

Correctional Newsfront

The Official Newsletter of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

2017

Celebrating VOLUNTEERS

Each year the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and its facilities take a moment to recognize citizens who devote their time and attention to inmates by volunteering within our prisons' fences and walls.

Citizens often provide religious-related services, while others facilitate addiction counseling groups. There are many other services that are provided by citizens. Oftentimes if it weren't for those volunteers and their commitment to our inmates, the services couldn't be offered at all.

As you may be aware, the DOC – along with all other state agencies in Pennsylvania – are facing difficult budget times. While the DOC normally holds an annual volunteer banquet at its Training Academy, our budget situation didn't allow for that to happen this year.

But we still are recognizing these kind-hearted and loyal individuals by telling their stories in this newsletter. We hope you will take a few minutes to learn about a handful of the thousands of volunteers who provide invaluable services to state prison inmates.

DOC officials hope to, again, one day hold its volunteer recognition banquet. Until then, this issue of "Newsfront" will highlight this year's Volunteers of the Year.

Rev. Jorge C. Villegas

SCI Albion

Father Jorge C. Villegas came to SCI Albion with a desire to serve those in prison. He made his decision following a discussion with the Catholic Chaplain. He declined an invitation to serve as a contract chaplain, and maintained volunteer status for several years. Father Jorge spent twenty-five years working between his home in the Archdiocese of Yucatán, Mexico and the Diocese of Erie.



His mission is to evangelize on both sides of the border. Recognizing a growing Hispanic ministry in the United States, he said, “If we believe that the ‘signs of the times’ are a real and present voice of God, we should all be asking ourselves what God is trying to tell us through this reality.” He displays no bias toward the men of our Saint Paul Catholic Community and demonstrates a genuine love for all, regardless of their faith affiliation.

Father Villegas has volunteered since 2014 by sharing monthly masses, providing the Sacrament of Reconciliation, conducting special celebrations during Advent and Lent, and participating in retreats during the year. He visits the medical department to provide the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Father Villegas has volunteered since 2014.

“The ways are so many. Yours is only one” is his motto. His unconditional giving and humble service to the Lord is his motivation. He learns much but shares more in dealing with the men at Albion. He understands the spiritual challenges inmates face and meets each individual where they are on their spiritual journeys.

Members of our Catholic and Protestant groups share thankful praise for Fr. Jorge. He is routinely greeted by inmates in the chapel and on the sidewalks. He responds with welcoming and positive comments to all. The men extend their appreciation to Fr. Jorge and share sadness as he plans a July return to Yucatán. The entire Chaplaincy department respects Father Jorge as a spiritual leader and team member.

As Pastor of Saint Stephen of Hungary, Catholic Church in Erie, Fr. Jorge is extremely busy. Fulfilling roles from secretary to maintenance man, he gives 110% to his parish and its members. He celebrates English and Spanish liturgies each Sunday and is loved by his parish community. He also serves as the lone volunteer for the Hispanic Community at FCI McKean.

Thank you, Father Jorge, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Albion’s 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Deacon Ralph DeCecco, Albion Volunteer Coordinator

Reverend Gene Zeller

Bureau of Community Correction

A little over seven years ago, Gene Zeller was asked by a dear friend to attend a meeting at Berks County Prison. Gene admits that he never thought he would have interest in working with a prison population, joking that it wasn't something on his "bucket List." Gene stated that he really had reservations about working in this setting but made a promise to his friend that he felt he had to fulfill.

Gene eventually came to Wernersville and met with two re-entrants in Building 27 who changed him. Gene stated that these two men really wanted to better their lives, and looked to him for help. Gene says that night changed his outlook and he's never looked back.

As a part of the Jubilee Ministries, Gene averages 25 hours a week volunteering his services to our population. He selflessly volunteers as a prison chaplain and a mentor. He offers counseling, conducts bible study groups, and organizes activities that include movie nights, board game tournaments, sports tournaments, and holiday decorating and socializing.

Gene explains that the motivating factor in his work is being able to help others in some way who are looking to change and to make a difference. Gene states there is nothing more gratifying then seeing someone he is working with succeed and start the next chapter of their life.

Gene has worked hard at his craft earning a bachelor's degree in Theology with a minor degree in Counseling. Gene is currently working on his master's degree in Counseling, and will be completing it soon.

Gene is married and has three adult children, six grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren. Gene is a devoted father and grandfather who works hard to balance his family life and volunteer life.

Thank you, Reverend Zeller, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the Bureau of Community Corrections 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Deputy Luis Resto, BCC Volunteer Coordinator

Pamela Graci

SCI Benner Township

Ms. Pam Graci has been involved in dog training for the past 16 years. She is the owner of, and trainer at, Wags and Woof, a Positive Reinforcement dog training program in State College and the surrounding areas. In addition to training owners on how to teach their dogs basic skills, Pam offers lessons to positively modify their dogs' behavior. She believes that each dog is unique and has its own personality which owners can tap into to have a better behaved pet and, ultimately, a better relationship with their companion.



Pam was already on board with SCI Benner Township's dog program, A Dogs Tale from Jail, before the first inmates even arrived at the facility in the spring of 2013. Pam was asked to be our dog trainer by the facility's superintendent, who was familiar with the work that she performed as a well-known and respected dog trainer in Central PA, as well as her involvement as a DOC volunteer in the past. With over 16 years of experience in dog training, the last 12 of which focused on rewarding dogs for good behavior rather than punishment for bad behavior, she was the perfect person for the job. Her belief that focusing on the positive is key to changing the behavior of man's furry friends, translated well into the mission of the DOC.

Not only does Pam offer her training services to our facility, she has worked tirelessly to locate shelters from which we receive our dogs and arrange for their transportation to our facility. She believes strongly in offering shelter dogs a chance to be adopted and become the wonderful pets she knows they can be. Shelter dogs are her heart, as she has often said, and she couldn't be more passionate in her endeavor to give them their second chance. Pam also ensures that she provides us with appropriate dogs by testing their temperament, which is a process of assessing a dog's ability to be social and what their potential for aggression may be.

Prior to the first dogs arriving in July 2013, Pam came to SCI Benner Township to introduce herself to the staff and inmates involved in the program, and to familiarize them with her dog training values of Positive Reward Based training. She brought her own dog pack into the institution to share what the outcome of this type of training can produce in our pets. For the next month, the inmate handlers were introduced to what many viewed as a new philosophy on dog handling, as many were familiar with the old fashioned correcting method of getting a dog to obey.

August 2013 brought with it the arrival of the program's first dogs – quite a motely lot they were - mixed breeds of varying degrees and personalities. That day, Pam spent hours getting the dogs and handlers settled and re-assuring the handlers that they would be fine. We have had many dogs since the first ones arrived at the facility. Over the past 3 years, it has become very apparent that Pam is indeed an expert in her field.

It is amazing to watch Pam at work with the dogs, revealing their hidden personalities, as well as their capabilities that were once thought impossible. She offers encouragement and praise when she watches the handlers work through an issue with their dog, has with understanding or learning what is being asked of them. Additionally, she shares the laughter when the dog does what the dog wants to do, such as those moments of an untimely face lick or getting treats forgotten on a chair.

Ms. Pam Graci's presence within the program has not only been evident within the dogs entrusted to the program, but with the handlers themselves. Where once there may have had little self-confidence, there is now a feeling of accomplishment each time one of the dogs in their care is adopted and leaving with the skills they taught them. With her strong belief in second chances and making this possible with positively reinforced encouragement, Pam has passed this belief onto those she works tirelessly with as a volunteer for SCI Benner Township.

Thank you, Pam Graci, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI-Benner 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Matthew McCoy, Benner Township Volunteer Coordinator



Margie Stewart
SCI Camp Hill

The HOPE dog program at SCI Camp Hill pairs at-risk dogs with inmates for the purpose of training them so that they can more easily get adopted. Margie Stewart adopted her HOPE dog, Danner from the program in April, 2008. She was affected by the idea of second chances for both the dogs and the inmates and wanted to “pay it forward.”

