

## TESTIMONY FOR STATE LEGISLATURE: Jimmy Cheadle

A while back I was allowed to go to Marysville Corrections Facility and speak in front of about 250 women. I thought at the time this is the most intimidating crowd a man would ever have to address. Well, that was very true, until today.

So my name is Jimmy Cheadle. And I am here today to talk to you about the Horizon Prison Initiative and the effects it had on my life and the lives around me

I was raised on the Westside of Columbus. To this day, at 49 years old, I can never recall a day when my mother and father were ever glad to see each other. Love wasn't something I was taught.

At an early age, a female baby sitter introduced me to sex. I was a short fat kid with allergies, so I really never fit in. as a result of these issues and in large part my own self-centeredness. I became a womanizer and a drug addict. This life style finally after several arrests, led me to prison. While in prison I knew this was my chance to change directions. So I enrolled in The Horizon Prison Program.

This is my experience while there I learned in one of the Horizon's workshops these things were considered trauma. I also learned in Horizon that these things did not give me an excuse to act the way I did. It is my responsibility to stand on my own two feet.

In Horizon I was given the opportunity to learn the tools it takes for me to deal with my past. And not only my past, but also to deal with the present day.

In the Building Communities Class I learned about the learning curve which is: first step, I need to realize I'm lacking information; second step, I learn the information I need; third step, I put it into practice, which is called the "ackward engagement step. No one is good at something with out practice. For many years I would stop at this step and assume I wasn't good at whatever I was learning.

In the awakenings part of Horizon I learned I'm not the only one with these issues. In the multi-faith electives I learned that most religions believe in this one universal rule -- treat others like you would be treated.

But really when I became a program aid the second year of Horizon, that's when the real work began, because for the first time in my life it wasn't all about Jimmy. I had to learn to care about others and their needs and concerns.

Danny Razor, a fellow horizon participant, said he couldn't tell you how, when, or why but thanks to Horizon he had found answers to questions that he never even knew how to ask! And how to deal with character defects he never knew he had I thought to myself that in one sentence that describes the Horizon experience.

This brings me to the final and most important thing I came by to talk to you about today.

Preachers always beg the question where is the "fruit." The rest of us call it proof. Where's the proof. Alena, please, stand up and show everyone our son – James Wayland Cheadle II.

For many years of my life people would tell me, "Settle down, have some kids." My response was always the same, if I was a kid, I would not want a dad like me! But today, thanks to horizon and the support group I have around me. This baby has two parents who care about each other and are equipped, and getting equipped to raise a son. Today this little boy has a legitimate shot at success.

This is how we change lives. This is how we will change our culture.

Thanks for your time.