



## **SCI Albion 2019 Volunteer of the Year Ron George**

Ron began serving the incarcerated even before SCI Albion was built. His first opportunity to serve came at Collins Correctional Facility in Collins, NY in 1989. He has also served at SCI-Greene and the Correctional Facility at Conneaut, OH. Ron began serving the inmate population at SCI Albion in 1993, which is the same year that the facility opened its doors. Today, he is a constant and dependable presence. Coming into SCI Albion two to three times a week, he serves with the Kairos Program, Chained to Change, Biblical Exegesis, and the Protestant Choir.

Born in Buffalo, NY, Ron was raised in the lower east side of Erie and now resides in Millcreek. His wife Dawn serves the women at SCI Cambridge Springs. Together, they continue to be a positive influence on their incarcerated brothers and sisters. A retired welder from General Electric, Ron and Dawn have seven children. He also assists at his church, “keeping things in order” by volunteering on their housekeeping and maintenance staff.

On his first visit to the Collins Correctional Facility, Ron shared he was not nervous or afraid. He stated he listened to the men with God’s ears, and has also learned to see them with God’s eyes. When an aneurism threatened to slow Ron down a few years ago, his desire to see God working in the lives of the men motivated him to continue volunteering. Although his sight and mobility are slightly limited, he still finds joy in seeing the men’s faces at the Kairos Closings. Ron believes, “God called him back from his illness to serve.” Facility Chaplaincy Program Director, Deacon Ralph DeCecco states, “Ron has been a great asset to the institution for many years. More than one inmate has shared with me what an inspiration Ron is to those in our programs. I know he brings the joy of the LORD into the lives of those he comes into contact with”.

Ron, the chaplaincy staff of SCI Albion also believe the Lord has called you to this ministry, and they feel blessed that you said yes to that call. SCI Albion is proud and privileged to be served by you, and honored to recognize you as the SCI Albion 2019 Volunteer of the Year!



## **SCI Benner Township 2019 Volunteer of the Year John Dickison**

For approximately 30 years, John Dickison has been helping others help themselves in a variety of settings. John began volunteering in the late 1980's in halfway houses, Veteran's Hospitals and a federal Penitentiary in Rochester, Minnesota.

In 1990, John moved to Pennsylvania and began facilitating Narcotics Anonymous meetings at Quehanna Boot Camp and SCI Smithfield. In 1992, he added NA meetings twice a month at SCI Rockview.

A cycle crash in 2007 and leg amputation a couple years later might have been enough to cause another volunteer to stop serving, but not John. He reports that, "Other than a six-month stint when I was in the hospital and nursing home, my prison work went uninterrupted. It's just part of my regular routine and life just doesn't seem right without it." While a lack of mobility did manage to keep him out of Rockview for a year, he resumed visits there after receiving a prosthetic leg.

When SCI Benner Township opened in 2013, John began volunteering there immediately. Since then, SCI Benner has been grateful for John's assistance with three weekly self-help meetings consisting of NA, AA, and SMART (Self-Management and Recovery Training).

John feels his volunteer work "is a small way I can repay some of the gratitude I feel for having been able to live in recovery. I firmly believe it is a goal attainable by nearly anyone, if they honestly work at it." John also believes "if someone is truly working the twelve steps, he or she will likely not get any new charges, because there is now a strong moral compass and sense of accountability guiding our choices in all our affairs. This is the essence of rehabilitation, salvation, and restoration to the human race." John acknowledges his volunteer work is just as rewarding for him as it is for the men, as he recently celebrated thirty-two years of sobriety.

John's volunteering extends beyond state prisons. In addition to the hours he continues to dedicate to SCIs Smithfield, Rockview, and Benner, John devotes time to several non-profit groups including the Stone Creek Volunteer Fire Company, Huntingdon County Arts Council, Mid-State Literacy Council and Voices of Central Pennsylvania newspaper.

During his free time, John plays in a band, enjoys working on motorcycles, and attends community events in and around the Huntingdon area where he resides with his wife, Tracie and son Braydon. John is also very involved with the activities in his church, the Abbey Reformed Church of Christ in Huntingdon, and with his son, Braydon's, middle school activities.

Thank you, John, for your selfless and generous service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Benner's 2019 Volunteer of the Year.



## **SCI Camp Hill 2019 Volunteer of the Year Hank Skorija**



The Catholic Community at SCI Camp Hill was in great need of an individual or individuals who would be able to assist in liturgical preparation and minister through music at Catholic Mass. The inmates involved, although dedicated, were in need of instruction and additional talent. As one of the Catholic volunteers Hank Skorija, heard of this need and stepped up to become a part of the weekly Mass. Gifted both in song and with instrument, Hank became the lead musician.

Hank is in formation to become a Deacon, with the Catholic Diocese of Harrisburg. Since 2016, Hank has been an instrumental part of the Catholic Mass leadership. He has worked closely with Deacon Vera, Catholic Chaplain at SCI Camp Hill, assisting wherever he is needed.

Hank has the heart of a servant. He shares that, “serving and praying with our incarcerated brothers affirms the message of the gospel. Jesus said, ‘You are the light of the world.’ Serving the inmates at Camp Hill highlights what Jesus does not say. He does not say, ‘One day, if you are more perfect and try really hard, you will be light.’ He does not say ‘if you play by the rules, dot your ‘l’s and cross your ‘t’s, then maybe you will become light.’ No. He says straight out, ‘You are the light.’ It is the truth of who we are as Christians on the journey, waiting only for you to discover this light. Prison ministry at Camp Hill exposes me to the Light that comes through the faithfulness of those we serve.”

Gary, an inmate says of him, “Hank has been a great mentor to me and others for any problem or concern that we may have. I greatly appreciate the time he invests in our Catholic Community and pray that he will continue to help our community thrive.”

Hank holds both a Bachelor of Arts degree and a Master of Science degree. He is also enrolled in the distance learning graduate studies program in Pastoral Studies through the Pontifical College Josephinum Diaconate Institute in Columbus, Ohio.

Hank, who is employed as an Industrial Sales Engineer, resides with his wife Anne and two stepsons, Matt and Andrew.

Thank you, Hank, for your selfless and generous service. Congratulations on being selected as SCI Camp Hill’s 2019 volunteer of the Year.



## **SCI Cambridge Springs 2019 Volunteer of the Year Carol J. Battin**



After retiring and making some short term mission trips in foreign countries, aging parents brought Carol Battin's long distance travel to a halt. But it didn't end her mission outreach. After praying for an open door to minister close to home, she came across an advertisement by Yokefellowship Prison Ministry in the Meadville Tribune newspaper. They were looking for volunteers to expand their ministry in the Northeastern, PA region. Upon completing her training, Ms. Battin became one of the pioneering women who brought Yokefellowship Prison Ministry into SCI-Cambridge Springs in the spring of 2013.

