



Newport News Sheriff's Office

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Equality Brings Work Release

to

Newport News City Jail

by

Lt. Kathleen Carey, PIO, Newport News Sheriff's Office; Newport News, VA

Sometimes you do things just because it is the right thing to do. A child picks up her room before being asked by Mom. A young boy helps and elderly neighbor bring in groceries. In much the same way, the Newport News Sheriff's Office began a work release program. It was the right thing to do.

In 2006, then newly elected Sheriff Gabe Morgan, began reviewing the programs offered by the sheriff's office. He discovered that female inmates did not qualify for work release based simply on their gender. Male inmates transported to another adult correctional facility within the city limits of Newport News, Virginia, have access to work release. However, that facility is for men only. Female inmates at the city jail, up until now, had never been given a chance to participate in work release.

The red flag went up. "I can't believe we got away with it for so long," said Sheriff Morgan about the flagrant inequality prior to his watch. He wasn't going to wait for a mandate to come down from the Department of Justice. Why wait for an order? Implement the program because it is the right thing to do.

A letter came in from prisoner of the state. Pamela Edwards wanted to fulfill the remaining part of her sentence closer to home. She had a job waiting for her. All that was standing between her and that job was our help. The Sheriff's Office used an opportunity that presented itself in that letter to launch its own work release program for women.

With the help and approval of the Virginia Department of Corrections, Ms. Edwards became the test subject in a pilot program that began in June of 2007. In a year's time, the program grew from one participant to nineteen (19). Thousands of dollars in court costs and fines have been paid down. Thousands of dollars in work release fees have been collected.

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