



*“Together Building a New Way of Life”*

# THE FIRETREE CHRONICLE



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## ***Drug & Alcohol Treatment Programs***

## ***Community Reentry Centers***

*“Together Building a New*

## **MEET LUIS LABOY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR INPATIENT D&A PROGRAM AT CONEWAGO WERNERSVILLE**

Firetree, Ltd. is pleased to announce the appointment of Luis Laboy to the position of Executive Director of Drug and Alcohol Programming at our Wernersville campus.

Luis has had a long and diverse career in Human Services. He graduated from Imperial Valley College in California with a degree in psychology. He worked as a Counselor and Outreach Coordinator for HIV/Aids in Fresno. He then spent eight years with Children and Youth as the Supervisor for the Court Unit specializing in emergency response and family reunification. He also attended the Southern California Child Welfare Academy and completed a 6 month course in Social work. For the last four years Luis was employed by La Nuestra Clinica in Lancaster, PA as the Director of Inpatient and Outpatient Services.

As a child, Luis was the product of a family that battled

his father's alcoholism. When his mother passed away, the family was split apart and Luis attended and graduated from the Milton Hershey School. "My whole life was turned upside down," Luis said, "and I decided to put it back together myself." His struggles in his youth are what made Luis determined to help others.

Luis believes that the D&A field needs to put particular emphasis on special needs populations—Latinos, women with children and especially those with co-occurring disorders. Drug use is increasing



Luis Laboy

among the early teenage population and by the time they become adults, development issues come into play which then helps to breed co-occurring disorders. "This population will only continue to grow," Luis said.

Please help us to welcome Luis to the Firetree family—we are fortunate to have him on board.

## **THE BACK ON TRACK PROGRAM**

Firetree, Ltd. is pleased to announce the opening of a new program located on its campus in Wernersville, PA. Back On Track is designed to provide the resources and guidance necessary to assist individuals with a successful reentry into the community.

Participants in the Back On Track program are referred by the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole. These individuals are state parolees who have violated their parole, are returned to state prison and who are then sent to Back On Track by a Parole Hearing Examiner as a result

of the hearing process. All participants arrive at the program directly from a State Correctional Institution. Referrals are made from the Central and Western Regions of the Commonwealth.

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*“More often than not, any positive communication is drowned out by the very experiences children are subjected to in their everyday lives.”*

## IT’S NOT EXACTLY “SCARED STRAIGHT”

In 2005, Capitol Pavilion began collaborating with some local agencies that work with at-risk children and teens. The goal was to give some of the residents who have worked through their issues a chance to share their hard-won knowledge with kids who so badly need it. Kids today are bombarded with so many messages, good and bad. More often than not, any positive communication is drowned out by the very experiences children are subjected to in their day to day lives. Who better to deliver a positive message of hope than someone who has actually made poor choices and paid the consequences?

Capitol Pavilion residents participate in community service speaking engagements once a week. They speak to students with emotional and behavioral problems, those in a teen parenting program and students who participate in a peer challenge group. All of the participants attend classes in the Harrisburg School District. The speakers are men and women who have criminal backgrounds and are chosen to speak

based upon how they present themselves in their daily lives at Capitol Pavilion.

Seminar topics cover a broad spectrum of subjects. Speakers might talk about prison life and how they survived it, families and childhood backgrounds and the choices and consequences (good and bad) that they have made. One female resident especially touched a group of teenagers when she spoke about her own early teenage pregnancy and not being able to be a mom to her own children due to her incarceration.

It’s not exactly “Scared Straight” however, the students seem to be captivated by what the Capitol Pavilion residents have had to say. They ask a lot of questions and comment intelligently on what was discussed. The students’ view regarding prison life has been glamorized by what they have seen on television and in the movies. It is apparent that the students who have participated in this program have a better perspective on what prison life is really like and the dire and sometimes tragic

results of making bad choices. Hopefully our residents will be instrumental in leading them to make better decisions for themselves and want to strive to be the best they can be.

### What’s In a Name? Community Reentry Centers

What is in a name? Sometimes a name can say a great deal. For many years Firetree has provided facilities to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, Federal Bureau of Prisons and the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole known as “Community Corrections Centers.” Recently it was decided to rename these facilities “Community Reentry Centers” to better reflect the programs offered.

The word “corrections” tends to be synonymous with the word “punishment.”