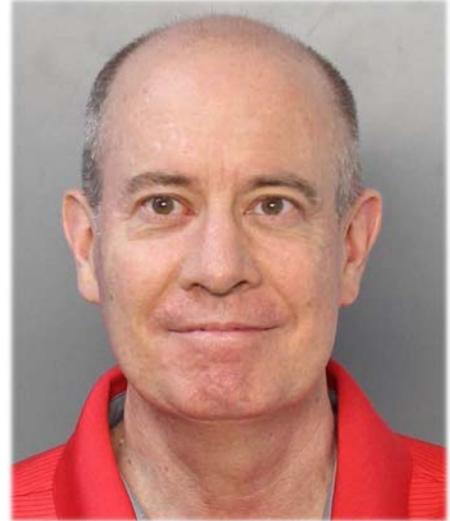
Ms. Battin had never been inside a prison before coming to Cambridge Springs and admitted she approached the experience with some fear and trepidation. But from the very first day, God replaced her fear with peace and she experienced His help and peace with every visit. Her role with this group is to teach Bible Study and share the love of Jesus with the women. The responsiveness of the women and their positive interaction motivates her to keep coming back.

Carol Battin is a seasoned minister of the Gospel, serving on her church board, teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir, assisting with funeral dinners and other events and serving as the Regional Prayer Coordinator for One Mission Society as an associate missionary. When volunteers were no longer able to bring their tried and true "paper" resources into the prison, Facility Chaplaincy Program Director, Rev. Darlene Johnson scrambled to encourage volunteers to email her their lessons. Rather than use email, Ms. Battin resorted to "old school" methods asking for two things: a piece of chalk and a black board. She uses these and her memory to teach their Bible Study lessons. Concerning volunteering in the prison she exclaims it "has been an absolute joy and I love going because I look forward to seeing [the] spiritual growth in several of the prisoners. Once they are released, I pray they never return as a prisoner and I hope to reunite with them in heaven."

Carol Battin currently resides in Titusville, PA a small town in Crawford County. She holds a Bachelor's and Master's degree in Elementary Education and spent thirty-two plus years teaching, including two years in Columbia, South America with One Mission Society. She is a single woman sharing a home with her sister Janet. They have a brother, sister-in-law, four nieces and nephews, several grand nieces and nephews and two great grand nephews.

The staff at CBS is both pleased and privileged to have among their volunteers one who is committed to her religious service with passion, purpose and pride. Congratulations Carol Battin on being selected as the SCI Cambridge Springs' 2019 Volunteer of the Year!!

## **SCI Chester 2019 Volunteer of the Year Stephen L. Schmidt**



For Mr. Stephen L. Schmidt volunteering in Alcoholics Anonymous programs in the prison is a win-win situation for him and the inmates. He learns about himself in the process even as he offers help to the inmates. He started volunteering at Treatment Centers to fulfil the requirements of AA membership. He felt good facilitating the meetings and decided to extend it to prisons. In his words, "It made me feel useful and it felt good to help others."

Mr. Schmidt started as a volunteer at SCI Chester in May 2010. He comes into the institution to facilitate AA meetings three times a month. One is sure to find Mr. Schmidt waiting patiently in the lobby to be escorted whenever he is scheduled to come into the facility. Chester's Facility Chaplaincy Program Director, Chaplain Akrong says of Mr. Schmidt, "He is one of the most faithful volunteers we have. He is regular and punctual." Deacon Finn who escorts him on Saturdays concurs.

On his first visit to a prison, Mr. Schmidt recalls seeing someone he knew from the streets and thinking the individual must have had a DUI. He found out later that he was wrong and that this individual was in prison for not paying Child Support. This experience has helped him to keep an open mind in his interaction with others.

Mr. Schmidt volunteers in other prisons. He has been volunteering for eleven years at MINSEC (a halfway house in Chester), eleven years at G.W Hill Correctional Facility (Delaware County), eight years at Montgomery County Correctional Facility and eight years at detention centers of the Philadelphia County jails.

As to what provides gratification to him in volunteering, Mr. Schmidt declared, "It is the opportunity to help others to overcome their problems." Mr. Schmidt has also found that even as he is helping the inmates, his interaction with them in the AA programs helps him in dealing with his own problems. As to what he has learned through the experience he said, "I've learned I can be very biased and judgmental." He has wondered why inmates keep making mistakes and do not make progress with all they learn. Upon reflection, however, he admits he is not any different from them. The experience, he reiterates, keeps him humble and helps him to seek solutions to his own problems even as he helps others.

Mr. Schmidt was born in Paoli, PA. He attended Conestoga High School in Berwyn, PA and graduated in 1974. He went on to attend Penn State University and graduated with BS in Civil Engineering in 1978. He works as a Civil Engineer.

Thank you, Stephen, for your faithful service to so many incarcerated individuals. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Chester's 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

**SCI Coal Township 2019 Volunteer of the Year  
Rich Roesly**

It all began more than ten years ago when, encouraged by another volunteer from the congregation, Rich Roesly joined his church's prison ministry group. Ever since Mr. Roesly has been regularly visiting with five other men from his congregation. They provide the midweek and Sunday meetings of Jehovah's Witnesses to inmates who identify with that faith group.

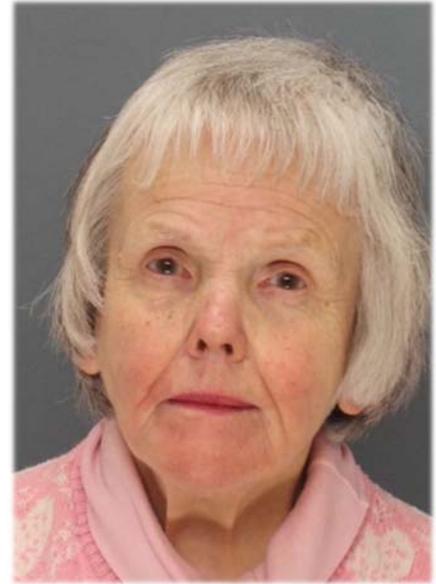


Rich says that he finds fulfillment in his ministry to the inmates. He states, "This ministry is a privilege and opportunity for me to do the work of God." In regard to his services, he notes, "The men have to study on their own and meditate on how the topic of discussion can help make a personal change in their daily living". He is encouraged whenever he hears the ways in which the inmates who participate plan to apply the scriptures they have studied in their lives. Rich shares, "The comments I hear from the inmates in prison inspire me to continue in my service to God. I have to plan my day or week to make the meeting on time, but the results I have seen from this effort is worth any sacrifice on my part." He also noted that the staff at SCI Coal Township has been accommodating and their assistance helps to make his whole experience very pleasant.

