



The Third Southernmost Illinois Conference on Justice

Reformation, Restoration, and Re-Entry: Let's Get to WORK

Carbondale Civic Center, Carbondale, Illinois

April 9–10, 2026

CONFERENCE PROGRAM

Join us!: NO REGISTRATION FEE- BUT **PRE-REGISTRATION REQUIRED**

REGISTRATION LINK HERE:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdte6YcZc4mu4YT-](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdte6YcZc4mu4YT-SRqOf3oTqiyv1_fleJVs6J86WBBA3QW4g/viewform?usp=sharing&oid=10236714885862666)

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5131

Continuing Education: Application (s) pending:

(CEUs)-Social Workers; Professional Development for Teachers (PD), MTU – Law Enforcement; and MCLE - Attorneys

Thursday, April 9, 2026 (pre-conference)

8:30 a.m. - Registration/Breakfast/Exhibits

9:00 am. **Welcome/Introductions** - Lynne M. Chambers, Esq. Executive Director, Legacy Training, Inc.

9:05 “The Delta Works!” – Impact and Investments in the Delta

Presenters:

- Sea Talantis, Director of Human Infrastructure at the Delta Regional Authority (DRA)
- Daniel Musgrave, Workforce Program Manager, Delta Regional Authority (DRA)

This presentation will highlight the role of the Delta Regional Authority in supporting workforce development initiatives throughout the Delta region, including Southern Illinois. Representatives will discuss key programs designed to promote job creation, workforce training, infrastructure development, and economic revitalization in rural and economically distressed communities.

9:35 – 9:55 “**Illinois Humanities Envisioning Justice Initiative**” Presenter: Dr. Tony Pizarro, Program Manager, Illinois Humanities

Presentation Description

This presentation introduces the **Illinois Humanities Envisioning Justice Initiative**, a statewide effort that supports community-based projects exploring the impact of mass incarceration through storytelling, arts, humanities programming, and civic dialogue.

10:05 – 10:45 “From Release to Stability: Lessons Learned from the Insignia Group Training Academy-A Demonstration Project for Rural, Workforce Development and Re-Entry”

- Dr. Sara Dobie, Director, Graduate Program, SIU School of Social Work.
- Dr. Morris Jenkins, JD, Phd. Associate Professor (Emeritus) Lewis University and Principal Investigator, Insignia Group-Workforce Development Demonstration Project for Returning Citizens,
- Aaron Woods, Research Associate
- Van Ikner, Dean of Students, Insignia Group Training Academy.

Successful re-entry requires more than release from incarceration—it requires access to stable housing, employment pathways, supportive services, and community integration. This session examines the **Insignia Group Training Academy**, an innovative rural workforce development and re-entry demonstration project implemented in Southern Illinois through Legacy Training, Inc.

10:45 a.m. “Expanding Clean Energy Workforce Pathways: Understanding CEJA, Workforce Hubs, and Community Navigators”

Presenters: Greg Bouhl , CEJA Hub Director and Marcella Woodson, CEJA Hub Manager, MANTRA-CON, Carbondale NAACP (invited)

This presentation will provide an overview of CEJA and its workforce development initiatives, including the creation of regional **Clean Energy Workforce Hubs** and the role of **Community Navigators** in connecting residents to training, resources, and employment opportunities within the clean energy sector.

11:00 - 11:45 – “Let’s Get to Work” - Career Pathways in the Skilled Trades and Transportation - Van Ikner, Moderator

Panelists:

- Adam Robertson - Carpenter’s union
- Freddie Brown - The IDOT Highway Construction Training Program Program
- Austin Frank, CEO, ARF Solar
- Max Russell - Russell Electric, Inc.
- TBD -Trucking Industry
- George Moss – Moss Heating and Cooling, Inc.

Panelists will discuss how job seekers can connect with employers in high-demand industries—including solar installation, electrical work, HVAC, carpentry, and trucking—who are actively seeking skilled and reliable workers.

11:45 – 12:15 “Talent Acquisition and Retention: Leveraging Transferable Skills”

Presenter: Ammiel Russell, Human Resource Professional, and Project Coordinator for Healing Illinois Initiatives, Legacy Training, Inc.

This presentation examines innovative strategies for recruiting, hiring, and retaining talented employees from underutilized labor pools, particularly individuals who are formerly incarcerated. Participants will explore practical approaches for identifying these competencies during the hiring process, reducing bias in recruitment, and developing workplace environments that support long-term employee success.

12:15 – 1:30 Lunch/Exhibits/Roundtable discussions/Activations

Sidney and Solomon Catering, Carbondale, Illinois

1:00 – 1:45 “Pathway Development & Career Navigation for Returning Citizens: Building Employer Pipelines, Incentives, and Digital Access”

Presenter: Ricky “Re-entry” Hamilton, CEO/FOUNDER, CANDOR, Inc.

GOT JOBS America (GJA) builds real career pathways for people leaving incarceration by starting with the destination first—identifying the careers and industries that are hiring, then designing a repeatable pathway into those roles. Discover how GJA maps existing skills, institutional training, and community-based credentials into high-need sectors.

