

N.J. phasing out 'Scared Straight' program

NEWARK, N.J. (AP) — Even after 20 years, the words "Scared Straight" still recall the cold stares of convicts, the frightened, tearful expressions of young delinquents and expletive-filled tirades aimed at keeping young people out of prison.

In the 1979 award-winning television special filmed at East Jersey State Prison, convicts stripped teens of their shoes, spit in their faces and told them rape, murder and lost dreams would await them in prison if they didn't straighten up.

"Scared Straight" won two Emmys and an Oscar. And the program, founded in 1976 at the Rahway prison, went on to reach more than 50,000 troubled young people and has spawned replica programs around the world.

But in recent months, New

Jersey has decided that "Scared Straight" may be better television than an effective deterrent to crime.

The state Department of Corrections ordered a re-evaluation of the program last fall, and only one session has occurred since December, organizers say.

Last month, the agency decided to restart a toned-down, less aggressive program.

It also took control of another program aimed at high school and college classes from the Lifers, the East Jersey State inmates who run "Scared Straight."

Corrections Commissioner Jack Terhune said independent studies have shown that scare tactics don't stop juveniles from committing crime.

He touted a program he

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founded in 1998, Project Pride, which takes inmates into schools "to address students in a very positive and proactive way, as opposed to the foundation of 'Scared Straight,' which is clearly a negative context."

Alan August, a retired Corrections lieutenant who founded "Scared Straight," said the scare tactics were meant to get the attention of delinquents who didn't want to listen.

"These kids were real wiseguys, most of them," August said.

"Scared Straight" supporters say they have countless stories from people who say the in-your-face intimidation by hardened criminals helped steer them off a dangerous path.

Arnold Shapiro, who produced the 1979 "Scared Straight" film, a 20-year sequel tracking those in the original, and a 1999 film about the program for MTV, said 80 percent of the young people who listened to the convicts in the shows avoided a life of crime.

"I can't relate to you the

number of people over the years who have said to me that just by watching on television what the Lifers were doing, it dissuaded them away from the direction they're heading," he said.

But Terhune was so disturbed by Shapiro's "Scared Straight '99," which aired last summer, that he decided to revamp the program to be less violent and aggressive, according to a source familiar with the program who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The department ordered the Lifers to stop scheduling new sessions of "Scared Straight" in September and suspended the Lifers' separate, less aggressive question-and-answer sessions and prison tours for high school and college students.

Corrections Department

spokesman Chris Carden says, a gentler version of "Scared Straight" debuted in April.

Another session is scheduled for Monday, and 15 others are planned.

High school and college tours programs will resume and expand to other prisons as well, but under the department's direction, Carden said.

Several high school and college officials have written to Gov. Christie Whitman in recent weeks in support of the Lifers' tour.

"Meeting with the Lifers ranks with the finest human interaction and educational experiences of our lives," wrote Barbara J. Gonos, a Brookdale Community College professor who has taken students to see the Lifers for a dozen years.

Coke plans \$1 billion toward boosting company diversity

ATLANTA (AP) — Coca-Cola Co., faced with a racial discrimination lawsuit brought by black employees, plans to spend \$1 billion over the next five years to boost opportunities for minorities and women.

Coke said Tuesday that it will accomplish that in part by doing more business with minority and women-owned financial institutions, suppliers and other companies.

The move will almost double the company's spending on diversity programs.

The initiative has nothing to do with the lawsuit filed by eight current and former employees, said Carl Ware executive vice president of global public affairs and the highest-ranking black executive at Coke.

Instead, it is an extension of Coke's mission to be a good corporate citizen in the communities where Coca-Cola is sold, he said.

"I'm absolutely thrilled. What Coke is doing, I hope other corporations will heed and follow."

— Rev. Timothy McDonald, president of Concerned Black Clergy

"This is a correct and proper business decision, a part of the company's overall business strategy," Ware said.

"This is the new Coca-Cola."

The plan includes:

— Increasing spending with minority- and female-owned businesses by more than 50 percent over the next five years, to an average of \$160 million a year.

— Establishing a new supplier mentoring program among minorities and women.

— Expanding a program Coke began in New York's Harlem in 1998 to increase economic partnerships.

Thirteen communities are already involved; Coke plans to add 50 new cities.

— Strengthening ties to financial firms owned by minorities or women. For example, Coke trustees recently doubled the portion of its employee pension fund managed by such firms to \$115 million. It also plans to double the value of its insurance coverage through minority- and women-owned firms.

— Spending \$50 million over five years to support nonprofit projects such as scholarships for minority youths.

"Certainly it's an attempt to address the lawsuit," said the Rev. Timothy McDonald, president of Concerned Black Clergy. "But I'm absolutely thrilled. What Coke is doing, I hope other corporations will heed and follow."

He added: "You would be hard-pressed to find any corporation that has done more for the black community."

Cyrus Mehri, the lawyer for the plaintiffs in the discrimination suit, said the plans deals only with the treat-

ment of minorities outside the company.

"It will largely be for naught unless the internal issues of discriminatory treatment of African-Americans is addressed," Mehri said.

Separately Tuesday,

Coca-Cola said it will invest \$200 million to expand its business in South Africa. The investment will be used to build bottling and canning plants and production lines and to launch new soft-drink brands.

Malice

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acquitted; and the jury's viewing of the movie "Malcolm X," which has footage of the King beating, during a break in deliberations.

Budzyn, whose second-degree murder conviction was also overturned, was convicted in 1998 of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to time served, about three years and eight months.

At Tuesday's sentencing, Sherry Green, Green's sister, read a statement on behalf of their mother, Patricia.


"I am amazed at the defendant's complete disregard for the truth and the pursuit to clear his name," she said, and asked the judge "to send a message to this defendant and others who think as he does."

crack house in Detroit. Prosecutors say Nevers struck Green in the head 14 times with a heavy flashlight in a clear case of unreasonable force.

Attorneys for the two officers argued force was necessary to subdue Green, and said cocaine contributed to Green's death.

Although no testimony indicated race was a factor in Green's death, the incident was compared with the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles because Nevers and Budzyn are white and Green was black.

The federal judge who overturned Nevers' first conviction cited the jury's exposure to media speculation there could be rioting in Detroit if the officers were



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