He and his fellow Jehovah's Witnesses volunteers have worked to grow their community's study group and have had tremendous success. The men in that group are currently growing in the knowledge of their faith as well as in their spiritual development. The Chaplaincy Staff is very grateful to Mr. Roesly for his selfless service. One chaplain said, "He is very dedicated and always ready to be called upon at anytime to come in and help."

Mr. Roesly was brought up in Williamstown, New Jersey. His family later moved to Ann Arbor Michigan where he graduated from Clonlara High School in 2002. Rich is happily married to his wife, Kim. He currently works as a self employed plumber. In addition to volunteering at SCI Coal Township, he also volunteers with a group that preaches in rural areas.

Thank you, Rich, for your selfless and generous service to the community at SCI Coal Township. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Coal Township's 2019 Volunteer of the Year.



**SCI Dallas 2019 Volunteer of the Year  
Sally Ann McGinley**

Sally McGinley is a member of PCGG (Prison Christian Growth Group) and has been volunteering at the prison for 4 years. She faithfully facilitates faith sharing on the second, fourth and fifth (when necessary) Tuesday of each month. She also started volunteering at Waymart Prison this year, again facilitating faith sharing.

Sally regularly attends many prayer services, discussions, lectures and retreats at St. Ignatius Church in Kingston. It was at one such event that Sally heard Mary Bednarek say she was volunteering at SCI Dallas. Soon after Sally also started to come.

Ms. McGinley says she has learned a great deal from the men she has worked with over the years especially in the area of patience. Seeing how these men cope with their situations has helped her in her life.

Sally was raised in Forty Fort, PA and graduated from Forty Fort High School. Upon graduation she attended Wilkes College and graduated in 1961 with a BA degree in Psychology. She held many positions throughout her career eventually retiring from the Commission on Economic Opportunity where she worked with the elderly in programs which allowed them to remain in their homes while having all necessary needs met.

Sally was married to Robert McGinley for thirty-eight years before his death and together they raised a daughter, Heidi McGinley. Her husband was in the Air Force and they lived at bases in the United States before returning to Sally's hometown of Forty Fort.

Sally has been a member of St. Ignatius Church in Kingston for thirty-three years and volunteers there regularly. She has taught religious education for thirty years and currently teaches both 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade. In addition, every summer she teaches at the Vacation Bible School.

She is also a member of the Adult Choir, the Contemporary Ensemble and serves on the Community Coordinating Team at St. Ignatius and has been a member of the Choral Society of Northeast Pennsylvania since its inception. Prior to the Choral Society, Sally was a member of the Wyoming Valley Oratorio Society. With the Choral Society and the Oratorio Society, Sally has been singing for many decades.

Sally has been and continues to be a very giving person. Thank you Sally for giving your time to the inmates at SCI Dallas. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Dallas 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

## **SCI Frackville 2019 Volunteer of the Year Marcia Sinkovitz**

When people talk about being called to a certain vocation, sometimes we do not appreciate the essence of such a claim. However, when we dispassionately pull back and observe the drive and dedication with which some individuals do their jobs, the meaning of a calling comes to life.



This is the testimony of Mrs. Marcia J. Sinkovitz, the Director of **Leading Inmates in Faith and Education Inc. (LIFE)**. Marcia is one person who has passionately and aggressively deployed the arsenals of her professional training into the rehabilitation of prison inmates. She is a licensed social worker who volunteers her professional skills at no cost, to ensure that incarcerated men are transformed spiritually and intellectually in readiness for a return to society.

She developed a detailed and sequential curriculum of Christian re-entry instructions. The LIFE program exposes participants to what amounts to a theology of Christian life skills – a study of the word of God, and a direct application of the ethical implications thereof in business, finance, employment, job skills training, marriage, relationships etc. Those who graduate from LIFE are enrolled into a life-long developmental project via the **Tremendous Book Club**. Each month, the book club supplies the men with books on leadership and self- management. They read them and then come together to discuss the ideas in them. In order to effectively operate and sustain this program, Marcia recruits and trains her own volunteers who are integrated into the prison volunteer pool as co-laborers.

Marcia started volunteering in 2013 at SCIs Camp Hill, Frackville and Mahanoy. Currently she oversees her program in twelve state prisons. She said that she used to work for a prison ministry, which exposed her to work among inmates. She recalls that her first contact was very exhilarating and instantly she knew that this was the place of her calling.

Marcia was born and raised in New York and attended Corning Painted Post West High School. She also attended Elmira College for her undergraduate studies and Shippensburg University for her graduate studies. Marcia is married to Ed Sinkovitz and together they are blessed with two adult children – Matthew and Tess. The Facility Chaplaincy Program Director of Frackville, Rev. Anyanwu, says of Marcia: “this lady is a true disciple of Jesus Christ who knows how to incarnate and contextualize the faith for prisoners.” Thank you for your service Marcia. Congratulations on being selected as the SCI Frackville 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

## **SCI Forest 2019 Volunteer of the Year William “Bill” Cadigan**

Faithful is the word that comes to mind when thinking of William “Bill” Cadigan. When Bill was seeking how he might serve God a friend looked at him and said, “You need to be in jail.” The Lord followed this up with several other individuals verifying that this was indeed God’s call. A chaplain gave Bill the opportunity to attend one of the protestant services at SCI Forest and Bill said to himself “I can do this.” So in 2005 Bill began to be involved with a ministry called “Walk in the Faith.” After two years, Bill began the Discipleship Bible Study. Since that time, Bill has faithfully led inmates through the Discipleship Bible Study.



Bill, a retired truck driver has volunteered for 14 years. Bill has been faithfully coming in once a week to teach inmates and to encourage them in their walk with the Lord. He has done this despite many personal difficulties and trials including caring for his wife during her battle with Cancer. Even when his wife, Ilene lost her battle with cancer Bill continued to come in and teach. Bill says, “I draw a lot of strength though that difficulty” and “They can identify with not having a loved one near.”

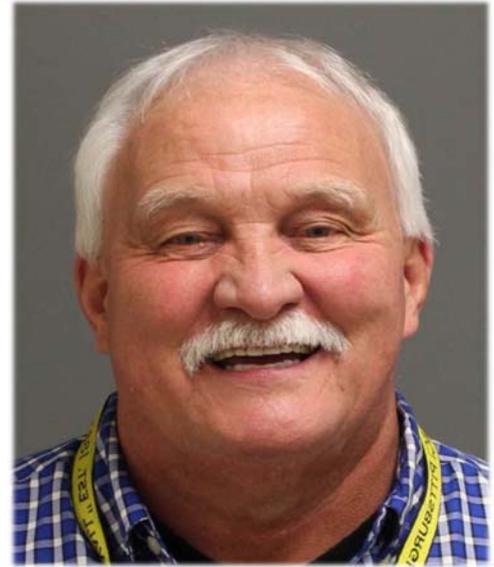
Bill talks about how he derives great joy in knowing that he is doing what the Lord has asked him to do. He also expressed joy in seeing the impact his ministry has had on the inmates’ lives. For Bill the most gratifying part of volunteering is watching the inmates grow in their faith over the years.

