



The Sunburst

San Francisco/San Bruno

Summer/Fall 2009

San Bruno In-Jail Program Aims to Reduce Recidivism

Starting May 1st, NCSL has been part of an innovative new venture at the San Francisco Jail for men in San Bruno. The agency is collaborating with San Francisco Sheriff Michael Hennessey in a joint venture to reduce recidivism by transforming a jail pod into an educational and program facility that prepares individuals for success after release. NCSL Program Manager, Isam Iddeen, explains how the pod program works: "During orientation, a person learns about all the programs in the jail and decides which would benefit him. This includes the Sheriff's Five Keys education program, a domestic violence program, a substance abuse program, and NCSL's **New Futures** program. Depending on his needs and situation, he may choose or be mandated to live and participate in one or more of the program pods during his incarceration."

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The NCSL **New Futures** program pod houses 48 men at any given time. With approximately 20 new inmates entering the pod each month, it has served over 100 individuals since May. NCSL staff members meet with the men for eight hours a day, Monday through Friday. Staff members and volunteers lead groups and seminars; conduct case management, interventions, and individual counseling; offer referrals; and communicate regularly with clients' family members and parole and probation agents. Isam explains, "Our program teaches life skills, motivation, and how to make a plan and have the courage to see that plan through." Clients participate in a number of supportive and enriching activities, including morning meditation, discussing current events, public speaking, reading, and vocabulary-building. The point, says Isam, is to "keep them current so they can understand what they will be facing" when they get out. Moreover, "reading and addressing the community helps them learn how to stand in front of someone. Listening to each other speak gets them to respect others' statements."

The many activities of the NCSL **New Futures** program pod form a multifaceted approach, based on the cognitive-behavioral model, which helps inmates learn different behaviors and form the new habits that will help them succeed outside for the long-term.

GOOD-BYE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

At the end of September, I will be leaving my position with the Northern California Service League (NCSL). It has been an honor and a pleasure to serve as NCSL's Executive Director for the past 23 years. It has been a great privilege to work with the wonderful and dedicated staff and Board of NCSL and to share in the successes of thousands of clients — individuals who were able to turn their lives around and take responsibility for contributing to a better, safer community.



When I started at NCSL, my office was over a bar. I had one staff member, a budget of \$84,000, and the agency was in debt and in imminent danger of closing its doors. There was only one way to go — **up!** Over the years, each of my days at the office was full of amazing stories and events, some happy and some sad. Each story made me respect and appreciate the human spirit and the strength and resilience of our clients and of our staff.

I am so very proud of this organization. Some of our greatest achievements include the development and implementation of strong employment programs for the formerly incarcerated, our Annual Reentry Conference & Job Fair for the Formerly Incarcerated; the Awakening New Futures Life Skills Training & Work Readiness workshops, which have been provided in the prisons, jails, juvenile facilities, and at City College, as well as in our facility twice a month; Cameo House, a transitional housing program for homeless formerly incarcerated women with children; the Children's Waiting Rooms at the Criminal and Civil Court Houses for children of parents and guardians with business before the courts; innovative in-jail program pods offering a wide array of groups to inmates; our San Jose office; and the Day Reporting Center that offers parolees counseling, groups, and supportive services. At one point, we had staff as far north as Santa Rosa and as far south as Salinas. We also were able to move into beautiful new San Francisco offices two years ago, just doors down from our old office, maintaining our neutral and convenient location.

My vision for NCSL is to see it continue to grow, expand its programs, and ultimately have an even greater impact on recidivism rates in San Francisco and beyond. I am handing the baton over to Mauricio Vela, a recognized leader in the community, who will introduce himself to you in the coming weeks. Under his leadership, I look forward to watching the Northern California Service League achieve even loftier goals and wider recognition as a model for other organizations doing similar work.

My time at NCSL has been an incredible experience that will remain in my heart forever. I leave you with my sincere thanks to all the wonderful people and organizations I have worked with over the years that have contributed to our success.

