



NEWS RELEASE



STATE OF NEW JERSEY State Parole Board

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For Immediate Release

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NJ STATE PAROLE BOARD AND MORRIS COUNTY SHERIFF SIMULATE “A DAY IN THE LIFE OF AN EX-OFFENDER”

State Parole Board Facilitates Another Successful Simulation Program for Service Providers, Police, and HS Students Who Experienced Reentry Life for Former Inmates

TRENTON, NJ, March 22, 2019— The State of New Jersey has one of the nation’s lowest prison recidivism rates at **31%** meaning the number of ex-offenders who relapse into acts of criminal behavior following release from prison, is comparatively lower than the United States average recidivism rate.

Strong and focused residential and community-based programs, such as those created and implemented by The New Jersey State Parole Board, under the direction of Chairman Samuel J. Plumeri, Jr., are major factors for the low recidivism rate. Recently, the State Parole Board facilitated a reentry simulation for the Morris County Sheriff’s Office and the Morris County Successful Transition and Re-Entry (STAR) program. The goal of the simulation program was to give participants a hands-on feel of what the ex-offender must accomplish as they assimilate back into the free world.

The simulation event served to educate approximately 100 reentry professionals, parole and correctional administrators, county service providers, probation, county, and local police officers and local high school students by placing participants in the “role” of a former prison inmate.



The volunteer “inmates” were presented with a whole host of challenges during the event, e.g. having to obtain their simulated driver’s license in order to be able to gain simulated employment, and engage with a vast collection of simulated social service agencies, including visiting a judge in order to take a drug test, obtain food stamps, and visiting the simulated unemployment office.

Chairman Plumeri said, “The reentry simulation is an invaluable exercise because it provides participants with a tangible and eye-opening experience of what it means for ex-offenders who once more face new challenges as they look to gain a foothold in society. The New Jersey State Parole Board is pleased to collaborate with Sheriff Gannon, the STAR program, and Morris County and I commend them for hosting a wonderful program.”



One of the most popular simulation stations was the county “jail” which housed role-playing offenders who did not meet the requirements of their simulation experience. Some of the participants found their time in jail amusing, while others found it to be quite the sobering experience.

Morris County resident Michael Lester is a former inmate who spent several months in jail for his third DWI conviction. Mr. Lester spoke to the crowd of participants and onlookers and shared his special message. “In real life, when you go to jail, you’re not laughing.”

To date, the New Jersey State Parole Board has facilitated five reentry simulation events throughout the state. The agency is currently planning to bring this successful program to Rowan University sometime later this spring.

The New Jersey State Parole Board (SPB) is committed to promoting public safety, utilizing effective methods to aid supervised offenders in reentering society, and to reduce the recidivism of offenders while addressing the needs of crime victims. As required by law, appointed parole board members and staff conduct approximately 13,500 hearings per year, solicit input from victims, and decide upon parole matters. Nearly 400 sworn SPB parole officers supervise more than 15,500 offenders and act as New Jersey’s primary law enforcement agency responsible for sex offender supervision. Additionally, SPB officers are also active partners with a variety of federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies and task forces. Finally, the SPB’s Community Programs Unit partners with government, non-profit, and private agencies to connect former inmates with vocational, mental health, and related services.

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