In November 2008, she walked into the prison as a volunteer for the first time. Walking back to P block where the dog program is housed, she remembers that it was pretty intimidating. She was with another volunteer and when they arrived at the block Margie was introduced as a new volunteer who had adopted Danner. Within minutes an inmate walked up to her, introduced himself as Danner’s handler, extended his hand and said, “You’re Danner’s mom.” He thanked her and they talked about the program. It was quickly evident to her how important the dogs and the program are to the inmates who are involved.

Usually in the prison twice a week, Margie assists with the weekly training class led by a professional dog trainer. She takes the dogs on field trips outside of the prison to socialize them and also helps escort some of the dogs and handlers on what have become weekly visits to the mental health blocks as well as the prison infirmary. Margie feels that both the dogs and the inmates benefit from the program.

When the dogs go to their forever homes, they’ve received lots of love and extensive training from their handlers. In turn the handlers experience what it’s like to be responsible for another living being that’s completely reliant on them. They learn about unconditional love and compassion. She says there are parallels between the dogs and the handlers. Both usually come into the program with some baggage and both dogs and handlers need to learn to trust. “It’s rewarding to watch the dogs and their handlers grow together and become more confident,” says Margie. She also feels that the dogs bring a sense of normalcy to the institution.

She recalls one particular afternoon when she came into the prison, accompanied by Danner. It was a cold, overcast, windy day and Danner was wearing a black hoodie with a skull and crossbones on it. There was a long line of inmates walking through the yard, all looking very grim with their heads down. As they looked up one by one, it was “like a chain reaction of smiles.” She remembers thinking, “Amazing – all those smiles – and all it took was a little yellow dog in a black hoodie.”

Margie received a BA from Penn State and is “officially retired,” but works part time at a veterinary clinic. She lives in Boiling Springs and can frequently be spotted hiking the trails with her two current rescue dogs, Yuki and Manny.

Thank you, Margie Stewart, for your dedicated, selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI-Camp Hill 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Larry Mills, Camp Hill Volunteer Coordinator



Imam Stanley E. Sparks

SCI Cambridge Springs

Imam Stanley Sparks experienced firsthand the importance and positive impact that volunteers have on the incarcerated, being an ex-offender many years ago himself. For him it was simply a matter of timing before he was able to pursue volunteering himself personally.

Imam's initial visits inside our institution began in 2011 as a Public Visitor, coming in for the Eid-al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha Prayers, and giving special sermons. He began volunteering on a regular basis at our institution in January of 2016, offering a weekly class for our Muslim population. The active Muslim Community nearly doubled within four weeks of the implementation of his class and has a consistent attendance since its inception. At first, his busy schedule only allowed him to commit to leading Jumah prayers once a month. Within six months, he was coming in twice a month, and a year later, he now comes in every Friday afternoon. The impact upon our population is visible in participation and the interaction of the Muslim Community around the institution. His dedication and commitment is respected and appreciated by staff and inmates alike.

Imam Sparks is a quiet and unassuming man, friendly, honest and deeply committed to his faith and family. He has a winning personality and is an engaging conversationalist; everyone he comes into contact with finds him open and knowledgeable by helping on many different levels.

He has been a stabilizing force for our Muslim Community. The ladies at Cambridge Springs are impressed with his depth of knowledge, his quiet, peaceful demeanor and the sincerity he conveys in his teaching and sermons. In their own words, they find Taleem classes to be "very educational," as "he is dedicated and committed to the faith and us." They continued by stating, "He is a very good teacher" as "he brings our community together and provides the structure that we need." Furthermore, Jumah prayers and sermons are "very beneficial" due to his teaching's being "practical and helpful." "He's teaching us how to live peaceful lives," stated one inmate as he also offers encouraging counsel and "reminds us of our duty" and "reinforces policies and regulations." Cambridge Springs is blessed to have him.

Imam Sparks was born, raised and educated in Erie, PA. He attended East High School and received a bachelor's degree from Mercyhurst College (now University). He is employed at Mercyhurst University as a Medical Coder and Biller. He is the husband and father of eight children, ages 1 to 16 years with the 16 year old attending her first year of college at Edinboro University. Imam is an in-demand speaker, speaking regularly at the Erie Islamic Community Center, also visiting and speaking at SCI-Albion, Penn State and mosques around Pennsylvania. Imam has also traveled abroad speaking at a church in Ghana West Africa and a Mosque while there. Cambridge Springs is pleased and privileged to have among our volunteers one who is committed to his religious service with passion, purpose, and pride.

Thank you, Imam Stanley Sparks. For your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI-Cambridge Springs' 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Darlene Johnson, Cambridge Springs Volunteer Coordinator

Robert Eugene Rieck

SCI Chester

The respect and appreciation Robert Rieck received from customers motivated him to become a volunteer and not just a member of the board directors for Thresholds of Delaware County. In the last eight years before his retirement in 2000, Mr. Rieck noticed the special recognition, appreciation and respect his customers poured on him. He decided shortly after his retirement to become volunteer to continue to help others who may need his services.

When Thresholds of DELCO decided to go to SCI Chester in 2000 to offer volunteer services to teach inmates problem solving and decision making skills, Mr. Rieck joined the team. He has been a staunch supporter of the group and has made tremendous contributions in the decision making process and problem solving skills for the many participants that the group has taught for the past 17 years.

Mr. Rieck teaches decision making one-on-one and also in groups. He is part of the clientele team that interviews inmates who want to participate in the program. He helps in training new volunteers – especially those who help the volunteers from outside in teaching inmate participants. He provides counsel to the team of volunteers when there is a need and fills in for the director when she is not available.

Mr. Rieck continues to volunteer because he believes the program is making a difference in the lives of inmates who are willing to change. He puts it this way: “I personally believe that the Thresholds of DELCO program, which utilizes local volunteers, is making a positive impact on most of the inmates we come into contact with. We can help change the inmates who want to be changed.” Mr. Rieck believes his volunteering efforts in Thresholds has been very rewarding; he has experienced growth and maturity. “During these 17 years as a Thresholds volunteer, I have truly received more growth and maturity from this program,” he elaborates.

Mr. Rieck was born in Gary, Indiana, where he grew up and had High School education. He received his bachelor’s degree in Chemical Engineering from Purdue University and his master’s in Business Administration from Northwestern University. He started working in a manufacturing plant and moved from there to a Chemical Company where he rose to become the Plant Manager. When he left that company he took a job as the Inside Sales Manager of a small private company from where he retired in 2000.

He has been married to his lovely wife Jeanette for 35 years and they have one grown son and two grandchildren. He also volunteers with Thresholds of DELCO in G.W. Hill Correctional Facility in Delaware County and Chester Counter Correctional facility. He also volunteers as a Mathematics tutor at the G.W. Hill correctional facility. In his spare time, he enjoys playing with his grandchildren.

Thank you, Robert Rieck, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI-Chester 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. James Akrong, Chester Volunteer Coordinator



Pastor Earl Mattern

SCI Coal Township

It all began around 35 years ago when Minister Earl Mattern felt that God was leading him into prison ministry. At that time he was warmly involved in the local church ministry, Elim Fellowship, in Lima, New York. There he served in a group that regularly visited a Rescue Home Mission and also volunteered at a detention home. Minister Mattern's journeys to SCI Coal Township started two years ago. Propelled by his passion and sense of calling in prison ministry, Earl telephoned the institution and informed us of his desire to serve as a volunteer.

Minister Mattern visits SCI Coal Township every Tuesday evening. He leads a non-denominational Christian Bible Study. He shares the Word of God with inmates and prays with them. Earl is finding fulfillment in his ministry to the inmates. In his words, "I appreciate that I can see them growing in God and worshiping freely even though they are incarcerated." Over and over, inmates have expressed the significant impact of Earl's Bible Study. He explains, "Since I have been in the jail, I have never been impacted the way this Bible Study impacts me. We do real fellowship and always feel God's presence to lift our burdens."

Staff in the Chaplaincy Department are very grateful for Minister Mattern's selfless service. A Chaplain says, "It is very unusual for Minister Mattern to miss his Tuesday Bible Study, and his passion and dedication to his group are worthy of emulation." Another Chaplain says "Minister Mattern's group is growing by the day - an evidence that he is doing a great job and touching the lives of the inmates."

