

Expungement Service Site Launched to Help Ex-Offenders Clear Records

by Lesley R. Chinn

A criminal record left unclear may have some serious consequences on an individual's life and career, according to Kenneth Coats, founder and chairman of ArrestFree.com.

"I have encountered a substantial increase in the number of people inquiring about an expungement. These people come from all walks of life and include professional people who, due to youth indiscretion or having made a bad decision, have a blemish on their record," Coats says. "Some people think that if a case is thrown out, they think it's gone, but an arrest record stays with you forever."

To help put a new spin on the Liberty and Pursuit of Happiness, Coats hopes to change this with his website, ArrestFree.com. Coats internet-based company is one of the first e-commerce expungement sites in the nation. It provides a user-friendly, cost-effective model to assist people to clear their minor offenses on their arrest records. The company was launched in 2005, but its web site was created earlier this year.

"The whole purpose is to reduce the high recidivism rate," said Coats, who noted that one out of six African-American males has an arrest record. "About 54 percent of the people who have gone to prison,

will return. It's because of having these records and barriers to employment, they end up (returning to a life of crime) and that basically creates this cycle."

Coats believes that while most individuals are unable to pay the high cost of having an attorney to assist them with clearing their records, ArrestFree.com will provide people with a meaningful avenue to increase their chances of re-establishing a solid reputation in their careers and community.

"Attorneys typically charge from \$1,500 to \$2,000 for this service...but I'm finding that people leave frustrated just to see a legal

attorney just to find out they're not qualified," Coats says. "By putting this information on a website, that information can be available 24 hours a day."

Services include obtaining criminal records to receiving comprehensive one-on-one phone support from an experienced expungement professional. The cost ranges from \$24.99 to \$299.99 plus state fees. And like a lawyer, Coats says, he cannot make any guarantee of getting a record expunged.

"The cost of \$299 is more reachable," Coats says. "The people in the urban market that would need this service spend that much on gym

shoes and other material things. I just think it's a matter of alerting them of their priorities. You can either spend \$299 on a night on the town or use it to get your life back in order."

Coats says approximately 10 percent of the profits goes back into the community to provide employment, expungement, and training-sponsored events as part of its mission to expunging one million arrest records of ex-offenders nationwide.

For those without Internet access to www.arrestfree.com, interested individuals can call the company's toll free number at 1-888-70-ARREST-FREE.