

COMMUNITY SPIRIT

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Reentry in Arkansas

*What it means for offenders
in the community*

One of the primary functions of the reentry program is connecting offenders with the resources they need to successfully reenter their community, says ACC Chief Deputy Director Kevin Murphy. “Without jobs, housing and support, offenders have little chance of succeeding when they are on parole,” Murphy says. “We know that there are jobs, housing and support services available - it is our job to connect offenders to those resources.”



The Good Grid and reentry efforts



makes it easy for other members to know and reach you and for you to reach out to those who can help you increase meaningful impact and who are interested in the same causes that you are.

2. Become active - Sharing the events, jobs, and updates you know about is only one part of the Good Grid. Another big part is following others'

The Good Grid is just one of many services that ACC's Reentry Division is implementing.

The Good Grid, a website launched in January, is putting the power of social good back where it belongs - with people.

"We've rolled out our website to be chock full of features to increase social impact interaction - and we want you to be among the first to use it," Nisha Garamilla of Protech Solutions told a group gathered at the Criminal Justice Institute offices in West Little Rock.

Protech Solutions, working with Chief Deputy Director Kevin Murphy, Assistant Reentry Director Carrie Williams and Reentry Manager Patricia Sims, has created a website that brings felony offenders under supervision together with resource information they need to successfully re-enter their communities.

"As you can guess, here at the Good Grid, we believe that anyone and everyone can make an impact and has a part to play in improving the lives of those in need, which is why it is so important for service providers, volunteers, and other key players to work together to enable those in need to reach their potential as successful and productive members of the community.

"And that's why we are so excited to get as many social impact-minded Arkansans on the site as possible," says Garamilla.

Here are some ways you can help enhance the Good Grid community:

1. Sign Up – The first and foremost way to contribute to the community is by joining it. This

updates and learning ways to participate in the social impact community.

For example, right now on the Good Grid, you can sign up to be an Angel Tree Mentor with Healing Waters or you can attend an upcoming event such

as the Jericho Way Open House/ Chili Cookoff or the Saline Connections Networking Event. These and other opportunities are available on the Good Grid and updated daily.

3. Raise awareness – Let

(Continued on Page 3)

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your friends, colleagues, and neighbors know about the Good Grid so that they can sign up and join the community of social impact minded Arkansans. Know of any employers that might hire ex-offenders? Know of any churches that



are already providing services or want to start being more active in social impact? Let them know about us.

We're always happy to come to churches or employers and give a presentation about the Good Grid/help them get started.

For more information about the Good Grid, see pages 4 and 5.

Reentry hires new Mentor Coordinator



Ardella Bearden, shown above, has been selected to be the Mentor Coordinator for the ACC Reentry Division

Bearden is experienced in working in corrections and her job will be recruiting, training, and matching mentors to mentees for ACC. If you are interested in becoming a mentor for ACC contact Bearden at 501-743-0959.

Reentry Officers

Wondering who can help in your area with employment, housing, transportation and other needs for difficult offenders?

Look no further, below is a list of all Reentry Officers in the state.

Through these men and women, you can find out how to connect offenders to the community.

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Area 1 - Kris Eglin | Area 7/8 - vacant |
| Area 2 - Cody Stafford | Area 9 - Markita Thompson |
| Area 3 - vacant | Area 10 - Melissa McClard |
| Area 4 - Christa Eldridge | Area 11 - Tiffany Mayo |
| Area 5 - Jeff Bowling | Area 12 - vacant |
| Area 6 - Mariano Reed | Area 13 - David Edwards |



What is The Good Grid?