Over the years that Bill has volunteered, the DOC has made many changes that impact how Bill is able to volunteer. With each new change, Bill had stayed flexible and adapted to whatever was asked of him. When the facility contacts Bill letting him know that he is unable to come in that day Bill is quick to accept and the few times he has had to miss a week Bill is good about communicating that with the chaplaincy staff.

Thank You Bill for your dedication and faithfulness in serving the inmates at SCI Forest. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Forest 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

## **SCI Fayette 2019 Volunteer of the Year Walter Schafer**

Mr. Walter Schafer got off parole in 1994 and started volunteering at SCI Pittsburgh that very same year. “My sponsor was leading an NA meeting at the institution and he knew it would help me in my recovery,” Walt recalls. He has not stopped being involved since. “I wanted to be able to go there and then leave,” Walt said. “That’s something I couldn’t do during my time behind the walls.”



When asked what he finds most gratifying about volunteering Walt said, “Volunteering is a powerful experience. It reminds me where I can end up. It motivates me. There is nothing like giving it back.” It reminds us of that in the Narcotics Anonymous Basic text. Walt noted that some of the NA members, who came into the prison to share at these meetings, had been inmates themselves. They attributed the change in their lives to the support of NA, which rests on one addict helping another addict.

Walt started coming into SCI Fayette, off and on, as a Public Visitor in 2011. He became a volunteer in 2016. Since then he has been leading the two NA meetings called New Way of Life and Come Clean to Get Clean, on Tuesday nights.

Walt lives in the Garfield district of Pittsburgh. Walt lost his wife to cancer in 2015. He has a son and a stepson. He is self-employed and sells flooring to the Amish and Mennonites. Walt said that he got a late start working at age 39. At that time, he realized he could not work for anyone else so he decided to work for himself.

James Barrie said, “Those who bring sunshine into the lives of others cannot keep it from themselves.” This rings so true with Walt. Walt greets everyone with a big smile that lets them know that he really cares. It is said that volunteers do not donate for the fame, they do not donate for the popularity, and they do not want anything in return. They are the best people in this world. Walter Schafer, is one of them. Thank you Walt and congratulations on your selection as the SCI Fayette 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

## **SCI Greene 2019 Volunteers of the Year Rev. Simeon & Claudette Hatcher**

Rev. Simeon J. Hatcher and Claudette Marie Hatcher have worked side by side in ministry. Therefore, when Claudette was invited to join her husband in prison she reports that she joined the group without much thought. They have both served at CCC Progress Drive, SCI Fayette and SCI Greene. In addition, Simeon has served at SCI Waynesburg and SCI Greensburg (both now closed).



Rev Simeon was no stranger to prison ministry. In 1984, in Hawaii, he joined members of his church who visited those in the state prison system there. He brought his experience to SCI Greene beginning in 2008. He began leading a weekly Protestant Bible study there after he called the prison to offer his services. He says that coming to teach the men brings him great joy and makes him feel fulfilled in living out his calling. He was joined by Claudette in 2011. She reports that from the very beginning, the inmates made her feel welcomed and respectfully addressed her as Lady Hatcher. She noted how much she enjoys the time she spends with the men of the facility.

Rev. Simeon shares that he has learned a lot from the men through volunteering. He points to specific lessons about patience, and that God can save anybody, anytime and anywhere. Claudette shares her husband's views about learning from prisoners but adds that through volunteering she has become more accepting of others.

Claudette feels fulfilled encouraging "her peeps" (referring to the men who attend her Bible study). She hopes that those who are released will have an opportunity to be seen for who they have become, not what they did. "Everybody makes mistakes," she adds. "These men simply were caught." With a desire to spread the good news so that lives can be transformed, she perseveres on.

Rev. Hatcher studied at Ambassador Bible College and obtained a BA in Bible. He also studied at Miramar College, CA and McMurray College, TX where he obtained a business degree. He is a retired marine. Mrs. Hatcher also studied at Ambassador Bible College, NC with a focus on Bible classes. Her work history includes time as a factory worker and a deli manager. Together, the Hatcher's have two sons and five grandchildren.

## **SCI Houtzdale 2019 Volunteer of the Year Micah Shepherd**



Introduced to prison volunteer-ministry by a friend in his local Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Micah Shepherd later took over as the LDS volunteer when the friend who introduced Micah to prison volunteering finished his graduate studies and moved away.

It has been two years since Micah began coming into SCI Houtzdale once a month to lead the inmate Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints meetings. He says, "I couldn't do this without the support of my wife, Rachel and family. When I first started, she supported me because I was very nervous. She is a great help and motivator to stay on the same spiritual journey with me."

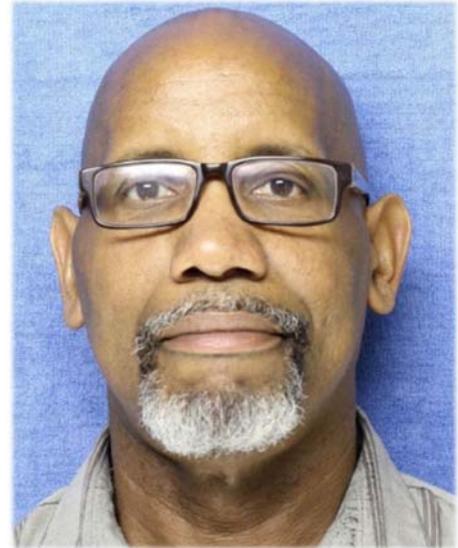
Micah says he benefits the most from seeing people in difficult situations following God noting, "I think their example of following God encourages me in following the scripture's instructions to visit the sick and those in prison". He says, "Every time a new person starts coming [to our meetings], it is a rewarding thing: watching one person's faith build another person's faith and so forth—like a domino effect. My goal is to see those in prison transition into a better life and continue on their spiritual journey."

Micah has made a positive contribution to the spiritual well-being of the inmates he teaches. Herbert P. says, "I really like Mr. Shepherd. He is well spoken and dedicated to his beliefs and teaching those beliefs. He is informative and an all-around pretty good guy." Chad L. says, "His teaching is heart-warming and you can see that he actually cares for those who attend the LDS services. I love his teaching. He makes you feel welcome and that you are a part of something."

Dr. Shepherd is a research professor at Penn State University, where he earned his PhD. He and his wife Rachel live in State College, PA and have three children, ages 4 to 12. Besides volunteering at SCI's Houtzdale, Benner and the Quehanna Boot Camp, he is also a member of the Acoustical Society of America.

