

## Volunteer Opportunity at RCF

*Have you driven by the many prisons in our community and wondered about life behind the fence?*

*Do you wonder why some people keep going back to prison?*

### **Potsdam@Riverview Correctional Facility**

**(Potsdam@RCF)** is a SUNY Potsdam program that offers men in prison the opportunity to earn a bachelor's degree in Sociology. Like SUNY Potsdam students on the main campus, students in the Potsdam@RCF program must complete all degree requirements including the general education Pathways program.

Potsdam@RCF is a Second Chance Pell site. Originally begun by President Obama in 2015, SUNY Potsdam welcomed the freshmen cohort in fall semester 2021.

### **SUNY Potsdam will celebrate the success of the first six students to graduate with a Bachelor of Arts degree in early 2024!**

### **GET INVLOVED!**

The research examining successful re-integration following prison demonstrates the importance of community support. Those released from prison face substantial barriers to becoming participating members of our community through housing discrimination, employment discrimination, and the myriad of ways incarceration continues even after individuals are released. Community support is not something that happens only at the time of release. Instead, our North Country community can increase community safety by offering support and encouragement to the college students at RCF while they work on their studies and prepare for release. Showing up for the students provides the important message that the students are on the right path and reinforces the transformative value of higher education.

In our interest meeting we will have the unique opportunity to hear first-hand experience from Mr. Brandon Rodriguez, a formerly incarcerated student who participated in the Potsdam@RCF program. Brandon has returned to the Potsdam community to complete his degree at SUNY Potsdam and is currently working as an intern to further help the developmental success of the program.

## **Potsdam@RCF is actively seeking volunteers for the following:**

- **Tutors** to help students learn, i.e., note taking skills, reading skills, proof reading and editing written work, organizing their time and materials and general encouragement.
- **Computer lab assistants** to help with basic computer operations such as saving and retrieving files and navigating Microsoft Word. A community volunteer in the computer lab is necessary to open the lab to students during these hours. (Computer lab assistants do not need advanced level of knowledge of computers. Most of the students have very limited experience with computers)
- **N.A. & A.A. group leaders** to facilitate groups.
- **Art or hobby craft teachers** to offer classes on drawing and knitting.

**Study Hall Schedule:** Monday-Thursday 5:15 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

**Computer Lab Schedule:** Monday- Thursday 5:15 p.m.-8:30 p.m.

Commitment is flexible, but our goal is for volunteers to commit to attending a study hall or lab session twice monthly for the duration of an entire semester (15 weeks). Volunteers do not need to stay for the entire evening (from 5:15-8:30pm), but a 90-minute+ commitment is preferred for each tutor/lab session.

Potsdam@RCF operates 12 mos. of the year, so it is also possible to volunteer during summer months as well.

## **If you choose to volunteer, here are some things to expect:**

The New York City Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) has a screening process that all volunteers must undergo to be able to enter the facility—as well as regulations that volunteers must always adhere to while within the facility. DOCCS will orient all new volunteers and the Potsdam@RCF Program Director will accompany new volunteers into the facility until they feel comfortable.

## **Volunteer Eligibility Requirements:**

- over the age of 21
- Bring a photo ID
- A criminal record will not deny you access to the program, but DOCCS will look at the currency and relevancy
- Tuberculosis Test
- Attend orientation
- Fingerprinting

## **Interest Meeting for Volunteers:**

On March 23, 2023 at 7p.m. we will be holding a short introductory meeting to discuss these volunteer opportunity. Specific information to be discussed:

1. The DOCCS volunteer eligibility criteria and volunteer policies
2. Security and your safety
3. The Potsdam@RCF students and Second Chance Pell program including the American research demonstrating that for every dollar spent educating incarcerated people, the state saves \$10!
4. A Q&A period. Every question is a good question!

If you'd like to attend, please RSVP to Katrina Hebb at [revhebb@gmail.com](mailto:revhebb@gmail.com)

## **Have a question before then? Contact Us!**

### **Nancy Lewis Ph.D.,**

Program Director, [Potsdam@RiverviewCorrectionalFacility/Second Chance Pell](mailto:Potsdam@RiverviewCorrectionalFacility/SecondChancePell)  
Professor, Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice Studies,  
State University of New York,  
Potsdam College,  
Potsdam, NY,  
(315) 267-3713  
[lewishnl@potsdam.edu](mailto:lewishnl@potsdam.edu)

### **Rev. Katrina Hebb**

First Presbyterian Church of Potsdam  
42 Elm St.  
Potsdam, NY 13676  
Church Office: (315) 265-9434  
[revhebb@gmail.com](mailto:revhebb@gmail.com)

### **Brandon Rodriguez**

Formerly Incarcerated Student  
SUNY Potsdam  
Justice Scholar Intern  
(929) 256-7986  
[Rodrigbs205@potsdam.edu](mailto:Rodrigbs205@potsdam.edu)