



March 24, 2009

## ReSource, Turning Point help felons build resumes

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In a windy north Fort Collins warehouse, William Barrow and John Bortels are sorting and arranging everything from used doors and cabinets to broken appliances and tiles.

The two are workers at the Center for ReSource Conservation, helping divert all manner of used home goods and construction materials from area landfills. But they are also something else: convicted felons. The two are building their resumes and getting work experience outside of prison.

"It gives us hope," said Barrow, 19. "It's pretty hard being a convicted felon. We've never had the chance to have a real job."

Arrested for assault and burglary when he was 15, Barrow was convicted as an adult and has spent the past four years in the prison system for youthful offenders.

But with four months left on parole, he and roommate Bortels are facing personal freedom without many of the skills they'll need to succeed.

Bortels, 20, was convicted of conspiracy to commit burglary when he was 16.

The two are participating in a partnership between ReSource and Turning Point, a Fort Collins-based program that helps juvenile offenders reenter society with counseling, education and supervision.

Under the partnership, Turning Point clients work internships with ReSource, learning skills from construction and conservation to teamwork and customer service.

Barrow said he's learning just how hard it is to re-enter society as a convicted felon - few people want to hire him or rent him an apartment. He said without the internship, it would be easy to fall back into old patterns.

"It's like, 'I can't get a job. I can't get an apartment. I'm a failure. I'll go back to doing what I was doing until I got caught,' " he said.

Barrow plans to head to Colorado Springs later this week to sign a lease on an apartment. He's moving there for a job installing satellite television systems with his father. Barrow said the work experience he's getting at ReSource will ultimately help him find a job helping people.

"This is definitely putting me in a position to communicate with people, and that's something I like doing," he said.

ReSource, 1501 N. College Ave., has hosted about a dozen interns from Turning Point, overseeing them for five-day-a-week, eight-weeklong periods.

"It's not like once a week," ReSource program manager Kendol Gustafson said. "We see them every day. They work hard."

ReSource sells the used or otherwise discarded construction materials for 50 percent to 80 percent off the cost of new.

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