



FRIENDS OF THE WAY HOME

Our Mission: To free individuals from the cycle of crime and despair by providing them with holistic support after prison that generates hope, self-sufficiency and connection to the community.

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From the Director's Corner Winter 2011

The other night, as I was traveling some back roads, heading home after dark around 9 o'clock, I was surprised and delighted to see a huge orange crescent moon, smiling through the western trees, close to the horizon! The moon set was magnificent, but somewhat disorienting. I'm used to seeing the moon set in the west on summer mornings! Without any effort on my part; at times without even a measure of awareness, things come full circle.

Traveling back to St. Martha's in Bethany Beach with Anthony Tilson, who spoke at Way Home Sunday there, was another "full circle" experience. (See article and photo on page 2.)

From the Director's Corner *Continued on Page 2*



Previews Of Coming Attractions!

December 16th at 6:30 p.m.

Quarterly Celebration Participant of the Quarter Dinner
Tunnell Hall, Georgetown Presbyterian Church,
North Bedford Street, Georgetown. Bring a covered dish!



TWH Honored by Governor Markell



Left to Right: Pat Fleetwood, The Way Home Board Member; Tony Neal, Lead Case Worker; Barbara Del Mastro, Program Director; Lee Dogoloff, and Jessica Clark, Board Members.

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Members of the Breaking into Prison Bible Study met Tony in 1997. Recently paroled, he now has a job, a driver's license, and plenty of dreams and plans for a better future. Supporters who have been in his corner all during the years rejoice in his progress. We walked out to view the bricks embedded in the sidewalks around the church. Some had only one name. These were purchased years ago by parishioners to keep the names of the Bible Study prisoners awaiting release fresh in our minds. Tony looked at his brick, and those of others, in silence.

In my own life, I am getting ready to attend my youngest child's college graduation. It seems like just yesterday I was juggling work and school schedules, packing lunches, and speeding off to hockey games. This year, she returned home in time to cook for Thanksgiving: A heart-felt full circle.

We don't always have the answers as we set out on various endeavors. Our careful plans can be blown into the wind in a twinkling. It can be so difficult to stay open to possibility when many around us are urging caution, citing potential roadblocks, advising restraint.

But, as poet Mary Oliver reminds us in her magnificent poem, *The Summer Day*, **“What is it that you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?”** What are we doing, and what are we going to do with our immense gift called life?

Fr. Max Wolf encourages us to keep asking the important questions. “In what ways is God making things new in our lives? What does God need to make new in us? When will we evolve to see things more as children see them – without prejudice and judgment?”

I ponder these questions and more as I go about my work, as I speak with those who have short-circuited their full circle more than once, caught on the merry-go-round of addictions and poor choices, as I wrestle with *my* inner demons, who keep popping up in different guises. I ponder, as I journey with so many others through this one precious and magnificent life, coming full circle – again and again.

Barbara Del Mastro

TWH Honored by Governor Markell

On October 28th, The Way Home was among several recipients of the 2010 Governor's Outstanding Volunteer Awards. Program Director, Barbara Del Mastro, and Tony Neal, Lead Case Manager, were presented with a plaque by Governor Jack Markell who recognized them for their strong leadership and constant inspiration.

Governor Markell also recognized The Way Home and other exceptional individuals and groups as the best in community service for making significant and diverse contributions improving local neighborhoods, by preserving history for generations to come, by helping individuals with life skills, decision making, and raising both money and awareness by volunteering countless hours for the benefit of fellow Delawareans.



A Way Home Participant Speaks at St. Martha's Episcopal Church

St. Martha's Episcopal Church in Bethany Beach, where The Way Home program first originated as a prison Bible Study in 1996, invited Way Home participant, Tony Tilson, to share his journey at two Sunday worships on October 31st.



Left to Right: TWH Board member, Jeff Jackson; Barbara Del Mastro, Program Director; Tony Tilson; and the Reverend Mark Cyr, Interim Rector of St. Martha's Episcopal Church in Bethany Beach, Delaware.

Since 1998, The Way Home has helped hundreds of ex-offenders stay out of prison, providing comprehensive case management for participants for less than one-sixth of the cost of incarceration. The Way Home aims for no more than five (5) percent recidivism among participants and seeks to eliminate recidivism among participants altogether.

Aside from the cost of crime to the community, Delaware taxpayers are paying approximately \$30,000 per year to house one inmate in prison.

