



NEWS FROM:
Office of Public Defender
Matt Shirk, Fourth Circuit
www.MattShirkPublicDefender.com

Contact: Matt Bisbee
Public Information Officer
Tel: (904)630-7350
MPB@PD4.COJ.net

For Immediate Release

April 16, 2010

Public Defender, Councilman Give Workshop on Employment Preparation *Shirk, Jacksonville Area Legal Aid explain legal process behind cleaning criminal records*

Jacksonville, FL: “A criminal record can inhibit one’s chances of getting a job, but in many cases, that record can be sealed or expunged,” explains Fourth Judicial Circuit Public Defender Matt Shirk. At the invitation of Jacksonville City Councilman Dr. Johnny Gaffney (District 7), Mr. Shirk provided an informational workshop to Jacksonville residents who attended the East 21st Street Neighborhood Association meeting on April 14th. Nearly 70 people gathered at the Long Branch Elementary School to learn more about the process and to ask the attorneys about specific cases.



APD Thompson (seated), PD Shirk (standing)

Joining Mr. Shirk to help address the many individual scenarios brought by participants were Assistant Public Defender Melanie Thompson and Jacksonville Area Legal Aid Staff Attorney LaVerne Andreason. The three attorneys were able to assist attendees with locating the appropriate agencies, understanding the ample paperwork and identifying what prior offenses could and could not be sealed and/or expunged.

“There are a lot of resources available to people reentering society after incarceration,” said Shirk. “But it is difficult for many to understand where to go for help. I thank Dr. Gaffney and the East 21st Street Neighborhood Association for putting the program together and bringing so many people. Also, I appreciate JALA for assisting the presentation because they are a tremendous legal resource in our community.”

Outreach into the communities of the Fourth Judicial Circuit is a top priority of Public Defender Matt Shirk; he is also committed to managing an efficient administration and providing effective legal representation. APD Melanie Thompson, a Felony Unit attorney, has been with the office for one year and serves in the Speaker’s Bureau, a small group of staff that assist Shirk at public functions or provide legal perspectives and expertise to various groups.
