

## **VALLEY FELON-AID PRESENTS REENTRY SIMULATION PROGRAM APRIL 27**

HAMILTON, MT—Valley Felon-Aid (VFA) is holding a Reentry Simulation Thursday, April 27, 3-5 p.m. at the Ravalli County City Hall in Hamilton. The free event will reenact situations faced by people reentering Hamilton County after incarceration, to create greater awareness of the obstacles navigated and services available.

A start-up nonprofit, Valley Felon-Aid helps connect those released in Ravalli County with community resources and provides tools needed for a better chance of success. Its certified peer support specialists, who have themselves reintegrated into the community, mentor and guide clients on their path back into society.

Christine and Matt Reynolds founded Valley Felon-Aid in response to their son's struggle with reintegration following incarceration. "As you come out of incarceration, there's a big gap between release and connecting with available resources," Christine Reynolds says. "Watching our son go through this created helplessness and hopelessness for the family."

Valley Felon-Aid partners with law enforcement, the judicial system, Health and Human Services, local churches, and nonprofits helping people overcome addictions, mental health, shelter, and family-support issues. "This is a community issue, not just one for the individual or family," Reynolds says. "Our detention center holds more than 50 people each day, costing Ravalli County close to \$2 million a year."

Moreover, many in Ravalli County detention are repeat offenders, Reynolds says. "Our recidivism rate is 80 percent, compared to 40-50 percent elsewhere. People here are generally not aware of the resources available, so they can easily be right back where they started a week or two after release."

The VFA program is supported by the Montana Department of Corrections, Partners for Reintegration, Welcome Back, the Gianforte Family Foundation, and individual donors.

The organization also offers animal therapy and faith-based recovery programs to help people heal from trauma. VFA helps clients adopt rescue dogs from the Humane Society and partners with a llama ranch, where clients walk and help care for the animals. "One of our first clients adopted a rescue dog, which turned him around. Having that unconditional love and a little responsibility made a huge difference in his life," Reynolds explains.

Recognizing the importance of home and family, Valley Felon-Aid plans to expand programming through a family support program and temporary housing to aid in the recovery process.

Volunteers and donations are welcome. For more information contact Reynolds at 406-880-7410 or email [valleyfelonaid@gmail.com](mailto:valleyfelonaid@gmail.com).

###