

The Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

SEPTEMBER 2005

Correctional Employees Thanked



David Landis (left) presents plaque to Warden Ferrell (center) and Chaplain Eskelinen (right) during the employee appreciation meal

On August 19, 2005, state employees of Fountain and J. O. Davis Correctional Facilities in Atmore were treated to a luncheon as a gesture of appreciation from We Care Program on behalf of the many free-world ministries who serve in those institutions. Realizing that corrections can be a difficult, negative, and stressful work environment, and looking for a way to encourage the correctional staff, Atmore area We Care staff persons organized, prepared, and served a delicious pork roast meal to approximately fifty correctional staff persons who had responded to our invitation. In addition to the meal, several volunteer ministries donated funds to purchase door prizes, which were awarded to seven "winners" in the form of gift certificates to area food and business establishments.

During the walk-in meal, a word of blessing was given to fellow correctional staff persons by Fountain Chaplain Brian Eskelinen, followed with a short presentation by We Care President David Landis. Landis noted that during the thirty-five years of We Care's existence, over ninety full and part time chaplains had served at Fountain and JO Davis. "Needless to say," said Landis, "Fountain and JO Davis have a special place in our hearts as far as ministry is concerned." Landis also expressed appreciation to Warden Ferrell and the other administrative staff persons who were present for their willingness to cooperate with We Care Program and the many free-world ministries who have served in various ways in the past.

We extend a special thanks to Bob Bruckhart, Manheim, PA, who donated and roasted the pig for the meal. Bob is the father of staff person Randy Bruckhart, who is serving as assistant chaplain at Fountain Corr. Center.



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Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons

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News of Note

Mullet Recognized

June 22, 2005 was a special day for **Wilma Mullet** and We Care Program. Mullet was selected as a recipient of the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction Gold Star Award. Mullet received the award from DRC Assistant Director Mr. Collins (left) and Ohio Reformatory for Women Director Mr. Wilkinson (right) at a special banquet ceremony. Mullet was nominated for the award by her Warden at the Ohio Reformatory for Women, Marysville, Ohio, where she serves three days per week as a volunteer assistant chaplain under We Care Program. Mullet drives three hours one way to the prison and stays for three days before returning home.

Of her work at ORW, Warden Andrews described Mullet this way: "She is a woman who shows compassion and empathy for inmates. She has gained the respect of staff that has come in contact with her for her unselfish dedication. She has managed to keep down the number of complaints and problems because of her work in the religious services department...She is doing what few could, or would do. Wilma K. Mullet would not want recognition for what she does, but she deserves the department's external Gold Star award." Great Job, Wilma!

Hurricane Katrina

"All the believers were one in heart and mind, no one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had." (*Acts 4:32, NIV*) This verse took on new meaning as our staff was made aware of a family from Mississippi who had lost their home and possessions due to Hurricane Katrina flood waters. After a week of staying in different hotels, they managed to find an unfurnished apartment in Mobile, AL, but had literally nothing except a few pots and pans they were able to salvage from their flooded home. Our staff and other friends were notified of the need, and the next day a van and trailer loaded with furniture, bedding, clothing, food, cleaning supplies, and toys was delivered to their apartment. The family was overwhelmed and blessed, and we were blessed in return to share. Yes, We Care personnel in Alabama were again affected by a major hurricane, but considering the total devastation that so many experienced, our temporary inconveniences caused by the storm seem insignificant.



The Ray family, from Mississippi, but displaced by Katrina, along with We Care staffers Randy and Eunice Bruckhart



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Published eight times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views to friends of We Care Program. We Care Program is a non-profit, interdenominational organization consisting of Christian men and women who share a burden for and commitment to helping incarcerated men and women. We are accomplishing our mission by recruiting, funding, training, placing, and administering missionary chaplains and chaplain's assistants in prisons to provide friendship evangelism, teaching, peer counseling, and encouragement.

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Inmate names changed

New Host Couple Arrives

After five months without a host couple at headquarters, we are especially grateful to welcome *Ed and Doris Ranck* to our team. From Powhatan, Virginia, the Rancks come with the support and blessing of their church family at Powhatan Mennonite Church. Interestingly, Ed and



Doris are coming back to We Care Program for a second term of service twenty-five years after serving for one year as house parents at "The Bridge." (No longer in operation, The Bridge was a home for troubled youth begun by We Care Program.) Ed will be dividing his time between local prison chaplaincy work and maintenance duties. Together the Rancks will serve

in numerous capacities, including "parenting" the young adult interns who will be arriving for their six-month assignment in October, and providing hospitality for various We Care Program functions.

