

The Visitor

December 2007



Working together, improving lives
—in your community.

Welcome to our new newsletter

We are pleased to bring you this new and improved newsletter for Prison Ministry volunteers. "The Visitor" is a fitting title, inspired by Matthew 25:36, "I was in prison and you visited me."

If you have any suggestions, or would like to send us information to be included in a future issue, please contact Sr. Dolores Chepiga at 443-263-1931 or dchepiga@vincentbaltimore.org

Upcoming Prison Ministry Events

Annual Prison Volunteer Day to be held

Please reserve Saturday, April 12, 9:00 a.m. until 1:00 p.m. for our annual Volunteer Prayer and Enrichment Day. Bishop Rozanski will begin the day with Mass at St. Lawrence Church in Jessup.

Social Ministry Convocation

Also, on Saturday, March 1, we participate in the annual Social Ministry Convocation that will be held at Seton Keough High School. The theme is *Building for Peace in a Violent World*. Our workshop will feature Dr. Lauren Robinson, a Restorative Justice practitioner, who founded and directs The Community Conferencing Center in Baltimore. Prison Prevention!

National Convocation

Do you want to enlarge your vision of prison ministry? *The National Convocation of Jail and Prison Ministry* provides that opportunity. This year the Convocation will be held May 4 to 7 in Techny, IL.

For information on any of the above events, contact Sr. Dolores Chepiga at 443-263-1931 or dchepiga@vincentbaltimore.org

I was in prison and you visited me.
Matthew 25:36

TO RECEIVE THIS NEWSLETTER
IN AN EMAIL, CONTACT
SR. DOLORES CHEPIGA AT
DCHEPIGA@VINCENTBALTIMORE.ORG

Christmas, a Time for Sharing

Sister Pat Ash, chaplain for the women at the Baltimore City Detention Center, would love to help us share with her women. Some items she can give them are: toothbrushes, toothpaste, lotion, pens, soap, shampoo, and conditioner. For Christmas – travel size; throughout the year – regular size. She can be reached at 410-209-4216.

News from our Volunteers at MCI-W

Volunteer, Mary Pat Donelan, reported about a ministry for lifers, that she recently began. The program, called "Lifers for Change," allows the prisoners to be of service in the institution. Mary Pat acted on a letter sent by a lifer to MD CURE of which she is an officer. The prisoner asked for outside help to have this program. Mary Pat followed the necessary process and voila! The women see this as a way not only to help themselves but also to benefit the prison environment. Much enthusiasm from Mary Pat and the lifers in the program!

Retreat held at MCI-W

(By Angela Burrin, participant, amb@wau.org)

At the beginning of the year, a few of the women who attend Catholic services at MCI-W asked if they could have a retreat. Thanks to Chaplain Carr and Julie Owens, a volunteer, a retreat was arranged for Saturday, September 29th.

On the actual day, eighteen women were able to attend. Only one of them had ever been on a retreat before. In Julie's words, "The retreat at MCIW on 'God's Unconditional Love' was such a blessing!"

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The women were open and eager to learn about His love through the music, Mass, Confession, talks, meditations, personal journaling, and group sharing.

God was truly present throughout the day. The women, as well as the volunteers, experienced His love in a personal way. God willing, we hope to have another retreat at MCIW next year!"

Volunteer Chris Schwartz invites anyone interested to join him in giving a presentation to his RCIA group at MCI-W. Some dates and topics are: January 13 – Jesus; January 27 – the Communion of Saints; February 3 – Mary. He can be reached at chris.schwartz@ieee.org

Recent Events

Volunteer Retreat

September marked our first *Volunteer Retreat* that was held at St. John's Parish Center in Westminster. We are very grateful to pastor Monsignor Art Valenzano, volunteer coordinator Debbie Loveland and her group for their service and hospitality, as well as former prisoner Joseph who shared with us the struggles and joys of his journey of Faith that led to his Call to Serve.

Chaplain's/Coordinators Retreat

In October we had our annual *Chaplains/Coordinators Retreat and Fall Meeting* at St. Lawrence's in Jessup. We appreciate and thank pastor Father John Dorn and staff for their usual generous hospitality. We are grateful, too, to Sister Carol Czyzewski FSSJ for her thought-provoking presentation of "A Contemplative Stance in Ministry".

Site needed for Volunteer Retreat

In order to attract more volunteers and to support you who are so active, we are looking for a central Maryland or Hagerstown parish to sponsor our *Volunteer Retreat* for a Saturday of next year. Also, if you know any former prisoner who would like to share some of his/her Faith journey with a group, please contact Sister Dolores.

