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JOHN VALENZUELA — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

San Bernardino County Probation officers Kathleen Cox, left, Marnisha Coleman and Richard Gomez talk with female inmates during the jobs resource fair at Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center in Devore on Wednesday.

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## LOCAL NEWS

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# Resource fair gives info, hope to Glen Helen inmates

By Grace Wong

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**DEVORE »** Eula Charles has been in jails before. She has been on drugs before. She has lost her children before.

And Wednesday, she was at Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center. But this time, she was there to help.

"They're me," Charles said of the inmates. "Everywhere they've been, I've been. But I'm 20 years clean and sober. I couldn't be where I am today if somebody didn't come into someplace like this and allow me to know it was okay for me to change my life and keep it real. Because it's hard. I want them to know that change is possible."

Charles is housing director for Time for Change Foundation, which had just one of many booths at a resource fair for the inmates at Glen Helen Rehabilitation Center. From probation officers to the Department of Motor Vehicles, the resource fair gave inmates the opportunities to get their questions answered and receive information to help them in their life after leaving the jail.

"We just want to give them the tools that they need to be successful when they go back out and are released," said Chris Martin, inmate programs coordinator.

The resource fairs, part of the Inmate Rehabilitation through Occupational and Academic Development Systems Program, have been held at the center for 12 years, officials said.

"I think that this was an excellent idea," said Desiree Delgado, 20, of Fontana, who will be getting out on April 21. "I believe that it will help each and every single one of us. I probably wouldn't have looked

for these resources if I were out. I'd probably still be doing what I was doing. But now that I'm in here and I've gotten the opportunity, I'm grateful for it."

One of the most popular booths at the resource fair was the public defender's, with many inmates hoping that their felony charges would be dropped to a misdemeanor because of Assembly Bill 109, Proposition 47 and Proposition 36.

AB 109, effective Oct. 1, 2011, mandates that individuals sentenced to non-serious, non-violent or non-sex offenses will serve their sentences in county jails instead of state prison, according to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation website. Prop. 47, approved last November, reduces felony charges to misdemeanors for certain drug and property offenses, according to the California General Election Voter Information Guide.

"When people talk about the public defender's office, traditionally everybody sees us handling cases in court, fighting for our clients in court, however we do more than that," said Thomas Sone, chief deputy public defender.

"We have a lot of outreach programs, especially more so recently because of the changes in law like AB 109 and Prop. 47 and Prop. 36 so our outreach programs are dedicated to try and help individuals get back on their feet, try and help them reach well-being and become self-sufficient."

But at the end of the day, the resource fair gave inmates a glimmer of hope and empowered them to make good decisions for themselves after they leave.

"I didn't feel like no one is out to help us but today showed me otherwise,"

said Lasandra Kennedy, 24, of San Bernardino, who is hoping to get out next week. "Today they opened up their arms for all of us. There was help for everyone."

She rifled through her pamphlets and pointed to a few.

"I learned a lot today," she said.

"I got everybody's cards and brochures just to help someone else because I'm not going to be homeless when I get out of here but someone else might."

"We get no help in here. We have no answers, no nothing and they're like, 'We don't know, we don't know, figure it out when you get out.' But they came and opened up the door for us. So it's like, OK, we don't have to ask ya'll anything because we have our own brochures and we have everything we need to know."