22nd Annual Benefit Auction

Support for Prison Ministries, Lititz, PA, will again be hosting a benefit auction for various prison ministry, chaplaincy, and aftercare programs, including We Care Program. Since 1984, the annual event has generated over \$1 million of financial support for prison ministry causes. The event will be held at the Farmersville Auction Grounds, located southwest of Ephrata, PA.

Friday, October 21

4:00-7:00 PM Chicken BBQ (eat in or take out)

5:00 PM Auction of quality merchandise, hardware, flowers, gift certificates, toys, collectibles, meats, and groceries.

Saturday, October 22

6:00 AM Pancake and Sausage Breakfast

8:30 AM Auction begins with quality merchandise for home, farm, and business.

Homemade foods will be available throughout the sale. Join us for a day of fellowship, food, and fun...all for the benefit of prison ministries! For more information, or to make donations of merchandise, call:
Nelson Martin (717) 625-0232.

Needed!

Volunteers & Intercessors

28th Annual Alabama Prison Crusade

Bringing the Gospel Message to Thousands of Men and Women in Alabama's Prison System

January 8-12, 2006

Applications Coming Soon!

- Begins with a Sunday of orientation and missions rally in Montgomery, AL
- Four days of friendship evangelism in 18 different prisons located in Montgomery, Troy, Birmingham, and Atmore
- Daily morning workshop sessions with gifted teachers
- Nightly prison services with special music and preaching
- Open to mature Christian men and women 21 and older*
- Fees start at \$225/person and cover event expenses, lodging and most meals**

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*Several prisons allow 18-20 year-olds by special permission.

**Reduced rate available for those not requiring lodging and meals

From the Field

Atmore, AL

Fountain Correctional Facility

Recently, while visiting in segregation, I had a lengthy conversation with a man about our families, struggles, food and whatever else came up. This man follows non-Christian teachings, but does enjoy reading and studying the Bible. As we talked, he asked what I know about the book of Jude. He had been reading this book and wanted to understand it better. I admitted to him that I did not know much about it, but would check it out.

As I studied, I got a grasp of the warning against false teachers who can work their way into the church and the

Montgomery, AL

Tutwiler Prison For Women

As Debra and I have one of our many heart-to-heart conversations, we deal with many emotions. In the past three years, I have seen her go through the walk of finding and getting to know God. When I first met her, she had “control” of her life. She attended church sometimes, always listening attentively, and could handle life on the hall. She had a strong front about her future. When she made parole near the end of 2004, she had a home plan, and she was ready. She often had seriously discussed her fear of facing and ability to resist her drug addiction.

I am now studying with Debra every Tuesday night inside Tutwiler. She failed to resist the temptations of drugs and violated parole after about five months. I was very impressed with her heart when she returned. When she came out to the chapel for the first time after returning to Tutwiler, she hung her head, but looked me in the eyes with sincerity and said, “I failed. I could not resist the temptation of the drugs by myself. Help me!” She knew she could have victory over Satan, and

she knew where to find this! She knows that God will make her strong, when she relies on Him and lives for Him first and foremost.

Debra now has an assurance and a peace about her future with the Lord. “Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.” (Philippians 2:12) Debra works out her salvation daily. She believes in Jesus Christ her Savior. Soon

she will reach the end of her sentence, and I pray that she will continue to walk solid in the presence of her Savior, with fear and trembling, as she remembers her salvation. This is the power and the glory that weakens any temptations.

- Davonna Carpenter

Staton Correctional Facility

One morning not long ago I went out to my truck to leave for the prison. I started the engine and heard a loud bumping noise. I shut off the engine and popped the hood. Wrapped around the radiator fan was one of our cats. I pulled him out and laid his limp body on the ground. I went and got a shovel, scooped him up and walked toward his final resting place. About half way there he popped his head up, jumped off the shovel and ran under the porch. Besides a bloody eye and some shaved fur, he is doing pretty well. He was battered and bruised but is still surviving.

