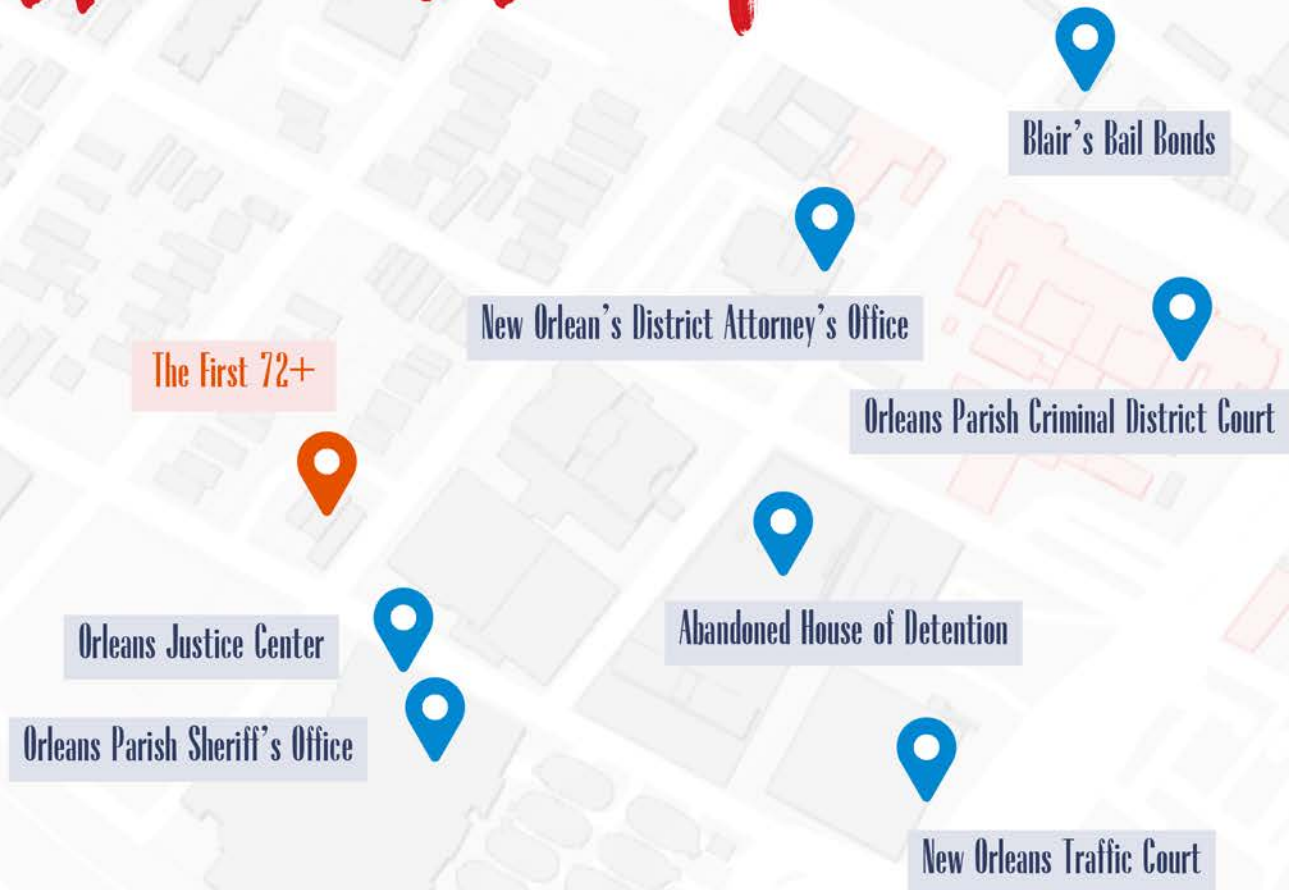


October
2024

The First 72+ hosts its 10-Year Anniversary Gala, "The First 10+: A Decade of Change", celebrating a decade of transformative work and positive impact on the community.



Where We Are



The First 72+ is uniquely situated in New Orleans, as our office and transitional houses are located in the center of the criminal legal corridor of the city. We are directly across the street from the Orleans Justice Center (formerly known as the Orleans Parish Prison) and the Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office. We remain within walking distance of the Criminal District Courthouse, the District Attorney's office, the Public Defenders' office, New Orleans Police Department, Traffic Court, and numerous bail bond offices.

A DECADE OF IMPACT

Over the last 10 years, The First 72+ has welcomed every justice-impacted person who came through our doors with open arms. Our organization continues to grow with every year, building upon previous programs and expanding to meet our clients' needs.



4,500+
clients
served



200+
clients housed at
The First 72+



4,000+
Public Benefits
applications



1,000+
clients
employed



50+ clients
supported at
Parole Hearings



<10% recidivism
rate amongst
clients



105 loans
totaling
\$200,000+



\$1.5 million+
in Emergency
Financial Assistance

2024 Highlights

In 2024, we have continued to grow! Our small-but-mighty team continues to expand programming and collaborate with community partners to plan impactful events to serve our clients.