Many people find themselves in helpless situations and having to deal with a multitude of poverty related issues. Though there are many good people and organizations ready to help, people are still slipping through the cracks. We address this gap by:

- Connecting **beneficiaries** - those looking for help - to providers that address their issues
- Helping **service providers** serve more effectively by connecting them to a community of dedicated supporters
- Channeling **volunteers** to causes that are meaningful to them

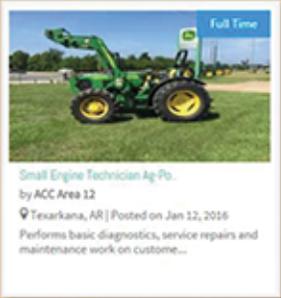
How it Works

There are two main components of The Good Grid (TGG). One part, called **MyPortfolio**, is for returning citizens and the caseworkers who are working on their behalf. The other part, called **Social Hub**, is for volunteers and service providers. TGG is a free service. Please contact us at **501-687-2346** or **team@goodgrid.com** if you'd like help getting started.

Get Started as a Returning Citizen or a Caseworker: MyPortfolio

1. Open up your browser using Google Chrome.
2. Go to the website **www.goodgrid.com/myportfolio**
3. Sign in with your Probation ID Number (PID) and birth date. If you are not sure about your PID, please contact the Good Grid Support Team.

Key Features:

<p>Fill out & download your resume in your choice of 4 styles. The better your resume is, the better chance you have of finding employment.</p>	 <p>Browse & apply to jobs crawled from sources such as Monster & ARJobLink. Filter for jobs specifically posted for returning citizens.</p>	<p>Browse the Training Module for structured learning content including reading, technology, and work skills.</p> 	 <p>Access and easily search our database of more than 100,000 services</p>
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Get Started as a Volunteer or Provider: Social Hub

1. Open up your browser using Google Chrome & go to the website goodgrid.com
2. Click the **Sign Up** button on the top right corner. Once you fill in the information and submit, an administrator will review your request.
3. Once you have been approved, you will be emailed instructions to set up a password and log in using your email and newly set up password.

Key Features:

<p>Post and browse from volunteer & full time opportunities for the <i>community of Arkansans who are passionate about making a difference like you.</i></p>		<p>Help <i>create jobs</i> for your returning citizens</p>
	<p><i>Create a microsite</i> for your organization so that you can raise awareness among volunteers & other providers</p>	
<p><i>Collaborate</i> with other social impact minded Arkansans</p>		<p><i>Publicize events</i> (like fundraisers, marathons, etc.) to your community</p>
	<p>Access and easily <i>search our database</i> of more than 100,000 services</p>	



Guest speakers at Little Rock center focus on reentry

In early February, the Central Arkansas Center in Little Rock hosted various speakers, each of whom spoke to residents on subjects associated

with re-entry.

Mrs. Phillip Dills, a Social Security Disability Representative, spoke with residents and answered questions concerning Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income.

Willie Fleetwood, the founder of “Helping One Willing,” and James Sockwell, owner of Pizza Palace in Searcy Arkansas, spoke with residents about programs available in the surrounding communities that will assist with their re-entry and explained how they can respond appropriately to any unique issue or barrier that they might face when released from ACC.



Project H.O.P.E. helping offenders succeed

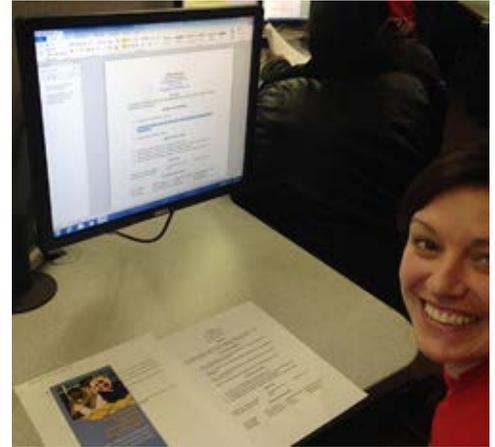
In late January, Area 9 kicked off its latest endeavor, Project H.O.P.E. - Helping Offenders Prepare for Employment - which is a new initiative Area 9 has undertaken with Arkansas WorkForce Services to help offenders better prepare to find new employment.

