

REACHING OUT *from Within*



From Co-Founder SuEllen Fried

You've heard the expression – "Today is the first day of the rest of your life." Well, 2011 is the first year of the rest of our Reaching Out From Within life!

We have a wonderful leadership team in place. Russ Thompson is our new President and Paul Showalter is our new Executive Director. Russ and Paul are preparing us to offer mentoring and reentry support. Similar reentry plans are underway by Joel Jackson's group in Wichita.

ROFW groups are capturing valuable data that will enable us to plan effectively for the future and tell our story in an exciting way.

Next year we will celebrate our 30th Anniversary and hope to have a memorable event in Kansas City. Please keep in touch with us when you return to your community so we can send you an invitation.

Our terrific Board of Directors brings great energy and skills to our vision for the years to come. Our GED program, chaired by Judy Beiriger involves five outside volunteers and ROFW members who serve as tutors. We are proud that 10 men have received their GEDs and there will be many more.

As President Emeritus, I am going to work on expanding ROFW beyond Kansas. If any of you will be completing your sentence in another state, please let us know so we can help you Reach Out to Others from Within.

A new look and a more frequent publishing schedule!

With this edition of *Inside & Out*, we experiment with a new format for our readers. The change will permit us to print more frequently and shorten the delay between deadline and publication.

The goal is to improve communication between our 14 ROFW groups. Rather than three issues a year, we hope to double the number to six.

Also, we expect in the near future to begin offering our readers in the community the option of receiving the newsletter by email. We anticipate that all the above changes will speed delivery and reduce costs.

To help us in this transition, we invite ROFW members and friends to comment on the changed look and offer your suggestions. Your ideas and feedback are very important to us. Readers may contact us by mail, email or phone. Contact information is on the last page.

--Paul Showalter, Executive Director

News and Views from ROFW Groups

El Dorado Correctional Facility

We have just finished two chapters in the Blue Book. Some of it has to do with us and our past life; we did learn a lot of things that we didn't know. Some of the people in our group told stories of their past and what drugs and alcohol has done to them, love ones and people they have known throughout their life.

ROFW wins mentor grant

Some ROFW members will soon be able to participate in a new ROFW mentor program that helps with reentry to community life.

Starting in August, ROFW will begin matching ROFW members to ROFW community mentors. The voluntary mentoring plan is funded through a \$25,000 demonstration grant from the Health Care Foundation of Greater Kansas City.

The ROFW mentoring program will start small and serve ROFW members releasing to Wyandotte and Johnson counties from Lansing and Topeka correctional facilities.

As the program gains momentum and funding, it will expand to other facilities and other parts of the state.

How ROFW mentoring will work

The grant will strengthen ROFW alumni groups, add many community mentors and add new services to benefit ROFW mentees upon release. Among its features:

1. Mentees will be matched with mentors 6-12 months prior to release and will meet regularly with their mentor in prison and for at least 6 months after release.
2. KDOC staff will identify offenders releasing to Johnson and Wyandotte counties at LCF and TCF and refer them to ROFW groups. Those that choose to become ROFW members inside prison will be eligible for the ROFW mentoring program.
3. Besides receiving friendly support, mentees will access a variety of services, such as help with applications for jobs, schooling and housing; linkage to health and social services; and help with other needs.
4. Mentees will be able to access alumni-led ROFW groups in the community designed to provide additional education, networking and support. Mentees will be able to learn from alumni who have already established themselves.

(See Mentoring Grant, page 8)

It was an eye opener to a lot of the members. The stories from each individual were pretty much the same in the overall concept.

We had a game night with refreshments and our company for the infirmary patients. Talking to them, playing games and getting to know them, really made their day. We had a lot of them say "thank you for what you are doing for us." They don't get many visits or activities back in the infirmary.

It was kind of ironic to be going through the Blue Book on drugs and alcohol and having game night. At the infirmary, you can see what the results are and what it can and will do to you in the future.

I think if teenagers and young and old adults saw what this stuff does to you and your body, they might think twice about their future and the consequences caused to themselves and everyone around them.

So if you care about someone and see them into drugs and alcohol, take them somewhere that has the after-effects of these substances, and maybe it will scare them from using.

--Don Rowell, News Editor

Leadership training

I would like to thank Di and Marilyn for the leadership class they presented to the Reaching Out From Within call out. It was full of great information that we can use to make our meetings even more productive.

