

# THE

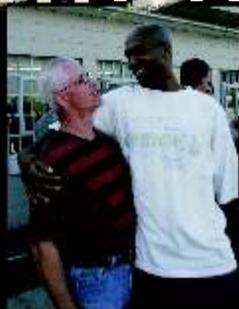
# Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

December 2006

## Camden Cookout

Full story on page 2.



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Ful filling the Great Commission in America's Prisons



[www.wecareprogram.org](http://www.wecareprogram.org)

# Camden Cookout

by Sid Chapman

**D**uring lunch on April 10 of this year, I shared with We Care President Dave Landis the strong feeling that God had been telling me that it was time to leave my job and enter full time prison ministry. I was both scared and excited as we left that afternoon to meet with Warden Adair at the Camden, AL, Community Based Facility (CBF), a work release unit for 125 to 150 men. The warden needed help in providing religious programming for the inmates and was aware of We Care Program's ministry in other Alabama Department of Corrections facilities.

On the drive back, excitement overcame fear as Dave asked me to join We Care as a volunteer associate to organize teams to provide Christian fellowship and lead Christian worship services at Camden. God's ministry began there through We Care on May 7 with teams of three to four men going into the facility every other Sunday from 5:30 PM until 8:30 PM. There are currently eight

men who are faithful to God's call on their lives to "visit those in prison." I was even more excited to clearly see that God wanted me to stay right where I was and also be involved in this other work He had prepared for us. God does want us to know His will!

On October 21, 2006, twenty men from Morning Star Baptist Church and First Baptist Church of Monroeville, AL, including the Hicks family from Franklin, AL, traveled to Camden CBF to share the love of Christ with the inmates and officers. From 3:00 PM until 7:00 PM, men shared smiles, handshakes, hugs, stories, testimonies, "picking and singing," praise to the Lord, laughter, tears, and just their time. Oh yeah, 400 hamburgers were cooked and all were eaten. For at least four hours that day there was no race, no denomination, no rich, no poor, no weak, no strong, just men sitting down with men, getting to know each other! Isn't it just like our Heavenly Father to send us to prison to see what Christ's Church, His Body, looks like? 🙌

## Volume XXXVIII, Number 7

Published eight times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views of 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.

*Direct all correspondence to:*

We Care Program  
3493 Highway 21  
Atmore, AL 36502

Phone: 251-368-8818  
Fax: 251-368-0932  
E-mail: [wecare@wecareprogram.org](mailto:wecare@wecareprogram.org)  
Web site: [www.wecareprogram.org](http://www.wecareprogram.org)

Board Chairman: LaVerne Eash  
President: David R. Landis  
Vice Pres./Business Mgr.: Don Metzler  
Editor: David R. Landis  
Asst. Editor: Noreen Horst  
Layout & Design: Sheila Schrock  
Circulation Manager: Noreen Horst

## FINAL REMINDER!

*Crusade applications  
due by December 18, 2006*

*For more information, contact our office at  
251-368-8818 or visit  
[www.wecareprogram.org](http://www.wecareprogram.org)*



# News of Note

VOL. 38, NO. 7

Atmore, Alabama

December 2006

## The Amazing Grace Tour

By David Landis

ACROSS THE U.S. – After 4,700 miles and 14 programs in eight states, we were happy to return to Atmore on November 20, but also realized that we had been recipients of God's favor throughout the Amazing Grace public relations tour. As a team we had prayed that God would stir hearts toward missions, give people a better understanding about the work of We Care Program, motivate some to partner

with us through the various opportunities presented, and possibly call some persons to future prison chaplaincy work, and we felt that God moved in each of these areas (although we did not hear of anyone's specific call to We Care...yet). In addition, we were also humbled by the generosity of congregations along the tour who gave towards the work of We Care Program. We are truly thankful for God's amazing grace!



