

COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS GETS GRANT

BY LINDSAY WINSLOW BROWN lindsayb@kpcnews.net

Friday, 14 May 2010 01:00

AUBURN — DeKalb County received a \$273,000 grant for a community corrections program from the Indiana Department of Corrections Thursday afternoon.

The DeKalb County Community Corrections 18-member advisory board also recommended Kellie Knauer for the community corrections executive director.

DeKalb County chief probation officer Tim McAlhany said hopes the program and director will start June 1.

Community corrections programs divert nonviolent offenders from serving prison terms in the IDOC. County officials also hope community corrections will reduce overcrowding at the DeKalb County Jail. As of Thursday, 97 inmates were behind the jail's bars, which is about 12 above capacity, DeKalb County Sheriff-elect Don Lauer said.

“When the community corrections program is up and running, people should see a reduction in the jail population,” Lauer said. Some local offenders, he added, are behind bars for sex offenses and would not be eligible for a community corrections program.

A community corrections program would help lower the expenses of housing inmates in jails and prisons, which would be a cost-savings for taxpayers, said Michael Lloyd, director of transitional facilities and community-based programs at the IDOC. He said it costs \$43 per day to house an inmate.

“I think some people have to stay in prison the length of time they've been sent,” Lloyd said. “Some transition successfully and make a real effort, too.”

Knauer, who has more than 10 years of criminal justice experience, currently is serving as home detention coordinator for Steuben County Community Corrections. She said some law-enforcement officers make jokes about how long it will be before they will see offenders again, once they are released into community corrections.

“But I have two guys now, and I didn't think they'd make it out five minutes,” and they're doing well, Knauer said. “I told them, ‘I appreciate the effort you're putting into this.’”

Knauer also echoed Lloyd's thoughts.

“Some of these people need to go to jail. We have to keep community safety at the forefront,” Knauer said.

To date, community corrections programs in other counties have diverted 25,000 felons from the IDOC. Five hundred inmates currently are in community transition programs, which are offered

to offenders already in the IDOC system to help transition them back into community life.

The programs save money and reduce prison overcrowding, Lloyd said.

“They would definitely be sleeping on the floor otherwise,” Lloyd said about the 500 inmates.

Ian Gilbert, director of a community corrections program in Adams County, wrote the grant application for DeKalb County.

“Ian did a fabulous job of including goals and objectives,” said Angela Hensley-Langrel, program director of community corrections for the IDOC. “We can’t just fund things that feel good. ... It has to be effective, and DeKalb County included all of those things.”

Hensley-Langrel said each community has unique qualities and access to different treatment providers.

“The goal of the grant is to meet the needs of this community,” Hensley-Langrel said. “(Community corrections) is not just jail, where they get three hots and a cot. You don’t have to address behavior in jail. ... If it never gets addressed, you won’t be productive very long. Our goal is lasting change.”

The IDOC funds 74 community corrections programs throughout the state, and plans to launch programs in DeKalb, Hendricks and Jefferson counties this year.

“Taxpayers are going to save money. Offenders are going to be coming out and living in the community, paying taxes, working jobs, getting treatment and taking part in cognitive self-change programs,” Knauer said.

Gilbert said Adams County is starting to see results from its two-year-old community corrections program. Less than 30 percent of Adams County offenders who completed community corrections programs were recommitted. The IDOC’s recidivism rate is 37 percent.

DeKalb County can reapply for its community corrections grant every two years. IDOC leaders said they do not think it’s likely the funding will stop, saying the program is a cost-saver for taxpayers and counties.