



DENIS HOUSE/The Lebanon Enterprise

Marion County jailer Barry Brady speaks at the June First Friday Forum, presented by the Marion County Industrial Foundation. Brady spoke about rehabilitating prisoners to give them a second chance once they are released. Behind him are R.D. and Chris, two prisoners in the Marion County Detention Center who shared their story.

Brady: 'Never going to fix cycle if we don't change'

Jailer presents program at First Friday Forum

BY DENIS HOUSE

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Marion County jailer Barry Brady wants to be clear on one thing: He's not light on crime.

After 36 years in the corrections business, Brady knows that some incarcerated individuals will always be in the justice system, what he calls "the 85%ers and lifers."

Then there are inmates

like R.D. and Chris. Both are incarcerated in the Marion County Detention Center on trafficking charges. Both men know they haven't made the best choices in the past. But they would like someone to give them a second chance to turn their lives around.

"I would recommend hiring them to anybody in a New York minute," Brady told those gathered at the June 3 First Friday Forum,

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presented by the Marion County Industrial Foundation.

Both men do maintenance at the detention center. R.D., 37, has gone 53 months with no write-ups and no positive drug tests. Chris, 48, 48 months. Both have experience in heavy machinery, and Chris has his CDL license. Both men received their GED while in jail.

"I was arrested for trafficking meth and heroin in Northern Kentucky," R.D. said. After his first arrest, he served his time and was released. He has three children and was looking for a fresh start.

"It's hard to find a job with a felony (on your record)," R.D. said. So he fell back to doing what he knew: Trafficking.

"I had to make money," he said. "It's easier than finding a job. It was just the matter of making a phone call."

Chris had a similar story. After serving time for trafficking, he went looking for work. During one interview he told the interviewer what his crime was. He thought he had a good chance to land the job, but he never heard back from them.

"I called them up and asked them," Chris said. "They told me once I broke it (the crime) down, they were going to pass."

Like R.D., he went back to his old ways and started trafficking again. And like R.D., he was arrested.

"I went back to what I knew, and now I'm back here," he said.

"It's hard for a guy who has a felony," R.D. said. "It's easier to traffic."

Brady said there are 78 million Americans with a felony on their record.

"That's 1/4 of our soci-

ety," Brady said. "We are recycling a lot of individuals. We have a 50% return rate. We've got to do a better job preparing them for the workforce."

Brady said second chances work if they are done right.

"It costs to do things and do them right," he said. "In 2017 KRS passed a ruling that says any county that has a jail can apply for a reentry center." While that's good in theory, Brady said, one thing is lacking: Funds.

"No money was filtered to help counties get it started," he said. "No money. But we need this to happen. We are never going to fix the cycle if we don't change."

Brady added that there has to be a want from county government, and noted that Judge/Executive David Daugherty and (Marion County Industrial Foundation Executive Director) Brooklyn Leep have been helping to work on it.

"In 2019 it would have cost \$3 million to build the facility," Brady said. "Now that has gone up to \$4-5 million. It's not getting any cheaper. Hopefully, we can find some money through grants."

Brady said that sometimes for these men going back home isn't always the best solution.

"Sometimes going home is toxic," Brady said. "Some families don't want them, so where will they go? These men want to work in a place that takes drug testing seriously. Just locking drug and addiction up is not the answer. We've got to let them learn healthy habits."

Meanwhile, inmates like R.D. and Chris continue to hope for a job once they are released so they don't go back to a life of crime.

"Give me a chance," R.D. said. "We have to prove ourselves to you."