



Expo Helps Ex-Offenders Get Back On Their Feet

October 1, 2014 By Courtney Yuen

Summit of Hope," an effort to get former convicts back on their feet and back to work. That expo today helped make that happen.

"It felt like there was no one there to help me," said ex-offender Tremontae Teague. "It felt like literally the whole world was against me, but that wasn't the case."

Teague said doing time for a possession charge was the lowest point in his life.

"I was incarcerated and I thought that was it, but with this organization and these people here today by allowing anybody in any situation to help lift themselves and become more productive in their lives and show that this is not the end," said Teague.

Only 20 years old, it's not the end for him.

"I definitely want to go to college," said Teague. "I'm looking into so musical engineering and production. From there I want to take my degree and venture the world and tackle anything that comes my way."

He said he was nervous coming to the expo today, but is glad he did.

Over 300 ex-offenders, like Teague came to the event today.

"It just warms my heart to even think about people taking a proactive stance to lead productive lives," said Marcus King with the Illinois Department of Corrections. "It's all about seizing your destiny and when you come to this event the option is here, it's a one-stop shop."

Sue Davison from the Safer Foundation who helped organize the event with IL-DOC said over 50 service providers ranging from mental healthcare, education and employment specialists were available to ex-offenders today.

"It's only a benefit to all of us in our community if we assist these folks because if we don't help them and those who are seeking a more positive path, if we don't help them it's just going to be revolving door. They're going to end up back in incarceration," said Davison.

She said they could even get a state ID, HIV test or flu shot. New Style Barbershop from Moline was also there giving free haircuts. They say they wanted to help give ex-offenders confidence, whether it was for everyday life or a job interview.

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As for Teague, he said he's happy to be moving forward in life.

"Nothing is too big and anything you set your mind to, literally is possible and I'm living proof of that because I'm not supposed to be here right now," he said.

IL-DOC said in the past two years, recidivism has dropped 8%. That's the rate that people return to prison.