Homeless Offender Takes Opportunity to Change Life, Behavior

Local News

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Tacoma, WA - A sanction for a violation turned out to be a catalyst for a bright new future and promising career for an offender under DOC supervision. The evidence–based change programs offered to Cory Kuder at the Tacoma Resource and Opportunity Center (T–ROC) helped improve his attitude and secure employment.In June 2010, Kuder admitted to his community corrections officer, Michael Ford, that he violated a condition of his supervision. In lieu of jail time, Ford reached an agreed sanction that required Kuder to attend offender–change programs at T–ROC.Although Cory was grateful for not being arrested, he was certainly less then thrilled about having to attend T–ROC four days per week. Kuder entered programming with an attitude of resistance. His goal was to simply get it over with.“Cory is very intelligent, but throughout adolescence and early adulthood he made poor decisions, and at times, lacked favorable coping skills,” said Ford. “This depleted his confidence to pursue his dreams for a better life.”

Kuder was enrolled in Getting It Right and Stress and Anger Management, two cognitive behavioral programs that have been proven to reduce recidivism. DOC uses offender–change programs to reduce risk to the community. The programs address the needs of offenders related to their history of criminal behavior including changing anti–social attitudes, increasing self–control, and learning how to deal with risky and stressful situations.Initially, Kuder refused to engage in class discussions, but he eventually participated and received certificates of completion. Ford instructed him to continue with programming until he found employment. Kuder returned to T–ROC, this time, verbally expressing a resentful attitude toward having to continue with programming.Staff at T–ROC encourage honest communication, delivered in a respectful manner. This creates an environment for the offenders to openly express their thoughts and feelings, while taking responsibility for them. Kuder’s new, expressed anger was an open door for this process to begin.“We welcomed this change,” said Community Corrections Officer John Ringener. “It gave us an opportunity to work with him. As he was allowed to respectfully disagree in class discussions, Cory became open to change.”In time, Kuder formed healthy positive

working relationships with the entire staff at T–ROC. Support staff Radyna Cochran, encouraged Kuder’s sense of belonging, which prompted him to experience feelings of pride and acceptance. Community Corrections Officers Nan Borders and Toni Mohle were highly instrumental in his positive growth by giving him hope to believe he could achieve positive goals. He remained in T–ROC programs for 18 months and eventually became a co–facilitator for the classes.“T–ROC helped me to accept what my life has become,” said Kuder. “John is very much the kind of person to have as a role model. Community Corrections Officer Kathi Bulman has been very helpful from the very beginning. It helps that she has a passion for people.”Along with behavior–change classes, T–ROC staff offers community resource information. This is where Cory learned about the FareStart program, which is a free 16–week adult culinary program that combines hands–on food–service training with classroom instruction and job placement services. The program prepares homeless and disadvantaged men and women for jobs in the restaurant and hospitality industry and helps them to keep those jobs.Kuder was accepted into the FareStart program while under DOC supervision. FareStart Employment Specialist Kelley Swanstrom noted that Kuder showed a great deal of dedication even before he was enrolled. He maintained his commitment to training through the program by showing up on time every day, working hard in the kitchen and challenging himself in the life–skills classes.“When I think of Cory one word comes to mind: dedication,” says Swanstrom. “Initially, Cory had difficulty being around other people; however by the time he graduated, he was sharing his knowledge and experience freely with the other students. He has a lot to be proud of including exceptional knife skills to go along with his new set of professional chefs’ knives, and it will be exciting to see where this takes him.”Kuder graduated from the FareStart program on January 12, about three months after completing supervision. Officers Ringener and Bulman were invited to attend the ceremony.“As a team, the staff at T–ROC believes there is no greater investment then to invest in the human spirit,” said Ringener. “Cory was given both respect and the tools to make positive behavior changes. We were privileged to sit with Cory’s family at the graduation and share in his success.”
Submitted by Kathi Bulman, Community Corrections Officer