

# THE Compiler

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority Summer 2002



WEBSITE 3

RESEARCH 4

GRANTS 6

TECHNOLOGY 7

## One day at a time

*Ex-offenders*

*help each other*

*overcome obstacles*

*to reentry*

By Cristin Monti Evans

The hardship doesn't often end at the prison door for newly released men and women trying to reintegrate into society. Ex-offenders who have done their time find themselves joining a society that seems unwilling to embrace them and help ease their way toward a lifestyle that is free of crime.

Recently released individuals often find themselves without the many resources they need to successfully rebuild their lives. Many have a substance abuse history that fueled much of their criminal behavior. Many also lack the social and family foundations they need to get back on their feet.

### **Help and hope**

In her effort to remain law-abiding and drug free, Janice Coleman finds strength in helping others who are

*Continued on page 7*



Jerome Collins, of TASC, at a Winners' Circle meeting. He started the first group in 1997 and there will soon be 10 around the state.

## The challenge of reentry: keeping ex-offenders free

By Daniel Dighton

On a recent evening in a spacious basement room at the offices of Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC), some 30 men and women sat on folding chairs in a large circle and shared their stories. They laughed and they cried, and when they spoke they introduced themselves as an alcoholic or addict.

They talked about their common day-to-day struggles — difficult family situations, getting and holding jobs, feeling alone or isolated — and how they cope with the stress while staying clean. They offered each other encouragement and gave support. Another thing they have in common is that they have all been in prison or jail. They are part of the Winners' Circle, a peer-led recovery support group for ex-offenders.

*Continued on page 2*



Illinois  
Criminal Justice  
Information Authority

**George H. Ryan**  
Governor

**Candice M. Kane**  
Executive Director

**Members**

**Peter B. Bensinger, chairman**  
President, Bensinger, DuPont  
& Associates

**Albert A. Apa**  
Former director, Illinois Police  
Training Board

**Dorothy Brown**  
Clerk of the Circuit Court  
of Cook County

**Timothy F. Bukowski**  
Sheriff, Kankakee County

**Richard A. Devine**  
State's Attorney, Cook County

**Barbara Engel**  
Victim Advocate

**Norbert Goetten**  
Director, Office of the State's Attorney's  
Appellate Prosecutor

**Theodore A. Gottfried**  
Director, Office of the State  
Appellate Defender

**Terry G. Hillard**  
Superintendent, Chicago  
Police Department

**Maureen A. Josh**  
Clerk of the Circuit Court  
of DeKalb County

**Thomas J. Jurkanin**  
Executive Director, Illinois Law Enforcement  
Training and Standards Board

**John J. Millner**  
Chief, Elmhurst Police Department

**Sam Nolen**  
Director, Illinois State Police

**John C. Piland**  
State's Attorney, Champaign County

**Jim Ryan**  
Attorney General of Illinois

**Michael Sheahan**  
Sheriff, Cook County

**Donald N. Snyder Jr.**  
Director, Illinois Department  
of Corrections

**John Z. Toscas**  
Attorney

**Michael Waller**  
State's Attorney, Lake County

Created in 1983, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority is a state agency dedicated to improving the administration of criminal justice. Most of the work of the Authority falls into three major divisions: Research and Analysis; Information Systems and Technology; and Federal and State Grants Administration.

The Authority is governed by a 20-member board comprised of state and local leaders from the criminal justice system and members of the public.

Copyright © 2002 Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority. All rights reserved. Intended for free distribution only. Permission to copy and redistribute parts or all of this publication can be obtained from the Office of Public Information.

Printed by authority of the State of Illinois, August 2002. Printing order number 03-051; 6,500 copies.

**Continued from page 1**

TASC Project Manager Jerome Collins started the first Winners' Circle in 1997 with two ex-offenders. He modeled it on a similar program in Texas, and he also asked inmates what kind of a program would help them when they left prison. Today there are Winners' Circle meetings at seven locations in Illinois, with three more sites expected to be going by fall.

