

# Grant Update

## A Summary of Grant Activity

Governor's Crime Commission

NC Criminal Justice Analysis Center

### Jobs on the Outside

Offenders face many barriers in attempting to reenter the community after a period of incarceration. One of the most common barriers to successful reentry is finding employment. In fact, lack of employment is one of the leading causes of recidivism. A 2005 survey conducted by the N.C. Department of Correction indicated that transition services, primarily employment training, were listed as the one of the chief needs of male offenders, followed by vocational rehabilitation, medical services, housing and clothing. Goodwill Industries of Central North Carolina Inc. implemented the Jobs on the Outside program as a collaborative initiative to provide employment training, career preparedness, job search assistance and an array of supportive services to enable ex-offenders to successfully re-enter the community and avoid recidivism.

#### *The Problem:*

While recidivism rates vary greatly in most of the United States, they remain highest among recently released ex-offenders. Programs such as Philadelphia's Reintegration Services for Ex-Offenders and the Winston-Salem-based Project Re-entry which covers 12 counties in the Piedmont area, focus on working with offenders before and after they are released from prison to give them an increased chance of finding legitimate employment. Similarly, the Greensboro-based Jobs on the Outside program is designed to help ex-offenders rebuild their lives once they are released from prison. The program assists individuals in Guilford, Randolph and Rockingham counties in obtaining employment.

#### *The Grant*

Jobs on the Outside focuses on assisting ex-offenders in successfully reentering the community through a collaborative effort of job training, job referral and support services. Services such as skills training, job readiness training, job search assistance and placement assistance provide ex-offenders alternatives to recidivism. In the first months of operation, the program registered 52 individuals. Prior to GCC funding, the program could only enroll approximately 50 percent of the ex-offenders wanting to participate. With funding from the Governor's Crime Commission, the program plans to expand its capacity and provide a broader range of services to those re-entering the community.

Specific program components include pre-release evaluation and post-release job training. Job training focuses on skills and competencies as well as innovative and creative thinking that meet the needs of area industries, including furniture manufacturing, distribution, advanced manufacturing and health care. Job placement



*Jobs on the Outside provides career development and skills training for ex-offenders trying to re-enter the work force.*





*John Rhodes from the All Stars Group meets with the Career Development Training class to provide information on counseling resources available to program participants.*

and career development are provided to clients, along with support services ranging from substance abuse aftercare, family reunification to mentoring. Additional services provided include academic and aptitude skills testing, career counseling, computer training, resume preparation, personal growth and leadership training, vocational development skills training and referrals to other community service agencies.

### ***Goals and Objectives***

The program's comprehensive approach is a contributing factor in its success. Participants undergo a preliminary intake interview and assessment followed by a two-week training class. They receive continued support through additional career and educational training. JOTO's program goals include enrolling a significant portion of those who participate in the pre-release evaluation, ensuring that participants complete job training, seeing that those who complete training obtain and maintain gainful employment and providing ongoing support services as needed to ensure success.

The program focuses skills training on occupational clusters identified by the U.S. Department of Labor that are specific to the tri-county area, including advanced manufacturing, logistics and distribution, health care and furniture manufacturing. JOTO also provides training for innovative and creative thinking. Additional services provided include substance abuse aftercare, family reunification, parenting classes, mental and physical health care, life skills training and mentoring.

### ***Community Involvement***

JOTO has a network of collaborators in the local community. Each agency or employer contributes a support activity that adds an additional facet to the overall program. The Guilford County Department of Social Services lends support in family reunification and related services. Guilford Technical Community College provides financial training, continuing education and training for the Career Readiness Certification program. Survival Skills, a private firm, provides training in life skills and workplace survival skills to program participants while a host of other agencies — from the City of Greensboro to Vocational Rehabilitation — provide support and services to the program. The JOTO Program Manager also serves as co-chair of the Guilford County Re-Entry Network, a broad-based coalition that supports re-entry efforts.