The Way Home Program provides case management services for a participant for approximately \$5,500 per year, one-sixth of the cost of incarceration.

The Way Home Program serves over 100 persons per month.

In 2006, the University of Delaware (UDE) released the results of a 5 year study that compared the recidivism rates of ex-offenders who participated in The Way Home with those who did not. The study found that The Way Home participants were less likely to return to prison, especially during the first year of release. In 2004, the recidivism rate for Way Home participants (10 percent) was approximately half that of Department of Correction's clients (21 percent).

The Way Home grew out of a church-sponsored prison Bible study where volunteers realized the desperate needs of men who were being released from Sussex Correctional Institution and took action to make a difference. The program began formal operation in 1998 under Children and Families First. After the first year of operation, The Way Home then became affiliated with the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware and in 2006 became an independent, non-denominational, non-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status.

Tony, the son of alcoholic parents, moved 35 times before he was 17 years old. After a botched robbery that turned into homicide, he served 23 years. Now in his forties, A Way Home case worker recently met him at the prison gates. Tony continues to work with The Way Home.

While in prison, among other activities he pursued, was the "Breaking Into Prison" Bible Study formed by the Reverend Jim Lewis' discipleship group at St. Martha's in 1996. Tony's eloquence and his deep faith was evident as he talked about his journey outside the prison walls, hopes for the future, and of the support that The Way Home continues to provide in the transition. He commented that his success was due to The Way Home's faith in him and particularly with Barbara Del Mastro's and TWH's staff who have cared for and supported his journey since 1996.

Tony is highly motivated, as well as humble and grateful. He used his prison time wisely learning all he can. He took some college courses and learned computer skills and is skillful at organization, teaching and leading groups. Since his release, he has obtained a driver's license and has opened a checking and savings account with a donation from All Saints' Episcopal Church in Rehoboth and his host family and a cousin who lives in Middletown. Now in work release, he is seeking employment.

Tony likes working with young people and hopes to start a program of alternatives to violence, bullying, and peer pressure, and making good choices, etc., titled "Help Increase Peace in Schools."

Among Tony's comments at the worship was: "The Way Home is a 'world-changing' program." Everyone he knows "involved with The Way Home has been successful and has not re-offended...The Way Home gives hope to those inside."

The Reverend Mark Cyr, St. Martha's Interim Rector, reminded the congregation that the course of our lives can change in the twinkling of an eye. He thanked Tony Neal, Barbara Del Mastro - The Way Home's program director; and all of the parishioners who help with this important ministry for their time and dedication.

Ms. Del Mastro received several donations and thanked St. Martha's parishioners for donating to The Way Home.



**And God's People
Show Their Support
For The Way Home**



Right Center: Teri Smith-Jones, Chairperson of the Outreach Committee of All Saints' and St. George's Chapel presents a donation to Barbara Del Mastro with Warden Heidi Gilmore, far left; the Reverend Max Wolf, Rector, far right,

In the true spirit of Hebrews 13:1, "Remember those who are in prison as though you were in prison with them," at the conclusion of the annual meeting of the Episcopal Parish of All Saints' Church and St. George's Chapel, on October 14th, Outreach Committee Chairperson, Teri Smith-Jones presented Barbara Del Mastro with a donation from both congregations to The Way Home.

"All Saints' and St. George's Chapel have been supportive of The Way Home for many years," Barbara said. "All Saints' Thrift Shop helped furnish a participant's first home and is always responsive to our needs. Faithful volunteers have brought coats and jackets and refreshments for groups to the office and have helped with emergency needs. Some years ago, All Saints' hosted a Tea and Inmate Art Auction! I still remember the delicious scones and the appreciation shown for the prisoners' art work, often created with limited and rudimentary supplies. The Way Home is on the prayer list at All Saints' and we feel the warmth of your presence and the strength of your prayers as we go about our work.

For years, we held a Women's Group here at All Saints' in the Chapel area. I would bring the women from the Work Release building in Georgetown and arrive at the church just around sunset. How beautiful the light was at that time of day, streaming in through the stained glass! We often started our evening with a quick look at the ocean.

For many, it had been years since they had glimpsed the sea and smelled the wonderful salt air! The women felt a sense of reverence and peace here in the church. I would always allow time at the end of our sessions for them to kneel in private prayer in the chapel or at the altar. The sacred space of All Saints' gave the women solace, if only temporary, from the often dehumanizing aspects of incarceration.

