

The Adult Parole Authority, NorthRiver Weed & Seed and Catholic Charities will host a free Citizen Circles training on Saturday, September 12, 2009 from 9am until 2pm. The training will be held at the Zablocki Senior Center, 3015 Lagrange Street.

Citizen Circles create partnerships among residents of the community that promote positive interaction with and accountability for offenders upon their release from incarceration. There are currently three active Citizen Circles serving Lucas County, two of which meet regularly in North Toledo. North Toledo Citizen Circle meets the first Thursday of each month at noon at Wesley United Methodist Church, 2934 Stickney Avenue, Toledo. NorthRiver Citizen Circle meets the third Monday of each at 7:00 p.m. at Salem Lutheran Church, 1125 North Huron, Toledo. Granny's Haven Citizen Circle meets the second Thursday of each month at 5:30 pm at Phillips Temple Church, 565 Palmwood Street, Toledo.

Scott Brown epitomizes the value of Citizen Circles in our communities. Scott began attending the NorthRiver Citizen Circle held at Salem Lutheran Church just months after his release and the circle's inception almost three years ago. Earlier this month, Scott successfully completed his parole and was released from supervision. According to Scott, getting to this point was not as easy as he made it appear and the road was "full of ups and downs."

He credits his success to his involvement with the circle. "I can go there and talk about anything. It's like a close-knit family—not afraid to confront the negative, but they help you emphasize and focus on the positive aspects of what you're accomplishing and keep that focus."

Recalling some of the helpful lessons learned early on from Citizen Circle, Scott spoke of the importance of eye contact. "Whenever I spoke, (circle member) Germaine would just stare into my eyes, like she was looking into my soul," Scott recounted. While incarcerated, Scott explained, direct eye contact signaled aggression and meant that a fight was about to break out. According to Scott, the Citizen Circle meetings helped him relearn the value of good eye contact and get comfortable with it once again.

With his time in prison and on supervision now behind him, Scott will begin classes at the University of Toledo in the fall and trade his full-time job at a local manufacturing company with a part-time job at Salem Lutheran Church. Here he will continue to give back to the community and serve as peer mentor at NorthRiver Citizen Circle—proving to others that hopes for a successful reentry become reality when local citizens gather to support reentry efforts.

Join Scott and other circle members in this effort and attend the **FREE** training to become a circle member. You too can help address risks that contribute to criminal activity by taking ownership of the solution. Space is limited, so please RSVP by calling Maud Walsh at Catholic Charities (419) 244-6711 ext. 410 or email at mwalsh@toledodiocese.org.

For additional information, contact NorthRiver Weed & Seed Manager, Valerie Moffitt at (419) 720-6812 ext. 20 or email vmoffitt@unitednorth.org.

