

Project helps offenders

► **Andy Galloway**

NICRO employees in Bethlehem and Phuthaditjhaba are doing all they can to make non-custodial sentencing (NCS) work.

So say Koena Mazibuko, Nicro Phuthaditjhaba, and Moses Ngakatau, Nicro Bethlehem.

This was one of the main messages that emerged during a hands-on training session offered by *Express* to the dynamic staff of Nicro (The National Institute for Crime Prevention and the Reintegration of Offender) in Bloemfontein last Thursday.

Fourteen Nicro representatives from Bethlehem, Phuthaditjhaba, Bloemfontein and Kroonstad attended the session instigated by Marita van Kraayenburg, Nicro area manager in the Free State and Northern Cape.

The session took the form of a press conference in which thorny issues were addressed. One of the top topics revolved around non-custodial sentencing (NCS), an alternative to sending offenders to prison. Gwem Maema, a Nicro social worker based in Bloemfontein, explained the rationale behind NCS.

Nicro started this as a pilot project in 2006. In 2008, Nicro ran a small five-site NCS pilot project with the Department of Justice and Constitutional Develop-



NICRO READY TO SERVE: From the left are, front: Mannini Lefalatsa (Botshabelo), Mpho Matlawa (Kroonstad) and Paulina Mokgothu (Bloemfontein); back: Shiela Litheko (supervisor for Welkom, Kroonstad, Bethlehem and Qwaqwa), Moses Ngakatau (Bethlehem), Vuyiswa Dingile (development worker, Bloemfontein), Marita van Kraayenburg (area manager in the Free State and Northern Cape), Gwen Maema (social worker in Bloemfontein), Stephen Ramohlabi (Bloemfontein), Thakane Sello (Welkom), Tebogo Nakedi (Bloemfontein), Miriam van Zyl (supervisor, Bloemfontein), Innocentia Mosiane (Bloemfontein) and Koena Mazibuko (Phuthaditjhaba). ICRO R

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ment, which concluded in March 2009. Parallel to the Justice pilot project, Nicro received funding from an international donor to deliver NCS programmes at 52 se-

lected magistrate's courts. Since then, the NCS project has gone forward in leaps and bounds. Nicro is now delivering NCS services at 25 courts around the country.

Non-custodial sentencing involves the sentencing of offenders to serve their sentence outside of prison.

For those offenders who are eligible, the NCS project offers them a chance to change their lives.

Nicro was founded in 1910 as the South African Prisoners' Aid Association.

The organisation was renamed Nicro in 1970. The or-

ganisation originally served prisoners and their families.

In the early 1990's the Economic Opportunities Project was introduced to deal with unemployment and the special needs of Nicro clients.

In 1992 after a joint campaign with other NGO's "Justice for the Children: no child should be caged" Nicro introduced diversion for

young offenders (channeling them away from the criminal justice system into programmes that make them accountable for their actions) which has grown to serve some 10 450 young people per year.

Nicro now functions in all nine provinces, has many service points and over forty community victim support centres.

