



## Last Stop Shop Offers Dignity to Offenders Leaving Prison

By: James Stratton

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GALESBURG, Ill (KWQC) - A program formed at the Hill Correctional Facility in Galesburg allows inmates leaving after serving their sentences to have a full set of clothing.

Vincent Taylor has been in prison for twenty years. After serving his sentence for first degree murder, he'll finally head home on Monday, December 19th.

“Exciting,” said Taylor with a smile on his face. “Overjoyed I get to spend it with my family after all these years.”

“It’s the anxiety of the unknown, but ready to live life and put this chapter behind me and move forward,” he added. “I’ve grown up in here.”

Before this chapter of Taylor's life ends, a shopping trip begins.

He and other inmates get the chance to pick out clothing in a makeshift store in the facility's laundry room.

Jeans and pants are neatly stacked along the walls, sized and organized.

Shirts hang below, also in perfect order.

All of the clothing is donated by the Salvation Army, local churches and service groups and Walmart.

It's a way to give inmates dignity and take away judgment once they're set free.

Normally they'd be released in prison issued clothing, black sweats and a white shirt.

"They kind of have the stigma when they're standing at the bus stop in sweatpants and a sweatshirt that, especially in this city, everybody knows they're an offender," said Assistant Warden, Chis McLaughlin.

"To actually leave outta here with regular clothes on and people not knowing you just were locked up is a blessing," said James Heard, who's been in prison for three years. He'll be released on Monday as well.

"I think this gives you the opportunity to blend in with society," said John Justice, who will be released after a seven-month stint on Friday.

By blending in with society, prisoners are more likely to become a part of it.

"Anything that's going to help you be a contributor to the community and a job seeker or a job holder, is all going to make it so they don't have to make negative choices," said Patty Burgin, who is a teacher at Hill and helps with the clothing program.

If you would like to donate to the program, you can drop off items to the Salvation Army in Galesburg. The correctional center is looking for winter clothing like hats, boots, gloves and other warm gear.

<http://kwqc.com/2016/12/16/the-last-stop-shop-offers-inmates-clothing-dignity-when-leaving-prison/>