

This is a printer friendly version of an article from [norwichbulletin.com](http://www.norwichbulletin.com)
To print this article open the file menu and choose Print.

[Back](#)

Article published Oct 1, 2006
Connecticut Pardon Team: Record can be cleared
By DOROTHY SCHNEIDER
Norwich Bulletin

Richard Frank has three college degrees and is well-trained in computer work, but can't get a job.

The 43-year-old Stamford man said he's being held back by one element of his past: Criminal offenses he committed 27 years ago and 13 years ago.

"In everything, I seemed to take two steps forward and someone was trying to hold me back, so I couldn't succeed," he said. "I'm having such a hard time. ... (People I interview with) find something in my background or I try telling people my story and they promise me a job, but then they just turn their head."

Now Frank is trying to do something about his past by applying for a pardon from the state, and getting help through the process from the Norwich-based Connecticut Pardon Team, launched in 2004 by three local women.

"Then maybe they'll let me alone and let me work," he said.

Jackie Caron, a Norwich city councilor, a state legislative aide and founder of the Connecticut Pardon Team, said Frank's story is all too common. And many people do not realize they are even eligible to apply for a pardon once five years has passed after their offense.

"There's so many people who make mistakes who come to our program and who have truly turned their lives around," she said. "They overcome a lot of downfalls they've encountered and the only thing that stops them is they have a conviction on their record.

"No one should have to pay for the rest of their lives for a mistake they made," Caron said.

Frank didn't want to reveal his crimes, but said since getting in trouble, he's earned two associate degrees from Norwalk Community College, a bachelor's degree from the University of Connecticut and graduate credits from Sacred Heart University. Frank has done community service work and tried to live as a responsible citizen. He's tried repeatedly to get a job in his field and even tried for a pardon several years ago, but to no avail.

"I'm still not giving up, but sometimes it's frustrating to have to go to day labor," he said, adding that this year has been especially tough for him, because he was laid off from an operations job he had landed for short time in New York.

Exasperated, Frank turned to one of the government-sponsored job training programs to get licensed as an environmental technician.

"If I can't get a job with my skills, then I'll just get a dirty job that no one wants," he said.

Neither Caron nor Frank claim the pardon process is easy. Even after the stack of paperwork is completed, including a personal statement and a host of records, the petitioner must wait eight months to a year to find out if their efforts have succeeded.

"It's a waiting game," said Caron, who knows from experience, after earning a pardon of her own years ago. "But most of the people I run into have been waiting 20 years, so what's another year?"

Dianne Daniels of Norwich serves as president and executive director of the Connecticut Pardon Team, Attorney Linda Sullivan of East Lyme serves as an adviser to the team and the people applying for pardons and Richard Caron of Norwich serves as the group's treasurer. The group has applied for nonprofit status and is waiting approval.

Jackie Caron said the team has provided information to more than 1,000 people so far through informational forums held across the state and through its Web site.

Because the pardon process is subjective, based on the crime and the person, Caron said it's invaluable to provide one-on-one advice to the people going through it.

Frank said the team is really "on the ball" and helpful. And although he won't have any answers from the state's pardon board until at least November, Frank feels confident in his application.

"It's like when you have a test in school. You may not get the best grade, but you're comfortable with how much you studied," he said.
