

MEMORANDUM

TO: ALL

FROM: 2007-2008 LEADERSHIP ACADEMY FELLOWS

DATE: JUNE 30, 2008

SUBJECT: FINAL REPORT ON THE BEYOND THE BARS SYMPOSIUM

The “Beyond the Bars: Symposium on Reentry in Maryland” held on May 20, 2008 at the University of Maryland, School of Law was the product of the hard work and dedication of the 2007-2008 Maryland State Bar Association Leadership Academy Fellows. The Symposium was a huge success and will mark a turning point in the movement to assist ex-offenders to better society as a whole.

The 2007-2008 Fellows decided to organize this symposium addressing the issues surrounding the reentry of ex-offenders into the community and society. The Fellows researched various ideas and topics, and discovered that Maryland's recidivism rate steadily remained at more than 50%. The Fellows believed that by raising awareness of local and statewide resources currently available to re-entering individuals regarding opportunities for vocational training, employment, substance abuse treatment and housing, the recidivism rate would decline. They hoped that through organizing this symposium, and bringing together all the individuals and entities that interacted and dealt with ex-offenders they would be able to create networks and bridges to bridge the gaps where recidivism occurred, and ultimately, impact the recidivism rate.

The Fellows began their public service project by reaching out to many organizations for funding for this project. Organizations responded and the project was fully funded by the following sponsors: Maryland Bar Foundation, Maryland State Bar Association, Bar Association & Bar Foundation of Montgomery County, Mead & Flynn, P.A., Alliance of Black Women Attorneys, Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Baltimore County Bar Foundation, Federal Bar Association, St. Thomas More Society, Gore Brothers Reporting, (Morton Sophia Macht Foundation, Inc., Venable Foundation, DLA Piper, Queens Anne’s County Bar Foundation, Klemkowski, Klemkowski & Dunn, P.A., Monumental City Bar Association, American Association of Visually Impaired Attorneys and the University of Maryland, School of Law.

The Fellows also organized the speakers for the Symposium, reaching out to various notable names from local area advocates to individuals known nationwide. The Fellows were able to secure 25 speakers to address the attendees on various topics of interest in dealing with reentry. The Keynote Speaker for the Symposium was Dan Rodricks, an award-winning columnist for the Baltimore Sun and the host of a radio program on WYPR. Mr. Rodricks has been very active in the arena of reentry and often

discusses this issue in his column, radio show and blog. Representatives from successful reentry programs, both private and public, were invited to present stories of their achievements and learning experiences to the audience, which included federal and state parole and probation officers, prison administrators, Maryland legislators, other members of the Maryland legal and judicial community, and local and nationwide private/non-profit organizations. Speakers and presenters included: Felix Mata (Defendant/Offender Workforce Development Initiative), Senator Lisa Gladden (District 41), Constance Parker (Maryland Reentry Initiative), Michael Pinard (University of Maryland, School of Law, Reentry of Ex-offenders Clinic), Brother Bey (FOXO), Jane Brown (Community Partnerships, Virginia Department of Social Services), Alfreda Robinson (National Women's Prisons Project, Inc.), Scott Shortenhaus (U.S. Department of Labor, Center for Faith-based and Community Initiatives), Thomas Williams (Court Services & Offender Supervision Agency) among many others. Attendees were offered an opportunity to discuss different topics in large and small settings with all of the speakers and presenters. The first half of the day included the Keynote speaker and a panel discussion. The second half of the day consisted of breakout sessions.

At the Symposium, various entities offering services and programs to ex-offenders were afforded an opportunity to showcase their programs throughout the afternoon at the Symposium's Exhibitors' Hall. Some participants included: The Way Home, Marion House, Inc., Jericho Re-Entry Program, Freedom Advocates Celebrating Ex-Offenders (FACE), and Alternative Directions.

