

THE CHILDREN

Because of our work with Aunt Mary's Storybook Project, we, at Companions, have become very aware of the children left behind when one or both of their parents are imprisoned. These are the forgotten victims of crime. The separation which can be quite harmful to these children is not their fault.

Can you imagine a child coming home from school to find Mommy or Daddy not there or to be in a vehicle with a parent when he or she is arrested? Do we ever wonder what happens to these children? Do we as a society care how they are doing?

The children of imprisoned parents suffer. The damage caused to them can be emotional, developmental, educational, mental, spiritual and even physical. They are much more likely to be imprisoned themselves than children who have not been separated from an incarcerated parent. Their parents are absent during some of the important moments of their lives. Communication with them is very hard. They can never just pick up a phone to call when they want or really need to talk to their parent.

Wouldn't it make sense to begin asking how we might establish sentencing laws and guidelines which consider the welfare of the children of the convicted person? Wouldn't we all win, whenever we could impose an alternative sentence on a person convicted of a non-violent crime so his/her children are not uprooted and suffer such a separation? If we can take better care of these children, wouldn't it be better for all of us?

Jana Minor

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RECOGNITION & RENEWAL OF BOARD



NEW RECOGNITION FOR OUR WORK

Our thanks to our volunteer, Mary, who has for several years collected books, supplies for our gift wrapping fund raiser and other needed resources, who nominated Jana for the Kane County Chronicle Everyday Heroes Award. We are grateful for this opportunity to spread the word about our projects. Jana will be one of 20 people to receive this award on November 19th.

RENEWAL OF OUR BOARD

Companions is seeking people with energy and passion for our work to join our board. We are in special need of a family member of a prisoner, a lawyer, a CPA, a librarian, author or someone in the publishing business, someone with media expertise and people from varied faith traditions. We normally meet about every 4-6 weeks. Board meetings are held at a central location or board members and at times via internet linkups or conference calls.

We have also established the following board committees and are seeking non board members to join these committees:

- Financial
- Board Development
- Aunt Mary's Storybook Project
- Parenting
- Pen Pal Clubs
- Fund Raisers and Grant Writing
- Public Relations/Social Media

If you are willing to joining our board or one of these committees contact Scott at scott@cjtinc.org or (630) 481-6231.

BOARD PROFILE: PHIL

As a new Board member at CJT, can you tell us a little bit about yourself?

I work as the Prison Response Organizer for the John Howard Association of Illinois (JHA), the only citizen monitor of our state's penal policies and practices. In my work, I process the thousands of letters and calls JHA receives annually from incarcerated individuals and other people impacted by the criminal justice system.

After graduating from Loyola University of Chicago with a B.A. in Political Science in May of 2013, I became a full-time staff member at JHA. I started with JHA as an intern during the summer of 2012 and remained as both volunteer and part-time staff until I was granted a full-time position. As a formerly incarcerated person, I empathize with the issues and challenges people in our penal institutions must grapple with on a daily basis.

What do you hope to accomplish during your term as a Board member?

I appreciate the opportunity to serve on the board of Companions Journeying Together. In this role, I hope to foster educational opportunities for the children of incarcerated parents by encouraging these kids to begin reading at an early age, the cornerstone of scholastic success.

A solid education can break down the barriers standing in the way of these kid's path to socio-economic advancement, enabling them to break free of the cycle of poverty and incarceration that too many young people are caught up in by no fault of their own. This begins when a child reads early and often.

What do you think the public needs to know about those who are incarcerated?

"Inmate" is a broad term that blankets many individual human beings. The men and women that are incarcerated in Illinois' prisons and jails are in fact a diverse group of persons from a variety of backgrounds that committed an act within a spectrum of criminal offenses that range from mere nuisance to behaviors that led to tragic and terrible results.

Some incarcerated persons are decent folks that did a bad thing. They should be held accountable for their actions, but are not deserving of being permanently branded as unscrupulous and irredeemable. Like all of us, inmates are individuals whom are worthy of forgiveness. Many of them are capable of earning their way back into the fold of society if given a chance to do so. Regardless of what their parents did, I believe that a just and wise society will not forget about the children impacted by their parent's incarceration, but rather, will provide them with the support they need to lead happy, productive lives.