We launched our Life Skills Program, a 5-day course for our residential clients helping them to readjust to living in New Orleans. Classes cover navigating public transportation, learning re-named streets, answering the conviction question during a job interview, and setting attainable goals for their first year post-incarceration. Additionally, specific barriers for FIPs are addressed, such as technology skills, resume creation, financial literacy, and handling workplace conflict.



The First 72+ partnered with EXCELth Family Dental to host a Pop-Up Dental Clinic, bringing much-needed dental care directly to formerly incarcerated individuals. Through this initiative, clients received dental screenings to assess their needs and plan for follow-up care. Unfortunately, dental health is often overlooked in correctional facilities, leaving many of our clients without proper care even after their release. We are proud to work alongside EXCELth to remove these barriers and expand access to vital services for our community.

In honor of Opioid Survivor's Month, The First 72+ hosted a "Hope and Healing" Survivor's Event in partnership with the Louisiana Department of Health. The event brought together several community organizations to provide clients with educational materials, harm reduction supplies, and access to critical resources. Clients learned about various forms of Medication Assisted Treatment and how to access them, the community-wide impacts of opioid use, and connected with community resources specializing in harm reduction, like Below Sea Level Aid.

The First 72+ LENTEN FISH FRY

In the early days of The First 72+, our founding members launched the Lenten Fish Fry to sustain the transitional house financially. As a grassroots organization, the Fish Fry earned us just enough money to get off the ground. Our community rallied in support, gathering on the house's front porch to pay it forward while sharing a delicious meal. What started as a means to pay the bills evolved into a yearly staple in our community. It's a time for us to see the faces of hundreds of community members and to thank them each directly for their support. The Fish Fry reminds us of our movement's strength in numbers and the joy (and good food) that we can share with one another every day.

Ten years later, we have continued to grow and beat our fundraising goals!



Photos courtesy of Henry Danner, Momena Workshops 2025

In 2025...

**1,262
plates
sold**



\$12,238 raised

**412
people
served**

A SOFT PLACE TO LAND:

Honoring the Legacy of Ben Smith

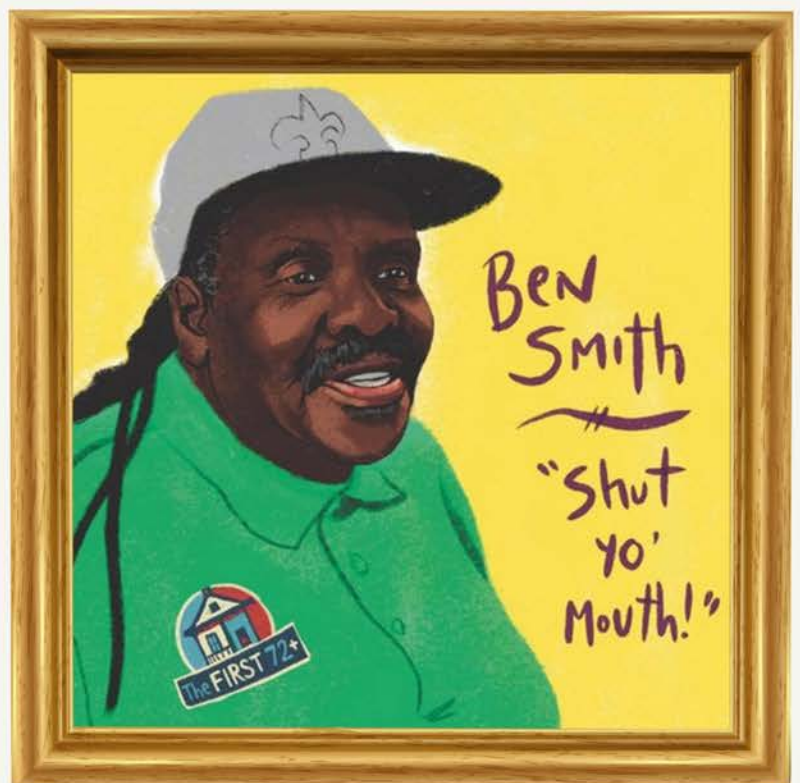
The First 72+ is, at its core, a community of people who first showed up to get help, but then turned right back around to be there for the people they grew up with, the people they did time with. As Ben Smith would say, to be there for “the next man up.”

And that’s the one thing that is sorely missing from our work today: Ben.

Before The First 72+ had a house, a logo and a sign on our roof, or a team of I4, many people would agree that the most valuable reentry resource in New Orleans was Ben’s van. He would pick you up, drive you to see your parole officer, get your birth certificate, social security card, and state ID. He’d get you a haircut and a fresh set of clothes so you could see your family for the first time feeling confident. Then he’d give you a job working on the back of his iconic Mardi Gras-colored grill trucks, for his business, Da Grill.

People often ask why we decided to call ourselves “The First 72+,” and no one explained it better than Ben:

“We’re talking about guys that have been locked up 15, 20, 25, 40 years some of them. The purpose of this place is to give them a place to get started. That’s why the name of this place is The First 72+, because those first 72 hours are so crucial. After that, we plan for the long term - getting out and staying out.”



