

NACIP PRIORITIES

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NACIP is a proud member of:



NACIP NEWS

National Association for
Children of Incarcerated Parents



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To prevent the cycle of intergenerational crime through a comprehensive network of programs, resources, research and advocacy.

New Interactive Book for Incarcerated Parents & Their Children

a new approach to building, understanding and fostering their relationship

Children of incarcerated parents need to know they are loved and cared for. Communities need to know what these children face. Because of this great need, Silent Victims of Crime, The Messages Project, and children's author Ruth Clark are collaborating on creating a program that can be simply implemented into any facility.

It starts with an interactive book that allows the incarcerated parent to communicate via the book with their child through a series of questions and answers intermingled with their own words. The child responds equally throughout the book.

This starts a dialogue with caring, constructive notes and drawings that enhances their relationship and therefore their lives. If and when visitation takes place, there will be a more intimate and stable environment initiated by their previous communication.

The next stage is for the parent to send a "message" via video. See end for additional information.

A documentary is being produced simultaneously as information is gathered for the book.

The first phase was recently completed in March as children of prisoners were interviewed about their heart-wrenching stories and how they are coping on a daily basis to reach a "college bound mentality". It will be released within the next year when all the phases are completed.

The collaboration between the three organizations comes from a combined multitude of experiences. Ruth Clark is an award-winning author/publisher of books for children, contributor to leading magazines for women, parenting, and families, and owner of Hibiscus Publishing. Hibiscus Publishing's Read To Someone You Love (TM) was founded April of 2009 with the mission to strengthen adult/child relationships through the time spent reading books.

The Messages Project, whose mission is to "maintain, or in many cases re-build, the connection between imprisoned parents and the children that are left behind" is run by producer and "CNN Top 10 Hero" Carolyn Lecroy.

Silent Victims of Crime's mission is "to end the intergenerational cycle of incarceration by leading youth to be college

bound, not jail bound". Founder, Paulette Pfeiffer, also co-founded the National Association for Children of Incarcerated Parents (NACIP) to advocate on a national level on behalf of children of prisoners.

This team of passionate and determined individuals are coming together to impact the lives of children of prisoners and their parents from an international viewpoint!

*www.themessagesproject.org
*www.silentvictimssofcrime.org

Be sure to check out these

Upcoming Events:

- **May 3rd-5th:** JJET Conference in Lexington, Kentucky
- **May 6th:** 3rd Annual NACIP Symposium in Lexington, Kentucky
- **October 10th-13th:** NPJS Conference in San Antonio, Texas

Wishing you a happy and beautiful spring!

*Warmest Regards,
Lisa Hutchinson and
Paulette Pfeiffer*



Silent Victims of Crime Program Updates

We received our 501(c)(3) tax exempt status!

A big thank-you to Jaclyn Cherry, J.D., along with her students Nik Budisavljevic and Jill Yarsley from the University of South Carolina School of Law for helping us at no charge! We would not have our 501(c)(3) if it were not for your incredible assistance!

Paulette Pfeiffer, Carolyn Lecroy, and Ruth Clark have begun a project that when finished will include an interactive book and a documentary on children of incarcerated parents. Phase I of the filming (interviewing children) was completed in Anderson, SC this past March! See page 4 for more on Carolyn Lecroy.

Information provided by Paulette Pfeiffer, President of Silent Victims of Crime and Co-Founder of the National Association for Children of Incarcerated Parents
E-mail: Paulette@SilentVictimsOfCrime.org



Educate Tomorrow & SVC Partnership

Educate Tomorrow and Silent Victims of Crimes are proud to announce their partnership. Our two organizations will commence a collaborative endeavor to enhance the lives of children whose parents have been incarcerated.

Based in Miami, Florida, Educate Tomorrow supports foster youth, from ages sixteen to twenty-three who are aging out of the foster care system, by matching them with mentors. These mentors help these young people to enroll in college and vocational programs, to find housing and employment, and to seek out for educational and social opportunities.

All too often, when parents end up in jail, their children end up in the foster system. Two years ago, Educate Tomorrow successfully secured the Caregivers Choice grant to fund a program for children of inmates. Yet funding was only one pillar of the program: absent were the pathways to children whose parents are prisoners, and the community members with the combined experience, networks, and motivation to support a program of this kind. The daunting challenge of delving into the unfamiliar arena of corrections faced us. Florida's labyrinthine dependency system already demands constant attention, tying up resources that we could apply towards this new mentoring program.

