

AVP Facilitators Come Home

In this issue we are thrilled to offer stories of AVP people coming home from prison—their struggles and successes in the transition to life on the outside.

Jose Velez



I have been out since November 24, 2016. After going through The Fortune Society's Three Week Employment Services Workshop, I interned (2017 Rauch Fellow, an endowed position) in the Employment Services Department for six months, and finally, in May of 2018, I was hired fulltime as one of their Front Desk Receptionists.



Jose Velez (center) is awarded a \$5,000 scholarship

I am also a team member and a volunteer with Alliance of Families for Justice (AFJ), located in Harlem. AFJ is a workhorse in re-entry services, advocacy work, and achieving systematic change among other things. I was recently named the 2018 AFJ Fellow. And, also on behalf of AFJ, State Senator Brian Benjamin awarded me with a \$5,000 scholarship, and gave me the recognition for my reentry work, my accomplishments and work in the community.

Since my release I have had 5 interviews with the press. The focus has always been my reentry into society, my transition. And my response has always been that it's not about me, but rather about the men and women coming home and the crises they are released with, the challenges, struggles and opportunities waiting for them once out. I am somewhat of an ambassador for the men and women coming home. And even though I live with relatives, I struggle and live with a housing crisis everyday. But that's a different chapter and a different story to tell.

AVP has been an empowering experience. It has given me the tools and the knowledge to not only see myself in the mirror more clearly but to put myself in others' shoes before any decision making process. It placed me in a plateau to be in control of me, in control of my feelings and my emotions. It showed me that even though I have no control of others views, opinions, feelings, and emotions, and no control of my surroundings, I do have a say, and I'm in control of my reactions, of my behavior. I am, and I know that I have to be, accountable, responsible for my own actions. Because I own them, they are my own and nobody else's. So, this is what I highlight and what I share and give back to others.

—Jose Velez, *Freedom Flaco*

AVP NY 2018 Annual Gathering

Thirty-five AVP Facilitators, soon-to-be facilitators and others who have only recently stepped into the pond of AVP shared a weekend of building community, fun and learning with each other at Powell House Retreat and Conference Center in Old Chatham, NY, September 7-9, 2018.

TNT Haywood (former Co-President of AVP NY), Evolving EL-Sun White and seven mentees from the Osborne Association in the Bronx brought enthusiasm and leadership. Some of the young adults led the Saturday evening session.

Neighborly Nadine Hoover, Your Smile Youngsil Kang and Migratory Margaret Lechner led us in a new way to present Transforming Power—the heart of AVP. Look on the facilitators' page of our website.

For more photos, check us out at: www.facebook.com/AVPNewYorkState



AVP NY Annual Gathering, 2018 Closing circle



AVP NY Forum Day, 2018 at Cayuga Prison

The Inside Team:

- Front (left to right):** King Keith Harrison, Respectful Roger Webster.
Seated (left to right): Dedicated Deacon (Walter Brown), Builder Bruce Ortlieb, Brilliant (Ronald) Burgess, Determination Demetrius Gonzalez, Mini Van Lewis, Artistic Armond Perry.
Standing (left to right): Wandering Wyatt McDonough, Dedicated Dean Faiello, Maintaining Mugs (John Muggleberg), Modest Mike Dishaw, Miracle Mike Messina, Positive P.O.P. (Damell Dexter).

Kief McNeely



I have been home three years and ten months. I work for a big moving company, Business Relocation Services (BRS) in Brooklyn.

Just recently while on the job I was spoken to so rudely and recklessly by a co-worker.

It bothered me so much, I was wrestling with what to do and was on the verge of lashing out verbally which

would of surely lost me my job but then I received a request to do something on AVP.

The mere mention of AVP made me smile, being reminded of the many hours of training and practicing for situations in our life that may come up like this. It was then I transformed my power into my calming down and thinking before reacting.

I looked at the person's point of view, called him back and communicated my dislike for what took place and we were able to get through it.

Thanks again AVP. you've come through again for me.

