

COMPANIONS HAS A NEW INTERIM DIRECTOR

We talk often about Companions being a miracle. Over the years people and resources have appeared at just the right moment. This spring, when we learned that Rev. Karen was moving out of state, we wondered how we would replace her. The answer came quickly in the form of Scott McWilliams who was hired by our board to serve as Interim Executive Director for a year with an option of renewing his agreement with us.

Scott comes to us from a local university where he worked in the Criminal & Social Justice program. In addition to his work with our organization, he is the founder and director of Incarcerated Voices, a project that seeks to provide a voice in the media for incarcerated people in the United States. He is also a volunteer at the John Howard Association of Illinois and was formerly a reentry affairs volunteer at the BOP's Metropolitan Correctional Center in Chicago. He is active with the Restorative Justice Committee of the Joliet Diocese.

Scott's clear thinking, talent for organization and planning for the future, energy and focus, are already serving us well. We are especially grateful for his abilities with technology and social media.

Please join us in welcoming Scott to our work. We are so grateful he has chosen to join us.

Jana Minor

Insidenotes

New Interim Director	pg. 1
Director News	pg. 2
Board Profile & Archives	pg. 3
Pen Pal Program	pg. 4
Christmas Card Project	pg. 5
25 Years Celebration & Needs	pg. 6

NEEDS

- ◆ Gift cards to Amazon, book stores, or office supply companies so we can obtain books and mailing supplies for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project
- ◆ Always postage stamps
- ◆ A volunteer to format JourneyNotes
- ◆ A volunteer near Kane County Jail with mailing tasks for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project
- ◆ A volunteer to enter data from Aunt Mary's Storybook Project

DIRECTOR NEWS

RESPONSE FROM SCOTT

I am very excited to join the leadership of Companions Journeying Together. As I get to know the Board, staff, volunteers, and supporters of our organization, I am amazed by how many people our programs impact, and how important our work is to many incarcerated people and their families. For instance, the Aunt Mary's Storybook project - the first of its kind, and a program that has been replicated in several states - provides a much-needed connection to imprisoned people's children and family. After listening to a recording, I could hear how much the project meant to the imprisoned man reading a story to his child. After observing our parenting program at DeKalb County Jail and meeting some of our incarcerated students, I was fortunate enough to hear them share their experiences and how much our program inspires them to be the best parents they can be. I look forward to improving our programs even more by embracing technological advancements and getting more people involved as Board members and volunteers. I would like to invite you to "like" our new Facebook page at facebook.com/cjtinc. Also, feel free to connect with me at scott@cjtinc.org.



FAREWELL AND THANK YOU TO REVEREND KAREN HUTT, COMPANION'S EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FROM 2003-2014

Happy Summer to all of our Companions who continue to journey with us and to those who are new contributors and friends!

Speaking of journey, we want to send our farewell blessings to Rev. Karen Hutt and her family in their move to Minneapolis, MN. Rev. Karen Hutt has worked tirelessly to further the mission of our work with incarcerated sisters and brothers in the state of Illinois. She has given countless talks at churches, schools, and venues promoting the twenty-five plus years that Companions Journeying Together has been in existence. Through her powerful preaching, she has informed so many of the needs and concerns of those we serve.

She is passionate about the rights of women, especially women who do time inside and outside of prison walls. Her counsel to these women, especially at Dwight Correctional Center, now closed, has made a significant difference for many women who will return to their families. We are grateful for her outstanding leadership as Executive Director for Companions Journeying Together, Inc. for these past eleven years. Her gifts and expertise have been put to the service of others. Her love of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is reflected not only in the service she gave to women who are incarcerated, but in the way she also reached out to men and youth confined in our penal facilities.

Thank you Karen.

Sister Colleen Nolan, OP on behalf of the Board of Directors for Companions Journeying Together.

BOARD PROFILE & ARCHIVES

BOARD PROFILE: MARY ANN

Can you remember back to when you first got involved in CJT? What drew you to not only that first meeting or encounter, but also what pushed you to take the step to become a Board member?