This program began last September when Re-entry PPA Markita Thompson, PPA Dedra Coleman, and PPO II Candace Cole-Wallace met to discuss the needs of jobless offenders. A plan was then devised to begin Project HOPE in West Memphis, Forrest City and Helena. The plan is to give offenders an opportunity to complete a resume, get their testing with WorkForce completed, receive training on how to seek employment and conduct mock interviews.

WorkForce brought its van to the West Memphis office and each participating offender was tested on site. Offenders also received training on job appearance and presentation by ACC officers.

Staff Development Specialist Kenneth Walker explained the process of finding a job and how to get the job search started. Drug Court Advisor Glen Vinson gave a brief talk on the importance of sobriety in the work place and during the application process. A mock interview was conducted with PPA Cole-Wallace and Drug Court Admin. Spec. Lanette Missman. Landing and keeping a job is a critical step to to becoming contributing members of the community.

Project H.O.P.E.'s next stops were Forrest City and Helena. A newspaper article written about the project is featured on page 8.



Program Offers HOPE for Offenders

Reprinted with permission

By John Rech

The Evening Times

Finding a job for a parolee can be a tough row to hoe. Recidivism rates decrease for ex-offenders that do get a job. So Project HOPE (Helping Offenders Prepare for Employment) rolled into West Memphis along with the WorkForce mobile. Parole workers for Arkansas Department of Community Correction were on hand to guide local offenders through the process. The goal was to better equip those recently released from prison for employment.

HOPE stemmed from a leadership seminar conducted by the Department of Community Correction when Candace Cole-Wallace and Dedra Coleman developed the program that came from a brainstorm at the seminar last summer.

The day of HOPE started with participants developing a pocket resume' and developing a personal job skills inventory. Next job hunters tried for the Arkansas career readiness certificate testing for reading, math, and information lactation skills. That readiness work links to more training and a proctored test at the WorkForce Center based at ASU Mid-South. Finally corporate human resources professionals showed up to conduct mock interviews with the parolees and coached them up on interview skills.

"It was part of our curriculum to come up with an action plan to come up with something practical for offender to use," said Coleman. "We want our offenders to get jobs, but when you look at it, they don't have the skills or don't know how to do a resume' to get a job. I just thought about a jobs skill program and called it HOPE."

"We went through an overview of what to have on a resume,'" said Markita Thompson, Area Nine Re-entry specialist. "We worked on how to present yourself in an interview in a positive way. It takes practice. Employment impacts recidivism greatly. Getting a job for a felon is not as hard as some would believe. There are plenty of companies dedicated to giving someone a second chance."

After this first ever stop, plans are to put HOPE on wheels and take it all around the area including Forrest City and Helena.

Church group donates soap for women at Southeast



Rev. Johnny Smith, Pastor of Shiloh Baptist Church in Pine Bluff delivered 1,000 bars of soap his parishioners collected to donate to the female residents of the Arkansas Community Correction's Southeast Center in Pine Bluff. Shiloh Baptist Church, Southeast District Association, Pine Hill Missionary and Regular St. Marion District churches of the area have pledged to donate quarterly. The donation of Ivory Soap is such an expression of compassion. Each bar represents a door of opportunity welcoming our residents back into their communities clean and sober. This helps them understand that they have not been forgotten.

Officer spends day speaking at local school

Parole/Probation Agent Trey Johnson, shown at right, spoke to a class at Blytheville Primary School for career day. Agent Johnson spoke about being parole/probation officer with ACC.



Reentry centers will make a difference



New reentry residents at the Covenant Reentry Facility in Malvern pose for a group picture after being transferred from ADC units. They are getting started on the right path to being successful in the community.

Rebuilding through demolition in Pine Bluff



Parole and probationers in Pine Bluff are working hard to assist the city with demolishing condemned buildings and clearing lots for future use.

This project is being completed with grant funding through the Arkansas Economic Development Commission and Arkansas Department of Workforce Services. Parolees and probationers are paid each week while also receiving valuable on the job training for construction and demolition skills.

Learned skills help offenders find work



Offenders in the Northeast Community Correction Center in Osceola can earn certification in welding while they are in the center.

