



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 2014

Time has sprung forward, and I often feel that I am running to catch up! We are at the midpoint of our 15th year of service as a formal non-profit community program, and our 17th year as a group of concerned citizens exploring our roles and possible avenues to be of help to men and women being released from Delaware prisons.

What have we learned over these years? What are some of the toughest lessons?

One of the most profound lessons that has come to me through these years is the lesson of renewal. I have only to look out the window today to be reminded of this timeless truth. "The only journey is the one within," Rainier Maria Rilke reminded us years ago, and these words ring true in every time and every season.

Continued on Page 2

Save the Dates!

June 19th

September 18th

December 18th

6:30 p.m.

Quarterly Celebration

Participants of the Quarter Dinners

Georgetown Presbyterian Church

North Bedford Street, Georgetown

Side Dishes and Desserts are Appreciated

The quarterly dinners are times for fellowship, good food, sharing ideas, but most of all supporting The Way Home participants as they continue their journey. If you wish to participate, please call The Way Home office (302) 856-9870.



The Way Home Celebrates 15 Successful Years

In 1996, a small group of parishioners from St. Martha's Episcopal Church in Bethany Beach, led by The Reverend Jim Lewis, conducted a Bible study called Bethesda Gathering at Sussex Correctional Institution. In 1999, Barbara Del Mastro, now The Way Home's Program Director, and several other volunteers joined the group . and The Way Home was formally organized as an offshoot of the Bible study into an independent, nondenominational, nonprofit program with 501 © (3) status. In 2001, The Reverend Max Wolf, Rector of All Saints' Episcopal Church in Rehoboth joined the ministry and became President of the Board.

Continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 From The Director's Corner.....Page 1**
- 2 TWH Celebrates 15 YearsPage 1**
- 3 Profiles in Courage.....Page 3**
- 4 Meet Your Board Members..... Page 7**
- 5 How to Reach Us.....Page 8**

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.

An assessment, released in September 2012 by the School of Public Policy and Administration of the University of Delaware, covering the period 1999 through 2008, compared the recidivism of Way Home (WH) clients and Delaware Department of Corrections (DOC) detainees. Subject, released from Supervision Levels IV and V, were compared in marital status, gender, and race. Recidivism is defined as the return of ex-offenders to incarceration (prison or jail) due to either an arrest or a parole/probation violation.

The Way Home Program performed more effectively than Department of Corrections on all recidivism dimensions:

- **Over the 1999-2008 time period, the various recidivism analyses showed that the predicted odds of WH clients to NOT recidivate are 1.23 times the odds for DOC.**
- **Over a five-year period, the risk of recidivism for WH clients has been 57% of the risk for DOC ex-offenders.**
- **WH had lower proportions of their clients who recidivated in the first year of their release than DOC ex-offenders.**
- **WH clients experience a longer time period before recidivating.**
- **For any point in time after release WH clients had higher probability of not returning to incarceration.**
- **Women, Caucasians, married, and older ex-offenders and those released from Level V were less likely to experience recidivism and they manifested higher probabilities of avoiding recidivism than men, non-Caucasians, non-married and younger offenders.**

The present analyses and findings represent a preliminary evaluation. A longer time frame for analysis is needed for The Way Home programmatic experience so that more conclusive statements can be made regarding The Way Home's performance.

We can provide clothing, food, a ride from prison, words of encouragement, prayer - and all of these things are good. But it is the interior journey of the one who walks beside us that will tell the real story. Will we be invited to join them on this journey? Maybe. Maybe not. One thing is certain. They will be looking at us, listening to us, and using their survival skills and senses to assess our fitness for that interior hike. The going can be very rough.

We cannot teach what we do not know. Who among us has not experienced another chance, a fresh start, a miracle? Renewal comes to us in unexpected ways, as astonishing and mysterious as an April blizzard or a January thaw. Sometimes it is a word, a look, a story that dives straight into our hearts and minds like an osprey going down for that fish like a streak of lightning, the voice of a grandfather or friend, a son or daughter. Sometimes it is a close call that brings our level of awareness up into a whole new spectrum. Sometimes it is a death. Sometimes it is a birth. God only knows what will finally get through to us.

