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## BIKES BEHIND BARS

Prison work gives inmates new start on the outside

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DAYTONA BEACH -- Convicted murderer Lennox Cramer helped build the perfect getaway motorcycle in prison recently -- not to use to escape beyond the barbed wire at Tomoka Correctional Institution, but to ease the hopelessness of being behind bars.

Instead of standing idle in the prison yard, the nearly 6-foot, 211-pound inmate works in a shop at the state prison, surrounded by wrenches, welders and tools of the automotive trade.

With those tools, Cramer and about five other inmates constructed a gleaming chopper decked out in chrome. They call it "Scoundrel," although it's not marked -- because it has a hidden compartment, a disappearing license plate and paint that changes color from every angle -- from red, to blue, to purple, to black. Cramer helped assemble the engine and suspension system.

The 51-year-old didn't get in trouble for building the customized bike that would seem to mock law enforcement with its devious design. Instead, he also learned how to estimate the cost of such jobs as part of a nonprofit program called Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diversified Enterprises (PRIDE).

The program generates more than \$72 million annually statewide in sales of goods -- produced by about 3,794 inmates. They work about 3.7 million hours for prisoner wages of 25 cents to 35 cents per hour, in 36 industries including furniture, textiles, agriculture and data processing.

Florida Department of Corrections spokesman Robby Cunningham said, "PRIDE plays a pivotal role in the rehabilitation of Florida's prison inmates," and "employability is one of the primary keys to an offender's successful re-entry into society."

More than \$1 million worth of services is produced at Tomoka Correctional Institution, where more than 70 inmates are employed at Heavy Vehicle Renovation Industry, which reconditions school buses, fire trucks and customized vehicles.

Most recently the PRIDE program included building the motorcycle for Razor Wire Cycles, a new nonprofit company created by Bruce Hall, plant manager, and Dave Lesizza, production manager. The two men said experience learned from working with Razor Wire Cycles helps inmates re-enter society with financial backing and jobs.

The Scoundrel is one of three model bikes being made as part of the company's plan to help prepare released inmates to do business in the outside world. The follow-up bikes will be called "Justice" and "Verdict," Hall said. He said Razor Wire will take orders for other custom bikes, and all profits from the bikes will help sustain and employ inmates upon their release.

"I would like to get out (of prison)," said Cramer, who was convicted of second-degree murder and a dangerous act in Manatee County in 1978. The Army veteran, who is an expert in martial arts, and who has written several published novels, including "War With Empty Hands," could be released from prison in 2017.

"They (prisons) have programs, and I have done most of the ones available," said the brown-eyed, heavily-tattooed prisoner, who also taught English to other prison inmates.

"This one (PRIDE's project with Razor Wire) is a unique opportunity. I haven't had my hands on a motorcycle in years, and it was nice to watch one come together," Cramer said. "I am hoping I can work this into my plans on the outside."

Razor Wire co-owner Hall, a New Jersey native with a master's degree in public administration from the University of Central Florida, "couldn't get funding" for the Razor Wire project but believed so strongly it could work that he invested \$50,000 of his own money, although he hopes to recoup it, since he's "not a philanthropist millionaire."

The other owner, Lesizza, formerly of New York, ran his own motorcycle shop on Staten Island and brought his know-how to the Razor Wire project. One former inmate, John A. Holcomb, 47, who was released from prison here on Dec. 30, already has benefited from the PRIDE program and Razor Wire.

Holcomb, who served about 15 years for attempted second-degree murder, dangerous act and aggravated battery with a deadly weapon in Hillsborough County, became a fabrication shop owner within a week of his release.

Hall said Razor Wire "helped out with rent, but his (Holcomb's) name is on the license. It's his business. He will be doing welding and fabrication, and we will be giving him work."

Holcomb said that while serving time, with the help of PRIDE, he became certified as a welder by the American Welding Society, and he helped make the Scoundrel.

"The job helped me and I felt like I was doing something worthwhile," Holcomb said. He said he was in prison because "someone hurt someone I cared about, and at the time I took care of it instead of involving law enforcement. I had never been convicted of a felony in my life."

But working for PRIDE helped him get through his prison time, he said. "I tried to maintain a free-world mentality and kept away from dope, alcohol and prison games. I hadn't been written up the whole time."

Foster Harbin, spokesman for PRIDE statewide, said that while any prisoner can apply for the program, a good behavior record is required for participation.

"A board reviews the final applicants and selects the inmates for the (PRIDE-related) jobs," Harbin said. When it comes to building the Razor Wire motorcycle, Hall and Lesizza have final selection of inmates.