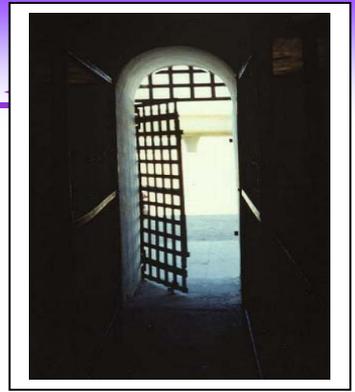


Maryland CURE Newsletter Spring 2010



Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative



In 1993, following the tragic murder suicide of an individual in the work and pre-release system, all persons serving parole eligible life sentences were removed from the program and returned to prison. They were to be evaluated and returned to the program if they were thought to be qualified.

None of those 134 lifers were returned to the program because in 1995 Gov Glendenning effectively ended the program by declaring that 'life means life'. One of those individuals in that program, Walter Lomax, was released after serving 39 years – not because he was returned to the program but because of overwhelming evidence showing his innocence.

Walter vowed to never forget the men that remained and he has kept his word. As director of Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative (MRJI) he worked tirelessly to take the politics out of this process with Senate Bill 900 in 2009 but the bill did not pass.

Fast forward to 2010 and the struggle continues! HB 940/SB901 states that a person who has served 20 years of a current life sentence, has received a recommendation to be released from the parole board, and has a favorable evaluation from the prison should be allowed to appear before a three judge panel for consideration of release. Currently, the governor must approve parole for people with a life sentence; the current and past governors have chosen to deny parole to this entire category of eligible people.

*Maryland Restorative Justice Initiative
P.O. Box 33313
Baltimore, Maryland 21218*

Legislative Updates

- **Senator Jim Webb – S.714**

S.714 proposes the establishment of the National Criminal Justice Commission. The commission would undertake a comprehensive review of the criminal justice system and make reform recommendations to improve public safety, cost effectiveness, overall prison administration and FAIRNESS in the implementation of the Nation's criminal justice system. While it may be tempting to dismiss this as another commission's recommendations that get ignored, there is reason for hope. There is strong support for this bill and some very respected members of congress have already signed on to it.

This has received a lot of press because it is quite rare for a major politician to introduce a bill that contradicts the mindless 'tough on crime' attitude of many Americans. And press is what we need! Public opinions and perceptions do not change easily and every time truths are repeated it helps in the evolution of public opinion. Continued on page 2...

Lifers Corner

- **Visit at MCI-H**

Eddie Hershman and Robert Leisure extended an invitation to CURE to come visit a group of lifers at Hagerstown. On April 19, 2009 Sharrie Booth, MD CURE and Charlie Sullivan, National CURE were welcomed by a large group at MCI-H.

Topics discussed included the reaching out of older lifers to incoming younger lifers and upcoming legislation to remove parole authority for life sentences from the Governor to the Parole Commission.

- **Thoughts**

Inmates who cope maturely in prison find incarceration to be a painful but constructive experience. This is particularly true for life-sentence prisoners, colloquially called lifers.

As a general matter, lifers come to see prison as their home and try to make the most of the limited resources available in prison; they establish daily routines that allow them to find meaning and purpose in their prison lives, lives that might otherwise seem empty and pointless.

The resilience shown by lifers should not be construed as an argument for more or longer prison sentences or for more punitive regimes of confinement, but rather is a reminder that human beings can find meaning in adversity.

I WISH

For almost three years, two Maryland CURE members have been facilitating a group of women with life sentences at the Maryland Correctional Institution for Women. The group has named itself I-WISH, an acronym for Incarcerating Women Inside Seeking to Help. They meet the 2nd and 4th Thursday evening of the month for seminars and workshops on a wide variety of topics. To name a few, they've experienced sessions with prosecuting attorneys, a parole board employee, learned to journal and write poetry, tell stories, and develop their spirituality. Most importantly, they've done projects to help others.

Continued on page 2..

Legislative Updates continued

Many of us - I would say most – who are involved in prison reformation know that the US has 5% of the world's population but 25% of the world's incarcerated population. Sen. Webb again repeated these statistics and said "either we have the most evil people on earth living in the United States; or we are doing something dramatically wrong in terms of how we approach the issue of criminal justice..."

