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*In Touch with OWDS* is published by the DCJS Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives (OPCA) for Offender Workforce Development Specialists (OWDS) and others interested in offender employment.

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## Leading the Way



In 1975, Sister Mary Nerney formed **Project Greenhope: Services for Women**, which helped those released from prison with their return to their communities. Eleven years later, she established [Steps to End Family Violence \(STEPS\)](#), which focused on battered women and later expanded to provide services to children who witness violence and to redirect young men who began abusing their girlfriends.

Sister Mary also founded the **Incarcerated Mothers Program** and was a founding member of the **Coalition for Women Prisoners**. She continued to counsel inmates until days before she died.

This year, **Sharon Richardson (pictured here with Sister Mary, left, on the day she left prison)**, a Re-Entry Specialist with STEPS, graduated in January from the latest OWDS training. Sharon shared her history about Sister Mary, who was with her throughout her long prison sentence and was right there to meet her as she was released. Sharon says that she considered Sister Mary to truly be a second mother to her.

Sister Mary even came out of retirement to ensure that Sharon would succeed in her endeavor to help others overcome the many obstacles encountered by those re-entering society after an extended time of incarceration.

## Ready, Set, Work!

In 2013, OPCA obtained information from 25 agencies that held 127 **RSW!** groups. A total of 846 offenders completed the **RSW!** groups and 403 obtained employment within 90 days. In 2013, 13 Probation Departments held 55 groups with 288 completions and 146 obtaining employment within 90 days. Six ATI programs held 48 groups with 356 completions and 195 obtaining employment within 90 days. The Residential Stabilization Centers (RSC) held 14 groups with 100 completions and 40 obtaining employment.

The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) in 2013 held nine groups in Hudson Correctional Facility. They reported 100 completions with 20 finding employment to the extent that the department was able to track participants following release.

DOCCS currently has two programs using the **RSW!** job readiness curriculum at Hudson Correctional Facility. One program, led by an OWDS-certified DOCCS professional, is held in the facility as part of re-entry. Although they are able to work with offenders before they are released, at this time the OWDS does not have access to post release employment information. The other program is known as the **Altamont Program-Second Chance**. Through this program, an Altamont program employee, who is a certified OWDS, facilitates the **RSW!** groups on the inside and then upon release, they assist the same participants with employment. This program reports 55 completions with 20 employed.

**Federal Probation** also uses RSW! to work with offenders individually and reports that two people finished the entire program and both found employment.



## OPCA Graduates 7th NIC OWDS Class

The seventh National Institute of Corrections' (NIC) OWDS class began in September 2013 and wrapped up in January 2014, becoming the first graduating class of the new year.

On Jan.17, OPCA, in collaboration with the state Department of Labor and county probation departments, celebrated the graduation. The class included staff from probation departments, alternative to incarceration (ATI) programs, 200% of Poverty Programs, County Re-entry Taskforces and the state Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS). With the addition of these 23 professionals who successfully completed the 180-hour training, there are now 161 OWDS-trained specialists through the OPCA partnership with NIC. Two OPCA-sponsored teams also attended NIC's national training, bringing the total of OWDS who have completed the program to 178. January 2014 Graduates are:

**Sean Brailsford**, Osborne Association; **Darren Ferguson**, Osborne Association; **Florentino Fernandez**, Catholic Family Center; **Tracian Ferron-Chase**, Greenhope Services for Women; **Henry Guiden**, Osborne Association; **Leslie Hearn**, Finger Lakes Alcohol Counseling and Referral Agency; **Clarence Jackson**, Trinity Alliance of the Capital Region; **Marlene Klock**, Onondaga County Re-entry Task Force; **Kathy Lind**, Tompkins County Probation; **Sarah McIntosh**, Oneida County Workforce Development; **Siddiq Najee**, Osborne Association; **Mary E. Palumbo**, Cattaraugus County Probation; **Sharon Richardson**, Edwin Gould Services for Children and Families; **Gloria Rosenthal**, Cattaraugus County Social Services; **Gregory Russell**, Kings County DA's Office/ComALERT; **Matthew Ryan**, The Addiction Center of Broome County; **Dana Silano**, Northeast Career Planning; **Patricia Taylor**, Center for Community Alternatives; **Nelson Villegas**, Center for Community Alternatives; **Anthony Virgil**, Coxsackie Correctional Facility; **Michael Wieland**, Great Meadow Correctional Facility; **Erika Winton**, The Regional Economic Community Action Program; **Sakiyah Wright**, Greenhope Services for Women.