Earl's volunteering extends beyond the prison ministry. As a faithful member of the Danville Assembly of God Church in Danville, PA, he is playing a significant role in the church and ensuring that he is using his gifts to God's glory and services to humanity. Minister Mattern enjoys sharing the word of God and leading the congregation in fellowship. He occasionally leads the congregation on Sunday services and other programs as assigned.

Minister Mattern received his High School diploma over 40 years ago. He was licensed to serve in the ministry for 12 years after which he was ordained eight years ago. He has volunteered in a Federal Prison and is currently volunteering at the Columbia County Prison. Earl is happily married to Marryella, and their marriage is blessed with two beautiful twin daughters - Marysara and Rebecca.

Thank you, Pastor Earl Mattern, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community at SCI Coal Township. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Coal Township's 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Akinleke Akinbode, Coal Township Volunteer Coordinator

Pastor Steve Atanasoff

SCI Dallas

As the Pastor of the Town Hill United Methodist Church, Pastor Steve, as he is known, met a member of his congregation, Laura Shaffer. Laura had been volunteering at SCI Dallas for some time and invited her Pastor to join



her group. Not unfamiliar with prison ministry, Pastor Steve had ministered in a county institution in the central part of the state and he agreed to join her at SCI Dallas. After several years of leading the Town Hill United Methodist Church congregation, Pastor Steve was transferred to a congregation in the Middletown, Pa., area.

Even though he was transferred, he had not lost his love of sharing God's Word with the men at SCI Dallas. He has faithfully conducted the Yokefellowship bi-weekly Bible study in the chapel since 2003. It is no easy task for Pastor Steve to minister at SCI Dallas, as he drives some 120 miles one way to be able to share the Word of God with our men.

Pastor Steve says one important lesson he has learned is to be a good listener. Some days it is more important to deal with issues than to dogmatically teach a lesson. Life lessons are most important because one is able to unite both God's Word and these lessons together which really brings the point home to the Yokefellowship group.

Inmates at SCI Dallas have expressed the impact of Pastor Steve by these comments: "Pastor Steve possess many God given gifts such as loyalty, listening, and encouraging healthy attitudes of endeavoring, forbearance, love & peace; inspiring us to practice these characteristics." Inmate Bob states: "He enjoys Pastor Steve's Bible study as he allows inmates to express their view. Pastor Steve's teaching provokes life lesson application, and really challenges me." Inmate Winslow states: "Pastor Steve has been instrumental in my spiritual growth. He is one of the most caring, loving, giving, and understanding people I know."

Pastor Steve received his bachelor's degree from Messiah College and his doctorate from Lancaster Theological Seminary. While at Lancaster Theological Seminary, he met his wife, Karen, who is also an ordained United Methodist Minister. The Atanasoff's have two children, a son and a daughter. Their son, Andrew is married to his wife, Katie; while their daughter Amber, is married to her husband Matt. Amber and Matt have one daughter named Karlyn.

Thank you, Pastor Steve, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Dallas 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Ricardo Jackson, Dallas Volunteer Coordinator

Reverend Keith P. McCarthy

SCI Frackville

The Reverend Keith P. McCarthy is not new to prison ministry, having volunteered at the Federal Prison in Minersville, PA. His journey to SCI Frackville started in the summer of 2014 when Mr. Edward Cunningham approached the FCPD at Frackville with the report that he had a pastor friend who he would like to bring on board to boast the work of volunteering at SCI Frackville.

Three years down the road, Rev. McCarthy has established himself as an outstanding volunteer at SCI Frackville. This volunteer opportunity has lead Rev. McCarthy to partner with the FCPD to launch Christian Parenting Education as a way to prepare men with necessary skills for successful re-entry back to our communities. In-

identally, Rev. McCarthy sponsored himself to a facilitators' training by the National Fatherhood Initiative. In addition to the parenting education, Rev. McCarthy also provides the men with college level Bible education. For these works, the men look forward to his meetings with excitement. He shares that his motivation for volunteering is seeing the incarcerated men learn life skills that will enable them to become productive citizens. "This ministry is what I am gifted for and it is quite fulfilling," he sums up.

By volunteering at SCI Frackville, teaching Christian parenting, and listening to the stories of the men has thought him some life lessons in perseverance, and the need to develop cheerful spirit in the midst of difficult life circumstances.

FCPD Anyanwu considers Rev. McCarthy a great asset because of his tremendous ministry experience which he graciously pours into the lives of men under his care. Added commendations of Rev. McCarthy are his great communication skills, reliability and adherence to security details. "He would always ask questions about anything that is not clear to him before he could proceed with it."

Rev. McCarthy was born in August 1956 in Harrisburg, PA, where he received his early education, graduating from the prestigious Bishop McDevitt High School. He later went to Penn State University and Lancaster Bible College where he earned his Bachelor of Science and MA, respectively.

Thank you, Reverend Keith McCarthy, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Frackville 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Samuel Anyanwu, Frackville Volunteer Coordinator

Chad Valone

SCI Forest

Chad Valone never thought he would end up in prison; it was the furthest thing from his mind. Prior to the completion of the construction of SCI Forest, a volunteer in Chad's congregation asked him to volunteer. Several thoughts raced through Chad's mind. Terrifying thoughts of meeting and trying to help convicted criminals were at the top of the list, along with the sincerity of the inmate population.

Those thoughts were overcome in 2012 when he sat in the parking lot waiting for his first day of volunteering. Chad looked at the large imposing structure before him, nervous to say the least. Clearing Control and escorted to the room assigned to the Jehovah's Witnesses group was only the beginning. As the men filed in and the room became filled with the voices of men praising, the nervousness departed and Chad was hooked.

Chad has been the Jehovah's Witnesses coordinator for SCI Forest since he started to volunteer in 2012. Chad leads in a weekly public address which is shown on Saturday mornings, as well as working hand-in-hand with the Chaplaincy Department to secure Gate Passes for needed materials and helping the inmates secure a Spiritual Advisor.



Over the years, Chad has learned that those incarcerated struggle with the separation from family, whether it's a birthday, anniversary, or just a traditional family activity it affects these men. Even when a family member passes, they cannot be there for support. Chad has come to understand that the things he enjoys and are able to do, these men miss out on. "At first you think they have everything they need, but it soon sinks in, that's just not the case," says Chad.

Several of the inmates have expressed their gratitude for Chad and his willingness to give unselfishly of himself. Jeff is always grateful for Chad being there and has become the highlight of his week. Gary always makes a point to thank Chad and express his appreciation for Chad's efforts. Chaplain Mac has even seen a change in the Inmates lives for the better since Chad has been leading these services and studies.

Chad resides with his wife Melissa in the small village of Baxter, Pa. Chad has an Associate's degree in Building and Construction where he uses that education for Commodore Corporation in Shippenville, Pa. Chad's love for seeing changed lives continues through door to door ministry and volunteer maintenance and constructions projects.

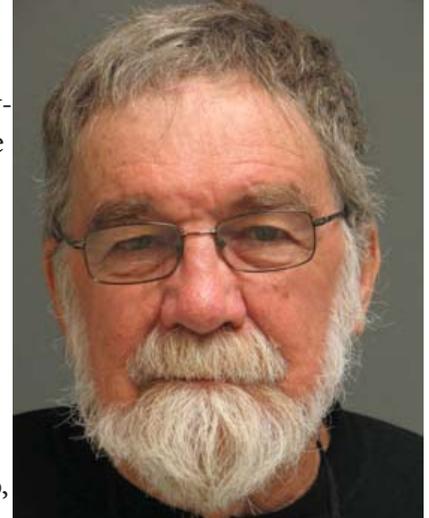
Thank You, Chad Valone, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Forest 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Stacy Shaffer, Forest Volunteer Coordinator

Kelse Hoffman

SCI Fayette

Mr. Kelse Hoffman began his time serving at SCI Fayette as a Narcotics Anonymous Public Visitor. Even though he wanted to be a volunteer, he figured there would be too much red tape involved to even try. Thanks to a little encouragement from our 2006 Volunteer of the Year, Mr. Thomas Churchill and Kelse's desire to carry the message of recovery to the addicts who still suffer, we have been blessed to have his experience, strength and hope at our meetings on a weekly basis. His 32 years of clean time are an inspiration to all the inmates who attend.



