

# Press Release

State of Maryland  
Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services



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## **Former Inmate Will Be Keynote Speaker at Maryland Correctional Enterprises CARES Program Graduation**

*June 29<sup>th</sup> at 6 p.m. at Central Md. Correctional Facility in Sykesville*

**Towson, MD (June 28, 2010)**---Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE), one of the top prison industry groups in the nation, will graduate 12 inmates from the innovative MCE CARES program Wednesday night, June 29 at 6 p.m. at the Central Maryland Correctional Facility (CMCF) on Buttercup Road in Sykesville. The keynote speaker will be a former inmate who was one of the first CARES graduates and who is now a successful MCE employee.

CARES stands for *Continuing Allocation of RE-entry Services*, and is a major MCE effort to ensure that inmates are prepared for work on the outside. CARES is offered to inmates who have worked for MCE for at least one year and are within two years of release. Participants work fulltime at the MCE laundry plant at CMCF and take evening classes on employment readiness. These classes help inmates with their decision-making, and with job referral tips such as how to connect with private employers who hire ex-offenders and how to utilize the One Stop Career Centers. The goal of CARES is to make inmates more employable, and to give them a head start on employment.

The program began with 18 inmates in July of 2008; to date, more than 100 have graduated, including the keynote speaker for this graduation, Tim Blair. Mr. Blair served more than 13 years in prison after pleading guilty to second-degree murder. While inside, he completed a number of programs and became a valued inmate worker at Maryland Correctional Enterprises. He was also among the first inmates to work on a landmark program---the only one in the nation--- that allows inmates who are veterans (Mr. Blair was a Marine for six years) to work in Maryland veterans cemeteries. While working at Garrison Forest Cemetery in Owings Mills, Mr. Blair saw the gravesites of his mother, father, and step-father, all of whose funerals he had missed because all died while he was in prison.

Maryland Correctional Enterprises is one of the top ten prison industries in the nation. It employs a record 2,000 inmates in an average month, and in FY '10 exceeded \$50 million in revenues. MCE has operations all across the state; its inmates make everything from license plates and uniforms to flags and signs. Its chief executive officer, Steve Shiloh, was recently awarded the highest national honor for a prison industry executive.

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But recently, MCE has gone way beyond traditional products and services, giving inmates a chance to become involved in truly meaningful projects that benefit the environment and restore history. At Antietam National Battlefield, inmates have restored the Piper Orchard and planted more than 3,800 trees. MCE inmates have harvested, grown, and replanted shoreline-restoring bay grasses and made thousands of oyster spat cages to help replenish oysters in the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. They have helped “plant” millions of oyster spat.

**Studies have shown that offenders with at least one year of MCE employment are less than half as likely to recidivate as general population inmates. CARES extends the employability of these offenders through their final years in the correctional system, resulting in a smooth transition into the workforce upon release, hopefully even further reducing the recidivism rate.**

Maryland Correctional Enterprises sell its products and services only to non-profits and government enterprises, not to private citizens. Its main mission is to teach inmates critical job skills and teach them to develop a strong work ethic. MCE operations include a meat plant (Hagerstown) whose inmates annually prepare 800 or more turkeys for the Bea Gaddy Thanksgiving dinner for the poor in Baltimore; furniture making and restoration plants; graphics and sign making; uniform and flag sewing operations, just to name a few.

MCE’s web site allows customers to order online at [www.mce.md.gov](http://www.mce.md.gov).

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The Maryland Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services protects the public, its employees and the detainees and offenders under its supervision.

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