

The 'D' Diaries

# CON IN NEED IS A COP'S GOOD DEED



MARCIN SZCZEPANSKI/Detroit Free Press

Viera Brownlee and David Swanigan get together in Brownlee's office at Detroit's police headquarters.

## Old friendship buoys a parolee's re-entry to Detroit

In the mid 1990s, Viera Brownlee and David Swanigan were two young people hanging out in Detroit's hardknock North End neighborhood.

But the two friends' paths took them in decidedly different directions.

Swanigan dropped out of Detroit Northern High School and started selling crack cocaine.

Brownlee went to college, worked in retail and marketing, and ultimately joined the Detroit



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Police Department in 1998 — the same year Swanigan went to prison.

The pair reconnected after Swanigan was paroled last year. For Swanigan, Brownlee's friendship, guidance and help have made the difference between success and a likely re-

turn to prison.

With nearly 4,000 parolees returning to Detroit each year, it's everyone's job to help ex-felons find productive roles in the community.

The special relationship between Brownlee and Swanigan is an example of what could happen if more police officers started mentoring ex-offenders after they leave prison and return to their homes and families.

■ JEFF GERRITT, 24A; EDITORIAL, 24A