# OPCA trains state Department of Labor to implement National Institute of Correction's Offender Employment Specialists Training at Career Centers

As a part of the Community Capacity subcommittee of the Governors' *Work for Success Initiative*, OPCA staff facilitated the National Institute of Corrections **Offender Employment Specialists (OES)** Training.

The training was held in Bronx, Erie and Albany counties and targeted community stakeholders to increase awareness of the unique barriers of people with criminal convictions entering the workforce.

This component of the Initiative was directed to increasing the capacity of the Department of Labor One Stop Career Centers to serve those re-entering society after incarceration who are not in need of more intense services.

The Bronx graduates were featured in the Summer 2013 In Touch with OWDS <http://www.criminaljustice.ny.gov/opca/pdfs/owdssept2013.pdf>

### Erie Offender Employment Specialist Graduates

Christopher Kokoszka, Denise Casey, Frank McAndrew, Greg Corral, Jill Whitfield, Katherine Smith, Michael Ministero, Michael Sawicz, Paul Digati, Phyllis Damico, Tim McGill, Tina Borowiak, Vicki Cocca, Michael Rivera, Justin Williams, Kenneth Colon

### Albany Offender Employment Specialist Graduates

Alyssa Amyot, John Banas, Diane Barth, Lafonso Bonner, James Brearton, Wendy Brown, Conor Donnelly, John Floeser, Susan Gallagher, Brian Gelb, Colleen Gemmette, Sara Harms, Leigh Kleinklaus, Doug Lansing, Malee Lennon, Pamela Miller, Polly Monahan, Deborah Pelton, Daniel Perkins, Anthony Smith, Christina Strubel, Benjamin Thomas, Stephanie Tubbs, Evan Twibell, Shawn Wallace, Symone Wango, Angela Crupe, Jamel Muhammad

**Offender Employment Specialist OES: Building Bridges<sup>®</sup>** is a **National Institute of Corrections** Offender Workforce Development Division entry-level training.

The program DVDs feature a variety of OES (Offender Employment Specialist) professionals in jails, prisons, probation and parole, community corrections, community based organizations and faith-based organizations.

These individuals demonstrate best practices, discuss ways for overcoming challenges and identify tools and strategies for improving outcomes in offender employment.

## THE OSBORNE ASSOCIATION AND OWDS

*By John Valverde, Associate Executive Director*

For more than 80 years, the Osborne Association has served incarcerated and formerly incarcerated men, women and their families, including the children of incarcerated parents.

Since 2013, we have utilized **Ready, Set, Work!** in our workforce development programs, which target young adults (Justice Community), non-custodial fathers (Fatherhood Initiative) and adults more generally (Osborne Career Center). We have been very pleased with the effectiveness of the curriculum across different target populations we serve and it has strengthened our workforce programs and their role in our holistic approach to re-entry.

Osborne is always seeking to increase the effectiveness of programs and how they deliver on our mission. A key factor in this is the professional development of staff. The OWDS training has certainly achieved that end and it has been a more than worthwhile investment. The training is academically rigorous and takes complex psychological information, contextualizes it and makes it accessible to both staff and participants. Our staff engage the material as if they are the participants and deliver it from that perspective. It has also improved their facilitation skills. As the skill and confidence of our staff increases, so does the confidence of those we serve. That improves outcomes, and in our work, evidence based curricula like **Ready, Set, Work!** make a huge difference.