Also, I would like to welcome the new members that have recently joined the call out. If you are showing an interest in learning what we have to offer and how to become a leader in this facility, then you are already on your way.

Everyone has been pretty patient about the recent fund raising event after many tie ups on one thing or another. Hopefully the fund-raiser hand out will go as planned, and everyone will like the items they ordered.

--Steve Holdren, Secretary

Bagging Meals for the Haiti Relief Effort

On April 12, EDCF-C inmates bagged food for the Haiti devastation. The inmates bagged 93,258 meals for Numana, which is a non-profit organization based here in El Dorado, Kansas.

We want to encourage all facilities to donate to this organization to help keep up this good cause. Each meal is approximately 30 cents. If you are interested, have your sponsors contact Rick McNary, CEO of Numana (316-452-5551) or check out their website (www.numanainc.com).

Winfield Correctional Facility

It's been an amazing past eight months for ROFW Winfield. We've seen a struggling group of two increase to almost 20 with new members interested every week. It's positive thinking that put us in the same room, and the new Blue Books have kept us together. Thank you Blue Book! And thank you B.B. Committee!

Outside of the Blue Book, we've still been busy. In the past six months we've hosted almost 30 engagements totaling 70 hours of *Reaching Out From Within*, speaking to over 800 young people and some "At Risk" groups. We've also donated over \$2,100 to local charities like: The Salvation Army, C.C. Safe Homes and a learning center, which we visit once a month and have plans for further donations in the works.

ROFW continues to impact our lives here at Winfield and the lives of those around us. Thank you ROFW and everyone who makes this group possible. Here's to another exciting half year.

--Andrew Washington, Chairman



Winfield members

Hutchinson Correctional Facility

Central Unit

We've been very busy here. We have welcomed our new sponsor, Mrs. Wylie. She is enjoying learning the aspects of our group and offers positive feedback in the form of encouragement for the betterment of ourselves and the steps we've taken in that direction.

We just completed the "Domestic Violence" unit and are getting started on the "Communication" unit. The guys here are making great progress in learning and understanding the lessons in the Blue Book. We've also been making progress in getting ourselves established here in the Central Unit.

We finished our yearly fundraiser and have many plans to give back to our community. A lot of positive things are being made possible for us here and we are hoping for more in the future as things progress.

Overall, things are going great and we have many plans for future endeavors that will benefit those needing our help. We'd like to thank everyone that is helping to make these things happen for those of us currently incarcerated and please let us know if there is anything the Central Unit group can do to help. Keep up the good work guys and gals across Kansas. We send all our best wishes for the future.

"Freedom is an incremental process."

--W.P. Young

Norton Correctional Facility

In January, we completed the donations for God's Pantry. It was a nice turn out. We are going ahead with our next fund raiser event in April with the cooperation of KDOC staff members.

All members have received their incredible new Blue Book. In past couple of months, we have conducted various sessions on addiction, toxic shame, conflict resolution, and internalize process both from the Blue Book and other *Reaching Out From Within* Library books. We design our curriculum based on members' current need.

We strongly believe action speaks louder than words. To reflect it in our curriculum, we always emphasize on role play as a part of expression to maximize group's learning. We are organizing our next open house on 1st of March. We had our last open house late last year. To everyone's surprise, almost ten percent of the facility attended that open house. Since then, the group has grown leaps and bounds with new members. We expect the same turn out his time.

This group continues to earn respect from all corners of this facility. Our sponsor, Ms. Sharan, Chairman Mr. Keen and Co-chairman Mr. Johnson provide great leadership to inspire all the members to conduct themselves not only as good human beings and productive society members but also as role models for our families and society at large.

As an old adage goes, "we cannot become what we want to be by remaining what we are." Our group is filling and completing this old saying by providing the platform for what we want to be.

Dealing with the Past

Anger. It is easy to define: the noise of the soul. Anger. The unseen irritant of the heart. .Anger. The relentless invader of silence... The louder it gets the more desperate we become.

Some of you are thinking...you don't have any idea how hard my life has been. And you're right, I don't. But I have a very clear idea how miserable you future will be unless you deal with your anger. X-ray the world of the vengeful and behold the tumor of bitterness: black, menacing, malignant. Carcinoma of the spirit. Its fatal fibers creep around the edge of the heart and ravage it. Yesterday you can't alter, but your reaction to yesterday you can. The past you cannot change, but your response to you past you can.

