

Community & Clubs: Club helps past inmates

Save/Share 



By Jim DeBoom

Updated: Tuesday, May 11, 2010 9:56 PM PDT

“All of them have been in jail. They made a mistake, or two, somewhere along the way. But they are trying to turn their lives around and become productive citizens,” said Rotarian Laura Dietz as she described a vocational service program of the Rotary Club of Newport Beach Sunrise for a rehabilitation group from the Salvation Army.

Founded and chaired by Tim Brown, club president, and in its fourth year, the program has grown in stature and in recognition by the Salvation Army for its hands-on approach.

The program consists of six workshops held over consecutive weeks that are led by Rotarians and focus on various aspects of employment. One week the class of 15 learned how to create a budget: “What do I need to make in order to afford an apartment, transportation, food, etc.?” Then there is the “elevator speech” on how to impress a potential employer about why they should consider hiring you.

In breakout sessions with individual Rotarians, the participants get their questions answered one-on-one while others observe, as many of them have similar questions. Examples of questions typically have to do with large gaps in their employment, unexplained absences, their respective felony, and for them, providing references fully cited.

“We use first names, and treat them each as valuable human beings, that the past does not have to predict their futures, and that is why we are there,” Dietz said.

On May 4, the group met Rotarians at the Working Wardrobes facility to pick out a suit. Some of the men have never owned a suit.

“What do we Rotarians get out of it? That feeling that you can’t buy at Wal-Mart or Bloomingdale’s. To know you are helping another human being is the reward,” Dietz said.