

For Immediate Release

PEN Products Expands Apprenticeship Programs in the IDOC

Indianapolis, Indiana (March 12, 2009) – One of the greatest challenges facing offenders upon their release from prison is securing steady employment. Because of this, PEN Products, a division of the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC), has worked to improve and provide U.S. Department of Labor apprenticeships in various fields for offenders in certain IDOC facilities. Now, PEN Products hopes to expand the apprenticeship programs to more IDOC facilities and positively impact more offenders.

During the last weeks of February and first weeks of March, PEN Products held informational meetings throughout the state to give each IDOC facility the opportunity to register U.S. Department of Labor apprenticeship programs for offender workers. In addition, IDOC facility staff has the opportunity to receive apprenticeship certification for their correctional work. The apprenticeship program initiative began in April 2006, and over 700 PEN Products offender apprentices have received certificates from the U.S. Department of Labor. In addition, over 1,500 of PEN's current offender workers are enrolled and working toward completing an apprenticeship.

As a result of the meetings, 15 IDOC facilities registered apprenticeship programs for their custody, counseling, administrative, and/or physical plant staff members, while 7 other facilities registered programs for their facility/physical plant offender workers. A variety of occupations were registered by the facilities through the programs.

“There is no doubt that these apprenticeship programs, certified by the U.S. Department of Labor, will benefit the IDOC's re-entry efforts by giving offenders significant job training and certification. PEN Products has done an outstanding job of coordinating these efforts, and I look forward to having this initiative expanded throughout IDOC facilities,” said IDOC Commissioner Edwin G. Buss.

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Media Contact:

Douglas S. Garrison

Chief Communications Officer

Phone: (317) 232-5780

dsgarrison@idoc.in.gov