

THE

Connection

● THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

● August 2007

Moving Towards the Unseen We Care Program Dedicates New Facility



July 29, 2007, marked another milestone in the history of We Care Program. An Open House and Building Dedication was held at the new headquarters with around 200 staff and families, board members, associates, and friends in attendance.

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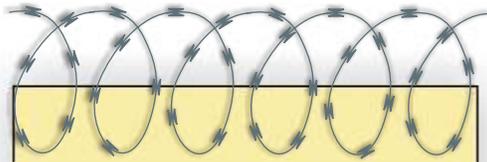
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Fulfilling the Great Commission in America's Prisons



www.wecareprogram.org



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Published six 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 chaplains assistants in prisons to provide friendship evangelism, teaching, peer counseling, and encouragement.

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Above: Noreen Horst offers an informative tour of the new building. **Below:** Wayne Ballenger presents a gift to hostess Doris Ranck.

During the Open House, visitors were given guided tours of the new facility, treated to delicious food prepared by We Care staff persons, and simply enjoyed each other's fellowship.

A dedication ceremony was held at 3:00 pm, beginning with Vice President and Business Manager Don Metzler providing a brief review of the entire construction process, giving God thanks for the tremendous outpouring of volunteer laborers who gave of their time and talent to help complete the new facility.



Below: Open House guests enjoy the opportunity to fellowship and relax on the outdoor patio.

Also present for the afternoon's events were ten inmates from the Atmore Work Center, who each at one time or another were assigned to the construction project as part of a Department of Corrections community work squad. One inmate, Wayne Ballenger, was recognized by Metzler

for his involvement in the project from beginning to end. On behalf of the men from Atmore Work Center, Ballenger presented a small floral arrangement and gift certificate to hostess Doris Ranck, otherwise known as "Mom" to the men, for her diligent work in making sure that construction workers were well fed throughout the construction project. (Money for the gift was redeemed from scraps of wiring that the inmates had collected throughout the project so that a gift could be purchased.)

President David Landis then challenged attendees to consider the blessings that



God had bestowed upon the We Care Program organization throughout its 37-year history. He reminded those present that although measuring the work that God has done within the organization was an impossible task and only eternity will reveal a true glimpse of its influence, it would seem safe to say that thousands upon thousands of lives had been touched by the power of Christ through the influence of We Care Program.

Landis spoke of three distinguishing characteristics that have been a part of We Care Program over the years. First, he spoke of the importance of discipleship and how We Care's chaplaincy services are an effort to walk alongside men and women in prison, pointing them to Christ, and then leading them to maturity through continuing relationships. Secondly, he spoke of spiritual growth, which has become a natural outcome for the hundreds of personnel who have served under the leadership of We Care Program throughout its history and many who have been discipled through their efforts. Finally, Landis spoke of the importance of "family" in the We Care organization, and how the many who are and have been a part of the ministry feel a certain bond to each other as workers united under a common purpose.

Landis spoke of a future that would continue to include these aspects of discipleship, spiritual growth, and family, but took it a step further. Landis anticipates a day when the We Care "family" will open its arms and doors to men coming out of prison and seeking a new beginning—men who have made a commitment to follow Christ while in prison, are demonstrating that commitment by their lives while incarcerated, have a desire to grow in Christ-likeness, and who do not want to return to their old way of life and the communities that fostered their slide into criminal activity. "This organization, led by a godly board of directors, staffed by a great team of



Above: Don Metzler, Business Manager & Vice-President, hard at work in his new office. Right: A view of one of the many accommodating guest bedrooms.



Left: Kenton Bucher leads a time of worship with the We Care staff during the first staff event to be held in the new "Family Room."

Right: Noreen Horst pauses from her administrative work in the office. Below: Board members hold their first business meeting in the conference room.





missionaries, blessed by a tremendous amount of prayerful supporters both locally and nationally, and now occupying a completely adequate ministry facility, is now moving towards providing a place of transition to Christian men seeking a fresh start and willing to enter into a discipleship program that will help them to become the sons, fathers, husbands, and employees that God intended for them to be.”



