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New Hour Support Services

- Support services for families and children of incarcerated women
- Advocacy at every stage of re-entry
- Safe spaces and events, including summer camp to support children of incarcerated parents
- Domestic violence and chemical-dependency referrals
- Leadership training for formerly incarcerated women
- Monthly member support group and higher education support

My Journey Home: Veronica Finneran



Growing up, I had a childhood just like any other.

I lived with my parents, sisters, and grandparents. I was outgoing, had many friends, and was a competitive gymnast for over 10 years. I was given every opportunity I wanted. I later graduated from high school and had a successful college experience, which led me to a teaching career. Then I suffered a string of tragic events, including the death of a loved one, and a friend introduced me to drugs. I used to numb the pain and to forget my troubles, only to find myself more lost than ever. I did not recognize the reflection looking back at me in the mirror. I quickly became a different person. The more I used, the less I cared about my own life, as well as those that my addiction and I had hurt along my path of destruction. At my worst, when I finally hit rock bottom, I was hoping to die. I prayed for God to take me. I needed the pain and misery to end.

I was recently released from state prison, after spending three years there for robbing houses to support my desperate drug habit. This is not who I am; it is simply a part of my life. Instead of forgetting my time behind bars, I share it with everyone who will listen. I want to use my experience to educate the community about the dangers of substance abuse. I have joined Suffolk County's heroin and opioid epidemic committee to combat the ever-present heroin and opioid epidemic that has decimated so many on Long Island. As we all know, addiction does not affect just one specific geographical or socioeconomic group. It is present among the poorest and most affluent neighborhoods. Addicts are everyday people: your mother, your brother, your father. They are me. Addiction of any kind can't be predicted and so it often hidden.

Getting arrested saved me, I remember sitting in jail awaiting my fate. I came to the realization that not only did I desperately need help, but I wanted and needed to live. I wanted a second chance at life. I wanted to make up for all the years I lost. I wanted to be a healthier version of myself, so I could mend relationships with those whom I loved but had hurt. I want to afford the same opportunity to those who are lost, but like me, can also find their way again. We all need a purpose—I truly feel this is mine.

Coming home and knowing there was a saving grace such as New Hour helped me to feel hopeful that there were other women out there that not only knew what I had been through, but most importantly did not judge me for my past. These women made me feel that not only could I have a real future, but that I deserved one, despite my past. I am truly grateful for all the women at New Hour who believed in me and in turn have given me the confidence to believe in myself.

Veronica Finneran
New Hour member since 2018

Message from the Executive Director



Re-entry can be deeply challenging. When women leave our programming in the jail and come home or leave a state prison and return to Long Island, they often don't know what to focus on first. So many needs: housing, a job, transportation, food, parole or probation requirements, mental health, and substance abuse treatment are at the top of the list. For Veronica and Aneesah, who share their journey in this issue, you will learn just how overwhelming re-entry can be. For most women and mothers, coming home is filled with feelings of isolation, fear, and a deep wondering of "Will I make it?"

Our goal is to empower women returning home, showing them how to find their voice and recognize they have value. We want them to know what support feels like and to realize that they can accomplish their goals and dreams to create a better life for themselves and their children. We are here for each of our members, to hold their hand, as they lead the way through re-entry and on to success. We hope you will consider sending a New Hour child to summer camp this year. Summer camp affords our kids a safe space to experience hope and joy. Your donation will help us end the cycle of incarceration for generations to come. Thank you for caring so deeply.

Gratefully,



Serena Liguori
Executive Director
New Hour for Women and Children – LI

Why I Advocate for New Hour Women



For most of my life, I've believed in advocacy for women and getting involved with organizations whose work impacted women. Whether it was educating women on the importance of practicing safe sex and helping to distribute condoms and supporting literature on the streets of Brooklyn, or volunteering to help paint a domestic violence safe house on Long Island, I believe in supporting women.

Helping incarcerated women is a passion for me, because this population of women is often written off by society, very similar to my own journey growing up: collateral damage from a broken home and substance abuse. It can be a long, lonely journey. I have a kindred connection to women who face an "against all odds" struggle in life. I have always believed my life would have purpose.

Being a part of New Hour gives me the opportunity to have a direct impact on our women's lives. At my core, I believe that women helping women can influence the trajectory of one another's lives in an affirming way. This was one of the reasons I became a certified life coach. In my role at New Hour, I'm able to use my coaching skills with our members to help them discover their inner strengths and begin to effect significant change and create the life they want to live—a little bit at a time.

I have been fortunate to have worked with New Hour since 2015, invited by my predecessor, Rusti Miller-Hill, to talk with incarcerated women about the importance of life skills. After a few classes, I knew for sure I wanted to be a part of the important work New Hour provides. Now, in my current role, I am responsible for reaching and engaging as many incarcerated women as possible in the Suffolk jails. It is an honor to be a part in their journey, helping them recognize their potential, and ensuring they know they are not invisible. I want to be sure they know their lives and their journeys are a gift of purpose.

