

## Media Release

September 26, 2016  
For Immediate Release

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

**NDCS:**

Dawn-Renee Smith, Communications Director  
402-479-5713; [dawnrenee.smith@nebraska.gov](mailto:dawnrenee.smith@nebraska.gov)

**Defy Ventures:**

Rebecca Choi, Chief of Staff  
408-930-9595; [Rebecca@defyventures.org](mailto:Rebecca@defyventures.org)

---

### **New Reentry Programming at the Nebraska State Penitentiary**

*Defy Ventures in Nebraska: Transforming the Hustle Inside Prison*

LINCOLN, Neb. – Today, Director Scott R. Frakes announced a new program at the Nebraska State Penitentiary (NSP) and the Omaha Correctional Center (OCC). Defy Ventures is launching its entrepreneurship, employment and character development program at NSP on Thursday, September 29, 2016 with a kick-off event (details below).

Defy serves 1,600+ Entrepreneurs in Training (EITs) nationally both inside prisons and post-release. Defy Ventures has recruited 3,500 executive volunteers across the US who are local CEOs, business leaders, and entrepreneurs to intentionally build life-giving, authentic community as they provide business coaching and employment mentoring to Defy's EITs.

A similar kick-off event was held at the Omaha Correctional Center on September 7, 2016, where 60 incarcerated men participated. At NSP, Defy expects even more incarcerated men to participate in the event along with 30 volunteers. Defy's founder and CEO, Catherine Hoke, will lead the event. Director Frakes stated, "The Defy Ventures program is a unique opportunity for incarcerated individuals to build their skills and connect with highly successful members of our communities. I look forward to attending the event, along with Warden Cruickshank and other members of NSP's leadership team." Also involved in Defy are local business executives: Ken Stinson, Howard and Rhonda Hawks, Bill Gerber, among others.

**Credentialed media** are invited to attend the kick-off event at NSP, Thursday, September 29, 2016. The event begins at 10 a.m. and will wrap up at 2 p.m. Each media outlet may send up to two people (reporter and/or photographer/videographer) who **must RSVP** to [dawnrenee.smith@nebraska.gov](mailto:dawnrenee.smith@nebraska.gov) **no later than noon on Wednesday, September 28, 2016.**

Reporters may attend all or part of the event and must coordinate entry and exit times prior to the event.

**About Defy Ventures:**

[Defy Ventures](#) “transforms the hustle” of people with criminal histories (both inside and outside of prisons nationally). Think of Defy like Khan Academy merged with Y Combinator for people with criminal histories. Defy recognizes the entrepreneurial nature of drug dealers and gang leaders. They equip proven street hustlers to go legit by providing entrepreneurship training, employment preparation, character development, *Shark Tank*-style pitch competitions, startup incubation, and executive mentorship.

Defy graduates have a 95% employment rate and a < 5% recidivism rate, and Defy has incubated and financed 150 of its graduates’ startups. Defy plans to serve 10,000 incarcerated people, nationally, in the next three years. (Short video about Defy’s program [here](#).)

Defy is backed by the Techstars Foundation, and has been featured on [TechCrunch](#), [The New Yorker](#), [The New York Times](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), [Inc. Magazine](#), [Forbes.com](#), and [The Harvard Business Review](#). Defy’s CEO, Catherine Hoke, was awarded the [Make Tech Human award](#) by WIRED Magazine/Nokia for being one of the “Top 17 Global Influencers Expanding Human Possibility Through Technology.”

You’ll find the Defy story [here](#) and will see three fast pitches by Defy’s incredible entrepreneurs and a recent SOCAP Q&A [here](#). [Here’s a podcast](#) produced by a partner of a venture capital firm in Silicon Valley.

###