



2007 RE-ENTRY CONFERENCE



Bruce Stout (above) and Rick Greenberg (below) presenting at last year's Re-Entry Conference.



The Coalition of Community Corrections Providers of New Jersey held its first conference in Atlantic City on November 27, 2007. After a warm welcome and introduction from CCCPNJ President Pat McKernan, the conference's plenary session was led by Dr. Bruce Stout, who discussed Governor Jon Corzine's initiative, "New Jersey's Strategies for Safe Streets". Drawing on his experience both in academia and government, Dr. Stout detailed how enforcement, prevention, and re-entry were critical to the success of the governor's plan. Dr. Stout also acknowledged that collaboration would be crucial, and that the governor's

propose crime plan would provide further assistance to individuals reintegrating back into the community.

The morning session provided two opportunities for participants to hear about new programs addressing the needs of special populations. First, program directors from PATH/Sanford Bates House, Columbus House/Kintock, and PROMISE addressed the mental health needs of offenders, and how the needs are being met in community settings. Simultaneously, conference attendees had the opportunity to hear how community-based programs are uniquely situated to collaborate with employers to hire and provide

support as ex-offenders re-enter the workforce. Successful strategies employed to assist clients pursuing economic self-sufficiency were also discussed by Opportunities for All and the Kintock Group.

During lunch, Rick Greenberg from the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice spoke about the Second Chance Campaign and "Ban the Box". Both of these projects which focus on giving offenders returning to the community more opportunities to be successful during their period of reintegration.

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FACTS ABOUT RE-ENTRY PROGRAMS

Community Corrections Providers served over 13,000 offenders in FY 2008. In 2006 it was reported that the NJ prison population was reduced by 14%, defying national trends. Simultaneously two community based programs in NJ demonstrated a more than 30% reduction in recidivism. Participants in re-entry programs are less likely to re-offend than offenders who leave prison without transitional services. Successful re-entry programs promote public safety!

REHABILITATION AT WORK: PARTICIPANTS IN FY 2008 CONTRIBUTED...

Gross Earning	\$7,659,774.57
Federal Taxes	\$527,379.11
State Taxes	\$126,343.99
Fines/Restitution	\$546,002.44
Child Support	\$224,267.70
Maintenance Fees	\$1,813,546.41



NEW JERSEY ASSOCIATION ON CORRECTION—MILLICENT FENWICK HOUSE

New Jersey Association on Correction-Millicent Fenwick House is a residential community release program for female inmates with substance abuse and mental health issues. All residents are carefully screened at the assessment for appropriate placement. Generally, residents are at Millicent Fenwick House for three (3) to eighteen (18) months before they are paroled or complete their sentence.

At Millicent Fenwick House, the residents are strongly encouraged to increase their education as well as prepare for the workforce. Residents are assisted with obtaining proper documents for employment, such as birth certificate, state identification and Social Security card.

Computer training is held at Millicent Fenwick House. These comprehensive training classes not only help clients master com-



Millicent Fenwick House in
Paterson, NJ

puter skills needed in the current job market, but also teaches them the "soft skills" necessary for obtaining and maintaining employment. The instructor assists participants with resume preparation, job interview skills and job retention techniques, all necessary competencies in order for clients to obtain and maintain employment.

In the last year, Twenty-eight (28) residents have attended local colleges. Two (2) residents graduated from a Culinary Arts program at Passaic County Community College. Currently, there are nine (9) residents attending a community college, one of which currently has a 4.0 GPA.

Millicent Fenwick House residents attend local GED and literacy classes at Oasis, Paterson Adult Learning Center, One Stop Career Center and Oasis to increase their literacy and GED skills. In the past year, Millicent Fenwick House has had five (5) residents obtain their High School Diploma.

Education is one of the best tools that a resident has to change their downward spiral. Better education leads to better jobs and better lives. Millicent Fenwick House does everything possible to improve the lives of individuals after incarceration and to decrease recidivism.

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Specifically, "Ban the Box" refers to a significant employment barrier, that being checking the box on employment applications indicating if the job applicant has ever been convicted of a crime. A significant goal of the Second Chance is to make this box voluntary for employers in considering potential job applicants. All Coalition members who achieved accreditation during the year were also honored at the luncheon.

Lastly, the afternoon featured two significant yet underserved populations within community corrections. One discussion concerned the continuing evolution of the concerns of female offenders, and the unique gender-specific needs they present along the continuum of care transition back into their communities and families. This presentation led by Senior Parole Officer Angela Marshall, Vice Chair of the NJ State Parole Board Yolette Ross, and Dyann Lonesome of the Nicholson Foundation discussed the Newark-based Project Reconnect. The other seminar led by the CEC staff serving the Alumni Association examined the role alumni groups play for ex-offenders. So often, many former clients and residents experience difficulty conveying to their families the problems they encounter as they return to society. Alumni associations can serve as bridge by offering clients support and alternatives to possible relapse and reincarceration.

CLEANING UP YOUR ACT

Clients from Community Solutions Inc.'s (CSI) Jersey City Community Resource Center (CRC) clean up more than their acts by participating in Journal Square beautification efforts as a means of giving something back to their community.

