



ULSTER COUNTY NEWS

ULSTER COUNTY NEWS INFORMATION
OFFICE OF ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE
244 FAIR STREET
KINGSTON, NEW YORK, 12401

PHONE: 845.340-3900
FAX: 845.340.3651
www.co.ulster.ny.us
www.ulstercountyny.us

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Chairman David B. Donaldson Announces New Leadership Of The Local Re-Entry Task Force

Ulster County Legislature Chairman David B. Donaldson has appointed Legislator Thomas “T.J.” Briggs, D-Ellenville, as the new Chairman of the Legislature’s Local Re-Entry Task Force.

Briggs is a Senior Corrections Counselor at the Eastern New York Correctional Facility in Napanoch.

“I am happy to announce the appointment of T.J. to chair the re-entry task force,” Donaldson said. “In his position as a senior corrections counselor, he will bring a wealth of experience to the task force which will be very helpful in dealing with the many initiatives that were started under the chairmanship of former Legislator Leonard Distel.”

Donaldson said, “The main goal of the task force is to work to lower the recidivism that currently occurs among parolees and offenders. Thirty percent of parolees and offenders are re-arrested within the first six months, 44 percent are re-arrested in the first year and 66 percent by the third year. It has been proven that punishment alone is relatively ineffective in curbing new offenses or technical violations of a parole condition.”

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“Offenders being successful and productive will not only result in safer communities, but ultimately save thousands of dollars in taxpayer money by lowering the recidivism that currently occurs,” Briggs said. “I am very much looking forward to the challenge.”

Donaldson said, “The Re-Entry Task Force will work to lower recidivism by ensuring that safe and affordable housing is available for all parolees and offenders. Other ways to combat the problem is to provide transportation, ensure that immediate personal needs are met, address family reunification issues, provide employee and job readiness preparation and ensure that fast-track access to treatment, healthcare and supportive mentors is available.”

The task force in its first year established local parole reporting stations so parolees were not required to travel to Poughkeepsie. A temporary site is now available in Ellenville and another site will soon open in the Kingston area. The ultimate goal of obtaining a permanent site staffed on a full-time basis will continue to be pursued.

In 2008, State funding will be sought to establish and support the “Transition from Prison to Community” effort.

Donaldson said, “A number of County agencies will continue to serve on the task force, including Social Services, Mental Health, the Sheriff’s Department, the Office of Employment and Training, Probation, the District Attorney’s Office, the Public Defender, Human Relations and the New York State Parole Division. Special recognition should go the faith-based partners on the task force – the Transformation Life Center, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, Bruderhof, Pointe of Praise and the New Progressive Baptist Church.”

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Pastor G. Modele Clarke and Assistant Pastor Paul Worthington of the New Progressive Baptist Church, along with one of their parishioners, Ronnie Wade, were instrumental in keeping re-entry issues on the County's radar, according to Donaldson.

"Their vision in creating the 'Save Them Now Program' and Program Director Wade's determination and direction to make sure the program was successful cannot go unrecognized," Donaldson said.

In Save Them Now's first year of operation, only three of the 61 men who entered the program returned to prison. Twenty-nine of those in the program obtained jobs.