Lansing Correctional Facility

Maximum Unit

Do Unto Others

Responsibility is demanding more from yourself for the sake of others.

This is a wonderful day! Why? Because you are alive and breathing. Take the responsibility to smile and tell each person you encounter today: "Have a good day. It is wonderful to be alive."

We are connected, each and every one of us, and it is our purpose to cherish and celebrate life as it is. You never know what is going on in the life of that other person. He may be grieving the loss of a loved one, suffering separation from the person he hopes to spend the rest of his life with, or celebrating the arrival of a new life into the world. When you smile and tell each man, woman and child you encounter that it is wonderful to be alive, you may bring some much needed joy or closure into a life.

Each person's life is unique, but we all experience the same emotions from time to time. People lose jobs, find themselves in financial trouble, find new employment, embark upon careers, celebrate birthdays,

and so on. Everyone needs the occasional handshake or embrace, expressions we sometimes take for granted.

It is our responsibility to courageously apply the courage and take the first step. We behave responsibly when we demonstrate the spirit of love unselfishly through our actions.

“I love you” are very powerful words. A smile and a sincere embrace, or handshake, expresses those three words when you are not able to verbally express them. *Reaching Out From Within* embraces the belief that people can stop the violence. We believe that it is our responsibility to change old ideas and beliefs for new ones. We demonstrate our responsibility through love, caring, and true compassion for our peers. Our example can spread like wildfire, breeding hope in times of hopelessness, giving strength when we feel weak, giving light where there is darkness, and opening doors that once blocked our way.

We are here and we are here to stay. With each breath we take as we welcome each wonderful day, we wholeheartedly take up our individual responsibility to greet every person we encounter with a smile and a warm embrace. We courageously adhere to the belief that we can never be whole of fulfilled until we individually have done our part to stop all violence. Our foundation is rooted in the virtues of love, truth, respect, forgiveness and positive change. We are small in terms of the whole of mankind, but we are growing and we are becoming stronger. We urge those of you who receive this message to share in the responsibility.

In love, truth, respect, forgiveness, and a positive sense of change, we greet you with a smile and a warm embrace.

--Ronnie, Lansing Correctional Facility-Maximum

Lansing Medium

We have held our election for this year. A couple of the original board members were re-elected, but there were new ones also.

On May 11, the group we organized Mother's Day gifts for visiting women. The Mother's Day Flower Give Away went great! We ended up having to cut our flower order in half because of a KDOC visiting decision. But regardless we ordered 60 flowers (carnations) for Mother's Day. As it happened, the last mother that came through the door for a visit received the last flower. So everything went great.

We also produced a pamphlet as an introduction of “who” we are and what we're about. We are hoping for the best outcome.

We are planning this year's Summit. We are hoping for a good turnout. This year, like every year, we are also going to do a food drive for a homeless shelter. We each, not just as individuals but a groups, need to keep in mind that out there somewhere is someone we care about that may be in the situation we are trying to support. Anything can happen.

In the last twenty years that I have done, I have seen guys come and go. The one thing I continuously hear is “I will never come back here.” Some guys really mean it, and they stay out there and live a productive life. But then there are those who come back, repeatedly. They are the ones we really have to look at and try to help them. Because the simple fact is, they NEED help. Whether it is knowledge they are lacking, or simply a new direction in their life.

We can be that new direction. We can be that new found knowledge. Let us be the reason that the recidivism rate I Kansas goes down. Let us reach out to those who need us and want us. Let us live up to our name. Let us Reach Out From Within. Reach out from within ourselves and help those who may be less fortunate, not just in monetary thought, but in knowledge as well. Let us look out for each other. The one work that can describe all that I have just said is UNITY. We have to have unity to accomplish anything in this life. Unity means progression. Progression means possibly not ever coming back to this place once you leave it, and holding true to the words uttered by so many as they walk out the door. Let us have unity in saying “I will never come back here.”

There is one other definition to “coming back here” that I want you to think of—coming back to a violent past. Once we learn who we are, let us progress to the future and never return to who we were in the past. We are also given the attention of Sen. Tom Holland on April 8, 2011. Through our extreme letter writing of Reaching Out to the public, we sent a letter to the senator, and invited him to sit in on one of our weekly sessions to learn more about how a violent place could have inmates that teach against violence. He said he wanted to know more about us, so we showed him a good time. We also extended him a return invitation.

