



NEXT STEP

The Wilder Job Club's Quarterly Newsletter

Spring 2008 Issue

AMHERST H.
WILDER
FOUNDATION

ESTABLISHED 1906

Here for good.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

<i>An Employer's Perspective</i>	2
<i>Federal Re-entry Act cont.</i>	2
<i>Expungement Law</i>	2
<i>Focus on Industries</i>	3
<i>1% of Adults Incarcerated</i>	3
<i>Service at Job Club</i>	4

Upcoming Events

- May 28th: The Employment Guide hosts a job fair at the Minneapolis Convention Center.
- May 30th: The Children's Defense Fund will hold a community meeting on "The Cradle to Prison Pipeline" from 10:00 A.M. to noon at the Wilder Center.
- June 6th: The Wilder JobsFirst program will host an Employer Recognition Breakfast to thank the employers who work with us.

WILDER'S EXCEL PROGRAM NOW JOBSFIRST

In an effort to better align the goals of the program with its name, the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation's EXCEL program is now known as Wilder JobsFirst. The JobsFirst program serves ex-offenders residing in or being released from correctional institutions, working to strengthen their ability to realistically plan for the transition from prison to the community and increasing their chances of becoming self-sufficient, contributing members of our community.

JobsFirst pre-release classes focus on strengthening employment search skills just before

release from prison. These classes teach a wide range of practical skills, from searching for a job to interviewing.

The Wilder Job Club is also an important component of JobsFirst, serving individuals who have been released from correctional institutions and are looking for work. The Job Club features daily presentations on job search topics and individual instruction and assistance from JobsFirst employment counselors. In addition, the **Community Employment Connection** gives Job Club participants the chance to see presentations from

community employers every week.

For more information on JobsFirst, contact Kate Ellefson at (651) 280-2352 or send an e-mail to JobsFirst@wilder.org.



FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PASSES REENTRY ACT

On April 9th, 2008 President Bush signed the Second Chance Act into law. The act will provide over three hundred million dollars in federal funding to various re-entry projects for both government and nonprofit entities. The bill is designed to expand on the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, which ended in 2005. This earlier bill funded a number of successful state programs that aimed to

reduce recidivism by providing effective services to incarcerated and just released individuals.

The Second Chance Act provides funding for a variety of purposes. The funding covers programs for both juveniles and adults, for education, training, drug abuse treatment, reentry services, and mentoring. A significant amount is devoted to extending

funding to already existing grants while other funds will be appropriated to develop new programs.

Minnesota legislators may soon have a chance to pass a state reentry bill. Currently being revised by its authors in the House and Senate, the Reentry Omnibus Bill was first introduced in February of 2008. In its current form, the bill *(continued on page 2)*

An Employer's Perspective

The following is a transcription of a speech given by Katie Roach of Minnesota Wire and Cable at a recent Wilder Foundation event. Katie has been a valuable volunteer for years, giving mock interviews and talking about her company with individuals at the Wilder Job Club and at correctional facilities.

"Looking back on the days I spent at the different correctional facilities interviewing soon to be released inmates, I remember driving home feeling really good. Really good about the day I had spent. It was a win-win situation, the inmates gained experience in the interview process, I gained insight into a program, a facility, and people I had never had the opportunity to meet. Most of the inmates I interviewed took the program very seriously. They put a lot of hours and hard work into their resumes and applications and they came with the attitude of

gaining as much as they could out of that day, as they knew what the road ahead was going to be like. They realized it was not going to be easy, but the more they talked about their conviction the more they became comfortable with the



Katie Roach, Minnesota Wire and Cable

rest of the interview."

"I had the opportunity to also talk with many inmates after they got released. They either came in for a tour of our company or they called

me about jobs to see if there were openings. Again, I applauded them for their follow through and encouraged them in their search for the job they wanted."

"(Over the last 10 years) we have hired over 35 employees that had been released from correctional facilities. Of those 35, not one had to be terminated by Minnesota Wire and Cable, they all left for better jobs or relocated. In our eyes, it was a win-win situation, we had excellent employees and we did not have to terminate anyone."

"Our belief, and that is both my belief and the belief of Minnesota Wire and Cable, is that there is a need to give a second chance for those who made a poor decision at one time in their life and want to be incorporated in our workforce today."

FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PASSES REENTRY ACT (CONT.)

(continued from page 1) would provide funding to research the possibility of creating a reentry court and state reentry facilities. It also would create committees to reexamine existing drug laws and the regulations for revoking a person's parole status. Perhaps the biggest impact of the Reentry Omnibus Bill would be the creation of a certificate of good conduct that would remove many of the barriers that ex-offenders face regarding employment and housing.