God used this band of brothers to encourage and motivate through testimony and drama along the Amazing Grace Tour route. Pictured from left to right are David Landis, Blaine Copenhaver, Kenton Bucher, Willie Thomas, and Joseph Watson.



## Construction Update!

ATMORE – A special thanks to the many different persons who have helped to bring the headquarters project to its current state of completion. Local and out-of-state volunteers, We Care staff, work release inmates, and a number of hired contractors have been able to make remarkably good progress. Pictured above are volunteers from Dundee, New York, along with local workers, as they put on the metal roof.



One particular area of

skill labor still needed for early Spring 2007 is drywall installation and finishing. Contact Don Metzler at 251-368-8818 or don@wecareprogram.org if you are interested in volunteering.

## Young Adults Serve Others

By Noreen Horst

The Connection

ATMORE – Six young adults arrived on October 9 to serve in this winter's internship program. Three young men are working alongside We Care chaplains in the local Atmore prisons. The three young women are rotating their service between Adullam House in Wetumpka, AL, a residential and educational ministry to children of inmate mothers, and assisting with food service in Atmore for the workers in our new headquarters facility. Pictured are Jake Peters (MB), Delmar Weiler (PA), Blaine Copenhaver (PA),



Kenton Bucher (PA), Christina Adams (PA), Maria Martin (PA), Brenda Steury (IN), and Sheila Schrock (IA). Blaine was part of last year's internship program and has remained on staff since that time. Sheila came in August to work in the office.

## Benefit Auction

FARMERSVILLE, PA – The annual Support for Prison Ministries (SFPM) benefit auction in Farmersville, PA, took place on October 27-28 and set a new record once again with over \$98,000 in net receipts. We Care Program is one of six prison ministries to receive a share of the auction proceeds. We are grateful to SFPM for their support of our work and to the many individuals and businesses who helped to make the auction a success.



**BENDER, Marvin & Elaine**  
Jonathan, Kenton, Twila, LaRonda, Rachel  
*Missionary Chaplain; Century Correctional Institution, Century, FL*



**BENDER, Marvin & Emma**  
*Volunteer Support Staff; Headquarters, Atmore, AL*



**BUCHER, David & Veola**  
Cheney, Ethan  
*Missionary Chaplain; Donaldson Correctional Facility, Birmingham, AL*



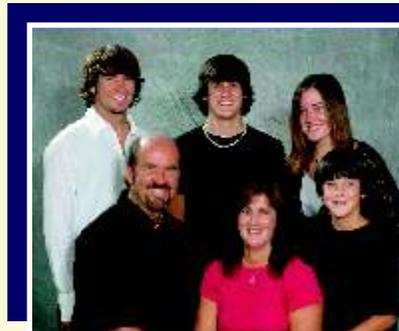
**DEPEU, Bob & Polly**  
Chad, Cassie, Kevin  
*Missionary Chaplain; Holman Correctional Facility, Atmore, AL*



**HOCHSTETLER, Lee & Sally**  
*Staff Associate; Holman Correctional Facility, Atmore, AL*



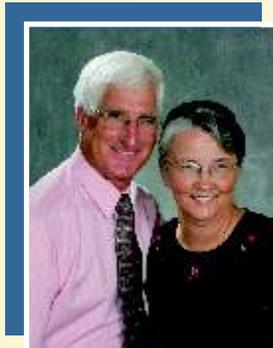
**LANDIS, Dave & Debbie**  
Diana, David, Darren, Darla  
*President; Headquarters, Atmore, AL*



**MARTIN, Irvin & Kathy**  
Kenton, Michelle, Justin, Durrell  
*Missionary Chaplain; J.O. Davis Correctional Facility, Atmore, AL*



