

CHAMBER WORKING TO HELP EX-OFFENDERS HAVE MEANINGFUL EMPLOYMENT

Individuals exiting incarceration, whether classified as “habitual” or first-time offenders, often face the daunting task of finding employment. Assisting those individuals willing to work hard, learn and grow in their jobs is one way the Chamber helps our community be a safe place to live, work and play.

The Chamber has developed a strong partnership with Durham County’s Criminal Justice Resource Center and staffs, under County contract, the Re-Entry Employment Specialist position. Dennis Jarmon currently serves in that capacity. He and CJRC professionals are making an impact on our community; reducing recidivism rates and saving taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars, annually.

The Employment Assistance Service (EAS) is part of a holistic approach to the Re-Entry process which requires participants, through a court-mandated program, to attend classes that address social issues, special needs (such as G.E.D. or substance abuse programs), employability classes, effective job search techniques and interactive Job Searches.

One EAS client, working as an electrician, credits the program with helping him “market myself and not dwell on my past.” Another participant working in the food service industry credits the program with giving her “the ability to be open-minded, confident and responsible about employment.” Employers find many Re-Entry clients to be valuable, contributory employees in their companies.

In 2006, 60 EAS clients obtained gainful employment. Without this kind of effective program, according to recidivism studies, we could expect that 66.6% of them would return to incarceration within 3 years. At an average incarceration cost of \$24,986 per person, per year, an estimated \$1,491,460 will be saved because of the strength of the EAS, CJRC professionals and individuals driven to turn their lives around and contribute to the community.

The Chamber encourages the business community to get more information on the program and see if there may be a good candidate for your business by contacting Dennis Jarmon 919-560-0500 djarmon@durhamchamber.org.