I had been involved in prison ministry prior to joining the Board. For a number of years, I was a volunteer at the Illinois Youth Center in Warrenville and I knew that I had an interest in prison ministry. When Jana Minor asked me to serve on the Board, in 2003, I was in the middle of a job search, had a little time on my hands and joined the Board in May 2003. My first opportunity to serve was on the search committee for our 'then-new' Executive Director, Karen Hutt. I've been on the Board ever since.

What lessons have you learned in your role?

I've been so impressed with our wonderful volunteers who support the various programs that Companions facilitates. Everyone has talents that they can share and I have learned so much for people that I would never had a chance to meet, if not for Companions. I believe that I can learn from everyone and during the time that I have served on the board, I've had the opportunity to learn from so many people and to do so many things I would never have a chance to do.

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

That they have families that suffer along with them and we can/should do more to help and support those families, especially the children. Also, we need better support systems and reentry programs for when the incarcerated are released.

Where do you see CJT in five years?

I'm optimistic that technology will play an important role in CJT future and that in 5 years, we will be using technology to reach more families and incarcerated people. As we look back on our past 25 years, the one thing that I learned is that we stayed true to our mission and I am confident that we will do that in the FUTURE also!

WE WERE AMAZED!



On May 15th, several of our staff and board visited the Special Collections and Archives of the John T. Richardson Library at DePaul University where our program records from the beginning are now housed in those archives. What a special experience! Jamie Nelson, the Director, showed us the boxes in which our materials are stored, gave us a tour of the collection and archives room and explained to us the procedures interested parties would need to follow if they wanted to review these records. It was a delightful experience.

To know that these records are accessible to anyone who wants to research them means so much. Can you imagine? From our humble beginnings in the office in our home in Brimfield, IL to having our efforts housed in a place that will keep them safe and available to people interested in what we have done and the philosophy and values out of which we work. It is astounding. We are grateful and hope that those records are helpful to many people.

PROGRAM NEWS

PEN PAL CLUBS



Mail call can be the highlight of the day for many in prison. But for those whose name is never called, it is one more reminder that you are forgotten, that no one cares. We, at Companions, maintain a list of those imprisoned people who would enjoy exchanging thoughts with someone who lives outside prison walls. There are never enough volunteers to meet the need. Last year we met Laura has become a gift to us. She wanted to start a pen pal club at her church but was having trouble finding someone to help supply her with names. Working together, she was able to establish such a wonderful group.

She has created quite a model. We would like to duplicate it in other churches or groups. Would you help us be exploring the possibility of starting such a group at your church? There is such a need. We can provide training, a post office return address and continuing availability to answer questions or concerns. Please get in touch with us!

LAURA'S REFLECTION

In Spring 2013, a Lutheran church in suburban Chicagoland formed a group of congregation members who wanted to begin a prison ministry. Being that it was a small group, brand new to the endeavor, they didn't know where to begin. After almost a dozen promising leads that turned to shut doors, they were matched with Jana and *Companions Journeying Together*. It was an instant partnership with matched ideology and a vision of growth.

Jana made a long drive to meet with the group of five women and two men, who were full of questions about becoming a meaningful pen-pal to a prisoner. Jana brought a binder of letters and drawings from her decades of correspondence. Of all the people who attended the informational meeting, each person signed up to be a member. This speaks volumes to the positive nature and inspiration Jana brings when talking about her work. With these new members, *Faithful Friends* was born.

Still in its infancy, this new group has matched six pen-pals, recruited fifteen members to send holiday cards (267 to date), fundraised for stamps, donated more than 50 knit bookmarks for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project, and said endless prayers for the incarcerated. Many of the members report having formed trusting bonds with their pen-pals and look forward to many more letters sent and received. *Faithful Friends* has begun publishing a quarterly newsletter in hopes of staying connected, offering each other support, fulfilling prayer requests, and attracting new members.

