

HOPE · DIGNITY · PURPOSE



# FRIENDS OF THE WAY HOME

**Our Mission:** To meet former prisoners at the prison gates and the office door in Georgetown to provide connections with community, meet needs, and foster relationships that prevent return to prison.

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## From the Director's Corner

March 2012

Recently, I attended the annual Episcopal Diocesan Convention in Dover. It's always good to see old friends, connect with people that are always in our hearts but don't always make it into our calendars! It's good to have a time away, to see what other ministries across the state are doing, and to share what we can about our own. But the highlight of the weekend for me came with the powerful words of the guest preacher, The Reverend Michael Curry, Episcopal Bishop of North Carolina.

Bishop Curry spoke of the growing plurality of our country, the blurring and blending of religious "territories", the decline of "religion" and the upswing in "spirituality". He encouraged us to think about the way, the truth, and the life – not in the context of a particular religion, but about all people and all creation being part of the family of God.

*continued on page 2*



## Previews of Coming Attractions!

**March 15<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m.**

Quarterly Celebration Participant of the Quarter Dinner

Tunnell Hall, Georgetown Presbyterian Church,  
North Bedford Street, Georgetown.

The quarterly dinners are a time for fellowship, good food, sharing ideas, but most of all supporting The Way Home participants as they continue their journey.

Bring a covered dish!

RSVP to Rick Chamberlin, TWH Associate Director  
(302) 841-8289

## **FUNDRAISER**

**Saturday April 21<sup>st</sup>, 5:30 p.m.**

**Buffet Dinner, Silent Auction, Door Prizes, AND**

**Entertainment by Award-winning Singer and Songwriter,**

**Doug James\*\***

Irish Eyes, Lewes DE

**Reserve Tickets Now!**

Call Bob at

**(302) 293-5336**

\*\*See more details about the Fundraiser and Doug on Page 2.



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He spoke of his father reminding him, as he dropped him off at the freshman dorm, to “treat every girl the way you would want your sister to be treated”. What a world this would be if everyone treated every boy as we would want our brothers, fathers, and sons to be treated, treated every girl as beloved mothers, daughters, grandmothers....

Every day I see men and women walking down the road from the prison in Georgetown carrying their few possessions in a plastic garbage bag. Maybe they have not treated their brothers and sisters well and that’s why they were in prison. Maybe not. Maybe it was a travesty of justice that they became ensnarled in the criminal justice system in the first place, but now they must somehow work their way out of it.

It is a true challenge to stretch out a helping hand, when so many times that hand has been bitten, to forgive, even if we can’t forget, to refrain from drinking of the cup of bitterness and reach instead for the cup of hope.

As people of faith, that is what we are charged to do. The theme of our weekend together was Hope and Perseverance. And this is what it takes, day after day, to pick up the broken pieces and piece things together again, to seek for help in healing our broken hearts and battered memories, to keep going forward instead of falling back into old habits, old angers, old shortcuts that lead nowhere.

Ash Wednesday is a day that brings us face to face with our own mortality and marks us as a people who wander through many deserts, searching for springs of the spirit. We could not enter those deserts without hope and perseverance tucked somewhere in our psyches. I’m praying for extra helpings of both for myself and for the whole human family of God, from men and women desperate to find even a part-time job, to those without a home, being shuffled from place to place. I’m praying for double portions for all of the blessed creation, groaning under stresses we have never known before, from poisoned seas to fractured mountains, as we travel through the Lenten fast, making our way toward Easter – together.

*Barbara Del Mastro*

## **FUNDRAISER**

The continuing success of The Way Home relies on people like you, dear readers and supporters of TWH’s mission, who also deserve a night out or a weekend in the lovely town of Lewes overlooking the harbor along with helping The Way Home stay afloat.

The fundraiser on **Saturday, April 21<sup>st</sup> at Irish Eyes Restaurant** in Lewes offers hors d’oeuvres, a Silent Auction, and door prizes, beginning at 5:30 p.m. Delicious buffet entrees include Pasta Primavera with Zucchini Squash and Talapia, salad, dessert, and beverages as well as a cash bar.

During and after the buffet dinner, the nationally & internationally acclaimed singer and songwriter, Doug James, whose hometown is Rehoboth Beach and who also works out of New York City, will provide entertainment.