VOLUNTEERING IN NORWAY



THE WONDERS OF NEW TECHNOLOGY

Within the past several months, we received an email from Fred, a web developer/programmer based in Oslo, Norway. Fred contacted us in response to an ad we listed on a volunteer website in which we were seeking a web developer. At first, we were very surprised that someone so far away was interested in helping a small non-profit organization in the Chicagoland area.

After emailing back and forth, Scott, our Interim Executive Director, got on Skype at around 2 AM Chicago time (9 AM in Norway) and spoke with Fred about his interest. Instantly we knew that this was going to be a great fit. Fred was very enthusiastic about social justice, and was very knowledgeable about the various issues we have with our prison system in the United States.

Currently, Fred is working on a system where we can deliver audio links/MP3s to our Aunt Mary Storybook participants. As our society becomes more and more connected through the Internet, and as many new computers are no longer coming with CD drives, we feel it is important to adapt to the changing technology. When the system is up and running, caregivers and their children will not only receive a new book, but also a username and password to an online system where they will be able to hear their incarcerated parent read the story to them. This system will work through the computer or their mobile device. To ensure that everyone receives the recording, we will continue to offer CDs to families without an internet connection or computer.

Fred has been such a tremendous help to our organization, and we cannot thank him enough for it! Tusen takk, Fred!

PROGRAM NEWS



UPDATE ON PARENTING

Research has shown that “parental incarceration is related to a variety of adverse child outcomes, including emotional or psychological problems and school difficulties” (Dr. J. Mark Eddy, Partners for Our Children, University of Washington School of Social Work). Giving criminal justice-involved parents the skills to successfully parent their children, and helping families become and stay connected helps parents succeed at reentry, strengthens children, and improves public safety for our communities.

We recently completed our first parenting class since implementing Parenting Inside Out®, which is an evidence-based, cognitive-behavioral parent management skills training program. Between September 30th and November 4th, incarcerated students at the DeKalb County Jail met for two hours over the course of ten classes with our instructor, Rhonda.

The incarcerated students learned communication and problem solving skills, listening skills, how to connect their child, child development, building family identity, how to parent more than one child, child temperament, how to parent through family challenges, and guidance. In the final week, we wrapped everything up and discussed how to handle their reunification with their children. Each participant will receive a certificate from Companions Journeying Together in addition to the option to receiving ongoing support through our aftercare component.

Companions Journeying Together would like to thank all of our generous donors for their support of our new parenting program. You have made such an impact in the lives of several incarcerated people and their children, and we cannot thank you enough for your support of our efforts.

We have plans to expand the program to teaching men, and we also hope to bring the parenting program to the Kane County Jail. Please consider supporting our efforts through 2015 so we can continue to assist one of the most at-risk populations in our country: children of incarcerated parents. As one researcher puts it, “children of incarcerated parents are often referred to as “hidden victims” because they bear the heavy burden of a crime they did not commit” (Julie Smyth, quoting Keva M. Miller, LCSW)

IDEAS & TIPS FOR WRITERS



MAIL IS A LIFELINE FOR THOSE BEHIND THE WALLS.

You are giving an incarcerated person a great gift if you are willing to write to them. One guy at 42 had never received a birthday card. Another fellow had many children and siblings but got only one card. Some get no mail at all!

If you are a great correspondent that is wonderful but for many of us, writing is a chore. Send cards for as many occasions as possible even April Fools Day, Halloween, 4th of July, etc. Remind family and friends to send cards. Church members may also be willing to write and/or send cards.

Begin a letter and leave it on a desk or visible place and add a bit at a time. Summarize ideas from news, magazines, experiences, etc. Write what is happening that day. Share daily scripture readings, poems or short selections from books. Get a joke, puzzle, or riddle book and send a challenge with each letter to be discussed on the phone or in the next letter. Be sure to comment on at least one item from your last letter from this person to assure them you read their letter.

Get a bunch of inexpensive "Thinking of you" and picture cards from card outlets and dollar stores. These could be crazy, sentimental, traditional, scenic, etc. Address and stamp them and then periodically send them one at a time. Postcards are cheaper but everyone can read the message. Letters are opened to check for contraband and are often read. Follow the rules of the institution.

