

# Concord Prison Outreach

Fall Newsletter 2012

# CPO

Helping Prepare Today's Inmates To Be  
Tomorrow's Good Neighbors



## Welcome MCPCC

Concord Prison Outreach and Middlesex County Prison Coordinating Committee (MCPCC) are joining efforts to expand services to the two Middlesex County facilities, Cambridge Jail and Billerica House of Correction.

MCPCC was formed in 1982 with concern for the whole prison system, including inmates, staff and correctional officers. Meeting regularly, they have developed mutually-supportive relationships with staff of the facilities and learned about and supported rehabilitative programs. Their activities have included collecting books for prison libraries, developing an award for the peer-selected most outstanding correctional officer, collecting clothing for inmates to wear upon release, becoming informed about issues related to corrections and advocating for progressive legislation.

CPO has already held planning meetings to identify program needs and deliver donated books. Plans are underway to provide volunteers from CPO's roster of nearly 100 volunteers to the facilities served by MCPCC.

According to Mary Ann Donaldson, the chair of MCPCC, "We have known about the good work of CPO for many years, so this decision seemed like a wonderful step at this point in the group's history. CPO's depth and breadth will bring much-needed services to the incarcerated and continue MCPCC's commitment to helping inmates return to society as productive citizens."

— Lisa Daigle

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## Caring for Families

For inmates, one of the difficult consequences of being incarcerated is being separated from their families. Most incarcerated men will leave prison at some time and hope to have a meaningful relationship with their children when they are released. Many see their children as a key motivating factor in making positive changes in their lives, so that once released, they will not return to prison. Concord Prison Outreach values these connections, and offers programs that



*(Left to right) Demi Ayres, Haley Yang, and Alice Noe show their art work at a card-making workshop, part of the Holiday Gift Bag project.*

help inmates build better relationships with their families, aiding their reintegration into families and communities.

The CPO Family Day activities are offered four times a year at NECC, where volunteers bring in projects and activities for the children to participate in with their fathers. Activities include decorating pumpkins and valentines, making May baskets, and face painting. Each child can select a book to take home, and it is common to see the fathers help their child select a book and read it to their child during the visit. Each family is able to have a family photo taken at the event. The families love having special activities available on these days. It is amazing to see the variety and creativity of the projects that are produced. And fathers often remark on how surprised they are to see the amount of enjoyment they are able to share with their children doing these simple activities, whether creating art or reading a book together.

A second family-oriented program is the Kid's Corner at MCI Concord, where an area of the visiting room is set aside for children to come and read books, draw pictures or play checkers. CPO provides a wide variety of books for children to choose, and a volunteer is often present to help a child select books that they want to read. The child can bring these books back to their father and read it with him, or sit in the Kid's Corner and have the volunteer read it to them.

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There are paper and crayons available, and children enjoy the opportunity to draw pictures to show their fathers. It can be difficult for a child to sit in a chair and talk for a long time, so the chance to move around, walking back and forth to the Kid's Corner can make the visit easier. It also allows the parents some time to talk alone about topics that they may not want to discuss in front of the children.

Volunteers come in weekly, every other week, or monthly, and it is the program's goal to have a volunteer present in the Kid's Corner during all visiting hours. There are currently many time slots available for volunteers.

We are pleased to announce that we will be starting a Kid's Corner service at NECC this fall. Volunteers are needed to staff this new program. For further information about either of these programs please contact Concord Prison Outreach, or Kai Shaner at 978-369-1635, or at ralphshaner1@yahoo.com

—Kai Shaner

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## Emotional Literacy Behind the Wall

The author Alvin Toffler noted that illiteracy in the future would refer not to those who could not read, but rather to those who could not learn. Taking this statement as both profound and true, I consider my role as a BEACON educator to be of critical public importance as well as a source of personal pride. The BEACON program at MCI Concord is based on Robin Casarjian's book, *Houses of Healing*, and is a curriculum for teaching mindfulness, emotional literacy, self-awareness, and other data-based methods for behavior modification and violence-reduction (against others as well as against oneself).

