

Summer 2005

REPAIR goes to work in Raleigh and Durham

Former inmates and probationers help restore homes in high-risk neighborhoods

Four ex-offenders recently completed a remarkable transformation in the home of an elderly woman in southeast Raleigh that included a kitchen renovation, bathroom repairs and improvements, and painting. Their work was part of REPAIR, a vocational training and community service program that is the newest component of the Going Home Initiative.

Anthony Carter walked out of the gates of Wake Correctional Center in November 2004 as a free man for the first time in two-and-a-half years. He says he was fortunate to get involved the Going Home Initiative and be part of the first cycle the new REPAIR program.

For four months, he attended classes, learning employability skills in addition to construction, renovation and home repair skills. When not in class, he was at work on the home in Raleigh's Biltmore Hills neighborhood with three other ex-offenders.

REPAIR targets the Weed & Seed communities of Wake and Durham counties. Weed & Seed coordinators choose renovation and repair projects that are consistent with their neighborhood revitalization and restoration strategies. Ex-offenders in Raleigh are tackling those jobs under the guidance of Troy Smith, a sub-contractor and instructor at Wake Technical Community College.

"When we first walked into that house, I couldn't believe it -- this rundown kitchen with cabinets from way back in the day," said Anthony McCray, another REPAIR participant. "I thought we'd never be able to fix it."

After four months, Smith had taught Carter and McCray, along with John Burt and Dustin Riggs, everything they needed to know to get

the job done. They had removed a rotten kitchen floor and replaced it, installed new kitchen cabinets, countertops and a sink, repaired damaged bathroom ceilings and floors and painted the living areas and bedrooms. The homeowner had provided the building supplies, while REPAIR brought the tools, skills and labor. Along the way, the four men had learned new home repair skills, developed a stronger work ethic and learned responsibility. They even got paid a stipend every two weeks for living expenses. This was their job for four months.

On graduation day, the four men were all smiles, and looking forward to the next step on their journey.

Anthony Caison, dean of occupational education at Wake Technical Community College, spoke to the group. "What you've done here is shown that you can finish what you've started, and that means a lot to a potential employer," he said. "Keep making achievements, don't stop now."

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Dustin Riggs (upper left) and Anthony Carter paint trim on a house they helped renovate.



New cabinets, countertops and a kitchen sink await a few finishing touches after a team of ex-offenders renovated this Raleigh kitchen during the first cycle of REPAIR.



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Labor commissioner awards NCDOC apprenticeship efforts



Wayne True, Bob Lewis and Deputy Secretary Fred Aikens accept an award from Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry (above). Karen Brown (right) accepts an award from Commissioner Berry on behalf of Correction Enterprises.



RALEIGH - State labor commissioner Cherie Berry presented special recognition awards to Correction Enterprises and the Division of Prisons on May 26, for the work those divisions are doing to provide apprenticeship opportunities for inmates and correctional officers.

The awards were handed out at the Department of Labor's 21st annual Apprenticeship and Training Celebration at the State Fairgrounds.

Correction Enterprises was recognized for "the outstanding opportunities provided to inmates through apprenticeship." Correction Enterprises offers apprentice-

ship in many of its industries and plants including printing, metal work, upholstery and sewing.

The Division of Prisons has more than 3,000 officers involved in apprenticeships. A major benefit for officers who are military veterans is the monthly stipend paid by the Veterans Administration to eligible veterans who are working as apprentices.

The Division of Prisons is developing apprenticeships for inmates working in food service, while Correction Enterprises is working to expand its apprenticeship offerings to its laundry business.

First nine inmates earn certifications in pet care

BLACK MOUNTAIN - Nine female inmates at Black Mountain Correctional Center for Women are the first North Carolina inmates to earn certifications as pet care technicians.

"All nine of our inmates passed with flying colors," said assistant superintendent Debbie Hughes. The inmates needed only a 70 to pass however, the low score was an 86 and the high score was a 96. Each inmate will receive a certificate from the American Boarding Kennel Association, and their names

will appear in the Pet Services Journal Magazine, a bi-monthly magazine published by ABKA. Black Mountain Correctional Center For Women was listed in the May/June issue under new members of the ABKA.

The "New Leash on Life" program allows minimum and medium custody prisons to partner with local animal shelters to train otherwise unadoptable dogs. The program has proven successful at several prisons around the state and continues to receive a great deal of positive news coverage.

Two inmates discuss job opportunities with a representative of Bryant-Durham Electric Co. at the Wake CC job fair.