Such skills and certification help offenders find gainful employment once they are released.

The welding program is one of many v-tech programs offered through ACC centers. More welding photos are on page 11.

Residents at Northeast Center are welding



Decorating the community for the holidays



Residents at the Northeast Community Correction Center in Osceola spent time help their community by putting Christmas decorations up in downtown Osceola.

One of the programs featured at all of the ACC centers is the community work program.

Through the work program, residents at the centers go into the community and perform community service such as mowing grass, filling sandbags in flooding areas, setting up festivals and cleaning up festivals after an event.

Residents are learning to give back to their community.



Residents are finding their spirit-filled life



In January, Central Arkansas Center Chaplain David Austen conducted his quarterly baptism service. A total of 20 residents, shown below, were baptized that evening during this service. The various volunteer groups who participated in the baptism service, shown above, were Baby Boomers, Freedom Warriors, Charlie Hill Ministries, Born 2 Raze Hell, St. Mark Baptist Church, and Promise Land Church.





Various legal documents are needed in everyday life

ACC's Reentry program at the Southeast Community Correction Center in Pine Bluff has began the Replacement of Vital Records Program for residents. Replacement birth certificates, Arkansas drivers licenses, state ID cards and Social Security cards have been applied for, received and placed in the residents' personal property files. The residents will receive them on the day of their release.

In December, six residents, two counselors and a security officer made a trip to the local Jefferson County Office of Motor Vehicles in Pine Bluff for documents. As seen in the above photo, Advisor Karen Mattin and Treatment Coordinator Melva J. Trask accompanied the residents.



Texas couple brings ministry

George and Linda Harwell from Love Without End Music Ministries preformed at the Central Arkansas Center to a packed audience of residents and staff. The gospel singing group from Whitewright, Texas is starting to become a favorite among both ADC and ACC facilities having traveled around Arkansas performing their style of music at various centers.

Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force Mobile Unit visits ACC center



In January, CAC experienced for the first time a visit from the Governor's Dislocated Worker Task Force Mobile Unit. Twenty-three residents were able to take testing in the van that will help determine their path to obtaining a Workforce Career Readiness Certificate. These 23 residents were scheduled to be released from the center within a 30 to 45 day time frame.

The Career Readiness Certificate is an important tool to help the resident gain employment upon release from the center. The Mobile Workforce Unit is slated to be at CAC during the months of February and March.



NEC honors volunteers with luncheon



The ACC's Northeast Community Correction Center in Osceola held its annual Advisory Board & Volunteer Luncheon meeting on February 10th.

There were 35 people in attendance with Chief Deputy Director Kevin Murphy as the guest speaker.

The center was honored to have Murphy as a guest as well as ACC Director Sheila Sharp and Deputy Director Dina Tyler.

Restore Hope initiative and news briefs

Restore Hope Arkansas

Governor Hutchinson recently sent a letter to state agency directors to announce the establishment of Restore Hope Arkansas, a new not-for-profit organization, to continue the work that came out of the Restore Hope Summit and to work to build community partnerships, coordinate communications, and align efforts for a stronger system to help adult offenders trying to rebuild their lives and to help vulnerable children in foster care.

The Governor has asked state agencies, boards, and commissions to consider assistance they can offer to Restore Hope Arkansas in the form of grants, contracts, dedicated staff time, or needed expertise.

The Governor noted that the assistance offered should be in line with each entity's mission, but asked all entities to be thoughtful in reviewing possible options.

On March 8, the Governor hosted agency directors at a meeting to provide an overview of Restore Hope and to discuss how each could be of assistance. Ted Dickey, Bill Dillard, Paul Chapman, and Governor Hutchinson (ex-officio) comprise the board for the Restore Hope Arkansas, Inc.

ACC's Chief Deputy Director Kevin Murphy has been working with various members of the Governor's Restore Hope Summit steering committee to follow up and enhance initiatives and progress made over the past year.

