



Robert M. Maccarone, Deputy Commissioner and Director  
 Bernard Wilson, Supervisor Contract Administration  
 Cynthia Blair, Editor

December 2011  
 Volume 2, Issue 4

# IN TOUCH with OWDS

NYS DCJS Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives: IN TOUCH WITH Offender Workforce Development Specialists (OWDS)

## News

OPCA Participates in National Broadcast



## Worth the Work!

- OPCA to hold Fifth OWDS Class in 2012
- RSW! -MH to pilot

## Inside Highlights

- RSW! News

## Other News

- Ulster B2B
- Legal Action Center
- OWDS Corner

Welcome to *In Touch with OWDS* an electronic newsletter from the New York State DCJS Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives (OPCA), written specifically for OWDS and others interested in offender employment

**Leading the Way...** DCJS Deputy Commissioner and Director of OPCA Robert Maccarone and Community Correction Representative Cynthia Blair were featured in the National Institute of Corrections' live national broadcast on Offender Employment Retention(OER) held on November 2, 2011.

Deputy Commissioner Maccarone shared with the audience of over 2,000 national viewers, information showcasing the programs that OPCA uses to foster positive change in individuals involved in the criminal justice system in order to help keep New York State communities safe. He spoke about the collaborative process necessary for success as well as the changes OPCA has fostered through instituting evidence based programming such as Thinking for a Change and Motivational Interviewing. He also shared information on OPCA's collaborative success in the use of the Pathways to Employment Program with county probation and ATI programs. *Ready, Set, Work! (RSW!) RSW! for Sex Offenders, RSW! for Persons in Mental Health Recovery and Retention Counts!* were all highlighted.

Also featured telephonically along with Deputy Commissioner and Director Maccarone were Dr. William Miller, Co-Founder of Motivational Interviewing and Dr. Barry Glick, Co-Founder of Thinking for a Change.

OPCA's Cynthia Blair was a broadcast Panel member on segments 6 "Program Implementation and Evaluation " and segment 7 "Leveraging Resources."

Other segments were: OER Stakeholders, Barriers and Benefits, Reducing Recidivism through Evidence Based Practices, Strategy and Partnerships, and Assessing and Planning. For those of you who missed the broadcast you can see it using the following link:

<http://nicic.gov/Library/024978>

**OPCA TO HOLD 2012 Offender Workforce Development Specialists Training in Albany**  
**Week One:** March 19-23  
**Week Two:** April 30-May 4  
**Week Three:** June 11-14

If you are interested in attending please contact: Cynthia at 518.485.5145 [cynthia.blair@dcjs.ny.gov](mailto:cynthia.blair@dcjs.ny.gov)

## Cattaraugus to Pilot RSW! for Persons in MH Recovery

Cattaraugus County Probation Department is gearing up to pilot the DCJS OPCA *RSW! for Persons in Mental Health Recovery* Curriculum. This program requires a certified OWDS and benefits from including other agencies that work with persons in Mental Health Recovery. 2011 OWDS graduate, **Denise Lengvarsky** will head up this effort. Denise has experience with the population, having served in the Forensic Mental Health Program in Cattaraugus as part of the Shared Services project. Denise will have plenty of Support from her co-workers as 14 Cattaraugus Probation staff are now certified OWDS, thanks to Director Gerry Zimmerman and his continuous support of this program.

## Ready, Set, Work! News

### Ontario County OWDS Begins RSW! group



SarahDobbs

SarahDobbs of Ontario County Probation is facilitating her first solo RSW! group in Ontario County. She is excited; and says that after presenting to the OWDS professionals during the 2011 class, she is well prepared for the day reporting group that she facilitates.

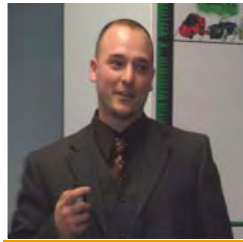
#### Statewide RSW! group Information

RSW! groups are being held in the following probation departments: Albany, Cattaraugus, Dutchess, Erie, Ontario, Monroe, Ulster and Warren counties. Albany County is also holding RSW! for Sex Offender groups and accepts offenders from surrounding counties. In addition to Albany, Saratoga, Schenectady and Rensselaer have had participants in the training.

