

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## CHATTANOOGA ENDEAVORS, INC

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### **BRENNAN SOCIETY INSTITUTED**

<http://brennansociety.net/>

### **A Major Gifts Program**

### **BENEFITTING Chattanooga Endeavors**

<http://ceiservices.net>

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Board Chairman**

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Chattanooga, TN – Chattanooga Endeavors, Inc. (CEi) a charitable organization in Southeast Tennessee dedicated to the rehabilitation of former offender announced today the establishment of its Brennan Society for Sustaining Gifts.

According to Timothy Dempsey, CEO, "The Brennan Society is a fellowship of exceptional people whose generous contributions are helping CEi achieve its goal of restoring former offenders to productive roles in our community." Named for Justice and Mrs. William J. Brennan, who made the original major gift to the organization, Mr. Dempsey says "the Brennan Society encourages ongoing support from our major benefactors and permits us to acknowledge publicly our gratitude for their personal commitment to our mission."

Justice and Mrs. Brennan learned about CEi through their longtime acquaintance with Mr. Dempsey's parents, William and Mary Dempsey. "Justice Brennan's defining commitment in both his public and private life," comments William Dempsey, "was to the voiceless and the suffering. His hope that a measure of peace and joy might somehow become their lot matches perfectly the mission of Chattanooga Endeavors, an enterprise which both he and his wife Mary applauded."

A lifelong advocate for community-based programs to assist former offenders, Justice Brennan remarked in a 1961 address to The Morrow Citizens Association on Correction:

Each success [in prisoner rehabilitation] will pay enormous dividends - not alone in the self-satisfaction of helping restore the dignity of a fellow human being but in improving the quality of the society of which both you and he are an inseparable part.

Consistent with this notion of human dignity and social restoration, CEi provides training, counseling and education services to assist former offenders during their transition from incarceration to civil society. Through its services, the organization seeks to improve its clients' abilities to obtain meaningful employment on the premise that developing stable patterns of work in the lives of men and women who have been in prison is an inexpensive and effective method of reducing criminal recidivism.

"Despite the results of our efforts and the very positive effect this has on our community," says Barrett Taylor, Chairman, "it has been difficult to raise money from the general public." Criminal justice projects in the United States, in fact, compete for just a penny on the dollar in charitable giving. This makes organizations like CEi especially difficult to fund through ordinary fundraising channels. "Since our inception, we have relied heavily on government grants to finance operations," Mr. Taylor continues. "We are now building revenue streams that are independent of government funding by focusing on public events, our own business activities and our major donors [through the Brennan Society]."

"We are very proud of our achievements," says Timothy Dempsey; "but we have a lot of work left to do." Nearly 1,300 of the 2,000 former offenders supervised in the area are unemployed or underemployed - with as many as 40,000 in similar situations across the state. "This is a problem for everyone which seems to grow more desperate by the day." If recent incarceration rates remain unchanged, in fact, an estimated 1 of every 15 persons (6.6%) will serve time in a prison during their lifetime. "The solution to this un-American problem is within our reach," claims Dempsey; pointing out that our job of establishing justice is incomplete until those that have broken the law are fully restored to society. "As a community, we hold the door to second chances. Therefore, as a community, we have the responsibility of seeing to it that those that are sincere about wanting a second chance also have the opportunity to get a second chance."

"Beth and I have supported Chattanooga Endeavors for many years," says Ted Caldwell, Brennan Society Chairman, "because they take on some of the toughest problems in our community." "The board and staff do an outstanding job with very little resources and very little recognition."

John Behrmann, Cohutta Bank Vice President and longtime supporter of CEi, acknowledges the difficulty in generating community enthusiasm for criminal justice projects. "Despite the obvious need, no one takes responsibility," he says, pointing out CEi struggles to raise its budget from year to year. "With the savings in tax dollars that flow from the work of programs like CEi," Mr. Behrmann says, "you would think that the public would invest more heavily in our effort." In fact the organization saves tax payers \$3.7 million each year in incarceration costs alone. "It has taken us a long time to build up the support we have; but the good news is that when people finally understand the value they are getting from their investment in CEi they are a supporter for life."

Last year major donors contributed over \$33,000 to the organization helping the organization provide services to 441 men and women who would have been otherwise unable to find decent jobs. "They understand the value of Endeavors' work, says Mr. Caldwell, "and are willing to make an investment in an organization that may not have the social appeal of other causes but that more than makes up for that in high returns for the community."

With the establishment of the Brennan Society, the organization hopes to increase contributions from major donors and to build a base for regionalizing its efforts. For more information about the Brennan Society or the work of Chattanooga Endeavors, please call Timothy Dempsey at (423) 266-1888.