



The Daily Communiqué

In Fifth Year, a DOC Partnership Shows Remarkable Success

By Chad Lewis, West Team Leader, Communications

Dolphy Jordan knew the odds – and they were against him.

Last fall Jordan, 37, was wrapping up a 21-year prison sentence for murder. Having been in prison since he was 16 he was not sure what opportunities he would have when he completed his sentence in April.

But a community corrections officer recommended him for a program that has a remarkable track record for success. None of the 60-plus offenders who have enrolled in the Post-Prison Education Program have been convicted of a felony since they completed their prison sentence.

“We’re talking zero recidivism,” said Program Coordinator Ari Kohn, who established the Seattle-based nonprofit organization in August 2005. “In a state where the recidivism rate is nearly 40 percent, the offenders enrolled in our program are at zero.”

Jordan, who is enrolled at South Seattle Community College, says his chances for success



Community Corrections Officer Jason Mackey, right, speaks with former offender Dolphy Jordan outside Reynolds Work Release. Mackey referred Jordan to the Post-Prison Education program.

are much greater thanks for the partnership.

"Just look at the statistics," he said. "I know I'm better off getting an education, and I know I couldn't have done it without this program."

Kohn and his staff and volunteers provide offenders with the basics they need to succeed in vocational institution, community college or university. The Post-Prison Education Program helps offenders with enrollment, tutoring, enrollment, books, transportation, food, career counseling and more.

"If all we did was enroll them in class and told them they're on their own most of them would never be successful," Program Coordinator Nicole Glasgow said. "But when we help them with all the other essentials they're able to focus on their education, which is true for non-offenders, too."

Offenders in the program have earned certificates and degrees that have led to stability. One former offender recently became a registered nurse. Another former offender became a certified to be a deep-sea welder and is assisting with the oil crisis in the Gulf of Mexico.

Xandis Phillips, the Community Corrections Supervisor at Reynolds Work Release, says the partnership has benefited everyone involved.

"The work they do with education goes perfectly hand in hand with the work we do at DOC," she said. "I know when an offender is enrolled in the Post-Prison Education Partnership I know they're almost certain to be successful, and that's good for public safety."

Kohn said the key is to front-load services, particularly during the first few days after offenders complete their sentences.

"Ideally, an offender will be released on Monday and enroll in class on a Wednesday," he said. "If you get them the very basics – I mean an apartment, groceries, toothpaste, toilet paper – they're much more likely to succeed. It's those first few weeks and months that are absolutely critical."

The non-profit organization did not achieve a zero recidivism rate by only accepting non-violent, low-risk offenders. In fact, Kohn and his staff and volunteers will only accept offenders who are considered high-risk.

"We don't go after low-hanging fruit," he said. "We want to help those who would pose the

greatest risk to public safety and help them succeed.”

Jordan, who completed his prison sentence April 19, says he’s grateful that partnership between DOC and the Post-Prison Education Program existed while he was incarcerated.

“I don’t think it would be as successful as it is if it was just one or the other,” he said. “It really takes both of them working together for this to work. And as you can see, it’s working.