

Title of Session: Alt/Correctional Education Forum - National Social Rehabilitation and Reentry Program

Moderator: BJ Berquist

Guest Speaker: Jorea Blount

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BJB2: welcome to today's Alt/Correctional Ed discussion

BJB2: our guest today is Jorea Blount who is going to share a new program for inmates and ex-offenders

BJB2: we usually start all Tapped In discussions with introductions

BJB2: please let Jorea know where you are located and what brings you to the discussion

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I'm a HelpDesk volunteer and I lead a math education and technology discussion here. I'm in New Jersey, near New York City

LynneW: My name is Lynne Wolters. I am a prof. of ed tech and am an interested observer.

MichelleLu: Hello, I am a Foster Youth Services Coordinator for San Diego County Office of Ed.

LynneW: I'm from Portland OR and lead a Web 2.0 Tools for Schools group.

BJB2: I've just returned from a Correctional Ed Conference where re-entry was one of the major topics

BJB2: Jorea, can you give us an overview of what your program is?

MichelleLu: that is what we are working on as well. Easing the transition back to comprehensive school settings

JoreaM: Hello. My name is Jorea Blount. I am represent the National Social Rehabilitation and Reentry program. We are located in the Dallas area. I'm currently working as a staff grantwriter for a nonprofit called Texas Inmate Services (TXIS). TXIS provides assistance to ex-offenders paroling out of Texas prisons.

MichelleLu: Adults only?

JoreaM: The program was created as an avenue for inmates and ex-offenders to be trained via correspondence in subjects dealing with grantwriting and nonprofit management.

LynneW: Why grantwriting and nonprofit management?

MichelleLu: oh wow...very cool. I wonder if the principles could be applied to vocational training for youth.

BJB2 wonders that also

JoreaM: Our organization wanted to create a program that was much different from any other training program that's available to inmates.

BJB2: Jorea, can the program start before the inmate is released/paroled?

BJB2: and what are the qualifications?

JoreaM: Most assistance that will be available to inmates and ex-offenders come from churches, nonprofits and other social services agencies. Therefore, these agencies are more apt to employ ex-offenders.

BJB2 . o O (many inmates lack a high school diploma or GED)

LynneW sees the connection

JoreaM: Yes, the program is for inmates and ex-offenders to take via home study.

BJB2: how do you let prospective participants know about your program?

JoreaM: Our staff consists of six individuals with degrees in management, human resource management, theology, journalism, social work and Christian counseling.

MichelleLu: that makes sense. However most agencies I have worked for (I am a social worker) cannot hire anyone who cannot pass a background check, so that would be a problem for felony offenders.

JoreaM: We have mailed out over 500 brochures to prisoner agencies. Also, I have sent out about 400 emails to different agencies such as Correctional Educational Association.

BJB2: have you joined the CEA listserv, Jorea?

LynneW: Is this a relatively new program?

JoreaM: We will offer job referral and placement assistance. Our organization coordinates with the National Volunteer Center Association, Americorp and the Catholic

Volunteer Network. Now the salary range is low but the ex-offender will gain the experience.

MichelleLu: I imagine that's really important.

JoreaM: Yes, our program is relatively new.

BJB2: ex-offenders not only have difficulty finding jobs, they also need a lot of support to re-enter the community....do you offer anything along those lines?

JoreaM: No, I have not joined the CEA listserv. How do I go about that, BJB?

BJB2: go to www.ceanational.org

BJB2: then select Discussion Groups on the menu on the left of the page

JoreaM: BJB, our organization can provide social service referrals to ex-offenders.

BJB2: I'd suggest the CEA General list, but there are many special interest groups. I think a new group for re-entry is going to be added

BJB2 nods to Jorea. Did you mention the age range? How old does a person have to be to participate?

JoreaM: Thanks, BJB. I will do that after I leave the discussion.

BJB2: Michelle, you might want to join the Juvenile SIG

BJB2 . o O (if you're not already a member)

MichelleLu: what is that?

BJB2: for correctional educators of juveniles (11-18)

BJB2: SIG = Special Interest Group

MichelleLu: excellent! I will do that too. I am on a learning curve here!

BJB2: Jorea, your training is all done using snail mail?

JoreaM: Our organization recommends that a student be at least 16 years of age and have completed their GED. However, if the student is working on their GED then we would accept them into the program.

BJB2: does training include face 2 face sessions?

MichelleLu: And can they live anywhere in the country?

JoreaM: Yes, the program can be completed via snail mail. The student is required to submit a nonprofit business plan and/or a grant proposal at the end of each track. There are two tracks: Nonprofit Management and Grantsmanship.

BJB2: writing grants can be really difficult! I know a lot of teachers have difficulty with this topic

LynneW: Are you using materials that had already been created or were the materials created from scratch?

JoreaM: No, there is no face to face contact. We are not staffed to do that. Our staff are contracted out on a part-time basis. They all have full time jobs. Everything is done by mail, fax, email and phone.

BJB2 nods

MichelleLu: is there a cost?

BJB2: good question, Michelle.

MichelleLu: smiles

JoreaM: Most material was created from scratch by experienced professionals. We do use other material as supplement materials. You can view the biographies of the development consultant that created the material at our website:
www.prisonerresources.com

JoreaM: Yes, there is a cost. There is one time registration fee of \$10.00. Also, each course can be purchased from \$5.00- \$10.00 depending on the course.

MichelleLu: wow, that is great.

MichelleLu: how can they prove they completed these courses?

BJB2: good. I think that ex-offenders need to pay some kind of fee to validate the program. Otherwise it becomes "what you pay for"

BJB2: I assume that once the program is completed, a certificate is offered?

JoreaM: Our organization is looking to train ex-offenders and inmates in the basics of Grantwriting, Grant Research and Nonprofit Management. This would allow the student to apply for entry level positions at nonprofit agencies, prison ministries and other social service agencies. We do not want to mislead any student in believing that they can

secure a high paying position with an agency just because they have completed this program.

BJB2 . o O (poor Jorea...we are an inquisitive group!)

JoreaM: The student will receive a transcript and a certificate once both tracks are completed. There's a total of 27 courses that the student must complete in order to receive a certificate.

BJB2: are there any other stipulations to admission? Drug testing? Sexual offenders?

JoreaM: There is no stipulations for admission other than the student must be working on or have completed a GED or high school program.

BJB2: interesting.

JoreaM: No, drug testing. That would be up to the prospective employer to test for drugs.

BJB2 nods

MichelleLu: do you have any contact with PO's to let them know their clients are doing this? Do PO's contact your program?

BJB2 . o O (POs would be a good point of contact, Jorea!)

JoreaM: POs must contact us. I have sent out an email and brochure to the National Association of Probation and Parole Officers.

MichelleLu: cool.

BJB2: do you have any questions for us, Jorea?

JoreaM: We have submitted a application to the Education Endorsement Committee of the Association of Fundraising Professionals, formerly called National Society of Fundraising Executives. This will allow our program to be recognized by a organization that plays a major role in the field of grantwriting and nonprofit management.

JoreaM: I have enjoyed this discussion. Feel free to contact me by email at jorea@usa.com, phone 972-999-7023 or fax 866-295-7200.

BJB2: sounds good.

MichelleLu: take care.

BJB2: Jorea, this has been very interesting!

JoreaM: Have a good night. Take care.