

Winston For Good Heroes: Ken Berry Personifies the Art of Paying It Forward

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Ken Berry, Winston's CSR & Pro Bono Administrator, is grateful for all he's received and is focused on paying it forward within his community.

Ken joined Winston as a paralegal nearly 25 years ago after Winston attorneys secured his release from prison and his exoneration. Under Kimball Anderson's leadership, Winston took Ken's case after receiving a packet of information from him with a cover letter that read, in large bold letters, "INNOCENT MAN SEEKS FAIR CHANCE TO RECEIVE JUSTICE." Ken had sent the information packet to 50 law firms throughout Illinois from his jail cell at Stateville Prison—where he had already served five years due to a grave miscarriage of justice.

Thanks to Ken's tenacious pursuit of justice and Winston's exceptional pro bono representation, Ken was released from prison on December 23, 1999 and exonerated at re-trial on February 1, 2000. On September 25, 2000, he joined Winston as a paralegal.

While at Stateville, Ken spent his days working in the law library and researching his own case in addition to serving as a "jailhouse lawyer" and GED instructor for other inmates. Since his release from prison, he has dedicated his life to serving others—especially those involved with the justice system.

Ken regularly mentors young men in his community and is a frequent participant in Saint Sabina's mentoring round tables. In addition, he often receives calls from strangers who have been referred to him because a family member has been arrested. No matter what time of day or night the call comes in, Ken always responds—offering his guidance along with his trademark compassion and calming demeanor.

"I never turn anyone away who asks me for help," said Ken. "Everyone deserves to be heard and to receive a thoughtful response. As a pro bono client at Winston, I felt like I was receiving the same respect as a *Fortune 500* client, and I aim to treat everyone who comes to me for help the same way."

Ken also gives freely of his time to improve the prison system and support people recently released from prison. Ken was appointed by the Illinois Governor and served for decades on the Illinois Department of Corrections Adult

Advisory Board. Currently, he serves on the Board of the John Howard Association, which provides citizen oversight of prisons and advocates for transparency and humane treatment of inmates.

Ken also serves as Chair of Reading Between the Lines, a nonprofit dedicated to reducing recidivism by helping justice-impacted individuals sharpen their critical thinking and interpersonal skills through studying and discussing literature and art. He has served on the board of Reading Between the Lines since its founding in 2013.

He is a long-time volunteer for the Monarch Awards Foundation's annual Thanksgiving meal program. Every year since 2005, he has helped distribute turkeys and other food items to members of the Englewood community so they can prepare a Thanksgiving meal for their families.

Ken is perhaps most proud of the volunteer work he does with the Terrell Bosley Anti-Violence Association, which was founded by his childhood friend Tom, who lost his 18-year-old son Terrell in a drive-by shooting. Ken volunteers each year at two of the association's signature events: a three-on-three basketball tournament and a winter coat drive.

Ken sums up his approach to life this way: "I was taught that to whom much is given, much is required. I am so grateful for everything I have received, and I try to use my experiences to inspire others and help people recently released from prison understand they can change their lives."

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