Over the span of 12 weeks, the inmates and the facilitators learn together about judgment and triggers, anger and how to communicate nonviolently, grief and loss, fear and joy, guilt and shame, forgiveness, and letting go of—and learning from—the past so we can be fully present with an open heart here and now. The subtitle of *Houses of Healing* is "A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom" and the holistic array of topics is one indication the BEACON program takes this designation seriously. Fortunately, so too do the inmates in the course:

*"The program made me look at myself deeply and want to change the way I really am"*

## Caroling Night at NECC

Join us to share holiday cheer  
Friday, December 7, 2012 from 6:45 to 9 pm  
Register by sending full name, date of birth and phone number to [events@concordprisonoutreach.org](mailto:events@concordprisonoutreach.org)  
or 617-286-6728

*"I am glad I took this program and know that I am a better man, which will make me a better father and future husband."*

While the words of the men are more moving than anything I could write, perhaps the most profound part are the men who take the course more than once and still find a way to go deeper and learn more each time they are in class. In other words, since there are always methods to become more compassionate, aware, peaceful, reflective, and wise, the BEACON program is educational for everyone. The curriculum is less about teaching mastery over material and more about providing tools to encourage personal growth and the necessary space between stimuli in the world (be they people, situations, the past, family, anxiety about the future, etc.) and our thoughtful reaction to them. I taught a Houses of Healing curriculum prior to coming to Concord and this is my second term of co-facilitating BEACON. I can honestly say that as a woman with no criminal record, I personally look forward to each class so that I can learn with the men how to become a more conscious and conscientious person.

My role as a teacher is not to dictate the route of learning, but rather to reveal how a passion for learning occurs and to assist students in finding it for themselves. BEACON (an acronym which stands for Behavior, Emotions, And Changing Oneself) is the highlight of my week as it provides an opportunity to participate in a dynamic learning environment where I can watch growth, awareness, and mindfulness in action. As another man wrote in his course evaluation:

*"The teachings make you look into yourself and help you try to figure out why we do what we do and how we end up becoming who we are. It also shows you that it's never too late to change and that we aren't the only ones with problems."*

I couldn't agree more.

—Ashley L. Taylor, PhD



## Message from Carol Peters

I am pleased to report that CPO had another successful, productive year. Nearly one hundred volunteers donated almost 5,000 hours of volunteer services behind the wall. Our 25 ongoing programs are thriving. Our Holiday Gift Bag project continues to deliver gifts of stationery and toiletries to the 1700 men incarcerated in the Concord prisons. In spite of changes in prison administration and the lack of a Director of Treatment at MCI Concord, we have been able to start four new programs this year, including a Recreational Guitar class at NECC and two new academic skills classes at MCI Concord: "Writing for the Workplace" and "Math Prep for College Placement." Both programs are aimed at men who already have a high school degree, helping them improve specific academic skills that will serve them when they leave prison.

We also have an exciting new program in "Nonviolent Communication" starting this fall at NECC. The program is based on the work of Marshall Rosenberg, and stresses compassion and understanding as the motivation for our action rather than fear, anger, shame, blame or other negative motivators. CPO is currently gearing up to train a robust team of volunteers to teach this powerful class, anticipating that it will be in high demand at many prisons.

As I highlight our new offerings, I also want to recognize the many volunteers who show up week after week, year after year, bringing their expertise and humanity to the men behind the wall. They are the very foundation of Concord Prison Outreach, and the reason that we exist. They bring human kindness to the dark places where it is needed most. Their compassion and dedication changes our world.

Mother Teresa once said, "If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other." CPO exists because of the many volunteers and donors who understand that we are not in this world alone. We come together to serve because we believe that we are of one spirit, and everyone deserves the opportunity to heal and grow and live up to their potential. When we all thrive, we all win. Join us.

