



# MEDIA RELEASE

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## PROJECT RETURN HONORED FOR ITS THIRTY YEAR COMMITMENT TO OFFENDER REENTRY

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Agency awarded "2008 Best Non-profit in Middle TN" by State Resource Board

**May 2008 - Nashville, Tenn.** – The Tennessee Community Resource Board (TCRB) presented Project Return, Inc., a Nashville-based nonprofit organization dedicated to assisting ex-offenders in re-establishing their lives, the "2008 Best Non-profit in Middle Tennessee" award at the second annual Faith in Corrections Conference. The Conference was held earlier this month at Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee.

TCRB has existed since 1985 when the state legislature created a Volunteer Advisory Board to help recruit and direct volunteer activities at Tennessee prisons. Recognizing the contribution that the community can make to the rehabilitation of inmates beyond merely volunteering in prison, the board was incorporated in 1997 as a charitable organization.

For nearly 30 years, Project Return's reentry efforts have strived to benefit the community by relieving a severely overcrowded prison system, saving tax dollars used to re-incarcerate repeat offenders, preventing new crimes, and contributing to the overall economic condition of the community. It has been estimated that the economic benefit resulting from an ex-offender staying out of prison for just one year totals approximately \$72,200. Clients of the agency have proven to be one-third less likely to recidivate than their counterparts who do not request the agency's services. Tennessee Department of Correction (TDOC) statistics show that individuals leaving state custody have a two-year 35% recidivism rate, while Project Return's two-year client failure rate has remained at approximately 13% since calendar year 2000. The agency provided 9,424 direct services to 5,121 clients in calendar year 2007.

"TCRB serves both the TDOC and state Board of Probation & Parole. The purpose of the TCRB is to coordinate with and assist both agencies in developing and utilizing volunteer resources in assisting parolees, probationers, and inmates in reintegrating into society as productive, law-abiding citizens," says Richard Dixon, TDOC Director of Volunteer Services and liaison to the TCRB. Dixon also served as co-chair of this year's Faith in Corrections Conference.

"In 2003, Project Return partnered with the TDOC to implement a federally funded initiative, 'Tennessee Bridges.' Project Return successfully contracted with the state to provide project management and facilitation in support of the program. The services that they provide to Middle Tennessee are of tremendous value to the TDOC, ex-offenders, and especially to the community. Statistics show that offenders leaving incarceration with community support and assistance are less likely to re-offend. Project Return provides that needed support and assistance," Dixon added, "and they are very deserving of this award for their many years of service to Middle Tennessee communities."

Of the nine awards presented at this year's Conference, Project Return partner agency, The Next Door, a transitional home that assists women who are re-entering society from incarceration, rehabilitation, or homelessness, also received the "2008 Best Transitional House in Middle Tennessee" award. The program addresses the physical, mental, and spiritual needs of women in crisis, equipping them for lives of wholeness and hope.■

### **About Project Return, Inc.**

Founded in 1979, Project Return, Inc. (PRI) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to the rehabilitation of Middle Tennessee's prison population for the good of the community as a whole. Nearly three decades of experience have resulted in a holistic case management approach designed to provide services that ensure quality, cost-effective assistance and support for former offenders and their families. Through employment placement, direct aid and other support services, PRI offers ex-offenders new beginnings. Since its inception, the agency has tried to help probationers and parolees become self-sustaining, law-abiding members of the community. The agency provides training and assistance designed to increase employability, improve life skills and coping skills, all in the hope of reducing the likelihood of recidivism. Services are free to anyone with a juvenile or criminal record that has been incarcerated or is currently incarcerated and planning for his or her release.

In 1999, the agency developed a youth service program, Project Success, to assist juvenile offenders. The program works with adjudicated youth between ages 13 and 19, offering extensive training and practice in life skills, conflict resolution, and job readiness. The program empowers participants with the opportunity to learn how they can be more successful in school and work, thus preventing the juvenile offenders of today from becoming the adult offenders of tomorrow.

Along with facilitating pre-release classes in area prisons, PRI collaborated with the Nashville Adult Literacy Council in 2003 to implement an Adult Literacy/GED program. Classes are held at the Board of Probation and Parole's two Community Resource Centers in Nashville. The Centers are the monthly reporting locations for individuals on probation or parole in Davidson County. The program is designed to reduce the risk that prisoners return to a life of crime after their release through education. PRI provides funding, financial administration and leadership for the collaboration, while NALC facilitates classes and administrative related functions. The program seeks to increase participant's reading levels and/or receive their GEDs, which will lead to employment and the ability to better function in society. This significantly reduces the likelihood that they will return to prison.

Among other awards, PRI was also the recipient of an "Outstanding Community Outreach" award, presented by Transition of Prisoners, Inc. at their 2005 "Refreshing the Fire" Prisoner Reentry Conference held in Nashville.



L-R: Accepting the award are Project Return's Program Specialist and Executive Director, Malinda Wilson and David Delbridge. Presenting the award is Richard Dixon, TDOC Director of Volunteer Services and Conference co-chair.