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## THE BACK ON TRACK PROGRAM

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The Back On Track Program is 12 weeks long and is based on an intensive educational and life skills curriculum. Each participant is given a series of assessments upon admission in order to evaluate that person’s programming needs. In addition, residents are assessed throughout the 12 weeks in order to gauge and track individual progress. All treatment is based on the Cognitive-

Behavioral model. Participants are given instruction and counseling on relationships, social skills, health, education, employment and relapse prevention. They also participate in the Life After Prison Program (LAPP) which teaches them about changing attitudes and behaviors and how to make better choices in their lives.



## FLIGHT OF THE EMU OR FUN TIMES AT CONEWAGO PLACE

I had a tough choice to make - answer a call from the facility's executive director or stay on the phone to resolve a significant financial issue with a rep from a Managed Care Organization. My boss would have to wait. However, when Tiffany paged me over the intercom, I knew this was "the call" no one ever wants to get. I'll never forget those words "Mike.....go outside.....NOW!" There was no hesitation in Tiffany's tone; I had no choice. This matter was urgent and I was needed.

I went outside, looking around and anticipating the worst. I fully expected to see an injured person or to hear the rumblings of a natural disaster. I've done trainings on managing conflict but I wasn't very confident I could de-escalate a tornado. I realized at that moment that I needed to clarify my job description.

I had taken a few steps toward the front of the facility when from behind the trees stepped the "urgent matter." I admit that I was shocked

and at a momentary loss. Nothing I had learned in all of my training could have prepared me for what I encountered. Standing in front of me, in all its glory, stood a bird larger than life and (more importantly) larger than me. I was face to face with an emu. Few people are aware that the emu is one of the most feared birds in the world and the real-life inspiration for the movie "Jaws." I knew I had to play it cool because in one quick motion, this bird could take me out and that was not how I wanted to earn my 15 minutes of fame. I relied on my instincts and, in my best Aussie voice, called out, "G'day Mate." The creature turned, looked me over, and "Ralph" decided that the trees and undergrowth in front of him were more inviting than me. He kicked it into high gear and disappeared from view.

At the very second my greeting was uttered a man, dressed in a long sleeve shirt and tie, emerged from behind another tree. He was flushed



in the face and sweating profusely, glaring at me all the while. As it turns out, he was the owner of the bird and they had been chasing each other for quite a while. My comment had caused this guy to think I was making fun of his situation and enjoying the chase. Clearly he was near the end of his rope and looking for someone to join him.

The last we saw of Ralph he was in the woods playing a cruel game of hide and seek with his owner. At the very least it can be said that emus have a sense of humor, which is more than can be said for emu chasers. Although a lack of developed wings kept Ralph grounded, it was his attitude and desire for freedom that allowed him to really take flight that day.

*"Nothing I had learned in all my training could have prepared me for what I encountered."*

***Recovery is a process...***

*"Just 'cause you got the monkey off your back doesn't mean the circus has left town."*

*-George Carlin*

## WHAT'S IN A NAME? COMMUNITY REENTRY

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Firetree's Community Reentry programs are far from punitive. The cognitive behavioral program used by Firetree, as well as the comprehensive life skills curriculum, provide the framework necessary to build a better life. Residents of the Community Reentry Centers learn how to avoid the pitfalls of criminal thinking and poor decision making. The word "reentry" describes the challenges faced by those released from prison.

Life in prison bears little resemblance to life on the streets. Skills that count most in the community are often taken for granted. These skills are often absent or at the least rusty in someone who has gained their freedom and whose relationships may have been broken.

Often those incarcerated have lost family, employment and whatever positive support they may have had prior to incarceration. The list of what

may have been lost will vary, but it is usually extensive.

One definition of reentry in the dictionary is "enabling one to regain the lead previously lost," which is actually specific to a "reentry card" used in the game of Bridge. It is Firetree's mission to help residents renew and rebuild their lives and provide them with their own "reentry card" in order to successfully move forward.



# Firetree, Ltd.

*"Together Building a  
New Way of Life"*

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## *Firetree Facilities*

### *Drug & Alcohol Treatment Centers*

#### *Residential*

**Conewago Wernersville**  
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**Conewago Place**  
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Hummelstown, PA 17036  
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#### *Outpatient*

**Genesis House**  
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Williamsport, PA 17701  
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**Genesis House Harrisburg**  
2901 North Sixth Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17102  
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### *Community Reentry Centers*

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**Capitol Pavilion**  
2012 North Fourth Street  
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**Lycoming House**  
1712-1718 Point Breeze Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19145  
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701 Erie Boulevard East  
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