Governor Hutchinson challenged the steering committee to further engage local communities to get involved in the effort. The group hopes to raise private funds of approximately \$3 million per year to provide support for development of the partnerships.

Specialty Courts

Specialty Courts, which were awarded Court Accountability Grants created by Act 895 of 2015 and funded by the governor, are receiving their money. The Jefferson County Drug Court received \$32,000, which Judge Berlin Jones told The Pine Bluff Commercial is the largest amount of funding it has ever received.

In all, 63 courts received base level funding totaling \$2,090,000. Of those, 26 are Drug Courts, 7 are DWI Courts, 1 is a HOPE Court, 2 are Mental Health Courts, 3 are Smarter Sentencing Courts, 9 are Veterans Court and 11 are Juvenile Courts.

An additional \$679,500 is available for distribution. Each member of the Court Accountability Grant Award Committee will make a recommendation on where the funding should go, and the full body will come to a consensus on its distribution. The Arkansas Judicial Council established the maximum allotments of grant funds for each type of Specialty Court, ACC established the rules for implementing the grant program, and the Advisory Council reviewed the applications and made the awards.

Reentry Centers

ACC is preparing to add two reentry centers, which were licensed in January. Safe Harbor in Little Rock has a capacity for 40 males and Twin Lakes Recovery in Gassville has a capacity for 23.

With this addition, ACC now has a licensed capacity of 198 reentry facility beds across the state. The first resident completed Phase III on January 31 and moved to Phase IV for Community Release.

She is living at an approved residence in Pulaski County while maintaining full time employment and regular weekly meetings with the reentry officer. As of January 31, 100% of eligible residents had obtained full time employment in the community. Eligible means the resident has completed no less than 21 days at the facility.

Restore Hope initiative and news briefs

Justice Center Study

The next findings by the Council of State Government's Justice Center are expected to be presented in May, and researchers say they will dig even deeper into who was sent to prison in 2014. The CSG's researchers presented their first round of findings to the governor's Criminal Justice Task Force February 17. So far, the research indicates that the number of felony sentences handed down by the courts has increased 24% since 2012, despite the state's falling crime rate and a drop in the number of arrests.

Andrew Barbee, Research Manager of CSG, told the task force that prison is the most frequently used felony disposition in Arkansas. Much of Barbee's testimony focused on the high volume of offenders being sent to prison for lower level offenses. Of those sent to ADC in 2014, 82% were for a drug, property or related offense. The numbers also show 1,015 offenders were sentenced for crimes whose presumptive sentences did not include prison.

An additional 3,589 offenders were sentenced to prison from an area of the sentencing grid that includes other options. Contrary to misconceptions, only about a quarter of felony defendants in 2014 were on probation or parole at the time of their new offense. For those on probation, 60% were sentenced to prison. For those on parole, the rate jumps to 86%. Defendants not on supervision were sent to prison 36% of the time.

County Jail issues

The County Judges' Association of Arkansas is working to provide its members with a good understanding of the challenges facing the state's correctional system in an effort to increase support for alternative courts, evidence-based programs, reentry and behavioral health. As a general principle, county judges support programs and solutions that reduce the cost of running the county jails.

In fact, they have been holding regional meetings on increasing the ability to divert more offenders from the county jail to mental health services. Chief Deputy Kevin Murphy and Director Sheila Sharp were invited to the association's Winter Conference in February to explain parole, probation, community-based programs and the direction ACC is headed. Much of the presentation centered on reentry and how decreasing recidivism will lower costs at both the county and state levels.

"We hope to earn greater support for the agency's reentry centers and increase community buy-in of the program. The more members of the community involved, the more successful reentry will be. County judges have indicated their support for our efforts, which should translate to increased community support," said Sharp

Residents at Northwest Center crochet gifts



Residents at the Northwest Arkansas Community Correction Center in Fayetteville use donated materials to crochet items that are donated to various organizations. The blankets and bunny blankets shown in the photographs above were donated to a local women's shelter.