

OPENING DOORS:

FAIR CHANCE REENTRY JOB FAIR CONNECTS JOB SEEKERS AND EMPLOYERS

The Fair Chance Reentry Job Fair took place Wednesday, July 23, in Roseville. The event was a first-of-its-kind collaboration between the DOC's EMPLOY Program and MINNCOR Industries. By all accounts, it was a resounding success.

By the numbers:

- 167 justice-impacted job seekers attended
- 14 Fair Chance employers and vendors set up tables

The goal of the event was to support both participants from the EMPLOY and Bridge programs and people in the justice-impacted community in connecting with employers who believe in second chances. Attendees also received professional interview coaching from DOC staff and free professional headshots from Emily Baxter of *We Are All Criminals*.

For many attendees, the job fair was more than a chance to hand out resumes—it was a step toward rebuilding, refocusing, and restarting life on new terms.

"I've done my time," said Mark John Alton, a job seeker. "It's an interesting experience coming back to a DOC-sponsored job fair. But I feel great about it. There are a lot of really good employers here, and I feel hopeful," he added.

Alton, who has been active in EMPLOY for the last six months, offered words of wisdom to others preparing to reenter the job market. "Be very patient. Work with your work release agent—they really are here to help. And most of all, network with others in your same position. They'll be your best source of information," he said.

Curtis Brewer, another attendee, said he found a couple of employers he was interested in but is focused on his longer-term goals. "Right



now, I'm in a halfway house, so I can't take driving jobs just yet. But I'm planning to get my Commercial Driver's License and start truck driving once I'm out," he stated.

Richard Richardson, also part of the Bridge Program, left several resumes and expressed optimism about the process. "I'm looking forward to hearing back from someone. It felt like a good event—and I'm hopeful," he noted.

Employers at the event echoed that same positivity and determination.



"Today was a great turnout," said Tosh Thompson, Outreach Coordinator with Small Sums, a St. Paul nonprofit that helps individuals experiencing housing instability get work-ready. "A lot of individuals were motivated and ready to reenter the workforce. It's encouraging to see the support, because so many people coming out of incarceration feel like they have no options. Events like this help them see they're not alone—they have real opportunities," he said.

Mari Anderson, a recruiter for On-Site Companies shared, "I wasn't expecting this big of a turnout, but it's been wonderful to talk to so many people. We ran out of flyers and swag early! That's always a good sign."

Jennifer Gast, DOC's Fair Chance Job Developer and organizer of the event, shared her broader vision: "Fair Chance Hiring is about giving people with criminal records an equal opportunity to compete for jobs based on their skills—not their past," Jennifer said. "It reduces recidivism, reunites families, and builds stronger communities," she added.

This approach not only opens doors for individuals but also supports a more

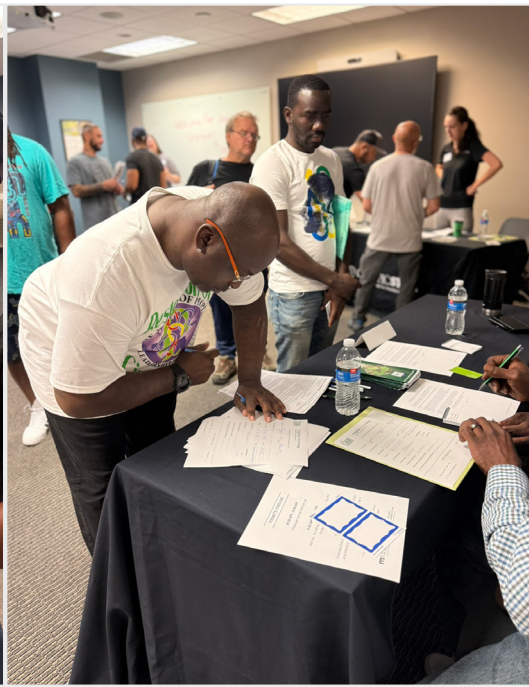
inclusive and successful workforce. As the Fair Chance Job Developer for the DOC, Jennifer works to connect employers with justice-impacted job seekers and to support Fair Chance Employer businesses.

The Fair Chance Employers/Vendors who participated included:

- Anagram International
- Twin Cities Outdoor Services
- City of St. Paul HR
- Olympic Steel
- Repowered
- On Site Companies
- Minneapolis Apprenticeship Outreach Office
- RTD Services
- City of St. Paul Public Works
- Electrical Association
- Better Futures
- Lighthouse New Beginnings
- Small Sums
- We Are All Criminals

The job fair was another step forward in the DOC's ongoing commitment to rehabilitation, community connection, and second chances. Whether someone was passing out resumes, exploring their options, or just starting to believe in their future again, the room was full of possibilities.





MOMENTS FROM THE FAIR CHANCE REENTRY JOB FAIR