Our work is challenging work, sometimes heart-breaking work – but always inspiring work. Many people really do change. They work hard, put the past behind, and move on into positive and productive lives.

Thank you for your prayers and for your generous support," Barbara concluded.



Profiles in Courage

The radius of Troy's community is small – from the transition house located on a back street in Millsboro where he is co-manager, he walks to a grocery store, a coffee and donut shop, and a sandwich shop. But he treads the neighborhood with a grateful heart. Troy's release from prison after seven years, and recent return to work release for non-payment of child support, would be difficult for most people, but Troy is tenacious, persistent, and resilient.

After his release from prison in 2000, he worked as a mason for a Laurel company, a trade that he had been involved with since age 17. With the economic woes of the past few years, Troy was laid off after 10 years but soon found a job on the "rehang" assembly line of a local chicken processing plant, "hanging" approximately 5,000 chickens a day. The hung chickens then proceed down the line for others to continue processing in preparation for packaging and shipment. This past summer, he worked a second job.

Even after several years, Troy's right hand is still discolored from working in cement in all seasons. "The work (in the chicken plant) is hard and I don't

make as much money as I did as a mason, but it is regular and I am paying my bills,” he comments proudly. He is saving for a car, paid back child support, and is paying his child support on time. He takes his responsibilities as co-manager of the transition house seriously.

In prison, Troy joined the Key drug program and took advantage of other seminars. “I learned that my problems stemmed from my attitude and behavior and lack of decision-making skills. I learned a lot in prison about becoming a better person and making better choices,” he comments. “I’ve been struggling with addiction for 25 years. In prison, I learned to weigh the consequences of using drugs and alcohol and that recovery to stay clean and sober is a lifelong process.”

One of The Way Home’s first participants, Troy was released from prison with one pair of pants, one shirt, no place to stay, no job, and no family support.” I owe my success to The Way Home program and Barbara. She is like a mother to me – I call her Mom. She has been with me throughout the past 10 years. I’ve relapsed while in the program, been in bad relationships, and the program never wrote me off. Barbara has always ‘lifted me up’ by encouraging and supporting me when I made mistakes.”

Current research in the field of drug and alcohol counseling indicates that the crucial factor in a person’s ability to stay in recovery or to “bounce back” is the strength of connection with at least one other positive person. The Way Home works to strengthen and nurture these life-saving and life-changing connections with participants. Case managers keep their cell phones on at all times. A few encouraging words at the right time, affirmation for even small things done well, presence which tells a person they are not alone in their struggles, can make a world of difference.

Troy’s future dream is to become a barber and a drug and alcohol counselor. “I need to get a car first!” he exclaims.



Donor Helps Participants Get on the Track to Success!

With a generous grant from the Speer Trust, The Way Home is working hard to help participants further their educational and training goals! Many of our participants have had progress toward further education and training interrupted during the course of their lives. We are working to help them turn this trend around. Way Home case managers are encouraging Way Home participants to take out those dreams for a GED, a college degree, a Certificate Program or Journeyman’s License that got put on the shelf, dust them off, and start working toward making them realities! We are already seeing some great results:

- ❖ One Way Home participant is enrolled in Del Tech
- ❖ One is applying to Sussex Tech for GED classes; several others are considering this as a first step
- ❖ One is exploring getting a barber’s license, and working as a barber for a second job
- ❖ One is making plans to take a refresher course for his CDL license
- ❖ One has plans to pursue a degree in Business at Del Tech
- ❖ One has plans to pursue a degree in Human Services at Del Tech
- ❖ One is working toward getting his driver’s license, which will open up more educational opportunities
- ❖ One is enrolled in both the GED program, and the vocational apprenticeship program at Sussex Tech
- ❖ One is preparing for testing for a Welder’s license

We encourage participants to keep taking those steps forward. As the saying goes, “the longest journey begins with the first step.”



The Way Home Participants' Profile*

60% Male, 50% white, 35 Years Old on Average
97% With History of Substance Abuse
47% Abused as Children
52% Had Previous Psychiatric Treatment
78% No Permanent Housing Upon Release

90% of TWH Participants are Arrest Free After the First Year Out of Prison Compared With 79% of Non-participant Releases.

*According to a University of Delaware Study of The Way Home.

