

Precinct Reporter

"I wholly disapprove of what you say, but I will defend to the death your right to say it" – Voltaire

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Advocates Call on Felons to Get Their Records Reclassified

By Dianne Anderson
Staff Writer

Still over a year to go, but Proposition 47 grassroots organizations and agencies are getting anxious over the time-line to get the local formerly incarcerated community into important services before it's too late.

Felons don't seem to be saving the date to get their status reclassified as misdemeanors.

Renea Wickman with the Inland Empire Concerned African American Churches has been attending many events to let the community know how reclassifying their records can open up a whole new world. In addition to jobs, they can access federal student loans, federal housing loans, as well as apartment and housing applications.

"It is very difficult to get housing with a felony. If you have people on Section 8, fami-

ly members [with felonies] are not supposed to be on the property," she said.

This week, Wickman plans to attend, and will have representatives, at two local events.

On Friday, July 24, the United Nations of Consciousness hosts its resource fair from 1-4:00 p.m. at Little Zion Manor Apartments at 2000 Jubilee Court. Open to the public, the event will host Prop 47 felony reduction Expungement services. The community can also apply for Medi-Cal or Cal Fresh, and get free counseling information through the African American Mental Health Coalition.

On Saturday, July 25, Time for Change is also hosting their Champ 47 free felony reduction clinic from 9:00 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. located at The Way World Outreach Mission located at 1001 N. Arrowhead Avenue in San Bernardino.

"We will have 15 Public Defenders on site preparing Petitions to reduce felonies to misdemeanors under Prop. 47," said Nicole Wolfe with Time for change Foundation in San Bernardino. " We will have a light lunch available for those waiting to have their Petitions prepared and tons of water to keep those in line hydrated."

Any felonies under \$950 can be reduced to misdemeanors, which include shoplifting, simple drug possession, forgery or fraud, petty or grand theft, bad checks, receiving stolen property. Participants are asked to bring their rap sheet, California identification or drivers license, along with any court documents, case numbers, and Live Scan results.

Wickman said that IECAAC is also willing to help any non-profits get Prop. 47 services into

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the impacted community.

"It's a good time for justice reform now, and it's a good time for African Americans to get on the bandwagon," she said.

Everyone should aware of the last day to apply for Prop. 47 benefits, which is the first Tuesday of November 2017, she said. Because the proposition didn't include any funding for advertising, she said it is difficult getting the word out about the process.

"Give us a venue, give us the date and time, we'll contact the public defenders and show up," she said.

Dr. Carolyn Eggleston, executive director, California State University, San Bernardino, Reentry Initiative, said that her three multi-service reentry centers in San Bernardino, Victorville and Moreno Valley have seen good success in the past five years with about 2,000 participants.

The program is by parole referral only, and works exclusively with parolees, but not probationers.

"We have all of the mandated classes they have to take, domestic violence, substance abuse,

and a series of educational programs, many non-mandated programs [for a] individualized approach," she said.

In partnership between the university and the California Department of Corrections, the program is part of a Cal State San Bernardino Re-entry Initiative. She said many participants come in by word of mouth, and for those who finish, there is a much lower rate of return to custody.

"We try to treat people humanely, and that they can hopefully get out of this cycle and go a different direction," she said. "We're doing good work, students are very responsive, we've had zero incidents of violence."

She feels that it is very important the community realize what Prop 47 means, and take advantage of the process.

"If they can't get all of their charges reduced, even if they can get some of them [reduction] helps," she said.

For more information, see www.timeforchangefoundation.org/

Or, www.safeandjust.org/recordchange