FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Laurey Peat
Laurey Peat + Associates
lpeat@lpapr.com
p: 214-871-8787

UNLOCKING DOORS™ HEADQUARTERS AND CLIENT RESOURCE CENTER OPENS TODAY

Program speakers and guests in attendance include city, county and state officials as well as representatives of the federal, state and local criminal justice system

DALLAS, TX – March 31, 2017 – Unlocking DOORS™, Texas’ cutting-edge community reentry network for ex-offenders, opened new state headquarters and Client Resource Center, named in honor of the Texas Bar Foundation - which will provide countless services, resources and networking opportunities to Unlocking DOORS™ clients as they find their way to a future of self-sufficiency that is crime-free.

“I would like to thank Unlocking DOORS™ for all of the work it does to help reduce crime in the Lone Star State,” said Governor Greg Abbott, Texas State Governor. “In order to keep the people of Texas safe, we must continue to reduce recidivism rates with comprehensive models such as the Unlocking DOORS™ "Reentry Brokerage™/Data and Predictive Trends" program. We look forward to their good work and welcome their new state headquarters to Dallas.”

Notable program speakers include U.S. Congressman Pete Sessions; Texas State Representatives Rodney Anderson and Cindy Burkett; Dallas County Commissioners Dr. Elba Garcia and Theresa Daniel; Dallas County District Attorney Faith Johnson; Honorable John Creuzot, Unlocking DOORS™ Board Chairman and Former Dallas County Criminal District Court Judge; Dallas City Council Members Philip Kingston and Rick Callahan; and, Vikrant P. Reddy, Senior Fellow of the Charles Koch Institute.

“Since 2010, Unlocking DOORS™ commitment to helping individuals effectively reenter society has served as a positive example for the State of Texas,” said United States Senator John Cornyn. “As a strong supporter of criminal justice reform, I often say that it’s not enough to be tough on crime, we have to be smart on crime too—and Unlocking DOORS™ work represents this effort.”

– MORE –
Unlocking DOORS™ is a unique and unduplicated national model for reducing crime and strengthening communities, working with all individuals who have a criminal background – from those arrested but not convicted to those coming straight from prison. Unlocking DOORS™ guides these individuals through its distinctive “Reentry Brokerage™/Data and Predictive Trends” model – collecting, formatting, and analyzing the most up-to-date client data to note predictive trends in the criminal justice arena. Clients are assigned a team of Reentry Brokers™ who complete a thorough assessment of the clients’ risk for re-offending and specific needs.

Headquartered in Dallas County, with an office in Tarrant County, Unlocking DOORS™ plans to expand throughout the State of Texas with the opening of locations in Bexar, Harris and Travis Counties by 2018-19. Expansion is the key to reducing gaps in service and strengthening the network of Partners/Providers and additional stakeholders to ensure a greater continuum of care and positive impact for both clients and society.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Texas currently ranks as the largest criminal justice system in the US, with approximately 753,000 individuals either incarcerated or under some form of community supervision (146,337 incarcerated; 86,078 on active parole supervision; 374,285 on direct or indirect probation supervision). Texas is followed by California, Florida, Ohio and Georgia. Currently, the state’s recidivism rate – or the measure of those who relapse into criminal behavior – is approximately 20 percent.

“Preventing recidivism is a fiscally and socially responsible thing to do, and Unlocking DOORS™ provides much-needed programs and resources to help former prisoners become good citizens and productive members of our society,” Attorney General Paxton said. “A solid reentry program is vital to better outcomes for ex-offenders, lower costs to Texas taxpayers and an overall better society.”

Texas is the largest criminal justice system in the United States, with some 70,000 individuals returning from federal, state and county prisons and jails to our communities annually. Given the daily influx of offenders attempting reintegration into our communities, it is vital to our society’s long-term safety, well-being and future that a systemic delivery and evaluation approach of the much needed guidance, services and resources to these individuals is provided so as to allow them to achieve and secure a future of self-sufficiency that is crime-free. Without such model, a majority of these individuals will re-offend (recidivate), costing taxpayer dollars, increasing the crime rate and destroying the chances for a healthy and productive society.

On average, it costs the State of Texas roughly $22,500.00 a year ($61.63 per day) to incarcerate/house an offender. With more than 70,000 plus offenders being released from the State prison/jail system (TDCJ) back into Texas communities each year, following logic indicates that the State of Texas would then save, on average, $22,500.00 ($61.63 per day) for each individual that is not re-incarcerated. This is based on the basic “cost per day” calculation which calculates cost per day, per person divides total program expenditures by the average daily population of a given program, the quotient of which is divided by number of days in a fiscal year - cost per day = (Total program expenditures/avg. daily population/number of days in a fiscal year).