Fortuitously, a chance encounter with a Carolinian firebrand, Paulette Pfeiffer, pointed to a path forward. With her intrepid spirit and extensive knowledge of the system, Educate Tomorrow will be able to launch ahead in helping children of prisoners. We have initiated the ground research and will be able to start the program rolling as early as next month. As we create new relationships full of potential between mentors and children, we will build a community newsletter to capture the landmarks and highlights of our journey together.

Information provided by Erica French

Overcoming the Odds: A Letter from the Heart

Dear: Head of Prison,

There are going to many steps I must take in order for me to have a relationship with my father, so I will start with the first one.

(LETTER CONTINUED)

My name is Chiquila Jones. I recently learned the person that I believe to be my father is an inmate in your facilities. I am writing to you, because I wanted to know if it would be possible for me to arrange a meeting with him. I have never met him before, my birth mother told me about him and what his name was before she passed away. I've always wanted to have a relationship with my father.

I am twenty-three years old and I've been in foster care since I was five. I've had bad experiences in the foster care system and I've had some good ones. I'm not expecting you to have any sympathy for me, because through all of that, I think that I turned out to be a very outstanding person. I attend Miami-Dade College, where I am studying to become a Registered Nurse (RN). I've also obtained a certificate in Medical Assistant from Everest and a Security class "D" License from Miami-Dade College.

You're probably wondering; with the hardships I've been through, how could I have possibly made it? Well, I will tell you that I didn't do it by myself. There were a lot of positive people helping me make it through. My biggest inspiration was myself. I didn't want to fall victim to the statistics about being a foster child. They say majority of foster children will end up in prison or homeless. I am very proud to say that I was fortunate enough to not have gone through that.

I want a relationship with my birth father, because I lost my birth mother early in my life and he will be the only immediate family that I have left. Although nothing may come from meeting him, I will still treasure the day that I got to see him and have a chance to meet him face to face. That alone will give me satisfaction and I will be able to close out that chapter in my life.

I really hope you decide to give me the opportunity to meet my father rather than reject my letter. If not, I will still be grateful that you took the time out of your busy schedule to read my letter. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Chiquila

*Graduate of Educate Tomorrow

Giving moms gift of hope: Queens Nun's group finds homes for former inmates & their kids

For some, giving is a full-time job - not just a holiday gesture.

Hour Children, a nonprofit Queens group, plans to begin the renovation of a Corona building this week to provide housing for 16 families of women that were once incarcerated. The group already helps more than 40 families living in five Long Island City buildings.

The group's new facility on 103rd St., once a home for boys, is slated to get a new roof and heating system, said Sister Teresa Fitzgerald, the organization's founder, who is better known by her colleagues as Sister Tesa.

"It's a home that helps them as a mother, as a woman," Fitzgerald said. In addition to its thrift shops and food pantry, Hour Children provides a variety of programs, including counseling, pro bono legal help and a work training center, which will open next year. "They become a family here," Fitzgerald said. "They become real friends with each other."

The effort began in the mid-1980s, when Fitzgerald, along with other nuns from Saint Rita's Convent, provided homes for children of incarcerated women. Hour Children - so named to note the time a child spends waiting to see his or her mother in prison - was established in 1995 when it expanded to take care of jailed mothers as well. It now pro-

vides homes for 41 families and 86 children of incarcerated mothers, Fitzgerald said.

"I am packed," she said, adding there aren't many options for locked-up mothers, who would otherwise have to rely on relatives or foster care to help raise their children.

"We're sadly unique," she said. Due to the growing number of applicants Hour Children must turn down because of space limitations, Fitzgerald also is looking to redevelop the land she has just purchased from the church, to build 18 more apartments. The construction is set to begin by the middle of next year, Fitzgerald said.

Women who get help from Hour Children have a 4% recidivism rate, group officials said, compared to the 30% overall for female inmates reported by the New York State Department of Correctional Services. That success has earned the group a growing number of supporters.

"It's sunshine after the storm".

"You come here, you have to be a product of society," said Venita Pinckney, 38, who came to Hour Children more than a year ago when she was released from the Bedford Hills Correctional Facility in Westchester County, and had just given birth to her son, Savion.



Ex-inmate and mom Venita Pinckney (left) gets a hug from Sister Teresa Fitzgerald.

She had spent most of her life since the age of 17 in and out of prison because of an addiction to crack cocaine., but the birth of her boy forced her to consider a change in her lifestyle.

"I wanted better for my son," said Pinckney, who now works for the organization.

Drug-free and working full time, Pinckney is hopeful for her future. "It's wonderful," she said. "It's sunshine after the storm."

