

1st Year Anniversary of Reentry

(11/28/2006)

Nebraska's Reentry Program Reaches One Year Anniversary

The one-year anniversary of Reentry leads to reflections and a celebration of comparing where we started and where we are. Reentry began in November 2005 with 10 participants – 8 men and 2 women.

To date, there are a total of 24 participants currently participating in various phases of the reentry program. The three phases involve Phase I starting at the Omaha Correctional Center and Nebraska Correction Center for Women. When offenders are ready for transition to Community programming or Parole, Phase II begins. Phase III begins when parole ends with successful living day to day in the community. This involves accountability to living life as a law abiding citizen, and giving back to reentry by being a mentor with Gold Star, volunteering their time with Men/Women in Progress continuing giving their talents to other areas of the community.

From July 2005- July 2006 there were 461 inmates identified in the target population incarcerated in the Nebraska Department of Correctional Services. Out of 461 inmates identified 238 Risk Needs Assessments were completed. Out of the 238 Risk Needs Assessments completed 122 scored high or intensive risk to recidivate. 22 names referred to the Parole Board 80 were approved to be interviewed for the program. 80 potential candidates were interviewed, 36 indicated they were interested in the program and 44 stated they were not interested. Out of the 36 candidates interested 30 were accepted in to the program. Out of the 30 candidates accepted 24 continue to participate in the program.

We currently have eight reentry participants in Phase Two of the program at Community-Corrections Center-Omaha. Of the seven, four are currently on parole, one on education release, one on work detail, and two on work release. We are awaiting arrival of two more participants currently completing the inpatient substance abuse program at TSCI. Upon successful completion, they will be transferred to the Omaha Correctional Center. There are two participants in the program at the Nebraska Correctional Center for Women in York. Four additional females are anticipated to begin the program in November 2006.

One of the more gratifying outcomes for the program include the support, collaboration, networking, brainstorming, educating and investment from the community with DCS.

Many partnerships have developed over the past year, which have proven to be invaluable. These include: Men In Progress (Ex-Offenders mentoring group), Compassion In Action (housing, self exploration and personal development), On-Track Inc. (employment placing and Commercial

Drivers License training), Omaha Police Department (Mentoring Program and surveillance), Gold Starr Institute (mentoring), New Creations (housing), Transition Teams comprised of family and friends, Motivational Enhancement with DCS Mental Health staff and Work Force Development. Without all this support, reentry would not be where it is today, nor would it continue to grow as it has thus far.

The “tools” for success are in the hands of the participants. With the support of staff, community, and families, the potential for safer communities is enhanced, families are healthier, and taxpayer relief for reduced recidivism is more possible than before. The team of internal, external partners along with offender participants committed to positive change has lead to promising results thus far.

Men In Progress:

In my opinion the Men In Progress is the heart and soul of the re-entry initiative. Those of us who have spent time in various institutions in various parts of the country had to endure some pretty unique challenges as we rose out of our cycles and patterns that kept us coming back to the places to which we swore we'd never return. Our stories are not unique however, in that every one of the guys who are now in the re-entry program are striving towards, or at least considering the possibility of a life without the chains both figuratively and literally attached the lifestyles that brought us here.

In the last year we have witnessed the impact of this program in the lives of the men both inside and out. We are all benefiting from being able to share our experiences strengths and hopes. This program is serving to create healthy networks where before there were perhaps only strained relationships at best. It is an honor and a privilege to be able to work with these guys and also the staff members involved in making this program a success.

Mr. Steve Collins

Men In Progress Community Volunteer

I am a participant in the Re-Entry program, currently serving a sentence of 8-12 years for manslaughter. I was approached with the Re-Entry program in September of 2005, and during that time I was in the process of learning who I am, and realizing my potential. This program is a program for violent offenders with a high rate of repeating crimes. Knowing my past experiences with the system, I chose to accept this program with hopes of getting new results out of my life. Since, accepting this program I have been blessed with a positive reinforcement team. These teams consist of the following; The Omaha Police Department, Mentors, ex felons, who have been successful of change, and Department of Corrections Staff. Along with the positive reinforcement team I have gained a personal relationship with each member, and learned that

they are in my life to help me develop into a better person.

I am currently a full time student at Metro Community College, with intentions to one day be a counselor for troubled youth. I attend counseling, church, and Men In Progress, a group to share my feelings, experiences, and goals among the other Re-Entry participants. These things have become a main focus in my life, to help me stay grounded and motivated. Overall, I realize that it's up to me to make the positive changes in my life. Blessed to be a part of the Re-Entry program, I have been provided with the necessary tools to be successful and achieve my goals.

I want to thank those involved with the Re-Entry program and those who have been supportive of me. I appreciate your time you have given me and look forward to showing you what I have learned in order to become a better man.

Cameron Wallace

October 19, 2006

Re-Entry Participant

Some comments from Reentry Participant's based on completed Evaluation forms they complete at the end of each phase:

q Most beneficial program:

o Men In Progress – allows us to build a support team with people who understand our struggles and know how to learn from mistakes.

o Men In Progress – I got to get a heads up on what I'll be going through.

o Teela Mickles class – helped remind me of my self worth and why I should focus on my life and not give up.

o Support systems – helps stay focused

q Recommendations to Improve Reentry Program:

o Hope other DCS staff gains an understanding of what the program is about.

o Parole to any zip code – help more people.

q Other Comments

o Thanks to the people who are responsible for creating this program. I plan to make it worth the chance, to open doors for more support, I appreciate the belief in us.

Impact and Lessons learned over the past year:

Ø The recognition of need to emphasize job search, job etiquette and interviewing techniques prior to Work Release/Parole placement.

Ø The affect and influence of the community membership based Transition Teams. The need to continue to implement and develop this facet of the program.

Ø Three different Risk and Needs Assessment developed for Reentry, Parole Board and Adult Parole Administration uses.

Ø Validated Classification System – Initial and Reclassification

Ø Electronic Classification System being developed at this time

Ø Web Based-Case Management System – may be applicable department wide in the future

Ø Metro Community College refinements

Ø Remain open to, and receptive to all offers of assistance from potential community partners