The Ben Smith Welcome Home Center



The Ben Smith Welcome Home Center is our second transitional house, designed by the Office of Jonathan Tate. We are able to house 13 men in total, with our first transitional house having 5 beds and the Ben Smith Welcome Home Center having 8. Residents live in our transitional house for 90-days free-of-charge while they work on their reentry goals. Both transitional houses and our office are across the street from the Orleans Justice Center (OJC), which serves as a glimmer of hope for currently incarcerated people to let them know that we are here when they get out.



“I used to look out of my cell at OJC and see this place. I actually saw when they started building the Ben Smith Welcome Home Center, but I didn’t know what it was. When I was trying to come home, my lawyer told me that there was this place I could go.

Kelvin Lyons, past resident of the BSWHC

Dwell Magazine

"This Housing Center Provides Sanctuary for Starting Over"

November 2023 Edition



There are two things that men leaving the prison system in New Orleans most commonly request from The First 72+, a nonprofit that helps the formerly incarcerated adjust to life on the outside. The first is enough privacy to wake up and not make eye contact with another man.

The second is a bubble bath.

We were lucky enough to be gifted

our first transitional house, which follows the traditional shotgun-style layout. Comparatively, the Ben Smith Welcome Home Center, designed by the Office of Jonathan Tate, was built intentionally to create an environment that did not replicate any aspect of incarceration. The house has large windows to let in plenty of natural sunlight, with high ceilings and light-colored walls. The house is communal, with residents sharing kitchen, bathroom, and living spaces. All bedrooms are located on the second floor, giving residents a birds-eye view of the surrounding area. Each bedroom sleeps two – but, crucially, provides privacy by placing cabinets for storage in the center of the room, between the two beds. The men can sleep, read, and relax outside of the line of sight of their bunkmate. Volunteers from Angola's hospice program stitched the colorful quilts that cover the full-size beds, which come with built-in headboards and reading lamps.



The Revival Workshop, which teaches woodworking to formerly incarcerated individuals, partnered on the layout, furniture, and selection of building materials. We wanted this space to offer comfort and a chance to take a deep breath and truly relax – something that can be especially hard for residents who have just come home, after years of learning to live constantly on alert. Much of our programming takes place in the Ben Smith Welcome Home Center as well, hosting our Life Skills classes and 9 Steps to Staying Free peer support group.

TRANSITIONAL HOUSING CLIENT HIGHLIGHTS

RONDAY DIXON

Ronday was incarcerated for 6 years before returning home in 2022. After hearing about The First 72+ from an alumni client, he came to us seeking employment and quickly enrolled in Thrive's job training program, per the work of our Client Services team. Ronday excelled in the program, even being asked to speak at his graduation; however, he was still struggling to find stable housing. He lived in our transitional house in mid-November and has moved into his own place in early February! After graduating from Thrive, he was offered a job there.



CLAUDE SAMUELS

Claude came home in 2024 after 11 years incarcerated. Claude discovered The First 72+ from a flyer of ours at Dixon Correctional Center. He recognized Pastor Tyrone and gave him a call, and later spoke to his friend, Ben Scott, who had graduated from our transitional housing program. Since coming home, Claude has been able to visit with his extended family, receive his social security benefits, and participate in our Life Skills program. Claude said, "The way y'all work with people, it's like we're living in another different world but we're right across the street from everything that went wrong!"



ALLEN CARTER



Allen Carter came to us through Troy Delone, our Reentry Court Case Manager. When asked about Allen, Troy said, “Can I give you a word? Resilient. He is the epitome of resilience. Allen had all the reason in the world to give up, but he took it on the chin and hit the ground running. He provided a good example for the rest of his peers. He is a phenomenal young man.” Allen proved Troy’s words to be true – returning home after 3 years incarcerated, he has been home a little more than 6 months and is already working two jobs, with the hope to pursue his passion in collision repair.

At just 24 years old, Allen is one of our youngest housing clients. His story is a reminder that Louisiana’s criminal legal system isn’t built to protect young people—it’s built to punish them. As lawmakers push for even harsher laws targeting youth as adults, we know Allen won’t be the last young person walking through our doors in need of stability and support. Instead of investing in resources that keep young people on the right path, our state continues to push policies that funnel them into the system faster and keep them there longer.

In lieu of Louisiana’s attack on our youth, we sought to create a program geared specifically towards our younger clients. Thanks in partnership to a grant from the NBA Foundation, we’re excited to launch our Economic Mobility for Justice Impacted Youth Program, to provide economic stability, career advancement, and entrepreneurship opportunities for Black justice-impacted youth ages 18 - 30. Classes will be starting this Spring, please reach out if you would like to refer someone to the program.

New PROGRAMMING

SECOND CHANCE CULINARY SCHOOL

The First 72+ Cooking School honors the legacy of our founder, Ben Smith, by providing tuition-free, hands-on culinary training to formerly incarcerated people, equipping them with skills for stable, gainful employment in the restaurant industry.