There are certain qualities that let us know we are out of synch with God's Holy Spirit; out of balance with God's desire for joy, peace, healing and delight for all of God's children. One of these is the fog, the smoke of addiction, compulsion. The pull toward that drug, that drink, that money, that winning hand, that dangerous relationship, that drive for revenge is overwhelming - it is like grabbing a high voltage wire. The current is so strong we can't let go. Things are no longer clear. We are lying to ourselves and lying to others. A chasm widens between our rational minds and our irrational desires. Our moral compass swings wildly about, making it so difficult to find true north. We are lost, caught up, burning - for a season. We all know the warning signs. Who needs the Weather Channel to tell us when a big storm is coming? We can feel it. We all know the earmarks of vulnerability - being alone, being discouraged, losing someone or something that is important to us, being overwhelmed with worry and anxiety, getting sick, feeling desperate. We know that predators prey on the one who has stayed away from the herd, on the one who is injured, or very young, or very old.

When several of these situations converge, it's time to seek shelter. Pray. Reach out to a friend. Go to a church. Talk with a Pastor or counselor. Start listing

your blessings. Take shelter with a trusted friend or group. Go to a meeting. Have some good old-fashioned fun! Find the beauty of the natural world and rest in that beauty. Do something that you truly love to do – something that is good and nurturing for you.

And then, in ways that we can never fully understand, release and renewal come blowing in like that first warm breeze of spring. Through God's grace, we can breathe again! The smoke clears, the fog lifts! We can see again! We can think and feel again in our right minds, our true hearts. We can let go of ---fill in the blank – and reach out and grab God's presence and promise again! The current of God's love and healing is a wholly different kind of fire – it is the fire that does not consume us utterly, but destroys that which is threatening to destroy us; does not kill, but refines and restores – yes, it is painful – but what birth, what seismic shift, is not? God's holy fire, burning bright in our darkness, clearing a new path, burning the rubble, renewing us again!

Faithfully,

Barbara Sophia Del Mastro



For fifteen years, The Way Home has continued to provide holistic support for former prisoners transitioning from prison into society and re-uniting with their families. Way Home participants are mentored in prison workshops and upon release are assisted with initial needs such as food, clothing, housing and many other basic necessities of life. Ongoing support is provided for transportation to find jobs, social services, banking services, driver's licenses or other identification, educational needs, counseling, medical care; and completion of probationary requirements to meet their goals and responsibilities. Volunteers also assist in crafting resumes and educating participants with everyday things most people find quite ordinary.

"The Way Home is a compassionate program. In most cases, we maintain contact with them as they continue to build their lives," explains Barbara Del Mastro, The Way Home's Program Director. "We receive requests from prisons throughout Delaware and we serve others who enter our office door in Georgetown."

"We have much to celebrate. We are proud of our track record, but most importantly, we see people building new lives, taking responsibility for their actions, and working with us to help other newly-released participants. We see people that are grateful for everything. These men and women have turned their lives around despite overwhelming odds. They are an inspiration to us. They are working, supporting themselves and their families, and looking toward a better future. Moreover, they are determined never to make the same choices that placed them in the Delaware prison system or other choices that risk a return to prison."



Profiles in Courage

Best friends for 32 years, they met in the early eighties when they were 12 years old. Both had a dysfunctional childhood. Danny's mother worked as a housekeeper raising two small boys. Tony explains he got into trouble to get away from the chaos at home.

At age 14, they were arrested two times for burglaries and shoplifting "and other crazy things," states Danny. "We thought it was fun. We were impulsive and didn't think about risks. We didn't have goals, aspirations, or anything concrete."

Danny admits he was the initiator and Tony was the follower: "We didn't foresee our behavior as prison-related." Finally, at age 17, during an attempted burglary, the occupant was assaulted which ended in a death.

The Superior Court in Georgetown sentenced both to life in prison. As the co-defendant, Tony had a 2nd degree murder charge, took a plea bargain, and was sentenced to life plus seven years. Tony served 23 years. Danny took a plea bargain to murder one and was sentenced to life without parole. Danny served 26 years. Both were facing the death penalty.

Tony's mom stood by him; Danny's parents chose not to and were absent from his life for the first seven years of incarceration. Both were in the same tier at Sussex Correctional Institution in Georgetown. Although it took time, both went down

a positive path. “Seven years after incarceration became a turning point for me,” explains Tony. In the mid-nineties, Tony attended a 24-hour-a-day behavior modification program called Reshape. “I dealt with guilt and shame. I had so many regrets for the crime because of the hurt to the victim’s family and to society. I felt if I had been a stronger person, I would have saved the victim. I had to write an autobiography and work through each day of hurt. I cried. It was cathartic. There was no radical change, but the wheels were turning. The program offered an opportunity to find peace within.”