The men and women in the Winners' Circle have taken steps to change their lives. They are working hard to beat the odds. But for every ex-offender at the Winners' Circle, there are hundreds more falling back to a life of drugs and crime and a return trip to prison.

An estimated 38,000 inmates will leave Illinois prisons this year, about the same number that left the year before, and the year before that. If current trends continue, more than 40 percent of these ex-offenders will return to prison within three years of their release, and most of those within the first two years of release.

**Stopping the cycle**

The cycle of offender imprisonment, release, and return to prison has long been a driving force behind the burgeoning U.S. prison population. In Illinois, Gov. George Ryan has focused on breaking that cycle of recidivism by making prisoner reentry a priority issue. Among the governor's initiatives targeting ex-offenders is the Illinois Workforce Advantage program, which provides an infusion of state and local resources to improve the overall environment in distressed communities, which tend to be home for many ex-offenders. The governor also doubled the number of parole agents in the state

and helped modernize the way they work.

The Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority identified offender services as a priority in its 2001 Criminal Justice Plan for the State of Illinois. To that end, several initiatives by the Governor's Office and millions of dollars in federal grants, many administered by the Authority, are supporting programs geared toward the successful reentry of ex-offenders into the community.

**Burgeoning business**

"Get tough" crime legislation of the 1980s and 1990s led to longer prison stays and more drug offenders going to prison. Add in high recidivism rates and you have the recipe for a corrections budget in Illinois that jumped from \$115 million in 1978 to about \$1.3 billion today, and a system that grew from 10 institutions in 1978 to 28 in 2002.

But economic conditions today have made it difficult for states to keep building more prisons to lock up more offenders for longer periods of time. That, and declines in violent crime in recent years, may help explain a leveling off in state prison populations across the nation.

The federal Bureau of Justice Statistics recently reported that the nation's prison population grew by only 1 percent in 2001, the smallest annual increase since 1972. In the second half of 2001, the federal prison population was up 2.8 percent, but the state prison population actually declined by 0.3 percent, according to the BJS bulletin, "Prisoners in 2001," released in July.

In Illinois, the crime rate in 2001 fell 2.9 percent over the previous year, the sev-

**The Compiler, Summer 2002**

**Vol. 21, No. 2**

Produced quarterly by the Office of Public Information

*Editor*

**Daniel Dighton**

E-mail: [ddighton@icjia.state.il.us](mailto:ddighton@icjia.state.il.us)

*Assistant Editor*

**Cristin Monti Evans**

E-mail: [cevans@icjia.state.il.us](mailto:cevans@icjia.state.il.us)

Visit the Authority online at: [www.icjia.state.il.us](http://www.icjia.state.il.us)

Write to: The Compiler, ICJIA, 120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016, Chicago, IL 60606.  
Telephone: 312-793-8550, TDD: 312-793-4170, Fax: 312-793-8422



A recent Winners' Circle meeting in Chicago.

enths straight year that crimes reported to police decreased. At the Illinois Department of Corrections, after years of steady growth and a peak of more than 45,600 inmates in 2001, the population seems to have plateaued, with 43,101 inmates as of June 30, 2002, and a forecasted population in 2003 of 43,201 inmates, according to IDOC officials.

One sure thing about prisoners is that nearly all of them are eventually going to leave prison, and most will go back to the community they left behind. They will typically return without a job or job skills, without much education, and frequently without a place to call home. What they will have is a felony record, and usually a history of substance abuse, as well as a host of other personal problems to overcome.

In many ways it seems society isn't about to forgive ex-offenders. There is a stigma attached to being a convicted felon, and many jobs are simply off limits. There are state laws, for example, that prohibit convicted felons in Illinois from getting licenses to be barbers and cosmetologists, among other professions.

"Once you get convicted you're always serving time, because that follows you the rest of your life," said George Williams, director of community partnerships for TASC, which provides extensive case management services to inmates and ex-offenders in Illinois.

