



RICHMOND CITY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
OFFICE OF THE SHERIFF
RICHMOND CITY JUSTICE CENTER
1701 FAIRFIELD WAY
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA 23223
C.T. WOODY, JR., SHERIFF

NEWS RELEASE

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Media Contact: Dr. Sarah Scarbrough
Office: (804) 646-0987
Cell: (804) 837-7779

JUSTICE CENTER PROGRAM HELPS OFFENDERS PREPARE FOR REENTRY WITH JOB PREP COURSE

The RCJC (Richmond City Justice Center) Program Department hosted its first round of mock interviews for residents participating in an intensive eight week job preparation course. Offering his support for the program, along with information on the restoration of rights process, Secretary of the Commonwealth Levar Stoney spent the morning on Tuesday at the RCJC working with program staff to hone the resume' and job interview skills of twenty five soon to be ex-offenders. Secretary Stoney joined almost 20 other volunteers from various businesses and government agencies in Richmond to interview residents, just as if they were interviewing for a job in the community. Each resident was interviewed by two different business professionals. Speaking on this, one participant stated, "I am doing things I never imagined I would do. I have not filled out a job application or went to a job interview ever in my life."

Through partnership with Micah White of RVA Has Talent, the RCJC Program Department is hosting its second season of RCJC Has Talent and Job Preparation course for residents. Residents enrolled in the REAL Program are able to participate. Participants learn everything from resume and cover letter writing, writing a business proposal, interview attire, elevator speeches, and interviewing techniques. Because the course is associated with RVA Has Talent, if all courses and required work is completed, they are able to perform in a talent show at the RCJC where a winner will be selected and be signed to the RVA Has Talent label. The course started with over 50 people, but due to the intensity, only 22 males and 3 females made it through and participated in the mock interviews.

Residents had typed their resumes and provided them to the interviewer prior to the interviews' start. Writing a resume was something the majority of the participants had never done before; many did not know how to use the computer, and as such were able to gain basic computer skills as well. Residents practiced for the interviews during class and in their free time, but did not specifically know the questions that would be asked during the interview. Tom Bannard, Caritas Shelter Manager, was a guest during one class and provided insight on answering the toughest and most intimidating question regarding their incarceration or felonies. Participant Al shared, "I finally had

The Richmond City Sheriff's Office is responsible for maintaining a secure jail and a safe court system, along with seamless inmate transport and civil process to preserve public safety. We remain committed to performing these duties with unsurpassed integrity and professionalism, with progressive training that incorporates best practices and technology. While partnering with the community, we strive to lower recidivism by bridging the gap from incarceration to reentry into the community by addressing criminogenic needs and barriers most closely related to reoffending.

the opportunity to be honest about being a felon and felt comfortable with it. Although we are in here, we took the initial step of being honest during our interview.” Participant Andre stated, “It brought awareness of how to be prepared when I return to society. I understand how to hold my posture and not get upset if asked about my time in jail. I also received insight on not selling myself short. These mock interviews helped to increase our self esteem, and we are more prepared now to reenter the community.”

Participant Keith most appreciated “Sheriff C.T. Woody for letting the program happen in the facility so we could show people what we are trying to do to better our lives. It was a blessing -- we could speak to people on the outside to show them that the program works and that we are more than criminals. They got a chance to see the things we are doing different and treat us like regular people at an interview.”