**MCDONALD, Dorsey & Karen**  
*Staff Associate; Monroe Co. Jail, Monroeville, AL*



**RANCK, Ed & Doris**  
*Missionary Chaplain & Host Couple; Atmore Work Center & Headquarters, Atmore, AL*

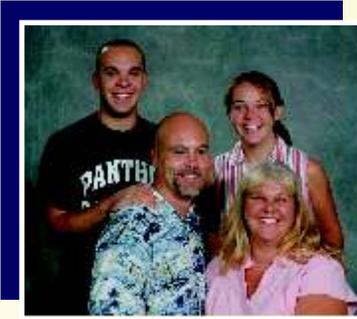


**SCHROCK, Sheila**  
*Graphic Design & Bookkeeping; Headquarters, Atmore, AL*

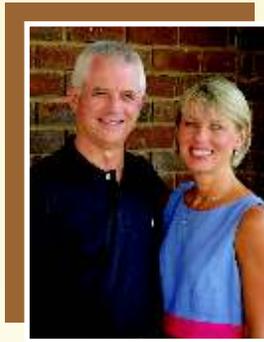


**STREHLOW, Mike & Patty**  
*Missionary Chaplain; Fountain Correctional Facility, Atmore, AL*

**Staff**  
Please continue  
prayers as we  
positions



**CARPENTER, Carl & Davonna**  
Josh, Maddi  
*Missionary Chaplains, Staton  
Correctional Facility & Life Tech,  
Montgomery, AL*



**CHAPMAN, Sid & Susan**  
*Staff Associate; Camden Community  
Based Facility, Camden, AL*



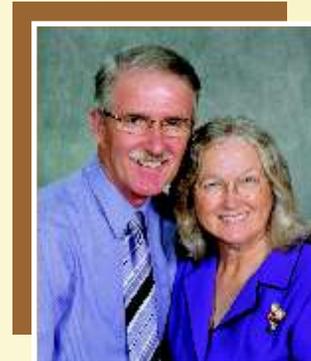
**COPENHAVER, Blaine**  
*Missionary Chaplain; Fountain  
Correctional Facility, Atmore, AL*

# Directory<sup>2006</sup>

...e to keep us in your  
...minister in various  
...and locations.



**HORST, Noreen**  
*Administrative Assistant;  
Headquarters, Atmore, AL*



**HUBER, Lester & Goldie**  
*Staff Associate; Fountain  
Correctional Facility, Atmore, AL*



**METZLER, Don & Phyllis**  
Brandon, Perry, Lauren  
*Vice President & Business Manager;  
Headquarters, Atmore, AL*



**MILLER, Anna**  
*Missionary Chaplain;  
Tutwiler Prison for Women,  
Montgomery, AL*



**MULLET, Wilma**  
*Missionary Chaplain;  
Ohio Reformatory for  
Women, Marysville, OH*

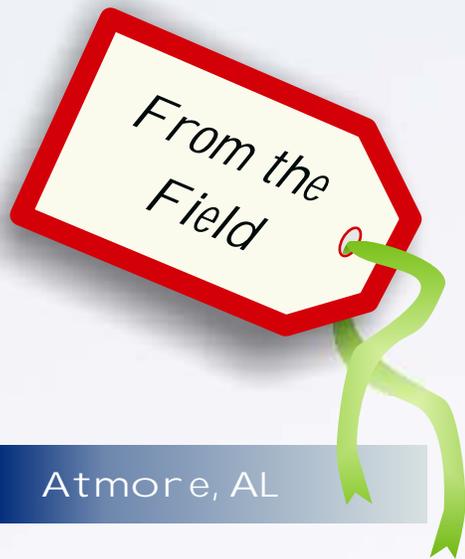


**YODER, Delmar & Marjorie**  
*Staff Associate; Fannin Co. Jail,  
Blue Ridge, GA*



## **BOARD MEMBERS** (left to right):

- J.D. Landis**, Mobile, AL
- Lester Huber**, Atmore, AL
- Lee Hochstetler**, Blackduck, MN
- Dennis Nolt**, Ephrata, PA
- Aaron Martin**, Ephrata, PA
- Loyd Gingerich**, Arcola, IL
- Eli Yoder**, Hutchinson, KS
- LaVerne Eash**, Gambier, OH
- John Bender**, Ephrata, PA
- Harvey Fox**, Lititz, PA
- Not pictured: **Alvin Mast**,  
Millersburg, OH



