



# BEYOND THE WALLS



## Sean Rice

**P**rior to being sentenced to serve 6 months at Colwell Probation Detention Center (PDC) in 2011, Sean Rice had an associate's degree in Business, but was struggling to find employment. In an attempt to acquire money, Sean decided to follow an illegal route, and ultimately received a 7-year probation sentence for Possession of Marijuana and Sale and Distribution of Marijuana.

Two months after Rice arrived at Colwell PDC, he joined the 1st Rescued Program group. Rescued is the first dog rescue program established within the Department. Their mission is to rescue dogs from Colwell's partners (Humane Society's Mountain Shelter and Castoff Pet Rescue), which would otherwise be euthanized, while providing a positive impact on the detainees.

"Out of everything offered at Colwell, Rescued makes the greatest impact on the person participating in it," said Rice. "With every class that passes, elements are designed and refined to not only change the character of the detainee, but also give tools to help achieve a life beyond the walls after release."



RICE WORKS FULL-TIME AS A GROOMER AT BLUE RIDGE GROOMING

Upon his release from the program, Rice began working as a dog bather and, thanks to experience gained in Rescued, ultimately gained full-time employment as a groomer at Blue Ridge Grooming in Blue Ridge, GA.

Sean received an early release from his probation on May 26, 2016. He now returns to Cowell PDC every Thursday, as the volunteer grooming instructor.



RICE SERVES AS THE VOLUNTEER GROOMING INSTRUCTOR AT COLWELL PDC

"I've been the grooming instructor for close to a year now," said Rice. "My drive to want to be a volunteer with the program is to help people develop skills that I was able to gain and make a living from."

For those considering joining the Rescued program, or other programs offered by the Department, Sean offers the following advice:

"For those currently in or pursuing to be members of a program, do not to take the experience for granted," said Rice. "Use it to help develop your character and change yourself into a better and wiser person."



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## Ladji Ruffin

**F**or Ladji Ruffin, the Department of Corrections was his University. After receiving a sentence of Life with Parole, Ladji took full advantage of the programs GDC had to offer.

The programs he participated in, all made a huge impact on his life. He started his educational and vocational education by first enrolling in On-the-Job training programs. Through these programs, he received certifications in Food Preparation and Baking. He then enrolled in the Faith and Character Based program where he learned how to type and encourage others, as well as became certified in Barbering. While enrolled in this program, he created a course which he called, Entrepreneurial class. He formed this class because he heard that one of the biggest pitfalls after being released is that it is hard to find employment. So, Ladji came up with an idea to combat the problem, which was to *create your own job*. Through his class, he was able to teach others how to establish their own business plans.



RUFFIN RETURNS TO CENTRAL STATE PRISON FOR THE BRAILLE OPEN HOUSE

All of this experience and knowledge led to his next endeavor, his enrollment in the Braille Program at Central State Prison. Here he transcribed textbooks into braille for the visually impaired. The books he produced were then distributed throughout the state of Georgia and across the United States.

Not only was Ladji helping others, he was also afforded the opportunity to hone in on his public speaking skills. Annually, during open house, he had the opportunity to speak to the local news stations and tell them his story.

After receiving his advanced certification in Braille, Ladji was accepted into the Governor's Mansion detail. He cannot put into words how this impacted his life, however he can say that it was a *life changing experience*.

When he was released in 2016, he started his own company, Authentic Braille Masters, LLC. This is a global company and he is currently conducting business with Canada. He is, also, an Independent Contractor selling energy for a company called Stream Energy. In addition, Ladji speaks at prisons, schools and other business owners, sharing with them his experiences and the drive to succeed.

“I know my story will bring hope and encouragement to a lot of people. I am an open book. I pray a lot of people that are working in the reentry business will take a long look into my life. My example can solve a lot of problems.