Sincerely,

Shirley Melnicoe

GREETINGS FROM THE NEW EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends of NCSL,

I can't express in words the excitement I have in being hired as NCSL's new Executive Director. I have big shoes to fill in replacing Shirley Melnicoe, who leaves a legacy of helping thousands of clients make positive changes and get their lives back on track.



I come with nearly 25 years of working in the non-profit world as staff, program director, executive director, and consultant. I was born and raised in San Francisco, am the father of two grown sons, a graduate of UC Berkeley, and I serve on the board of Coleman Advocates for Children & Youth and the Jamestown Community Center.

As I settle into my new role, I am eager to meet the challenge of realizing NCSL's mission, *"To create safer, healthier communities by helping the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated become responsible and contributing members of society."* I embrace the NCSL tradition of serving our clients through a strong staff team and board of directors. And, I am committed to the ongoing development and success of the organization as we progress into the 21st century. I look forward to getting to know all of our friends and supporters.

Sincerely,

Mauricio Vela

**Join us to honor Shirley Melnicoe
and celebrate her 23 years of commitment to NCSL and the community,
and come meet our new Executive Director, Mauricio Vela.**

When: Wednesday, September 30, 2009 from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Where: Pacific National Bank, 300 Montgomery Street, San Francisco

R.S.V.P. to Rochelle Augusta: (415) 863-2323 or rochelle@norcalserviceleague.org

New Futures Initiative Helps Parolees with New Start

NCSL has built its reputation for effectiveness by combining tried-and-true strategies that have helped our clients over the years along with innovative new approaches. Our New Futures Initiative (NFI) is an example of this kind of flexibility. From July 2007 through June 2009, the program provided reentry services to parolees in San Francisco and Santa Clara counties, with an emphasis on violent offenders and sex offenders, because that is where the need for reentry support is greatest. There was also an attempt to recruit and meet the unique needs of female parolees. NFI services included NCSL's Awakening New Futures Life Skills Workshop (job readiness skills), vocational training, job placement services, case management, education, anger management and other skill-building groups, referrals to other community organizations and public services, and supportive services.

A unique component of NFI was the matching of parolees with mentors who helped them to re-join their community in positive ways and modeled behaviors and thought processes that would increase the parolees' chances of success. In Santa Clara County, mentorship was provided through a contract with VIP Mentors, a nonprofit organization that

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recruits attorneys to volunteer as mentors. In San Francisco, NCSL recruited and trained individuals who had successfully completed parole and were living stable lives to serve as “peer coaches” to parolees. Of a total of 412 NFI clients:

- 100% completed NCSL’s week-long Awakening New Futures Life Skills Training and met with an Employment Specialist.
- 88% received supportive services.
- 80% attended support groups.
- 13% were matched with a mentor.

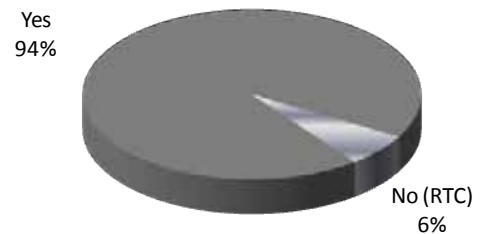
More than half — 55% — of NFI clients were placed in job and/or educational programs. This includes:

- 37% of sex offenders
- 63% of violent offenders
- 75% of women

At a time when California’s recidivism rate is an alarming 70%, NFI clients had a recidivism rate of only 6% over the two-year program period.

We are excited about the implications of this program and hope to have a chance to replicate it in the coming years. The success of NFI proves that well-planned, focused programs can produce positive results where both the client and our society will win.

Percentage of NFI Clients
Achieving Successful Reentry
(n=412 total clients)



Spotlight on NCSL’s Day Reporting Center Clients and Graduates

NCSL’s Day Reporting Center (DRC) reduces recidivism by giving parolees referrals, services, a healthy and supportive place to spend each day, and by working with parole agents to resolve issues that would otherwise lead to re-incarceration. The following stories highlight some of the achievements of current and former DRC clients.

