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## Local Ex-Convicts Can Help Clean Up Oil

### Operation New Hope Offers Second Chance For Ex-Offenders

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Joe Raedle/Getty Image


**JACKSONVILLE, Fla.** -- A local nonprofit organization is looking for ex-convicts to help clean up oil washing ashore in the Panhandle.

Operation New Hope, which helps men and women recently released from prison find work, has a new contract that allows it to help hundreds of ex-offenders get a second chance.

On Friday, instructors explained to a group of ex-offenders what to expect when they leave Sunday for Pensacola.

They have their gear, gloves and 40 hours of beach cleanup training under their belts.

Michael Love is among them. With a felony on his record, he has struggled to find work, until now.

**Video:**  [Project Hires For Beach Cleanup](#)

"I can actually start living now. I found some work," Love said.

It's work that will have him making between \$11 and \$12 an hour over the next six months cleaning up oil on Florida beaches.

"I will be able to take care of my kids, pay bills, eat, you know, live comfortable," Love said.

"Folks typically are going to net \$3,000 or \$4,000 a month, which is really significant when you think about it," said Kevin Gay, founder of Operation New Hope.

Gay said there are requirements for whom the organization can train and hire.

First, only ex-offenders who have been released from prison within the last 2 1/2 years -- from January 2008 or later -- can apply.

The organization can't hire anyone who has a violent record or any arrests involving sex crimes.

The work is physical, so the nonprofit is looking for people between 18 and 45 years old.

Finally, they must be a U.S. Citizen, and they must pass a drug test and consent to random drug tests.

"We're going to have our staff with them there," Gay said. "We're going to have case managers and job developers in Pensacola drug tested every week, focused on the work and representing us well."

Gay said it's a second chance for the ex-offenders and perhaps a good way to make amends for their past.

"We're going to help clean up the environment to make it better," Love said. "I feel wonderful about it to have the opportunity to help contribute."

Operation New Hope has 300 to 500 jobs available for ex-offenders who meet the requirements. To apply, call the organization's Ready 4 Work Program at 904-354-HOPE.

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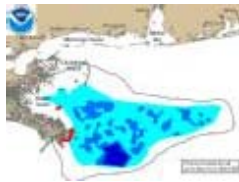
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