



**Bridges of America Dedicates Jacksonville Facility for
Transition, Work Release and Substance Abuse
*Facility Brings More Than 50 New Jobs to Area***

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JACKSONVILLE – Officials today dedicated The Jacksonville Bridge, a Transition Center, Work Release facility, and a Residential Substance Abuse Treatment program in Jacksonville. Adding more than 50 new jobs, The Jacksonville Bridge is part of the acclaimed Bridges of America network for adult male and female offenders in the State of Florida and can house 344 male inmates and clients.

On hand for the event was Michael D. Crews, Secretary of Florida's Department of Corrections, who welcomed the re-entry operation to the area and lauded its role in helping rehabilitate inmates and clients.

"Research shows time and time again that an inmate who has the opportunity to participate in re-entry programs that provide educational, vocational, and substance abuse counseling are more likely to return to society and not commit another crime," said Crews. "Partners like Bridges of America play an important role in helping keep Floridians safe."

The work release program at the new facility, which already supports 140 inmates, allows those who are nearing release to leave the facility and work in the community. With their earnings, inmates pay restitution to victims and court costs, provide in part for their sustenance, and save for their future. They also learn valuable job skills and are better positioned to continue in gainful employment upon their eventual release.

Another 165 inmates are housed in the Transition Center and participate in training programs that provide them with skills and certifications to eventually seek and obtain employment. This peer-led, peer-driven program also helps inmates with recovery, life skills, education, and job training

In the Residential Substance Abuse Treatment, some 39 clients participate in a 6- to 8-month peer-driven program that provides assistance to adult male felony drug offenders who have been sentenced by the local courts as a deterrent to incarceration and a condition of probation.

"The Jacksonville Bridge is an answer to a prayer for the men who arrive here, and we're proud to bring this important transitional opportunity to Jacksonville," said Lori Costantino-Brown, President and CEO of Bridges of America, the leading provider of transition and work release programs in Florida. "We know that the education, counseling, treatment, and vocational skills inmates and clients receive, gives them a chance to turn their lives around. Our partners with the City of Jacksonville and across Duval County have been tremendously supportive of our growth and our efforts to help the men here prepare for their release."

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Located on five acres west of downtown, The Jacksonville Bridge consists of dormitories; classrooms; culinary facilities for education and meal preparation; a multi-purpose facility for dining, worship and events; and outdoor areas for exercise and family visitation. The Jacksonville Bridge has been in operation in Jacksonville since 2008, but was located in leased commercial space. The land for the new facility was purchased in 2011, and construction followed soon after, with inmates first moving in in phases, beginning in December 2012.

About Bridges of America

Bridges of America is the oldest criminal justice substance abuse treatment provider for adult male and female offenders in the State of Florida. The program was established on the holistic approach to recovery, and predicated on the 12-Step Model. For more than 34 years, the organization's unwavering purpose has been a commitment to providing thousands of felony offenders the opportunity for rehabilitation and reintegration into their communities as law-abiding and tax-paying citizens.

Bridges of America was founded by Frank Costantino, an ex-felon who served a 22 ½ year prison term for burglary and other related crimes. Upon his release, Frank founded "Christian Prison Ministries" to share the Gospel with other prisoners. In 1980, Frank opened up the first "after-care" resident program in Orlando to provide that bridge. What started as a local ministry has now parlayed into a worldwide vision that serves over 1,000 men and women daily. Lori Costantino-Brown, Frank's daughter, continues to provide the vision and leadership of Bridges of America. In Florida, the Bridges of America network includes facilities in Orlando, Bradenton, Auburndale, Jacksonville, Ft. Lauderdale, and Pompano Beach, with more being added in 2014 in Cocoa, Santa Fe, and Lake City.

For more information, visit www.bridgesofamerica.com

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