



**UP TO 5% CASH BACK WITH BLUE CASH®**

apply now ▶

AMERICAN EXPRESS

Search

**HOME DELIVERY**



Home > News > News Columnists

Text size:

- Classifieds**
- Jobs
  - Cars
  - Real Estate
  - Apartments
  - Items For Sale
  - Place An Ad

- News**
- Connecticut
  - Towns
  - Latest News
  - Education
  - Health
  - Politics / Elections
  - Consumer
  - Special Reports
  - Photos/Multimedia
  - Off Beat
  - World/Nation
  - Columnists
  - Blogs

**Sports**

**Business**

**ITowns**

**Entertainment**

**Features**

**Travel**

**Video**

**Opinion**

**Obituaries**

**Traffic**

**Shopping**

**Topics (Beta)**

**eCourant**

**Weather**



Radar: rain alert

**Resources**

- Site Map
- Lottery
- Mobile News
- Text Alerts
- RSS Feeds
- Mortgages
- Coupons

**Advertise With Us**

- Newspaper Classified
- Newspaper Retail
- Online
- Media Kit
- Contact Us

## Former Offenders Boxed In

Stan Simpson  
August 9, 2008

I was trying to reach Leroy Gardner — and because he hadn't returned a call in a couple of days, I was getting concerned.

I met Gardner at the [Mark Twain](#) library several weeks ago. I was working on a column about the closing of the Hartford branch library. Gardner, 44, a bald, fit, eloquent man, was working the computer, trying to find a job.

He handed me a copy of his resume. He was seeking a "bilingual certified medical secretary position" that could utilize his "extensive Spanish skills and medical administrative experience."

His resume described him as someone with "strong interpersonal skills with ability to easily establish rapport and trust with patients."



Stan Simpson  
Bio | E-mail | Recent columns

Ads by Google

**Sex Offenders Near You?**  
Use This Free Public Service To Locate Any Sex Offenders Near You!  
[www.PeopleFinders.com](http://www.PeopleFinders.com)

**Registered Sex Offenders**  
Protect your child. Find out now if a sex offender lives in your area.  
[www.RegisteredOffendersList.Org](http://www.RegisteredOffendersList.Org)

**Dui records**  
Find dui records near you. Local business listings for the US.  
[Local.com](http://Local.com)

**Told In Confidence**  
If a crime is told in confidence to a lawyer, can it ever be shared?  
[www.ResponsibilityProject.com](http://www.ResponsibilityProject.com)

**10 Rules of Flat Stomach**  
Cut Down 9 lbs of Stomach Fat every 11 Days by Keeping these 10 Rules.  
[FatLoss4idiots.com](http://FatLoss4idiots.com)

Gardner showed me a book of theological essays in which one of his writings was published.

The guy was bright, polite, had technology and office management skills and was eager to work. The problem is that Gardner is an ex-offender. He didn't go into detail, just matter-of-factly stated, "I come off a lot of repeated incarcerations because of my substance abuse problem — and I've had some serious charges. But I'm highly skilled."

The federal government had released him in July after he served a 10-year stint for armed robbery.

After spending some time in a halfway house, Gardner found refuge in a homeless shelter. He called me a few weeks ago, saying his situation was dire.

As a black man, no matter how eloquent, with an extensive criminal history, Gardner is going to have serious challenges trying to find someone to hire him. But it's not just repeat offenders who find themselves ostracized in the job market.

Responding to the recidivism problem, the city of [New Haven](#) in September is expected to eliminate that ominous box on a job application that asks a prospect whether they've ever been convicted. New Haven [Mayor John DeStefano](#) told me Friday that if he's going to ask city employers to give ex-offenders a chance at redemption, then city hall, too, should set an example.

Boston, Cambridge, Baltimore, San Francisco, Minneapolis and St. Paul no longer include the question on their applications.

Don't misunderstand here: A person's criminal *history* is important. But so, too, are their present mind-set and plans for being a productive citizen in the future. These ex-inmates are being shunted from potential jobs before they have an opportunity to tell their story.

I've heard a number of ex-offenders or their families complain that they want a chance to make good, but too often they can't get past that box on the job application.

### POST SCRIPT: Maryann Measles



#### Appeals Continue Nearly 11 Years After Her Death

In 1997, Maryann Measles was murdered in New Milford. Some defendants in the case continue to appeal their convictions.

