

**For Immediate Release  
Thursday, October 15, 2009**

**Contact: Paul Solomon  
541-543-3237**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **City of Eugene to “Think Outside the Box”**

One of the major barriers for people with conviction histories is getting a job. Partnership for Safety and Justice (PSJ) announced today that employment opportunities with the City of Eugene will be improved when the city becomes the second government entity in Oregon to remove the question “Have you ever been convicted of a felony?” from their initial employment application.

Instead the city will ask the question on a supplemental questionnaire or at the appropriate time during each individual hiring process.

*“The city can hire the most qualified applicants when they don’t exclude people unnecessarily,” says Patty Katz, director of PSJ’s Beyond Barriers Program.*

*“We’re not saying conviction histories shouldn’t be considered at all. We’re saying they shouldn’t be considered on initial job applications because we don’t want people to be indiscriminately screened out and we don’t want to discourage people who could be the most qualified applicants from applying.”*

Eugene City Manager John Ruiz agreed to pilot a project to make city jobs available to qualified people with conviction histories. The city joins a number of counties and cities across the country in supporting the hiring of people with conviction histories, including Oregon’s largest county, Multnomah, which changed its job application in 2007 at PSJ’s urging.

Partnership for Safety and Justice was the lead organization in a local campaign to encourage the City of Eugene to “Think Outside the Box.” Many local Eugene organizations, faith-based leaders and community members worked side-by-side with PSJ.

In a letter to Eugene Mayor Kitty Piercy, Multnomah County Chair Ted Wheeler encouraged the city to change their employment application, saying that together the county and the city can lead the way for others in the state to do the same [see attached].

Supporting the success of people with conviction histories reduces recidivism and increases public safety. Securing stable employment is one of the primary factors in making a successful transition back into the community.

*“When a person has been convicted of a crime and paid their legal penalty, we do not want to saddle them with a life sentence of being unable to find a decent job” says Paul Solomon, PSJ’s board president and Asst. Executive Director of Sponsors, Inc., a transitional housing program for formerly incarcerated people in Eugene.*

--MORE--

*“Research indicates that people who have and maintain decent jobs are less likely to re-offend. In fact, after five years of being crime free, that person is no more likely to re-offend than someone of the same age who has never been convicted of a crime. If a person with a criminal history is the most qualified applicant for a position, we should do everything we can to encourage that person to apply, and that is what the City of Eugene has done.”*

Partnership for Safety and Justice is a statewide, non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to making Oregon’s criminal justice system more just and better equipped to strengthen public safety.

# # # #