

## From Prison to Purpose: One Man's Journey Back to Family, Work, and Hope



*Matthew celebrates his release from prison alongside SHIELD team member Jayson, marking the beginning of a new chapter filled with hope, opportunity, and family restoration.*



*Chaplain McCleary praying for Matthew at his baptism service. Chaplain McCleary serves at MacDougall Correctional Institution.*

Matthew's journey is a powerful example of transformation, perseverance, and the impact of supportive reentry services.

A military veteran, Matthew, participated in SHIELD Ministries' **Minds in Training (MIT)** pre-release program while incarcerated at MacDougall Correctional Institution. Through character development and cognitive learning classes, he worked through many of the issues that had contributed to his incarceration and developed the skills needed to make positive life changes. His dedication to personal growth led him to become a **table leader**, where he assisted fellow students and helped facilitate classroom discussions.

Upon his release, Matthew enrolled in SHIELD Ministries' post-release program and continued his re-entry education. Upon his admittance he received assistance with clothing, food pantry items, and other basic necessities.



Shortly after his release, Matthew was baptized, and SHIELD volunteers who had invested in his life while he was incarcerated attended the celebration. Pictured left to right, volunteers William, Wendy, Matthew, Liz and Wendy's husband. Their presence was a meaningful reminder of the lasting impact that mentorship, faith, and supportive relationships can have on a person's journey.

Matthew received transportation assistance while pursuing employment and meeting reentry obligations. He was referred to the **Trident Technical College Journeyman Program**, where he was accepted by a participating employer and began building a successful career.

Through funding provided by the **Palmetto Goodwill Grant**, SHIELD Ministries was able to assist Matthew with reinstating his driver's license and covering two weeks of program fees, helping remove barriers to employment and self-sufficiency.

Determined to continue moving forward, Matthew paid his restitution obligations, obtained his driver's license, and excelled in the workplace. His strong work ethic earned him a promotion and the opportunity to relocate with his employer to the Upstate of South Carolina, where he was reunited with his family.

Today, Matthew continues to thrive. He has purchased his own vehicle, become a homeowner, and is building a stable future for himself and his loved ones.

Matthew's story demonstrates what is possible when determination, faith, education, and community support come together. From serving as a leader in the Minds in Training classroom to becoming a successful employee, homeowner, and reunited family member, his journey reflects the life-changing impact of second chances.