



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FAYETTE COUNTY JAIL LAUNCHES I.G.N.I.T.E. REHABILITATION PROGRAM

Uniontown, PA – The new Fayette County Jail is the first corrections facility in Pennsylvania to launch the National Sheriffs' Association's (NSA) I.G.N.I.T.E. Program.

A national initiative aimed at rehabilitating inmates and reducing recidivism, I.G.N.I.T.E. stands for "Inmate Growth Naturally and Intentionally Through Education."

Fayette County Sheriff James Custer, along with Warden John Lenkey, Deputy Warden Angela Kern and NSA representatives, held a ceremony marking the historic launch Thursday, at the jail on McClellandtown Road in Uniontown.

Custer said the program launching less than six weeks after the new jail officially opened makes this "an exciting time" for Fayette County.

"I hope we can be a model facility and more county jails across Pennsylvania will become a part of I.G.N.I.T.E. I'm looking forward to many things, but I want to see how the inmates become engaged with the different components of the program and monitor their progress from there," Custer said. "I'm also looking forward to the long-term results of the program, which is ending generational incarceration and reducing recidivism in Fayette County."

Founded in Genesee County, Mich., by Sheriff Chris Swanson, the program offers classes to enrolled inmates two hours per day, five days per week, in which they can work toward a variety of goals, including:

- Earning credits toward a General Educational Development (GED) diploma;
- Learn a skilled trade via virtual reality;
- Completing enrichment courses in a myriad of subjects, from American Sign Language to financial literacy;
- And much more.

Since its original launch, I.G.N.I.T.E. has seen thousands of students complete more than 200,000 classroom hours, log more than 20,000 hours of coursework, and participate in more than 700 standardized tests nationwide.

NSA Executive Director Jonathan Thompson said he's excited Custer and Fayette County officials are "taking on this important initiative."

“I.G.N.I.T.E. makes it clear that sheriffs’ offices across the country are sending individuals in their jails back to their communities more equipped to lead productive lives,” Thompson said.

In addition to Custer, Lenkey and Kern, Thursday’s ceremony included remarks from Bishop TD Holden of Bishop TD Holden Ministries; Meghan Beal of the National Sheriffs’ Association; Sheriff Samuel Hulse of Bonneville County, Idaho; Maj. Jason Gould of Genesee County, Mich.; Percy Glover, Genesee County, Mich., community engagement co-executive director; and Pa. Dept. of Corrections Secretary Laurel Harry.

Refreshments were provided by Keefe Commissary Group, and program partners include A Child’s Place; Penn State Fayette; WVU Medicine – Uniontown Hospital; One Voice, One Community; United Bank; Steratore Sanitary Supply; and Summit Food Sources. Recognition and thanks were extended to Beal, the NSA I.G.N.I.T.E. “family” and Claire McNally.

“I believe this program will provide the inmates with the education, vocational training and life skills to help them successfully reintegrate into society upon release, which – in turn – will make our communities safer,” Custer said.

To learn more about the National Sheriffs’ Association’s I.G.N.I.T.E. Program, visit www.sheriffs.org/ignite. To learn more about the Fayette County Jail, visit <https://fayettecountypa.org/797/Fayette-County-Prison-Project>.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.org.

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