



D.C. Fathering Court Grads Grateful for Second Chance

posted 01/29/10 7:01 pm producer: [Alexandra Meril](#)



WASHINGTON - A special kind of graduation ceremony took place in the District Friday.

The Fathering Court program, run by the D. C. Superior Court, helps reconnect former prisoners with their loved ones. And for five graduates, it helped get them back on track.

The program was created to combat a sobering statistic: one out of every four D.C. prisoners owes court-ordered child support. Once they get out, the job search can be daunting, as former inmates deal with their rocky past and the current economy.

Still, these five men managed to go from incarceration to celebration.

Northeast D.C. resident John Williams and D. C. Magistrate Judge Milton Lee didn't always

have the most jovial relationship. Two years ago, Lee presided over the case that sent Williams to jail.

"I didn't dislike him for the sentence he imposed," said Williams. "I knew if you do the crime, you do the time."

After serving his sentence, Williams wanted to get back to work. But with a criminal record, he couldn't find anything steady and fell behind in child support payments. That's when he turned to Lee for help.

"He was phenomenally frustrated by the inability to find long-term work," Lee said.

The magistrate judge chose Williams and four other men for the Fathering Court initiative. The year-long course helps place former inmates into subsidized work through the Department of Employment Services.

Others, like Williams, find work in the private sector through Educational Data Services Incorporated. The company works with 20 businesses that are willing to take on former

Advertisement

30-Year Fixed Rate
\$200K loan for \$1,060/mo.

866-945-4410

*Rates can change. Act now!

Quicken Loans

The Easiest Way to Get a Home Loan®

Print Powered By FormatDynamics™



inmates.

"We're right up front about who we want to employ and basically the employers are willing to take a little bit of a chance," said Lee.

While job seeking plays a big part in the course, the program still focuses on fathers, with the men receiving guidance on how to reconnect with their children. It's advice that convicted felon Reginald Sutton, who served 10 years behind bars, says he desperately needed.

"I have a relationship with my children now," he said. "I'm able to pay my child support. I'm working. You stay out of trouble -- you don't have a choice. You don't want to let anybody down."

Organizers are currently reviewing applicants for the next class of Fathering Court that will start soon.

© 2010 NewsChannel 8, a division of Allbritton Communications Company

The Associated Press may have contributed to this article.

All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.

Advertisement

30-Year Fixed Rate
\$200K loan for \$1,060/mo.

866-945-4410

*Rates can change. Act now!

Quicken Loans

The Easiest Way to Get a Home Loan®

Print Powered By  FormatDynamics™