[Post Script Archive](#)

### A great career in less than a year!

Campuses located in:

- Branford, CT
- Southington, CT
- Windsor, CT
- Springfield, MA
- Bohemia, NY
- Albany, NY

Not all programs available in all campuses

**BRANFORD HALL** Career Institute [Click here for more information](#)

### Popular stories

[Most viewed](#) [Most e-mailed](#) [Hot topics](#)

**One Killed, Six Wounded After Parade In Hartford**

**Kevin Rennie: Tapes May Tell Tale Of Dodd Deal**

**Motocross Driver Killed At Speedway**

**Blue Team Wins Exciting Calhoun Game**

**New Assistant Coach Ralph Hits Ground Running**

[More most viewed](#)

- Newspaper Services
- Subscribe
- Subscriber Services
- Archives
- Reprints
- Newspaper Ads
- Courant Jobs
- About Us
- View Page 1

"It really limits the possibility of them being hired," said Jackie Caron, founder of the Connecticut Pardon Team, which works to expunge the criminal record of those ex-offenders who have established a track record of staying out of trouble and being stellar citizens. "A lot of times, employers just look at the fact that they were convicted and don't bother to ask them what the situation was."

Some ex-offenders don't bother to check the conviction box, Caron said, only to be fired later for lying.

It's a frustrating existence. At some point, when inmates pay their debt and have owned up to their misdeeds, they've earned a shot at redemption.

I called the state Department of Correction Friday to see whether they had any more information on Leroy James Gardner.

A man with his name and age was sent to MacDougall Walker prison in [Suffield](#) a few days ago — on a parole violation.

**Stan Simpson's column appears on Wednesdays and Saturdays. He can be heard live today on WTIC NewsTalk 1080 from 5:30 a.m. to 10 a.m.**

[E-mail](#)   [Share](#)   [Print](#)   [Reprint](#)

**Related topic galleries:** [John DeStefano](#), [Crimes](#), [Prisons](#), [New Haven \(New Haven, Connecticut\)](#), [Suffield](#), [Mark Twain](#)

[All topics](#)

Copyright © 2008, The Hartford Courant

We encourage you to share your thoughts about our stories. However, comments that are obscene, overly personal, racist or otherwise inappropriate will be removed. Because the messages are posted instantly and anonymously, Courant.com cannot vouch for their accuracy or authenticity. Report abusive posts by clicking the link found at the upper right of each item. -- *Courant.com*

[Read all 7 comments »](#)

**Name**

**Comments**

Type the numbers you see in the image on the right:



[Post Comment](#)

Please note by clicking on "Post Comment" you acknowledge that you have read the [Terms of Service](#) and the comment you are posting is in compliance with such terms. **Be polite.** Inappropriate posts may be removed by the moderator. Send us your feedback.

**careerbuilder**  
Top Jobs

MECHANICAL ASSEMBLER  
P/A INDUSTRIES, INC.

ACCOUNTANT - 2 POSITIONS  
NOT SPECIFIED

ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
CAPITOL REGION EDUCATION COUNCIL (CREC)

CERTIFIED INDUSTRIAL HYGIENIST

RETAIL / SHOWROOM SALES

CONNECTICUT LIGHTING CENTERS / RESTORATION LIGHTING GALLERY

[View all Top Jobs](#)

Plan A:

Visit  
**Cars.com**  
to research  
fuel economy.



**I AM ... On A Mission**  
Elder Pedro Laraia, 21, is a missionary with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[I AM ... On A Mission](#) Video  
I Am...

**Courant News Columnists**



**Stan Simpson**  
Former Offenders Boxed In



**Consumer Watchdog: George Gombossy**  
Chase Hid Key Reason It Cut Homeowner's Credit Line



**Rick Green**  
Even After Prison, Dreams Live On For Parolees



**Colin McEnroe**  
Jury Duty, Yuck! Judge Judy, OK!

**More**

- Connecticut Lottery Results
- Hartford Courant Corrections
- Connecticut's War Dead
- CT Stats
- Open For Business
- Since You Asked
- Both Sides

**Tell Us About Your ...**

- Events listings • Birth announcements
- News tips • Press releases / articles

**Special Ad Sections**



**GLASTONBURY MUSIC FESTIVAL**

These Wednesday night concerts will make your summer!

**ABOUT ENFIELD**

Get a taste of Enfield - restaurants, music and things to do.

**CELEBRATE SOUTH WINDSOR**

Time to celebrate - The South Windsor Chamber of Commerce is turning 40!

**DISCOVER MANCHESTER**

Pizza, beads, silver and summer activities - right in town.



**Show Off Your State Pride**

Share your favorite Connecticut photo on this reader photogallery.  
Upload your own photo

---

[amNY](#) | [Baltimore Sun](#) | [Chicago Tribune](#) | [Daily Press](#) | [LA Times](#) | [Newsday](#) | [Orlando Sentinel](#) | [Sun-Sentinel](#) | [The Morning Call](#) | [The Virginia Gazette](#)

---

[Terms Of Service](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [About Us](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Advertise Online](#)

---

[CareerBuilder.com for Jobs](#) | [Apartments.com for Rentals](#) | [Cars.com for Autos](#) | [FSBO](#) | [Coupons](#) | [ShopLocal.com](#) | [Discount Shopping](#) | [Houses For Rent](#) | [Open Houses](#)