Kelse is there every Saturday for the Steps to Serenity meeting in the Chapel. He has been a volunteer at SCI Fayette for 5 years. When asked by Steve Benko, Drug and Alcohol Treatment Supervisor, how the Saturday meetings are going, he stated, "They have been on the upswing and are growing weekly." He credits the participation of the Therapeutic Community members and graduates with making the Steps to Serenity a strong meeting.

When questioned on why he volunteers he answered, "I get as much out of these meetings as the inmates do. They are just like me. We have everything in common, I just didn't get locked up." He went on to say, "Part of my 12th step work of giving it back is why I am here on Saturdays. I enjoy talking to the men at these meetings,



some are working a strong recovery program and that is an inspiration to me.” Kelse ended our conversation by saying, “This just seems like another meeting on the street for me.”

It states in the Narcotics Anonymous Basic Text that the only message necessary to make the suffering addict reach out is the power of example. As SCI Fayette likes to say in the Therapeutic Community, Kelse, Role Model!

Kelse is retired and worked all of his life in the construction/maintenance field. He loves fixing clocks in his spare time. He currently resides in Finleyville, Pa., with his wife Lisa. His son, Kelse III, who is 30, is in the Air Force.

Thank you, Kelse Hoffman, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Fayette’s 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Gerald Dillinger, Fayette Volunteer Coordinator

Joseph L. Silverman SCI Graterford

Joseph (Joe) Silverman’s volunteer story is unique. For many years Joe’s parents, Leonard and Esther Silverman, were volunteers for the Jewish Congregation at Graterford, and they planted the seeds of volunteerism into their son at an early age. Leonard visited Jewish prisoners at Eastern State penitentiary beginning in 1948 and he continued to visit Jewish prisoners at SCI Graterford until 1994. Esther later joined her husband for his visits at SCI Graterford and the men truly enjoyed the weekly study of the Torah the couple led.

Joe visits twice a month on Friday evenings for Shabbat services. In 1994, when Joe’s dad could no longer make the long walk down the SCI Graterford corridor, it was then that Joe decided that he would continue the legacy of volunteerism which his parents began. In 1990, Leonard Silverman was honored as the Volunteer of the Year and now his son Joe is being honored in a similar manner. At SCI Graterford, staff believe this would be the first father/son honored as Volunteer of the Year.

During the twenty three years that Joe has been entering SCI Graterford for Shabbat services, he has noticed a positive transformation in the attitudes and outlooks of the Jewish inmates. Joe has observed, “even though the men have gone astray, they want to change their lives for the better and they maintain a hope for the future, after all, this is what Torah teaches us.”

The Jewish congregation is a small group; however, its members are regular attendees of the Shabbat services and holiday observances. Joe’s leadership brings continuity to the religious functions and he offers steady support to the men who have lost family and friends while incarcerated at SCI Graterford.

Stan, one of the members of the Jewish congregation describes Joe’s bi-weekly visits on the Sabbath in this way, “Joe’s fellowship is warmly felt by all the men as he always continues the conversation begun on the previous visit... Joe is a first rate person and his integrity and concern for us is always evident.” Rabbi Mitchell Romirowsky, the SCI Graterford Jewish Chaplain offers the following comment: “Joe has been devoted to the wellbeing of the inmates in the Jewish congregation and continues the wonderful legacy of his dear father Leonard.”



Joe lives in Lansdale, Pa., with his wife, Bonita. He owns and operates an automobile garage where he repairs cars of all makes and models. He is a member of Tiferet Bet Israel Synagogue in Blue Bell and he and Bonita regularly attend services and community functions there.

Thank you, Joseph Silverman, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Graterford 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Rafael Torres Jr., Graterford Volunteer Coordinator

Temujin Ekunfeo

SCI Greene

Mr. Temujin Ekunfeo was contacted by an inmate asking if he was willing to do an out-reach ministry in a state facility. Mr. Ekunfeo stated that doing ministry in prison was “the farthest thing from my mind.” The reason why it had never clicked in Mr. Ekunfeo’s mind is that reaching out for converts is contrary to the tradition that he has served as a member of the priesthood of the Yoruba spiritual tradition since 1978.

Mr. Ekunfeo was contacted by the Religious Services Department at SCI Greene asking if he was interested in serving as a volunteer for the Yoruba Religion. After a process of vetting he was offered a position as a volunteer religious worker, which he accepted. He embraced this volunteer opportunity because he wanted to help the men at SCI Greene to better understand the Yoruba tradition as a member of the Yoruba priesthood.

He embarked upon this project in the Fall of 2016 and has visited SCI Greene every Wednesday since then. One thing he learned from the onset of this ministry in prison is that he was not going to be able to do initiation ceremonies for his students in SCI Greene like he does outside these secure environment. However, he looks forward to his visits with his group at SCI Greene, because they are excited about what he has taught them thus far. He said that coming to teach the guys makes him “very happy” and he looks “forward to that every week.” Mr. Ekunfeo is very proud of the wealth of knowledge he gained from Gilberto Martinez, knowledge that he has the honor to pass on to his students at SCI Greene.

Mr. Ekunfeo studied Anthropology at the University of Pittsburgh. He began his studies in the “Yoruba Temple” in Harlem, New York in 1969, while was advancing his knowledge of African drumming at the Olatunji Center of African culture, which was also located in Harlem New York. He continued religious studies in Philadelphia, PA as a student of Gilberto Martinez, who was made a member of the priesthood in the Guanabacoa neighborhood of Havana in 1944. He is 66 years old, a semi-retired drummer, singer, storyteller, maker of African instruments and a creator of both secular and sacred beadwork. Some of his beadwork is currently on display in Phipps Conservatory in an exhibit of plants from the West Africa.

Thank you, Temujin Ekunfeo, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Greene 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Jabulani Sibanda, Greene Volunteer Coordinator



Anna Marie Nachman

SCI Houtzdale

Anna Marie Nachman began volunteering at SCI's Houtzdale and Rockview in 1999 as a result of her brother's volunteering and encouraging her to get involved. She stated that once she volunteered she saw that the inmates encouraged her more than she felt she could encourage them. When the Catholic Christian Growth Groups started, she and her husband Edward were among the first volunteers to return to SCI Houtzdale.

Anna Marie ministers through teaching and singing in the Houtzdale prison on the first and third Saturdays of each month. She puts a lot of time into her lessons, as shown by the appreciation demonstrated by her students.

Anna Marie says she has learned an appreciation for those she ministers to. She says she respects their ability to demonstrate the Spirit of God's presence and work in their lives, in spite of the circumstances they may be going through. She states that she values their openness and willingness to learn and be taught.

"Ms. Nachman is well liked and has a beautiful singing voice. She is well prepared, shows a lot of insight and is passionate in her teaching," says John K., a SCI Houtzdale inmate. Chad S. says, "By her being here for us, we are able to see a demonstration of God's grace. She and her husband are like family coming to see us. It's a powerful thing for them to care and give time to us when they give up a lot of things they could be doing with their time and their lives." John S. says, "We use her C.D. to sing along with in our services. She has a wonderful ministry with us."

Chaplain Miller has observed her teaching and ministry and has been deeply impressed by the immense impact she is having on the inmates who attend the Growth Groups. Her ministry is having a deeply and profound impact on healing the men at SCI HOU. Healing the deeply seated anger, resentments, and self-pity inside the men begins their positive life-long changes in becoming better people. The staff at SCI HOU are grateful for the exemplary volunteers that Anna Marie and her husband, Edward, are to the inmates.

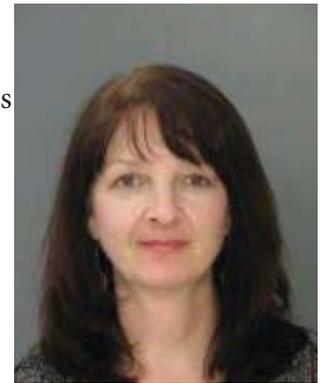
Anna Marie and Edward Nachman have been married for 38 years, they have been blessed with five children, two girls and three boys. They have also been blessed with three grandchildren. The Nachmans continue demonstrating a passionate love for those imprisoned by volunteering both at SCI Houtzdale and SCI Rockview. Thank you, Anna Marie, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Houtzdale 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Mobolaji Wojuola, Houtzdale Volunteer Coordinator

David Zook

SCI Huntingdon

David Zook never thought he would end up in prison. The thought never crossed his mind until after some reluctance to Yoke Fellowship's then director, Wesley King's invitations, he accepted and decided he would see how volunteering at SCI-Huntingdon's Yoke Fellowship would work out.



