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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Additional \$800,000 Federal Investment Positions WNY Reentry Program as Pioneer in Industry Standards**

Erie County, NY— Leading reentry service provider Peaceprints of WNY was selected as one of five organizations nationwide to be awarded funds from the U.S. Department of Justice for the continued operation of one of its most successful programs, Project Blue. Since its inception, the program, which was developed and implemented in collaboration with the Erie County Sheriff's Office, has resulted in drastically reduced rates of recidivism among participants. In addition to extending funding for Project Blue through 2024, the award mandates that the program will be studied and evaluated by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ). The purpose of the study is to determine best practices and contribute to a national standard in offender reentry programming.

When the pilot program received an award of \$1 million in 2018, Peaceprints of WNY became the first organization within Buffalo and Erie County to receive Federal Second Chance Act funding. Two years later, the graduates of Project Blue re-offend at a rate 60% lower than the national average and 75% lower than the county average. "Our unique and transparent partnership with the Erie County Sheriff's Office, Jail Management Division has opened the door for innovation through new and enhanced jail-based programming. We are grateful to have the opportunity to further extend and enrich our program offerings through the receipt of additional funding" said Cindi McEachon, Executive Director of Peaceprints of WNY. " McEachon added that she was particularly excited by the opportunity for Project Blue to be studied by the NIJ, stating "We know that the success of Project Blue is groundbreaking, and we hope that through the study, the work we are doing here in WNY can set the standard for best practice in the industry and provide a template for success that can be duplicated across the country."

Director of Project Blue, Lindsey Allen, is equally excited by the implications this award can have for reentry services across the United States. "Our team and community partners have proven that providing equitable and accessible services to returning citizens can change the entire trajectory of one's life. It is our goal to further impact the lives of our clients, families, and community alike. We're looking forward to expanding upon and continuing to serve incarcerated individuals in Erie County, but this study has the potential to influence policy and affect change at the national level", offered Allen.

Project Blue currently serves 150 individuals annually, offering intensive case management services for participants released from the Erie County Correctional Facility and Holding Center. The program includes pre- and post-release services, evidenced based programming such as *Ready, Set, Work!*, wraparound services, mentoring, housing coordination, comprehensive educational and employment services, and access to healthcare services. For more information, call (716)856-6131 or visit:

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About Peaceprints of WNY: Since 1985, Peaceprints of WNY has been committed to providing comprehensive reentry services that promote social justice and equity. We recognize that no two individuals are the same, and that circumstances, abilities, and needs of the people we help vary greatly. Services include transitional, supportive and independent housing, intensive case management, youth programming, in-prison workshops and support groups, as well as education and workforce development programs designed to empower and equip returning citizens with the tools necessary to transform their lives and reclaim their stake as contributing members of our community.