### ***Accomplishments***

Case managers use a database system to track and monitor the activities of participants. This program ensures accountability and accurate reporting of services delivered. They have also developed and implemented a Career Development and Workforce Training Curriculum to prepare ex-offenders for employment. Since implementation of the grant in July 2009, 591 ex-offenders have received career training, job coaching, job referral and placement assistance through the program. Forty-five individuals have obtained employment at wages ranging from \$7.25 an hour to \$20.00 per hour.

Steven Mitchell represents one of JOTO's success stories. He registered with the program on January 11, 2010. While he had a respected professional work history, a felony conviction in 2006 created a number of occupational challenges for him.

*“Your proposal is an example of how we can have a significant effect on the problems that impact our communities. We commend you for your dedication, hard work and commitment to safer communities for families across North Carolina.”*

*— Governor Beverly Perdue*

*Quoted in the Goodwill Glimpse Volume 2, Issue 1 August-November 2009*

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He completed the two week career development and workforce training program as well as several other workshops. Mitchell also took advantage of coaching and mentoring provided by case managers and staff. He was trained as a participant trainee and has assisted with workshops and CDT training. In February 2010 he obtained a position as an executive assistant with a local firm and has since been promoted to general manager. He continues to volunteer with JOTO in his spare time.

*“JOTO shaped the way I thought about things. It changed my whole life. Period.”*

*— Gerald Jones  
JOTO Graduate*

Adrienne Ellerbe registered with the program in September, 2009. When she entered the program, her self-esteem was low and she faced a number of personal and financial barriers. Her goal was to re-enter the health care field. She participated in the ‘Journey to Success Career Training’ class and also attended Personal Care Assistant training through Caring Hands Home Health, Inc. Through the assistance of JOTO and her own efforts, she passed the state examination to obtain her license as a Certified Nursing Assistant. While she is still looking for employment, she continues to take classes through Guilford Technical Community College to advance her education, enhance her skills and reach her goals.

Another evolving success story is that of Alan Pegram. He registered with the program in February 2010. He came into the program with knowledge and training in electrical maintenance, but his history of felony convictions proved to be a significant obstacle to employment. After going through the career development and training class, he found his self-confidence. Using his skills and networking, he secured a part-time position as a technician with GSO Aviation and has the opportunity to become a full-time employee. He also volunteers with the Interactive Resource Center with the Greensboro Police Department and has participated in call-in sessions. He hopes to become an advocate for the re-entry initiative and the Street-Safe Task Force.

### **Summary**

Jobs on the Outside meets one of the most critical needs faced by ex-offenders in their efforts to re-enter the community and avoid recidivism. It assists ex-offenders by providing job readiness and skills training and assisting them in obtaining the employment they need to survive on the outside. Through their cooperative effort with other Guilford County agencies and programs, participants develop the skills necessary to find and maintain employment and break the cycle of recidivism.



*Above, Case Managers Raymond Watkins and Donna Price celebrate the graduation of another JOTO Career and Workforce Development Training class (shown at left).*



# Job on the Outside

## GRANT SUMMARY

**Area Served:** Guilford County

**Implementing Agency:** Goodwill Industries of Central N.C., Inc.

**Project Director:** Clinton Thomas, Vice President, Career Development Services

**Funding:** Federal: \$ 104,498.72

**Overview:** Goodwill Industries' Jobs on the Outside focuses on assisting ex-offenders in successfully re-entering the community through a collaborative effort of job training and support services. Services such as skills training, job readiness training, job search assistance and job placement provide ex-offenders employment as an alternative to recidivism.

**Objectives:**

- 70 percent of pre-release evaluation participants will enroll in JOTO
- 60 percent of JOTO participants will complete a specific job training program for skills and competencies in local industry clusters
- 50 percent of participants completing training will be hired into gainful employment
- 70 percent of participants will receive supportive services identified as needed
- 65 percent of participants who are employed will maintain employment for one year
- 60 percent of participants who successfully complete JOTO and become employed will not return to the criminal justice system as a result of new criminal charges for at least one year after program completion

**Accomplishments:** Between July 1, 2009 and April 2010:

- A total of 591 ex-offenders have been served through the program
- 45 program participants have obtained employment
- Through December 2009, 56 participants have completed services