

## 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Companions, Journeying Together, Inc. was incorporated on December 31, 1986. That means we will be 30 years old next month. Think of the amazing things that have happened during those 30 years and the ever growing number of people whose lives have been touched. Think of what we have all learned.

God has been so very good to us. And so have so many of you – both our donors and volunteers, those living behind bars who have shared with us, and the officials who have helped to make our programs work in their facilities. Thank you.

We plan to celebrate all of this throughout next year. Watch for more details about a possible summer picnic for volunteers and a family friendly fund raising event around Aunt Mary's birthday in October. You can always get our news from our web page [www.cjtinc.org](http://www.cjtinc.org) or on our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/cjtinc/](http://www.facebook.com/cjtinc/).

## Witches Night Out

What an amazing event! Think 1500 women, all in witches' costume, some very simply, some elaborate, most with towering witches hats. Think 1500 women having great fun together, dancing, eating, drinking, buying raffle tickets, 50-50 tickets, purchasing gifts from the many vendors. Think 1500 women scattered through two beautiful buildings, under a tent or sitting around a warming fire.

Thank you, thank you to the wonderful committee of 25 dedicated women who pulled off this event and who will share all of the proceeds with organizations doing programs for women and children. Our Aunt Mary's Storybook Project is one of those organizations.

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### NEEDS

- ◆ Postage Stamps
- ◆ Groups to Hold Book Drives
- ◆ Opportunities to Speak to your Group/Church

*"People, even more than things, have to be restored, renewed, revived, reclaimed, and redeemed; never throw out anyone." Audrey Hepburn*

## 14,811 Birthday Cards

Each one signed by Deborah. For 14 years, Deborah has been preparing cards to send to those on our mailing list, 90-100 a month. In each she wrote a beautiful note. Now, she believes it is time to let someone else take up this task.

Deborah has been amazed at how much she received for her efforts and at how much she learned about the loneliness and humanity of our sisters and brothers who are imprisoned. One man's wife read some of the cards her husband had received and realized how much those cards meant to him.

Many other recipients of Deborah's cards wrote to say thank you. This is what one man said: "I have been receiving cards and from time to time a letter. It has been a positive part of my recovery to know that I am cared for. The cards come on special holidays and the letters are confirmation of the volunteers' love and true dedication. I very much appreciate Deborah's dedication to serving others through her birthday cards."

Thank you. Thank you, Deborah for these years of giving of yourself.

## AMSB News

We are so grateful to have expanded our Aunt Mary's Storybook Project to two new facilities: the Randolph County Jail in Chester, and the Western Illinois Correctional Center in Mt. Sterling. We are also scheduled to serve a new division at the Cook County Jail very soon. This brings our total number of facilities to 7 county jails and 5 state prisons in Illinois. Of special note is our service to Cook County Jail's Division 9, the super-maximum division of the jail, and the Menard Correctional Center, the largest maximum security prison in Illinois. These populations are traditionally ones that have reduced access to programming. We are thankful of the administrators at these facilities for allowing us to connect these parents with their children and families.

Aunt Mary's Storybook would like to express our deepest appreciation to the Shorewood Glen Service Group in Shorewood who graciously donated 549 brand new books and \$107 in cash for our program. Many neighbors in this community came together to donate to this important program. We are so grateful for the wide spread support we received in this community!

Now more than ever we need your support to help our program reach as many incarcerated parents as possible. We are in need of new books and funding for postage costs - these are our biggest expenses in offering this program. Please contact Scott McWilliams, Executive Director, at (630) 481-6231 if you can help.

*"Only love can be divided endlessly, and still not diminish." Anne Morrow Lindbergh*

## Thanks, Gift Wrapping & Congratulations



### **Big Big Thanks: Rotary 4 Literacy Barnes & Noble Book Fair**

The Rotary Clubs of Batavia, Geneva and St. Charles teamed up with Barnes and Nobles in the Geneva Commons to hold a fun and important event. Shoppers on that date were given an opportunity to purchase books from lists supplied by 6 different organizations that serve children in the Tri-City area of Kane County. Aunt Mary's Storybook Project was one of those. A percentage of any of their purchases that day as well as purchases made online for several days will be donated to these charities. Thank you Rotarians for including us in this event.

### **Gift Wrapping at Chicago Ridge Mall – Our Biggest Fund Raiser**

Chicago Ridge Mall at 95th Street just off of 294 has given us permission to do a gift wrapping fund raiser again this year. The proceeds will go for Aunt Mary's Storybook Project.