Ben believed in second chances, often giving people their first job on his iconic Mardi Gras-colored grill trucks. Formerly incarcerated people face countless barriers to employment, making it difficult to secure jobs that offer stability and opportunities for advancement. Our program focuses on essential skills like cooking, customer service, kitchen safety, knife skills, line cooking, and menu planning. We address gaps in commercial kitchen experience while offering holistic reentry support to ensure long-term success. By preparing participants for roles beyond dishwashers and busboys, we create opportunities for advancement and economic stability, carrying forward Ben's commitment to being there for "the next man up." We're looking forward to welcoming our first cohort in April!

Our Cooking School is run by our case manager Wayne Sneed, former resident of our transitional house and participant in our program after 44 years incarcerated. Wayne has a degree in culinary arts and works part-time at the Hyatt Regency!

New PROGRAMMING

FOOD PANTRY

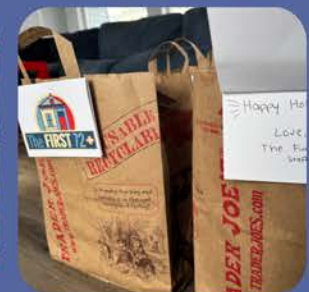
Access to fresh, nutritional food is a challenge for many of our clients. Formerly incarcerated individuals are nearly twice as likely to experience food insecurity in the U.S. (Prison Policy Initiative, 2021). When clients first return home, one of the first things that we do is apply for public benefits, including the DCFS' Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. However, SNAP can take 3-4 weeks after the initial application process to kick in which leaves our residents with few affordable food options. To fill in this gap, we re-launched our on-site food pantry in the fall of 2024. While different iterations of the food pantry had existed in the past, we felt it important to have a renewed and consistent source of accessible food at our site. We looked to our community partners to actualize this project and they responded with invaluable support. We are looking forward to continuing building out the pantry in the coming year!

DIGITAL LITERACY

This past year, we were thrilled to receive a generous donation of computers from the Federal Reserve, helping us break down the digital barriers many of our clients face as they navigate an increasingly online world. Through our ongoing partnership with Loyola University, college students have been able to aid in one-on-one technology support with our clients, offering personalized support and bridging the gap between generations.

B4

"B4" is one of the newest initiatives at the First 72+, created to address the urgent challenges facing Louisiana's youth. With recent legislative changes allowing 17-year-olds to be tried as adults, young people are at greater risk of entering the criminal justice system. "B4" is a preventative program designed to intervene before tragedy strikes – before a loved one is lost, before someone ends up in prison, and before families turn to The First 72+ for help. The program's goal is to keep youth out of the criminal justice system through proactive mentoring and support. Staff and First 72+ alumni visit schools across the city, sharing their personal stories of hardship and growth to inspire students to make better choices. By fostering open conversations and providing relatable role models, "B4" encourages young people to avoid the life-altering consequences of one bad decision – a critical step in preventing the next generation from entering the cycle of incarceration.



Continuing PROGRAMMING

CLOTHING CLOSET

For many of our clients, our office is their first stop home – this means that often, clients walk through our doors wearing their assigned clothing from prison or the clothes they got arrested in. While the barrier that inadequate clothing poses to obtaining employment feels fairly obvious, we care first about the feeling of autonomy, comfort, and freedom that comes with shedding those old clothes. Getting properly dressed in clothing that feels like a fresh start is something we can visibly see on our clients' faces, which is why our Clothing Closet is a vital part of our initial operations. A few days later, a client may return needing proper shoes for a job in a restaurant or a button-down shirt for a job interview. Clothing is a way that clients can regain the dignity that incarceration stole from them, as well as gain confidence in their identity as a free person.

PRE-RELEASE

In 2024, we continued to expand our Pre-Release program to support currently incarcerated individuals prior to their release. One way we have been able to expand the program has been through the help of transition specialists at correctional facilities across Louisiana. Our team was able to visit Rayburn Correctional Center and Allen Correctional Center, giving us the opportunity to speak with men with upcoming release dates. This allows our team to begin crafting a reentry plan for them, addressing their anticipated needs before they come home to avoid a gap in care. Transition specialists also help us connect with clients over Zoom, whether to prepare for a parole or clemency hearing, or interview for our transitional housing program. These connections help us form a relationship before clients come home, and ensure they understand that we are a safe place for them to seek help during their transition.



Continuing PROGRAMMING

9 STEPS TO STAYING FREE

"9 Steps to Staying Free" is a weekly peer support group designed to empower formerly incarcerated individuals on their reentry journey. Facilitated by our Co-Founder and Co-Executive Director, Pastor Tyrone Smith, the program addresses the need for structured, in-house programming that fosters mental and emotional "decarceration." Pastor Tyrone created the program to fill a critical gap—providing similar resources outside prison walls to help individuals navigate life after incarceration. The nine-week series covers topics essential for reentry success, including "Responding Versus Reacting," and "Thinking for Change," focused on changing clients' mindset. Since its inception nearly four years ago, 9 Steps to Staying Free has celebrated three graduations with over 50 participants, many of whom continue to engage with the class weekly. We look forward to celebrating our fourth graduation this spring!



