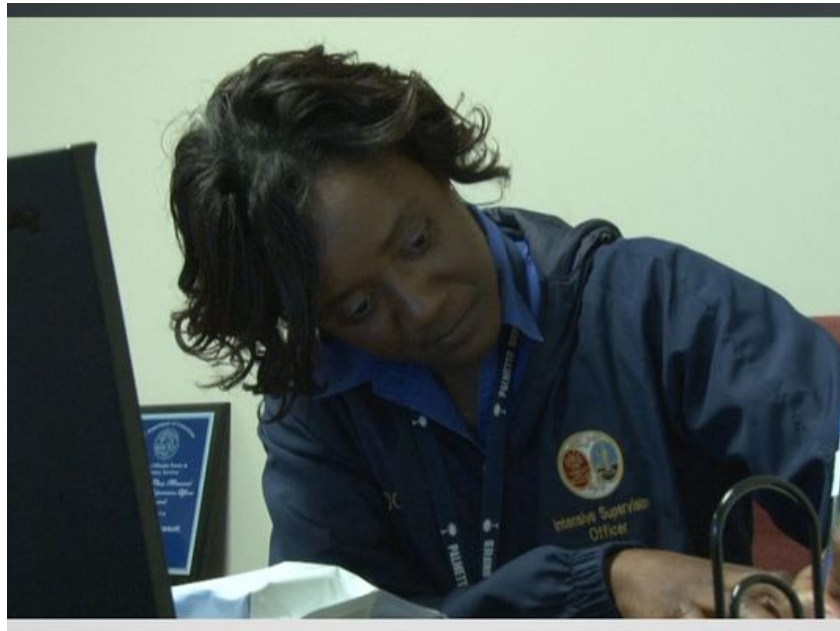


Cracking Down on Repeat Youthful Offenders



Story by Steven Dial, WLTX

Orangeburg, SC (WLTX) - A lot of the recent crimes in the Midlands have been committed by "Youthful Offenders," meaning criminals ages 17-25.

The Department of Corrections Intensive Supervision program is not your typical probation system for youthful offenders.

Three Years ago 57% of Non-Violent Youthful Offenders committed new crimes after serving their prison time; now it's down to 4%

"There is really no typical day with me, anything could come up. I am in the field, I am seeing offenders, I am randomly drug testing offenders, I am out doing home visits and community work sites," said Intensive Supervision Officer Lorri Bennett.

The Department of Corrections gave News 19 unrestricted access into how the Intensive Supervision Program works.

It's only for Youthful Offenders that are in prison for the first time for committing non-violent crimes.

Bennett handles cases in Orangeburg County.

"You are not only changing their thought process but you are changing their behavior and that's the key thing, if you can change their thought process and behavior, I think you've won the battle."

Bennett works everyday with offenders that have been convicted of a felony.

"Stupidity, just a dumb moment," said 28 year old Corey Davis who recently served three years in prison.

He sees Officer Bennett once a week and is currently looking for a job. Davis says this program has helped him and has a message for young people.

"It's easier to stay out of trouble out here than in there, you have to think before you act. Don't jump into anything without thinking about what the consequences will be first," said Davis.

Chief Wendell Davis with the Orangeburg Department of Public Safety says in the three years of the program - he's seen a decrease in offenders.

"If we allow a person at 18, 20, 22 be involved in crimes, that person will most likely be involved in crime until they are 45," said Chief Davis.

Intensive Supervision Officers spend a lot more time with offenders than a parole officer would. From Surprise visits to helping them get a job.

"Since I've been through all that I have been through, I realize that the world does not revolve around me," said 26 year old April Gleaton who recently served three years in prison.

Gleaton's life was not on the right track and her actions resulted in her spending three years in prison.

Now she is temporarily working at the Orangeburg Vocational Rehabilitation Center and plans on attending Denmark Technical College in the fall.

"I want to have a successful future; I don't want things to be the way that they were," said Gleaton.

There are currently 400 offenders that are in prison and waiting to join the program and more than 600 that have served their time and are currently trying to turn their life around through the program.