Employee of the Month

Piece of Work

January 1, 2006 By Lucile Scott

Holding down a job while holding down HIV is daunting. But add a criminal record and career planning becomes hard labor. After Lynn Bridges, a transgendered woman, was released in 1999 from a five-year attempted felony prostitution sentence, she continued a college degree begun inside. Then she found work through a temp agency—and soon won a position at non-profit Correct HELP, empowering positive inmates.

Describe studying in prison.
The program was popular: People want to make the most of their time inside, and I learned business skills. I applied for and got a scholarship, and the college's clerk said I was one of the first prisoners to actually continue after my release.

How did you deal with disclosing your criminal record on the job?
I was worried the temp agency wouldn't take on a felon, so I lied. I had to quit when a company wanted to hire me full-time. But I disclosed at the next agency and never had a problem. At Correct HELP, it's actually a plus.

Why did you start disclosing?
I realized it's all about attitude. A lot of people decide that they can't find a job outside before they leave prison. But jobs are there. I am an HIV positive African-American transgendered woman with a felony conviction. If I can get a job, anyone can.

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