

## Out In A Week Boutique Giving Inmates A Fresh Start

By: Akilah Davis

November 3, 2016



LOGAN COUNTY, Ill. (WICS) - November 3, 2016 - First appearances make a lasting impression and for women hoping to enter the work force, what they wear could make or break a job offer. Now, one boutique is helping women make that transition.

They say shopping is therapeutic and that's especially true for shoppers at the "Out in a Week Boutique" -- All of them are picking out outfits to go home in.

"I don't want to walk out in a gray jumpsuit because that's what we wear here every day, all day," said inmate Sonia Shelton. "I want to look like I'm somebody going out the door."

Out in a Week Boutique isn't your average shop and these aren't your average shoppers. Inmates with a couple weeks left on their sentence come to the boutique at the Logan Correctional Center to select an outfit to wear home instead of the standard gray sweatsuit. It's all for free.

"People know when you step off the train or bus you came from the penitentiary and we don't want to look like that," said inmate Tina Beals.

"Coming down here to pick an outfit lets me know I'm one step closer to being home with my family. It's a new beginning," said inmate Amanda Nelson, who is also a boutique specialist.

These donated clothes are a new beginning that starts with the new or gently used clothes or shoes that have been donated by the community..

"It definitely raises their self confidence and sense of well being . They feel like they're leaving and being normal. Not being labeled like they've been here," said IDOC Correctional Counselor Sierra Waterkotte.

The boutique opened in may of this year and has serviced close to 500 women. Inmates say the boutique doesn't just offer them a new outfit, they're putting on a new outlook.

"Just knowing that its over for me and that I'm getting something nice to go into the next chapter of my life," said Nelson.

IDOC is launching other boutiques at facilities across the state as part of Gov. Rauner's rapid results initiative. By sending the inmates home in these clothes instead of offender clothing, the department is able to save money. That money gets reallocated to pay for other services within the department.

<http://newschannel20.com/news/local/correctional-center-boutique-sends-inmates-home-in-civilian-clothes>