—Kief McNeely, Kool Ki



Kief McNeely, Carolyn Polikarpus, AVP Outside Coordinator, Green Haven Prison.

Eddie Cuadrado



It seems like so long ago that I was introduced to the Alternatives to Violence Program.

Being in a correctional setting—prison—

did little to impress me about a program that would help me deal with violence; after all, prisons are violent places. Upon becoming a participant in one of the AVP three-day workshop, I introduced myself as Curious Chico because I was truly curious as to what I would get out of the program. I had no idea how much I would gain from the experience and how far-reaching it could be if practiced effectively.

It was difficult to believe there is good in everyone when surrounded by hundreds of men who committed bad acts and sent to prison. However, AVP taught me to develop the attention, empathy, patience and courage to believe otherwise. Doing so further allowed me to communicate my feelings effectively and learn the skills to find non-violent ways of reacting to conflict. I gained so much from other participants in our sharing of experiences that I became a facilitator and, I like to believe, became a role model for many of them. AVP helped me gain insight into what can be achieved when handling conflict in a different manner while in prison, and later at home and work.

Upon my release from prison I encountered difficult situations in trying to make a positive transition. There were moments when I needed to use skills learned from AVP to build self-esteem, empowerment and to build trust and co-operation. Moments of frustration, fear and sometimes anger in making an adjustment after so many years of imprisonment at times needed to be defused and dealt with. I had to reach deep inside

myself and find the creative power to change those feelings, communicate them, in a manner that ultimately allowed me to develop non-violent ways to handle the conflicts—whether external or internal—that were hindering my success.

After almost 20 years since that first AVP workshop, I often practice the skills learned then in order to seek healing and peace. I find myself on many occasions passing some of what I learned to others so that they too can learn to find non-violent ways of addressing negative experiences and it brings me back to that moment of curiosity of alternatives to violence.

It's going on eight years since my release after doing twenty-three years. I'm currently residing in Manhattan but my heart is in the Bronx.

In September, I began working as a case manager with Exodus Transitional Community. I manage a program called Common Unity with youth and young adults ages 14 through 24 on trauma-informed care. Prior to this, I did seasonal work with the NYC Parks & Recreation Department and before that, I worked for five years with the homeless population and with families facing eviction from their apartments.

—Eddie Cuadrado, Curious Chico, Masters of Professional Studies, New York Theological Seminary; Case Manager, Exodus Transitional Community

AVP Needs Your Support!

AVP facilitators inside and out together have **volunteered** more than **17,250 hours** in 2018, valued at more than **\$500,000** in NYS!

Our 2018 budget is **\$45,000**.
Our income to date is **\$24,142**.

Please do what you can.

Nicholas Catalfamo



My name is Nicholas Catalfamo also known as “Natural Nick” to my AVP family. I was first introduced

to AVP by TNT Haywood in 1997 at Eastern Correctional Facility. I was hesitant to attend at first but after completing the basic workshop I realized how much I enjoyed AVP. Therefore, I signed up for the Advanced workshop and went on to take the Training for Facilitators. I really enjoyed being a facilitator and sharing the jewels that I learned from the other seasoned facilitators.

When I finally left prison on January 9th, 2018, I had served over 27 years and was involved with AVP for 20 of those.

As I sit here at my computer typing this I have been released for approximately eight months, it seems much longer than that and I have appreciated every moment of my second chance at life.

When I was first released, society seemed so much faster than I had remembered. I was just trying to digest and process everything. It seemed so surreal. I had a few let downs along the way but I never gave up and just tried a little harder. I was a little frustrated trying to get a job but I didn't give up and after three weeks I got my first job in a restaurant. I was very grateful for the opportunity and worked hard.

Honesty is the best policy. With the jobs I have obtained since my release I have to say by being open, upfront and honest about my past has been the best policy. Once I told my employers about my felony conviction they were ready to give me a second chance. Once given

the second chance I worked hard and proved to them that they made the right choice in hiring me.