This year we will be at the mall on the following dates:

- Saturday & Sunday December 3 & 4 : 12 pm to 6 pm
- Saturday and Sunday December 10 & 11 : 9 am to 10 pm
- Every day Saturday through Friday December 17 - 23: 9 am to 10 pm
- Saturday December 24 8 am to 6 pm

Join us in this important fund raiser by:

- Volunteering to wrap. Contacting Jenny at [Auntmarysvolunteers@gmail.com](mailto:Auntmarysvolunteers@gmail.com) to schedule a time.
- Donate wrapping paper, tissue paper, gift boxes, bows and gift tags. Advertise to family and friends who might live near their mall to bring their gifts in for us to wrap

### **Congratulations Sr. Juanita Ujcik, OSF**

Our board member, Sr. Juanita Ujcik has just published a book entitled Let None Walk Along: a guide for friends and family of incarcerated people. It is intended to encourage and offer guidance to families and friends of those in prisons and jails. Sr. Juanita spent 30 years working in ministry including at DuPage and Will County Jails.

Sr. Helen Prejean CSJ, author of *Dead Man Walking*, says in part in the Foreword. "I am overjoyed to recommend Sr. Juanita Ujcik's compassionate book. This book will be a lifesaver for (the people most hurt and ignored by incarceration: the families) and will inspire them to more creative ways to help their loved ones behind bars, whether in jail or in prison. The book provides information, strategies, resources and common sense. In short, it is a gem."

Sr. Juanita, we are so proud of you.

*"What you do today can improve all your tomorrows." Ralph Marston*

# journeynotes



Companions, Journeying Together, Inc.

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## 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.

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Visit us at [www.cjtinc.org](http://www.cjtinc.org)*

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## 29 YEARS OF COMPANIONS!

The Companions staff would like to hear from you.

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Call at (630) 481-6231

[facebook.com/cjtinc](https://www.facebook.com/cjtinc)



An electronic version of our *JourneyNotes* publication is now available! Please visit our website at [www.cjtinc.org](http://www.cjtinc.org) to sign up!

## NEEDS CONTINUED

- ◆ **Postage Stamps:** We use a lot of postage to answer mail from prisoners, to send Christmas and Birthday cards, to forward letters to pen pal volunteers. Right now our stamp box is very low.
- ◆ **Groups to Hold Book Drives:** We have been given new wonderful opportunities to offer Aunt Mary's Storybook Project. That calls for an increase in books, mailing supplies, and postage money. Do you know a group that might hold a book drive for us? We will supply guidelines.
- ◆ **Opportunities to Speak to your Group/Church**

November, 2016

Dear Faithful Companion(s):

Someone recently asked me how many people we had touched in our 30 years of ministry. Imagine the hosts of people who were feeling alone and discouraged and then received a card or letter – so many thousand. Think of the children who received a package of a new book from their parents with recordings of the parents' voices. Think of the mothers who were so grateful to receive a card or letter on Mother's Day because we had provided pretty writing material.

Think of all of you who have participated in any way to make this happen. None of us can know the fruits of all of these seeds that have been planted. I expect that your life has been touched, too. I know that mine has.

And we are still add it. Some numbers from this year of 2016:

- We have sent packages to over 1,950 children through Aunt Mary's Storybook.
- Over 70 pen pal volunteers are presently writing to over 80 prisoners. Mail means so much.
- On Mother's Day this year, we supplied 4,640 packets of stationery to imprisoned women and juveniles in 15 jails and prisons.
- We are preparing to mail, distribute and provide 25,000+ Christmas cards.
- 90-100 birthday cards have been mailed every month.

Our Executive Director, Scott McWilliams, has been working hard to grow our programs, especially Aunt Mary's Storybook. Administrators are calling him asking for us to bring that project to their facility. We are grateful for the opportunities, but that means that we are using much more resources.

We write to ask that you continue to help and even increase your donation this year.  
\$35 will enable us to cover postage costs for the average AMSB session at a county jail or prison.  
\$50 will enable us to purchase 12 books for AMSB families.  
\$100 will pay for the stamps for one month for birthday cards.  
\$400 covers the cost of sending an issue of JourneyNotes to those behind bars on our mailing list.

We pray for a blessed Thanksgiving and Christmas season for you and your loved ones. Let us know if ever you know of anyone we can serve.

Gratefully,

Jana Minor  
Founding Director  
Companions Journeying Together  
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