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Group outlines pardon process

By: Kerry Heeran , Herald Staff

NEW BRITAIN - Starting over with a clean slate for Alderwoman Jacqueline Caron of Norwich started when her public defender said to her "you would be a great candidate for criminal pardon."

After receiving that pardon in 2000 and establishing a group to raise awareness on the pardon process, Caron and the Connecticut Pardon Team will host a "Pardon Forum" at the New Britain Public Library that will discuss the process to pardonship.

Caron said the team would advocate and educate individuals about the pardon process and what they can expect when completing the pardon application. Attendees are provided with a pardon application, information on how to research state statutes regarding a pardon, information on transitional jobs for ex-offenders, information to restore voting rights and other information.

In her younger days, Caron was convicted of a crime, but now as an adult and community activist realized she made a mistake and needed a clean record to lead a successful life.

"When I received my pardon application, I was in college and had a lot on my plate," she said. "I got the application, it was overwhelming. There would be paperwork filling my bed every night."

Caron said even though she received her pardon in 2000, it was a long process that took about four months with no one to turn to for help. She then wondered if there was anybody else out there that had as much difficulty applying for pardon.

This was the reason that Caron and a friend decided to hold their first free seminar at the Norwich Public Library in 2004. She said the response was overwhelming and people would call her constantly for more information.

"People came from New York and Rhode Island, Stamford," she said. "Since then, we have done many workshops all over the state and in 2006 we became incorporated."

State Sen. Donald Defronzo, D-New Britain, who will also be in attendance Thursday, said he thinks this information session is a good opportunity for people to clear their name because having a criminal record can impact buying a house, applying for a loan, getting a job or promotion and many other aspects in life.

The forum will take place at 20 High St., from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on Thursday. For more information, call (866) 251-3810 or www.connecticutpardontea.com.

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