## Atmore, AL

### Atmore Work Center

I would venture a guess that the idea of being an answer to prayer never entered the heads of the five inmates who are checked out from the Atmore Work Center to work on our new We Care headquarters building. But they come five days a week and work hard on whatever jobs we have for them. Having them with us gives them an opportunity to see the working side of our faith, that we are not just dressed up folks walking their dorm talking about the religion we profess, but men working together on a common project. They see our reactions when mistakes are made and hear our words to the minor injuries that are part of any construction project. These men can see the love that goes into a home cooked meal, (and the word is out in the camp that Doris is quite the cook!) and enjoy the camaraderie around the noon lunch table. They see kindness in a cake purchased as a birthday surprise and the special feeling of being singled out for attention as we sing "happy birthday."

And us? We benefit from their construction skills, their friendship, and the insights we gain concerning life behind bars. Indeed, God sends us blessings from unexpected places.

- Ed Ranck

### Fountain Correctional Facility

The key word for the ministry at Fountain Correctional is "busy." There are over fifty students enrolled in the Bible college, and many of them recently finished midterm exams. We are overseeing three pre-GED (General Education Diploma) programs, two at Fountain and one at J. O. Davis, with a total of about forty students. And from time to time we administer the Test of Adult Basic Education to help the men

get into these programs. There are courses to teach and papers to grade, and now is the time to start planning for the spring 2007 semester. Busy? Busy.

But not "busyness." As Paul said, in I Corinthians 9:26, "... I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air." We have a goal, and it is NOT to post numbers. Real changes are being made to the spiritual climate here at Fountain, and the various educational programs are a big part of that. To quote one inmate, "With that GED program and the college, this camp gives you more to look forward to than any other camp I've been to." Pray that we keep our eyes on the goal, not the path. Amen!

- Mike Strehlow

## Cherrylog, GA

### Tutwiler Prison for Women

"Therefore let him who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall." (I Corinthians 10:12)

As I sat in the library talking to an inmate about her Bible studies, she began to share her life story. Most of her life she had been very critical of prisoners and thought they got what they deserved. She never dreamed that some day she would be one of them. God had to strip her of everything, including all her earthly possessions, to make her see that the people in prison are just like her. They have made mistakes and wrong choices that have led them to prison.

She told me it has taught her tolerance toward people. But she has also learned that even though she lost all of her earthly possessions, she now has a relationship with God, and He will help her rebuild her life when she leaves the prison. God has become a treasured possession to her. As the song writer says, "Take the world, but give me Jesus."

God had to strip her of everything to make her see that the people in prison are just like her.

- Anna Miller

### Staton Correctional Facility

I worked on a pig farm when I was younger, and it didn't take long to figure out where the term "pig headed" came from. If I tried to load a pig on the truck and he didn't want to go, it was a tough

battle. Being pig headed or stubborn isn't necessarily a bad thing, especially when it comes to our Christian walk. According to Romans 5:3, when we persevere, it builds our character. "Not only so, but we also rejoice in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

Someone once said that perseverance is being "stubbornly persistent" in good things. We are reading the book of Daniel in our morning Bible study at the prison. As a teenager Daniel was taken into slavery. He "resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine" at this young age. He was righteously stubborn. Three kings and many years later he was told that he must pray to the king only. Daniel was pig headed and continued to pray to God three times a day. Two things really

impress me about Daniel. First, he was determined to serve God no matter what the consequences. The second is that Daniel lived a life of perseverance from a teenager to the end of his life. Daniel was stubbornly persistent in good things, are we?