Wake CC holds first job fair for inmates

RALEIGH - More than 120 inmates and 30 exhibitors attended Wake Correctional Center's first job fair for inmates held May 25. Inmates had a chance to meet with a variety of exhibitors including public and non-profit service providers and employers with job opportunities for offenders. Many inmates filled out job applications on the spot. Among the employ-

ers meeting with inmates were Baker Roofing, Bryant-Durham Electric Co. Inc. and Carolina Trucking. Surveys completed by both the inmates and exhibitors indicated both groups were extremely satisfied with the event. Many exhibitors said they were impressed with the polite demeanor of the inmates and indicated a willingness to participate in future job fairs. Many inmates said they hope there will be similar events in the future.

BRIDGE continues tradition of work, training and service

MORGANTON – One of the state's most successful inmate training and transition programs was born out of necessity after a devastating fire burned thousands of acres in the South Mountains of Burke County in 1985. The state Forest Service and the Division of Prisons responded with a cooperative effort to ensure that there would always be enough trained firefighters ready to fight future wildfires. A group of young male inmates went to work, learning forest conservation and wildfire protection from state forest rangers.

Today, 70 inmates in the BRIDGE program stand ready to answer the call when wildfire strikes. When they're not fighting fire, the inmates are at work on other conservation and forest management jobs on public lands across North Carolina.

More than 3,500 inmates have moved through the program since 1985. The BRIDGE name stands for building, rehabilitating, instructing, developing, growing and employing – a representation of the goals the program hopes to achieve and the values it tries to instill in each inmate crewman.

Like other rehabilitative prison programs, BRIDGE works to build a strong work ethic in its participants, while teaching them skills and good work habits that will benefit them long after prison. In the evenings, BRIDGE crewmen who have not completed high school participate in GED classes at Western Youth Institution.

The work that happens during the day is what makes the program so popular with inmates, prison officials and local communities. BRIDGE crews will try to handle any request that comes their way, but most of their work is related to forestry and conservation. A great deal of trail building, maintenance and light construction in the state park system is handled by BRIDGE crews.

"Just about everywhere you look in this park, you can find something that BRIDGE crews have worked on," said Allen Rogers, superintendent of South Mountains State Park. BRIDGE inmates help maintain more than 40 miles of park trails,

they have marked the park's 50-mile perimeter boundary, and they are frequently called on to handle park improvements, maintenance and repair tasks.

Protecting woodlands from wildfire, often involves setting a controlled fire to limit the amount of fuel that's available to burn. "We do a significant amount of controlled burning every year, more than any other state park," said Rogers. "And we couldn't do it without BRIDGE."

Dupont State Forest near Brevard was acquired by the state eight years ago from the Dupont Corporation. BRIDGE inmates worked for two years to mark the boundary around more than 10,000 acres of recreational woodlands, which included some extremely steep terrain.

The road signs, interpretive kiosks, benches, railings and other items that make the state forest safe for visitors were handcrafted in the BRIDGE carpentry shop, which now occupies the main dormitory of the old Burke Youth Center.



BRIDGE Officer Brian Estes (left) of Western Youth Institution instructs an inmate while building a foot trail around Fawn Lake at Dupont State Forest near Brevard.



A BRIDGE Helitack crew poses while on standby with a Forest Service helicopter at the Hickory Airport.

FIRE COMES FIRST

No matter what the day's project is, when a fire call comes over the radio, all other work stops – fighting forest fire is the main mission for BRIDGE. During spring and fall, when humidity is low and wildfire conditions are prime – that's the busy time of year for BRIDGE crews.

Fourteen crews, each comprised of five inmates and a crew leader, are ready to roll from Morganton every morning. Seven forest rangers

and seven DOC correctional officers serve as the BRIDGE crew leaders. In addition, during peak fire threat times, up to three highly trained five-man Helitack crews are on standby with a forest service helicopter, ready to fly to remote fires to help contain and extinguish them. The Helitack job is a prized assignment for 20 of the best BRIDGE inmate crew-

David Eubanks dies after December heart attack

David A. Eubanks, Community Development Specialist for the JobStart II prison-to-work project, suffered a fatal heart attack the evening of December 23, 2004, at his home in Kinston.

During his 12-plus years of state service, David worked at Forsyth Correctional Center, Wilmington Residential Facility for Women and Sampson Correctional Institution. He also worked for Job Corps and Vocational Rehabilitation.

A native of Greene County, David also served as a Methodist minister, after com-

pleting his ordination studies at Duke University.

As the JobStart II representative to four prisons, David was widely recognized for his ability to work collaboratively with prison staff and community agencies to prepare inmates for securing employment at the time of release.

David is survived by his wife Pamela, his parents, four sons and a daughter, two sisters and a brother, and 12 grandchildren.