– MORE –
“Texas has implemented criminal justice reforms that are a model for our nation and helped guide recent policy decisions at the federal level. But our work to safely address rising prison population continues,” said U.S. Congressman Pete Sessions. “Reforms to federal laws are only one component of this national discussion. If we truly want to effectively reduce crime and recidivism we need partnerships with critical programs like Unlocking DOORS™, who efficiently assess each individual and tailor plans focused on the ex-offenders’ needs.”

A key to the success of Unlocking DOORS™ is educating the community about what it takes for ex-offenders to successfully reenter society. In particular, Unlocking DOORS™ stresses the importance of helping ex-offenders find jobs, while also continuing their education. Housing is another barrier that Unlocking DOORS™ stresses as a vital piece in any successful reentry puzzle, as well as reliable transportation. Without transportation to and from an acquired job, or other wrap around services, the client is back to where he or she started. To that end, Unlocking DOORS™ has partnered with Dallas Area Rapid Transit (DART) to issue bus/rail day passes to its clients with built in accountability measures which must be followed to the letter if additional passes are to be acquired. With DART rail/bus access located immediately outside its headquarters Unlocking DOORS™ is able to accommodate the client transportation needs without a hitch.

“When you’re helping more than 200,000 people every day to get to work, school and the other important places in their lives, it’s gratifying to be associated with organizations like Unlocking DOORS™, where you see the positive impact on individual lives,” said Robert English, Senior Manager of Consumer Programs at Dallas Area Rapid Transit. “As Unlocking DOORS™ guides people to become productive members of society, we’re pleased that DART’s dependable, affordable public transportation services provide the access they need to achieve their goals.”

Founder, President and CEO Christina Melton Crain, Esq. is the former Chairman of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. She was the first woman ever to lead the nine-member board. Crain has a female TDCJ state prison named in her honor: The Christina Melton Crain Unit in Gatesville, Texas. While at TDCJ, she implemented a number of successful programs, such as GO KIDS and the widely-recognized AMACHI Texas mentoring program, which provides hope to the children of incarcerated offenders.

“I’ve seen first-hand the transformative influence Unlocking DOORS™ has on ex-offenders when we connect them with the services and resources they so desperately need,” says Christina Melton Crain. “By giving them a second chance, we can improve lives, cut crime rates, and strengthen our communities – but we can’t do that without the funding that is so critical to our existence.”

A crucial part of Unlocking DOORS™ success is community collaboration and partnership. The Network pulls together resources from more than 160 statewide agencies, organizations and governmental entities, including Dallas County, the City of Dallas and the Texas Department of Criminal Justice; Unlocking DOORS™ Partners/Providers come from a wide range of social, health, civic and business areas.
“I believe that the Unlocking DOORS™ model is helping establish a solid foundation for reentry programs across the nation,” said Dallas County Commissioner Dr. Elba Garcia. “Reducing crime in our communities is a priority; we strongly benefit when we are able to provide comprehensive, coordinated services for ex-offenders. The distinctive feature of Unlocking DOORS™ is that they individualize each client's treatment plan to his or her specific needs; ultimately giving the client a greater likelihood of succeeding.”

Through the support and funding of government resources, and private & corporate donors, like the Texas Governor's Criminal Justice Division, the Harold Simmons Foundation, the Meadows Foundation, the Charles Koch Foundation, the City of Dallas and the Texas Bar Foundation - Unlocking DOORS™ is able to successfully pursue their mission and provide ex-offenders the support and resources they need. Other notable contributors include the Westcott Foundation, the Dallas Foundation, Tolleson Private Banking, the Dallas Women’s Foundation, the Dallas Bar Foundation and the Dallas Association of Young Lawyers Foundation – all of whom awarded funds to Unlocking DOORS™ since its inception. Direct public support also plays a major role to the success of the Unlocking DOORS™ mission.

“Our foundation strongly believes in a quality of life for all members of society; including those individuals attempting to return to the community after being incarcerated,” said Betsy Healy, Grants Director of the Harold Simmons Foundation. “Unlocking DOORS™ is providing the necessary resources and guidance that these individuals desperately need so that they can make a fresh start and live a normal life for themselves and their families.”

Unlocking DOORS™ utilizes a new innovative software, called “Pieces Iris™”, to interpret and share data in real-time, impacting their ability to provide a smooth and seamless transition back into society for individuals in the Network. The Pieces Iris™ software is a configurable, client-centered case-management tool designed specifically for non-profit and social service agencies; in this case - Reentry Brokerage™.