Carol Peters, Executive Director

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## Welcome Superintendent Marchilli

CPO welcomes Raymond Marchilli, the new Superintendent at MCI Concord and NECC. Supt. Marchilli, who started this past July, has been working for the DOC since 1983. He comes with a breadth of experience in a variety of settings. Marchilli holds a BA in counseling and a MS in Criminal Justice, preparing him to handle many roles. He was first a Correctional Counselor at South Middlesex Correctional Center, later headed the segregation unit at Cedar Junction, was the Director of Classification at Shirley Medium, and worked at Shattuck Hospital. He has held assignments as Deputy Supt. at Lancaster, and as Deputy Supt. at Gardner. All this has given him a "lot of experience that only varied assignments can give," he says.

Looking at Concord's prisons, Marchilli remarked that his predecessor, Bruce Gelb, had left a good situation here, and added that in such a large universe it's necessary to develop good teams. "If you don't have good security you

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## Who We Are:

Staff: Carol Peters, Executive Director • Win Wilbur, Administrative Assistant • Mark Richards, AVP Coordinator

Board of Directors: Michael Krupa, Chair • Karen Paradies and Carol Tierney, Co-Vice Chair • Richard Leaver, Treasurer • Lisa Daigle, Recording Sec. • Karen Ippolito, Corresponding Sec. • Jonathan Hoch • Jay Luby • Don Miller • Linda Reynolds • Kai Shaner • Ashley Taylor

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Supporting Faith Groups: Acton Congregational Church • Acton Friends Meeting, Concord • Chapel of the Cross, Westborough • Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints, Belmont • Church of the Good Shepherd, Acton • First Parish, UU, of Bedford • First Parish, UU, of Cambridge • First Parish, UU, of Chelmsford • First Parish, UU, of Concord • First Parish, UU/UCC, of Lincoln • First Parish, UU, of Stow and Acton • First Parish, UU, of Sudbury • First Religious Society, UU, Carlisle • First Unitarian Society, UU, Newton • Framingham Friends Meeting • Friends Meeting at Cambridge • Grace Chapel, Lexington • Hancock UCC, Lexington • Holy Family, Catholic, Concord • Kerem Shalom, Jewish, Concord • New Church, Swedenborgian, Concord • St. Anne's-in-the-Fields Episcopal Church, Lincoln • St. Catherine of Alexandria, Catholic, Westford • St. Elizabeth's Episcopal Church, Wilmington • St. Elizabeth of Hungary, Catholic, Acton • St. Irene Catholic Church, Carlisle • St. John Evangelical Lutheran, Sudbury • St. Matthew's United Methodist Church, Acton • St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Weston • St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Brookline • Sudbury United Methodist Church • Trinitarian Congregational Church, Concord • Trinity Episcopal Church, Concord • United Church of Christ, Boxborough • West Concord Union Church

## WE INVITE YOUR SUPPORT!

The generous contributions of our supporting faith groups and members of the community are essential to meet our part-time staff and program expenses. Our volunteers depend on your support to provide the program materials and services that are so beneficial to our incarcerated neighbors. We appreciate whatever amount you can give and are grateful for your support. Many employers have programs in place to match donations made by their employees. We are a 501(c)(3) non-religious charity. An envelope for your tax-deductible contribution is enclosed.

Special thanks to Middlesex Savings Bank  
for supporting the printing and mailing of this newsletter.

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can't have good programming—and good programming creates good security.” With that philosophy, he believes that anything that helps an inmate succeed on release, and thus reduces recidivism, constitutes good programming.

He spoke in detail about the need for newly-released inmates to be prepared to meet the inevitable difficult questions about gaps in their resumes and to be able to show how they used their time in prison productively to advance their education or improve other personal or work-related skills.

When asked about new programs that CPO might want to institute, he said they are working now to sort out available times and spaces for programs. While he

felt he was too new to this institution to make comments on specific needs for new programming, he urged volunteers to bring ideas to his administration.

He said that MCI Concord is trying to bring in some industry and vocational jobs, such as upholstery, welding, culinary, barber, and computers, to supplement those currently available—building and grounds, kitchen and maintenance options—to inmates who want to work and/or learn new skills.

But, he concluded, “We want to recognize the contributions volunteers make—I feel they are an extension of the staff here and help get things done that we couldn't do on our own. People here appreciate that.”

— Win Wilbur

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