I can't help but compare the cat's situation with those who are incarcerated. They are hard pressed and battered by the temptations of this world. Some seem so weak and powerless against the temptations of drugs, alcohol, gang activity, and the lusts of the flesh. They are constantly battered by situations in prison like the heat, the food, the overcrowding, and being separated from family and loved ones. But God has placed us, as chaplains, in their midst to share with them the hope, comfort and deliverance we have found through Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior.

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. (2 Cor. 4:7-10)

-Carl Carpenter

9 THINGS I LEARNED IN PRISON...

...About People and Society

1. There is a good person inside of everyone.
2. Children need good, committed daddies.
3. Doing dope is not a good idea.

...About Salvation and Accepting Christ

1. Salvation and repentance is much more than a point-in-time happening that occurs when a person says a prayer.
2. Many have wrong ideas about what it means to follow Jesus.
3. Jesus is already actively at work in the “gutter”.

...About Church and Religion

1. Christ's body is very diverse and completely transcends denominational lines.
2. God can shatter stereotypes.
3. Love for Jesus is better than love for religion.

- Brian Miller, after a six-month term of service with We Care

need to earnestly contend for the faith by diligent Bible study and prayer.

As I returned to visit this man, I was able to share with him what I learned. He was eager to hear. God is working on him through His word, but I see in him the deception with which he was led astray by false teachers. As Jesus put it, they are wolves dressed in sheep's clothing! Please pray for us as we contend earnestly for the faith, and for many in prison who have been led astray.

- Randy Bruckhart

decision to drastically downsize our operation by discontinuing a major line of our work, with the realization that it could potentially mean the loss of employment for my brother. A time of prayer sealed the decision in our hearts.

Looking back, I know that Monday morning act of consecration was one of those special, holy moments in life. Besides my salvation experience, that decision stands out as the greatest moment of surrender in my life to date. I was about to find out that the effects of that decision would have far reaching implications, not only for me, but for everyone connected to our family. Although current work order commitments would all be honored, I had to draft and mail a letter explaining our decision to discontinue a particular line of work to hundreds of current customers. In our success-driven community, what we were doing looked like a big step backwards. As news of our decision spread, family, friends, business associates and church family began to ask questions. Because this decision was “spiritual” in nature, many questioned and some even mocked our decision. Although in my mind I wrestled with some of the negative responses, I felt very strongly that this was the direction that God wanted me to go. Almost immediately, I sensed a greater longing for God’s presence, a deeper hunger for His Word, and a growing realization that my life’s journey was about to take some interesting turns, although I had no idea what they might be.

Several months later, my brother and I were working on a job together, and as we worked, the idea came to me that it would be good to spend some time studying the Bible in some kind of formal setting. It felt like the only way this would work would be to step away from the business for a period of time and give all my attention and focus to studying the Bible and listening to what God might be saying to me and our family. I walked over to where my brother was working and hesitantly asked him what he thought of the idea and if he would be willing to manage the business if we should decide to pursue this route. He agreed.

That same week, after receiving counsel from several friends, my wife, children and I took an exploratory trip to visit a Bible School in Ohio (we were living in Pennsylvania) to try to get a sense if this was something that we should do. We arrived on campus and not finding the host couple from whom we were supposed to get the key for our room, we walked out into the yard where a family was playing in the grass. We introduced ourselves, explained our reason for being there, and before long were invited into their living quarters where we exchanged testimonies in wonder of how God was drawing and calling our families to follow after Him more wholeheartedly. Again, there was the sense that God was orchestrating events and adding some substance to our faith as we began journeying into new territories. There was very little doubt that enrollment was the next step, and several months later our family was temporarily situated in an apartment on the school’s campus while I took in

various Biblical studies.

During that first semester, I “happened” to be in a class taught by Phil Weber who was the president of We Care Program at that time. I had never met Phil, nor did I know anything of We Care Program. But because of the small size of the class that semester, it didn’t take long for a friendship to develop between Phil and myself. One morning, over breakfast at a local restaurant, we entered into a discussion concerning God’s calling, ministry in general, and other life issues I was trying to work through in my own mind. Then it came. Yes. “The Invitation.” ***A week-long prison crusade in Alabama!?*** One thing I can say for sure; prison ministry was not even a blip on my computer screen. I had never even heard of We Care Program before this Bible study experiment, and Alabama!? Yeah, Right! But the invitation had been delivered...and all I could say was “I’ll think about it.” (I might have said I’ll pray about it, but there wasn’t much to pray about...I knew I was going.)

