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Thinking for a Change seeks to improve decision-making skills among the Criminal Justice population.

The Thinking for a Change Program (T4C) program has been identified as making a huge difference in the Jerome Combs Detention Facility (JCDC) in Kankakee County.

A Graduation ceremony will be held in Courtroom 300 of the Kankakee County Courthouse at 10:30 am on Friday January 23, 2015 to recognize the successful participation of inmates who actively participated in the Thinking for a Change Program (T4C). Former Chief of Corrections and current Undersheriff Mike Downey will be the keynote speaker. "This program teaches and reinforces a think before acting philosophy that helps an individual to evaluate a situation and assist him or her in making a choice that hopefully will bring a positive resolution to the issue at hand" said Undersheriff Downey. "We will never be able to determine the number of times an inmate who is either currently in class or a former graduate of the T4C class have prevented a fight or altercation from happening in the jail because they were able to use the lessons they learned in the class to prevent and diffuse the situation" added Downey.

The Honorable Judge Bradshaw-Elliott and the Honorable Judge Erickson have both indicated that the T4C program has made a great positive difference in the lives of the inmates who have taken the program, and that the continued offering of T4C offers the promise of having a profound impact upon the court system. They also feel that individuals with better decision-making skills are more apt to be successful once they are released to the community, are more likely to become valued, productive citizens, and will reduce the chances of committing crimes. Individuals or organizations interested in T4C or other Reentry programs should contact Jasper Jones, Re-entry Coordinator, at 815-802-7234 or go online at <http://kankakeereentry.wix.com/jcdcreenter>

Throughout the United States and in Kankakee County, individuals who are incarcerated tend to review their lives and realize they have made bad decisions. These decisions; which are typically made without much thought or planning, ends up getting the offenders locked up behind bars. This ultimately costs taxpayers their much-needed money to pay to house these individuals. The Kankakee County Sheriff's Office, in conjunction with Kankakee County Renewed Opportunity (KCRO) saw a need to assist this population in understanding the long-term effects of their decisions. In September of 2013 these agencies collaborated to get individuals trained in the use of the T4C curriculum. The T4C curriculum uses as its core, a problem solving program embellished by both cognitive restructuring and social skills interventions. While each of the concepts are presented systemically, the participant quickly learns and appreciates that cognitive restructuring does require an objective, systematic approach to identifying thinking, feelings, beliefs, attitudes, and values. This program was adopted by the National Institute of Corrections as one of many cognitive-restructuring courses created to assist individuals with changes in their compulsivity thus reducing the rates of negative behaviors and incidences while incarcerated, and ultimately reducing the chances of recidivism while in the community.

The first T4C class began in November 2013 and just ended on March 21, 2014. Since then, we have completed 3 cycles of both men's and women's classes. Those who attended and remained at Jerome

Combs Detention Facility did not miss any classes (as they were voluntary) unless they had a Doctor's appointment or Court that superseded the classes and graduated with minimal or no behavioral issues. The individuals were given a survey and an overwhelming majority indicated that the classes should be mandatory for all inmates to receive.

The T4C classes began to grow to meet the needs of those who are out in our community. In April of 2014 we began our pilot project at the Kankakee Public Library. We are now preparing to open up two new classes in the community all beginning in mid-February 2015. Demand for this program has soared since its inception in Kankakee County.