A press conference was held on April 27, 2010 to announce the introduction of this act. A blue-ribbon bipartisan commission that will be undertaking an 18 month comprehensive review of the Nation's criminal justice system to include federal, state, local and tribal governments' criminal justice costs, practices, and policies. After conducting the review, the Commission will make recommendations for changes in, or continuation of oversight, policies, practices and laws designed to prevent, deter, and reduce crime and violence, improve cost-effectiveness, and ensure the interests of justice.

- **H.R.4080/S.2772 Justice Reinvestment Act**

This would authorize the U.S. Attorney General to make grants to help jurisdictions analyze criminal justice trends and then develop and implement options designed to reduce corrections expenditures and increase effectiveness of current spending. The analysis would be in crime and arrest rates, conviction rates, probation, parole, prison & jail populations. Resulting policy options would be based on the data collected in the analysis.

*Update: Approved by Senate Judiciary Committee 3/11/2010

- **Funding of Second Chance Act**

The budget provides \$144 million for prisoner re-entry programs, including \$100 million for the Office of Justice Programs to administer grant programs authorized by the Second Chance Act and \$30 million for residential substance abuse treatment programs in State and local prisons and jails.

- **Mentally Ill Offender Treatment and Crime Reduction Act (MIOTCRA)**

MIOTCRA was signed into law 2004 and in 2008 was reauthorized by Congress for an additional five years. The bill expands training for law officers to identify and respond appropriately to individuals with mental illnesses. Urge your Senators and Representatives to support funding for this bill!

Find your Senator:

http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm

Find your Representative:

<https://writerep.house.gov/>

I-WISH continued

They made attractive card with wise advice on them that were donated to a homeless shelter to put in the lunch bags of children. They wrote a new inmate booklet for new inmates on how to adjust to prison life.

Their crowning achievement has been, with the assistance of a professional playwright, to write and perform a very provocative and moving play, *Faces*, which depicts their lives before and after incarceration. The play was written to convince teens not to make the same mistakes that they did. The play has been performed about a dozen times for adults and teens. All have been deeply moved, many brought to tears, hearing about mistakes made and freedom lost.

MD State Commission on Criminal Sentencing



The Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy annual public comments session was held on November 18th in Annapolis. The Commission works to increase equity in sentencing by reducing disparity in sentencing. <http://www.msccsp.org/>

Several advocacy groups attended and spoke including C.U.R.E. member Ed Sabin and Mother of a Lifer, Lea Green. Both spoke about supporting legislation to remove politics from the approval of parole for lifers. Thanks to all who were able to attend and keep this issue in the spotlight.

Maryland CURE Meeting Schedule

Saturday, June 19, 2010
Saturday Sept 18, 2010
Saturday Dec 11, 2010
10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

The Meeting House
5885 Robert Oliver Place
Columbia, MD

NOTE: MD CURE meetings will be held quarterly on the third Saturday of March, June, September and the second Saturday of December

Embracing Lambs Ministry

Live life for Truth and Honesty

See with your spirit as well as with your eyes

Embracing Lambs Ministry works to help deaf and hard of hearing people in prison and as they are released back into society. They provide advocacy, information and referrals to resources and help to improve conditions in prisons for those who are deaf.

There is an estimated 90,000 deaf and hard of hearing inmates incarcerated in the United States. This is an estimate based on numbers from the Department of Justice and the website www.deafattorneys.com

If you are aware of any Deaf or Hard of Hearing individuals who may be entering prison, or in prison expecting to be released, please contact us. We are interested in finding out about inmates whose rights have been violated under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act). Embracing Lambs Ministries will provide an easy to read bible upon request for Deaf inmates.

For released Deaf inmates who are in need and without family assistance, we offer Welcome Home Kits. Even if we are not able to provide direct support, we may be able to refer you to someone who can.

Embracing Lambs AfterCare Program is structured to provide faith-based aftercare support needed to help deaf and hard of hearing individuals reclaim and rebuild their lives towards re-integration into civil and productive Christians.

Embracing Lambs is led by Pastor Mark Ehrlichmann and Assistant Director Anne Ehrlichmann.

Embracing Lambs Ministries,
P. O. Box 4882
Baltimore, MD 21211
embracinglambs@gmail.com

Phone number is 410 542-1510. (Sorry that we are not able to accept collect calls at this time. If you write, please be patient, as we have limited office hours.)