Several months later, I was on a bus headed to Alabama, ready to participate in my first ever prison crusade, wondering “What in the world am I doing on this bus full of radicals traveling 1000 miles to talk to some guys in a prison in Alabama?” Looking back, it was truly one of the greatest weeks of my life. Not only did I enter a whole new level of learning to depend on God, but during the week I experienced a very clear call from God to enter the harvest field of prison ministry. In fact, the call was specifically to assist JR Yoder at JO Davis Correctional Center. (JR was the father of the family we had met during our exploratory trip to the Bible School in Ohio!) That calling began the most radical season of surrender that I have ever experienced, as one by one, extended family, church family, our home, community, and ultimately, the business I had started eleven years earlier were all laid on the altar of surrender, left behind to answer God’s call to visit those in prison. Initially, we committed to one year. That was 1999, and like they say, the rest is history.

My friend, I don’t know what season of life you find yourself in, but I know that some of you are standing on the edge of a diving board thinking thoughts very similar to what I was thinking but are afraid to jump into the water because you are afraid of the immediate consequences or where you might end up. I know the feeling. But can I challenge you with this thought? Following Jesus is not about knowing the exact outcome of every act of obedience. It’s not about having all the blanks filled in before we move forward. What I have found to be true in my journey thus far is that experiencing the ultimate fulfillment that God wants all of us to know sometimes requires extreme measures of faith demonstrated by radical obedience to the inner whispers of the Holy Spirit. “For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.” (Matt. 16:25 NKJV) Friend, you can experience God’s pleasure. Please don’t waste any more precious time! JUMP!

Perspectives



David R. Landis
President

By all outward appearances, life was going well. A stable Christian walk, happy wife and children, Godly parents, quality friends, solid church family, and a self-started business that was growing in reputation and profit. It really was the evangelical version of the “American Dream.” The activities and work schedule I was involved in were arranged in such a way that very little quiet and un-planned time was available, but in those rare moments of reflection, I noticed a stirring was beginning to take place, and in my thought life the frequency of sensing that something different was in store for me slowly increased.

Years went by, the pace of life increased, and despite continuing “success,” I found myself asking my wife questions like “Do you see me doing this for the rest of my life?” Inside, I was thinking “There has to be more!” I began to notice that significant relationships were beginning to be affected by the way I was organizing my priorities. Everything revolved around the business, and what was left for others was truly “left-over.”

A significant point happened in 1997. Promise Keepers was holding their Washington D.C. men’s conference, and a group of us decided to go. The combination of powerful messages, the imagery of such a vast multitude of men calling out to God for wisdom and guidance, and the experience of corporate repentance for our sins and those of our forefathers made a lasting impression on me. I knew that my life needed new direction and focus, and during our ride home, several in our van load agreed that beginning each work week with Bible Study and prayer was a good first step in becoming the kind of husbands, fathers, and workers that God wanted us to be.

From that time forward, every Monday morning friends, co-workers, and business associates met in the office of my business establishment and shared testimonies, scripture, and prayer. It was a season of listening, learning, and reflecting. One Monday morning, the direction of my life was drastically changed. The men who were a part of the prayer group had left for their respective work-places. Only my brother remained. (We had been working together since the early years of the business). Having both experienced the recent birth of a child (their first and our third) we began to reflect on our roles as Christian husbands and fathers, and soon came to the conclusion that in order to remain faithful to God’s plan for our families, our priorities would have to be drastically adjusted. Although several options were discussed, the only one that “felt right” was a radical

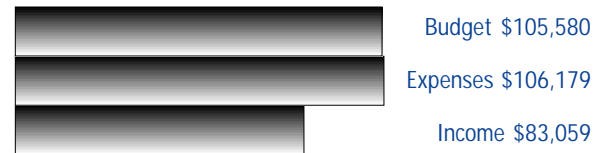
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I'd love to hear from you.
Contact me at
dave@wecareprogram.org

The Bottom Line

As you can see by the numbers, income is lagging behind budget and expenses by over \$22,000. Some of this gap can be attributed to budgeted income that is not expected until later in the fiscal year. In addition, contributions are down more than \$6500 compared to the same time last year.

2 months ending August 31



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