"Micah Shepherd is a man who leads the services with humility and strength of character. Each inmate in his services shares that they feel respected and able to trust Dr. Shepherd", says Rev. C. Timothy Miller, Chaplaincy Director for SCI Houtzdale.

Thank you, Dr. Shepherd for positively influencing those you minister to and congratulations on your selection as the SCI Houtzdale 2019 Volunteer of the Year.



## **SCI Huntingdon 2019 Volunteer of the Year John Charles Thomas**

John Charles Thomas served the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections for twenty-five years at five separate facilities and in various positions. These positions included five years as a Deputy Superintendent, a year and a half as the Commander of Quehanna Boot Camp and almost ten years as a Superintendent. John is also a man who believes in second chances. Mr. Thomas is dedicated to the idea that every man in prison has the ability to choose a different and more positive path in his life. Therefore, it should come as no surprise that upon his retirement from the Pennsylvania DOC in October 2017, he made a conscious choice to put his convictions into practice as a volunteer.

John became a full time volunteer for the Every Man a Warrior Spiritual Growth Program. It is a Scripture based program that includes the memorization of Bible verses. It also uses several workbooks that each inmate gets to keep copies of at the program's conclusion. The program provides inmates with a solid biblical foundation to guide them throughout their lives. John currently facilitates the Every Man a Warrior Program two days a week at SCI-Huntingdon, and one day each week at SCI-Smithfield and Quehanna Boot Camp.

John is often quoted as saying, "I don't believe we were put here to just do self, the next car or bigger house. It's about investing in others." John says that as a volunteer, he has learned a great deal about the inmates he works with on a weekly basis. In his current role, he is able to be a true advocate for positive change in their lives. He has also learned that it is very important to hold participants in the Every Man a Warrior Program accountable for their level of engagement in the process.

Mr. Thomas currently resides in the Clearfield County Area. He lives with his wife Jane and their five adopted children. John says that other than discovering the love of Christ and finding his wife, his greatest joy has been adopting. Because of that, he and his family have championed adoption through public service announcements, adoption conferences and being featured in numerous stories in print and television media. John holds a Master's Degree in Psychology from Chestnut Hill College and formerly sat on the Board of The National Association of Blacks in Criminal Justice.

It is easy to see that giving of himself to others is a way of life for John. Thank you John, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI-Huntingdon 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

## **SCI Laurel Highlands 2019 Volunteer of the Year Dane Cramer**

When we hear the phrase “peer pressure”, we immediately think of the adolescent years and generally, we think of the “negative” influence others may have on us. Dane Cramer might say he had an experience of peer pressure that came much later in life and had a positive impact.



Dane and Chaplaincy Director David Klink spent many hours together in the early 2000’s while both were attending classes at seminary in Ohio and also pastoring churches part-time. Soon after David was hired as the chaplaincy director at SCI Laurel Highlands in 2004, he began to urge Dane to become a volunteer at the prison. Always eager for opportunities to share his faith, Dane began volunteering in December 2004. As often as schedules allow, Dane preaches for Protestant services and teaches Bible study at Laurel Highlands. Along with his ministry at the prison, seven years ago Dane began volunteering at the Somerset County jail.

David Klink, Facility Chaplaincy Program Director and Volunteer Coordinator remarks, “Dane is an awesome preacher and teacher. He is not one to force his beliefs on anyone. When teaching on any subject, he is careful to explore each viewpoint, giving the details that others might use to arrive at their conclusions. He shares which view he believes to be true but suggests that the men study and meditate to decide for themselves.”

When asked how volunteering has affected him, Dane remarked, “I have learned that I need to keep it ‘real’. I know all the “churchy words” that preachers tend to use but these men need to hear in simple terms that can be understood and applied to their everyday lives. It has helped me be a better communicator of the gospel.”

Dane works as an insurance investigator, a position he has held for 33 years. In his spare time, Dane has always enjoyed backpacking on the Appalachian Trail. However, his passion remains ministry. He and his wife open their home each Thursday night for a Bible study group to meet there. Dane’s latest endeavor has been creating a podcast where he shares his thoughts on issues facing each follower of Jesus Christ.

Dane resides in Somerset with his wife, Cynthia. Together they have seven children and three grandchildren.

Dane Cramer has devoted his life to ministry. Thank you Dane, for your life-changing ministry to the men at SCI Laurel Highlands. Congratulations on being selected as the SCI Laurel Highlands 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

**SCI Mahanoy 2019 Volunteer of the Year  
Ricardo Anthony Gomez**

Ricardo was born and raised in Staten Island, New York. While he was in his early teens, his parents moved to Pottsville where in 1971, Ricardo graduated from Nativity High School. He earned his Bachelors of Science degree in Adult Health in 1986 from Bloomsburg University. He went on to earn a Certificate in Addictions Counseling from Misericordia University.



In 1996, Ricardo began as a volunteer at SCI Mahanoy. He felt blessed to be able to lead the Alcoholics Anonymous group. Although he loved volunteering, he was forced to take a sabbatical when he received orders from the United States Army that stationed him out of the area. Upon his retirement from the Army and return to the area, he became more determined than ever to give back to others and reconnected with volunteering by once again leading AA groups inside the institution.

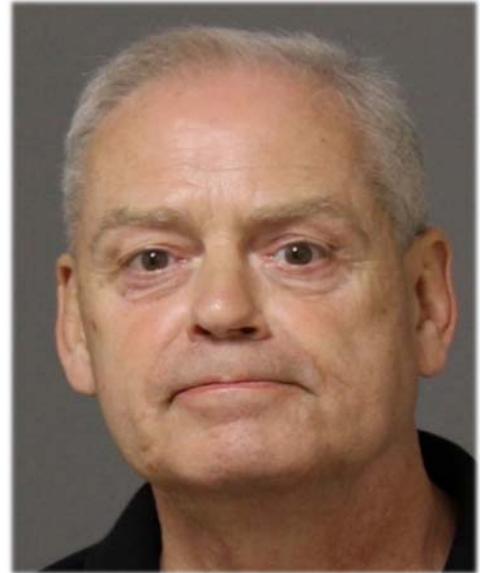
He began to volunteer in answer to what he understands to be a moral obligation to reach out and help those who are suffering. Little did he know how he would feel the first time he entered the prison as a volunteer. Ricardo recalls that it was a little bit scary when the gates closed behind him. He felt that it was very intimidating. He was also concerned about the inmates accepting him. However, as the weeks went by he felt accepted and realized how much he could reach out to the inmates that were suffering in their addiction. He wants to be able to help Inmates recognize things that they did not realize or were unable to acknowledge, due to their alcoholism. He says one of the greatest feelings he has is looking out during a meeting and seeing an inmate's face when the light comes on in their eyes. He believes that is the moment when they realize they can change their life and truly make it.