Above: Guests enjoy fellowship and refreshment at the kitchen serving counter. **Left:** Martin Weber, founder of We Care, offers the prayer of dedication for the new building.

Not only does Landis believe that this type of programming could have a significant impact on the lives of former inmates, but he also believes that the possibility exists of God using this program to train its residents through Paul/Timothy type relationship building to grow into Christian workers and leaders who will have great influence in future Kingdom building, and potentially, be key players in the future of We Care Program and its ministry to the incarcerated. “We have been blessed; we want to be a blessing,” Landis concluded. He then invited Martin Weber, founder of We Care Program, to give the prayer of dedication.

Right: David Landis, President of We Care, cuts through the chain to symbolize the freedom that many will find through Jesus Christ.



Attendees then viewed a video presentation which portrayed the chronological chain of events that were a part of the building process.



Right: The board members pose together on the front porch. **Below:** Inmates from the Atmore Work Center take part in the chain-cutting ceremony.

The video featured many of the volunteers from around the country who assisted in the project.

The formal dedication concluded with a ceremonial “chain-cutting” at the main entrance of the new facility. While the inmate guests lined up to hold each side of a hefty chain, We Care Board of Directors Chairman LaVerne Eash gave the official charge to move forward as a ministry, following God’s call to “preach the good news to the poor...bind up the brokenhearted...proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoner.” (Isaiah 61:1) Then Landis cut through the chains to signify the true freedom that can come for those who choose to follow Christ. ✨



News of Note

VOL. 39, NO. 4

Atmore, Alabama

August 2007

Moving On

By David Landis

After five years of service with We Care Program, **Carl and Davonna Carpenter** have followed the Lord's leading back to their home community in Pennsylvania. Carl served as an assistant chaplain at Staton Correctional Center, Montgomery, while Davonna volunteered in several women's institutions during their time in Alabama. Thank you, Carl and Davonna, for answering God's call to prison ministry for this season of your lives. We miss you, but wish you God's richest blessings as you serve Him wherever He leads.

Sheila Schrock has completed a term of service in bookkeeping

and graphic design. We appreciate all you did in the last year, Sheila, and are grateful for the new look you have given to our promotional materials. Thanks for a job well done! May God bless you as you continue to follow His plan for your life.

With all the extra household responsibilities due to final stages of construction, moving, settling in, and preparing for open house, we were blessed to have **Rose Kauffman** on our team for the past three months. Rose came from Illinois specifically to assist We Care hostess, Doris Ranck, in this transition. Thanks, Rose, for the work you did behind the scenes and the joyful spirit you demonstrated while serving.

Attn: Read-a-thon Participants

Now is the time to be collecting the pledge payments from your sponsors. Don't forget that to qualify for prizes, forms and pledges should be received in our office by August 31.



Work is progressing on the new chapel for Atmore Work Center. The foundation has been poured, and block walls are going up.



30th Annual We Care Prison Crusade

Mark your calendars!... We are gearing up for what we hope will be another life-changing prison crusade. January 27-31, 2008 will be our 30th annual crusade, and we are looking for it to be a significant event in the history of We Care Program. More to come in our next newsletter.



From the field

Atmore, AL

Atmore Work Center

Jesus once asked if, when He comes again, He would find faith on the earth. Growing up in a traditional church, I had my ideas of what faith looked like and was pretty comfortable with that picture. What evidences of faith do I find here in prison, where a great majority were not raised in Christian homes and find Christ through some other influence? I see Nick on his knees in the chapel, interceding for his family, the wife and children he can only minimally influence while he serves his time. I see Roger giving two bars of soap to the chapel program every month, his application of the scripture that asks us to tithe. Kenneth comes to the chapel every day after work to be alone and pray before his evening activities. Joe sings and is often found listening with his headphones, learning the songs he sometimes shares in our Bible studies. Jason cleans the chapel. He provides a cup of cold water near the speaker's stand for times when my voice gets tired. James says, "I'm gonna pray for you, Chap," when our ideas clash or our friendly banter goes a bit too far. Rev takes me aside and helps keep me in line when I violate the prison code of etiquette. Saturday noon finds the chapel closed for a special prayer service, sometimes

vocal, sometimes silent, as a dozen or so men meet to share a variety of concerns and pray. Yes, when Jesus comes, He will find faith on the earth, in some unlikely ways and some unlikely places.