For years, these men and women have been on the outside of mainstream society as individuals, and forgotten or largely neglected by society collec-

tively. But recently, the economic and social costs of incarceration have brought such pressure on the system that the needs and experiences of ex-offenders have suddenly come to the forefront of criminal justice planning and policymaking.

### **Studying the issue**

To gain a better understanding of the factors that most affect ex-offenders' reentry into the community, the Urban Institute, a public policy research organization in Washington, D.C., recently began a comprehensive study of ex-offenders in a handful of states, including Illinois. The study will analyze reentry from four perspectives: the individual, the family, the community, and the state — to include state programs and policies and the social and economic climate. The researchers hope that the knowledge gleaned from the three-year study will help states and communities improve prisoner reintegration and enhance public safety.

In a separate but related initiative, the Urban Institute will provide the Authority with a report on how federal grant money the Authority administers can best be used to support the successful reentry of offenders into the community.

Also, the Authority's Research and Analysis Unit has begun a study that will examine factors that influence recidivism among ex-offenders in Illinois, focusing in particular on the role gang involvement plays in rearrests after release from prison. The study is being supported with a grant from the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

### **"Going Home" initiative**

Several reentry initiatives have been launched recently in Illinois. In July, Gov. Ryan announced that the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) had received a \$2 million grant from the U.S. Department of Justice to support the Illinois Going Home prisoner reentry program in the North Lawndale community of Chicago. Illinois was

## Website improvements

Recently, the Authority revamped its website. The redesigned site — [www.icjia.state.il.us](http://www.icjia.state.il.us) — continues to be a tremendous tool for Internet users in search of community crime statistics, criminal justice research of a state and national scope, or news about state and federal grants.

The Authority's upgraded website now conforms to federal and statewide accessibility guidelines. These guidelines specify how web content should be made available to people with physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities. Emphasis is now placed on providing text-equivalents for non-text images and streamlining the overall site layout so that users using electronic screen readers or speech synthesizers can successfully navigate through the entire website.

### **DataNet**

A popular feature of the Authority's website is the Criminal Justice DataNet, a web-based database application which allows website users to research broad issues facing the criminal justice system or simply examine crime trends in a specific Illinois city, county or regional area. Currently, criminal offense and arrest data from the Illinois State Police uniform crime reporting program are available from 1983 through 1998 on each of Illinois' 102 counties. Users are able to display data in a variety of graphs and tables, and to download data into a spreadsheet for further analysis. An upgrade to the existing DataNet is under way and will provide users with additional functionality, including enhanced graphing, mapping, and analytical capabilities.

### **General information**

In addition to providing statewide criminal justice data, the website continues to provide information from the Authority's three main areas of operation: research, information systems, and federal and state grants.

Users interested in keeping current with the Authority's website can register online for the free CJ Dispatch, a twice-monthly e-mailing that highlights recent Authority publications, upcoming grant and funding opportunities, and new additions to the website. More than 1,000 subscribers currently receive the e-mail.

*Continued on page 4*

# Research

## Capital punishment

The Authority's Research and Analysis Unit (R&A) recently provided technical assistance to Governor Ryan's Commission on Capital Punishment on a special analysis of capital cases in Illinois. R&A researchers assisted in linking data from the Chicago Homicide Dataset and criminal history records to information maintained by the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) and information obtained via the Law Enforcement Agencies Data System. Researchers analyzed more than 7,000 death certificates obtained from the Illinois Department of Public Health in an effort to match additional victim information to IDOC records. R&A also coordinated three focus groups of homicide victim survivors and worked with Northwestern University's Center on Wrongful Convictions to conduct a panel discussion involving individuals wrongfully sentenced to death row. Three reports were submitted to the Commission on Capital Punishment, focusing on victim and survivor issues in homicide cases and the needs of those wrongfully convicted. The Authority's work was incorporated into the commission's April 2002 final report to the governor.