From 2008 through the end of 2010, 13 county Probation Departments held 102 sessions of the RSW! 20 hour curriculum. 719 probationers and other offenders completed the sessions with 433 obtaining employment, a 60% employment rate.

Probation Violation Centers are also holding RSW! groups: BASICS, EAC TASC, Palladia, Project M.O.R.E., and TASC of the Capital District reported 414 RSW! completions as of July 2011 with 119 reported as employed.

### TASC of the Capital District Holds 5 RSW! groups this year



Brandon DeLuke

Brandon DeLuke, who is also a 2011 graduate of OWDS, is making big strides in the TASC of the Capital District's Probation Violation Residential Center's RSW! program. Since the program began last year, they have had 51 residents complete RSW! Out of the completers, 29 found work within 90 days of completion. A 57% employment rate is a huge accomplishment with this especially difficult population. Brandon has a unique way of engaging participants. He has some people in the group that bring valuable skills and talents. He began by asking one participant who has an advanced degree and who has worked on NYC's Wall Street, to assist with the budgeting module. Brandon says the other clients seem to listen more intently when they are hearing something important from one of their peers. Now Brandon is on the lookout in each new group for participants who might have special expertise or life experience that can enhance one of the modules and allows them to assist him in that module where appropriate.

#### Erie County OWDS

Erie County Probation has a new twist on their RSW! groups. They have several staff trained as OWDS and are partnering with a community group which

### Erie County (cont.)

also has trained OWDS. This is allowing Erie to share the RSW! training and for certified OWDS to specialize in certain modules.

Denise Skowkowski a 2011 graduate of the Albany OWDS training, is the anchor and attends all of the sessions. She is able to forge the very important relationships needed with the participants while having other OWDS assist with many of the modules. We will update you on their results in the next issue.

**RSW! VETERAN SET TO RETIRE**



Art Cooney,  
Senior Probation Officer

After many years at Cattaraugus Probation, Art Cooney, OWDS extraordinaire will be hanging up his badge in the New Year. Since taking the OWDS training in OPCA's inaugural class he has been on a mission to help probationers become law abiding citizens by preparing them for quality, legitimate employment. Cattaraugus probation has 14 probation staff trained in OWDS—the most of any department in the state and it all started with Art. The department often has several RSW! groups running at one time in different parts of the county and has become a model site. We hope that along with his plans to travel, farm and laugh a lot, Art will continue to use his considerable OWDS skills in the next chapter of his life. *Art, we salute you. (See next column for an open letter from Art)*

### An OWDS Reflects on Ready, Set, Work!

#### Open Letter from an OWDS:

*I have been doing RSW! for some 3 years to date. It has been an eye opening experience, to say the least. Several striking observations come to mind: How important is a support network? It is critical to the success of an offender seeking a new path. It is an essential ingredient for any career development plan. We see many offenders who have a negative support network. Correcting this deficiency is key to their success as well as that of the OWDS. Helping the offender explore, seek out and maintain positive associations is worthy of a substantial amount of our time. It is my belief that this network begins with us. In the case of a probation officer this requires taking on more of the role of a social worker while the law enforcement role becomes a bottom line (I still file a number of Violations). Once a dynamic support network is in place, critical and planful thinking replaces impulsive thinking, empathy replaces selfishness, and work ethic replaces the you owe me, I'm a victim attitude. RSW provides a powerful and effective tool in this general initiative. 80% plus of those who have completed our RSW groups are maintaining employment. All but a small percentage of these are maintaining lawfulness and civility.....*

*Merry Christmas.....Art*

*Art Cooney, Probation Officer, OWDS, GCDF, GCDF Instructor*

## Ulster County Employment Collaboration

By Mark Pisano, OWDS, Ulster County Probation

### Business to Business Showcase



The Ulster County Regional Chamber of Commerce, with the support of Ulster County Executive Michael Hein, held a Business to Business Showcase at Ulster County Community College on Friday 9/23/11. There were approximately 120 local business and services represented. Ulster County Probation Department Senior Probation Officer **Mark Pisano**, OWDS GCDF, attended the B2B Showcase, and was able to meet and speak with many potential employers, as well as collaborative partners for the **Ready, Set, Work! Program**. Executive Hein, Deputy County Executive and former Ulster County Probation Director Robert Sudlow, and Probation Director Melanie Mullins have always been supportive of Evidence Based Practices in Ulster County. Mark is currently holding an **RSW!** group.