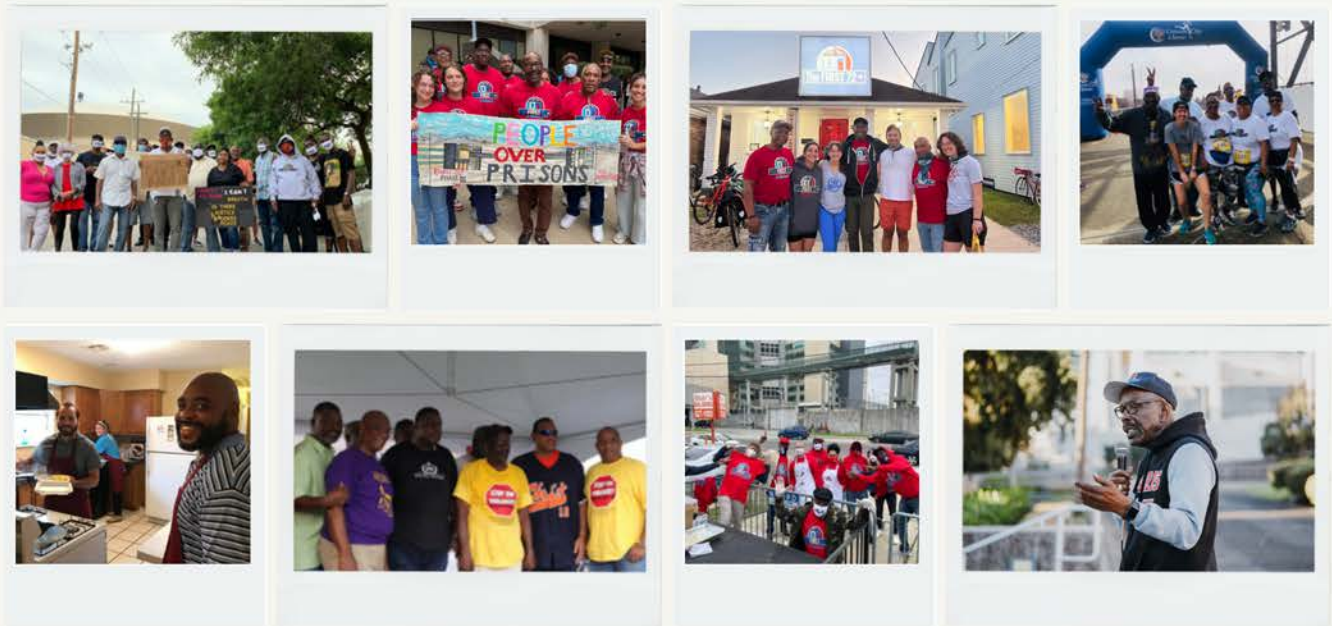
REENTRY COURT

The Orleans Reentry Court Program began in 2015 with the help of Judge Laurie White. In 2021, the program transitioned to Section K under the supervision of Judge Marcus DeLarge. Our reentry court case manager, Troy Delone, works side-by-side with the Section K team to support men with their reentry process, even before they are released. The program requires an in-jail portion in which participants must get their GED/HiSET, obtain two vocational trades, complete a mentorship program and substance abuse treatment if necessary. Once release, participants are on probation work towards goals including finding housing, employment, mental health support, substance abuse treatment, obtaining a driver's license, and continuing education. Judge DeLarge holds a monthly Docket Day where participants meet with their case management team and community providers to discuss the successes and setbacks they face as they navigate their reentry. Reentry courts help to lower recidivism rates, with this program boasting a 10% recidivism rate, a stark contrast to the 40% statewide average and the lowest rate of all reentry courts in the state.



The FIRST 72+ *in the Community*

Born from a deep love for our community and a commitment to uplifting one another, The First 72+ has always believed in the power of second chances. Since our founding, we've embraced the importance of giving back and showing up—whether hosting fish fry fundraisers, organizing back-to-school events, leading vaccine drives, or standing with others to put a stop to violence in our community.



In 2022, we proudly partnered with NOLA to Angola, an annual bike ride fundraiser dedicated to supporting families traveling long distances to visit their incarcerated loved ones. That year, the ride raised over \$50,000, which helped provide housing vouchers for our clients in need of stable housing. Since then, it's become a tradition for us to host the riders on the morning of their journey, sharing in the spirit of community and solidarity.

In collaboration with the Louisiana Department of Health, we held multiple vaccine drives during the COVID-19 pandemic, held outside our offices to provide vaccines and boosters to those in need.

Through the years, we've participated in multiple "Stop the Violence" rallies to call for an end to violence in our New Orleans community. We have also participated in other community events including the Crescent City Classic and VOTE's "Phase Out Phase III" Mental Health protest.