## Homicide research

In cooperation with the Chicago Police Department, R&A researchers continue to update and add to a comprehensive database containing information on every homicide that occurred in the city of Chicago between 1965 and 1996. The Chicago Homicide Dataset is now being updated through 2000. With the help of a \$4,500 grant from the Justice Research and Statistics Association (JRSA), R&A also is participating in a five-state grant project to study incident-based homicide data. Researchers have collected and analyzed data from homicide case file information from several local police departments in Illinois as part of the project. Their report will be completed later this year.

## Drug task force research

Researchers have completed a final draft report for a project analyzing differences between targeted offenders of special drug task forces in the state and the targeted drug offenders of local police departments. Funded

## Continued from page 3

among 49 states splitting \$100 million under the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, a collaboration involving the federal departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Education, Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development, Justice, Labor, and Veterans Affairs.

"These federal funds will help us continue our progress in administering programs designed to rehabilitate individuals and to reduce crimes committed by prior felons," Ryan said in a statement announcing the grant.

The Going Home program will direct services to juveniles and young adults with a propensity for violence or of high risk of returning to prison. Contact with the participants will begin before they are released, and the program will utilize newly formed transition teams, which will include IDOC parole officers, TASC case managers, and North Lawndale Employment Network staff.

The 200 inmates selected for the program will receive a variety of services, including assessment, case management, cognitive restructuring, a voucher pool for treatment, transitional housing, employment training and placement assistance, and specialized youth services. Approximately 525 inmates currently fit the requirements to participate in the Going Home program, according to IDOC.

As part of the program, a similar group of offenders returning to the neighboring communities of West Garfield, Austin, and West Humboldt Park will receive less-intensive services and be connected with existing networks of faith-based organizations and community agencies.

The Authority will conduct an evaluation of the program by tracking recidivism rates of participants. The Authority has committed up to \$700,000 in federal Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant Funds to possibly expand the North Lawndale model to serve juveniles in other Chicago neighborhoods.

A notable trend among ex-offenders returning home is that many return to the same crime-ridden and economically depressed area where they got into

trouble. This migration perpetuates the social and economic distress of many troubled urban neighborhoods.

With more than 2,700 parolees between the ages of 17 and 35 currently living in the community, North Lawndale has one of the highest concentrations of ex-offenders in the state. The North Lawndale Employment Network has estimated that more than 70 percent of all North Lawndale men between the ages of 18 and 45 have a criminal record.

Unemployment in North Lawndale is around 27 percent. Incomes are low, crime rates are high, and single mothers head a majority of the households, according to the latest U.S. census. North Lawndale was targeted by the Illinois Workforce Advantage and Going Home programs in an effort to improve these conditions and help a significant contingent of ex-offenders.

## Specialized programs

In collaboration with IDOC, the Authority recently committed nearly \$2 million in federal Anti-Drug Abuse Act funds, along with more than \$625,000 in state matching funds, toward transitional and reentry programs focusing on needs of specific groups of offenders. The programs are part of an IDOC effort to develop a system-wide approach to transitional reentry of offenders and consist of assessment, individualized case planning and case management that continues after release to the community. The four programs are briefly described below.

■ With the help of \$432,600 in federal and matching funds, a post-release substance abuse case management program has been operating for more than a year at the Southwestern Illinois Correctional Center in St. Clair County. The program targets adult male inmates with chronic substance abuse and criminal histories.

■ With \$533,333 in federal and matching state funds a community-based transitional program is being developed for female offenders at the Decatur Correctional Center and a Chicago-area Adult Transitional Center (ATC). Women offenders face unique issues, and this program will provide gender-responsive, individualized case

*(continued on next page)*

management services, with a particular focus on homelessness and finding safe housing. The program will complement existing collaborative initiatives between IDOC and the Illinois Department of Human Services at the Decatur facility and selected ATCs that assist female offenders with the transition back to the community.

