

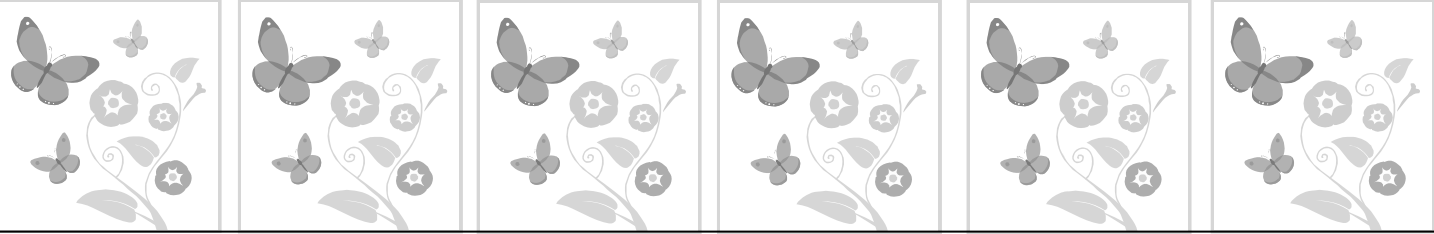


Strafford County Department of Corrections

Family Newsletter

April 2008

Published by Strafford County Department of Corrections, Jail Industries



Dear Families, Friends, and Inmates,

Again this month the same editorial will be shared by the readers of both newsletters. I have exciting news! The Second Chance Act of 2007 passed Wednesday April 9th 2008! I was privileged to have been invited to attend a reception on Capital Hill that evening to celebrate with all those who had worked so hard for four years to make this bill a reality. Earlier in the day President Bush had signed into law the first of its-kind legislation into law, making an important step in shaping public policy toward improving recidivism rates.

The people who jammed packed that room were only a small portion of all those out there who believe in the concept of this bill. This Second Act legislation will connect people released from prison and jail to vital mental health and substance abuse treatment as well as addressing issues surrounding reduction in recidivism. The law will expand job training and placement services, mentoring and assist with transitional housing and case management services.

The Act has passed but appropriations for the level of funding has not. However many members of congress who were responsible for working for the success of this bill are also on the appropriation committee. Will every facility and agency working for this successful venture receive money? Probably not, but it is an historic beginning toward what is hoped is a change as mentioned above in public policy. This is historic because the Congress of the United States not only passed this but they did so with bi-partisan support of both parties, Republican and Democrats. This bill is one of a very few bills in the last four years that accomplished that feat! What does that mean? It means that Congress believes that all persons deserve a second chance when they have served their imposed sentence and that the wholeness of our country and the safety of our communities is best served by assisting these individuals with their transition back into our society so that they may become productive participants who feel welcomed and not "aliens" as one of my former inmates described his feelings shortly before his release.

Where do you as inmates fit into this picture and what is your role in all of this? I believe you all hold the key. You must want success and take advantage of everything offered to you both while incarcerated and upon release. You must show that with a Second Chance and opportunities you too can make a difference in this society. Those of us who have been in the "trenches" fighting for this Justice statement need your help. What will you do to prove and empower this statement?

I have worked with over 2,000 inmates in my 22 years at Strafford County; a place I was called to by God and believed in and supported by Strafford County Department of Corrections. I have seen so many of my former inmate workers on the "outside" in our stores, in your places of employment, on your trips to probation, or coming from a program. We stop we smile at one another and you are eager to tell me you are making it. I am so proud of so many who have grown over the years. I already know how many are out there succeeding but let's try for more with this new welcoming support. You are the ones that are called to break down the barriers and eliminate the prejudice against former inmates by being that success story one inmate at a time.

Families and friends play a vital role in our loved one's journey. It is an awesome role sometimes filled with

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

fear, disappointment, and struggle but also joy when success and growth occurs. Our task is not just to help our loved one but to break down the myth of who we are as families. Families and friends play a vital role as mentor, friend, counselor, and overall support for the highest number of the inmate success stories in this country today. As a result our communities are safer because of us!

One of the most important challenges this Act poses is to individual community members to risk being a friend to those especially coming out of our jails and prisons that do not have the gift of family and friends; most specifically challenged in this Second Chance Act is the "Faith Based" community. I pray that we are up to the challenge.

I will close with a comment shared by one of the senators that strongly supported this Second Chance Act. He said, (I apologize if this is not his exact quote, "my 94 year old mother called me today and said she was very proud of me. "Today you did God's work". (referring to the passage of the Act)

Sincerely,

Marilyn Allen
Family Reception Center Coordinator

All Americans Good And Bad By T.L.

