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### **For Immediate Release**

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## **Athens County Reentry Program expands**

The Athens County Reentry Program is expanding its services and personnel in order to help more ex-offenders live independently after serving their time in prison.

The Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services recently awarded a grant to Athens County Job and Family Services and the Athens County Reentry Task Force to allow for the expansion of the program.

Coordinator Jay Wamsley leads the program, which provides guidance and assistance for ex-offenders who are preparing to leave the prison system as well as those who have been out of prison for an extended period of time. The goal of the program is to help these individuals build independent lives so that they can avoid the problems that led them to prison in the first place. The initiative is designed to increase public safety, lower local law enforcement costs and reduce Athens County's high recidivism rate.

The grant funding is allowing Wamsley to now work full-time in this position and to have an additional staff member work with him. Athens County has already seen success in reducing the recidivism rate of the ex-offenders who have been working with the reentry program, and this expansion should lead to additional success. The programs and services currently offered to ex-offenders include:

- Assistance with navigating the health care and public assistance programs as they transition into life outside of prison.
- One-on-one meetings with ex-offenders before and after they leave prison to help answer their questions and to provide information on community resources, mental health programs, substance abuse treatment programs, educational opportunities and other services.
- Assistance with employment searches.
- Support groups such as the Citizen Circle, which meets on the third Thursday of each month at The Work Station in The Plains.
- Workshops and seminars held on a variety of subjects for ex-offenders at The Work Station.

The public is invited to the monthly meetings of the Athens County Reentry Task Force, held at 9 a.m. on the fourth Monday of each month at the Athens County Job and Family Services County Home office.