

Program To Help Incarcerated Veterans Transition Into The Community Recognized for Its Success

Louisville (April 13, 2009) -- Third District Congressman John Yarmuth presented a check for \$150,000 to Volunteers of America of Kentucky to fund its Incarcerated Veterans Transitional Program (IVTP) in Louisville.

In three years as a pilot program, the program cut recidivism by 90 percent. This funding provides critical services to veterans transitioning out of prison who are at high risk of homelessness upon their release.

The Incarcerated Veterans Transitional Program costs \$700-\$1,200 per veteran and matches them with veterans as mentors to help them acquire the tools needed to get jobs, find housing, and reintegrate into civilian life. By contrast, the taxpayer cost to incarcerate individuals is \$18,000 per year.



(l to r) Desiree Groves, Program Manager IVTP; Richard Waddell, graduate of IVTP; Jane Burks, President/CEO, Volunteers of America; Rep. John Yarmuth

Kentucky, which has the fastest growing prison population in the country, saved about \$2 million per year through the pilot program, which served 328 veterans in three years.

Initial work is done in seven of the state penal institutions to help ease the stress and transition that inmates face when released. Once released, outreach work begins, and veterans receive assistance with transitional housing, employment and training, clothing, referrals to other agencies, and three to six months of follow-up services.

Under current grant funding (October 1, 2007 to June 30, 2008), 45 veterans were served with a recidivism rate of only 2 percent. Of those 45 veterans, 70 percent are employed, 7 percent enrolled in a higher education program, and 4 percent entered a residential substance abuse program.

Yarmuth secured the funding in the FY09 Commerce-Justice-Science appropriations bill, which President Obama signed into law earlier in April.

In 2007, the Department of Labor discontinued funding for the highly successful program, but Congressman Yarmuth successfully fought for emergency funding that saved IVTP. Later that year, he authored the Second Chance for America's Veterans Act, which would create a national pilot program modeled after Louisville's IVTP. The bill passed the House and awaits Senate action.