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NEWS RELEASE

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Westchester County Department of Correction Offers Entrepreneurship Training to Inmates

VALHALLA, NY, July 12, 2021 – [Inmates to Entrepreneurs](#), a national nonprofit that teaches incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals how to start and grow their own businesses, announced today that Westchester County Department of Correction (WCDOC) is offering the Inmates to Entrepreneurs course to its inmates.

The first group of Westchester County graduates completed the 8-week program in May. They joined the live course via Zoom and graduated alongside formerly incarcerated individuals from across the Northeast. The course is available nationwide to anyone with a criminal record and is provided free of charge by the nonprofit.

“As part of our core mission WCDOC is committed to helping our residents identify resources and opportunities that can help them during and after their period of incarceration,” said **Nory Padilla, First Deputy Commissioner with WCDOC**. “With that in mind, we embraced the opportunity to offer this course because entrepreneurship can have a direct bearing on the welfare and livelihood of our residents and their families upon their return home. We are proud of our residents’ participation in this unique virtual business course and look forward to another successful round of training with the Inmates to Entrepreneurs organization,” Padilla added.

Brian Hamilton founded Inmates to Entrepreneurs in 1992 to help provide a path to financial stability and success for a population whose employment options are limited after reentering society. Formerly incarcerated individuals face unemployment rates [five times](#) the national average and, nationally, within three years of release from incarceration, more than [two-thirds](#) of former inmates are rearrested. The primary goal of the organization is to help reduce this recidivism rate through training a new generation of entrepreneurs.

“We want people who have been judicially involved to be able to earn a livable wage and to be part of wealth creation,” said **Brian Hamilton, founder of Inmates to Entrepreneurs**. “America is the land of second chances. There are 2.3 million people currently in prison or jail, and over 70 million people with a criminal record in the United States and we want to equip them with the tools to start their own businesses,” Hamilton continued.

WCDOC's Inmates to Entrepreneurs graduates shared their experiences:

- "Inmates to Entrepreneurs showed me that I could still have a successful business, even with a felony record. Knowing that motivates me because of the circumstances I'm dealing with now. I know I could still be a successful business owner," said **Akeem Palmer**.
- "Learning about entrepreneurship motivated me and gave me hope because despite the circumstances I am going through right now, I can make my family proud and be successful in life," said **Jose Flores**.
- "Since I've participated in the Inmates to Entrepreneurs class, I realized that I want to be my own boss. I also learned that being an entrepreneur is much more than just learning to run your own business. It is an approach to life that involves thinking of yourself as a 'can do' person," said **Shelby Hines**.
- "The Inmates to Entrepreneurs class taught me how to identify business opportunities, and that the secret of a long-lasting business is to analyze your business goals and collect feedback," said **Keyonnie Davis**.

More than 10,000 individuals have taken Inmates to Entrepreneurs courses and 20 to 30 percent have started businesses, including landscaping, event planning, catering and cleaning services.

About Inmates to Entrepreneurs

Inmates to Entrepreneurs assists people with criminal backgrounds in starting their own businesses. The organization's goal is to reduce the rate of recidivism in the United States by providing an alternative path to financial stability and success. To learn more, visit <https://inmatestoentrepreneurs.org>.

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