

From the Sheriff:

One of the first programs I started after my election was the Dodge County Sheriff's Inmate Work Crew Program. The Sheriff has this authority under State Statute 973.03 (3) (a). The intent of the program is to provide a conduit for inmate to reduce their sentences and relieve jail overcrowding. The program also allows inmates to actually pay their debt to society, the same society many wronged in committing their crimes. There are also numerous residual benefits for the inmates such as changing stereotypes we have of inmates and themselves proving to society they can work in a public forum and comply with the laws and norms of society.

This is different than a community service work crew. Community service is a sentence that is imposed. The Inmate Work Crew is a program where as an inmate can work for a non-profit organization or government entity and for every 24-hrs he/she works their sentence is reduced one day. It is very feasible that an inmate sentenced to 60 days jail for Operating w/o a Valid Drivers License could be out in 35-days.

This program is managed by the Program Office in the Dodge County Detention Facility and they are doing a fabulous job. To date, the program has provided this FREE labor to 45 different work sites. The sites include tornado clean-up in Waupun, painting Beaver Dam City Hall, Randolph flood clean-up, Bethesda Fair, and local churches and civic organizations to name just a few.

The results are very measurable and encouraging. Our largest effort has been the Waupun Tornado clean-up where we provided 24 inmates that contributed 896 hours of labor to the community. Our financial savings are approaching \$80,000.00 as we have reduced combined sentences of our labor force by 1,184 days saving the taxpayers the \$60.00 per day in housing costs.

Each inmate is interviewed to see if he/she is a good candidate for this program. Each inmate accepted is instructed on the penalty for inappropriate behavior and conduct. An inmate may have earned a 15-day reduction in his sentence but if he violates any rule he loses all he earned.

When we started this program it was not warmly received as society has its own television impressions of inmates. Today, 2 ½ years later we continue to grow and at times have run out of candidates for this worthy program. We have received many letters of recommendations from organizations that have been recipients of this work force. Some inmates have also secured full-time employment after proving themselves.

Some would say that all inmates should be locked up and the key thrown away until his sentence is up. Years ago I was one who thought that way. I have seen the value of a program like this, the opportunity to have inmates work off their sentence, prove to society they are reformed and can be responsible. It is our intent to expand this program into other areas. We ensure that we do not compete with the local labor force.

If you have any question regarding this program, its merit, benefits, or if you have a need for a few strong backs, feel free to contact me. Thanks for listening tnehl@co.dodge.wi.us.