Just remember we can live up to our name better than anyone else, because we made this happen. Not we as a group but we as individuals who have come together for a common cause, an end to the violence. Unity in the group spells greatness. With greatness we can achieve anything for everyone. UNITY. It should be taught as a lesson.

--L. Coleman, Secretary, LCF-Medium

Be Careful

A mouse believed and trusted in the mouse God who gave him all he asked for.

One day an elephant pushed over the tree in which the mouse lived. Being upset, the mouse said: "God if I could only be an elephant for one year, I'd put a stop to bullies like him."

Being tired from the work of cleaning his home, the little mouse fell into a deep sleep. When he awoke, he felt so heavy it was hard to move. He went to the pond for a drink and saw from his reflection in the water that he was an elephant.

"Oh God, I'm an elephant!" hollered the mouse.

"Yes," said God, "you asked to be an elephant."

The mouse said, "but there's not enough for an elephant to eat here."

God replied: "Be careful of what you ask for; be what you are, and all things will come.

--V. Johnson, LCF- Medium

Lansing-Minimum

Greetings from the "Hill." We hope that everyone is using the new Blue Book. We have slowly been going through the Blue Book. Some of the units we have been reviewing are: Prison Mentality, Spirituality, and Domestic Violence.

We were able to watch the video "Into the Fire," which was produced by the Topeka Correctional Facility Reaching Out From Within. We would like to sincerely thank the women at TCF for producing such a fine play. It stimulated a great discussion here on the hill.

We also watched a video "Attempted Murder: Confrontation" produced by HBO. The documentary presents a victim offender mediation performed in a New York correctional facility. Until next time.

--Jason L.

Topeka Correctional Facility

TCF-Minimum

Normal

"There are things that no one tells you that you must experience in order to learn. It only hurts the first few times. You scream, and you scream and you scream until your throat is raw. Your eyes are swollen and you taste a substance in the back of your throat that is like bile, vomit and tears all rolled into one.

"You cry for your mother. You cry for yourself, and you beg for God. You can't understand what is happening.

"You can't believe it's happening, and yet, it is. And so, bit by bit, you fall silent. Terror won't last forever, it takes too much energy.

"In truth, terror occurs when you are confronted by the unknown. But once it has happened enough, when you've been beaten, violated and broken, it's not unknown-- is it? The same act that once shocked you, hurt you and shamed you, has now become the "normal" for you. This is your day; this is the life you lead. This is what you have become. So, you become numb."

These words are from a book, but they are my life. I faced this terror every day. There is no reason a woman, child or man should ever have to live with fear like this. And nowhere in the universe is this "normal."

(Continued on next page)

Message from ROFW President Russ Thompson

I was honored to be elected President of the Board of Directors for Reaching Out From Within on April 19, 2011. SuEllen Fried, our founder who preceded me as President of the Board, is now President Emeritus.

I have been volunteering with Reaching Out From Within since 1996. For six of those years I was Chairman of the statewide program when it was part of Stop Violence. During the period 2000-2006 I was able to visit with the ROFW groups in El Dorado, Hutchison, Lansing, Larned, and Winfield in the company of Trish Madsen, who was our professional staff person at that time.

Then I was taken out of the area by my job during the period 2007-2009 and was unable to continue as a volunteer with ROFW. When I retired in May 2010 I returned to volunteer service at Lansing Correctional Facility. I am currently one of the volunteer sponsors for the ROFW group at LCF Minimum.

This is an exciting time for ROFW. We have developed a plan to expand upon our program's successful tradition of empowering participants and facilitating their positive transformation. We plan to begin offering reentry mentor support for all of our program participants. In May I went through KDOC training to be a mentor and am now matched with a member of the ROFW group at LCF Maximum.

ROFW mentors will be providing one-on-one support for their mentees, while encouraging continued participation in ROFW groups both inside the correctional facility and outside in the community. The community Reentry Support Groups of ROFW are already in place in KCK and Wichita. Those groups meet on Sunday evening each week.

We encourage all alumni to connect with one of those existing Reentry

(See *President's Message*, page 8)

Get help. Get out. Don't be a victim—be a survivor. Don't be a statistic and end up in prison or dead. Don't be silent. Speak out. Let's end domestic abuse.

