



## State of New Jersey

### STATE PAROLE BOARD

JON S. CORZINE, GOVERNOR

PETER J. BARNES JR., CHAIRMAN

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# Media Release

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## **Trenton: Parolees, Ex-Parolees Hold Day of Community Service in Honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.**

TRENTON – “Everybody can be great ... because anybody can serve. You don’t have to have a college degree to serve. You don’t have to make your subject and verb agree to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.”

Honoring those words by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and the celebration of Martin Luther King Day, a group of parolees and former parolees today gathered for a day of volunteer community service at Donnelly Homes Recreation Center. (*Note: A separate group of parolees and ex-parolees held a similar day of volunteer service in Newark, described in a separate media release.*)

State Parole Board Chairman Peter J. Barnes Jr. said, “These current parolees still serving their sentence, and former parolees who have reentered society and are now free citizens, today are demonstrating that it is possible for offenders to change, find rehabilitation, and benefit society. I applaud their service today, in honor of Dr. King’s challenge that all Americans work for social and spiritual transformation.”

Mayor Douglas Palmer said, “In Trenton, we are focusing on the importance of holistic youth development, including a wide range of alternatives to gang activity from a prevention standpoint. We also have a very sophisticated truancy prevention program and a YouthStat collaboration that brings solutions on a case-by-case basis from more than a dozen agencies that have responsibility for our young people. But no work is more important than helping ex-offenders re-direct their lives. Because if they do not turn things around, the cost to them, their families, and our communities is incalculable. This is why we are putting so much energy into a re-entry springboard, including job training and job placement and a healthy transition back to the community.”

Arthur Townes, Director of Community Education Centers’ Alumni Association said, “Each offender that successfully reenters society represents a realization of the world Dr. King strove to create. The Alumni Association takes great honor in continuing Dr. King’s work by providing resources to ex-offenders so that they may realize their dreams of leading productive and meaningful lives. The parolees and CEC Alumni here today are perfect examples of the spirit behind Dr. King’s legacy of compassion and understanding.”

State Parole Board Member Rev. Dr. Kenneth L. Saunders said, “Today’s gathering serves as a testimony that future earnest expectations and goals can be accomplished through the overcoming and by the conquering of past failures. There are vast opportunities for parolees to reshape and remold their lives for the maximization of individual potential, and this deserves celebration. I believe Dr. King’s own message here today would be, ‘Life doesn’t have to be aimless or lack purpose. Your dreams and hopes for the future lie not ahead of you, but within you.’ It is with a sense of great joy and continued

hope that I salute these parolees and parole alumni in their efforts to celebrate the life of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.”

The current parolees, who are serving their sentences under the supervision of State Parole Board parole officers, and ex-parolee members of Community Education Centers’ Alumni Association, began their day of service at the Albert M. “Bo” Robinson Education and Training Center. They attended a presentation on Dr. King’s life and contribution to American social justice, and then traveled to Donnelly Homes Recreation Center to perform approximately four hours of volunteer work.

The New Jersey State Parole Board (SPB) is New Jersey’s lead reentry agency, and works to ensure ex-prisoners return to society as law-abiding citizens. As required by law, appointed Parole Board Members and staff conduct more than 20,000 hearings per year, solicit input from victims and decide parole matters. SPB’s sworn parole officers supervise more than 15,000 offenders statewide. In addition, SPB is New Jersey’s primary law enforcement agency responsible for sex offender supervision. SPB officers are also active partners with multiple Federal, State and local law enforcement agencies and task forces. Finally, SPB’s Community Programs Unit partners with government, non-profit and private agencies to connect ex-prisoners with vocational, mental health and related services, targeted to break the cycle and risk of crime.

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