Volunteer Opportunities

- The administrator at the Thomas O'Farrell Youth Center in Marriottsville expressed a wish for a Church to adopt their Center, perhaps providing a pizza party or other activity for their 45 boys.
- The Assistant Principal at MCI-J expressed a need for Math and Writing tutors.
- The Baltimore City and the Baltimore County detention centers each have a unit for juvenile boys and need volunteers.
- The Baltimore County Detention Center in Towson needs two volunteers for their monthly *Story Book* program.
- A huge thank you to Father Milton Hipsley for his 10 + years of weekly service in each of the three correctional facilities in Cumberland. If anyone travels to that part of our state, know that Fr. Milton desperately needs volunteers there.
- We continue to search for people who would like to be involved in a three or more session Restorative Justice *Special Program* for state prisoners. The text with workbook is Restoring Peace. Victims as well as other speakers are needed to present the program to prisoners who can and wish to verbally take responsibility for their crime. For more information contact Sister Dolores.
- Each month we join with the DOC's Transition Personnel in presenting an exit orientation to prisoners who are leaving prison within the month. We have the opportunity to tell the inmates what St. Vincent de Paul, Catholic Charities, and other Catholic groups offer to help exiting prisoners during this crucial time. If interested in accompanying Sister Dolores and in possibly representing us in the future for these classes, please let her know.



St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore

Our Mission

To help people who are suffering from the effects of poverty meet their basic human needs and achieve a better future for themselves and their family.

Our Values

Inspired by Gospel values, we serve all people, as we see God's living presence in every person.

We seek to maximize volunteer involvement, as we believe that caring people can make a difference in the lives of others, and that personal and spiritual growth occurs when people become directly involved in helping others.

We advocate for those we serve, encourage personal responsibility, foster hope, and promote the dignity and self-worth of each individual.

We seek to build a sense of community, and to form community partnerships in support of our work.

We strive to offer the highest possible quality of services in an efficient and effective manner, to strive for overall organization excellence, and to adapt to the changing needs of those we serve.

Programs

Adelante Familia
Beans and Bread
Camp St. Vincent
Cottage Avenue Community
FoodShare
Frederick Ozanam House
Head Start
Home Connections
Mobile Clothing Bank
Parish Conferences
Prison Outreach
Samaritan Center
Sarah's Hope
Learn to Earn at St. Ambrose
YouthPlace at St. Ambrose

News & Resources

Employment for women offenders

Recently Sister Dolores attended a workshop on *Emotions and Employability: A Focus on the Soft Skills of Employment for Women Offenders*. The presenter had written a workbook on this title and forwarded the 55 pages to participants who requested them. The material focuses on awareness of emotions, what triggers them, and why. Lack of awareness often results in former prisoners quitting their jobs on the spur of the moment when emotionally overwhelmed. A good workbook! For an e-mail copy, contact Sister Dolores.

Resource packet available

Brockbridge volunteers, Pam Clark and Leo Regensberger, have compiled a packet listing the resources available in Baltimore City and several surrounding counties. Their goal is to make it available to all churches, so that when someone in need, perhaps a former prisoner, comes to the church door, staff will know where to refer them for help.

Maryland CURE

Maryland's Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants recently met in Columbia, MD. The group's goals are "to reduce crime by reducing the number of lives – victims, offenders, prisoners and their families – wasted in the endless cycle of crime, victimization, incarceration, and recidivism". Representatives of MD CURE met with Gary Maynard, Secretary for the Department of Public Safety. Among the topics they discussed were ACA (American Correctional Assn.) accreditation for Maryland's prisons and the problems of transportation for families in Baltimore who want to visit their loved ones in Hagerstown and Cumberland. The group appreciated the Secretary's openness to their concerns and agreed to have a CURE representative at a commission meeting that will discuss gangs and violence in prison. To learn more about MD CURE and/or to get on their mailing list, contact sharie.booth@comcast.net. Next meeting is February 16, 10 a.m., in Columbia.



St. Vincent de Paul Fundraising Events

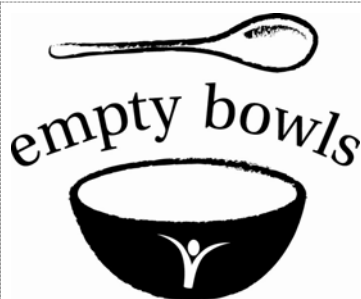


Treat your 'love' to an enjoyable Valentine's evening!

Sample a wide selection of wines from around the world, taste gourmet food, listen to live music, attend educational seminars, and bid on silent auction items.

Saturday, February 16: 7:00 – 11:00 p.m.
The Belvedere—One East Chase Street,
Baltimore, MD 21202

Tickets are \$80 per person. Order online at www.vincentbaltimore.org/newsandevents.cfm or call 410-547-5548.



Benefiting Beans & Bread
and Sarah's Hope

***“As our bowls
are filled, let us
remember those
that remain
empty.”***

Come to a simple soup and bread meal and make a difference in the lives of hungry and homeless people in the Baltimore community. Enjoy a wonderful selection of soups supplied by local restaurants, listen to live music, bid on items in our silent auction and choose a hand crafted ceramic bowl made by local artists and students. Take home the bowl as a reminder that many people are faced with hunger and homelessness each day.

Saturday, March 15, 2008:
4:00 – 7:00 p.m.
College of Notre Dame
Doyle Hall Cafeteria
4701 North Charles Street,
Baltimore, MD 21210

Tickets are \$15 per person (children 5 and under are free). A pack of 10 tickets is \$125.

For tickets, call 410-547-5548 or visit www.vincentbaltimore.org. Tickets are also available at Beans & Bread and Sarah's Hope.



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