Danielle Donaphin
New Hour Program Coordinator

A Volunteer's Journey



My yoga journey deepened during the two years I spent as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Tanzania, East Africa. While abroad, away from everything and everyone familiar, I needed grounding, I needed nourishment. To help center myself, I turned to the yoga I had learned in high school and college. Breathing in, I know I'm breathing in; breathing out, I know I'm breathing out. The focus on my breath gave me something to hold onto when the world felt topsy-turvy. Using my breath to connect with and help move my body kept me healthy. I knew, as I practiced each morning before the heat and the work started, that I needed to share this depth of meaning with others, especially women back home.

For a few months now, I have had the honor to share yoga with the women at New Hour. We gather every four weeks to settle in, find our breath, move our bodies, and deepen our connection to that which sustains each of us. The concept of the word "yoga" is similar to that of "yoke," where two oxen are linked together and sharing a burden. In our practice, we link our body and breath, allowing each movement to take a full inhale or exhale, helping us to slow down and stay in the moment, outside the worries of our minds. In moving our bodies and focusing our attention on the breath, we create more stillness within, going deeper to find our inner light. We have inside us a guide to show us the way on a path of personal fulfillment and to help carry the weight of our lives. As we remember we are not alone and learn to listen to this voice, we begin to move more often in the world as beings of light and love.

Kaitlyn Pawlukoic
New Hour volunteer (and our very own yoga guru)

Author Susan Burton Visits New Hour Members



Author of *Becoming Ms. Burton* Susan Burton visited incarcerated women in New Hour's weekly programming in both Riverhead and Yaphank jails. She is the founder of A New Way of Life, which provides shelter and transitional housing to women returning from California correctional facilities. Susan donates her book to women behind bars and speaks around the country to inspire female prisoners realize their true potential. Pictured from left are Program Coordinator Danielle Donaphin, Susan Burton, Sheriff Errol Toulon Jr., Executive Director Serena Liguori, and Social Worker Rebecca Gordon.

The Unitarian Universalist Congregation at Shelter Rock will hold its annual women's group luncheon on July 10. New Hour members will participate in a fashion show with clothing donated by Savers thrift store. Special thanks to Maria Ceraulo for organizing this special event!



Upcoming Events

Tuesday, July 10 Cooking Class for New Hour members with top chef Zahra Tangorra. Volunteers welcome to help our New Hour children cook!

For more information, contact Executive Director Serena Liguori at (631) 273-3300, (631) 672-7147, or sliguori@newhourli.org.

Contact Us

We're here for you. Please contact us at:

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P.O. Box 213
Brentwood, NY 11717

(631) 273-3300
newhourli.org

To our donors, we greatly appreciate your support. Please send monetary and in-kind donations to the address above or visit newhourli.org/donate.

With approximately 350 incarcerated women—of whom 60 participate in our weekly jail programming and over 70 mothers, caregivers, and children receiving wraparound services in the community—your generous ongoing support is greatly welcomed and appreciated.

Check Out Our Video

We have a new video made in collaboration with Hofstra University's School of Communications on newhourli.org. A special thank you to film students Ryan, Arturo, Emma, and Emily!



Voices of New Hour: Aneesah Davis



My first encounter with New Hour was while I was incarcerated in Riverhead's Suffolk County Correctional facility, where I had a life-changing opportunity to attend their health and wellness and re-entry weekly programs. Upon my release, I had my own plan and a resource to help me get housing and take care of any stipulations the court gave me. I didn't contact New Hour once I was released to let them know I was home. I felt like "I've got this." That was a mistake and just shy of a year later, I realized I was wrong. The stress and unhealthy relationship issues started all over again, and I began to react in less than helpful ways, falling back into my own do-the-same-thing mode.

I couldn't take the stress anymore. Wanting to give up, it dawned on me that the New Hour program coordinator Rusti Miller-Hill had given me a notebook with her contact info in it. I immediately searched for the notebook and called her. As I began to explain and pour out to her what I was going through and why I called, she listened with no judgment. Her words of encouragement were so comforting. She put my mind at ease. She also let me know about the women's monthly group that I could attend and how ironic it was that one was coming up in the next few days. I did go, and I was greeted with open arms; right then I knew I belonged there.

Since my engagement with New Hour, I have obtained a certification in business and finance. With the encouragement from New Hour staff and members, I intend to further my education to become a CPA. I hope one day to run my own accounting office. I have also been given the opportunity to participate in Hour Children Working Women Re-Entry Program at Hour Children in Long Island City, where I learned many skills to help prepare me to rejoin the community. I was also able to intern with New Hour, where I obtained the work experience I needed for future references and employment.

The people of New Hour have helped me so much: giving me toiletries, getting referrals for clothing, providing transportation through either supplying bus passes or getting someone taking me to where I need to go, and so much more. That is what New Hour has done for me. This is what New Hour is to me. They are my home away from home. Their genuine caring touch encourages me to stay the course and to never give up. Their love, support, and understanding takes me a long way. For a small organization, the lengths they go to for their members makes me feel like they are as big as the Earth. I don't know where I would be if I hadn't made that phone call. New Hour has truly been a blessing to my re-entry process. That's why this is my New Hour!

Aneesah Davis
New Hour member since 2015



To send your donation today, mail check or credit card info to:
New Hour for Women & Children – LI, PO Box 213, Brentwood, NY 11717
or visit us online at newhourli.org/donate

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