In prison, both Danny and Tony took leadership roles leading groups, attended Bible studies, and were involved in Prison Insights to Kids, a program where they spoke to young people heading down the wrong path. Tony worked diligently to earn a GED, a high school diploma, and 16 college credits. He worked in the prison library. “I spoke respectfully to guards, administrators, and other prisoners and I received their respect.” Also a turning point for Danny, after seven years of incarceration, his mother and stepfather visited him for the first time. “Those first seven years were extremely difficult. It took my parents that long to get past the hurt. Fortunately, Tony’s mom was always there for me.” Danny also earned a high school diploma and some college credits.

Danny and Tony faithfully attended the monthly prison bible study called Bethesda Gathering, initiated in 1996 by The Reverend Jim Lewis, Episcopal priest at St. Martha’s church in Bethany Beach, where they also met Barbara Del Mastro, Jim Lewis’ wife, Judy; and other volunteer church members. In 2000, they met two new volunteers, The Reverend Max Wolf, Rector of All Saints Episcopal Church, Rehoboth; and Susanne McCormick. “They (the church members) accepted me, were non-judgmental, and understanding,” explains Tony. “We developed a friendship that lasts to this day.” Danny echoes Tony’s sentiments by saying, “Barbara’s an angel.”

“I was at a crossroads in my life,” explains Tony. In the seven hour day that the newly forming Bible study group held during Lent in 1998, Tony and Danny, as well as the other men in the group were nourished and uplifted by shared study, fellowship, good meals, and a sense of growing connection.

In prison for 23 years, before release, Tony built a strong support network. “I swallowed my pride and asked for help.” Danny agrees: “The more support in your corner

makes it easier to remain focused. I wouldn’t be where I am today without the unconditional love and positive influence of friends and family.” Both have kept in contact with other ex-offenders. “I invite them for a cookout once a year. All of us have changed our lives. However, we remind each other where we came from and we encourage each other.” says Tony.

The parole board denied Tony’s parole five times before he was released. “The hardest time was in 2003 when I heard my mom had brain cancer. When I was denied parole, I was told to ‘keep up the good work’.” While in prison, Tony’s mom, sister, and an uncle passed away. Although greatly disappointed, Tony came to a place of peace. “I heard from God to accept the good as well as the bad and take my eyes off the situation. This was another driving force for change in my life,” Tony explains. Finally, in 2010, Tony made parole with indefinite years of probation.

“When Tony left prison, Danny thought, “Am I ever going to see him again?” He vowed to never seek parole unless his victim’s family accepted his plea for forgiveness. “I was strongly against filing for any sentencing relief even though correctional officers, counselors, and family members encouraged me to file for a commutation. I felt it was a great injustice to my victim’s family. It wasn’t until I had served 25 years that the victim’s family forgave me and gave me their blessing to file. What a miracle! God’s timing is perfect, because it was at this time that God showed me another miracle through the U.S. Supreme Court. The man upstairs is totally amazing!” Danny exclaimed.

In June 2012, The U.S. Supreme Court held that the Eighth Amendment forbids a sentencing that mandates life in prison without the possibility of parole for juvenile homicide offenders and guarantees individuals the right not to be subjected to excessive sanctions. Delaware, as well as other states, soon after the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision, changed their laws.

The U.S. Supreme Court’s decision was based upon two cases involving juveniles heard by the Court in March 2012: Evan Miller v. Alabama, 10-9646, wherein a 14-year-old boy and two other boys

intended to rob a video store. One boy carrying a shotgun, shot and killed the store clerk. The teen was found guilty, charged as an adult with capital felony murder and aggravated robbery and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole. In the second case, Kuntrell Jackson v. Ray Hobbs, Director, Arkansas Department of Correction, 10-9647, another juvenile was charged with mandatory life without parole when he and a friend beat a neighbor who subsequently died after they set fire to his trailer after an evening of drinking and drug use. Lawyers for the prosecution in both of these cases argued that the sentences were not overly harsh when compared to the crimes and the mandatory nature was permissible under the Eighth Amendment's prohibition for cruel and unusual punishment.

In the U.S. Supreme Court's decision, two cases were cited: Roper v. Simmons and Graham v. Florida, which stated that children are constitutionally different from adults for sentencing purposes. Their lack of maturity and underdeveloped sense of responsibility leads to recklessness, impulsivity, and heedless risk-taking...they are more vulnerable to negative influences and outside pressures...they have limited control over their own environment and lack the ability to extricate themselves from horrific, crime-producing settings...and because a child's character is not as well formed as an adult's, his traits are less fixed and his actions are less likely to be evidence of irretrievable depravity.

