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# The Transition Times

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## ECO, Inc. has a new name!

We are celebrating our 35th anniversary with a new name and a new face! We are now The Center for Community Transitions!

The Center for Community Transitions became a 501 c (3) organization in 1974 as ECO, Inc. The first and longest operating program is Aftercare, which provides transition services to men and women leaving prison or jail. Research shows that securing and retaining employment reduces the chance of a return to prison or jail. Soon after beginning this program we realized that the impact of prison did not just affect the prisoner, but also the prisoner's family.

port activities include facilitating a twice-monthly support group, reconnecting inmate parents with their children and developing a parenting program that is taught at the Mecklenburg County jails.

In 1987, we opened the first contract prison in North Carolina, The ECO Center for Women. This program allows women who are near the end of their state prison sentence to participate in work release, family leave, study release and community leave programs to increase their ability to make a smooth transition back into the community.

From 1997 - 2001, ECO operated a transition residential program for women who were released from prison or jail and were homeless.

In 2006, ECO absorbed Mecklenburg Sentencing

Services into the organization as the fourth program. Sentencing Services prepares in depth psychosocial sentencing reports for the courts in order to maximize the utilization of community resources as an option to prison.

In 2007, the board of directors approved the name change from ECO, Inc. to The Center for Community Transitions, continuing with the tagline, building people, not prisons. This name change became effective in January 2008 and was officially announced in March 2008.

### Our Mission

**The Center for Community Transitions strengthens our community by helping people with criminal records find a healthier and more productive way of living. Our work provides employment and transition services; supports alternatives to incarceration; and restores and strengthens family bonds.**

### Board of Directors

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The Family Support program was developed based on research that has shown that maintaining family ties is a key to reducing the chances of a return to prison or jail. Family sup-

## Get Involved!

Volunteer your time and/or lend your expertise

The Center for Community Transitions welcomes volunteers who are willing to share their skills with our clients. Opportunities are designed to accommodate your schedule and can include activities such as providing lunch for workshop clients, teaching a class, becoming a mentor or conducting a life-skills workshop such as computer skills or household budgeting. These are just a few of the opportunities available.

To learn more about how you can help, please contact Kelly Perez at 704-374-0762, ext 13 or [kperez@centerforcommunitytransitions.org](mailto:kperez@centerforcommunitytransitions.org)

[www.centerforcommunitytransitions.org](http://www.centerforcommunitytransitions.org)

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### Community Impact

#### In 2006-2007

We provided services to over **2,000** individuals (unduplicated):

- **893** individuals with criminal records received services to become employment ready.
- **82%** of those who completed our Employment Readiness Workshop and obtained employment remained out of prison/jail.
- **400** inmates received correspondence services to prepare for release.
- **164** inmates attended presentations to learn about our programs.
- **323** inmates attended Family Ties parenting classes or received support about parenting long distance.
- **178** children visited an incarcerated parent who completed the Family Ties class to maintain their family bond.
- **142** individuals received pre-sentencing recommendations for alternatives to incarceration through Mecklenburg Sentencing Services.
- **27** women received transitional services at the ECO Center for Women. These women.....
  - .....earned \$249,518.21 through their jobs
  - .....paid \$45,260.89 in restitution
  - .....paid \$10,976.04 in child support
  - .....paid an additional \$10,377.85 in voluntary child support
- **87%** of the residents released from the ECO Center for Women remain out of jail or prison.

A study conducted by United Way Central Carolinas has shown that for every dollar contributed to The Center for Community Transitions, formerly ECO, Inc., the return on investment is \$43.00 through saved incarceration costs and contributions to the local economy.

building people, not prisons

### Volunteer Spotlight on Kelley Young



Kelley has been a volunteer at The Center for Community Transitions for a little over 3 years. She saw an ad in the volunteer section of Creative Loafing magazine when the organization was known as ECO, Energy Committed to Offenders.