Linda Vazquez is a Day Reporting Center (DRC) client working hard to get her life on track. She lives at the Rose Home, which supports her recovery, and comes to the DRC every day to participate in groups and talk to her NCSL Case Manager, Luis Aroche. She also meets with Employment Specialist Clare Bautista, who is helping her to look for work in retail or elder care, where she has employment experience. “Coming to the DRC is helping me to keep myself straight and not get steered the wrong way.”



Linda is actually doing some remarkable things as she gets back on her feet. One day this July, Linda returned home to see Rose Home Founder/Director Gwen Strain bleeding profusely. Unknowingly, a doctor had made an accidental incision during a minor surgery, and Linda’s immediate action to put pressure on the site and to call the police most likely prevented tragedy. She was presented with two certificates of honor

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for heroic behavior, one by Ms. Strain and one by State Senator for District 3, Mark Leno. Meanwhile, Linda volunteers as house manager at the Rose Home and cooks soup for the homeless who come for dinner once a week. "It's cold at night. I feel good giving people food," she explains. With her sense of responsibility, optimism, and service to others, Linda is on her way to recovery and employment. Her dream is to have a career working with children who have gone through some of the challenges she herself survived.

Billy Cunningham came to the DRC in October 2008 and graduated six months later. By finding and paying for his housing, NCSL gave him the stability he needed to follow a routine of getting support, participating in DRC programs, and looking for work. He says, "Being at the DRC made me feel that sometimes you can get more help from strangers than from family. It's a trip how people can take a chance on you." Billy met with Case Manager Billie Percy often and still calls her when he needs to talk something over. "Billie and the other counselors there don't realize how much of an impact they have on my life," he reflects. The DRC routine of daily drug testing, life skills training, group and one-on-one sessions, and morning meetings helped him to shift from being "a person that blamed everybody else" to being responsible, and it was particularly helpful to be able to put the names of NCSL staff members down as references when he applied for jobs. Now he works as a Floor Coordinator at the Episcopal Community Sanctuary, rents an apartment, and has custody of his 16-year-old son. He hopes one day to turn a lifetime of difficult stories into a career as a stand-up comedian, but he's not in a hurry: "I used to look for the short cut," he says, "I've learned that when you work for something, it's not easily taken from you."



Billy Cunningham and son, Evander.

Lanita Lloyd came to the DRC in December 2007. For the next 13 months, she attended daily support groups and trainings that helped her learn how to stay clean and sober, build healthy relationships, and learn other reentry skills. The DRC paid for her housing for six months while she looked for work. Although Lanita found temporary assignments in retail, it was an NCSL referral to Mayor Gavin Newsom's office that really changed her life. While she and other recruits were initially told they were in a program to help them develop job preparedness skills, Lanita soon learned that it was also a way for Mayor Newsom to identify new employees with the initiative and skills needed to work for City Hall. Lanita was thrilled to be chosen to work as an administrative assistant in the Mayor's Office. "It was an extraordinary experience," she exclaims. She held the position for a year and a half, before budget cut-backs led to her being laid off this July. Now she is applying herself to school. She received her AA in accounting in July and is currently pursuing a degree as a medical assistant. In five years, she plans to have a degree as a registered nurse. "I was used to not finishing things," she says, "but jail woke me up. I know I'll struggle, but nursing is something I always wanted to do."



NCSL Services and Locations

Post-Release & Day Reporting Center

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San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 863-2323

Fax: (415) 863-1882
Email:

NCSL@NorCalServiceLeague.org
www.NorCalServiceLeague.org

Pre-Release

Hall of Justice, Rm. 116
850 Bryant Street, Rm. 213
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 552-9250

Email: PreRelease@
NorCalServiceLeague.org

Cameo House

424 Guerrero Street
San Francisco, CA 94110
(415) 703-0600

Fax: (415) 703-0550
Email: Cameo@
NorCalServiceLeague.org

Children's Waiting Room

Hall of Justice
850 Bryant Street, Rm. 106
San Francisco, CA 94103
(415) 553-9377

Email: CWR@
NorCalServiceLeague.org

Children's Waiting Room

Civil Courthouse
400 McAllister Street, Rm. 111
San Francisco, CA 94102
(415) 703-0255

Fax: (415) 703-0267
Email: CWR@
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