To all Americans good and bad,
remember your soul is of white.
Some people on Earth were too bad to be good,
and the bad can rise with height.

I don't care how bad you think you are,
there is always someone that is better.
If people in life could live with peace,
we could expect the most brightest of weather.

All Americans good and bad,
let's shake hands and all become one.
Because if you live with misery today,
tomorrow will never get fun.

Let's rid this world of anger,
and surround this world of grief.
With a little more love and a lot less fighting
and let our hearts live in peace.

To all Americans capable of
some change we can certainly use,
let's not become this violent path.
This path you should never abuse.

Flower Down Stream By T.L.

I love to watch a flower quietly float down stream
The white like the dove
with her leaves so green
When the wind picks up she moves faster down
stream

The only noise in the background
is the rippled watery sounds
The beauty of this flower on water
looks like heaven to me I found

An eagle soaring high above
with wonderful trees and life around
The color of a gazing wilderness
with a breeze that has no sound

This flower reaches an ending fall
And then she burst through the air
So softly hitting the water below
Not one petal on her has a tear

She reaches the side of the shore to rest
And there she is, as white as a dove
To watch a flower drift down stream
just brings to my heart some love

The Adventures of Peetoo the Beagle



Spring Happenings



Easter Baskets were given to 42 happy children.



The winner of the scooter was drawn by a Family Reception Center volunteer. The happy recipient will be claiming their prize!

My Journey By A.T.

September 6th, 2007. I arrived here at Strafford County D.O.C. I had just been extradited here from Maine State prison after spending a year there. I was worn out mentally and spiritually. I did not have any contact with my family or with any friends for the most part during my year sentence. I was alone and scared. I was still facing four felony possession with intent charges. I know I was headed back to prison for another bid.

I felt truly empty inside. I longed for my children. Ben, my oldest, was 11 years old and my beautiful daughter Olivia was 5. I had not seen either one of them since October of '06. Even though I missed them my mind would still race back and forth between getting through this time and reuniting with my family and getting out and going crazy partying.

While I was in jail in Maine I had become aware of the fact that I was an alcoholic and drug addict. That was a huge eye opener for me to admit to myself and others. I also regained my connection to my faith in God. But I was still totally floundering about. Shortly after I got here I met with Quinn in programs. She shared with me all the programming options and I shared a little of my personal story with her and she suggested the T.C. program for me. It sounded great to me right off the bat. She left me an application and told me to fill it out and get it back to her. I took my time with it. It took me a week to finally get it done and returned to her. To my surprise I was accepted into the program and I entered the Women's Recovery room within a week. September 24th, 2007 – the first day of my new life!

T.C. was a totally awesome experience for me. I was able to deal with my many issues of grief and loss. I learned the ins and outs of my disease and just how powerful it is. And even more important for me, I learned about myself. Today I can say that I know myself and I still love myself. I have confidence in myself today and never let myself down.

But, like anything else, the time came for me to graduate and leave the program. I wasn't sentenced yet so I was going to have to return to Unit J. I was a little unsure about how that was going to be for me. I was concerned that the negative effects from the unit would have a pull on me. I was very determined to stay on the right track and keep myself focused and not allow anything or anyone to interfere with me and my recovery.

I was very lucky Sgt. Noseworthy informed me that she had already put me on the fill in list for a job in laundry. When I came back to Unit J, I was of course overwhelmed by all the girls and all the noise, but everyday I kept telling myself that I would be working soon. I was right. I was full-time within a few weeks.

I loved my job from the start. It tired me out and filled up my days. Time started to fly by. I was making some money for myself which made me feel so good. With the money I was able to afford some phone calls to my family and children. The gap between us was starting to close in. Things were looking up!

You know what they say – be in the right place at the right time. Well I was at the right place at the right time. The IB – "Jail Industries" was about to expand it's work force. They had contracted some new work. There were looking for people with soldering experience. I had in fact a lot of soldering experience. So I was given an opportunity to try out for a soldering position. With some luck and maybe even a little skill I got a position.

This position has opened so many doors for me. I will be getting a certification in soldering that will lead me to full-time employment upon release. I have regained my confidence as a good employee. I'm able to save money to help me restart my life. Plus as an employee of the IB, Marilyn Allen helps inmates find suitable housing as well as employment upon release.

I have recently learned that I will be leaving here to enter the Drug Court program with a chance to reestablish my entire life. I truly believe that this is possible because of the T.C. program and the experience I've had in the Jail Industries.