Because of past church affiliations in Detroit and working with the jail and prison ministry in that city she thought she would enjoy volunteering here. She had enjoyed it so much that she has encouraged others to volunteer.

Kelley says that she loves working with the staff, other volunteers and the clients. Kelley also says that she meets very interesting people from all walks of life and it is a reminder that life is not always a bed of roses because of the thorns but it is still a beautiful. We need each other.

### Online Giving

Make a donation without writing a check! The Center for Community Transitions offers secure online giving at [www.centerforcommunitytransitions.org](http://www.centerforcommunitytransitions.org) where you can click on the "Donate Now" button and give a gift to support our programs and services.

[www.centerforcommunitytransitions.org](http://www.centerforcommunitytransitions.org)

### A Note from the director

By Myra M. Clark

One of the things we have learned to do around the office is "celebrate what's right with the world". And lately there has been much to celebrate.

**We are now The Center for Community Transitions!** As mentioned on the front page of this newsletter we have changed our name after 35 years. Our new name better reflects the work we do in the community through our four programs: Aftercare, Mecklenburg Sentencing Services, Families Doing Time and the ECO Center for Women. .

**The Senate and House have passed the Second Chance Act!** I'm sure you've heard the saying "if the only tool you have is a hammer, then everything looks like a nail". We need more tools in our tool box!

The Second Chance Act is about building people, not prisons!

This Act includes \$162 million in funds to help people reenter the community with needed resources, mentors, substance abuse treatment, education and treatment. It is also about children of incarcerated parents, providing services and connections for these children that have never been available before. Please visit our website news section for more information about this act.

**Empowering Kids with Incarcerated Parents – E-KWIP has been launched!** We have long known that crime affects many people, including the families of those who are arrested and incarcerated. We are

so excited about receiving a United Way Focus Area Grant for this program. In collaboration the Big Brothers Big Sisters Amachi Mentoring program, we are able to enhance services to children of incarcerated parents. **E-KWIP** will facilitate children's support groups, work with caregivers and provide much needed education and training to those who have contact with these children.

This program is also being supported by the Family Center as they are adding a weeklong summer camp experience for these children!

**We are making a difference in people's lives!**

People such as:

- Tamika who now works for one non-profit and serves on the board of another,
- Melvin who continues to be the man he wants to be – a provider for his family, a father to his sons and a good husband, or
- Susan who is in her last semester of classes at Central Piedmont Community College. She is about to receive her associates degree. She has been inducted into the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society and earned a spot on the Dean's List and President's, or
- Sam who found a job but realized it was not the best place for him if he wanted to remain clean and sober. He returned to our office to find a job that would support the changed he made in his life, or

- Erika who received a toy buffalo after visiting her mom in jail as a reminder to talk with adults in her life when she feels scared, or
- Matt who was court ordered to a community program rather than incarceration, because he needed intensive mental health services to manage his behavior, or
- Anita, the preschool teacher, who did not realize the impact incarceration has on children until she took our workshop and can now reach out to families with compassion, or

Any of the dozens of people we see each week who have made a commitment to change their lives and who have the courage to turn that commitment into reality.

To many of the people who seek our services things may seem bleak and discouraging but then we see the light return to their eyes and the spring return to their step as they work toward achieving their potential.

*"We are making a difference in people's lives!"*

And in that we can **celebrate what is right with the world!**

As you can see there is much to celebrate so come celebrate with us!

Myra



Recent graduates of our Employment Readiness Workshop.

### Making a difference beyond your lifetime!

If you are creating or changing your will, please consider a legacy gift to The Center for Community Transitions. You can make a difference to an organization that has been strengthening families and our community for over 34 years by leaving a gift that will last beyond your lifetime

For more information on legacy giving, please contact Susanne Griffing at 704-374-0762, ext. 17 or [sgriffing@centerforcommunitytransitions.org](mailto:sgriffing@centerforcommunitytransitions.org).

[www.centerforcommunitytransitions.org](http://www.centerforcommunitytransitions.org)