

2009

# Cons Helping Cons

Cons Helping Cons is a web based community developed to offer practical suggestions to offenders attempting to remain crime free and move forward with their lives; educate people with no criminal past about the struggles and the challenges faced by people being released from prison and contribute to the safety of our communities

*"If we are unwilling to hire ex-cons or give them any assistance it only puts them back into the same situation prior to their past offence"*

11/1/2009



# Cons Helping Cons | Convicts Helping Convicts

<http://www.conshelpingcons.com>

Convicts helping Convicts is an online support community for anyone who has left prison, jail, penitentiary, correctional facility, halfway house, or anyone dealing with the aftermath of a criminal past or criminal record. It is only for those who want to live a law abiding, honest lifestyle, of whom wish to seek help and understanding or assistance in dealing with the day-to-day obstacles we face. We welcome you to post comments and share your struggles and hardships. We also welcome victims of crime, parole, police or any other law enforcement agency to be part of this site as well.

Our goal is simply to reduce crime by assisting ex-offenders and helping them to live a normal, law abiding lifestyle, and thus obtaining a pardon if possible. We also have a twofold goal; if anyone is thinking of committing a crime or feeling there is some perverted glamour and celebrity status from it, we hope you read the information on this site, and learn what the real aftermath of crime produces.

## Social Community

There are many ex-offenders out there today who need help, but there are very little choices available to them. It is not like we can start a support group. Even if we did, with the stigma attached to it no one would show up. We may have a few close friends who understand, but for the most part we fight this struggle alone, misunderstood, and in shame. This site enables you to remain anonymous without fear of everyone finding out who you are.

We welcome you to post comments, create groups, and share your struggles and hardships. We are also working on getting employers to post more Jobs/employment listings for ex-cons in the classifieds. Make friends and enjoy yourself, relax no is going to judge you here.

<http://www.conshelpingcons.com/socialnetwork/home.php>

The screenshot shows the website's header with the logo "CONSHelping CONS ONLINE SUPPORT COMMUNITY". Below the logo is a navigation menu with links: Home, Donations, Forums, Classifieds, Polls, Events, Groups, Blog, Albums. A secondary menu contains: What's New, Profile, My Apps, Messages, Friends, and Settings. The main content area features a large heading "Don't let your past dictate your future." followed by a welcome message: "Welcome to the Cons Helping Cons Social Network!". Below this is a "Main Home Page" link and a user profile for "Hello, Chuck!" with a "[ Logout ]" button. A "Network Statistics" section is partially visible at the bottom. A paragraph of text describes the community's purpose: "Convicts Helping Convicts is an online support community for anyone who has left prison, jail, penitentiary, correctional facility, halfway house, or anyone dealing with the aftermath of a criminal past or criminal record. It is only for those who want to live a law abiding, honest lifestyle, of whom wish to seek help and understanding or assistance in dealing with the day-to-day obstacles we face. We welcome you to post comments, create groups, and share your struggles and hardships. Make friends and enjoy yourself, relax no is going to judge you here."

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## Who created Cons Helping Cons and Why?

### Short biography and why I created this site

Chuck Zwicker - Who am I? <http://www.conshelpingcons.com/about.html>

I was born in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia in 1970, and grew up in a small community called Riverport, between Lunenburg and Bridgewater. My parents divorced when I was eight years old, which was anything but amicable; my father passed away from lung cancer two years later in 1980. Without going into a lot of detail my childhood was very dysfunctional.



I started drinking alcohol at a very young age; I can recall getting drunk as early as 10 years old, and by the time I was 14, I was a heavy drug user and this progressed until I was 16 years old. When I was 16, I got caught for two breaks and enter (B&E); was sentenced to probation and had to take drug therapy programs. I was unable to give the drugs up right away and it required three trips to detox and a series of programs. It took almost a year, but I was off the drugs by the time I was 17 years old, and with the exception of being a social drinker today, I have been drug free for 22 years.

Throughout my teen years I was a petty thief and a small time criminal. However, around 20 years of age, I ended up being charged with four more B & E's and was sentenced to 15 months in jail. I was released on parole, which was revoked four months later for 'being suspicious of being suspicious'. I've never figured this one out – so call me if you know. I finished the rest of my sentence and was released.

I was only out for a total of eight days, when I was charged with 1st degree murder which was reduced to 2nd degree murder at the preliminary hearing; I later pleaded guilty to manslaughter. I was held in remand for six months and was sentenced to eight years in 1992. I was released upon completion of two-thirds of my sentence and had to reside in a halfway house with only day parole, for just over a year.

Looking back to that night so long ago, changed me forever. Since that night, I haven't had the stomach for crime like I used to. I no longer found it funny or a big joke. I took a life. I took something that I couldn't fix, take back or nor give back, or just pay restitution and be done with it. No matter what I did, I could not change the fact that I took a life and there was nothing I could do or say that could change what happened. From that night on, that moment on, my life was changed forever. My outlook and many of my viewpoints on life were also changed forever. The guilt that consumed me, made be accountable for my actions required imminent change. Nothing came with ease. It took a tremendous amount of work, tears and facing the issues I had head on to become the person I am today. It took years of counselling, and over a decade to understand my deep rooted psychological issues. Years of gut retching counselling and being forced to face the truths of my life and the fears of my life head on,

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helped me to truly understand the dynamics of my offence (understanding why you committed the crime). This was a daily routine for me years ago.

However, regardless of how much guilt I had, or how much I wanted to hate myself, I realized that my life must go on. Eventually, I came to place where I realized that I couldn't punish myself any longer and have learned society will continue to do that for me; therefore I must be constantly vigilant in keeping myself positive. That means I have to live a lifestyle that will never lead to my past mistakes. I want to protect society by helping and assisting offenders to live a law-abiding lifestyle, thus reducing crime. I also want to educate the public, with no criminal past, about the struggles and the challenges faced by people being released from prison thus contributing to the safety of our communities. We cannot just bury our heads in the sand and hope crime will go away, and we cannot deny an ex-con employment and other necessities of life and expect them to make it.

I created this site back in December 2008, and the 'Cons Helping Cons Online Community' was created in September 2009. The idea of creating this site first came out of anger, disgust and just plain frustration, from the day-to-day struggles I faced. However, as these emotions subsided, I felt there was a real need for a website like this others like me who are going through the same emotions and a roller coaster in life. They are not alone. And I am not the only person going through these struggles.

I've had an overwhelming response from families of convicted persons; so I'm working on doing more for them in the future. The response from ex-offenders, people and organizations has been wonderful and I thank you all so much. It was what gave me the strength to come forward with my identity, and will empower me to do more. Shame is one of the biggest allies crime has, as it keeps us from telling or facing the truth, and without truth we cannot understand who we are and we are doomed to repeat our past. Loving the good parts about oneself is easy; loving the bad is what forces us to embrace change.

**Do you need help with obtaining a Pardon in Canada? Cons Helping Cons is now offering FREE pardon services to any ex-offender within Canada.**

Do not be taken by the myths and lies of the present Pardon Services companies out there today. Know the facts and make an informed decision before you pay for any company for this service.

#### **Free Pardon Services**

<http://conshelpingcons.com/free-pardon-services-canada.html>

#### **Getting a job with a criminal record, getting back into the workforce after Incarceration**

<http://www.conshelpingcons.com/employment.html>

#### **Dating & Relationships for ex-cons & ex-offenders**

<http://www.conshelpingcons.com/dating-relationships-ex-cons-ex-offenders.html>

#### **Pros & Cons of Pardons**

<http://www.conshelpingcons.com/pardon-pro-and-cons.html>

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