Economic Empowerment

Reentry is *expensive*. When someone comes home after being incarcerated, they are immediately faced with various financial hurdles: finding a place to live, paying for transportation, paying off fines and fees, arranging childcare, covering daily living costs, and more. On top of that, having a criminal record often makes it harder to find stable-wage jobs. These challenges can feel overwhelming, but at The First 72+, we're here to help. Our Economic Empowerment program is all about giving people the tools, skills, and support they need to overcome these barriers. By focusing on financial stability, we're helping participants rebuild their lives, take care of their families, and create brighter futures.

BUDGETING MADE SIMPLE

We work with participants to create easy-to-follow budget plans that help them take control of their money. These plans focus on covering everyday needs and saving for the future.

FINANCIAL LITERACY COURSES

We offer financial literacy classes to teach participants how to set aside money for emergencies and invest in their future, building a strong foundation for financial independence.

MANAGING MONEY

Through group workshops and one-on-one coaching, we guide participants in handling their finances, setting goals, and avoiding common money mistakes.



THE FOUNTAIN FUND

In 2022, we began a partnership with the Fountain Fund to offer low-interest loans to formerly incarcerated individuals. These loans make a huge difference by helping participants:



**Buy reliable
transportation**



**Secure
stable
housing**



**Reinstate
driver's
licenses**



**Get job
certifications**



**Access other
employment
opportunities**

Stories OF IMPACT

After 20 years of incarceration, Jimmie Variste met some of our team members at a job fair. Recognizing The First 72+ from his time incarcerated, he sought support in overcoming barriers to employment due to his criminal record—despite recently obtaining his Commercial Driver’s License (CDL). Through dedicated case management and employment assistance, Jimmie secured a position as an Over-the-Road (OTR) driver with US Express. Reflecting on his newfound freedom and stability, he shared: “I absolutely love it. I get to see the places I used to watch on TV for 20 years. The best thing about being out is being able to travel—I’ve been to about 40 states!”

After being incarcerated for 12 years, Isaiah Catchings came to us the day he was released in August of 2024. With guidance from our team, he has made incredible progress in just a few months. He obtained his driver’s license for the first time in his life and is now employed as a delivery driver for Domino’s Pizza and a valet attendant at the Saenger Theatre. Looking ahead to 2025, Mr. Isaiah is determined to build a career. In January, he plans to apply for a handyman apprenticeship, setting the stage for persistent growth. Mr. Isaiah’s long-term goal is to own a business he can pass down to his family; “One thing I really want to do is open up my own business...something that could go on for generations. I got nieces, I got nephews, I got family that are going to need to be taken care of.” We are proud to stand beside Mr. Isaiah as he pursues his goals and builds a future not only for himself but for the generations to come.

Carl Lee connected with us as a pre-release client through his transition specialist at Raymond Laborde Correctional Center after his initial housing plan fell through. When asked about his first days in the house, Carl told us; “My expectations here have been more than met. All the people are real nice and helpful. I think I’m going to get more benefit from these 90 days than I probably gotten from the last 20 years of my life. Being surrounded by people that care is something I never had before... It gives you a whole lot of incentive when the people around you have faith in you,. It gives you more faith in yourself.”

JIMMIE VARISTE



ISAIAH CATCHINGS



CARL LEE

CELEBRATING A MILESTONE:

Recap of Our 10-Year Gala

This past October 2024, we celebrated 10 years of transformative work in New Orleans! Held at the Westin New Orleans, the gala featured testimonials, honoree recognitions, and heartfelt remarks.

Hosted by Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office Chief Communications Officer Casey Ferrand McGee, we honored individuals and organizations who have significantly contributed to our mission: United States Congressman Troy Carter, the Greater New Orleans Foundation, former client Harold Johnson, Reentry Case Manager and former client Troy Delone, State Senator Royce Duplessis, City Council President Helena Moreno, City Councilmembers Lesli Harris and Oliver Thomas, Sheriff Susan Hutson, and our Founder, Pastor Tyrone Smith. Through philanthropy, leadership, and community service, these honorees have advanced second chances and changed lives. State Representative Candace N. Newell and City Council President Helena Moreno also presented The First 72+ with proclamations from the City and State, acknowledging our decade of service and advocacy.

The gala was an inspiring evening—a chance to reflect, celebrate, and recommit to the work ahead. Through partnerships, advocacy, and community support, The First 72+ continues to lead the charge in reducing recidivism and transforming lives.

Together, we hope to make the 10 years even more impactful, with more opportunities, successes, and lives changed for the better.



We sincerely thank the sponsors who made this gala possible: Freedom Finders, Verizon, Phoenix Project NOLA, Resourceful Consulting, Safety Bound, Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office, Baptist Community Ministries, Greater New Orleans Foundation, Gulf Coast Bank, Women With a Vision, Total Community Action, Enterprise Community Partners, Daughters Beyond Incarceration, and Borealis. Additionally, a very special thanks to all supporters and friends who attended or purchased tickets for our clients.