■ Another transitional program will utilize \$625,000 for community-based substance abuse treatment for adult males at the West Side Adult Transitional Center in Chicago. The program will provide residential substance abuse treatment and a transitional program.

■ A total of \$912,500 will go toward a similar substance abuse treatment and transitional program for young offenders at the Illinois Youth Center-Chicago and at the West Side ATC.

Also, the U.S. Department of Justice recently announced changes to the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT) program guidelines that will allow up to 10 percent of the roughly \$2 million Illinois received this year under the program to go toward community-based treatment programs. Previously, RSAT funds could only be used for programs in correctional facilities.

### **Jobs are key to success**

In light of the large number of inmates returning to North Lawndale, IDOC opened an adult transitional center there. The Safer Foundation has operated the North Lawndale ATC under contract with IDOC for the past two years. Safer is a nonprofit organization that for the past 30 years has been helping ex-offenders find jobs as a means for reestablishing themselves on the outside. In addition to the 200-bed North Lawndale facility, Safer has operated IDOC's 350-bed Crossroads ATC for more than 15 years.

The philosophy of the Safer Foundation has always been that holding down a job was essential for keeping ex-offenders from reoffending or violating parole. "We knew that if an offender didn't have a legitimate income, he was going to have an income one way or another," said Ron Tonn, associate vice president for public fund development at the Chicago-based organization.

The foundation specializes in employment preparation and job referrals for ex-offenders, along with basic skills classes that can lead to a GED. In the classroom the instructors attempt to establish a model workplace environment to instill appropriate communication skills and other traits necessary for holding a job. What many of the clients learned in prison were survival skills, such as intimidation and menacing behavior. "That's part and parcel for surviving in an institution, it's not so good on a job," Tonn said.

In addition to the two ATCs it runs for IDOC, Safer has programs at its main office in Chicago, at the Cook County Jail, and at Safer facilities in Rockford and Davenport, Iowa.

The foundation gets about 4,500 walk-in clients a year in Chicago out of some 18,000 ex-offenders who return to the area during that period, Tonn said. The foundation places about 700 to 800 ex-offenders into jobs each year, drawing on an active pool of about 300 employers who have hired ex-offenders in the past couple of years.

Employment specialists at Safer focus as much on screening and placement in jobs as they do on making sure the clients keep their jobs. Part of Safer's success is due to the fact that it provides support for its clients and the companies that hire them for one year, Tonn said. "It's a package deal."

Over the years Safer has taken various approaches to helping ex-offenders succeed in the community, and many of them have been somewhat experimental, Tonn said. "I think we're just kind of at the door of understanding what works. It's not to the point that we have the recipe yet. We're always trying new things."

In addition to the regular basic skills classes and job services that they provide, the foundation also is working with the Illinois Department of Public Aid in a program focusing on family reunification. Tonn estimated that 60 percent to 70 percent of male ex-offenders in the area are fathers, and typically they are not supporting their children. Safer believes that connecting the fathers with their children and the children's mothers will help prevent recidivism. The program is just getting

## **Research** continued

through the Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, and carried out in cooperation with Loyola University, the project collected data on criminal histories and drug arrest dispositions from a sample of Illinois' multijurisdictional drug task force arrests and a comparison group taken from local police department arrests. The study also developed a means to compare Authority-funded Metropolitan Enforcement Group (MEG) and Task Force unit activities with the general drug control activities in the areas they serve. This technique was used to develop profiles of each unit to place their efforts into the larger context of drug control efforts in their respective jurisdictions.

### **Disproportionate confinement**

The Authority also has been working on projects related to the disproportionate confinement of minorities. One project, funded by the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, is looking at the disproportionate representation of minorities in the Cook County juvenile justice system. Researchers have completed the collection and analysis of data from various contact points in the juvenile justice system and finished a draft report of those findings. Case level data also is being collected as part of this project to measure the influence of specific factors on decisions made as the juveniles are processed through the system. A separate project, funded through JRSA, focuses on the development of a comprehensive statistical profile of each of Illinois' 102 counties. The profiles will assess disproportionate minority representation and contain a host of data and information to aid juvenile justice planning, problem identification, and problem solving. The profiles will be available on the Authority's website.