"It [the U.S. Supreme Court's decision] was a total act of God," proclaims Danny. "For the first time, there was a flicker of hope."

With the help of his lawyer, Danny requested and was granted a resentencing hearing in September 2013. Danny did everything in prison to turn his life around and to show he wasn't the same person that committed the crime. He received forgiveness from the victim's family and a few came to his court hearing. His dad, who lived in San Diego, and Barbara Del Mastro and Father Max of The Way Home spoke on his behalf. Susanne McCormick and her husband Tom, Danny's parents, friends, family, and volunteer Hugh O'Neil attended the hearing to support Danny. Tony spoke eloquently on Danny's behalf. "The judge said because

I took accountability and responsibility in prison, I was fully rehabilitated and not a threat to society." His resentencing was reduced to one year at Sussex Correctional Institution Work Release or house arrest with a host family for one year followed by four years' probation.

Addressing the change in law, Tony talked to his probation officer, his lawyer petitioned the Parole Board, and Tony was released from all probation and supervision.

While still in work release, he saved his money and made a list of contacts to call for help. "It's okay to swallow your pride and ask for help," Tony declares confidently. The Way Home's past associate director and case manager, Rick Chamberlin, was at the top of the list. "As a Delaware state trooper, Rick had been to my home for many domestic disturbances between my mom and step father." Now, as a retired State trooper, Rick became a mentor and friend as he greeted Tony at the prison gates and Barbara found a room for him to rent. Tony Neal, also a case manager at The Way Home, helped Tony apply online for jobs. "I've been honest with prospective employers about my past," Tony proudly states. "When you need people to fight for you, you need to take their help. Another opportunity will come your way to pay back their help. Never let pride stand in your way," Danny also advises.

Both initially got jobs working at local chicken processing plants. At one time, Tony worked four part-time jobs to pay the bills. Now, he is manager of an equipment rental business in Laurel, "I have good pay and benefits and a good boss," declares Tony. He participates in conflict resolution workshops presented by The Way Home and speaking engagements at schools and churches. "One speaking engagement was at a church one mile from the crime," Tony states dubiously.

Danny will always remember the date he left prison: December 18th, 2013. Barbara Del Mastro was the first person to greet Danny upon his release. Susanne and Tom McCormick, mentors for both

Danny and Tony, offered their home to Danny for one year of home confinement. Tony was Danny's first visitor in his new residence. Tom helped him get a birth certificate, identification, medical support and other social services, a driving permit, construct a resume, and transport him to job interviews. "Actually, a former ex-inmate friend of mine helped me get my first job," said Danny. He added, "I wouldn't be where I am today and be so successful in such a short period of time if it weren't for the love of Susanne and Tom, Barbara and Tony, and my parents." "Tom and Suzanne are awesome. They took me in their camper to a Penn State game with tailgating and the whole nine yards," declares Tony. "Sharing this weekend experience with Tony was the most exciting part of the trip," adds Susanne.

Barbara Del Mastro met Danny carrying a trash bag with his meager possessions at the prison upon his release. She speaks highly of Tony and Danny. "We all make mistakes – every single one of us," she reflected. "What matters is how we get up after we are knocked down, ask forgiveness, and try to do better with our decisions and our conduct. The grip of addictions, emotional turmoil, and effects from abuse can be very powerful. It is so important for a person to be able to talk with others about whatever they need to talk about in a safe setting. Healing from the past allows all of us to truly come to grips with our lives and build a brighter future."

After attending Danny's hearing Suzanne explains, "I talked to Tom about offering our home. Tom, without hesitation, agreed we should be Danny's host family. We love him like a son as we do Tony. We were so excited anticipating Danny's arrival. He stepped through our doorstep and became like a son. He helps around the house and attends church with us where Tom is the Deacon. From the first Sunday, he reached out to our church family with his friendly manner and smiling face and is warmly welcomed by our priest, the Reverend David Archibald, also a member of The Way Home board. On any given Saturday morning, you can find Reverend David, Tom, and Danny sharing breakfast at a West Fenwick deli."

"Statistically, prisoners who have served long sentences have reduced rates of recidivism compared to those who have served shorter sentences," Barbara Del Mastro

commented. "Tony and Danny are determined never to return to prison. They have supportive people all around them with open ears and open hearts."

I still have guilt about the crime I committed," states Danny. "I cannot change that poor choice I made as a teen and I still grieve for the victim and his family." After completing the forms for social services benefits, Danny told the clerk, "I will be accepting them only temporarily until I get employment." Danny made the choice in prison to focus on becoming a productive person. He said, "The miracle is not that I'm out of jail but that God used my time to teach me endurance and patience, kept me sane, positive, and upbeat as an inmate." "Tony and Danny were positive role models for other inmates," Susanne adds.

