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MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR RELEASE: **IMMEDIATE**

DATE: **September 15, 2011**

Newport News partnership tackles prisoner re-entry as a public safety issue

It is common to imagine *handcuffs* when thinking of crime prevention. But what happens after the arrest and after the conviction? The person fulfilling his/her sentence gets released. Most often they return to the community where their original crime took place. Then what? Public safety cannot stop there. It is the mission of the Newport News Re-entry Council to develop strategies to aid in that person's *successful* transition back into society in order to reduce the chance that he/she will recommit crimes and create more victims.

The Council, in collaboration with the Mayor's Task Force on Teenage and Young Adult Violence Reduction and other stakeholders, will work in partnership on the local level to improve public safety and strengthen the community through use of effective re-entry strategies. The Newport News Sheriff's Office is a proud member of the Re-entry Council.

The Re-Entry Council's first town hall meeting will be held Monday, September 19, 2011 at American Legion, 368 American Legion Drive, Newport News from 6:00 p.m. -- 8:00 p.m. The first hour will be devoted to an exhibit from service providers. Private, non-profit, and faith-based organizations will display information and interact with attendees. The second hour is reserved for a Q & A session between a panel of experts and the audience. People will have a chance to ask questions plus offer their own individual perspective and suggestions on the matter of prisoner re-entry.

WHO: Newport News Re-Entry Council
WHAT: 1st Town Hall, "Issues & Answers"
WHEN: Monday, September 19, 2011
6:00 p.m. -- 8:00 p.m.
(Exhibitors from 6-7; Town Hall Panel of Experts from 7-8)
WHERE: American Legion
368 American Legion Drive
Newport News, VA
(off Warwick Blvd. and Lucas Creek Rd. in the Beechmont section of the City)

SUPPORTING STATISTICS and BACKGROUND: *(see page 2)*

10,000 to 12,000 people are released from Virginia's correctional facilities and returned to communities each year. An even greater number re-enter communities from local jails and federal correctional centers. The process of leaving prison and returning to society has become a significant challenge to the state and the nation. Persons released often have few resources and difficulty finding jobs, housing or help. National studies show that approximately two-thirds will be arrested again within three years of release.

(Source: Va Department of Social Services)

Governor Bob McDonnell has made prisoner re-entry a priority of his administration. On June 21, 2011, he signed seven pieces of legislation that strengthen re-entry policies in the Commonwealth.

"The foremost priority of government is public safety," Governor McDonnell said. "As a prosecutor, state delegate, attorney general and as governor, I have worked to make Virginia's communities safer places to live, work and raise a family. One critical component to this is making sure Virginia has an effective prisoner re-entry strategy that includes strong, successful programs. An effective prisoner re-entry plan is good government. It improves public safety, reduces recidivism and victimization and improves the outcome for offenders returning to our communities. Everyone deserves a second chance. When a crime is committed, the individual responsible must be punished to the fullest extent. If you do the crime in Virginia you will do the time. But when that prison sentence is completed, and the price to society has been paid, we need to take the additional steps necessary to ensure that our prison system is not a revolving door. Currently, two-thirds of those who come out of prison are re-arrested within three years. That means new victims, and more costs to taxpayers. This is simply not acceptable."

(Source: Governor Bob McDonnell news release issued June 21, 2011)

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For more information, contact Lt. Kathleen Carey at 757-926-8747 or 757-813-6139.