Currently, this partnership is discussing ideas of how to best plant seeds to grow new groups like *Faithful Friends* at other Chicagoland churches. Continue to follow JourneyNotes for future updates.

Companions and *Faithful Friends* both share the belief in presence. Letters and cards sent to those behind bars are meant to bring comfort, peace, and hopefulness. *Faithful Friends* remains steadfast in their promise to pray for victims and offenders of crime, hoping to live the belief in action that no person is ever forsaken.



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.
- Rev. Karen and her family as they begin a new life away from Chicago.

CARD PROJECT NEWS



CHRISTMAS IS COMING

It is not too early to start planning how you can help us with our two big Christmas projects. Our Christmas Gift Wrapping Fundraiser is an important fundraiser for our Aunt Mary's Storybook Project. Last year we collected over \$10,350 in donations from the people whose gifts we wrapped plus \$3,500 from Kohl's Associates Cares Program. We are so grateful for all who helped last year and all of you who will help us in 2014 by:

- Volunteering for a few hours to help wrap the gifts for shoppers.
- Donate wrapping paper, gift boxes, bows, tape dispensers and the rolls of tape used in them, scissors.

It is a lot of fun and provides us with very needed funding!

CHRISTMAS CARD PROJECT



Every year, hundreds of volunteers make it possible for us to send thousands of cards to people who are confined in prisons and jails. Will you help again this year by providing us with cards you have signed. Please put a stamp on the envelope and do not seal. Remember we cannot send any cards which have anything glued or taped on them or on the envelopes. That includes **purchased cards that have pretty little things glued on them, stickers, or tape.**

These cards make a big difference as evidenced by the thank you notes below:

"Thank you so much for the Xmas cards. I felt like a little kid at Xmas time all again. God bless everybody at Companions."

"I am writing to thank you for the beautiful Christmas card. Every year I get a card from you. I keep waiting for a card from my family but it never comes."

"I would like to thank you and all of the volunteers that make it possible for me and my fellow brothers and sisters to receive a card during these trying holiday when a reminder that someone is thinking about you is truly needed. There was a time when I was in deep despair, struggling with my life, never willing to reflect on where I went wrong. It was until I received an envelope during mail call. I held it in my hands for quite a while reading and rereading the names and postmark then when I opened it on the front of the card was a picture of the Joyful Mystery, The Nativity. It brought me to tears. It made me rethink life, rethink my situation, and look into who I am as a person. Despite my shortcomings I'm capable of making a difference in the world. To this day I'm a humble man. Thank you and God bless you."

"I am writing to thank you so much for the Christmas cards. You guys think about us when our own family don't. Every year around Christmas time I get really emotional and a feeling of joy every time the officer called my name at my cell door. I felt like I was somebody again. Someone cares about me again. I do appreciate the love you guys send to me every Christmas."

journeynotes



Companions, Journeying Together, Inc.

P.O. Box 457
Western Springs, Illinois 60558-0457

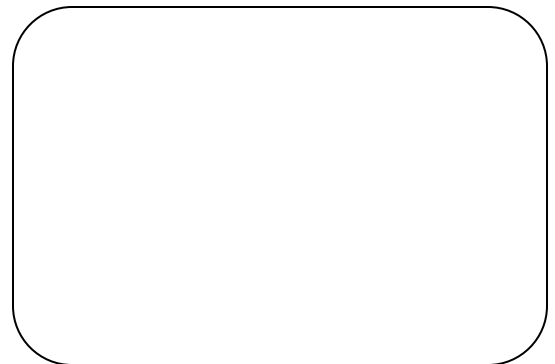
our goals • our vision • our commitment

- 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*

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

Nonprofit org
US POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT #6060
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)

NEEDS

- ◆ Gift cards to Amazon, book stores, or office supply companies so we can obtain books and mailing supplies for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project
- ◆ Always postage stamps
- ◆ A volunteer to format JourneyNotes
- ◆ A volunteer near Kane County Jail with mailing tasks for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project
- ◆ A volunteer to enter data from Aunt Mary's Storybook Project