- Carl Carpenter

## Montgomery, AL

### Fannin County Jail

Staying in contact with prison and jail friends after they are released or transferred to other facilities is a constant challenge. The distances may make visiting prohibitive, and telephoning may be costly and/or next to impossible. That leaves letter writing, which has been very hard, time-consuming work for me.

But anyone struggling in the faith, as well as against addiction and many other sinful behaviors, will benefit from consistent, encouraging communication from Christian mentors. They likely will do best when they are reminded frequently, every day if possible, that God loves them and that someone—you, their friend—is caring about them and praying. Affirmation that they have not been abandoned is often a key factor in

Satan is to be held at bay and they are to grow ever stronger spiritually.

During recent months I have begun experimenting with a sort of mail "blitz," making as certain as possible that these special friends are receiving evidence each day that they are not forgotten, that I am praying for them and battling against forces of evil in their behalf. These daily reminders may be letters or notes (handwritten or computer-generated), but often are columns and articles from Christian magazines and newsletters, such as this one.

So far I have not attempted to "blitz" more than two persons at a time. Just keeping up a stream of mail five to six days a week I have found to be demanding but do-able. We are blessed to have a simple facsimile machine, which makes copying relatively easy. And copying may be necessary, as some facilities will not accept clippings from newspapers or magazines.

Those to whom I am presently ministering in this way are a man recently met who is being held in "protective isolation" following a transfer from a local jail to a prison in a distant state, and a woman known for many years who is being held in an adjoining county jail and whose impoverished family has neither telephone nor transportation. Will they endure in the Lord? I can only pray, hope, and continue preparing the materials and mailing the envelopes day by day.

- Del Yoder

## Birmingham, AL

### Donaldson Correctional Facility

Ministering in prison has brought me into numerous situations where I have had to make decisions and speak words that have brought negative reactions towards me. Every time this happens, I am reminded WHO is in control of my life and the ministry HE has called me to accomplish. I am also reminded that I need to daily surrender my reputation to HIM, and HE will protect me as I work under HIS authority.

The situations vary and have included verbal onslaughts by prison staff as they vent and rage over something I said or did in good faith. It hurts when slanderous things are said and spread around the institution after I acted on something I was sure God wanted me to handle in a certain way. When dealing with issues concerning the Faith-based programs, inmates often become angry with standards I uphold, decisions I make, and truth I speak to them. Slanderous rumors run rampant, notes of accusation are written and passed to "higher ups" in the administration, and despair knocks on my heart's door. By God's grace and strength, I send it away!

I rejoice to see my God bring good out of what Satan meant for evil.

Each negative and hurtful situation gives me the opportunity to respond in a positive, forgiving, and graceful manner. It has been a joy to see how God can make good come out of these hurtful, uncomfortable circumstances as HE enabled me to respond as HE desired me to. Though staff persons rarely apologize and ask for forgiveness, I know by their actions later that they respect me for the way I responded to their wrong actions. Our working relationship would have been jeopardized if I had reacted in a negative, unforgiving way. Some formerly offended inmates have come to apologize and ask forgiveness for what they said to and about me after I spoke truth to them and/or took action in their situation. Others still hold hateful grudges, but the Lord gives me grace in relating to them. Once again, I rejoice to see my God bring good out of what Satan meant for evil. Praise the Lord!

This article is not intended as a pity party note. Instead, use it as a reminder to pray for us prison missionaries as we witness and work in these secular, hostile, corrupted environments. And in your sphere of influence, may you say truth that needs to be said, act truth as GOD enables you, and be a witness for HIM for HIS honor and glory!

