

MARYLAND CURE

Maryland CURE
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International CURE Board Meeting

August 31 - September 4, 2012,
Hotel Harrington, Washington, DC
Report from President Lea Green and
Treasurer Mary Pat Donelan

Billed as a Board Meeting, it was more like a conference with very useful workshops on how to improve your chapter and seminars on important prison justice issues. We both came away absolutely invigorated and motivated to improve the advocacy and effectiveness of Maryland CURE by adopting many of the suggestions presented.

Our newsletter is an important vehicle for letting you all know what we have been doing on your behalf. We realized that we have not been reporting to you all of our efforts. We will do so in the future. We also realized that issuing the newsletter twice a year was not frequent enough. We now pledge to send you a newsletter quarterly.

We have also been remiss in collecting dues. We are a very low budget organization. We use the dues to print and mail the newsletter. Our bank balance has been steadily declining. If it's been more than a year since you have paid your dues, please do so as soon as possible. This will be your dues notice for this year. Next year, we will start sending out individual notices on your dues anniversary date.

In order to receive tax-deductible contributions, we need to become a 501-C-3 organization which will cost about \$400. We will make this investment in our future.

Many chapters issue a membership card each year. We'll start this new practice as well. We also learned about software where it's easy to click and send an e-mail message to a legislator. We'll get that and will be encouraging you, your family and friends to get messages to our legislators about bills we'd like to see passed.

2013 promises to be an exciting year for Maryland CURE!

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Officers from most of the CURE chapters in the US along with CURE representatives from Nigeria, Malawi, Japan and Ghana attended. Much time was spent developing position papers on Sentencing (we over-incarcerate!) and Sex Offender Registries (we're against). Best Practices were shared among members. Visits to Congress were made on the last day of the meeting asking our legislators to support the Webb legislation that creates a study of the criminal justice system.

To All Maryland CURE Members

Please send us your annual dues. To save money, we will not be sending out individual notices this year – This will serve as your notice.

- Prisoners \$2 (or 4 stamps)
- Individual \$10
- Family \$15
- Life \$100

Thanks in advance!

Lea's Corner – a message from Lea and an update on our advocacy efforts on your behalf!

I am really excited about the Maryland Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy. At the Dec. 13, 2011 public meeting, they voted and approved a motion to have our public statement included in the public meeting. I believe this is a first! The next public meeting will be Dec 11, 2012. Please join us to have your voice heard! www.msccsp.org

What We Have Done for You:

- In May a meeting was held with Sen. Joanne Benson and Del. Aisha Braveboy to discuss strategies to work with Maryland Department of Corrections on prison reform. We are lobbying to get other organizations to join us in this much needed project.
- The Second Annual National Day of Prayer was presented by the Women of Wisdom (WOW) at MCIW. It was very inspiring to see all faiths come together to express their faith.
- On May 4, 2012 our board member Bonnita Spikes was given the Gov. O'Malley Volunteer of the Year Award. We are very proud of her!
- Lea met with Senator Joanne Benson and Mr. Gerald Stansbury of the state NAACP chapter. They set up a meeting for June but it was discovered at the last minute that the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) was having a panel meeting across the hall. They

decided to attend the ACLU meeting where the panel was very attentive to the same issues we were discussing!

- A discussion took place at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women about developing a Maryland CURE chapter.
- Lea attended the A.A. County Branch NAACP general monthly meeting.
- In August the Maryland House of Corrections held an Open House Tour. Alfreda Robinson of the WOW group invited Lea to do a presentation of Maryland CURE which was warmly received.

Autobiography in Five Short Chapters

Chapter One

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I fall in.
I am lost ... I am helpless.
It isn't my fault.

Chapter Two

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I pretend I don't see it.
I fall again.
I can't believe I'm in the same place.
But it isn't my fault.
It still takes a long time to get out.

Chapter Three

I walk down the same street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I see it is there.
I still fall in ... It's a habit.
My eyes are open.
I know where I am.
It is my fault.
I get out immediately.

Chapter Four

I walk down the street.
There is a deep hole in the sidewalk.
I walk around it.

Chapter Five

I walk down another street.

(Portia Nelson)

Starting Out in Mainstream America, on-line

book <http://startingout.icsa.name/> by Livia Bardin

Starting Out in Mainstream America offers information about life in the USA today. Adjusting to any new culture can be slow, difficult, and painful. If you are entering or preparing for re-entry into mainstream American life after a long absence, or perhaps for the first time, you may have many questions about where to find and how to do things.

