



# parole project

P.O. Box 2029, Baton Rouge, LA 70821

[paroleproject.org](http://paroleproject.org)

## 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2017 Newsletter

### **Parole Project Client Lue Sullivan Granted Release**

On Monday, December 19, 2016, Parole Project represented Lue Sullivan before the Louisiana Committee on Parole. Lue, who is now 60, had been serving life without parole since he was 16 years old. Parole Project successfully represented Lue and gained his release on the same day as his hearing.



Lue Sullivan (L) and Keith Nordyke

“I am so grateful for the work Parole Project did to prepare and represent me, and for what they have done for me since my release,” Lue stated. “They have been there for me every step of the way.”

Parole Project President Keith Nordyke worked with Lue leading up to his hearing to compile a post-release plan of action. Since his release, Parole Project continues to work with Lue to assist him in implementing his plan and providing Reentry coaching.



Lue obtains his first license!

“We are committed to Lue’s success. Our dedication to him didn’t end on the day he came home. We will be here for Lue, and all of our clients, every step of the way,” said Nordyke.

Since his release, Lue has reconnected with family and old friends. He completed a driver’s education course and every day he “learns and experiences something new”. Lue’s future looks very bright.

We congratulate Lue Sullivan, and we know he will be a shining example of why individuals deserve second chances. There are many others like Lue who will thrive once given the opportunity.

### **Message from Norris Henderson Parole Project Board Member**

I am very encouraged by the work that Parole Project is doing, and that is why I agreed to join its board of directors. The Reentry blueprint that Parole Project has designed is truly the start-to-finish model that will ensure the success of our clients.



If you are a *Graham, Miller, Montgomery, or Morgan* case, the Parole Project is here for you. We totally understand that many individuals affected by these decisions are seeking relief in the form of a fixed term of years sentence (*Craig*). I am not here to convince you otherwise.

Nonetheless, some courts will provide relief in the form of parole eligibility. For those individuals to whom this applies, Parole Project is here for you. Parole Project will be your advocate before the parole committee and provide you support upon release.

I am serving on the Board of Directors of Parole Project because I was formerly incarcerated, and I understand the process of reintegration upon release. The challenges on the outside are often different than what one on the inside expects; thus, Parole Project was formed to not only help deserving candidates earn their release, but to provide coaching and support moving forward. We want to see everyone reach their full potential.

If you feel Parole Project can assist you, please do not hesitate to contact us.

#### **How To Contact Us**

Please send a direct letter to:

**Louisiana Parole Project**

**P.O. Box 2029**

**Baton Rouge, LA 70821**

Or email: [andrew@paroleproject.org](mailto:andrew@paroleproject.org)

Include information such as:

*Name, DOC#, Parish and date of conviction, age at arrest, sentence, programs completed since incarceration.*

## Parole Project

Our **vision** is that returning citizens meet their full potential.

Our **mission** is to enhance the viability of parole candidates and provide them with support to promote their long-term success.

### About Parole Project

Louisiana Parole Project, Inc. is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization that provides representation and case management to indigent candidates for parole release, with a **primary focus on individuals who were originally sentenced to life without parole for crimes committed when they were younger than 18 years of age.**

We are committed to public safety and to the welfare of our communities. Parole Project is dedicated to smart reintegration of returning citizens and ending mass incarceration due to the unnecessary costs to taxpayers.

We assist our clients by promoting opportunities for rehabilitation; preparing a plan of action tailored for each client, presenting the plan to the Louisiana Board of Pardons and Committee on Parole, and executing the plan post-release; and providing Reentry support through individualized case management. Parole Project works in conjunction with corrections officials to provide our clients with prospects for growth and training.

Parole Project also assists policymakers and advocates with recommendations for criminal justice and parole procedure reforms.

### Why Parole Project?

Parole Project was created to address a host of complex issues born out of recent U.S. Supreme Court rulings affecting juvenile lifers. There must be an external process addressing the many issues confronting these offenders, as well as the communities where these offenders will return.