If you have a computer, use graphics and pictures to make creative and interesting letters. Have the kids make their own cards. They may have to use colored pens or pencils because crayons, magic markers, glue, glitter, paint, stickers, lipstick, perfume, etc. is usually not permitted. You may have to help with ideas and spelling but kids will soon catch on. This could be a regular family project.

If your person has poor eyesight, is dyslexic and cannot read, send colorful cards and pictures anyway. Write a few simple words typed or in LARGE PRINT (not cursive). Copy what you write and read it when you next talk to your loved one. The meaning will then be associated with that card.

One of the best things about letters is that the person can keep a few special ones. This is a tangible sign of your love and support. It is a treasure that lasts years longer than the original mailing date.

WRITE LETTERS & CARDS SHARE INFORMATION INCLUDE ITEMS OF INTEREST
COMMENT ON LETTERS SEND CHILDREN'S LETTERS & SHARINGS
ENCOURAGE OTHERS TO WRITE



PRAYER REQUESTS:

We ask that you keep in your prayers:

- Those who were wrongfully committed and now are still imprisoned.
- All loved ones of those who are confined in our penal institutions.
- Each person in prison who is struggling with depression.
- All who are working for reform of our Criminal Justice System.
- Health care workers in jails and prisons that they can and will provide good care.
- An end to the death penalty in this country.



NEEDS 



- ◆ **Chicago Ridge, IL Gift Wrap Fund Raiser:** Want to do something fun and help our Aunt Mary's Storybook Project in the process? Or do you have community service hours to perform? Join us for a gift wrapping fund raiser at the Chicago Ridge Mall (Ridgeland & 95th Street, Chicago, Ridge, IL). We would appreciate your help. To volunteer email Jenny at auntmarysvolunteers@gmail.com. Opportunities available on the following days:

Saturday, Dec. 6:	11 am to 6 pm	Sunday, Dec. 7:	11 am to 6 pm
Saturday, Dec. 13:	9 am to 10 pm	Sunday, Dec 14:	9 am to 10 pm
Friday, Dec. 19:	9 am to 10 pm	Saturday Dec 20:	9 am to 10 pm
Sunday Dec 21:	9 am to 10 pm	Monday Dec 22:	9 am to 10 pm
Tuesday, Dec 23:	9 am to 10 pm	Wednesday Dec 24:	8 am to 6 pm

Please note that our biggest need for volunteers are the last six days. They will also be the most fun!

- ◆ **Aunt Mary's Storybook Project Volunteers:** We are in great need of a few volunteers who live near Batavia, IL or Geneva, IL to help download the recordings made by parents at the Kane County Jail. The volunteers will also help prepare the packages for mailing. We are also in need of several volunteers to go into the Kane County Jail and DuPage County Jail with our Aunt Mary's Storybook Project. This requires a commitment of about 3-4 hours per month.
- ◆ **Very useful:** Gift cards for Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, Office Max, Office Depot so that we can purchase the books and mailing supplies we need for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project and for the parenting classes.
- ◆ **Always postage stamps and opportunities to speak to your civic or church group.**

journeynotes



Companions, Journeying Together, Inc.

P.O. Box 457

Western Springs, Illinois 60558-0457

OUR GOALS ● OUR VISION ● OUR COMMITMENT

- ◆ To bridge the gaps between the free and the unfree worlds in our society.
- ◆ To implement programs that foster the personal growth of incarcerated people and their families.
- ◆ To promote family literacy, lifelong learning and positive parenting techniques
- ◆ To recruit and educate volunteers about the criminal justice system and restorative justice.

*Journeynotes is a publication of
Companions, Journeying Together, Inc.
Visit us at www.cjtinc.org*

Nonprofit org
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CAROL STREAM, IL



25 YEARS OF COMPANIONS!

The Companions staff would like to hear from you.

Scott@cjtinc.org (Executive Director)

Jana@cjtinc.org (Founding Director)

Call at (630) 481-6231 (New number)



facebook.com/cjtinc

NEEDS

- ◆ Gift wrappers for our Chicago Ridge Mall gift wrap fund raiser.
- ◆ Gift cards for Amazon, Barnes & Nobles, Office Max, Office Depot so that we can purchase the books and mailing supplies we need for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project and for the parenting classes.
- ◆ Always postage stamps and opportunities to speak to your civic or church group.
- ◆ A volunteer near Kane County Jail to help with mailing tasks for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project.