2:00 p.m. – 2:45 “ **Clean Slate Illinois: Expanding Employment Opportunities for Returning Citizens**” Presenter: Greg Chambers, Director of Policy, Coalition to End Permanent Punishments

This presentation will explore how Clean Slate legislation is transforming access to employment for returning citizens across Illinois. Chambers will examine the legal framework of the policy, the types of records eligible for automatic sealing, and how the law affects background checks used by employers, licensing bodies, and housing providers.

2: 45 – 3 p.m. Illinois Solar for All: Energy Equity and Economic Opportunity for Low-Income Communities Presenter: Jay Terry, Grassroots Educator, Legacy Training, Inc.

Workshop Description

This workshop introduces participants to the **Illinois Solar for All (ILSFA)** program and its role in expanding access to renewable energy for low-income households and environmental justice communities.

3: 15 – 4:00 p.m. “Faith, Environmental Justice, and Workforce Pathways: Engaging Faith Communities in Renewable Energy and Reentry Opportunities” - Panel Discussion

Panel will introduce participants to the foundational concepts of environmental justice and examine how faith communities can engage in workforce development. Panelists will discuss practical approaches to building partnerships among faith institutions, nonprofit organizations, workforce development programs, and public agencies to expand employment pathways in the clean energy sector.

4:00 P.M. - 6 P.M. Networking Reception - Varsity Theater, Carbondale Illinois

Blaxx Smokehouse Catering, Mounds, Illinois

6:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

“Art, Storytelling, and Justice: Creative Voices from the Reentry Community”

This special conference program integrates the arts as a powerful vehicle for dialogue, reflection, and community healing. A performance by Mud Theatre Project will use storytelling and theatrical expression to explore the lived experiences of individuals impacted by incarceration and the journey toward restoration and reintegration. Complementing the performance, an art exhibition will feature works created by formerly incarcerated artists.

Conference - Friday, April 10

8:30 a.m. Registration;

9:00 Welcome - Lynne Chambers, JD, MSW, CEO/Founder, Legacy Training, Inc.

Mayor Carolin Harvey, City of Carbondale - Welcome/Remarks - by video

Stan Reno, Carbondale City Manager, Former Carbondale Chief of Police
(invited)

Marcy Cassio-Hale, Jackson Co. State's Attorney - Welcome/Remarks (invited)

9:30 - "Understanding the Role of Judges: How Courts Work and Why It Matters"

Presenter: The Honorable Jonathan A. Mitchell, Associate Judge, First Circuit

Judge Mitchell will debunk common misconceptions about the courts and explains how judges make decisions based on law, evidence, and procedures. Topics include judicial independence, ethics, sentencing limits, elections and appointments, and the rights of individuals appearing before the court.

10:30 a.m. "Advancing Justice Reform: The Role of Oversight and Advocacy in Improving Correctional Systems"

Presenter: Gwyneth M. Troyer, JD, MA, Director of Prison Monitoring, John Howard Association

Workshop Description: The John Howard Association (JHA) of Illinois was founded in 1901, and takes the name from an 18th century English humanitarian. JHA monitors prisons and advances independent oversight of carceral systems to promote humane treatment and increased transparency. This presentation will provide an overview of the data and analysis of the work of JHA.

11:00 – "Utilizing Entrepreneurship and Personal Development Education to Build Inclusive Economies: An Overview of Defy Ventures" (VIRTUAL)

Presenter: Melissa O'Dell, Executive Director

This session will discuss Defy's programming, including CEO of Your New Life, which is facilitated in three IDOC facilities, as well the post-release services Defy provides throughout the state for graduates of the program.

11:30 – 12:30 LUNCH/ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION/ACTIVATIONS

Catering by Hunan's, Carbondale

12:30 -1:15 “Faithful Lawyering in Troubling Times: A Conversation with Christian Legal Professionals” Panelists: TBD

Description: This panel brings together Christian attorneys and legal professionals to explore what it means to practice law with integrity, courage, and compassion during times of social uncertainty and division.

1:15 to 1:45 “ Justice Restored: The Work of the Illinois Innocence Project and the Fight Against Wrongful Convictions”

Speaker: Mr. John Hanlon, Esq., Executive Director of the [Illinois Innocence Project at University of Illinois Springfield](#).(retired)

Attorney Hanlon will discuss the critical work of the Illinois Innocence Project. Participants will gain insight into the causes of wrongful convictions, including eyewitness misidentification, false confessions, inadequate legal representation, and misuse of forensic evidence.

Exhibitors

- Legacy Training, Inc.
- Community Health and Emergency Services,
- Southern Illinois Community Foundation
- Meridian Health
- Reform
- Man-tra Con
- ARF Solar
- Carpenter's Union

Sponsored by: Illinois Humanities, Envisioning Justice Initiative; SOL Community Foundation, in collaboration with the Southern Illinois Community Foundation

Convened by:



Legacy Training, Inc.