The Network helps people regardless if they’re coming directly from incarceration or if they’re already living in the community. Unlocking DOORS™ coordinates reentry into the community for anyone 18 or older with a criminal background. As often as possible, the Network begins assessing a client before someone is even released from prison. Once released, ex-offenders are assigned a “Reentry Broker™” who works closely with them to give them the right tools they need for success.

Four different assessments are done for each client: 1) A comprehensive risk/needs assessment from the Texas Risk Assessment System (TRAS), 2) A Career Key assessment, which details an ex-offender’s work history, education and job skills, 3) A Behavior and Experience Assessment, including details about potential issues with mental health, drugs or alcohol, and 4) A Benefits Calculator assessment, which determines what governmental benefits each ex-offender may be eligible to receive. Reentry Brokers™ then come up with an individualized reentry brokerage plan and referrals to the Network’s community partners/providers to help the client address their needs and become productive, self-sufficient members of society.
Unlocking DOORS™ monitors ex-offenders throughout the reentry process, as long as that may take, and is there to hold their hand as they work through various goals; always ready to assist with a new goal/referral or a replacement referral should one not work as anticipated. Unlocking DOORS™ clients do not graduate from the program; much like one’s doctor, Unlocking DOORS™ is there to assist whenever necessary.

"Congratulations and a well-deserved thank you is in order for Unlocking DOORS™," said State Senator Royce West. "The congratulatory nod celebrates the opening of their new facility which will be used to deploy even greater resources toward their mission of assisting those who are in the process of forging new lives through the process that is reentry. Thank you Unlocking DOORS™ for being a partner in bringing awareness to the larger community, that those you serve are willing, productive and capable of contributing to society in meaningful ways."

In the Spring of 2016, the Texas Bar Foundation awarded Unlocking DOORS™ funds to assist with the establishment of the nonprofit’s new state headquarters. In recognition of its support, Unlocking DOORS™ has named its Client Resource Center in honor of the Texas Bar Foundation. Located in the Unlocking DOORS™ headquarters, the Texas Bar Foundation Client Resource Center will provide clients with printers & desktops for job searches, resume writing, benefits enrollment, and a variety of other resources. Other facilities include a Meditation/Quiet room where clients can destress; a client living room with coffee bar & refrigerator; and, the omnipresent Resource Walls, complete with Network resources, brochures, and more.

“When I was released, what worried me the most was ‘How do I have a normal life,’” said Dina Jackson, a successful Unlocking DOORS™ Client. “Unlocking DOORS™ has been an amazing experience from the start. They referred so many great resources, which gave me hope. I don’t think of them as a program, but more as a support unit for a happier life where I can reach my full potential.”

###
About Unlocking DOORS™

Founded in 2010 and headquartered in Dallas, Unlocking DOORS™ is the states’ most innovative and comprehensive “reentry network. The non-profit Network creates stronger communities by guiding people with criminal backgrounds to become law-abiding, self- sufficient members of society – which reduces crime and saves tax payers money. Using its unique and highly-successful “Reentry Brokerage™/Data and Predictive Trends” program, the organization serves as a model for how other cities, states and communities can help those with criminal backgrounds help themselves.

Connect with Unlocking DOORS™: Twitter | Facebook

About Texas Bar Foundation

The Texas Bar Foundation solicits charitable contributions and provides funding to enhance the rule of law and the system of justice in Texas, especially for programs that relate to legal assistance for the underserved, the administration of justice, ethics in the legal profession, the encouragement of legal research, publications and forums, and education of the third branch of government.

Connect with Texas Bar Foundation: Twitter

About Pieces Technologies

Pieces Iris™ is a configurable and cost effective case management and client tracking tool. It can provide a real-time view of clients served with a built-in sharing framework between social service organizations and healthcare providers. With proper consents, Pieces Iris™ enables a direct path for case managers and case workers to route "clients"-in-need to the providers of social services they require.

Connect with Pieces Technology: Twitter | Facebook

About DART

The Dallas Area Rapid Transit authority (DART) is a transit agency in Dallas, Texas. It operates buses, light rail, commuter rail, and high-occupancy vehicle lanes in Dallas and 12 of its suburbs. With the extension of Orange Line to DFW Airport station at DFW Airport on August 18, 2014 and the extension of Blue Line to UNT Dallas on October 24, 2016, DART is the largest light rail operator in the US, with 93 miles of track.

Connect with DART: Twitter | Facebook