-Article by Joe Kemp of NY Daily News

JJET Conference: May 2010

The Juvenile Justice Educators and Trainers Forum will be in Lexington, Kentucky, May 3rd-5th. It will be a spectacular gathering of people for networking, collaborating, and learning. The theme for the forum revolves around technology, but there is a variety of great sessions!

The NPJS Forum for Juvenile Justice Educators and Trainers will provide a unique opportunity for participants to discuss critical issues, participate in skill building workshops, learn about best practices and promising approaches, and establish a network of support. While Educators will have the opportunity to shape an

agenda for alternative education in the 21st century, Trainers will have the opportunity to assess their current training program against best professional practices and envision new goals for the future. Program faculty possesses a wealth of national expertise, integrity and hands-on service delivery experience.

All Forum training and events will be held at the Holiday Inn North Hotel, located at 1950 Newtown Pike, Lexington, Kentucky 40511. To book your room reservations, please contact the hotel at 859-233-0512 and tell them you are with the JJET Forum.

NACIP Symposium

Following the JJET Conference, NACIP will hold their 3rd Annual Symposium on Children of Incarcerated Parents on May 6, 2010.

The Symposium will also take place at the Holiday Inn North Hotel (see address to left). The Symposium will take place from 8:30am to 4:30pm.

Please see page 5 for the registration information for both the JJET Conference and the NACIP Symposium

“Helping the Children Heroes” Carolyn Lecroy & The Messages Project

When Carolyn LeCroy was incarcerated for fourteen months in a Virginia prison she thought of herself as one of the lucky ones. Her two sons, ages 18 and 20, gave her joy and hope by driving the long trip in to see her on visitation days. The love and support from her family kept her spirits up, but looking around, LeCroy could see there were plenty of incarcerated parents who were not so fortunate.

“My children came to see me all the time,” she says, “and there would be women who never got visits. And I would look at them and think if they are this unhappy, what about the children?”

Before her arrest, LeCroy had a career as a television and advertising producer. When she was released on parole in 1996, she decided to use her background in film and video to help inmate parents and their children. In December of 1999, she and volunteer camera crews were granted admission to the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women in Troy, Virginia. They recorded video messages with inmate mothers and mailed the messages to their children and families as special Christmas gifts.

“They know they’ve made mistakes, but they’re still human beings and they have children and they all love them”.

Almost a decade later, LeCroy is now running her own non-profit dedicated to connecting incarcerated parents and their children. Since the first taping at Fluvanna, The Messages Project has visited six state prisons in Virginia at least three times a year to create an estimated 3,000 video messages.

“There’s lots of support groups for children who have a divorced parent, who have a military parent but for our chil-

dren, for the children of incarcerated parents, there’s very few,” LeCroy says. “People don’t think about these children. And a child is worried about their parent’s safety. They miss their parent.”

LeCroy’s determination to advocate for these children made her a hero in the eyes of those she helped over the years, but it wasn’t until recently that she became a hero on the global stage. LeCroy was a top ten finalist for CNN’s “Heroes 2008,” a worldwide-broadcast annual awards tradition from the news network. A panel of philanthropists and humanitarians, including doctor and author Deepak Chopra, environmentalist Jane Goodall, and basketball star Magic Johnson, selected LeCroy from 3,700 nominees from 75 countries.

After the ceremony was broadcast on Thanksgiving and Christmas, LeCroy says the response was overwhelming. The Messages Project was inundated with phone calls and emails. More and more people are asking LeCroy to bring her project to their state. “It’s just gotten bigger and bigger and bigger, which is just wonderful because more children will get messages from their moms and dads.”

On a taping day, LeCroy and her volunteers arrive at the facilities with the cameras, lights, and microphones. Now they have the technology to record DVD messages. Parents sit in front of colorful backdrops, some with children’s artwork, some depicting characters from favorite television shows like “Rugrats.”

“The Departments of Correction and the facilities have been wonderful about letting us bring backdrops in,” she says. “It makes it a softer piece for the children.” Some inmates simply talk to their children through the camera, others read books. LeCroy is right there in the room during the filming, encouraging and comforting the often emotional inmates. “For many, it’s the first time they’ve apologized to their families or to their children and have actually taken the responsibility for what they did,” LeCroy says. Many of the inmates fight back the tears as they work their way through their message. “Every single emotion

that you can think of we’ve seen,” says LeCroy, who tells the inmates to just talk from their hearts. “They know they’ve made mistakes, but they’re still human beings and they have children and they all love them,” she says.