Volunteering allows Ricardo to see lives changing for the better and allows him to continue in his own self-preservation and personal growth as a person in recovery. He says as he looks at and works with the inmates this one phrase often comes to his mind, "But for the grace of God, there go I". A close friend of Ricardo has stated that he is amazing. She is very proud of him not only for turning his own life around but for also helping others to turn their lives around.

Although Ricardo began volunteering with AA at SCI Mahanoy, he now also regularly leads AA meetings at SCI Coal Township and SCI Retreat. In addition, Ricardo also volunteers with the Alternatives to Violence program, which meets on weekends, and today he is a vital part of their Instructor/Facilitator team.

Thank you, Ricardo, for your selfless and generous service. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Mahanoy 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

**SCI Mercer 2019 Volunteer of the Year  
Steve Leapline**



Steve Leapline has been a volunteer at SCI Mercer for a little more than three years. Looking for a new way to share his faith, he received that opportunity when a church friend suggested volunteering at SCI Mercer. A trial period was arranged. On the first night, he entered the prison simply to observe what was taking place during the Monday Evening Protestant Bible study. That was all it took. He was hooked.

Mr. Leapline enters the institution nearly every Monday to preach or to share a lesson that he has thoroughly researched. His love and compassion are in each lesson. On the days when it is not his turn to lead, he makes an effort to speak to and more specifically to listen to each man who would approach him.

When asked what he had learned through volunteering at Mercer, Steve responded, "I was surprised that the inmates had the freedom they do. The men are not simply locked up. I appreciate that we can talk and interact with them. I enjoy hearing their questions and responding to their faith issues. It has been a blessing to get to know them. I also have been blessed by how receptive the men are when we come and share with them.

They are truly thankful for our being here. Their responsiveness is why I keep coming back".

Joe Kosarek, the Facility Chaplaincy Program Director has compared Steve to a walking illustration of the hymn "It Is Well with My Soul." Steve has faithfully served the inmates at SCI Mercer even through a trying time as his wife Beth battled leukemia. Rev. Kosarek shares, "When it is Steve's turn to lead, he is here, with a smile and his unfailing faith".

Mr. Leapline was born in Dunbar, Pennsylvania. He is a graduate of Connellsville Area High School. His graduation from the School of Computer Tech in downtown Pittsburgh led him into a career in software engineering. He has spent most of his working career with PNC Bank.

Faith and family are first in this volunteer's life. Steve lives with his wife Beth, who is thankfully in remission from her cancer, and their son in Valencia, Pa. They are faithful members of First Baptist Church of Butler.

Thank you Steve, for your service to the inmates at SCI Mercer. Congratulations on being named SCI Mercer's 2019 Volunteer of The Year.



## **SCI Muncy 2019 Volunteers of the Year Jeffrey and Barbara Bohn**

Shining Light Performing Arts Program, founded and managed by Jeff and Barb Bohn, first came to the Muncy Chapel in 2016 when they held a two-week Impact Workshop. This was their first, two-week Impact Workshop in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. They returned in 2017 for another two-week Impact Workshop. Most recently in 2019, they returned with a three-day version of the Impact Workshop. The purpose of these workshops is to change the way the women see themselves, others, and God, as they grow in leadership and explore their faith with one another.



Shining Light has brought artists who perform on Broadway and in similar venues across the country into the prison setting. The men and women of Shining Light have developed a passion to use their art to share with the incarcerated, calling the experience “life-changing” for the performers. One inmate stated, “The Shining Light workshop helped me to renew my excitement for my faith and further my journey with Christ. It is an amazing asset for the Chapels.”

The Workshops at Muncy have emphasized hands-on experiences, servanthood, and intentional challenges. The workshops provide ways to put faith and love into action by giving the participants an opportunity to serve their peers by performing for the general population. This helps the inmates overcome challenges and fears that are deeply ingrained in them.

The women love coming to the Shining Light Workshops, which is evidenced by the long waiting list for each workshop. When listening to the women talk about Shining Light there is nothing but praise for what this dedicated group of men and woman have done for them. At the end of any workshop, the first words heard are, “when are they coming back? I want to be a part of the next one.”

The workshops over the past four years have enhanced the Worship Services in the Muncy Chapel. They have helped new singers to find their voice, encouraged new musicians, and given the Sacred Dancers a new way to look at the way they dance. SCI Muncy cannot thank Shining Light enough for choosing their facility for their entry into Pennsylvania’s state prisons. Thank you for sharing your time and talents with the women of SCI-Muncy. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Muncy’s 2019 Volunteers of the Year.



**SCI Phoenix 2019 Volunteer of the Year  
Rev. Alfredo Gonzalez**

Rev. Alfredo Gonzalez has been a volunteer with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and in particular with SCI Graterford/Phoenix for 9 years. During that time, he has worked with the men in the outside service unit as well as the Hispanic population behind the walls.

Alfredo was born and raised in Philadelphia. He is the son of Rev. Wilfredo & Adelaida Gonzalez, who pastor a flock at the Gethsemane Evangelical Temple in North Philadelphia. It was at that church where at just 8 years of age Rev. Alfredo Gonzalez preached his first sermon. Due to life circumstances and a youthful mind frame, he became a father at 16 years of age. He met that challenge with the assistance of his family and graduated high school while working a part time job. One of his life-long dreams was to be a professional wrestler particularly with World Wrestling Entertainment. That dream came to a halt after he sustained a serious back injury at his place of employment. Blaming God for his injuries, Rev. Gonzalez fell into a state of depression and deep sadness when there seemed to be no hope of recovering from his injuries. After some time, Rev. Gonzalez decided to return to church where in 2008, he reconciled with the Lord and began to search out how he would minister for God. His father who was already volunteering at SCI Graterford asked if he would be willing to assist with Prison ministry to which he happily agreed.

Rev. Gonzalez is a graduate of Liberty University's Bible Institute and he is putting that diploma to good use in his work with the incarcerated. Adhering to the voice of the Spirit directing him to "minister to men behind the walls" he also volunteers at SCI Chester alongside his Father, Wilfredo. His volunteer service does not stop with the SCIs, however, as he currently serves as spiritual advisor to several men in the boxing and mixed martial arts (MMA) world. He is also a Chaplain for a local wrestling organization.