## OWDS Corner

By Craig MacNeil, OWDS, Albany County Probation

### Life Changing Work



Craig MacNeil

At the completion of a recent **RSW!** group I had a 51 year old man with multiple felony convictions that has spent more than half of his adult life incarcerated get a full time job - when he sat down with me to discuss this new job he proceeded to break down and cry at the fact that in his entire life this was the first thing he ever completed and the first time he felt that he had a "real shot at never getting in trouble again."

A recent graduate of the **RSW! for Sex Offender** group has started his own business. He happily reports that on Thanksgiving weekend he completed his first contract and can't wait to re-invest a portion of the money back in to the business to upgrade some of his equipment.

Another graduate of a recent **RSW!** group has just obtained his DBA (doing business as) certificate. He happily reports that not only does he have several painting contracts lined up but he has struck an agreement with a former "off the books" employer who is willing to pay him with checks made out to him in the name of his new business. He has been pre-approved for a \$35,000 small business loan and is in the process of scheduling an appointment with the NYS Small Business Development Center to review his business plan.

*Clearly **RSW!** groups can make a difference in the lives of offenders, their families and help keep our communities safer.*

### **OWDS Corner**

We invite original articles from Offender Workforce Development Specialists, and will try to share one in each issue.

### **Keeping In Touch:**

Offender Workforce Development Specialists should advise OPCA as soon as they receive their **GCDF** or other certificates, promotions, etc.

Didn't see **your** name here? Let us know what you are doing. Also please contact Cynthia Blair if you need technical assistance with your **Ready, Set Work!** or **Retention Counts!** groups at 518-485-5145 or [cynthia.blair@dcjs.ny.gov](mailto:cynthia.blair@dcjs.ny.gov)

# LEGAL ACTION CENTER



## Sixth Annual NYS Reentry Policy Conference

held at NYU on September 26, 2011

*"Meeting Employer and Job Seeker Needs: Criminal Record Policies that Work"*

Keynote Speaker P. David Lopez had the following to share:

*When a young Phoenix man named Gabriel left prison after a four-year term for burglary, he was 21 -- the same age at which his uncle, P. David Lopez, graduated college and saw before him limitless opportunities. But unlike that college grad, Gabriel "faced a world where his options, in many ways, were limited," Mr. Lopez said, "by stereotypes, by prejudice, by the law." Mr. Lopez, the keynote speaker at the Network's Sixth Annual NYS Reentry Policy Conference, went on to become General Counsel at the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. His nephew's story mirrors the struggles happening all over the country, he said, and inspires him to keep fighting against discrimination in hiring.*

If you missed the conference the links below will lead you to very useful brochures for those with a criminal history who are seeking employment.

[http://www.lac.org/doc\\_library/lac/publications/YourRapSheet.pdf](http://www.lac.org/doc_library/lac/publications/YourRapSheet.pdf)  
[http://www.lac.org/doc\\_library/lac/publications/LoweringCriminalRecordBarriers.pdf](http://www.lac.org/doc_library/lac/publications/LoweringCriminalRecordBarriers.pdf)  
[http://www.lac.org/doc\\_library/lac/publications/CriminalRecordsAndEmployment.pdf](http://www.lac.org/doc_library/lac/publications/CriminalRecordsAndEmployment.pdf)

For more information contact the Legal Action Center at  
<http://www.lac.org/>  
or the H.I.R.E. Network at  
<http://www.hirenetwork.org/>

## OWDS Training to be held in Western NY

Chautauqua County will hold their 2<sup>nd</sup> OWDS training on the following dates:  
March 18-23, 2012  
May 7-11, 2012  
June 18-21, 2012  
Contact Warden Johnson  
[JOHNSONP@sheriff.us](mailto:JOHNSONP@sheriff.us) for more information

## Chautauqua OWDS training class of 2011



# HAPPY HOLIDAYS

