

PULL OF GRAVITY EVENT

The “Pull of Gravity” event will be a collaborative effort of Project H.O.P.E., the City of Mobile and the Southwest Alabama Workforce Development Council (SAWDC) to highlight the difficulty of ex-offenders returning to the community and the community resources available to support them. Mayor Sandy Stimpson, the City of Mobile, SAWDC and Project H.O.P.E. community partners will promote the event to the community. The event itself will have several different components. First, a broad range of community service providers will have a table in the Saenger Theater lobby where they can inform the public on what services they provide. This activity will be beneficial in two ways: 1) the service providers can recruit more volunteers who can then be more civically engaged, and; 2) those who are in need of the services can directly connect with the service providers through the event. As an aside, the event over in Pensacola featured the serving of light h'orderves in the theater lobby about a half hour before the event commenced. If there is any difficulty in the city absorbing this expense Project H.O.P.E. partners may want to consider doing so.

Next the event will begin with a welcome to the audience from Mayor Stimpson and his introduction of Mr. Robert Reed, an Assistant United States Attorney from Philadelphia, who will emcee the remainder of the event. Mr. Reed and the documentary's creator, Mr. El Sawyer, have been travelling around the country showing the film and leading the panel discussion afterwards so they have the execution of this event down pat. The U.S. Attorney's office will pick up the travel expenses of Mr. Reed and Mr. Sawyer.

At this point in the event the documentary film “Pull of Gravity” will be shown. The documentary is gritty and has some foul language, but accurately captures peoples' real experiences as they try to return to the community after a term of incarceration. The documentary film lasts approximately one hour. I have included a link to the film producer's website for your review. <http://www.pullofgravityfilm.com/>

Once the screening of the film has concluded a panel of people who are engaged in reentry efforts in our area will take the stage in order to discuss their reentry efforts. The panel will include myself, Mr. El Sawyer, a representative from Light of the Village (<http://www.lightofthevillage.org/>), a representative from Life Tech in Thomasville (<http://www.ascc.edu/?DivisionID=2332&DepartmentID=2233>), a pair of employers who successfully and consistently hire ex-offenders, an attorney mentor, an ex-offender mentee and a representative from “The Beautiful Gate Ministry.” The target audience would be a cross section of the community with individuals representing the faith based community, law enforcement, the Mobile Chamber of Commerce and its members, local attorneys, service

providers, government and private victim/witness entities, workforce development entities and local post-secondary institutions.

We may want to consider awarding re-entry certificates of merit to business and entities that have shown a sustained commitment to the re-entry effort in our local area.

Again the thrust of the event would be to spark the re-entry conversation here locally in hopes of addressing our crime problem at its root by identifying areas where community involvement can arrest systemic impediments to ex-offenders successfully reintegrating back into society. These impediments include ex-offenders' lack of knowledge about what free or reduced fee services are available in the community to assist them, ex-offenders' educational and employment needs and an unwelcoming business community. These traditional impediments to successful re-entry lead to a high recidivism rate where new victims are created because ex-offenders have forfeited any hope of successful reintegration. Given the high demand for skilled vocational laborers in this region, ex-offenders, if properly trained in both soft skills and vocational skills, can be a reliable labor pool for our robust maritime and airline industries while at the same time reducing our local crime rate and reducing prison costs for the State. The February to March time frame is the target time frame to hold this event