This book provides practical solutions for people with needs like:

- getting a driver's license
- finding a place to live
- finding a job or job training
- getting health care
- finding your way around the legal system

And information about broader concepts like

- Abuse and neglect
- Communications skills
- Relationships
- Parenting skills
- Aspects of mainstream culture like music, movies, and sports

Legislative Process in Maryland

Ideas for bills (proposed laws) come from many sources: constituents, the Governor, government agencies, legislative committees, study commissions, special interest groups, lobbyists and professional associations, for example. Each bill, however, must be sponsored by a legislator. The volume of bills makes it difficult for each bill to get through the legislative process within the 90-day session. A bill filed prior to the first day of the regular session is introduced (i.e., read across the floor) and assigned to a standing committee on the opening day of a session, thus obtaining a head-start advantage.

The fate of most legislative proposals is determined within the standing committee to which they are assigned. Committees hold a public hearing on each bill or joint resolution assigned to them. At the committee hearing, testimony usually is heard from the bill's sponsor and other proponents and opponents of the bill. Testimony and further consideration may result in amendments to the bill made by the committee. The final vote of the committee is recorded by member, and may be favorable (with or without amendment), unfavorable, or without recommendation. Having been "voted out of committee," the bill now returns to the floor of its chamber of origin accompanied by a report of committee action.

After consideration of committee amendments, the bill is then open to amendment from the floor. Second reading is completed when the presiding officer orders the bill, with any adopted amendments, printed for third reading. No amendments may be presented on third reading. In the chamber of origin, a recorded vote is taken to pass or reject the bill. To pass, the bill must receive a majority vote of the elected membership.

After passage by the first chamber, the bill is sent to the opposite chamber, has its first reading, and is assigned to a committee for consideration. The procedure followed is identical with that of the first chamber except that amendments may be proposed during second and third readings. If amended in the second chamber, the bill is returned to the chamber of origin so that house may consider the amendments. If the amendments are agreed to, the bill is voted on as amended and action is complete. The bill is reprinted, or "enrolled," to include the added amendments before being

submitted to the Governor.

All bills passed by the General Assembly become law when signed by the Governor, or when passed over the Governor's veto by three-fifths of the membership of each house. According to the Constitution, laws thus approved take effect on the first day of June after the session in which they were passed, except when a later date is specified in the act, or the bill is declared an emergency measure.

As you can see, there are many steps to the process and the 90-day legislative period is short. Last year, we supported and testified about two bills – both to remove the Governor from the approval process, one for lifers convicted of felony murder and the other for lifers who were convicted as juveniles. Both bills went to committee, but neither went any further by the time the legislative period ended. We are hoping these bills are put forth again this year. We'll keep you posted.

The first step in the process is to get a legislator to sponsor the bill ... and the earlier the better!

Thoughts to Reflect On

The words you speak become the house you live in.

-- Hafiz of Shiraz

It is not what you look at that matters, it's what you see.

-- Henry David Thoreau

If we learn to open our hearts, anyone, including the people who drive us crazy, can be our teachers.

-- Pema Chodron

2012 Restorative Justice Conference

The Third Annual Restorative Justice Conference will be held at the Howard Community College in Columbia Maryland on November 15-17. It is sponsored by the Circle of Restorative Initiatives for Maryland, whose mission is to serve as a statewide network to promote restorative principles, practices and initiatives for communities, organizations and individuals throughout Maryland.

For more details and to register, go to <http://www.crimaryland.org/>.

Maryland CURE is a Chapter of CURE, a national grass-roots organization dedicated to reducing crime through reform of the criminal justice system.



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Prolonged Solitary Confinement

Individuals held in solitary confinement are often locked down 23 or 24 hours a day in a small cell. There is often no natural light. They have no contact with other prisoners. They can spend one hour every other day alone in an exercise pen. Calls to and visits with family are very infrequent, when permitted at all. Many live in these isolated conditions for years.

The National Religious Campaign Against Torture (NRCAT) has created a petition that is available online (www.nrcat.org/solitary). When they reach 500 signatures from a particular state, they send the endorsements to that state's legislators, governor, and top corrections officials.

Check out their website for more information about all their activities. Ending prolonged solitary confinement starts with your petition signature!

Maryland CURE Meeting Schedule
Oct 27 Central Branch Library Columbia MD

Check website to verify meeting location
www.marylandcure.webs.com

There's much work to be done! A recent Justice Department report says the federal prison population is too high. This report said the growing federal prison population, now more than 218,000 and a budget of almost \$6.2 billion are "incompatible with a balanced crime policy and are unsustainable." Last fall, the Sentencing Commission stated that mandatory minimum sentences are often "excessively severe." Mandatory minimums have contributed in the last 20 years to the near tripling of federal prisoners.

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