### **Other research**

Researchers have begun work on a project funded by the National Youth Gang Center that will examine the recidivism of gang versus non-gang members released from Illinois prisons.

The Authority also recently received a grant from JRSA to conduct an in-depth examination of the backgrounds, needs, and services received by female delinquents that have been committed to IDOC.

*Continued on page 6*

# Grants

## Recent Authority designations

■ \$2.2 million in **Victim of Crime Act (VOCA)** funding to 24 child advocacy centers across Illinois. These centers provide direct services to abused children. Centers had to have been operational prior to December 2001 to be eligible for funding.

■ \$905,724 in federal fiscal year 2001 **Local Law Enforcement Block Grants (LLEBG)** to 60 local law enforcement agencies for officer safety equipment. These funds will provide 18 new police vehicles, several mobile data terminals, and more than 20 in-car video systems.

## Federal grant designations

The Authority recently received designations for several grants from the U.S. Department of Justice for federal fiscal year 2002.

■ \$984,700 in **LLEBG** funds.

■ \$19.5 million in **Anti-Drug Abuse Act (ADAA)** funds. Also known as the Edward Byrne Memorial State and Local Law Enforcement Assistance Program, these funds support government programs that support drug law enforcement and combat violent crime.

■ \$2 million in **Residential Substance Abuse Treatment (RSAT)** funds to continue providing assistance to state prison inmates.

■ \$15 million in **VOCA** funds. Funded with fines paid by those convicted of violating federal laws, VOCA supports direct services to victims of violent crime. The act requires that priority be given to services for victims of sexual assault, domestic abuse, child abuse, and other groups identified by the state as underserved victims of violent crime.

■ \$4.9 million in **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)** funds. VAWA funds are used to improve the response of the criminal justice system to victims of sexual assault and domestic violence.

■ \$7.18 million in **Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grant (JAIBG)** program funds. JAIBG funds are used for initiatives that enable prosecutors to address drug, gang, and youth violence problems more effectively, and programs establishing and maintaining interagency information-sharing capabilities.

## Continued from page 5

under way at the two transitional centers Safer operates in Chicago. The program seeks to bring fathers into compliance with their child support obligations without being punitive, Tonn said.

### Expand focus beyond reentry

As Tonn sees it, the attention being given to reintegration is too narrowly focused. To seriously address the issue of reentry, the criminal justice system needs to pay more attention to the front end of the system, before nonviolent drug offenders are taken out of their communities and sent to prison. "In Illinois, we're in a lot of turbulence right now when it comes to ex-offenders. The focus needs to be broader than just reentry," he said.

More resources should be devoted to community-based programs for nonviolent offenders with addictions, Tonn said. Another priority should be to help ex-offenders find legitimate jobs as an alternative to the lucrative drug economy that exists in many communities, he said.

According to IDOC's 2000 Statistical Presentation, prisoner exits rose by 4 percent in 2000, continuing a trend that began in 1989. A major reason for the increase in exits was the increase in admissions for lower class drug offenses, which tend to have short incarceration periods.

The offense of Class 4 drug possession was the most common sentence to IDOC in 2000, and resulted in 4,290 prison admissions. The next most common sentences were for the Class 2 felonies of burglary, which accounted for 1,647 admissions, and manufacture/delivery of a controlled substance, which accounted for 1,437 admissions.

Substance abuse is a pervasive problem throughout the inmate population. U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics surveys indicate that in addition to inmates serving time for actual drug offenses, many more were sentenced for crimes they committed either while on drugs or to get money for drugs.

The average prison sentence for Class 4 drug possession was 1.8 years in

2000, but the actual time served in prison is typically only about four to seven months. Because the time in prison is so short for these offenders, they don't receive many services before they are released, said David Olson, a senior research scientist with the Authority who works on corrections issues.