There is an opportunity here at Strafford Country DOC to revamp your life if you are willing to take advantage of the programs! They are open to everyone! I'm living proof that if you work hard and do the right thing, things do work themselves out for the best!

Who Am I? by R.J.

I am stuck here on the planet we call Earth
Trapped in a shell we call a body
I'm here, I'm here in a physical form
But my mind, my mind travels at Mach speeds
Thoughts are discombobulated
I'm lost, yes I am lost
Lost in time, lost in life
Who am I?

I often daydream having visions of super
stardom and wealthy living
Becoming famous
Somebody the whole world knows
But that is not me
Who am I?

Who am I?
Who is R. E. J.?
At one point in time
I thought every person
Being human or extraterrestrial
Had purpose in life
They say every man has a destiny
But what is mine?
Who am I?

Am I many men?
Am I a figment of some talented writer's imagination?
And my life is a script
That went unrehearsed or
Or maybe a star character
off an episode of surreal life
Because life is sure enough real
Who am I?

And what are my reasons for being here?
Is it possible to go your whole life?
Not knowing who you are
Searching and searching to find your mark
Searching to find your self
Who am I?

I don't want to be another John Doe
Or perhaps a lost soul
I need to figure out who I am
Before the credits come up
Or before some little kid puts the joystick
Down because the game is over.

Let the Games Begin!



Yet another week at the Strafford County Department of Corrections has flown by, but not without some real excitement in the tournament world. Unit G reigned supreme in scrabble and copy coos (dominoes). The games were all team games this week and the competition was fierce, final game copy coos lasted two and one half hours. WOW! Scrabble - forget about it - two nights on just the final game between G&H. These guys were unbelievable. All winners received their prizes Thursday night. The four winners all invited a friend to share their good fortune with them. Now that's sportsmanship. The support shown during the games, as always, is a thing of astonishment to me. These young men for a moment play together as if no other world existed but here. No worries or cares, just here and now and the game.

Upcoming Events

June 18th—Inmate and Staff Barbeque

June 21st—Family Barbeque and fun activities for the children



Lost Faith and Absolutely No Hope by J.C.

No hope starts out in another Jail's classification unit. I was there on a probation violation for a dirty urine, and withdrawal from the drug of choice.

I arrived about 5:00am in the morning, and slept through the next day to awaken in the cell at this facility. I looked out the cell door at the clock and it was nine in the morning. I was really feel down and depressed. I was thinking about my wife and children and how I had let them down one more time. I was afraid to turn to my faith because of the lies I had told myself and my family. Pacing back and forth in my cell I grabbed my sheet and decided there was no more to live for. I hung myself in my cell to awaken with about six correctional officers and two paramedics telling me they didn't know how I came out alive because they were taking me to the hospital to pronounce me dead!

Within one hour I was cleaned up, put into a burrito and placed in a cell with a correctional officer at the door. Sill wishing I was dead, medical was checking me over. I was trying to eat a sandwich but I as fighting my nervous system to try to regain control. Just then the c.o. said to me, "you will not believe this but they want you in booking, bag and baggage."

I arrived in booking to find a Strafford County Sheriff officer. I was on my way back to Strafford County Jail for a probation violation. Upon arrival I found out that Strafford County jail had gotten the heads up from the facility I was previously housed about the suicide attempt.

Strafford County placed me in a paper suit and put me in a padded cell under suicide watch. While in there I saw my old roommate from New Hampshire State Prison. He told me he was in the Therapeutic community, the TC program.

I then started asking the correctional officers about how I could ask for help from the TC program. Officer Chabot said he would look into it for me, and that he did. Jake Collins and a few others from the T C program came and saw me that day. This was the beginning of hope once again. They moved me into the medical department. Medical told me once I was off suicide watch they would help me get into the TC program.

I saw Mental Health and they moved me to "E" pod where I withdrew from my drug of choice. I interviewed for the TC program and was given the opportunity of a lifetime. Seven days later they moved me into the TC program. From there my life began to change. Working with Kate and Sharon, the counselors from TC, I learned parenting, life skills, problem solving, anger management, communications skills, trust, honesty, and a willingness to change. Most of all I learned about my disease of addiction. Sharon and my brothers from the TC program helped me to realize a lot about my faith, and that recovery was the most important number one thing always no matter what.

Life is a journey and the God of my understanding is the only one that knows where I am truly headed.

Starting May 5, 2008, cash will be accepted 24/7 for inmate accounts only through the automated Kiosk (ATM) in the Booking/Release public lobby.

There will be a \$2.00 fee deducted for this service.