October 6, 2014

Aramark Response to News Media Coverage about its Corrections Business in Michigan

A lot has been said about our company and the work we are doing for the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC). Much of what has been said has come from others. We wanted you to hear from us, too.

First, Michigan is home to more than 4,000 dedicated Aramark employees who work at schools, universities, businesses and 10 municipal prisons around the State. That’s right; we are not new to the Corrections business in Michigan. Aramark has successfully partnered with 10 county correctional facilities for decades.

Our employees are the key to everything we do for the MDOC. We have many good and dedicated associates across Michigan. All of these employees go through an extensive background screening process performed by MDOC and MDOC tells us who we can hire. They also receive 55 hours of MDOC and Aramark training.

However, there is no question, that we have faced challenges.

Some of the employees we were told we could hire turned out not to be up to the standards of Aramark or the state and that has been a disappointment.

We partnered with MDOC to add additional safety and security training, specifically around over familiarity and recognizing inappropriate behavior by offenders.

This is working and the number of employee related incidents involving food service employees has declined steadily over the past 3 months with only 4 issues in August and September vs 19 in July.

Aramark follows a zero-tolerance policy for improper employee behavior, and with the MDOC, we initiated a new process that improves security by immediately terminating any employee accused of not following the law and rules. Under the previous system, a food service employee accused of improper behavior was allowed to continue working for several months while defending against allegations.

Prior to our arrival, employee issues went unreported and were not publicly disclosed, so our missteps have received an unprecedented level of attention. While there is a great deal of publicity around our employee infractions, the fact is, very few of them are ever charged with a crime.

The reality is that employee incidents occur regularly throughout the MDOC, just like every correctional facility or large organization in this country.

Aramark has also addressed sanitation issues by providing additional training and coordinating with MDOC to address areas within their contractual responsibility, including pest control, and facility and infrastructure improvements.

On November 1st, we will launch IN2WORK, a vocational training and re-entry program designed to give offenders in Michigan job skills so that they will be employable upon release back to communities throughout the state. IN2WORK, which Aramark offers in 75 locations across the U.S., significantly reduces recidivism and rehabilitates offenders. The recidivism rate of IN2WORK graduates is less than 8 percent compared to a typical rate of 37 percent.
We have been successful in the Corrections business for almost 40 years, and yet we continue to learn and to improve every day.

On behalf of the hundreds of Aramark employees at MDOC and the 10 county correctional facilities we serve, and the thousands of Aramark employees throughout Michigan -- all of whom are proud to work and live in this great state -- we encourage you to learn more about our company and the effort we are taking to reinforce our service commitments here.

Get the Facts here.