"If they come in with an eighth grade education, they aren't going to get their GED in four months," Olson said. Similarly, he added, by the time these inmates go through intake and get assigned to a prison, there's not much time for extensive substance abuse treatment.

Reintegration isn't so hard for these offenders because they didn't really spend much time away from the community. But they don't come back with better tools for avoiding the mistakes they've made in the past, and now they have a felony conviction on their record. "The problem is they go back to the same place with the same negative influences they had before," Olson said.

IDOC Director Donald N. Snyder Jr. said he supports a debate on the value of community-based treatment for nonviolent drug offenders.

"We need to look at the value we return to taxpayers on the dollars we spend. Putting thousands of inmates in prison for a few months for possessing and using drugs is costing taxpayers millions of dollars every year," he said.

The value of using those dollars for incarceration alone is the central issue, Snyder said.

"Some of these offenders may need to be in prison for their criminal behavior. However, we could probably screen many of them out and get them in drug treatment programs that would cost less and be more effective in dealing with offenses they might commit in the future," he said. ♦

**Continued from page 1**

struggling in their transition from ward of the state to ordinary citizen. Coleman is a leadership group member of the Winners' Circle, a, peer-led recovery support group of ex-offenders facilitated by Treatment Alternatives for Safe Communities (TASC).

"I was looking for comfort," she said of her reintegration in December 2000 after serving 18 months at Dwight Correctional Center for cocaine possession with intent to sell. "When I went to Winners' Circle, I found people just like me coming home from the penitentiary or the county jail, trying to live and get back into society. I could talk about problems and things that were bothering me and I started getting involved."

Coleman received substance abuse treatment in Gateway Foundation's Corrections program prior to her release from prison. After serving her time, Coleman moved into Kedzie

Coleman applied for extensions and stayed at the recovery home for nearly a year. She took courses in office administration, got a job, and was able to pay rent to the recovery home. She eventually found an apartment. Today she and her new husband are making plans to purchase a house.

Coleman's first attempt at reintegrating and recovery took a much different turn. She served 11 months and entered a work release program in 1993 for a drug possession conviction. She then moved into Grace House, a recovery home in Chicago for female ex-offenders. She found work as a waitress, and eventually moved in with a friend.

"I stayed clean for seven months and I was doing real good, but waitressing had always been a trigger for me – fast money," she said. "For a while, I was able to save, but I wasn't attending meetings. I was working and trying to



**"I had so many trials and tribulations, things I didn't know how to deal with, and I turned to drugs for comfort. I didn't know what to do then. Today I do."**

— Janice Coleman

House, a halfway house for men and women. "When I came out, I refused to go back to my family and so-called friends," she said. "They were enablers. I got off the Greyhound bus downtown, hopped in a cab, and went straight to the recovery home."

At Kedzie House, Coleman was given three months to obtain a state identification card, find a job, and locate affordable housing. While obtaining a state identification card may seem like a simple task to most people, it can be difficult for individuals who are exiting the prison system due to a lack of necessary documentation, uncertainty about where and how to obtain the card, and even transportation issues. Further complicating matters, ex-offenders are unable to line up services, housing or employment without a state identification card.

find an apartment, and in the course of that, I ended up relapsing."

Coleman said a personal decision to steer clear of drugs and alcohol plays a key role in the progress she has made this time around. Now four years clean, she works in the outreach and outpatient division of Chicago's Haymarket Center. The center serves chemically dependent men and women and their families, including homeless and court-mandated offenders, through detox, residential, outpatient, and special treatment programs.

"I started using drugs and alcohol when I was 31," said Coleman, now 45. "Before I started using drugs and alcohol, I had a productive life. But I had so many trials and tribulations, things I didn't know how to deal with, and I turned to

*Continued on back page*

## Technology

### IIJIS strategic plan

The Illinois Integrated Justice Information Systems (IIJIS) project is on schedule, with the completion of a statewide strategic plan expected by the end of 2002. The plan will be submitted to the governor and will detail the work that needs to be done to reach goals for the exchange of criminal justice information in Illinois for the next two years.