According to the U.S. Department of Justice, an estimated 1.5 million children have an incarcerated parent, but only 20 percent of prison inmates receive monthly visits from their kids. “The children of an incarcerated parent are the

“Every single emotion you can think of, we’ve seen”

silent victim of the parent’s crime,” LeCroy says. “These children get forgotten sometimes.” Not for long now that the CNN exposure has opened up a whole new world of possibilities for The Messages Project. “This is actually a terrific situation to be in, however, it does leave us scrambling,” she says. “We can always use the name and information of contacts within those correctional or detention facilities that may be interested.”

The Messages Project is currently looking for taping volunteers and funding from interested groups, religious organizations, foundations, and individuals. LeCroy says local funding in new states will be essential for the project to expand outside of the state of Virginia.

Even though she’s been officially declared a hero, LeCroy has her own set of heroes to look up to. “It’s hard when a parent is in prison, so I think that makes all those children heroes,” she says.

Article by Ann Coppola,
News Reporter

Centerforce Partners with Marin Academy Students

Centerforce recently collaborated with local high school Marin Academy for a multi-session exchange. Community Action Coordinator Lauren Toker approached Centerforce (CF) in hopes of providing her freshman class with an opportunity to better understand the ways in which incarceration impacts families and the local community and to demystify some commonly held stereotypes. Committed to increasing awareness about the impact of incarceration in our communities, CF welcomed the partnership.

“We can understand this because we are kids too, who are having our own struggles”

CF Executive Director Carol F. Burton and the LIFE Project Coordinator Alison Tanzer spoke to the students about the realities of having a parent in jail or prison and introduced the class to the Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights. “A lot of times when we talk to students they want to know about things similar to what they see in prison related movies or TV shows, but the Marin Academy kids were really thinking about the deeper impact

and it showed in their questions and enthusiasm,” Tanzer commented.

“I learned about how kids have the right to see their parents as well as be notified when their parent is arrested,” one of the students remarks.

Students connected to individual stories and reflected on their own learning and changing perceptions. One student writes, “We can understand this because we are kids too, who are having our own struggles.” Another student adds, “realized that it wasn't only the parents who [had] it bad when they went to jail, but their children as well.”

The Community Action class of 2013, Toker, and parent volunteers traveled to CF's Yellow House, the former Visitor's Center outside San Quentin, to hear presentations from CF staff and clients. A father and son, recently reunified, shared their experiences of the strain on the family during the incarceration, the ways in which they are reconnecting, and the role that Centerforce has played in their transition.

Members of the class commented on the power of hearing a first hand account of

what families go through when a member is incarcerated. One student writes of gaining “deep respect for the guests at the Yellow House” and “learning a lot from their stories.” Another adds, “Now whenever I think about someone in prison, I will think of their family as well.”

By the last session together, students were reciting the Bill of Rights from memory and several have shared their interest in learning more.

The students' project culminated in a holiday drive at the school benefiting youth in CF programs. Toker “hope[s] this project is just a starting point for the youth involved.”

By Carol F. Burton,
Executive Director

For more than 30 years, CF has worked to support, educate, and advocate for families, individuals, and communities impacted by incarceration. CF offers a continuum of services for families, including Leaders in Future Environments (LIFE), a one-on-one mentoring program for youth who have a parent incarcerated. CF has offices located in Northern and Central California. www.centerforce.org



JJET Conference and NACIP Symposium Registration Information

To register for the JJET Conference and/or the NACIP Symposium, go to: www.npjs.org, click “Register now”, and the registration form will appear.

After April 9, prices are as follows:

- Standard Registration \$139
- NPJS One Year Membership \$ 29
(save \$10 off the membership fee of \$39 by mailing in your membership fee with registration)
- National Symposium on Children of Incarcerated Parents \$40
(post-conference event held Thursday, May 6th)

*You can pay by check, purchase order, or accepted credit cards.

REGISTER TODAY!

NACIP

National Association for Children of Incarcerated Parents



To prevent the cycle of intergenerational crime through a comprehensive network of programs, resources, research and advocacy.

Visit us on the internet!

www.npjs.org/nacip

TO CONTRIBUTE STORIES OR INFORMATION, CONTACT:

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Dr. Lisa Hutchinson

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E-mail: lxhutchinson@ualr.edu

Advocacy & Programs

Paulette Pfeiffer

Office: (864) 287-1311

E-mail: info@SilentVictimsOfCrime.org

National Association for Children of Incarcerated Parents

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Title: _____

Agency: _____

Address: _____

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