Each weekly meeting that David attends, he brings a refreshing jolly spirit with him. He has now been involved for the past ten years. Leading a devotion is met with a sincere humility and genuineness that conveys his attitude towards the preciousness of his Savior and the Word of God.

During the past years of service, David states that one thing is for sure about the men that are incarcerated: “They are men just like me.” The understanding of humanity’s greatest need is apparent with the servant of the Lord attitude that is portrayed in every service. Looking back over the years, David remembers that at first he felt apprehensive about coming into prison, but he always knew in his heart that he was obeying the will of God.

Inmate Chris S. states, “Concerning David Zook, I love the way he always wants to get started for bible study and his openings with Scripture & Prayer!” Chaplain Grove also has observed that those who participate in the Yoke Fellowship meetings have benefited from the spontaneity that David Zook contributes and always expects to hear something rewarding coming forth from his scripture readings and testimonies that portray the life of Christ from everyday living. “David sets a fine example for others to follow.”

David’s wife, Arlene, stands behind him as a dairy farmer of approximately one hundred animals. He has had the privilege of raising 4 daughters ages 23 through 30 spaced evenly at around two years apart. David has served in his community on the Fire Insurance Co-operative committee for numerous years also. He attends his local church in the community where he has also taught Sunday-School relentlessly. His true “Yokefellow,” Daryl Peachey tells us that David loves to trout fish in Kish Creek which flows through his farm. He also enjoys fishing at Raytown Lake or spending time at his camp on Stone Mountain.

Thank you, David Zook, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Huntingdon 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Darrell Wireman, Huntingdon Volunteer Coordinator

Thomas P. Mesaros

SCI Laurel Highlands

In 2013, when Tom Mesaros lost his job, the furthest thought from his mind was prison ministry. Little did he know at the time, but Tom believed God was opening a door for him to do just that. Tom was very involved in his local AA chapter. While attending a weekly meeting shortly after losing his job, Tom was approached by a fellow member of the group who was very active in prison ministry. His friend suggested Tom would really enjoy helping incarcerated men change their thinking by becoming involved to lead AA groups at SCI Laurel Highlands. Since he now had plenty of time on his hands, Tom decided to give volunteering a try.

Tom’s own story of recovery began when he spent one night in the county lock-up. He states, “I realized I needed to change my lifestyle before it was too late.” During his rehab, Tom was challenged by a counselor to begin attending AA meetings. He believes in AA and testifies that the program has played a huge role in him staying sober. For the past four years, Tom has been leading AA meetings at SCI Laurel Highlands. He is faithfully at the institution the fourth Monday each month.



When asked what is most gratifying about volunteering Tom replied, "Seeing someone who is serious about changing the way he thinks and knowing the change that has happened within me is now beginning to take place in another individual is so rewarding. I want to help as many men as I possibly can."

John, who attends the weekly AA meeting, says of Tom, "He is so genuine in his concern for others to change. He apologizes to us if he has to miss a meeting." Rev. David Klink, Facility Chaplaincy Program Director and Volunteer Coordinator, remarks, "I believe Tom's greatest asset is his humble spirit. He exemplifies the true spirit of a volunteer: one who comes to offer help and hope out of gratitude for what they personally have experienced in life!"

Tom resides in Boswell, Pa. with his companion of 31 years, Susan. They have two grown daughters, Sarah, 29, and Hannah, 27. Tom has been blessed to be the grandfather of two beautiful little girls, Julia, 15, and Savannah, 8. Tom has also been blessed with a new job, he is employed at J & J Truck bodies, as a welder. In his "spare time" Tom enjoys hiking.

Thank you, Tom Mesaros, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Laurel Highlands 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. David Klink, Laurel Highlands Volunteer Coordinator

Olga Williams

SCI Mahanoy

Olga Williams first heard of prison ministry through a fellow church member while attending her churches weekly prayer meeting. Although working in prison had never crossed her mind, she was immediately interested in the opportunity to help those within prison walls. Without hesitation, Olga was excited and ready to share the Catholic Faith with any inmate who would listen.

Every Thursday, since 2015, Olga, through the Diocese of Allentown, has helped lead the weekly Rosary and time of worship along with Sister Martha. She is an instrumental part of the team that assists Sister Martha in setting up and running the service, as well as counseling and encouraging the inmates that attend.

Over the years, as Olga has volunteered at SCI Mahanoy, she has learned that people in prison need and desire to practice their faith just as much as anyone else. In fact, it is in helping them do so where she finds satisfaction and enjoyment. The inmate's reaction and response to the Catholic faith is ultimately what drives her to continue her work here at the institution. When asked what keeps her coming back to SCI Mahanoy, Olga said it best: "The enthusiasm, honest sincerity, and dedication to Jesus and the Catholic faith that we all share together is why I do what I do and will continue to do so for as long as I can."

The impact that Olga has had on SCI Mahanoy goes further than just the religious department. Her smile and cheerful attitude affects everyone she meets. Always ready with an encouraging word or funny comment, Olga goes above and beyond when it comes to bringing light into an often dark place. A typical comment from inmates when talking about Olga is, "she's just a genuinely nice person." This goes hand in hand with what staff

think of her as well. Sister Martha Zammatore, with whom Olga works very closely with, shares the sentiments of many staff members when she says “she is a kind, welcoming, and loving person.”

Olga currently lives in Barnesville, PA with her cat Bella and is the proud mother of two daughters; Danielle and Alexandra. She holds a secretarial associates degree and a certificate of completion in the Basics of Catechist Formation from the Diocese of Allentown. Besides her delightfully tasteful job with the Hershey Chocolate Company and her volunteer work here at SCI Mahanoy, Olga also works with the Drug Awareness Resistance Education Organization and the Saint Vincent DePaul Society. In the past she has also volunteered at the local animal shelter helping care for homeless animals. In Olga’s spare time she loves modeling, acting, reading and writing poetry. She has been involved in many projects throughout New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. She is also a three times published author.

Thank you, Olga Williams, for you selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Mahanoy 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. David Boyles, Mahanoy Volunteer Coordinator

Dennis Fitzgerald

SCI Mercer

Dennis Fitzgerald got his start in prison ministry when a friend from church invited him to help out with the AA program at a local halfway house. He was to present an action topic to help move the men toward sobriety. In 2002, he came to SCI Mercer and helped with a Catholic Metanoia Retreat. He loved it. He loved the artwork and the presentations and the eagerness of the inmates to learn. When 2013 rolled around Mr. Fitzgerald retired after twenty years of working in the Mental Health field. Another friend from church invited him to become a volunteer at SCI Mercer. As a man who keeps busy, he jumped at the challenge. Mr. Fitzgerald describes himself as a willing volunteer. “If the church needs help, I am someone who will say yes,” said Dennis.

One of the volunteers who captured the attention of Rev. Joseph Kosarek, Facility Chaplaincy Program Director and Volunteer Coordinator, was Mr. Dennis Fitzgerald. Mr. Fitzgerald quietly enters SCI Mercer every Wednesday afternoon with several other volunteers. He then quickly takes his position at the front of the chapel and patiently waits, usually by himself for count to clear and movement to begin. A small group of inmates will gather in front of him because Mr. Fitzgerald is responsible for leading SCI Mercer’s Roman Catholic Rosary Prayer Group. He has a passion to lead these men in prayer and to teach them the significance of prayer.

“The Hail Mary prayer,” he says, “is the prayer to pray when someone can’t find the words to ask for comfort, to look for guidance, or to thank God for his generosity.” One day as Rev. Kosarek was listening to his teaching he heard this message from Mr. Fitzgerald: “The rosary prayer is perfect because of the praises it offers, the lessons it teaches, the graces it obtains, and the victories it achieves. That makes the prayer an honor to pray and a blessing for each of us.”

Mr. Fitzgerald’s educational background explains why he is so calm and confident in leading the inmates at SCI Mercer. He knows the kind of challenges he is dealing with and loves to do it. As Mr. Fitzgerald explained: “I do

this, because there but for the grace of God go I. I enjoy meeting new inmates. I am fascinated by learning about their cultures especially those who are foreign born. I appreciate listening to their stories because I hope to relay the love of God to them. I want to help them build a spiritual foundation to prepare them to leave here and to walk in faith outside of these walls.”