REPAIR

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"This is where I actually completed something and didn't fall back," said John Burt, who served a year-and-a-half in prison for assault with a deadly weapon. "I never got my GED, so I'm so glad I finished this."

Anthony Carter's next step was already planned. Five days after graduation, he was set to start classes at Carolina Trucking Academy - to pursue his dream of driving a tractor-trailer for a living. The Going Home Initiative was helping him pay the cost of his classes.

Another cycle of REPAIR is now underway in Durham, where 10 ex-offenders have started the classroom portion of their training. A second cycle in Wake County is getting ready to start.

"This was an idea," program manager Nicole Sullivan told the graduates, "and together we were able to make it happen."

"I believe in it 100 percent," said Anthony McCray. "It works!"



Dustin Riggs (right) receives his REPAIR graduation certificate from Anthony Caison, dean of occupational education at Wake Technical Community College.

BRIDGE

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men. They wear bright orange helmets to distinguish them from the rank and file crewmen and they have what is arguably one of the most interesting and exciting work assignments available to inmates.

CHANGES AND CONSOLIDATION

From 1990 to 2002, a portion of the BRIDGE program was based in Avery County at Blue Ridge Correctional Center in Newland. When the state legislature closed the Blue Ridge prison facility that year,

all BRIDGE operations were consolidated in Morganton. "Some people thought we went out of business when we left Avery County," said assistant camp director Keith Suttles, who directed the BRIDGE program at Blue Ridge. "Now, everyone's together here in Morganton." From the Morganton base, crews can still handle work in almost any location.

There are 84 positions for inmates in BRIDGE, and 70 of those are filled right now. Candidates for the program must be young male inmates admitted at Western Youth Institution or transferred there. They must also be in minimum custody and meet certain other program requirements.

Job Start II moves toward post-release phase

By Arthur Clark

Begun in August 2003 as a grant-funded initiative of the NC Governor's Crime Commission, the **JobStart II** prison-to-work project is in the process of switching its focus from the pre-release preparation of participating inmates to the post-release phase of following up with participants in the community.

The primary purpose of post-release follow-up is two-fold: to assist the ex-inmates in carrying out the re-entry and job search plans developed in the pre-release phase as well as to monitor and document their performance in securing employment and performing on the job.

In the post-release phase, project staff—Virginia Brogden, Vincent Gaddy and Arthur Clark - will intensify the ongoing contacts they have maintained with participants since their release. This will occur both in terms of the frequency of telephone and in-person contacts and in their efforts to support participants requiring additional assistance in ad-

justing to life in the community or pursuing their job search plans.

Following the conclusion of the post-release phase of the project this fall, and based on the documentation collected by staff, final recommendations for ways to strengthen the preparation of offenders for release during incarceration will be submitted to Division of Prisons Administration.

Ten prisons have served as **JobStart II** pilot sites, each selected for the high quality of pre-release programs and services it provides to inmates: Albemarle Correctional Institution, Avery Mitchell Correctional Institution, Caswell Correctional Center, Duplin Correctional Center, Fountain Correctional Center, Harnett Correctional Institution, Lumberton Correctional Institution, Pender Correctional Institution, Wake Correctional Center, and Western Youth Institution.

JobStart II will end operations in December 2005. For more information, email aclark@doc.state.nc.us or call 919-716-3097.

Brown Creek metal plant graduates welding apprentices

POLKTON - Six inmate apprentices graduated as journeyman welders July 8 and received recognition from Labor Commissioner Cherie Berry at Brown Creek Correctional Institution.

The inmates had completed 320 hours of classroom education, through a vocational program at Harnett Correctional Institution, then transferred to Brown Creek to complete their on-the-job training in the Correction Enterprises metal plant under the instruction of welding supervisor Nick Nicholson and plant manager Randy Green.

Inmates James Byrd, Darrius Campbell, Ryan Furr, Chris Matthews, Mark Matthews and John Perry received their journeyman certificates and patches.

"We call apprenticeship 'the other four-year degree.' The time and effort you put in is the same as four years in college," Commissioner Berie told the graduates.

James Byrd spoke for the inmate graduate by reading a poem he had written.

Correction Enterprises director Karen Brown praised the craftsmanship of the inmates, talking about how the products manufactured at the Brown Creek metal plant "far

exceed our customers' expectations. I never hear a complaint about our stainless steel products made here," she said.

The Harnett-Brown Creek partnership marks the first time two prisons have collaborated to develop an apprenticeship program. A similar arrangement is planned in food service, with inmates completing classroom education at one of the cook schools offered at several prisons, then moving on to work in one of three test kitchens that are staffed by Raleigh area prisons.



Welding apprentices pose for a graduation photo with Correction Enterprises officials.