

# KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

## Court program oversees likely reoffenders

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**KALAMAZOO** — Beginning next week, eight high-risk former federal prisoners will take part in a Kalamazoo-based program designed to help them find success as free men.

The Accelerated Community Entry Program will start Jan. 15 in the U.S. District Courthouse in Kalamazoo. The public is welcome at an informational meeting about the program at 5:30 p.m. today at the Fetzer Center of Western Michigan University.

The Kalamazoo program is identical to ones started in Benton Harbor in 2005 and Grand Rapids in 2007, said Matthew J. Kakabeeke, supervising U.S. probation of-



Paul Maloney

ficer. The eight men participating, all residents of the Kalamazoo area, are on supervised release after having served their sentences — mostly for drug- and gun-related crimes, Kakabeeke said. Most have served between five and 25 years in prison and are considered likely to reoffend.

"It's designed to be a 24-month program, but it can take longer," Kakabeeke said. "We don't give up."

Chief U.S. District Judge Paul L. Maloney, based in Kalamazoo, will oversee monthly court hearings to monitor participants' progress.

It was Maloney who pushed for the program here, according to Kakabeeke. As a former Berrien County circuit court judge, Maloney was familiar with the program

started there by his U.S. District Court predecessor, Judge Richard A. Enslen.

Program participants work with their probation agents, attorneys, the judges, counselors and various service providers to obtain needed life skills, Kakabeeke said. Goals are outlined for each participant. Participants aren't allowed to leave the program, even if they are sent back to prison.

"They might go back but in some instances I saw a 'light bulb' moment," Kakabeeke said of participants elsewhere. "Maybe later in life they remember some of the things they learned here and it will help."

The regular rate of return to prison is about 66 percent, Kakabeeke said. Of the 41 participants in the Grand Rapids and Benton Harbor programs, 17 went back to prison — a 41.5 percent rate.