Mr. Fitzgerald was born and raised in Sharon, Pennsylvania. He graduated from Sharon High School. Following graduation Dennis continue his education earning a Bachelor’s Degree in psychology and a Master’s Degree in Mental Health from Youngstown State University. Mr. Fitzgerald has been committed and faithful to Lynn his wife for the past forty five years. Both he and Lynn have one daughter named Shannon.

Thank you, Dennis Fitzgerald, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Mercer 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Joseph Kosarek, Mercer Volunteer Coordinator

Pamela Klinger

SCI Muncy

Pamela Klinger is a volunteer with Canine Partners for Life and liaison to SCI Muncy. As a volunteer for Haven to Home, she learned about CPL and was asked if she was interested. She agreed and the rest is history.

As a liaison, Pamela performs evaluations on the puppies to see how they are progressing. She checks to make sure all the puppies have their tags and puppy books are up to date. Most importantly, she listens to the inmates who update her about the puppies as she reports back to Jennifer Swank, the prison puppy coordinator on the progress of the program.



She is responsible for training staff and the community handlers that are interested in participating in SCI Muncy’s program. She coordinates a class every two weeks with a role call, updates, training exercises, and games for the puppies. The women at SCI Muncy have been receiving a rewarding and great experience with the puppies. While Pamela may be the coordinator, she also has learned an incredible amount about dogs, behaviors and service dog training. Some of the inmates in her class have been training many puppies over the years. She expressed that they have actually trained and helped her to make decisions for the group. The inmates at SCI Muncy are some of the kindest, most patient and giving women she knows.

How do the women at Muncy feel about Pam? It is best expressed in their own words. “Pam is a valued member of our team. She has a lot going on in her world but still makes time to come here twice a month to help us. An obvious animal lover, she focuses on how to help the next animal in need, both with our service dogs and rehabilitating other dogs at her rescue . In doing so, she has faced many struggles and heartbreak but through it all has been strong and courageous. Her love of dogs is infectious, brining a spirit of generosity and true concern for

the well being of all puppies and handlers. She tries to encourage other to help to make our program better.

Her heart knows no boundaries when it comes to giving of herself to animals and humans in need. Raising puppies to be service or companion dogs is no small feat. In addition to rescuing dogs, working a full-time job, and keeping up with everything else life throws at you, she volunteers at Muncy to help us with the CPL Program. Pam is awesome in every aspect of the word. We love her and she supports us to do better each and every day. Just like dogs leave paw prints on our hearts, she has left a handprint on ours and we thank God for her.”

Beyond working with Have To Home and Canine Partners for Life, Pamela volunteers with One Dog At A Time. Her love for animals helped her create a program called Canine Crusaders for Second Chances (K9C42C) with the help from a few of her dog-loving friends. The goal is to work with all local veterinarians, dog lovers, rescues, SPCA's, shelters, boarders and basically anyone who has anything to do with dogs. They work together to train, network and find loving homes for dogs that may have been on death row, breeders or considered un-adoptable by giving them a “Second Chance.” She hopes to get her program into another local prison to handle obedience training similar to the service dog program only for rehabilitation for rescued dogs.

Pam sums up the experiences of both the women at Muncy and herself best. “Canine Partners for Life is an amazing organization of people doing amazing things across the country for people with disabilities. Being a part of such an amazing organization has been a privilege for both the women at Muncy and me. I love it! I wish I could only do more.”

Thank you, Pamela Klinger, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Muncy 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Debra Reitz, Muncy Volunteer Coordinator

Charlene Sciarretta

Office of Victim Advocate

Charlene Sciarretta's world changed forever on May 13, 2004; the day her 26 year old son Danny died of a heroin overdose. Instead of seeking medical attention that would have saved her son's life, an individual, that claimed to be a friend, drove Danny to another location and left him in his car where he died. That individual was convicted of involuntary manslaughter and sentenced to state prison.

Since Danny's death, Charlene has made it her personal mission to share Danny's story with everyone in the hopes that it would save even one person. From schools to churches to state prisons, Charlene shares Danny's story and the dangers of heroin and addiction. This message has been much needed in state prisons as so many inmates struggle with addiction. Since Danny's death was a crime handled by the DA's Office, Charlene wanted inmates in state prison to see the other side of addiction and how their actions impacted victims. She wanted them to see that having any role in drugs, whether selling or even a personal addiction of their own creates a ripple of victims all throughout the community and even their own families. “My hope is that Danny's Story will educate our children, parents, family members and our communities about the real possibility of drugs entering

their worlds and changing their lives forever.”

Charlene started speaking in state prisons over 5 years ago and shares Danny’s story at Days of Responsibility, Impact of Crime Classes, and Crime Victims’ Rights Week events. Charlene quickly learned that some of the inmates had no idea how their choices impacted people like Danny. Charlene stated, “The dealers never really thought about the human aspect; it was all about profit. Danny has been gone 13 years and now he’s another face in the crowd. But I’ll use his face and hopefully make people accountable and maybe change the face of addiction. The prisons have been an eye opening experience for me and I will continue to visit them until they stop asking.”

Charlene has been married for 45 years, is the mother of two and is retired from Baltimore County Public Schools Office of Law. She loves to walk her Great Dane, enjoys taking classes at the Y and is about to be grandmother for the first time.

Charlene’s determination and strength to share Danny’s story and create awareness for addiction has made her an incredible asset to OVA and to the DOC. Her passion and desire to evoke change in the inmates in our state prisons by sharing Danny’s story is both honorable and selfless. OVA is honored to work with Charlene as she is such a deserving recipient of the Volunteer of the Year Award.

Thank you, Charlene Sciarretta, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the Office of Victim Advocate’s 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

*In Loving Memory of Danny Sciarretta
October 19, 1977-May 13, 2004*

Submitted by Karen Laird, OVA Volunteer Coordinator

Elmer Zook

SCI Pine Grove

Elmer Zook and the Hillsdale Mennonite Church have always had a heart for doing prison ministry at SCI Pine Grove. Elmer Zook has always exhibited a positive attitude among staff and inmates, and has a love for inmates becoming stronger in their spiritual walk. When SCI Pine Grove opened, Elmer Zook inquired about any volunteer opportunities. The question for Elmer Zook was not whether he should or should not become a volunteer at SCI Pine Grove, but when could he begin doing prison ministry as soon as possible.

Mr. Zook became a regular volunteer at Pine Grove in 2005; along with some of the members of the church he attends, Hillsdale Mennonite Church. These volunteers conduct a Sunday Protestant service six times a year, and host a Bible study twice a month on Fridays. Elmer is very active in both of these volunteer services. Elmer said that one of the most gratifying aspects for him being a volunteer at SCI Pine Grove is, “Knowing that God is pleased when we serve others.”

Elmer Zook has also pointed out that the staff at SCI Pine Grove is, “Very good to us, and we appreciate the



privilege to come in.” Elmer Zook explains that one of the reasons that he does come in as volunteer, and keeps coming back every year is, “Touching the lives of these young men who have so little exposure to God’s love, and seeing what the Lord can do in the hearts of the men.” Elmer also is active in community work as a self-described “Literature Distributor.”

This dedication to touching the lives of inmates and allowing the Lord to work in the hearts of the inmates’ hearts is reflected in the following inmate comments; Tom, “They are very good as the Bible Study has touched my heart. Elmer asks how I am and is truly interested in what I am up to when he sees me.” Mark: “Elmer is extremely kind, patient, and he loves coming in to help the guys.”

Elmer and his wife Susie Zook live in Clymer, Pa. and have eight grown children: Anthony (33), twins Laverne and Linford (32), Stephen (29), Ewell (27), Roselyn (25), Leah Beth (21), and Wendell (19). Elmer added that he and Susie, “are blessed to have nine grandchildren.” Elmer Zook is employed at L and L Overhead Doors in Clymer, Pa. as an overhead door installer. He and his wife are currently Youth Leaders at Hillsdale Mennonite Church. Elmer is a servant and says that although he has, “the love of God in his heart, and always wants, “to reach out to the men” at SCI Pine Grove, he considers himself, “an unworthy servant.” Anyone who knows Elmer Zook, or has been blessed by his ministry at SCI Pine Grove, know that one day the Lord will say to Elmer, “Well done my good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21).”

