

Night of Hope: Success, Hope and Music by NEW Reentry Council

The words “epic” and “transformative” best describe the recent *Night of Hope* event organized by the NEW Reentry Council as part of its annual Reentry Week awareness campaign.

Hosted by TV personality and author Valonda Calloway, the event celebrated individuals who have successfully transitioned back into society. Keynote speaker Dennis Gaddy, executive director, Community Success Initiative, encouraged participants to stay informed and involved in prison reform policy changes. Gaddy, who graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Campbell School of Law, built a 20-year sales career, prior to spending more than five years incarcerated by the N.C. Department of Corrections, due to some self-described poor decisions and choices.

In addressing *Night of Hope* participants, Gaddy spoke of his journey, including the hardships he faced after reentering society. Knowing first-hand the importance of a second chance, Gaddy founded Community Success Initiative to assist others in successfully transitioning back into society. “Make sure you build relationships,” he encouraged the audience. Building strong relationships as a former inmate is a powerful tool as you navigate your new life, he said.

A panel discussion allowed participants to engage in discussion related to second chances. As panel members, two NEW Reentry clients provided their perspectives on their trials and their successes. Other panel members, two local employers, spoke to the impact of providing a second chance in the workplace.

North Carolina Attorney General Josh Stein concluded the event with comments on providing a second chance to allow every citizen to meet their fullest potential. Click [HERE](#) to access Stein’s message.

Kelley Traynham is a writer in the North Carolina Community Action Association’s Communications Fellows Program. NCCAA Communications Fellows are students or recent graduates pursuing a career in communications, graphic design, IT, public policy or a related field. They receive a stipend for their participation in the program. For more information on the NCCAA Communications Fellows Program, please contact Yvette Ruffin, director of the NCCAA Communications Fellows Program.