Both of these acts signal an increased focus by governments on reentry. Before signing the Second Chance Act, President Bush said, "I'm about to sign a piece of legislation that will help give prisoners across America a second chance for a better life. This bill is going to support the caring men and women who help America's prisoners find renewal and hope."

MINNESOTA COURT CHANGES EXPUNGEMENT LAW

A recent decision by the Minnesota Court of Appeals expanded the scope of criminal record expungements in Minnesota, making it possible for a judge to order the Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) to seal its criminal records. Previously, courts were only able to seal court records on an individual's criminal history, while the BCA would still give information on the "expunged" records to potential employers and others in its background checks. The decision points out that the judiciary branch can have control over other government entities in certain circumstances, and claims that the issuing of expungements warrants this type of control over the BCA. Issuing a concurring opinion to the decision, Judge Shumaker wrote, "To offer to eligible persons the remedy of record expungement but then to limit the reach of the expungement so that the record remains accessible to the public is to effectively deny that remedy. This contradiction surely violates the principle of fundamental fairness on which our laws are premised."

FOCUS ON INDUSTRIES: LEISURE AND HOSPITALITY

The leisure and hospitality industry is one of the largest employers of ex-offenders. This field accounts for almost ten percent of employment in the United States, and is largely made up of food and lodging services. Wages in this field are lower than many others in which ex-offenders seek employment: an average of \$9.75 an hour for a non-supervisory worker compared to an average of \$16.76 for a non-supervisory worker in private industry. The unemployment rates for this industry are higher than most others as well, 7.3% compared to 4.6% for all occupations. Most jobs in Leisure and Hospitality are unskilled

labor. The two most common jobs are waiting tables and food preparation, which pay an average of \$8.27 and \$7.66 per hour. Cooks in restaurants earn \$9.78 on average, and only \$7.41 in fast food, a very common employer of ex-offenders.

Growth in the leisure and hospitality industry is expected to be better than average over the next eight years. New jobs will likely be unskilled and available to people with limited or no work history. Restaurants and food businesses will likely grow at the national average, but recreation centers and hotels are expected to grow at a faster rate and add more jobs.

The leisure and hospitality industry in the Twin Cities offers significantly lower wages than the national averages. Restaurant cooks make an average of \$9.26 and fast food cooks only \$6.97.

Figures and graph are from the United States Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, available online at <http://www.bls.gov>



PEW CENTER REPORT REVEALS 1 IN 100 US ADULTS IS INCARCERATED

A recent report released by the Pew Charitable Trusts' Center on the States claims that more than 1 in 100 adults in America is incarcerated in jails and state and federal prisons. According to the report, this dubious milestone is the result of legal measures enacted over the past few decades, such as three-strikes rules and mandatory minimum sentencing, that have increased the length of time for the average incarceration. The report is a timely one, as states across the United States are experiencing budget problems and are looking to cut back on corrections spending. The report notes that state spending on corrections more than doubled over the past

twenty years, which is likely due to the fact that the prison population nearly tripled during this same time period.

The report also notes the extreme racial disparities in incarceration today. The incarceration rate for white men is 1 in every 106 while for black men, it is 1 in every 15. For black men between the ages of 20 and 34, the rate is a startling 1 in 9.

Minnesota fares better than many states in the report, as our spending on corrections is only about 2.7% of our total state budget. This amount is the second lowest in the nation and less than

half the national average of 6.8%. However, Minnesota also had one of the fastest growing prison populations in the country, one that increased by more than 5% in 2007.

The report has generated significant media coverage, including articles in *The New York Times* and other major newspapers. To view a PDF of the report, visit www.pewcenteronthestates.org



AMHERST H.
WILDER
FOUNDATION

JobsFirst Employment Services
451 Lexington Parkway North
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation is a nonprofit health and human services organization that has served the greater Saint Paul, Minnesota, area since 1906. We operate dozens of programs that help children succeed in school, older adults remain independent, troubled youth create healthy futures, and individuals and families maintain long-term housing and employment.

The Wilder Job Club Serves:

People who have been released from prison, *not* jail or workhouse
Must be under some kind of Department of Corrections supervision

The Wilder Job Club Provides:

Daily topic presentations relating to job search and interviewing
Information on talking about convictions to employers
Daily job leads
Access to computers, phones, fax, and Internet
Help creating individualized resumes
Assistance with work related needs

Job Club is open Monday through Thursday, 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M.
Intakes of new participants take place between 9:00 and 9:30

The Amherst H. Wilder Foundation Job Club
1600 University Avenue
Suite #219
St. Paul, Minnesota 55104
Phone: (651) 288-5191
Fax: (651) 642-2073
E-mail: JobsFirst@wilder.org