



Newport News Reentry Newsletter

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VOLUNTEERS MAKING A DIFFERENCE

The Newport News Sheriff's Office was proud to host its 8th Annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner on Thursday, October 24, 2013. Over 150 volunteers and their guests attended, along with several city officials whom joined Sheriff Morgan in congratulating the volunteers.



Thanking Volunteers: *City Councilman Robert Coleman (left) Newport News Mayor McKinley Price (center) and City Manager Jim Bourey (right)*

As an annual tradition of the Newport News Sheriff's Office, volunteers are honored each year for their commitment to furthering the success of Inmate Programs—a section of the Sheriff's Office that offers a myriad of services to include mentorship, spiritual guidance, tutoring, parenting and wellness education to incarcerated individuals. The Sheriff's Office could not operate and keep programs going without the help of all the kind-hearted and dedicated volunteers. Currently, there are over 30 classes in the Newport News City Jail and the Sheriff's Office reentry staff continues to work with the help of approximately 150 volunteers to further improve all the pre-release programs.



Pre-release programming is an important aspect of reentry. Volunteers truly help make a difference by furthering the vision of reentry and continuing to focus on improving the offenders' social and human relations skills as well as employability skills. The purpose of such programming is to prepare individuals for successful reintegration in the community in hopes they will not return to the facility. Equipping transitioning citizens with the tools and knowledge to succeed in the community is vital.



Sheriff's Office Reentry Staff

Inside the Jail

Vertical Garden

The Newport News Sheriff's Office is currently implementing new ways to enhance offenders' skills and civic service through constructing a vertical garden in the recreational yard of its Jail Annex. Offenders will have the opportunity to participate in a skilled based, hands-on program in sustainable agriculture. The vertical garden is expected to evolve in 2014, and a portion of the produce will be donated to the local Food Bank.



Brick Masonry

The Brick Masonry Program was launched in the Newport News City Jail Annex. The program is based on an 8-week curriculum of entry level skills and knowledge of the vocational trade. The Sheriff's Office is prominent in helping returning citizens develop in-demand job skills.



G.E.D. and NovaNET

The GED rates continue to skyrocket in the jail, with some scoring exceptionally high. In one extraordinary case, one individual passed NovaNET, and for the first time at the Newport News Sheriff's Office, the person gained their High School Diploma. The GED passing rate is currently 92 percent.

InsideOut Dad Graduation

Shawn O'Keefe, InsideOut Dad Instructor, continues to have high participation in the nationally recognized evidence-based course offered at the City Jail. Below is a picture of Mr. O'Keefe at the graduation sharing his and the Sheriff's Office philosophy on reentry. He states, "There are two types of inmates 1) the ones that are dangerous and have committed serious crimes and need to be locked up and 2) the ones that we are just mad at, they did something stupid, and are serving their time and paying their debt to society. However, they are redeemable and their mistakes are not supposed to be a life sentence." In agreement



Shawn O'Keefe, Hosting Graduation in City Jail

with Shawn O'Keefe, it is important to realize that offering rehabilitative pre-release programs will only decrease the likelihood of them returning. Mr. O'Keefe had a total of seven graduates at his last InsideOut Dad graduation; each graduate was called up one by one to receive their certificate of completion and to share what they learned in the class. Each individual mentioned that they were thankful for the opportunity to participate in such an empowering class. The information they learned will help them become better fathers and will assist them in connecting in similar circumstances. In total, seven fathers received certificates and graduated; over 20 family members attended.

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Successful Living on the Outside

Ms. M. Petteway like many others housed at the Newport News City Jail, fell into the revolving-door cycle. Each time they were released from incarceration, they shortly reverted and returned to detention within a couple of months. Until one day it clicks for the person...I want better for my family and for myself! This is especially true for one special client named Ms. M. Petteway.

Many leave from confinement without the necessary resources and motivation to change their past ways. Most released ex-offenders seek and desire jobs, but without securing legitimate employment, it is back to day-to-day hustling on the streets to provide for their families.

Reentry--the reintegration of citizens from jails or prison back into the community--has the attention of many state and local agencies in Virginia. Public safety is of grave concern as well as giving second chances to those who paid their debt to society. In order to achieve reentry success, preparation prior to release is important as well as follow-up post-release services. The story of Ms. M. Petteway is a great example of reentry success.

Printed with permission from Ms. M Petteway



Ms. M. Petteway was housed at the Newport News City Jail for several months where she participated in Inner Reflections, a jail-based drug and alcohol treatment program facilitated by the Hampton-Newport News Community Service Board (CSB). After graduating from Inner Reflections, she enrolled in the jail's first Shared Network Access Point (SNAP) class, an extension of Peninsula Worklink's Virginia Workforce Development One-Stop Center. While in the program, she stated to the facilitators, "I have to change my life. I cannot keep doing this to my children. I am going to make the most of this class so I can find work and not come back!" Every class Ms. M. Petteway worked hard to produce quality work in preparation for her release. She created a strong resume, continuously searched for employment, explored educational opportunities, and took advantage of the mock interviews provided by the Sheriff's Office reentry staff.

Ms. M. Petteway was released early in 2013, and immediately began post-release services with one of the Sheriff's Office reentry specialists. After several months of searching and submitting several applications, Ms. M. Petteway landed an interview and was shortly hired by a staffing agency. The reentry specialist discovered that Ms. M. Petteway had years of service in the United States Army, and assisted in seeking her military benefits.



Through research and assistance, Ms. M. Petteway was connected with the Veterans Benefits Administration which offers an opportunity to attend school and obtain affordable and permanent housing. Ms. M. Petteway applied for her benefits and was accepted at Thomas Nelson Community College in a two-year degree program to become a Substance Abuse Counselor. During her first quarter, she maintained a 4.0 GPA! She has since found a three-bedroom apartment, moved in, and sought furniture through the Department of Housing and Urban Development - HUD-VASH Program. She continues to participate in the Sheriff's Office Post-Release Program and is a true success story.