RESPONDING TO THE MOMENT

THE U.S. INCARCERATION CRISIS: LOUISIANA AT THE CENTER

The United States continues to lead all independent democracies in incarceration rates, with Louisiana holding the title of “Prison Capital of the World” (Prison Policy Initiative).



HB9

Abolishes parole for most offenses, eliminating rehabilitation incentives and hope for incarcerated individuals.

The special crime session held after Landry’s election win in February 2024 introduced several devastating legislative changes, completing overturning the series of bipartisan reforms passed in 2017 under the Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI).

HB10

Reduces good-time credits, likely doubling the nonviolent prison population and increasing costs while endangering prison safety.

Data shows that longer sentences do not lower crime rates but instead increase recidivism. These policies will expand Louisiana’s prison population, intensify dangers within correctional facilities, and cost the state hundreds of millions of dollars.

HB11

Extends parole terms and adds harsher penalties for parole violations, creating more barriers for reintegration.

SB5

Requires unanimous parole board votes for release, making parole eligibility more restrictive and disincentivizing rehabilitation.

THE IMMEDIATE IMPACT

THE U.S. INCARCERATION CRISIS: LOUISIANA AT THE CENTER



Overcrowded Jails

Overcrowding in jails is worsening, now requiring facilities to house juveniles in ways that strain resources and compromise safety. According to the Orleans Justice Center, 17-year-olds must be separated by sight and sound from adult detainees due to federal standards. The costs for this are astronomical for the jail, who have already faced staffing shortages.



Police Presence & Homelessness Raids

Governor Landry's administration has targeted unhoused individuals in New Orleans. With less than 48 hours' notice, individuals were forced to relocate to an inadequately equipped warehouse in Gentilly or face arrest. This disproportionately harms our clients – formerly incarcerated individuals are 10x more likely to experience homelessness (Prison Policy Initiative). Unhoused individuals are also 514 times more likely to be arrested.



Decline in Parole Releases

The percentage of individuals granted parole has dropped significantly under the new policies, leading to fewer people being released and fewer opportunities for rehabilitation. Out of the clients we have advocated for parole in 2025 so far, only one has been released.

HOW THE FIRST 72+ IS TAKING ACTION:

Louisiana's title as the incarceration capital of the world is not new, but neither is our resilience. Despite the challenges ahead, The First 72+ remains steadfast in fighting for our community. Now, more than ever, we must innovate and expand our approaches to combat these escalating issues.

We are actively engaged in key criminal justice coalitions and advocacy groups across the state, including:

The Louisiana Reentry Coalition
Liberty and Dignity Statewide Criminal Justice Coalition
Louisiana Community Storytelling led by Represent Justice
New Orleans Big Easy Budget Coalition
New Orleans Reentry Task Force

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

THE U.S. INCARCERATION CRISIS: LOUISIANA AT THE CENTER

SUPPORT US!

In the next decade, we envision a Louisiana where everyone returning home from incarceration has the support they need to thrive. Your contribution helps us provide life-changing resources like housing, employment, and advocacy, ensuring that no one is left behind.

Fuel our Food Pantry

You can make a difference by donating non-expired, non-perishable food items to our office, ensuring clients have greater access to consistent, nutritional food. Donations can be dropped off at our office, 2915 Perdido Street, during our office hours, 8:30am - 4:30pm.

Welcome our Clients Home!

Starting over after incarceration can be overwhelming, especially without basic necessities like a toothbrush, deodorant, or bedding – items essential for everyday life. You can help make their transition smoother by supporting our Welcome Home Kits through our [Amazon Wishlist](#).

Fill our Clothing Closet

What we need: Suits, dress shirts, slacks, shoes, and accessories. Casual wear is welcome too. We take both men and women's clothes! To donate, come by our office any time between 8:30am - 4:30pm Monday through Friday.



Make a donation!

givebutter.com/first72plusgiving

or visit our website: first72plus.org

WHAT YOU CAN DO:

THE U.S. INCARCERATION CRISIS: LOUISIANA AT THE CENTER

STAY INFORMED:

VOTE! – It's a common misconception that people with a conviction history cannot vote. In Louisiana, many individuals impacted by the legal system can exercise their right to vote, and doing so is one of the most powerful ways to create change. By casting your ballot, you help shape policies that directly impact our communities, from criminal justice reform to housing, employment, and beyond.

Make sure you're registered, know your rights, and show up to the polls! Unsure if you're eligible to vote? Check out our partner, Voice of the Experienced (VOTE)'s Voter Protection Hotline to check your status:

<https://www.voiceoftheexperienced.org/voting-rights>.



This past February, Governor Jeff Landry vowed to resume executions in Louisiana for the first time since 2010, using nitrogen gas—a poorly studied and inhumane method of suffocation. Louisiana has the highest per capita rate of wrongful death sentences in the nation, disproportionately impacting people with intellectual disabilities and people of color.

The First 72+ stands with other leaders in opposing the death penalty and condemns this administration's blatant disregard for life and dignity. To support organizations actively fighting against the death penalty, follow our partner, The Promise of Justice Initiative (PJI), and visit their website to learn more. You can help amplify the message by calling Governor Jeff Landry's office, sharing on social media, and helping spreading the word.