Doug’s songs have been performed and recorded by artists and producers such as Dionne Warwick, Joe Cocker, Barry Manilow, Michael Bolton, Dan Hill, and many, many more -- too numerous to mention. His songs include such hits as “After You”, “Break It to Me Gently”, and the 1990 BMI Song of the Year, “How Am I Supposed to Live Without You.”

For more information about Doug and to hear some of his popular music, visit <http://www.dougjamesmusic.com/>

A member of the Delaware Human Relations Commission (Got discrimination? Get Help: 877-54-HUMAN), Doug is an avid human rights – as well as animal rights – advocate and activist.

**Please call Bob Davis at (302) 293-5336 to reserve your tickets. The Way Home needs your support!**



## **Profiles in Courage**

One of Sylvonnia Stratton’s poems, Angels Sent From God, featured in the Fall 2011 The Way Home newsletter and read at the June 2011 Quarterly Dinner, states, “They never judge me or ask me a lot of questions... They just listen and give me a lot of

**Profiles in Courage.....continued on Page 3**

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 \$33,000 per year to house one inmate in prison.**

**The Way Home Program provides case management services for a participant for approximately \$5,000 per year, about one-sixth of the cost of incarceration.**

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.**

suggestions” but they explain “...it’s your choice to make a decision...if you would like to go beyond this door...”

That might partially explain Sylvonnia’s decision to seek more opportunities and to simply state, “God does things for a reason” in her decision to move to the Wilmington area. She admits many difficulties in transitioning after prison but she also commends Miss Barbara, Mr. Tony, and Mr. Rick, intimated in her Angels poem, with instilling the courage to make that decision to follow her heart.

Her background, typical for a young woman on her own since age 17, living a somewhat nomadic life due to some bad choices leading to petty crimes, serving several prison terms and several probation violations, also documents an abusive childhood and the need until 2011 to assuage the pain with drinking and using drugs.

“Sister Lorraine Morris of the Booker Street Church (in Georgetown) told me about The Way Home,” she explains. “Until then, I was in and out of halfway houses and relatives’ homes and sometimes lived on the street. I had no stability and as hard as I tried, I continued to make bad choices. I met Tony (Neal) in January 2008 and worked with Rick (Chamberlin) in 2011 who had more faith in me than I did. But it was Miss Barbara who said, ‘Get up, brush yourself off, and keep moving’ who finally steered me in the right direction.”

After a stint working in a local chicken processing plant, last summer, Sylvonnia worked tirelessly and faithfully at Sedona Restaurant in Bethany Beach and although she obtained her driver’s license in 2010, was without a vehicle. The Way Home staff and volunteers faithfully and tirelessly drove her to and from work. “Many of those early morning and late night trips became the mentoring process that gave Sylvonnia the courage to continue on the right path,” states Barbara.

“Through meditation and prayer, committed to meetings six times a week, and with the help of The Way Home staff, in February 2011, I surrendered to God. I began mentoring others in the program, volunteering at a local thrift shop, and doing service work at Booker Street Church. I am sober now, my head is clear, and I want to better myself,” Sylvonnia continues.

Sylvonnia recently moved “up north” to Wilmington in search of better job opportunities and to grow. She is continuing studies to complete her high school diploma and another goal is to obtain her CDL license. “I’m letting go, not holding on, and allowing God to lead me. The Way Home knew I needed them and they helped me. I’m at peace with my decision to move on. The Way Home gave me the tools to go where I need to go right now. I will always stay involved and in touch with The Way Home.”

1 John 5 states, “...our faith can overcome fear of change. Through prayer our hearts can be changed by the Spirit of love.” Sylvonnia, we wish you the best!



### **Meet Your Board Members**

The famous actress and comedienne, Lucille Ball, once said, “If you want something done, ask a busy person to do it.” And there is no question that board member Bob Davis fits the category of “busy person” along with most board members. However, unless you get to know him, you might not know the extent of his volunteerism, for his quiet demeanor belies his energy and focused get-it-done attitude.

