

Court Information Release



UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

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United States Probation Office Prepares for Grand Opening of “The Helpful Hanger”

CHICAGO – In recent months, the United States Probation Office has embarked upon a number of ambitious and exciting initiatives to assist federal offenders with needed job development resources. In response to the news of these new initiatives, Chief Judge James F. Holderman remarked that he is “immensely impressed with the Probation Office’s continued pursuit of new ways to expand its services, despite its well-established reputation for excellence in job readiness and job placement programs.”

The impetus for recent changes began in 2006, when a small core of probation officers started meeting regularly to explore creative ways to prepare ex-offenders for the workforce. As momentum grew, a Workforce Development Committee was established to coordinate and explore community resources and potential employers. To date, the Workforce Development Committee has grown to approximately thirty-five members, which includes officers, supervisors, and a retired probation officer committed to reducing the unemployed offender rate.

During the past 12 months, the Workforce Development Committee has been working diligently to develop employment resources throughout the Chicagoland area. At the same time, the Committee has also created in-house resources for ex-offenders. One such resource is “The Helpful Hanger,” a clothing closet outfitted with donated business attire for those offenders who do not have appropriate interview clothes. Recognizing a need for this basic item, the Committee began collecting donations from members of the Probation Office over the last few months. With a closetful of clothing in all sizes and styles, the Workforce Development Committee and the United States Probation Office together are ready to open the doors of the Helpful Hanger, with a Grand Opening ceremony scheduled for Tuesday, June 12th at 10 a.m.

In addition to the Helpful Hanger, the Workforce Development Committee has also developed an In-House Job Readiness Training Program, designed to assist and prepare pre-screened offenders by conducting mock job interviews, internet job searches, and resume development. Participation is currently limited to 20 employment candidates per group. The inaugural In-House Job Readiness Training Program is scheduled to take place on June 27, 2007, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Chief U.S. Probation Officer Richard Tracy says he is proud of the efforts of his employees in constantly thinking of new ways to assist federal offenders. Chief Tracy notes that, "Employment is a crucial part of successful reentry into the community. The opportunity for gainful employment provides ex-offenders with a number of benefits, the most important of which is the hope for a better future."

The Helpful Hanger is located at the United States Probation Office, 55 East Monroe, Room 1500. Snacks and refreshments will be available at the Grand Opening celebration. Members of the court family and the press are invited to attend this auspicious event.