Want to take action in the fight for justice in Louisiana? Join our partners at Voice of the Experienced (VOTE) to build power, stay informed, and make an impact. Attend their monthly meetings to connect with the community, or follow them on social media to stay updated on the latest advocacy efforts and ways to get involved.

VOTE's most recent campaign is the Protected Class Campaign, fighting to make formerly incarcerated people a protected class in the city of New Orleans - this ensures our clients are not discriminated against for employment or housing based upon their conviction history. Most recently, the New Orleans City Council unanimously voted to advance the Protected Class Ordinance to the the October 11th ballot. Make sure to vote and help spread the word!

Thank You

Even when plans may not go according to plan, clients feel the impact of our work beyond what we see day-to-day. One pre-release client who was denied parole messaged us after the hearing, saying, "I really want to thank you for speaking out for me yesterday. Even though I was denied, your presence offered me a glimmer of hope. After years of feeling that I was alone, you made me realize that there are people out there who still care about us". Your support helps us to make people feel seen, heard, and supported in ways that they may not have before.

<i>Anne Mahlum Philanthropy Fund</i>	<i>JP Morgan & Chase Co.</i>
<i>Ann H & Charles J. Babington Family Fund</i>	<i>JLH Impact Fund</i>
<i>Armature Philanthropy</i>	<i>Laughing Gull Foundation</i>
<i>AT&T</i>	<i>Lotta Fund for Aiding Discharged Convicts</i>
<i>Avodah Jewish Service Corps</i>	<i>Louisiana Asset Funders Network</i>
<i>Baptist Community Ministries</i>	<i>McKenzie Scott Yield Giving</i>
<i>Bob Barker Foundation</i>	<i>NBA Foundation</i>
<i>Caesars New Orleans Casino</i>	<i>New Orleans City Council</i>
<i>Capital One</i>	<i>New Orleans Community Support Foundation</i>
<i>CEO Works</i>	<i>NOLA to Angola</i>
<i>Change Elemental</i>	<i>Orleans Criminal District Court</i>
<i>City of New Orleans Mayor's Office</i>	<i>Orleans Parish Sheriff's Office</i>
<i>Communities Foundation of Texas</i>	<i>Orleans Parish District Attorneys Office</i>
<i>District Attorney's Office</i>	<i>P.A.C.E. Fund</i>
<i>Donnelley Center for Nonprofit Communications</i>	<i>Public Welfare Foundation</i>
<i>Ella West Freeman Foundation</i>	<i>Representative Troy Carter</i>
<i>Entergy</i>	<i>RosaMary Foundation</i>
<i>Enterprise Community Partners</i>	<i>Seattle Foundation</i>
<i>Foundation for Louisiana</i>	<i>Sellen Community Foundation</i>
<i>Freedom Finders</i>	<i>Stand Together Foundation</i>
<i>Gates Foundation</i>	<i>The Federal Reserve</i>
<i>Greater New Orleans Foundation</i>	<i>The Fountain Fund</i>
<i>Greater Washington Community Foundation</i>	<i>The Jill Moses Kohlmann/Allison Bach Fund</i>
<i>Gulf Coast Bank</i>	<i>The Just Trust</i>
<i>Huey and Angelina Wilson Foundation</i>	<i>The Woodson Center</i>
<i>Institute of Mental Hygiene</i>	<i>Thrive New Orleans</i>
<i>Impact 59</i>	<i>Tulane Small Center</i>
<i>Jewish Communal Fund</i>	<i>United Way of Southeast Louisiana</i>
<i>Jordan BCC Community Grants</i>	<i>Verizon</i>
<i>JM Kaplan Foundation</i>	<i>W.K. Kellogg Foundation</i>




NEED HELP?

Transitional Housing: We offer 90-day transitional housing, free-of-charge, to formerly incarcerated men returning home from prison or jail who are not on the sex offender registry. The housing is located on either side of our office building on Perdido Street in New Orleans, directly across the street from the Orleans Justice Center (previously, the Orleans Parish Prison). We can house up to 13 men at a time and residents live communally, sharing kitchen and communal space, and share their bedroom with one roommate. If you are interested in this option or have a loved one who may be a good fit for this program, call (504) 324-8859.

If you or your loved one has a sex offense charge, we will help them find suitable housing options. Call or visit our office for support.

Pre-Release Support: We help currently incarcerated individuals develop reentry plans prior to release, as well as advocating at parole board hearings. If you have an incarcerated loved one who needs this support, they can write us a letter to our office at 2915 Perdido Street, New Orleans, LA 70119, or you can call our office at (504) 324-8859.

Wraparound Services: Are you or a loved one returning home from incarceration in need of clothing, food, ID documentation, Public Benefits, case management, employment support, housing support, or financial literacy? Come to our office anytime between 8:30 am and 4:30 pm, Monday through Friday at 2915 Perdido Street, New Orleans, LA 70119.

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