Rev. Gonzalez has gone through numerous challenges in his life. In addition to his back injury, he fell victim to a stray bullet when he was caught in the crossfire of a feud between neighborhood drug dealers. God's healing mercies fell upon him as in spite of severe nerve damage he still had full use of his arm. Through it all, he remained faithful to God and his calling to the ministry behind the walls. He is very well liked by all of the men he serves at SCI Phoenix and they are very happy to have him come in to teach the good news of the gospel to all who would listen. Thank you Rev. Gonzalez for all your great contributions to the Department of Corrections and to SCI Phoenix in particular. Congratulations on your selection as SCI Phoenix's 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

**SCI Pine Grove 2019 Volunteer of the Year  
Dr. Mary Jalongo**



In life, it appears that some things are just meant to be. For example, in 2004, Mary Renck Jalongo, Ph.D. watched a TV show *Cell Dogs*. Each week a different prison was spotlighted utilizing a dog program. Mary said, “I dreamed that the stars would align and bring a program of this type to the local SCI.” Ten years later, that became a reality for her.

Since 2014, Dr. Jalongo has been invaluable to the TAILS (Train, Assist, Inspire, Loyal, Serve) program at Pine Grove. In addition to serving as a sponsor for dogs many times, Dr. Jalongo formulated the dog-training program for the inmates. She also teaches eighty of the one hundred and twenty hours required to complete this program.

Dr. Jalongo recalls that the first time she walked into SCI Pine Grove, “I was nervous!” She also noted, “From the very start, I have felt privileged to participate and have thoroughly enjoyed working with the service dog training program.”

Mary shared that, one inmate/trainer wrote in his dog training journal that he always took his service dog along when his daughter visited. He noted that in the past, his daughter had referred to him as “my Dad who’s in prison.” After several visits where the dog was present, she gave him a new identity. She began to call him “my Dad, the dog trainer.”

Dr. Jalongo’s volunteer work has been noted by other inmates as well. She is described as a dedicated teacher and someone passionate about the program, who always has a positive attitude. One inmate noted her service goes “above and beyond.”

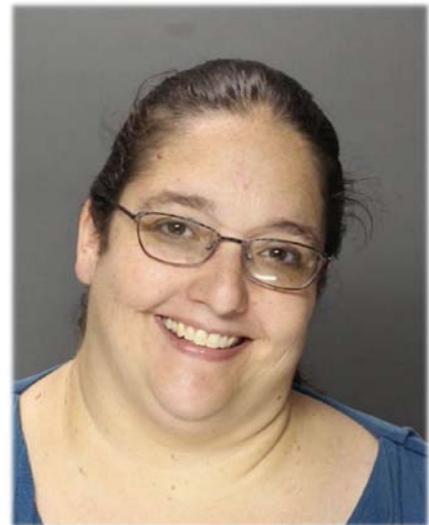
Dr. Jalongo has a Bachelor of Arts Degree in English/Spanish from the University of Detroit/Mercy, a Master of Arts in Teaching Language Arts from the University of Oakland in Michigan, and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of Toledo Ohio. In 2015, Dr. Jalongo retired as a faculty member and director of the Doctoral Program in Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Studies in Education, at Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Mary and her husband Frank S. Jalongo reside in Indiana, PA. where she is also an active volunteer at the local animal shelter. She volunteers there three evenings a week, takes photographs of the homeless animals and manages the shelter’s social media.

Thank you, Dr. Mary Jalongo, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Pine Grove 2019 Volunteer of the Year.



## **Quehanna Boot Camp 2019 Volunteer of the Year Tava Jury**



In 2018, Passages received a grant that funded services to survivors of sexual assault in correctional facilities. Tava Jury filled that position and began her journey as a volunteer.

She starting volunteering weekly at the Quehanna Boot Camp and SCI Houtzdale in August of 2018. She facilitates groups and individual sessions for survivors.

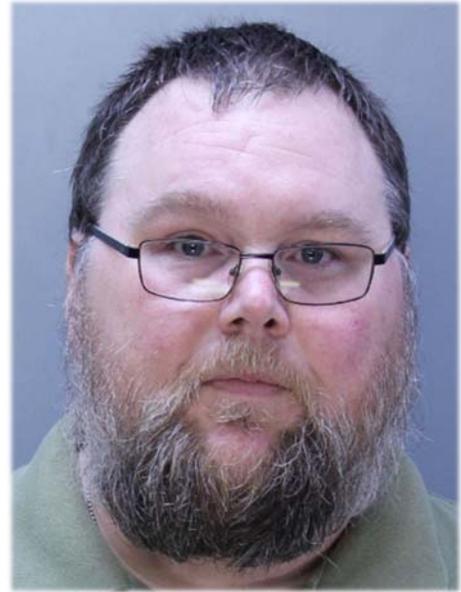
Ms. Jury remembers her first visit as a prison volunteer as hectic. She remarked that there was a lot going on while she was trying to orient herself to where she was going in such a large facility. Nevertheless, she kept coming back. Tava is motivated to continue volunteering through Passages because she likes to help people heal from hurts that they have experienced. She appreciates being able to help them create a positive and fulfilling future. When asked what she has learned through volunteering in a prison, she said that people are people everywhere you go, and mentioned that there are many incarcerated people, who have been impacted by sexual assault. Tava enjoys being a part of the services provided by Quehanna. She is grateful to be able to be a part of the healing process of the inmates and enjoys helping people move forward in a positive direction.

The inmates who meet with Tava said that she is very helpful, easy going, gives good advice, and that she is very easy to talk to. She encourages and inspires the inmates. As one inmate said, "I would not have taken the steps necessary if it wasn't for Ms. Jury."

Tava grew up in Athens Pennsylvania and graduated from Athens Area High School. She continued her education at York College of Pennsylvania where she earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Psychology in 2001. She is employed by Passages as a Corrections Counselor/Advocate of Passages, Inc. She and her husband Michael currently live in Woodland, Pennsylvania and are parents to three cats and one dog.

Thank you, Tava, for your selfless and generous service to our inmates and community. Congratulations on your selection as Quehanna Boot Camp's 2019 Volunteer of the Year!

## **SCI Retreat 2019 Volunteer of the Year Rev. Jamie Dana**



There are times when the unfolding of our story seems obvious, but only in retrospect. That may well be true for Rev. Jamie Dana, the Wiccan, or earth-based spirituality, chaplain at SCI Retreat. Although he initially connected with Facility Chaplaincy Program Director, Rev. Tyler Parry in June of 2017, it was not until months later that the opportunity for him to serve the Wiccan community at SCI Retreat became a reality. Beginning with a few casual conversations, Chaplain Dana was soon immersed in the life of the Wiccan community, providing counsel and presiding at rites and ceremonies of their faith.

No one who spends time with Chaplain Dana can miss his larger than life personality, sense of humor, and compassionate nature. One inmate noted, “He is so kind and so willing to listen, it feels like we have known each other all our lives, and yet I’ve only known him since I got here a couple months ago.” It does not take long at all to see and appreciate the immense humanity Chaplain Dana brings to the institution.