Maryland CURE New Website

We have been working on updating our website and have added lots of links and several re-entry resources. Please visit and let us know if you have any suggestions!

www.marylandcure.webs.com

Resources

National Association for Children of Incarcerated Parents

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

Mothers of Incarcerated Sons Society MISS encourages support for mothers of both sons and daughters who are incarcerated and encourages advocacy.

www.mothersofinmates.org

Sex Offender Laws

Maryland lawmakers have been negotiating on several sex offender laws and some proposals have already been signed off on such as lifetime supervision of violent sex offenders who have been released and elimination of good behavior credits for those still behind bars.

There are many myths regarding sex offenders and the public is particularly susceptible on this subject due to the sensitivity of the crime and the many misperceptions that have been promulgated. When an especially heinous crime is committed, people have a tendency to be afraid and to group everything into one category. The word 'predator' is used across the board when in reality the FBI-UCR reports that 23% of sex crimes are against someone under 18 and that predators represent about 3% of all sex offenders.

There is a widespread misperception that people who commit sexual crimes do it again and again. The research, however, directly contradicts this. Recidivism rates for sex offenses are relatively low, typically running in the 3-13% range, and among the lowest of all types of crimes. The largest, most sophisticated analysis was performed by Karl Hanson, Solicitor General of Canada.

Hanson's findings include:

- **Overall recidivism rate for new sex crimes: 13.7%** (Hanson, R.K., and Morton-Bourgon, K., *Predictors of Sexual Recidivism: An Updated Meta-Analysis*. Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Canada (2004-2), p.8)
- **Recidivism rate for child molestation: 12.7%** (Hanson, R.K. and Bussiere, M., *Predicting Relapse: A Meta-analysis of Sexual Offender Recidivism Studies*, *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* (1998) p. 8.)
- **Recidivism rate for child molestation within families: 8.4%** (Hanson, R.K., *Age and Sexual Recidivism: A Comparison of Rapists and Child Molesters*, Department of the Solicitor General of Canada (2001-01), p. 9.)

Re-entry Information

Sylvester Uhaa from International CURE attended our January CURE meeting. Sylvester was in the Washington area for several weeks and volunteered to help Maryland CURE. He put together a list of all the Maryland County detention facilities and a sample questionnaire for them concerning their re-entry policies/contacts. We used this to request information and have heard from several of the counties. We will be posting this information on the website as we get replies. www.marylandcure.webs.com

Resources continued

- **Maryland Community Services Locator** – www.mdcsf.org – type in location and zip code and the site will do a search for you.
- **United Way of Central MD 211** – a 24-hour a day, seven day a week confidential information and referral services that is available in more than 150 languages -- or in the Greater Baltimore Area – call 410-685-0525, Elsewhere in MD – 1-800-492
- **Legal Services** – www.publicjusticecenter.org – 410-625-9409, 1-877-625-9409
- **MD Money Helpline** – 1-877-254-1097 –free financial hotline – consumer credit counseling
- **To check for cheapest prescription prices in any area** – www.medtipster.com
- **To locate Departments of Social Services** – www.dhr.state.md.us
- **SAIL** – web-based screening and application tool for food stamps, temporary cash assistance, medical assistance, and other various social services – <https://www.marylandsail.org/>
- **Identification cards, birth certificates etc. can be obtained with the help of any county's career center** –access listing of Maryland's One-Stop Career Centers at www.dllr.state.md.us
- **Photo ID** (\$15) – Motor Vehicle Administration – www.mva.maryland.gov, 1-800-950-1682
- **St. Vincent de Paul of Baltimore** – a faith based charity affiliated with the Catholic Church; striving to renew and adapt to the changing needs of those it serves.
320 Cathedral St., Balt MD 21201
<http://www.vincentbaltimore.org>

Register with the National Criminal Justice Reference Service to get current criminal justice information.

P O Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000
www.ncjrs.gov

JusticeMaryland – a statewide criminal justice advocacy organization.
www.justicemaryland.org

Cell Door Magazine - www.celldoor.com – written by many people in prison. Send sort stories, opinions, poetry and art submissions to:

Cell Door Magazine
12200 Rd. 41.9, Mancos, CO 81328

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



MD CURE Newsletter
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The purpose of life is not to be happy - but to *matter*, to be productive, to be useful, to have it make some difference that you have lived at all. ~Leo Rosten

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