I opened a bank account got my drivers permit and in August, I bought my first car and I got my driver's license in September.

Having a realistic release plan and a strong support system was very helpful upon my release. The Quaker community has been so supportive in my transition; their help has been wonderful.

I have had to have a lot of patience in this journey because I had to understand that things will take time before I am able to achieve the goals I have in place for myself. I just keep doing the right thing everyday and things will come.

To all of my AVP family I send my regards.

—Nicholas Catalfamo, *Natural Nick*



Nick Catalfamo, Shirley Way, AVP Outside Coordinator, Cayuga Prison.

Alisha Kohn



For most people, at most points in their lives, a year doesn't make a world of difference,

and yet here I stand looking at myself in the mirror, a little more than a year after being released. Amidst the shock of facing the world from ten years behind the current times, there was the very real fear of going back. I didn't want to do the right thing, I wanted to use.

After being dumped at the shady Imperial Motel and left to myself, what place did I have in this world?

Fortunately, I met someone who had been down this road and although I almost threw away that invitation to my first NA [Narcotics Anonymous] meeting, I didn't. That made a world of difference to me.

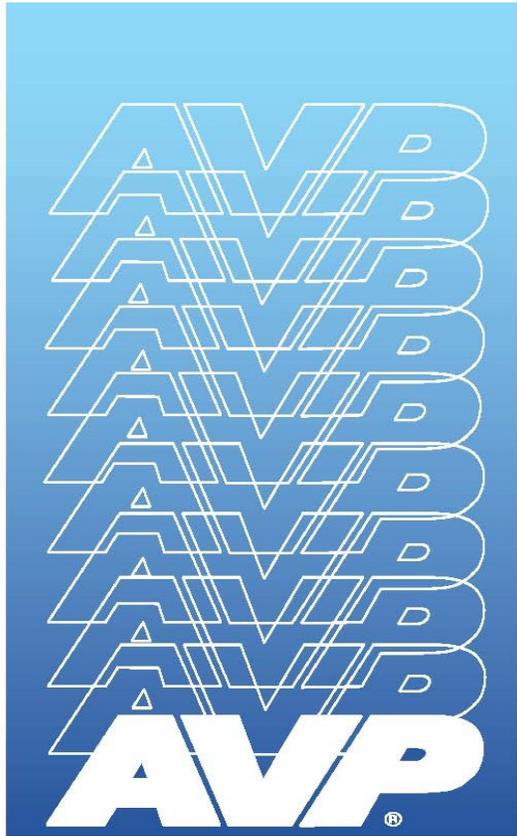
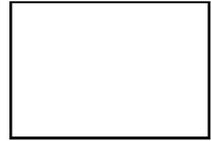
I can tell you the major highlights: a job after five months, moving into a rental which turned into a foreclosure, getting off of parole years early, getting my right to vote back, entrusted with a management position, finding the love of my life, moving into a more stable apartment with friends and riding into my first full year clean in 13 years.

The most important life-changing event, even in my life, is when I connected AVP New York. When I connected with AVP it was right around the time of the yearly retreat at the Powell House [2017]. For the three days I was at Powell House, I was reminded of all the great people who make the AVP program possible and how much transforming power does to create a better world.

After the retreat I was motivated to bring AVP into my community. I got connected with Now Noelle (Pollet), Luminous Laurie (Scott) and Achieving Anthony (McCool) and we have exhibited Mini workshops at local reentry organizations in Newburgh, New York. We even managed a brief Mini at the reentry task force of Orange County and at the end of our allowed time there, the head of area parole for Peekskill was using adjective names.

These last fourteen months that I have been released have been magical but there have also been some hardships. If I could describe what the last fourteen months have been like for me is that Transforming Power does work. There have been times I wanted to give up but the real truth is that one day at a time is the only way I can do this and the rest is just yesterday!

—Alisha Kohn, *Adventures Alisha*



AVP NY Annual Gathering, 2018
Powell House, Old Chatham, NY, September 7-9, 2018

Please support AVP!! Thank you very much !

