



IDOC Hosts Summit of Hope in Mt. Vernon



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MT. VERNON -- The Illinois Department of Corrections is hoping to help former inmates transition back into society by offering information on different support services, all under one roof.

On Tuesday, IDOC hosted a Summit of Hope event in Mt. Vernon. Similar to a job fair, the program offers dozens of support services through local businesses and organizations.

"They can leave with job referrals, they can leave with housing assistance, if there's an issue as far as food or being able to take care of their children," explains organizer Marcus King.

Representatives with the Illinois Secretary of State's Office provide services found at the DMV, including a new I.D. at no cost. If eligible, parolees can even leave with a driver's license.

"It's not just a job fair. It's an opportunity for people to reintegrate back into society and become productive citizens," says King.

One of the goals is to keep former inmates from turning back to crime and returning to prison. King believes the right resources can stop repeat offenses. He says the program can provide a second chance for the nearly 200 people who showed up Tuesday.

Most importantly, the program provides hope.

"When you can get people back to work, not only does it fight crime but people are working. They are productive citizens and they're just leading healthy lives," says King.

Tuesday's event was for parolees from Jefferson County and connecting counties. A Summit of Hope event for female parolees in Jackson County is scheduled for the beginning of next year.