

Jail program a 'Community Model'

By **DON KORALEWSKI**
I-M Editor

John Pezzoli, Assistant Commissioner for Behavioral Health Services, recently visited the Southside Regional Jail. Pezzoli's visit included a tour of the facility and interviews with jail staff and inmates.

A highlight of the visit was an update, through staff and inmates, on the jail's Community Model Program.

The program is a model program for corrections facilities around the nation.

Conducted by the Center for Therapeutic Justice in Williamsburg, the program offers inmates a guided self-help approach to address and remedy contributing factors and causes for an individual's incarceration — substance abuse, mental health issues and anger management issues among them.

National statistics state that of those incarcerated in jails and prisons across the country, 67 percent will be



Don Koralewski/Independent-Messenger
John Pezzoli, Assistant Commissioner for Behavioral Health Services, center left, recently visited the Southside Regional Jail. He is joined by Southside Regional Jail Superintendent Col. Lance Forsythe (who is also Chairman of the Board of Directors for District 19 Community Services Board), Michael McBride a counselor for the Center for Therapeutic Justice, and Director of the Center for Therapeutic Justice Morgan Moss.

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re-arrested shortly after their release. "Many incarcerated persons leave jail worse — having honed their criminal skills through the inmate subculture, untreated addiction, and negative outlook on life... inevitably, without intervention, revolving door offenders re-infect their families and society with additional crimes," states an introduction to the program offered to the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services at the outset of the program in 2005.

Inmates volunteer for the program and have to be selected into the program. Currently, according to Jail Su-

perintendent Col. Lance Forsythe, of the 117 prisoners held at Southside Regional Jail, 29 are participants.

The Community Model Program involves group housing of participants — separate from non-participating inmates. Here, inmates participate in group sessions conducted by mental health professionals; take part in education programs (such as GED preparation programs); and, work with each other for positive reinforcement.

The program is run in cooperation with District 19 Community Services Board, which provides an on-site facilitator — supervised by a licensed social worker.