

Correctional Industry Program Makes Good Use of Time

'We're set up to run as a business...' – Former Director Joe Trevathan

Since it was established in October 1987, York Street Industries, the Hampden County Correctional Center's correctional industry program, has expanded its product line to include not only ergonomic secretarial chairs, but also inmate uniforms, upholstery services, admission/hygiene kits, and furniture repair.

The correctional industry program is now located within the security compound of the Hampden County House of Correction at Stony Brook.

When York Street Industries opened in 1986, the inmates made only secretarial chairs. As the market for chairs began to decrease, the program began to add other product and services. "This is what really keeps us going. The money from the chairs allows us to do other things." Joe Trevathan, Director of Correctional Industries, explained.

According to Trevathan, products and services offered by the program are only advertised in trade magazines that serve government agencies.

Trevathan explained, "We're allowed to sell to other government agencies. We're trying to market the uniforms and hygiene kits to correctional facilities across the country."

In addition to making inmate uniforms and admission hygiene kits, the program also repairs damaged mattresses, pillows, and uniforms. Inmates caught vandalizing these items are billed for the cost of their repair. Inmates involved in the York Street Industry program made coat racks for the correctional facility.

"We're set up to run as a business. We're always looking for work. Anything we provide for the inmates, we try to make here," Trevathan said.

Four objectives

The York Street Industry program has four main objectives: to keep inmates productively occupied; to teach work discipline and job skills; to operate on a self-sufficient basis; and to produce quality products at reasonable prices.

"We're taking people that have never done anything in their life and teaching them pride," said Program Coordinator Michael Mastriani.

An average of 20 inmates work in the York Street Industry shop each day.

The inmates work approximately seven hours per day and earn between 50 cents to \$1 per hour. The money they earn can be sent home to friends or family members or be put in their account to be used in the commissary.

"I would say over half of the inmates here (the shop program) would have no other money if they weren't working in here." Mastriani speculated.

Both Trevathan and Mastriani agree there have been few problems with the program.

"When they come through the door, they're not inmates. They are workers and we try to treat them that way." Mastriani said.

Mastriani also said the inmates are treated with respect and taught to work together. All inmates admitted to the program are carefully screened. If they have any reason to believe an inmate will cause a problem, he or she is removed from the program.

Tools used in the shop are accounted for three times each day. Each inmate has a token with his or her number on it. When the inmate borrows a tool, his or her chip is put in place of the tool on a pegboard.

Hope to expand

Trevathan said he would eventually like to see the print shop and machine shop integrated into York Street Industry program. In the meantime, he plans to continue marketing their existing products.

"We go directly to the manufacturer for the materials as much as possible. You can't beat our prices." Trevathan explained.

The standard hygiene kits include a disposable razor, comb, toothbrush, shaving gel, soap, and toothpaste. Optional items, such as shampoo and non-alcohol deodorants are also available. The hygiene kits are becoming one of York Street Industries most popular items.

"You can't find them cheaper. Someday, in my opinion, the hygiene kits will hit big and we'll be shipping them all over the country." Trevathan said, adding that he's received inquiries from across the country and has shipped kits as far as California.