

January 28, 2008

Rob Hope  
Chair, Second Chance Day Planning Committee  
ReEntry Services Coordinator  
Goodwill/Easter Seals MN  
553 Fairview Ave. N  
St. Paul, MN 55104



Dear Community Leader:

On February 13<sup>th</sup>, at 11:00 a.m., in the Capitol Rotunda, over 1000 ex-offenders, their family members and supporters of justice system reform will come together to highlight the importance second chances. This effort is being lead by a consortium of non-profit leaders and justice system advocates. On behalf of this consortium, we are asking for your support in drawing statewide and national attention and in raising the awareness about the barriers facing individuals with criminal records.

There are currently 155,000 Minnesota adults under some form of correctional supervision; 142,000 on probation, 4,200 on some level of supervised release, and 9,100 in prison. And there are at least as many with a criminal record who have satisfied all the requirements of their sentence. This equates to one in every sixteen Minnesotans having the stigma of a conviction they must overcome to qualify for housing, employment and student loans, among other things.

Legislatively we have created nearly 200 collateral sanctions over and above the penalties associated with a conviction. They include restrictions from certain careers, licenses and housing options and they limit a person's ability to access education. Over the course of years, these sanctions have made it nearly impossible for individuals to over-come past mistakes. As their worlds increasingly circumscribed their inability to become productive members of society affects children, families and communities and jeopardizes public safety. These actions, and others, negatively impact not just the offender, but the offenders family, and by extension, future generations. The fact that the poor, and people of color, are extremely overrepresented, suggests that we are potentially contributing to the evolution of permanently disenfranchised communities. We need pragmatic approaches to public safety that are rational, sustainable and cost-effective.

The prison population is five times larger than it was a scant 25 years ago. Yet during that same time period, the overall population of the state grew by just 27%. Public safety requires that we find an effective way to help people overcome the challenges they have to change their lives. But equally important is developing a process to recognize that change and minimize the effects of past behavior on future productiveness and integration. A person who, because of stigma, cannot find employment or housing, and who isn't afraid of incarceration, is problematic for us all.

Anoka County Attorney Robert M.A. Johnson will join multitudes of ex-offenders and supporters on Wednesday February 13<sup>th</sup>, to illustrate the importance of a "Second Chance" and the valuable contributions that can come from supporting one. An invitation has been extended to Congressman Ramstad.

We ask that you and your organization support "Second Chance Day on the Hill" on February 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 by recruiting individuals to come to the capitol. It is time for us to come together and make the all too often invisible problems facing individuals with criminal records visible.

Contact information and meeting dates will be updated on [www.employexoffenders.org](http://www.employexoffenders.org).

We thank you for your support,

Sarah Walker  
Director  
180 Degrees, Inc

Guy Gambill

Dan Cain  
President  
RS Eden

Matthea Little Smith  
Sabathani Community Center

Sue Abderholden  
Executive Director  
NAMI MN

Winfred Payne  
Executive Director  
Alternatives

Toni Carter  
Ramsey County Commissioner

Gary Rierson  
President  
Greater Minneapolis Council of  
Churches

Shantae Holmes  
Family and Children Services

Deborah Schlick  
Executive Director  
Affirmative Options Coalition  
Joycene Maroney Ryan  
MARRCH Board

Jonathan Palmer  
Director  
Minneapolis Empowerment Zone

Lynn Lash  
St. Stephens Human Services

Michael Friedman  
Executive Director  
Legal Rights Center

Anita Urvina Davis  
Principal Child Support Officer  
FJC

Robert Hope  
ReEntry Services Coordinator  
Goodwill/Easter Seals MN

Mary Whitney  
Executive Director  
Women Planting Seeds

Robert Johnson  
Anoka County Attorney

Lori Stee  
Director  
Rebuild Resources

Mark Mask  
Executive Director Edify  
University

Stephen Onell  
FathersFIRST

Mary Ulland Evans  
Resource Development  
Coordinator  
Three Rivers Community Action,  
Inc.

Georgia Komoszewski  
Alberta Lea Salvation Army

Cheryl Wilson  
Organizing Project of African  
American Congregations  
MICAHA

Sue Watlov Philips  
Elim Transitional Housing, Inc.