- Ed Ranck

Fountain Correctional Facility

It has been gratifying to be a part of and witness the growth and development of the Faith Dorm program at Fountain. Started in 1999 with 70 residents, the program has grown to include 430 of Fountain's 1200+ residents. Some of that growth is attributed to what is known as the New Beginnings Transition Dorm, opened within the last year. This dorm is the entry point for those wishing to enter the somewhat more structured Faith Dorm.

My involvement, which started in 2000 and continues today, has primarily consisted of leadership selection, coaching, and trying to be a faithful witness using Godly principles to promote vision, bring encouragement and correction, and resolve conflicts. I consider it a

privilege to work alongside these men and often pray for them as leaders in the Faith Dorm environment and also for situations in their personal lives.

Recently, I have been gratified to assist in selecting a leadership team of veteran Faith Dorm residents to give leadership to the Transition Dorm. It has been encouraging for me to realize that God has been doing a work in these men's lives, even though it sometimes feels like watching trees grow. We have divided the dorm into nineteen groups of ten, each group having a leader who is a Faith Dorm graduate. This enables the workload of leadership to spread out evenly and gives many a chance to exercise their gifts.

Yes, there has been some resistance to the changes we are instituting, but it is evident to me that God is working in the midst of these

changes. I believe that the continuation of this work will eventually cause onlookers to question what the foundation of this kind of structured programming is based on. That is when I will humbly submit my belief that God's principles, when followed, offer the greatest hope for any community, whether a group of men in a prison dorm, a small town, or a nation.

-David Landis

Question: what do drug dealers, pedophiles, check forgers, car thieves, and murderers have in common? Among other things, they get locked up for the things they do. Another thing they have in common is that Jesus died for their sins. And to name a third, some of them are Fountain of Life Bible College students here at Fountain Correctional Facility in Atmore, Alabama.

Recently we held an award service. That is when I hand out completion certificates to the inmates who have successfully completed a college course. These Liberty Theological Seminary courses are not "gimmies" by any means. The inmates have to work just as hard to pass them, and produce work that is just as good, as any free world Bible college student would. Only about half the men who start a given course do all the reading and homework it takes to fulfill passing requirements (although we have several "A" students). Completing any college course is a real accomplishment.

Make no mistake, these are tough guys. They have to be tough to survive in an Alabama prison. But the looks on their faces when I call them up to the front and hand them their certificates, surprises me.

It is an open secret that running even a fairly modest-sized Bible college is hard work. And I work hard at it. Yet when I see how far the students have come, when I hand them their certificates, I have a sense that the look on my face probably surprises THEM. Those award services are when they pay ME back.

-Mike Strehlow

“Yes, when Jesus comes, He will find faith on the earth, in some unlikely ways and some unlikely places.”

J. O. Davis Correctional Facility

Like most prison chapel programs, we hold a barrage of services in the chapel at J. O. Davis. These include preaching, teaching, seminars on deliverance, praise and worship, and prayer time. We also have an abundance of videos.

Sometimes it is difficult to know what to teach or how to minister best to the men. I pray about it, seeking God's will for the men, yet still often feel like we're lacking in creativity. I ask myself, do they really need to hear another sermon? I want to give them tools to work with to better themselves. What can the chaplain give that others aren't already giving? Often I come to the place of saying, "Okay, Lord, You lead and I will follow. Come and move in our midst." As we enter into exuberant praise and worship, the Holy Spirit brings brokenness and healing to emotional hurts that we may have been experiencing that day. Burdens are lifted and the load somehow seems lighter. As I pray with individuals, the Lord often brings encouragement to them. When I witness men smiling through tears of joy, I am encouraged, and my heart is glad. Maybe I haven't accomplished much, but heaven has. And we've just had a foretaste of heaven.

