

They Call It the Best Little Reentry Program in America

Date: 10-30-2017

In ten years the Georgetown County, S.C. Sheriff's Reentry Services has had a zero percent recidivism rate for those completing the program

The following article about a unique, and successful, reentry program created by Georgetown, S.C. Sheriff A. Lance Cribb was sent to *Reentry Central* for consideration for publication. We would like to share it with our readers.

The Best Little Reentry Program in America

By Joe Fee, Secretary of Amazing Journey Inc., an organization of volunteers supporting the Georgetown County Sheriff's Reentry Services.

Every year over 600,000 people with a felony conviction are released from U.S. prisons. Many of these men are high school dropouts and few have any marketable skills. As a result, over 40 percent are re-incarcerated within three years, and prospects for those who remain free are poor. Men with criminal records account for 34 percent of all nonworking men ages 25 to 54, according to a recent New York Times/CBS News/Kaiser Family Foundation poll. Two major factors driving this result are the strong bias against men with felony convictions and their lack of suitable work skills. It is clear that without an attractive skill set, the released inmate will have a very difficult time making a living. Sheriff of Georgetown County, S.C., Lane Cribb has formed a partnership with County Director of Public Services Ray Funnys to develop a program that overcomes these barriers.

The Georgetown County Sheriff's Reentry Services (RES) provides the means for incarcerated men near the end of their sentences to obtain journeyman certification in over 15 trades. In the past ten years over 250 clients have completed their training and none have returned to prison. This program is also remarkable in other ways:

- The training program is run by one salaried employee and nine volunteers. All testing and certification takes place within the Georgetown County Detention Center.
- All of the program clients work as apprentices for the Georgetown County Public Services Department to fulfill their training requirements for journeyman certification under expert supervision. This effort saves the county hundreds of thousands of dollars per year over the cost of incarceration and training.
- RES clients learn how to write resumes and take interviews. They can interview with prospective employers while still in detention and being hired prior to release is not uncommon. Most released clients find full time employment within six months.

The Process

The State of South Carolina permits prisoners with good conduct records to request transfer to other correction facilities within the state near the end of their sentences. The transfer is granted if both the state and receiving facility agree to the request. Georgetown County Detention Center (GCDC) has accepted transfers for a number of years to obtain a very low cost source of unskilled labor. Over the past decade the