

Inmates Share Stories, Look At Prison Life

TheIndyChannel.com

See the whole story, with video at
<http://www.theindychannel.com/news/19746633/detail.html>

Troubled Teens Get 'Reality Check' From Inmates

POSTED: 7:32 pm EDT June 13, 2009

UPDATED: 8:23 pm EDT June 13, 2009

PENDLETON, Ind. -- Some troubled teens got an inside look at prison life Saturday as part of a program dubbed "Reality Check."

The teens from Muncie talked with four inmates from the Pendleton Correctional Facility, all who had been convicted of murder or attempted murder, 6News' Sarah Cornell reported.

The inmates told stories of drug abuse and violence, and shared pictures of the prison cells they now call home.

"No matter what your background is, whether you have one parent or have both parents, whatever you experience is or going to be, you still have the power to make good choices," said John Hairson, an inmate serving time for attempted murder.

The program, which began in August, targets teens from across the state who've been in trouble at school or with the law.

Organizers said the bleak look at prison life hits home for many.

"Some of them just look at it like, 'Yeah those guys are just talking.' Others, they realize that they are one step away from being in this place," said program coordinator Wayne Scaife.

Javon Hall, 15, was recently arrested and expelled from school. He soaked in the inmates' message.

"It's not a place I want to be, ever," he said. "They can't do the things they want to do or wish to do."

The inmates who volunteer aren't compensated for sharing their stories, and some miss lunch to participate.

The Reality Check program is offered to teen groups across the state. Anyone looking to take part is asked to contact Scaife at 765-788-2107 or by e-mail at wscaife@idoc.in.gov.

Additionally, the Indiana State Prison has a similar program called "Voices from Behind the Wall" that has been in place for 15 years and served more than 60,000 students from all states. The coordinator of this program is Gus Carlson, who can be reached at (219) 874-7256 ext. 1550.

Also, the Miami Correctional Facility has had a program called "Straight Talk" since 2000. Contact Ann Hubbard at 765-689-8920, ext. 5536, ahubbard@idoc.in.gov for more information.