



Chaplain Melvin Solomon is the new director of the Transition Aftercare Network.

## Chaplain Solomon to lead Transition Aftercare Network

**Former Caledonia and Warren chaplain to coordinate faith-based re-entry efforts**

Chaplain Melvin Solomon has been appointed director of the Transition Aftercare Network (TAN), the faith-based element of the Department of Correction's transition and re-entry efforts for ex-offenders.

The Transition Aftercare Network is operated by a collection of churches and faith groups across the state and coordinated by the Division of Prisons to provide offenders with support and aftercare services in local communities after their release.

Solomon is a native of Halifax County, but now calls Durham home. He comes to TAN after seven years as a full-time prison chaplain at Caledonia and Warren Correctional Institutions. He previously worked as a special education teacher in Durham Public Schools and currently serves as the pastor of Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church in Henderson.

Solomon's passion for helping offenders find the right path grew from his church's efforts to aid offenders and crime victims. Mount Olive Missionary Baptist maintains active ministries providing aftercare and mentoring for ex-offenders and assisting the victims of crime.

For the future, Solomon has big goals for TAN. He hopes to refocus the program's efforts to clearly define its role in providing services to offenders released from prison and separate it from the department's other in-prison religious programs.

He also hopes to grow the TAN volunteer

roster from the current count of about 825 to more than 3,000 volunteers across the state. The key to growing that base of volunteers is putting well-trained and hard-working volunteer coordinators in each county, he says. Only about half of the state's counties have a TAN coordinator in place now.

Since he assumed the TAN position, Solomon has fielded many calls from churches interested in becoming involved in aftercare efforts. "The spirit of volunteerism in this state is second to none," said Solomon. He's confident that the goal of more than 3,000 statewide volunteers is attainable, once a representative is in place in each county.

"Volunteers have to know that they are rendering a worthwhile and valuable service in order to keep coming back," he said. Building and maintaining TAN as the kind of program where volunteers keep coming back is his top goal.

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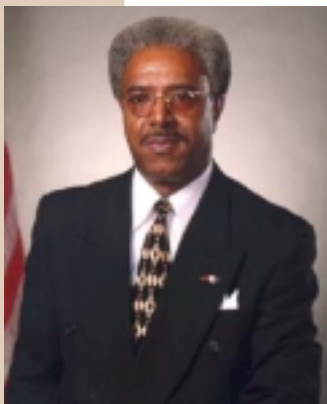
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### Inside:

- Stopping the cycle of crime 2
- Inmate Construction Program 3
- "Going Home" conference plans 3
- Offender employment expert 4

# Safer communities: Stopping the cycle of crime

by Secretary Theodis Beck



*Theodis Beck has served as North Carolina's Correction Secretary since April 1999.*

Every year, more than 22,000 inmates leave North Carolina's prisons after completing their sentences. These ex-offenders return to communities across our state to rejoin their families and start new lives. It is critical that we make every effort to ensure these inmates leaving prison do not commit new crimes and return to a life behind bars.

North Carolina's prison population is growing rapidly. Today, our 74 state prisons house more than 33,000 inmates. That population is projected to exceed 42,000 in 10 years. Slowing the cycle of recidivism is key to controlling the growing prison population.

The Department of Correction is working hard to prepare inmates for their release, so they leave prison and become productive citizens who contribute positively to their communities. The ability to get and keep a job is one of the most important factors affecting an inmate's success

after prison. An ex-offender who is gainfully employed is three times less likely to return to prison than one who does not have a job.

Thousands of inmates each year take advantage of the educational and vocational training opportunities available inside our prisons. More than 3,000 inmates earn their General Equivalency Diplomas each year and last year over 2,000 earned college certificates or degrees. Some inmates learn computer electronics while rebuilding used computers for schools and non-profit agencies. Inmates learning the heating and air conditioning trade

are refurbishing air conditioners for the elderly and families who cannot afford air-conditioned homes. Inmates learning masonry and carpentry have built homes for Hurricane Floyd victims and are finding other ways to give back to their local communities.

The JobStart program, now in its third year, teaches inmates the job seeking skills they need to find employment. It also teaches them how to explain their criminal record to a prospective employer. Ex-offenders with valuable job skills, a strong work ethic and the will to succeed can make good employees. All they need is an employer willing to give them a chance.

The Going Home Initiative is a new effort to link government agencies, community and faith-based groups, businesses and citizens who are committed to helping inmates succeed after prison. Starting one year before their release, inmates will begin transition planning so when their release day comes, they have a job lined up, a place to live and a network of support services in the community they can rely on for help.

Through hard work and preparation in prison and with community support after time served, we can provide ex-offenders another opportunity to be productive members of society. It might just be the chance they needed to get back on life's track and avoid the mistakes of the past.

For more information on Department of Correction programs visit [www.doc.state.nc.us](http://www.doc.state.nc.us) or call 1-800-368-1985.

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*This article was originally published in February 2003 in Governor Mike Easley's semi-monthly newspaper column and ran in several North Carolina newspapers.*

## “Going Home” initiative plans January conference

The “Going Home” initiative is planning a two-day training conference entitled “Changing the Odds” to be held on January 13-14, 2004 at the Radisson Hotel in High Point. The training conference is designed to bring all state, local and community partners together in one forum to discuss and receive training on various topics related not only to the “Going Home” initiative but also to successful offender re-entry in general.

The heads of the four lead state agencies, Correction, Health and Human Services, Commerce and the Community College System will be invited to participate in the opening plenary session to emphasize their agencies continuous support and commitment to this effort.