- Dave Bucher

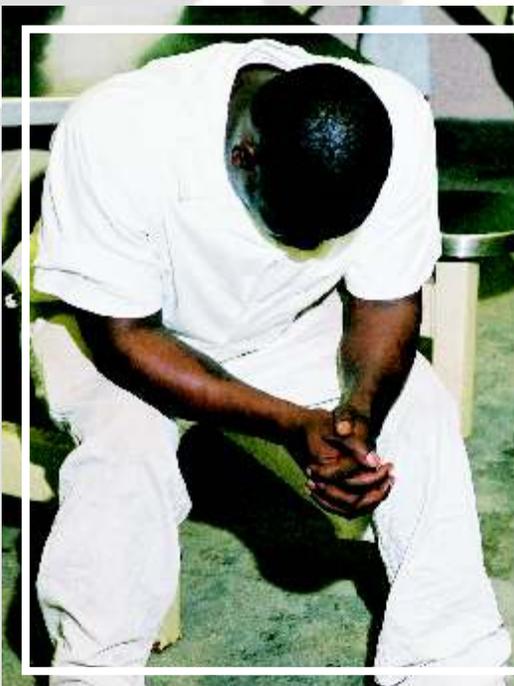
# One.

"I tell you that...there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety nine righteous persons who do not need to repent." - Jesus, Luke 15:7

**Will you help us share the Good News?**

Chaplain's Assistant Positions Available in  
Atmore, Montgomery, Birmingham, and Troy, AL

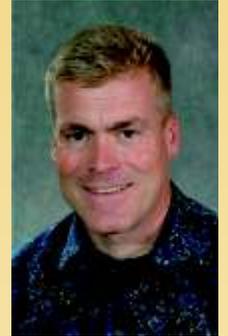
Please contact [dave@wecareprogram.org](mailto:dave@wecareprogram.org)  
to begin a life-changing experience.



# PERSPECTIVES

with David R. Landis  
President

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



**A**lthough the day in and day out work of prison chaplaincy can seem rather fruitless at times, I can't help but step back and reflect on the happenings at Fountain Correctional Facility where I spend most of my in-prison time. God is revealing to me that our day-by-day, month-by-month, year-by-year efforts are also a part of a bigger picture which is slowly unfolding.

Consider the Faith Dorm at Fountain. Starting in 1999 as a result of a directive from the prison commissioner at that time, a Faith-based dormitory was instituted in every major facility in Alabama's state prison system. We Care Chaplain Glenn Weber pioneered the new initiative at Fountain, despite a good bit of resistance from staff and inmates alike, and began a dorm with 70 inmates. After Glenn's departure, I became the dorm director. In time the program was expanded to include 188 men, and later, because of prison overcrowding, was increased to 240 men. (Joe Yoder and Randy Bruckhart also devoted a lot of their energy to giving leadership to the Faith Dorm during their service with We Care.) Later on, a "transition dorm" of another 120 men was opened for those waiting to enter the Faith Dorm.

A Substance Abuse Program (SAP) was then started by the state in one half of the Transition Dorm, and recently it was decided that the other half could also be used as an aftercare dorm for those who had completed SAP.

Believing that God was orchestrating a change at Fountain, and awed by the fact that well over 100 men were still on the waiting list to enter the Faith Dorm program, Chaplain Eskelinen proposed expansion once again. In November 2006, with the full support of the prison administration, Fountain saw the opening of a "New Beginnings" dorm of 190 men waiting to enter the Faith Dorm.

**What this means is that almost one half of Fountain's 1,200 inmates are now in program-oriented and faith-based dorms.** Not bad for a prison some have considered the "bottom of the barrel" in Alabama's prison system.

What I am seeing is that the labors of many We Care staff persons and local volunteer teachers and mentors over years of time are making a difference! Recent developments like the Fountain of Life Bible College and the GED preparation classes are fanning the flames of progress. Equally encouraging is the fact that God is raising up inmate leaders to accelerate His work behind the walls. What was once a very dark place is now brightening as opportunities for spiritual, mental, emotional, and relational growth are made available. Although plenty of challenges remain, I am encouraged by the changes I am witnessing and believe that we may be on the verge of a historical move of God. 🙌

3493 Highway 21  
Atmore, AL 36502-4669  
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