The strategic plan will put forth strategies for integrating Illinois justice information systems through the sharing of complete, accurate, timely, and accessible information.

The IIJIS Planning Committee recently completed a "Scenario for Justice Information Sharing in Illinois," which identifies the types of information exchanges desired for an integrated justice information system in Illinois. Such exchanges might include a police officer needing immediate information on a vehicle during a traffic stop, or a judge needing complete and accurate criminal history information to set bail in a case.

A gap analysis of the Scenario is being conducted to identify those information exchanges that can be accomplished now, and to identify obstacles to additional exchanges.

To assist in the statewide effort, and to facilitate county-level integration planning, project staff members are convening discussion groups to make gap determinations from the perspective of justice information users and suppliers representing all justice agencies involved in offender-based decision-making. Participants also will enhance the Scenario by reviewing the information requirements for each stage of offender-based decision-making and noting regional and jurisdictional differences in user requirements.

The discussion groups will be organized around specific practitioner groups identified in the Scenario, including police, sheriffs, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, circuit court clerks, corrections officials, and probation/court services officers. In addition, staff members will convene multi-agency discussion groups in three counties where integration planning activities have already begun.

**Continued from page 7**

drugs for comfort. I didn't know what to do then. Today I do."

**Misconceptions**

Andy, who asked that his last name not be used, joined Winners' Circle two years ago.

"The biggest misconception by the public (about ex-offenders) is 'once an addict always an addict,' or 'they will always return to crime,'" Andy said. "It's not true. When a person gets tired and they have somebody to help them find another direction and keep going, they don't pick up drugs and keep pursuing that life."

Andy believes being in a position to help others has contributed significantly to the strides he has made. He works as a sexually transmitted disease counselor and case manager at Haymarket Center, and is a Winners' Circle leadership group member.

"It reminds me of where I came from," he said of his work. "It gives me a

chance to give back some of what I learned through my experiences."

Andy has been in and out of prison seven times since 1969 for stealing cars. He was released from Sheridan Correctional Center in December 2000 after two years and nine months of incarceration. He considers himself fortunate.

"I went through what I went through, but a lot of people weren't so lucky," Andy said. "A lot of people are in for the rest of their lives."

Now 52 years old and four-and-a-half years clean, Andy also serves as president of the health ministry at his church. He received substance abuse treatment in Gateway Foundation's Corrections program during his stay at Sheridan. He eventually became a group facilitator during his incarceration, and took steps to continue his outreach work once he left prison.

"My gift is being able to reach people that others can't reach," he said. "Ev-

erybody has some kind of niche, they just need encouragement to find it. Prior to treatment the last time, I wasn't an outspoken person. I didn't think I had the ability to draw people's interest. A counselor encouraged me, and I found mine."

Coleman and Andy have served as guest lecturers before a variety of organizations. In July, they and other Winners' Circle leadership group members traveled to a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration conference in Washington, D.C., to speak about the importance of recovery homes and other resources for ex-offenders.

"You have to be willing to have had enough, and you have to do what you can do, but you have to have the resources available," Andy said. ♦

Please make address changes in the space above and mail or fax this portion to the Authority. Check if appropriate: \_\_\_ Add to mailing list. \_\_\_ Delete from mailing list. Sign up through our website for CJ Dispatch and receive e-mail notification when *The Compiler* and other publications are posted online: [www.icjia.state.il.us](http://www.icjia.state.il.us)

PRESORTED STANDARD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
CHICAGO, IL  
PERMIT NUMBER 4273

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority  
120 S. Riverside Plaza, Suite 1016  
Chicago, Illinois 60606  
312.793.8550  
TDD 312.793.4170  
Fax 312.793.8422  
[www.icjia.state.il.us](http://www.icjia.state.il.us)

