

Fond du Lac joins program for offenders

For The Reporter

MENASHA — Circles of Support, a program of Goodwill Industries of North Central Wisconsin (NCW), has added Fond du Lac to its service area for assisting men and women in making a successful transition from incarceration to their home communities.

Circles, a volunteer-based reentry program, has been operating in Oshkosh since 2006 and in the Fox Valley and Green Bay since 2007. Prior to becoming a Circle, the Fond du Lac area had its own faith-based mentoring program for ex-offenders. Together, these four communities have worked with more than 135 participants in 2009 alone.

"Circles of Support has been in operation for just over a year as a program of Goodwill NCW," said program coordinator Danel Burchby, adding the Fond du Lac area is reflective of the tremendous growth we've shown in the last 12 months.

"The Fond du Lac community came on board with a solid core of volunteers who are passionate about reentry," Burchby noted. "The Wisconsin Department of Corrections' (DOC) presence and support have also been invaluable in Fond du Lac's smooth transition to a Cir-

cle of Support."

Marcie Janz, a volunteer with the former Holy Family/Fond du Lac Community Mentoring Ministry, said the local organization decided to join the Circles program in order to become part of a larger volunteer community — one that has a similar mission and the same core values.

"In our consideration of the future, it was determined that joining Circles of Support and having the collaboration of DOC would be advantageous for us," Janz said. "Circles' organizational structure makes allowances for variability in the types of Circles in each community, which means Fond du Lac can assist its participants in small circles or in larger circles, depending on the comfort of participants."

The Circles program relies upon a strong base of volunteers to support its growth and to deliver quality services to participants in all of its communities. Volunteers provide pro-social support and links to community resources in order to give ex-offenders the best possible chance for success. In the past year, Circles participants have remained crime free at a rate of more than 80 percent and show positive strides in gaining employment and housing, which increase their self-sufficiency.