Like many of us, Bob is transplanted from the Washington, D.C. area and after graduating high school in Silver Spring, Maryland, joined the U.S. Navy Construction Forces, the Seabees. In the four years of his enlistment, he built bases or housing in Guantanamo, Cuba; on the now-decommissioned Naval Air Station Argentia, Newfoundland; bases in French Morocco, Africa, and Eleuthera and a NASA space tracking station near Nassau in the Bahamas. After an honorable discharge, and a 43-year career with the Government Printing Office in Washington, D.C., he moved permanently to a home on Salt Pond in Bethany Beach, Delaware.

After working for a local building contractor and experiencing some medical problems, he looked around for volunteer work. While conducting Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous meetings, at Sussex Correctional Institution for work release prisoners about 10 years ago, he was introduced to Barbara

Del Mastro who invited him to join The Way Home board.

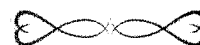
Since then, among other things, he with other Way Home volunteers, visit participants living at the Millsboro transitional home every Monday night. “We bring snacks and ice cream and mostly listen to the participants as they struggle with their re-entry into society. From these informal discussions, we get to know them, and we see them grow and flourish. It’s a good feeling,” he explains. “I’ve been in recovery for 32 years and I was given a great deal of insight for dealing with the participants. I wanted to give back.”

“Bob has been very faithful in providing transportation and assisting with job searches for many of The Way Home’s participants and helping with repairs on the transitional house,” comments Barbara Del Mastro. “At The Way Home board meetings, he adds a wonderful element of peace and eases any tension as he listens, summarizes the dialogue, and reminds us of who we are and what is important. Also, he is also faithful in bringing bagels to the monthly meetings!”

Bob is presently the chairman of the Lord Baltimore Lions Club Emergency Committee, whose mission is to help those in need of funds to buy fuel and for other emergency needs. He serves on a committee to furnish glasses for adults and children. In July, he will become president.

He is also on St. Martha’s Episcopal Church’s building committee dedicated to rehabbing mobile homes for low-income families, on the vestry board, and is an alternate delegate to the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware convention.

When asked about his thoughts for The Way Home’s future, Bob reflects, “Although The Way Home is experiencing funding cutbacks as many nonprofits are, the board and staff members are united in their mission, their vision, and their efforts to rectify the situation. There are opportunities for other talented and committed community members to help us in this journey. We just need to find them and convince them to join us!”



**In thanksgiving and remembrance for the life and ministry of The Reverend Canon P. Simon Mein**

We grieve with so many in the Episcopal Diocese of Delaware and at the same time give thanks for the life of The Reverend Canon P. Simon Mein, who died on Sunday, February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2012, following a tragic automobile accident.

Simon was a person of incredible depth, sensitivity, and kindness. I tried to absorb every word of his sermons that I was fortunate enough to hear during his work as priest at St. Martha's in Bethany Beach. He was very much attuned to our work with people coming out of prison, and always offered encouragement for this ministry. He worshipped and taught classes at All Saints' in Rehoboth for the past ten years, and was involved in the life of the parish of St. George's Chapel in Harbeson as well.

His roles as teacher, priest and chaplain touched many lives. His depth of experience, intense scholarship and attention to detail made each sermon, each conversation, a rich, vibrant journey that left listeners and friends in a thought-provoking place. His presence changed any atmosphere for the better – a change that lingered long after he left the room.

May his spirit of compassion, intellectual rigor, and deep love for the entire human family and the whole of God's creation live on in all of us who knew and loved him. May the spirit find expression in ways that we have yet to discover and experience, and empower us for the work crying out to be done in this world.

In gratitude for a life well-lived,  
Barbara Del Mastro

**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

**Conflict Resolution Workshop** – St Paul's Episcopal Church, Pine & Academy Streets, Georgetown  
Saturday, April 14<sup>th</sup> – 9:00 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. and Saturday, April 28<sup>th</sup> - 9:00 a.m. to 6:15 p.m.  
Lunch & soup & bread supper provided. Call The Way Home Office to register.

**HELP WANTED**

**The Way Home is always looking for individuals willing to:**

Mentor a participant. - Visit someone in prison who receives few visitors. - Help with on-going workshops.

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 former prisoners and all who live and work in correctional institutions, and the community.

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

Non-Profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Georgetown, DE  
# 275

Return Service Requested.

*The Way Home, Inc. is one of the grateful recipients of a 2011-2012 Criminal Justice Council Grant.*



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Barbara Del Mastro, Executive Director  
Tony Neal, Lead Case Manager

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