Danny proudly shows his living quarters on the second floor of Tom and Susanne's home. He smiles broadly as we walk out on the deck overlooking the bay in Fenwick Island. "Isn't this beautiful? I was fishing off the deck below at 10:00 o'clock last night and thinking, "The crime we committed 26 years ago doesn't define us. Our experiences made us what we are today. God has forgiven us. He doesn't want us to stagnate. He has something planned for both of us. We will fly and spread our wings."

Danny then takes me to the basement where he has some exercise equipment. "I just got my first pay check for three days work. It feels good that I am a taxpaying citizen. I went to the bank with Tom and opened my first ever savings account and debit card." He opens a refrigerator in the corner and proudly shows the contents he purchased. "I don't think I'll ever have a bad day. I never wake up in a bad mood. I'm getting my life on track." Susanne, who has known Danny for about 13 years in the prison Bible Study, corresponded with he and Tony on holidays and birthdays and just in general. "They wrote letters from their hearts to many on the outside," Susanne comments.

"I have a huge extended family. Danny is my best friend – more like brothers – for 32 years. I'm grateful for all that has happened. I embrace the good and the bad. I am more self-assured with who I am

and who I am not, and with my position with Christ. Christ is my compass – my true north.” Tony smiles broadly as the interview concludes and he heads for his newly-purchased cherry-red truck with the tool box in the back.



Danny and Tony



Meet Your Board Members

Beneath this board member’s grizzly, walrus-like mustache lurks a contagious smile – when he smiles. Most of the time he is very serious. And, much like a walrus -- who is prone to bellow loudly mostly to protect his mate -- Father David Archibald listens and at an appropriate moment, jumps in with a to-the-point, sardonic question or comment that many board members might not have thought about or are unwilling to face. Additionally, he keeps us on task. He self-describes his management style as “brusque” and “hands off” and indeed, that is how he comes across in meetings. But, in some cases, he points out the truth no matter how uncomfortable it might be. “Also,” he explains, “I have a low tolerance for fluff. I believe, when a task is assigned, those working the assignment should have a considerable degree of autonomy in completing those activities – otherwise, why would you assign someone a task who didn’t have the ability to complete the assignment?”

Born and raised in New Jersey, after high school, he became a self-employed trucker and while trucking,

felt called to ministry. “I bounced in and out of college,” he explains, studying English and Religion and graduating from Thomas Edison State College in Trenton. He also attended Washington & Jefferson College in Washington, Pennsylvania and West Virginia University in Morgantown.

Father David also describes himself as a “street minister,” probably because while in seminary in Sewanee, Tennessee, he worked with street people and in a soup kitchen at St. Luke’s Episcopal Church in Atlanta during a summer off campus. “It was a huge, rich, congregation and a very successful organization. People came in Mercedes and opened trunks full of food.” He also worked with Hispanics in a men’s group and assisted with job searches. “My father had three crummy jobs during the Depression when there was high unemployment. There are always things to do that people don’t want to do.”

After ordination, from 1990 until 2001, he was associated with two small Tennessee churches and in 2002 he was assigned to St. Mark’s Episcopal Church in Millsboro and St. Martin in-the-Field, Selbyville. “A small church is so rewarding. You get to know parishioners, develop personal relationships, even know the names of their dogs and parakeets.” At that time, the Bishop of the Diocese of Delaware invited him to a meeting at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Georgetown where he met Fr. Max Wolf and Barbara Del Mastro and where he first found out about The Way Home prison ministry.

An Episcopal priest for 24 years and on The Way Home’s board for 12 years, Father David began celebrating the Eucharist in Sussex Correctional Institution’s chapel and for five years worked in the Boot Camp, a six-month intensive Marine Corps-like experience, where he taught parenting classes. His main connections now are with ex-offenders attending his church and through The Way Home.



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, March 22 – 9:00 a.m. to 6:15 p.m. Lunch & soup & bread supper provided.
Call The Way Home office to register.

Men’s Support Group Every Other Tuesday at Georgetown Presbyterian Church in the Library
7:00 to 9:00 p.m. In the Library. For dates, call Ira Kalbrosky at 215-431-1927

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.

To Volunteer, call The Way Home Office at (302) 856-9870

Visit The Way Home website: <http://www.thewayhomeprogram.org/>

**The Way Home
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