Thank you, Elmer Zook, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Pine Grove 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Kirt Anderson, Pine Grove Volunteer Coordinator

Betty Burnett

Quehanna Boot Camp

In the 1980’s, Betty Burnett had a calling and began volunteering her time at the Clearfield County Jail as an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting facilitator. It wasn’t long after she started volunteering at the Clearfield County Jail that Betty answered the call to serve the female inmates at the Quehanna Boot Camp. She became the leader of their Alcoholics Anonymous meetings.

Betty feels that giving back to her community is the most gratifying part of volunteering. She said, “I’m just sharing my own experience with the females at Quehanna.” Betty also volunteers at the Clearfield Hospital and has volunteered as a Red Cross disaster volunteer. She even helped in Louisiana in 2008 - 2009.

Betty believes that the impact she has made with the women at the Quehanna Boot Camp gives them hope. It is clear to see that she is making an impact on the female inmates with whom she meets. One inmate said about Betty, “She is so willing to share her own experiences, strength, and hope that it helps others to open up.” Another inmate said, “She listens with a concerned ear and gives us her opinion. I look forward to our weekly meetings. She is an inspiration.” While a third inmate says, “You are a true inspiration and positive example that clean time is possible to all us addicts. I thank you for all of your support, care and love. May God bless you.” And from



one final inmate, “I always leave the meeting feeling hope and a sense of serenity.”

Betty made the decision to retire from her own commercial cleaning business and now devotes her free time to travelling. In 2006 she drove her Subaru Outback to Alaska where she stopped in Anchorage to visit relatives in the Air Force. The trip was well worth her time because she said she had so much fun exploring. She’s visited all 50 states and this year wants to visit Las Vegas. She’s also explored internationally. Her travels have taken her to Prague, Czech Republic and finally Germany where she voyaged on a riverboat cruise. She loves trying new things and in particular forms of transportation. She’s currently waiting for her new Elio to arrive. For those of you who aren’t familiar with an Elio, it’s a three wheeled vehicle similar to a motorcycle trike. As you can see, Betty is so much more than what appears on the surface.

Thank you, Betty Burnett, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as Quehanna Boot Camp’s 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Jennifer Yingling, Quehanna Boot Camp Volunteer Coordinator

Rocky Demelfi

SCI Retreat

When Chaplain Guy Giordano, contract chaplain at SCI Retreat and Pastor at Slocum Chapel, first approached 2017 Volunteer of Year, Rocky Demelfi, about becoming a volunteer at the prison, he jumped at the chance. Rocky had no apprehensions about working within a prison and in fact since the thought had never crossed his mind, he was excited to see what the opportunity would be like. He quickly realized that it was a perfect fit for him and that God was obviously calling him to service through prison ministry.



Rocky quickly engaged this new opportunity at SCI Retreat through the LIFE Bible study program run by Marcia Sinkovich. In the fall of the 2014, the first weekly LIFE Bible Study class began and Rocky, along with the other volunteers excitedly begin on what he knew would be an awarding and challenging journey.

Over the last several years, Rocky has learned a great deal from his time within the fence. However, one particular lesson that sticks out to him is how inmates can often times seem more excited and energized when it comes to the study of God’s word than believers who are out in society. This devotion to Christ and love for His word is a true inspiration to Rocky and is part of the drive that as he says, “keeps me coming back.”

Another driving factor behind Rocky’s work within SCI Retreat is the appreciation the inmates show for him and the other volunteers. “It’s obvious that they miss you when you can’t come in,” he says, “which shows how much of an impact you have even though you’re only there an hour a week.” Inmate Eric R. summed up what both staff and inmates think of Rocky when he said, “he just has a great heart and an honest love for people.”

This love for people is put on display outside the fence as well in the work that Rocky does with the Christian

Motorcyclists Association. After graduating from the Full Gospel Institute of Theology, Rocky joined the association and eventually started a new chapter. As the Hazleton chapter president, he is able to minister to all kinds of people throughout the motorcycle world, an environment that can sometimes be just as dark as what is found in prison.

Rocky and his wife of 20 years, Mary, live in Drums along with their adopted son, 17 year old RJ. After 38 years in the plumbing business, Rocky now enjoys the freedom of retirement and able to focus on the work God has called him to do.

Thank you, Rocky Demelfi, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Retreat 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. David Boyles, former Volunteer Coordinator at Retreat

Bill Elder

SCI Rockview

Bill Elder began serving at SCI Rockview around twenty-five years ago with Gideons International. Periodically, the group would come in to preach, worship, and distribute Bibles. This was just the introduction to his volunteer service. Bill had a strong relationship with Chaplain Tom Reitz, who was also his former pastor at the Christian & Missionary Alliance church in Bellefonte in the late eighties. Bill recalls the invitation to teach, “In the fall of 2007, I received a call from Chaplain Tom asking me to be a Sunday school teacher. I said I would like to think and pray about it and get back to him. His response was that he needed the answer right away, and insisted that I say yes, so I agreed.” Within a few months, Bill was in the classroom teaching the Bible.

Bill is currently involved with prison ministry in a variety of ways. Primarily, he serves monthly in a Sunday school teacher rotation. This gives him the opportunity to interact with 30-40 men each class. He also continues to serve with the Gideons in arranging service times, accompanying the group visits, and coordinating the donation of dozens of Bibles each year. He and his wife Sharon both enjoy attending special services for musical guests and holiday observances. Generally, if the doors are open to the volunteers, Bill will be there.

From his experience teaching, Bill says that he has gained as much as he has given. His first impression of teaching at SCI Rockview is that “the guys must spend all day reading their Bibles so that they can grill the teacher.” This has taught Bill to continuously improve in his knowledge of Scripture so that he can be ready for tough issues that arise in class. According to Bill, “I have a great time studying with the class and have had many good discussions. This to me is not a sacrifice, but a privilege to come in and work with the inmates.”

Reflecting on Bill’s contributions, Chaplain Aaron Reitz states, “I truly appreciate what Bill does for us. He is not only a great teacher, but he also supports the chaplaincy with his helpfulness and spirit. He goes out of his way to get us Bibles which affects a lot of guys here. He has been a faithful volunteer and wonderful family friend for thirty years.” This sentiment is shared by the men whom Bill serves, including inmate Scott, “I have known Bill for almost twenty years now. He has always met the men here with an open smile, genuine affection, and a servant’s heart. He attends our special services just to spend extra time with the men and show his love and support

for our church. He is a teacher, mentor, and man of God who sets an example of Christian love.”

Bill and his wife Sharon are long-time residents of Zion, Pennsylvania. He has one adult son Robert. Bill recently retired from a thirty-three year career of auto sales at Dix Honda in State College, Pennsylvania. In his retirement, he enjoys gardening, riding his motorcycle, and doing handyman projects around the house. He continues to serve the community through weekly Gideon services at Centre County Correctional Facility, Bible distribution to college campuses and hotels, and as a local church treasurer.

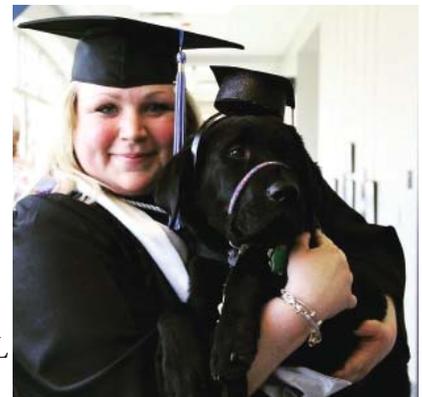
Thank you, Bill Elder, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Rockview 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Deacon Tom Boldin, Rockview Volunteer Coordinator

Mackenzie Howe

SCI Smithfield

May through July 2014, Mackenzie did an internship at SCI Smithfield working with treatment and unit managers as part of her Criminology program at Mount Aloysius College. During her internship, Mackenzie was exposed to the Canine Partners for Life Prison Puppy program and began training as a volunteer with the program. Mackenzie continued her involvement in the program during her internship at SCI-Huntingdon and when she returned to college classes. Mackenzie has always had a passion for dogs and now the CPL program at Smithfield.