To ensure that their work would not be a single day of achievement, the Leadership Academy Fellows also partnered with the University of Maryland's Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR) in populating its database of public and private resources and programs available for individuals who have recently reentered society from prison or jail. The Fellows contacted various people and organizations in each county to get current names, numbers and other information about various programs available throughout the state for ex offenders. The information was consolidated and has been or will be added to the CESAR website at <http://www.mdcsl.org>. The unveiling of this website at the symposium was considered to be the highlight of the day for some of the attendees.

Additionally, the Fellows coordinated with Gore Brothers Reporting and were able to capture video footage of the first half of the Symposium. Footage is available at "http://www.gorebrothers.com/webcast/msba_la08" and includes a welcome address by Alison Asti (2007-2008 President of the MSBA), the keynote address by Dan Rodricks, Commentary on Legislation by Maryland State Senator Lisa Gladden, and a panel discussion on "Collaboration as the Key to Success in Reentry". Panelists included Constance Parker, Diana Bailey, David Muhammad, C. Jeff Beeson, Rhonda Gaines & Roger Lash.

The Symposium was a tremendous success. Attendees were pleased with the experience they had and the information that they learned. An evaluation form was distributed at the Symposium and results are listed below along with some of the

comments and suggestions for the future. (The results are organized in reference to each segment of the Symposium, and were rated on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest score achievable.)

Keynote Address

Presenter – Dan Rodricks

Content – 4.06

Speaker – 3.86

Overall Commentary – Speaker considered to be disappointing, unprepared, unhelpful and cavalier. The audience believed that the speaker needed to do additional research to speak on this topic.

Collaboration is the Key

Presenters – Constance Parker, Diana Bailey, David Muhammad
C. Jeff Beeson, Rhonda Gaines & Roger Lash

Content – 4.23

Speakers – 4.31

Overall Commentary – There was a great variety of organizational representatives that the audience was not aware of. The panel spoke well of how agencies are collaborating. The panel was informative and dynamic and offered different approaches to resolving reentry problems. Jeff Beeson and Roger Lash were noted as particularly good speakers.

Other States Programs

Presenters – Jane Brown & Thomas Williams

Content – 4.33

Speakers – 4.38

Overall Commentary – Both presenters were very informative and gave different approaches to resolving re-entry problems. Excellent presentation of what Virginia has done and continues to do in reentry. Lots of great information it is good to know what is happening in neighboring jurisdictions as well as how interstate compact works with integrated services between DC, Maryland and Virginia.

Addressing the Issues of Reentry for Women

Presenters – Brenda Shell-Eleazer & Alfreda Robinson

Content – 4.75

Speakers – 4.73

Overall Commentary – Really good, great statistical information given, but too much reading of PowerPoint.

How Can the Legal Community Help

Presenters – Brenda Bratton-Blom, Michael Pinard, Nancy Forster & J. Wyndal Gordon

Content – 4.23

Speakers – 4.15

Overall Commentary – The audience wanted to know more tools and techniques that could be used, but found that the information that was given was helpful in their jobs. The presentations were interesting, positive and useful. Nancy Forster and Michael Pinard got great reviews and were considered engaging. The moderator was noted as being fun. However, the audience did not find J. Wyndal Gordon helpful in particular.

New Trends in Reentry Programs

Presenters – Brother Bey, Linda Deming & Paul Harris

Content – 4.09

Speakers – 4.36

Overall Commentary – The session was characterized as whacky but fun and enlightening. Only one speaker (Deming) actually spoke about reentry programs, one spoke about his experience of incarceration (Bey), and the other spoke of spiritual belief. Paul Harris and Brother Bey were interesting and great motivational speakers.

Making Re-Entry Work: Local Program in the Spotlight

Presenters – Mary Joel Davis, Eric Seleznow & Andrew Stritch

Content – 3.88

Speakers – 4.06

Overall Commentary – Speakers shared good information, however handouts or brochures would have been helpful to view. Eric Seleznow in particular got excellent reviews and requests were made for additional information regarding what he discussed. The other speakers were perceived as dry in comparison.