--Tamara T., Co-facilitator

A Strong Woman and a Woman of Strength

A strong woman works out every day to keep her body in shape. But a woman of strength kneels in prayer to keep her soul in shape. A strong woman isn't afraid of anything, but a woman of strength shows courage in the midst of her fears. A strong woman lets anyone get the best of her, but a woman of strength gives the best of herself to everyone. A strong woman makes mistakes and avoids the same in the future. A woman of strength realizes life's mistakes can also be God's blessings and capitalizes on them.

A strong woman walks surefooted, but a woman of strength knows God will catch her when she falls. A strong woman wears a look of confidence on her face, but a woman of strengths wears grace.

A strong woman has faith that she is strong enough for the journey, but a woman of strength has faith that it is in the journey that we will become strong.

--Andrea Jones (AJ) and friends

Greetings from TCF-Minimum

Our year has started off good. We welcome a few new members: Heather Paxton, Duchess C., and Andrea Jones Davenport. So congratulations on your membership!

On March 8, we had a speaking engagement. Our guests were future social workers from Kansas University. Diane R., Tamara T. and Michelle E. spoke to the group.

Myself and Duchess C. sat in and got to witness raw emotions and the girls answering tough questions. On March 10, Tosha R., Michelle E. and Duchess C. spoke to future social workers from Kansas State University. Both engagements produced vital information for all.

Also on March 8, our group watched a film titled "Sin by Silence." It's a documentary made by women in a California prison that details their abuse at the hand of their spouses. The movie was touching and I believe it did its job. We had a mental health professional on hand for anyone who needed it. It was a great turnout.

We finally received our Blue Books and we are very excited to be starting work in them. So far the year is looking bright for *Reaching Out From Within*. We challenge all of you to set a goal for 2011 and stick with it.

--Heather P., Treasurer, Newsletter Editor

--Tamara T., Co-facilitator, Newsletter Editor

President's Message

(Continued from page 7)

Support Groups, or to contact our Executive Director, Paul Showalter, about starting up a new group where one does not already exist. To assist in connecting our members who are being released from incarceration with existing Reentry Support Groups, I request that each inside group provide a letter (SUBJECT: Release from Incarceration) to each departing member prior to release. Contact me at rthompson67@kc.rr.com and I will reply with a copy of the letter attached for your use.

In order to support the development of the ROFW mentoring program, we have submitted applications for two major grants. We will continue to apply for grant dollars. In order to compete successfully for grant funding, we need data.

I ask everyone involved with ROFW to help collect accurate data about group participation and volunteer contribution. I would like to have you forward that data to me or Executive Director Paul Showalter (pshowalter1@hotmail.com) at the end of each quarter. For the first quarter (January through March), ROFW volunteers reported traveling 2365 miles at their own expense and working 359.25 total man hours in their volunteer service. That is impressive information for potential grant funders who are trying to maximize impact with their grant awards.

The fact is, those miles and hours were contributed by just seven of our many volunteers (Beiriger, LaVan, Weiblen, Fried, Goetz, Ranney, and Thompson). Imagine how many miles and hours that would be if all of our volunteers reported. We are now midway through the second quarter (April through June). Please get me your volunteer miles and hours, along with group member attendance records, for the second quarter prior to the end of July

--Russell S. Thompson, Ph. D.

Mentoring Grant, Continued

(Continued from page 2)

5. Mentees will be able to take part in First Day Out services that address their specific needs. For example, the mentee may need a ride from the prison to their new residence, help opening a bank account or getting ID or applying for food stamps, etc.

Already, six ROFW volunteers, including ROFW president Russ Thompson, have completed KDOC mentor training to get ready for the program's start. ROFW expects to enlist 30 mentors the first year.

Looking ahead, ROFW's Board of Directors also applied for a federal Second Chance Act mentoring grant. The two-year grant, if it is awarded, would begin in October and would add Sedgwick County and other Kansas correctional facilities to the ROFW mentoring plan. The counties targeted by the plan have the largest number of releases.

ROFW is one of two state organizations that is a member of the KDOC's Mentor Steering Committee. The committee advises KDOC on its newly launched Mentoring4Success program that seeks to expand the availability of mentors.

Errors and omissions

We apologize in advance for any errors or omissions in this newsletter. You can reach us with your comments and inquiries...

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