Donor Helps Participants *continued from page 5*

Several Way Home Alumni have stepped forward to serve as Mentors to those preparing for their GED's. Other Way Home volunteers are willing to help with specific study areas. We are excited about the enormous potential that is bubbling just below the surface in people's lives, and are honored to play a part in bringing that potential up and out into the light of day!

Thank you, Speer Trust, for this wonderful opportunity!



Heartfelt Thanks to the Community from The Way Home

Thanks to all of you – churches, individuals, and groups - who responded so generously to our appeal for help found in the last issue of Friends of The Way Home! Your help is so greatly appreciated and very much needed. We are using your contributions to further our mission of helping ex-offenders make a fresh start after serving time in prison.

More help is needed! Won't you consider a donation or pledge to The Way Home this year? All contributions are tax-deductible, and go to a very worthy cause. Ex-offenders are helped in becoming tax-paying rather than tax-draining citizens and are able to help not only themselves, but their families, and whole communities are strengthened. Safety is increased, and people gain a sense of hope as they become self-sufficient and productive.

No donation is too small. Please consider The Way Home this year as you go over your gift list!

Thank you again,

From Staff, Board of Directors, Volunteers, and Participants of The Way Home

In the Poet's Corner

I am not superman nor a child.
I am not my past nor my future.
Accept me for the man I am only this day.
I am not great nor small,
But somewhere in the middle
So rejoice with me for where I am.

Anthony Tilson

(The Way Home Writing Workshop at the Sussex Correctional Institution, August 22, 2002)

Meet Your Board Members

She is petite, yet carries a big stick – that is – in her position as the Secretary of The Way Home's Board of Directors. "She keeps us on the 'straight and narrow,'" comments program director, Barbara Del Mastro.

The only original board member still remaining since the program's inception, Tempe Steen is tremendously dedicated and her legal expertise and good judgment are invaluable to TWH's mission and future endeavors.

After teaching for 10 years in the Indian River School District, Mrs. Steen, in 1983, graduated from Widener University Law School and clerked in Georgetown's Superior Court. During the next 26 years she was associated with several firms in private practice and retired this year from Steen, Waehler & Schrider-Fox, LLC in Ocean View. Her primary practice focused on local government law for several Sussex County towns.

During that time she was also actively engaged in outreach with St. Martha's Episcopal Church in Bethany Beach and joined The Way Home at its inception. Although she was not directly involved in the Bible Study with TWH's participants, she worked diligently behind the scenes to incorporate The Way Home as an independent 501(c)(3) organization, developed the personnel manual, and continues to assist with fundraising, developing grants, and advising the board in modifying policy and other legal matters.

"It takes a particular feel and perspective to do this work. If we are going to remain independent, build upon the success of the program and be able to assure continued program stability and future growth in order to assist many more people, we need to find volunteers with the same calling," Mrs. Steen opines. "Our 'business' is both faith-based and business-based. We must follow through and behave accordingly in decision making," she concludes.





Thank

You!!!!

**...to everyone who plays such a vital role in helping The Way Home
keep reaching out to those leaving prison!**

...and the many individuals who give of their time, talent, and treasure!

Churches, synagogues, and centers of worship
across the State of Delaware
businesses, banks, financial institutions, foundations,
clubs, and other nonprofit organizations,
county and state,
and individual donors and anonymous patrons...

Please know that you are truly appreciated.



Thank

You!!!!

Ongoing Support Groups

Everlasting Hope
Wednesday nights
6:00 to 7:00 p.m.
Booker Street
Church of God
Georgetown

Bridges to the Future
4th Monday of each month
7:00 to 9:00 pm.
Georgetown Presbyterian
Church
North Bedford Street
Georgetown

Way Home Women's Group
4th Tuesday of each month
4:15 to 6:15 p.m.
Georgetown Presbyterian
Church
North Bedford Street
Georgetown

HELP WANTED

The Way Home is always looking for individuals willing to:

Research and write grant proposals. - Make a tax-deductible contribution. - Mentor a participant.

Visit someone in prison who receives few visitors. - Be a participant's pen pal. - Help with transportation.

Help organize a clothing/coat/necessities drive. – Serve on one of the Way Home committees.

Work with your church or civic organization to hold an annual fundraiser or give an annual pledge to the Way Home.

Help with job search/job contacts for The Way Home participants.

Pray for ex-offenders, all work in correctional institutions, and the community.

The Way Home
P. O. Box 1103
Georgetown, DE 19947

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