Federal Initiatives in Re-Entry

Presenters – Felix Mata & Scott Shortenhaus

Content – 4.65

Speakers – 4.59

Overall Commentary – Speakers were outstanding and informative. They gave good, useful information regarding the breakdown on federal initiatives and finances and how things trickled down to local, community and faith-based resources.

In their evaluations, attendees were asked which topics were most interesting and what did they learn and how they benefited by attending the symposium. Based on attendees responses the top five topics were the Apprentice Program, CESAR website, Women's Issues in Reentry, Collaboration as the Key and the Federal Initiatives in Reentry. Attendees stated that they benefited and learned about the breadth of programs available, specifically the apprentice program that Roger lash discussed; the collateral consequences of sentences; that personnel in government are working towards making a positive impact in the area of reentry; how I can help; Virginia's model reentry programs; how big the housing issue is for individuals reentering the community; how to work with others in different agencies; the usefulness of the CESAR website; the various legal and federal issues involved in the area of reentry; the statistics regarding reentry; how many people and ex-offenders are concerned with this population of reentrants; that we can build on the existing programs available to enhance them and make them work more successfully; and that Maryland is on track and developing a blueprint for more success in the field of reentry and lowering the recidivism rate.

Some more general comments, quotes and suggestions from attendees regarding the Symposium were:

- Great moderations at breakout sessions.
- The program was well put together and executed and covered about all it could in one day.
- Seemed to center around programs servicing Baltimore City residents, would like to learn how to access and locate providers in other areas of Maryland.
- "To be honest, it was a great presentation and I just don't think it could be better than it already is!!!"
- Shocked to see so many people show up for a symposium on reentry. It is even more impressive considering that a thunderstorm that had occurred that morning.
- "Very, very, very well planned."
- Great job in planning, parking, email follow-up, accommodations and coordination were excellent.
- The helpers and guides were knowledgeable and friendly.
- "Let's hear it for Mrs. Steedman!" & "Kudos to the MSBA."
- Congratulations to the Leadership Academy on a job well done, great job in planning and a good variety of topics were covered.

- Politicians and Directors of Corrections may support all these programs if the money is there to support them.
- The information shared at the symposium needs to be transmitted to all Department of Corrections social workers and parole and probation officers.
- Additional emphasis on issues related to jail, rather than Department of Corrections would have been helpful.
- Get more judges and the bench involved they make decisions and add another dimension and layer to conversations about reentry.
- Funding is a hurdle, there needed to be a session discussing how to get funding for the projects and services presenters were discussing.
 - The breakout sessions would have benefited from additional time.
- It would have been helpful to gain knowledge about programs and services available specifically for juveniles.
- Great networking tool, however it would be helpful if a list of all the attendees and the agencies they represented was available.
- More business leaders, companies and employer representatives should be involved.
 - There could have been a speaker(s) during lunchtime.
- Livelier opening remarks and less time for the keynote address would have made the Symposium better. Time could have been used for more breakout sessions.
 - More exhibitors that provided transitional services to ex-offenders.
- Mix it up, through seating or other ways to assist in developing networks and contact with persons from other agencies.

The Leadership Academy's *Beyond the Bars* Symposium was successful in bringing together many different entities to discuss a large variety of topics related to the area of reentry in Maryland. The Fellows believe that all who attended benefited in some way from the symposium and that greater connectivity and networking were achieved through the symposium.

We also learned that through the judges that attended, a new initiative is being spearheaded by Chief Judge Bell to provide more information to the judiciary.

The 2007-2008 Maryland State Bar Association Leadership Academy Fellows included: Gerald L. Allen, Timothy A. Bradford, Christine Britton, Terrah A. Dews, Linette F. Golden, Wm. Carl Isler, II, Kenyan R. McDuffie, Aaliyah R. Muhammad, Aaron E. Price, Tracy L. Steedman, Mathew S. Tidball, Angelia Wade, Shani K. Whisonant and Jean Ann Whyte.