Mackenzie now works full-time; yet, she continues to be one of SCI Smithfield’s most active volunteers. Mackenzie regularly attends the bi-weekly trainings held at the institution. She consistently takes the puppies from the institution whether it is overnight, or for a long weekend to socialize them in the local community and beyond. When training future service dogs, socialization in different environments and exposure to various stimuli is extremely important. Mackenzie has taken the puppies almost everywhere she goes: her college graduation, shopping trips, to the beach, to Washington DC, to the lake, etc. Not only has Mackenzie had an impact on the successes of the puppies, but she has also established a rapport with the inmate handlers and has gained their respect as they recognize her devotion to the program and their work.

Through her involvement with the Canine Partners for Life Prison Puppy Program, Mackenzie has learned how to train dogs and the proper care for the puppies. She has also learned the impact of training future service dogs on society and their impact on independence of those who receive these dogs once fully trained. The relationship that is established between these service dogs and their recipients is amazing and rewarding. Not only do these puppies impact society outside of prison walls, but Mackenzie has learned the impact these puppies make on the lives of inmates during their incarceration. The handlers are greatly impacted by their unconditional love and watching their puppies mature to become full-service dogs and go to work.



The impact of Mackenzie's involvement in the Canine Partners for Life Prison Puppy program at SCI Smithfield is invaluable. As aforementioned, she serves an integral part in the socialization of the puppies in society. Without Mackenzie's continued and constant involvement, the puppies trained at SCI Smithfield would not be as nearly ready to become full-service dogs as Smithfield's reputation holds with the Canine Partner's For Life organization. Thus, the tireless work of the inmate handlers to train valuable full-service dogs would not see the successes since the puppies trained at SCI Smithfield can experience much more than just prison life. They experience society with Mackenzie's involvement.

Mackenzie is from Huntingdon, Pennsylvania. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminology with a minor in Religious Studies from Mount Aloysius College in Cresson, PA. She is employed full-time with Huntingdon County Children Services as a Caseworker II and part-time as a security guard at Seven Points Marina in Hesston, PA. Mackenzie is engaged to Cody Hockenberry and her parents are Beverly and David Howe, also of Huntingdon. Mackenzie enjoys time boating at Raystown Lake with her friends and family and two dogs Torri and Xander.

Thank you, Mackenzie Howe, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Smithfield 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

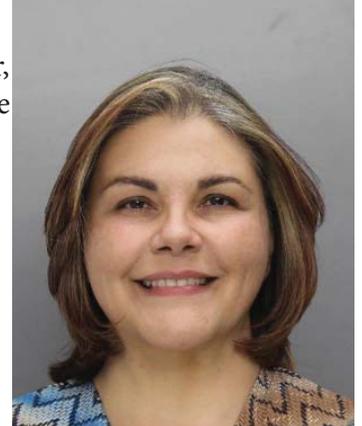
Submitted by Travis Hunsinger, Smithfield Volunteer Coordinator

Marilu Ickes

SCI Somerset

Marilu Ickes became involved in prison ministry at SCI-Somerset when a local pastor, Dr. David Stains, asked her if she would be willing to lead a Spanish Bible Study in the prison. After years of travel as a resource person for the Church of God chaplaincy program, she found an opportunity to minister in her native Spanish language waiting right in her own backyard. Born and raised in Puerto Rico, Marilu came to the Somerset area after she married her husband Chris.

Marilu leads a weekly Spanish Bible Study on Wednesday's at SCI Somerset. This time has been a special blessing for the Hispanic Christian inmates because it is in the evening when most of them do not work or have any classes. The extended time allows for personal spiritual counselling and conflict resolution. Marilu's husband Chris has assisted her with these studies as his schedule allows. Marilu has used her network of ministry contacts to arrange for weekend retreats with other Spanish speaking ministers. This provides an even broader area of spiritual growth opportunities. Marilu said she feels called to prepare the men for when they get out so they don't come back. She said it is gratifying "When I see the men growing in the Lord. To watch their progress and see them getting deeper into the Word of God."



Craig Hess, Protestant Chaplain, said, "She is on fire for the Lord, and the inmates catch that zeal." Two inmates expressed themselves with the first inmate, Javier, stating, "She is truly interested in seeing real change in our

lives,” while Daniel declared, “Her faith has impacted my faith. She is real and pushes us to get better.”

Marilu and Chris direct Ickes Ministries, through which she speaks at conferences and retreats and volunteers as a resource person for the Church of God Chaplaincy Commission. In this capacity she works with pastors who serve in chaplaincy roles in the Philadelphia area. She finds this role a diminishing as she gets more involved with the prison ministry. Ickes has a Bachelor’s Degree in Labor Relations, a Masters in Public Administration, and a PhD. in Training and Performance. Chris and Marilu Ickes live in Somerset, Pa. Marilu has been helping provide Spanish media ministry for TV in the local area, and now at SCI-Laurel Highlands.

Thank you, Marilu Ickes, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI-Somerset 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Phil Maust, Somerset Volunteer Coordinator

Martin Vega

SCI Waymart

One day, a pastor and an Imam were talking with each other. It may sound like the beginning of a bad joke, but in this case, it was the beginning of a wonderful ministry in the Department of Corrections. Just over a decade ago, Martin Vega and Imam Sayed Afify had a providential meeting. “Imam Afify,” Mr. Vega says, “was the instrument God used to introduce me to prison ministry.” Martin connected with Pastor Alvin Rios and together they serve the Spanish Protestant Community at SCI Waymart.



Twice a month, on Monday evenings, Martin travels more than an hour to help lead Spanish worship at SCI Waymart. Whether through the spoken word, beautiful and upbeat music, or simply an encouraging presence, Martin is always able to build up not only members of the Protestant Community, but other inmates and staff as well. Mr. Vega says, “My divine calling is to preach and to share with the incarcerated the love of my God and for them to know God’s restoration.” Certainly God uses him to accomplish just that.

Martin has found that restoration, encouragement, and growing in faith are a mutual experience. As he helps the members of the SCI Waymart Protestant community grow, Martin himself is stretched and grows as a result. Mr. Vega puts it simply and succinctly, “I seek the lost souls,” and his passionate desire for those living in darkness to find light fuels his dedicated service.

“Mr. Vega is great. He loves these guys and you can see that in everything that he does. They really respond to him, and I really enjoy working with him,” says Facility Chaplain Matthew Lorent. Inmate Santos enthusiastically



states, “He is a blessing from the Lord; the Lord continually blesses me through his ministry.” Inmate Alberto agrees, “Brother Vega has such passion for the Lord and for the Word and for us!”

Martin is a multitalented man, a carpenter by trade, who has worked for Machuska Construction for thirteen years. He, his wife Cynthia, and his family reside in Endicott, New York, where they are faithful members of Iglesia Mana en el Desierto. They find joy in all they do and all that life sends their way is met with a smile and a laugh, grounded in unshakeable faith.

Thank you, Martin Vega, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Waymart’s 2017 Volunteer of the Year.

Submitted by Rev. Tyler Parry, former Volunteer Coordinator at Waymart

How Can You Volunteer?

The DOC is always looking for volunteers to help provide valuable services to our inmate population.

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact the volunteer coordinator at the facility you wish to volunteer and ask how you could be most helpful in addressing inmate needs.

Then, complete and submit the following documents to the volunteer coordinator:

- Centralized Clearance Information Request Form
- Volunteer Application
- Emergency Information and Security Consent Form
- Letter of Endorsement

Each volunteer application will be processed, and a background check will be completed.

The volunteer coordinator will contact you once this process is complete.

If approved as a volunteer, you will:

- Be required to submit documentation that you have a current, valid Mantoux test (Tuberculin Skin Test) result at the time you begin to volunteer (this may be done for free at any correctional facility, with arrangements made through the volunteer coordinator).
- Be asked to attend a security orientation to become more familiar with department rules, operations and expectations of your role. This also is an opportunity for you to ask questions.
- Have a Photo ID taken and be enrolled in the Biometrics system that tracks everyone as they enter and exit a state prison.

Please visit the DOC’s website’s “How Do I” section and select “Become a Volunteer” for further information.