Return Service Requested

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT

Note: Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT / NEW YORK
2017 Workshop Summary Report

Note: These statistics represent the workshops reported to the AVP/NY office.

ALBION Prison (Women's) Workshop count: 9 Participant count: 96 Apprentices trained: 11	GREEN HAVEN Prison Workshop count: 14 Participant count: 250 Apprentices trained: 15	BRONX Area Council Teen + young adult wksp ct: 3 Teen + young adult part't ct: 20 Apprentices trained: 3 Adult workshop count: 3 Adult participant count: 46	WESTCHESTER AC cont'd Multi-gen workshop count: 1 Multi-gen participant count: 9 Facilitator Days: 2 Facilitator Day participants: 20 Apprentices trained: 8
ATTICA Prison Workshop count: 2 Participant count: 16 Apprentices trained: 6	GREENE Prison Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 49 Apprentices trained: 23	BROOKLYN (NYC Area Council) Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 15	AVP/NY PRISON WKSPs: Prisons served: 16 Workshops in English: 130 Workshops in Spanish: 5 All-facilitator workshop count: 1
AUBURN Prison Workshop count: 16 Participant count: 199 Facilitator Day count: 1 Facilitator Day participants: 13 Apprentices trained: 18	GROVELAND Prison Workshop count: 4 Participant count: 51 Apprentices trained: 8	CATSKILL Area Council Teen workshop count: 3 Teen participant count: 58 Mini adult workshop count: 4 Mini adult participant count: 84 Teen apprentices trained: 14	Workshop count: 136 Participant count: 1,852 Apprentices trained: 212 Facilitator Day (mini): 1 Facilitator Day part't count: 13 Inside facilitators: 226 Outside adult facilitators: 92
BEDFORD HILLS Prison (Wmn's) English lang. wksp count: 10 Spanish or bilingual count: 3 Participant count: 126 Apprentices trained: 9	OTISVILLE Prison Workshop count: 3 Participant count: 53	CENTRAL NEW YORK AC Multi-gen workshop count: 2 Multi-gen participant count: 26 Youth workshop count: 1 Youth participant count: 19 Adult mini workshop count: 1 Adult mini participant count: 40	AVP/NY COMMUNITY WKSPs: Community workshops: 21 Participant count: 263 Adult part't count: 131 Multi-gen part't ct: 35 Teen + yg adult ct: 78 Youth part't count: 19
CAYUGA Prison Workshop count: 8 Participant count: 88 Apprentices trained: 11 AVP/NY's Forum Day 2018: 25	SING SING Prison English lang. wksp count: 26 Spanish lang. wksp count: 2 Participant count: 523 Apprentices trained: 9	MID-HUDSON Area Council Mini workshop count: 1 Mini participant count: 4	Apprentices trained: 25 Adult apprentices: 11 Teen apprentices: 14
EASTERN Prison Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 72	SULLIVAN Prison Workshop count: 5 Participant count: 58	NIAGARA FRONTIER AC Adult short workshop count: 2 Adult short wksp part't count: 15 Youth short workshop count: 4 Youth short wksp part't count: 20 Adult mini workshop count: 1 Adult mini participant count: 14	Mini Adult workshops: 5 Mini Adult part't count: 73 Mini Youth workshops: 8 Mini Youth part't count: 104 Facilitator Days: 2
ELMIRA Prison Workshop count: 9 Participant count: 82 Apprentices trained: 8	WENDE Prison English lang. workshop count: 3 Participant count: 42	WESTCHESTER Area Council Adult workshop count: 6 Adult participant count: 60	Facilitator Day part't count: 20 Outside adult facilitators: 92 Teen facilitators (under 18): 6
FCI RAY BROOK (Federal Prison) Workshop count: 7 Participant count: 109 Apprentices trained: 25	WOODBOURNE Prison Workshop count: 5 Participant count: 91 Apprentices trained: 16		
	ADIRONDACK Area Council Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 10		