A welcome outcome of the training was how it increased communication and collaboration among our staff and across programs. We had always previously utilized a primary instructor to deliver our job readiness curriculum. This training allowed for additional front line staff to obtain the skills and we see the difference in how it has strengthened the teamwork.

We know the importance of communicating a consistent message to participants, and OWDS has brought more staff into the conversation with **Ready, Set, Work!** as a valuable shared point of departure and unified message. Staff have also highlighted the value of the assessments as critical to engaging and motivating participants, which ultimately strengthens not only retention in the program, but retention in employment. Assessing strengths and weaknesses as part of career exploration supports individuals in developing a vision for the future. It is not enough for individuals to obtain employment. The goal is to keep it, grow professionally and turn a job into a career. And it is also about participants understanding that employment is far more than getting to a job each day. It is an integral part of the role individuals have in the lives of their families and their communities.

The OWDS training and **Ready, Set, Work!** have become critical pieces of all our workforce development at Osborne, while not taking anything away from our other program elements, such as our cognitive behavioral therapy, financial literacy and environmental literacy. They have also made us part of a valuable OWDS learning community that shares best practices and the latest research and information.

We are grateful for the positive difference it has made, on many levels, and look forward to having more of our staff trained.

## RSW! Worth Noting: Craig Eckert



**Craig Eckert** (at left) works for Community Transition Center in Dutchess County and graduated from the Albany OWDS training in 2012. One of Craig's 2013 RSW! groups had 11 enrollees and 10 completers. Of the 10 who completed, nine found employment.

Craig reports: *"This group was really motivated and had previous job experiences we could work with. The best story is from Mr. "Smith," who experienced nothing but rejection from employers since being convicted of petit larceny. He did however, have a marketable skill, as he loved computers and possessed an extensive knowledge of them. During the RSW! program Matt O'Connor and I made sure Mr. Smith focused on his knowledge of computers when he was applying for jobs. About a month after completing the group, I walked into Staples to purchase a laptop. To my surprise, there was Mr. Smith working in the computer department. It was his first week on the job and he was loving it. He even helped me pick out a personal laptop. It was one of the best moments of the job."*

## Rensselaer County Probation and RSW! Success

Rensselaer County Senior Probation Officer **Pauline Franz** graduated from the Albany 2012 **OWDS** training as the class salutatorian (she was featured in the Summer 2012 issue). Since that time, Pauline has held several groups and reports that in 2013, she had **18 RSW!** graduates with **14** employed within 90 days. This is a **78 percent** employment rate. We salute Pauline and Rensselaer County Probation for the tremendous work they are doing in the area of offender employment.

## Good News Story from Cattaraugus County Probation

Cattaraugus County Senior Probation Officer and OWDS Instructor **Ann Faulkner** reports on one of her **RSW!** Graduates: *"Shane completed the RSW! program some time ago. I had been waiting for him to finish paying his fines and restitution so I could request an early discharge. Yesterday, unexpectedly, he brought me the money. We talked about how far he had come and his thoughts on the program. I was pleased and a bit surprised when he said that the one thing that really made a difference to him was the "Ready, Set, Work!" group. "*

*Shane said that it had motivated him and given him the desire to go out and do something with his life. He completed training for his CDL but did not get hired for quite some time. He finally found a company that would give him a chance and for the past nine months he has been driving and working full time for them. Shane and his wife also reconciled, and, in addition to their daughter, they are expecting a son this summer. I know that RSW! is a wonderful resource, but it really means a lot when someone points to that as the incentive and the spur to get them off the couch and on the road to a full time job.*

**Congratulations!**

## New Global Career Development Facilitators

January 2014 Graduates: *Henry Guiden, Osborne Society; Sakiyah Wright, Greenhope Services for Women; and Erika Winton, The Regional Economic Action Program*

June 2013 Graduates: *Angela Crupe, state Department of Labor and Shannon Perkins, Oswego Probation Department*

June 2012 Graduate: *Tanya Henderson, Altamont Program*