Recently I showed a video from home of my family on a mission trip to Reynosa, Mexico, in 2001, but I was feeling that it was a somewhat poor attempt of ministering. On the video were scenes of us relating to poor families on the streets, giving toys and balloons to children and handing out Bibles, and serving hot dogs and snacks to a few hundred people on three occasions. On the last day of that mission trip we visited an orphanage. As the men in prison watched us relating to the orphans, most of them became teary-eyed. After the video, I gave opportunity for questions. Their response was surprising. Many were asking, "How

can I be a part of something like that?" or "How can I help?" One young man came to my office afterwards very broken, sharing that he had never felt such pain for others. I believe God moved in our midst, and seeds have been sown once again.

- Irvin Martin

Birmingham, AL

Donaldson Correctional Facility

Confrontations are seldom pleasant. When another person confronts an issue in my life, it causes friction, and sparks will usually fly. The other person may have a genuine concern for my personal and spiritual growth, or they may just be trying to get on my nerves. Do I allow God to help me grow, no matter what the reason for the confrontation?

In the Faith-based Honor Communities here at Donaldson, we have a set of standards for the residents to live by and uphold. The standard is set much higher than in the rest of the institution, and it greatly benefits the men in the communities. We enlist the help of inmate leaders within the communities to lead out in their holding each other accountable on a daily basis. The whole point is for the men to confront each other and grow together personally and spiritually. We encourage the men to confront their peers in a righteous way, and we ask them to take confrontation well when it happens.

The complaints that so often come up about this "business of confrontation" vary, but may include the following. "That man is wearing white just like I am; he can't tell me what to do!" "He can't tell me nothing, 'cause he violates the rules too!" "So and so did something even worse, and nobody said nothing!" "I wasn't hurting nobody, why don't they just mind their own business!" Any of these sound familiar? Though these are invalid responses, all of us have used or have considered using them.

...if you never
risk anything
you never
really live.

We will continue to teach and model the importance of Biblical accountability and confrontation for the spiritual and personal benefit of the men in these communities. May we all be willing to take a "pull-up" from others, or have the courage to give a word of confrontation to someone else for his benefit. Let us provoke each other to love and good works (Hebrews 10:24) and be sharpened like iron upon iron (Proverbs 27:17).

- Dave Bucher

mONTGOMERY, AL

Tutwiler Prison for Women

Recently I watched a friend of mine going through a tough period in her life. She struggled with trust, and it brought to my mind some of my own struggles in that area. When God asked me to obey the call on my life to prison ministry, there were times when I felt like Peter, with a desire to do anything for Jesus, and my heart wanted to step out of the boat. But my head didn't want to take the risk. There were too many uncertainties. Risks are based on trust, and for me it bordered on unbelief.

Years ago a friend of mine told me that if you never risk anything you never really live. What a challenge! When we fully surrender to God's plan for our lives, we experience the joy of knowing we are in the center of God's will. It is well worth the risk to know we are fulfilling our purpose in life and to feel God's approval.

The fields are ripe and ready to harvest, and we need more workers. Can Jesus count on you to be willing to step out of the boat when He says, "Come"? Many think of prisons as a dark place, but there are treasures there. Isaiah 45:3 says... "And I will give you treasures hidden in the darkness—secret riches. I will do this so you may know that I am the Lord, the God of Israel, the one who calls you by name." Has He called you by name? Come and help us find the hidden treasures in the dark places. Trust God and come. You'll find that it's worth the risk.

- Anna Miller

WANTED

A team of young men who will be placed in various prisons to work alongside our staff prison chaplains. Emphasis will be placed on spiritual growth through the development of inter-personal relationships with those who do not know Christ, discipleship of new believers, and fellowship with the Body of Christ within prison walls. In addition, the team will be assigned to various community service projects and be encouraged to grow in personal spiritual disciplines.

Deadline for application extended to
August 31, 2007.

For more information contact David Landis:
dave@wecareprogram.org or 251-368-8818.



WHO: Young men ages 20 and older

WHEN: October 8, 2007-April 30, 2008

WHERE: Atmore, Alabama

WHY: "I was in prison, and you came to me." -Jesus

COST: Will need to raise some program expenses and have health insurance coverage. (Room, board, and monthly allowance provided.)

EXPERIENCE: Priceless!

www.wecareprogram.org



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