While we are not the first ReEntry focused group in Louisiana, we are seeking to be the tailored solution for a foreseeable problem: a parole process that is not easy to navigate and a large contingent of individuals previously ineligible for consideration, coupled with public safety concerns and the need for good policy.

Our organization works in collaboration with agencies such as D.O.C. and Probation & Parole, community organizations and other ReEntry groups. A spirit of cooperation is necessary to promote our shared objectives. Nonetheless, a concentrated effort on behalf of transitioning juvenile lifers is a necessity to our group and should be a priority for our communities.

Our unique **Client Assistance Process** consists of five progressions:

**Situating the client** consists of working with corrections officials to properly screen our clients for parole eligibility and ensure they are prioritized for educational and rehabilitative opportunities. Each client would be screened for their criminogenic needs and would be counseled as how to best address their individualized needs. Also, this step would focus on lowering a client's dynamic risk factors as it relates to LARNA/TIGER scores.

**Preparing a plan of action with the client before the hearing** is necessary to ensure long term success. Just as any business or organization with no plan of action would fail, so too would an offender seeking parole release with no tangible strategy. This plan would first include identifying a residence and a job for the offender available upon release. The Parole Committee will not grant an individual who has not lined up these priorities. An incarcerated individual may have the skillset to be prosperous upon release, but it is often not possible for any person who has been incarcerated for 35 years or more to coordinate such matters on his or her own. We see ourselves as facilitators, connecting

these individuals to family, friends, or existing community organizations that can help. We also seek to connect these individuals to social or self-help groups in the communities to which they would be relocating. Additionally, there is a need to have each client examined by an expert in adolescent brain science per U.S. Supreme Court directive. This would allow eventual expert testimony at a parole hearing to the client's maturity when the offense was committed and the likelihood of continued criminal behavior.

**Representing the client before the Parole Committee** is a priority for our organization. We seek to invest time and effort into the client long before the day of the hearing, yet our clients will receive outstanding representation the day of the hearing. We recognize that while parole candidates who have legal representation are more likely to be granted than those who do not, the vast majority of offenders cannot afford to hire an attorney to stand with them at the hearing. The attorneys we will bring on our team to represent our clients have previously navigated hundreds of parole cases and are committed to our strategy. In addition, we would coordinate the expert testimony and testimony from supporters to take place at the hearing, something the client could not easily do on his or her own.

**Implementing the plan of action post-release** is necessary to prevent recidivism. At this point we would have already done the groundwork for the plan of action, but we would also be there to help navigate the offender through his plan and offer assistance when obstacles or unforeseen issues present themselves and the plan needs to be adjusted. We would collaborate with Probation and Parole so they would see us as a partner in ensuring the client is law-abiding and productive.

**ReEntry Coaching and information gathering** is the final piece of our process, yet it is ongoing. Our coaches would serve as mentors rather than supervisors as the client adjusts and progresses in his or her return to society. While any ReEntry coach would be required to have applicable experience in this field, we would prefer to employ individuals in this capacity who have personally gone through the reintegration process successfully and could serve as role models to the client. The coach would be the case manager linking the client to support services and community resources when necessary. The coach would also maintain communication with clients and meet with them on a regular basis to ensure success. We see this as an additional layer of security for the client and his community. Through the ReEntry Coach, we would compile information on each client that would allow us to promote the success of this process. Most importantly, we will establish an assessment procedure that allows us to improve our program and promote best practices to our partners.

### Parole Project Long-Term Outlook: Create Model ReEntry Program

Parole Project will be a long-term endeavor. Although there will be an initial significant number of juvenile lifers eligible for parole, there will always be a steady number becoming eligible over the coming years.