The CRC is a Journal Square business and a member of the Magnolia Avenue Block Association (MABA), the neighborhood association for the Journal Square area of Jersey City. "Community Solutions' Jersey City CRC in my mind embodies the spirit of community. The CRC participates and gets involved with the community. We share common community based goals inextricably tied to the idea that helping others will enrich our lives", says Jerry Milsap, Founder & President of the Magnolia Avenue Block Association, Inc.



David Buchsbaum, Assistant Operations Manager for Journal Square with members from Community Solutions, Inc. planting in the large decorative planters around Journal Square Plaza.

Every year clients and staff work side-by-side in projects to clean the streets, remove graffiti, and plant flowers to improve the overall appearance of the square.

Clients learn new skills relevant to future employment such as landscaping, carpentry, painting, simple repairs, and the use of hand tools.

As a result, CRC clients have gone on to work with Journal Square maintenance work crews.

CSI programs provide the tools and resources necessary for people to become self-sufficient in the workforce. The mission of Community Solutions Inc. is to promote the independence, citizenry and well-being of individuals involved, or at risk of involvement, in the child welfare, juvenile justice or criminal justice systems.

ANOTHER CHANCE UPDATE

Governor Jon Corzine's "Another Chance" initiative, a demonstration project, began in 2007 aimed at approximately 1,500 offenders returning to Newark, Trenton, and Camden. It is based on assessments of an offender's successful re-entry into the community while supported by intensive diagnostic assessments and more diverse educational, vocational, and job-coaching programs. It begins within the prison walls and follows through to the community. Primarily driven by the Office of the Attorney General, Another Chance is a unique approach to reform.

At the same time, the Majority Leader of the New Jersey General

Assembly has begun an aggressive campaign focusing on overall reform of New Jersey's criminal justice system. On September 9, 2008, Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman held an informal meeting with advocates from across the state. All were invited to an open forum to share their opinions of what type of improvement is needed and how to positively reform the system. The Majority Leader plans on a more formal hearing scheduled within the next month that will form the frame a more comprehensive plan. Her open mind and willingness to take constructive suggestions from members of the Coalition and similar organizations are creating a level of

confidence that true, positive reform is on the way.

Through these undertakings, both the Governor and the Majority Leader show that they understand that real re-entry reform is needed. They recognize that this clearly leads to actual community improvement and safer neighborhoods.



Visit our friends to learn about other re-entry initiatives at www.secondchancenj.org



**The Coalition
of Community
Correction
Providers of
New Jersey, Inc.**

THE COALITION SPEAKS OUT!

The CCCPNJ had the opportunity to make recommendations to improve prisoner re-entry with our partners at the first listening session regarding re-entry held by Majority Leader Bonnie Watson Coleman at the State House on September 9, 2008. The following represented some of the comments that were offered on behalf of CCCPNJ by Coalition President Pat McKernan.

Re-entry begins at entry. Alternatives for diverting lower risk offenders to community alternatives should be explored as recommended by the GEAR Commission. GEAR suggested that non-violent drug offenders would be better served in the community, not prison. Nearly a quarter of today's prison population (some 6,000 offenders) could be diverted to community corrections providers. Incentives should be provided for education and promote work within prison linking it to demand occupations in their returning communities. Give returning ex-offenders the documents they need to transition home including their medical records,

a non-drivers license identification card, etc.

Manage the transition home for all people leaving prison. All inmates, including the current maximuming out population should transition home through community-based programs. Mandate all offenders transition through some form of community program such as parole supervision, electronic monitoring, day reporting, or residential programs based on the needs of the offender. Provide more services to clients with special mental health and medical needs

Think outside the box. Evaluate the need for a community corrections legislation that secures the infrastructure that is currently serving returning offenders in our State but also that incentives community-based alternatives BEFORE people are removed from the community. Thus, promoting shared ownership for rehabilitation of offenders. Leverage funding of other

state departments especially the Dept. of Labor and Workforce Development to prepare offenders for employment in the community and help this workforce to be seen as an asset in economic development.

Other strategies to consider include:

Adopt a "Ban the Box" campaign and begin with public sector employers. Have government model the behavior we expect of their private sector counterparts in giving offenders a fair shot at employment.

Assist offenders address child support when entering prison so they do leave prison with crippling debt that serves as a disincentive to legitimate employment.

Adopt sentencing reform to address the staggering numbers of people sent to State prison due to mandatory minimum sentencing and that disproportionately affect people and communities of color.

Opt out of the felony drug ban.

The neediest of clients require a safety net. Access to temporary assistance including Medicaid is critical.

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Please Visit
www.cccpnj.org
For more information

The Coalition is a body of organizations that contract with the New Jersey Department of Corrections, New Jersey State Parole Board, and the Juvenile Justice Commission to provide community corrections programs such as assessment centers, residential work-release programs, substance abuse treatment programs, and day reporting centers for parolees. CCCPNJ collectively represents community corrections providers, addresses community corrections issues and advocates for rehabilitative services for offenders in New Jersey.