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Fresh start for offenders

Allentown DO holds offender job fairs

A job is important to all Pennsylvanians to provide for themselves and their families. But jobs also are important for successful reentry and safe communities.

Employment is one of the key factors to reduce victimization and recidivism, therefore, the Board works with community organizations to co-sponsor job fairs to help individuals with criminal histories find and retain a job.

This past October, the Lehigh community went all out to meet the needs of individuals and employers.

“This job fair was a perfect example of what reentry is all about- changing attitudes and behavior and everyone working together to make it happen,” said the Board’s Central Region Director Kelly Evans.

The New Opportunities Job Fair, held at the Veteran’s Sanctuary in Allentown, was sponsored by the Board, CareerLink Lehigh Valley, GEO and Treatment Trends.

For the first time, the Board and local providers held a clothing drive for donations of professional attire appropriate for job interviews.

“Supervisor Crush was instrumental in organizing the clothing drive so our offenders would be able to dress in suits and ties to attend the event,” Evans stated.

Local providers of clothing donations included The Neighborhood Clothes Closet, located at St. Luke’s Evangelical Church, and First Impressions, located at Northampton Community College.

The job fair provided an opportunity for parolees to help parolees as well.

“A few days before the job fair I overheard an offender mention that he wished he had a haircut. So I reached out to a parolee who is a licensed barber residing at Keenan House,” said Supervisor Amy Crush.

Kenyatta Muhammad, who works at The Buzz in Allentown, donated his time to provide haircuts to participants of the Keenan House Program. Keenan House graciously paid for their haircuts.

In preparation for the job fair, ASCRA Dana Roth held resume writing classes and mock job interviews, which were attended by 72 parolees.

“You could see the pride on their faces as they walked in dressed for success and with a resume in their hands,” said Evans.

Parolee Gregory Newton received an offer of employment from the job fair and others made it to the second round of interviews.

Not resting after one job fair success, Allentown District Office staff, in conjunction with other county offender workforce development

specialists, held another offender-based job fair in Reading.

Approximately 200 offenders attended Corrections II Connections at the Crown Plaza Hotel in late November seeking one thing – the opportunity to share their resumes with potential employers in the county.

Fifteen areas businesses and non-profit organizations participated in the successful event.

New Opportunities Job Fair Employer Participants

- The Archive/New York Urban (retail)
- Labor Ready
- The Performance Group
- IMKO Workforce Solutions
- Lehigh Valley Building Systems
- Shelly Enterprise
- Comfort Inn Suites
- MBD Wheel and Brake Repair and Services
- Full Stream Staffing
- CDS Logistics
- Tru Value Distributers



Clockwise: Offenders wait to meet with potential employers in their new suits; a local business interviews a potential candidate; and job fair attendees pick up information and personally deliver their resumes.