Nonetheless, an enduring objective for Parole Project will be to create the model start-to-finish ReEntry program in Louisiana that could be expanded beyond juvenile lifers. Our organization would like to be the conduit that provides offenders deemed suitable for parole release a blueprint and mechanism for long-term success. As the Department of Corrections and the Louisiana Committee on Parole have moved toward a comprehensive revamp of their risk assessment instrument (from LARNA to TIGER), we believe our formula will be consistent with the best practice policies corrections officials are moving toward.

**“We are working for you”**  
**Andrew Hundley, Executive Director**  
[andrew@paroleproject.org](mailto:andrew@paroleproject.org)

I hope this newsletter finds each of you in good health and spirits. I am proud to be a co-founder of Parole Project and serve as its Executive Director. Every day since my release, I have been humbled by the opportunities that have been afforded to me.



While I have been extremely fortunate and blessed, I have not forgotten the individuals I left behind who deserve their second chance. This is why, since day one, I have strived to be a positive example of how we are all better than our worst mistake and we have much to offer our communities on the outside. I know to whom much is given, much is expected, and I am dedicated to using my second chance to pave the way for many of you.

There is much work being done behind the scenes on your behalf. Numerous organizations and individuals (some you may never know) are committed to bringing you relief. We stand beside them in advocating for eventual release. Nonetheless, we formed Parole Project because we recognized that there was a piece of the puzzle missing. We are confident that our Client Assistance Process will help you achieve success.

Parole Project’s primary focus at this time is the representation of individuals who received life sentences for offenses before the age of 18. If this describes you, we want to represent you. We will not turn you down and we will not turn our backs on you. We are working for you.

I have been where you are, and I recognize your concerns. But more importantly, I understand your dreams and aspirations and I want to help you achieve them. My primary objective is to put you in the best possible position to achieve your potential. This means that we are with you before, during, and after your release. We want to invest in your future.

If you seek representation outside of Parole Project, I will continue to support you. I only ask that you ensure that whoever represents you has the experience, knowledge, and relationships to navigate you through the cumbersome parole process. Just as you wouldn’t want to be the first patient a surgeon ever operated on, I implore you to consider the expertise of who represents you through this process. This is your chance at freedom; always consider your best chance for success.

I encourage each of you to continue the positive work you are doing on the inside. Continue to work on your rehabilitation and always have each other’s backs. I promise I will always have yours. I look forward to working with you in our outside communities, where there is more work to do.

**LEGAL BRIEF**  
**By: Keith Nordyke**

This issue we will focus on the *Montgomery* remand. As you know, the United States Supreme Court decided the Henry Montgomery case January 25, 2016 holding that the decision in the *Miller* case was to be retroactive. When the case returned to the Louisiana Supreme Court (LASC), the Justices were faced with the issue of how to implement *Montgomery*.

A decision of an appellate court that is usually unanimous but with no specific author is called a *per curiam* opinion and that is what the LASC issued in the *Montgomery* remand. Recognizing their 2013 decision in *Tate* that Act 239 was to be prospective, the Court noted that the 2016 legislature failed to act and then reversed course and ordered the lower courts to use the provisions of Act 239 in conducting resentencing hearings stating that existing legislative enactments are applicable, either directly or by analogy.

So now there are a set of rules governing resentencing. What about rules for the Parole Committee? Until the 2017 Legislature acts, the Parole Committee should be guided by Act 239. The parole process should be similar to that set up for the *Graham* cases and will require:

- No write-ups in the year prior to the parole eligibility date.
- Completion of the 100 hour pre-release program.
- Substance abuse treatment IF applicable.
- A GED or waiver.
- A low risk designation on the DOC risk instrument.
- Completion of reentry program.
- Written evaluation of the offender by a person with expertise in brain development.

The legislation also required that the offender has served thirty-five years of the sentence imposed.

Although the Parole Project’s mission is to handle those that are soon to be eligible, we are hopeful that the thirty-five years served requirement will be adjusted in the upcoming legislative session.

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