The training sessions will include topics such as the Offender Management Model, DOC policies and procedures, “Going Home”

initiative policies and procedures, housing, ex-offender employment and training, mentoring, capacity building and sustainability, confidentiality and duty to warn, accounting procedures and case planning.

We anticipate participation from agencies including the Division of Prisons, Division of Community Corrections, Criminal Justice Partnership Program, Division of Alcohol and Chemical Dependency Programs, TASC, Community Colleges, local housing authorities, JobLink Career Centers, Employment Security Commission, law enforcement, vocational rehabilitation, TAN, faith partners and other community

agencies involved with the “Going Home” initiative.

For additional information regarding the training conference or the “Going Home” initiative, please contact project director Roshanna Parker at (919) 716-3089.

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**Mark your calendar:**  
*“Going Home”  
Training Conference  
Jan 13-14, 2004  
High Point Radisson*

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## Inmate Construction Program takes on new work

Central Engineering is preparing for work on two new projects which will provide a large volume work for the Inmate Construction Program (ICP) and a great deal of experience for inmates learning construction trades and working toward apprenticeship certificates from the Department of Labor.

Inmates will renovate an existing building at Warren Correctional Institution to become the new Correction Enterprises janitorial products plant.

A longer term project for the Inmate Construction Program involves upfitting the industrial space at the new 1,000 cell prisons in Scotland, Anson and Alexander counties to fit the requirements of future prison industry tenants.

Correction Enterprises is currently recruiting manufacturers to occupy these spaces and become partners in the Prison Industry

Enhancement (PIE) program. These businesses would locate their manufacturing operations inside a prison facility, then train and employ inmate laborers at a prevailing wage to produce their products. Companies interested in learning more about PIE should contact Judy Chapman at 919-716-3608.



*Inmates in the Inmate Construction Program work on a 208-bed dormitory addition to the NC Correctional Institution for Women in Raleigh.*

# Offender employment expert visits North Carolina



Errol Sull

Errol Sull, author of **The Ex-inmate's Complete Guide to Successful Employment** and a nationally recognized authority on re-entry preparation for offenders, conducted a series of presentations and workshops on Oct. 22-23 in Research Triangle Park for DOC, community college, and other partner agency staff having an interest in different ways to strengthen transition services for inmates being released from the Division of Prisons.

Chief among Sull's recommendations were the greater use of free resources by staff for preparing offenders for re-entering the community; increased training for all staff who provide pre- and post-release services to offenders and the development of a communications network among service providers for maintaining collaborative support and sharing information about transitional resources.

Sull's appearance in North Carolina was sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections and co-hosted by DOC and the North Carolina Community College System.

## Parker hired to lead Going Home initiative

Roshanna Parker has been hired as the first project manager for the Going Home initiative. Parker most recently worked as a project manager for a Chapel Hill research company where she helped provide training and technical assistance to several states on the issue of disproportionate

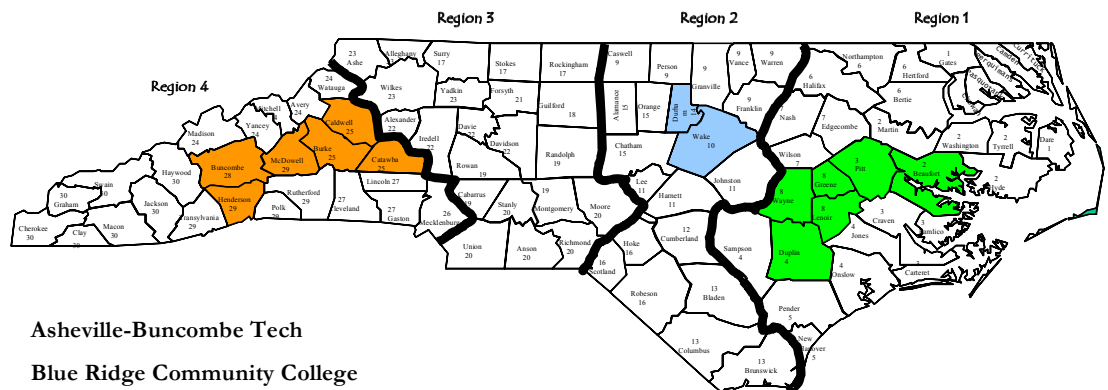
minority confinement. She also worked for three years as a juvenile justice planner at the Governor's Crime Commission and has worked as a DOC correctional officer, probation officer and case analyst.

One of Parker's main goals for "Going Home" is to provide community partner agencies with the resources they need to deal with offenders once they are released. Parker can be reached in the DOC Research and Planning office at 919-716-3089.

### Transition & Re-entry Statistics

The Bureau of Justice Statistics website is an excellent source for statistics and information regarding transition and re-entry programs. [www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/reentry/reentry.htm](http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/reentry/reentry.htm)

## NC Reentry Cluster Communities



Asheville-Buncombe Tech

Blue Ridge Community College

Caldwell Community College

Catawba Valley Community College

McDowell Technical College

Western Piedmont Community College

Wake Technical Community College

Durham Technical Community College

Beaufort County Community College

James Sprunt Community College

Lenoir Community College

Pitt Community College

Wayne Community College

To suggest or contribute items for Transition News, please contact Keith Acree at 919-716-3727 or e-mail [aka05@doc.state.nc.us](mailto:aka05@doc.state.nc.us)