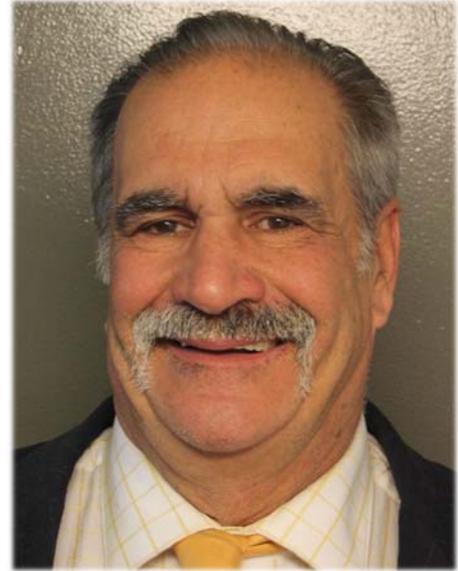
Coming to prison was an eye-opening experience for Jamie, who remains committed to helping incarcerated persons become their best selves. “I am motivated to serve my religion,” Chaplain Dana writes, “and help the inmates lead a spiritual life.” His commitment shines.

Aaron, a dedicated participant in Chaplain Dana’s programs, writes, “He really helped to turn my life around. I didn’t have a place to belong, and joining with Chaplain Dana to help create a Wiccan community really helped me with that. I had a purpose and that felt good.” Rev. Parry, says, “Chaplain Dana brings such a presence with him that no matter where you are, how loud or disruptive the environment might be, he makes you feel calm and grounded and connected.” Superintendent Vince Mooney agrees, “He’s a good guy, and I’m not ashamed to admit I was skeptical at first. He won me over.”

Jamie lives in Nanticoke with his wife, Sheryl, and his four daughters. When he isn’t serving various Wiccan communities, you can find him working hard behind the wheel of his truck, on the water fishing, or in the woods hunting.

Thank you, Jamie, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Retreat 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

## **SCI Rockview 2019 Volunteer of the Year Paul Kress**



Paul Kress' became connected to SCI Rockview through his reputation as someone deeply committed to ministry. He was already involved in ministry through Light of Life Rescue Mission, Saint Francis Hospital, and counseling at abortion clinics when he was introduced to Pastor James White, a long-term volunteer at Rockview. Pastor White immediately invited Paul to accompany their team to preach at various correctional facilities including Rockview.

Paul travels with a team of 3-4 individuals known as Pittsburgh Fellowship. In addition to his service at Federal Correctional Institutions Loretto and McKean, he travels three hours one-way each month between March and October to participate in the Protestant worship service at Rockview, frequently preaching the message. He has been volunteering in this capacity since 1994, making this his 25<sup>th</sup> year of service.

On his very first trip to Rockview, Paul says, "I made the mistake of asking someone what they did, and he said he killed his wife." A quick learner, Paul added, "From that point on, I stopped asking that question." The primary motivators for Paul are seeing lives genuinely transformed and feeling the inmates' gratitude. According to Paul, "They really appreciate it when you come. They sense sincerity and appreciate devotedness." Sharing in their worship, he has witnessed that men can have joy in prison.

According to one inmate, "Paul's dedication to our church family shows the power of Christ to use a life to impact others." Another observed, "Paul's willingness to share the gospel in a place that so many people avoid is a testament to his character." Chaplain Aaron Reitz has observed Paul's ministry over several years and notes, "His humorous and colorful way of sharing his faith has a way of connecting with individuals from all walks of life."

Paul is a long term resident of Verona, Pennsylvania. He and Ann, his wife of 45 years, have four sons and two grandsons. He is a graduate of Penn Hills High School and Christ for the Nations Bible Institute. He has worked in a variety of occupations including truck driving and selling insurance. Currently, he performs caregiving for From the Heart Home Care services and security for the Pittsburgh Steelers. He serves at the Rosedale Food Bank and the Blessing Board of Oakmont, which distributes furniture to those affected by tragedies. He has also served in international missions including trips to Cambodia in 2013 and Myanmar in 2016.

Thank you, Paul, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Rockview 2019 Volunteer of the Year.

## **SCI Smithfield 2019 Volunteers of the Year David and Reba Bowen**



The Bowen's motto is: "Together for Him." This motto is a big reason why they have been such a dynamic duo at SCI Smithfield for several years. Although Reba has spent more time as a volunteer in the PA Department of Corrections, this is obviously a family affair. When David was a chaplain at SCI-Huntingdon, Reba came in as a volunteer. When he came to Smithfield as a chaplain, Reba came in regularly on Sunday mornings and on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

Reba's dedication to volunteering led her to resign from a contract position teaching parenting classes at Smithfield when policy changed and contractors were no longer permitted to volunteer. Many Yokefellowship participants were grateful she counted being able to volunteer and her commitment to the ministry above being a contractor and stayed on in that capacity.

David did get an earlier start in prison ministry, however. He remembers that the men in his church took turns each week having worship in the Portage County Jail in Ravenna, Ohio." That group included his father and brother. His father, Rev. Paul Bowen, started him in prison ministry when he was ten years old. David notes, "The greatest and best influence in my life (other than Reba), is my parents," When David's father, Rev. Paul was in his seventies and eighties, he still came with Reba and David to SCI-Smithfield as a faithful, fruitful volunteer.

After retiring from chaplaincy, David returned to his volunteer roots and joined Reba in serving with Yokefellowship at Smithfield on most Tuesday evenings. They also volunteer at SCI-Rockview; SCI-Benner, SCI-Chester and SCI-Fayette. A few months ago, they did a Marriage Seminar at SCI-Benner and plan to do other seminars in other facilities as invited. David shared that "it is so encouraging to see men changing and growing and maturing since we started here at Smithfield twenty-two years ago in 1997. It is even more exciting to see men get out and stay out and live by the grace of God to the glory of God. That's why we keep coming and plan to keep coming 'til Jesus comes and takes us home,"

Rev. Sylvia Morris, Chaplaincy Director (FCPD) at SCI-Smithfield, said she is amazed at the passion and commitment that the Bowens have not only for Smithfield but for any facility that is willing to invite them. "The Bowens are not going to rust out; they are going to wear out for the Kingdom of God," said Chaplain Morris.

David met Reba at Eastern Nazarene College when he was a freshman and she was a senior. They married on August 26, 1967. Together they have two children; Monica, and Paul and have also been blessed with three grandchildren.

Thank you, David and Reba Bowen, for your selfless and compassionate service to our community. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Smithfield 2019 Volunteers of the Year.

**SCI Somerset 2019 Volunteer of the Year  
Lawrence “Larry” Powers, Sr.**

Because he was once entrapped in addiction himself, Lawrence “Larry” Powers, Sr. is an individual who feels driven to serve the prison community. “I need to let these guys know that we can change”, he said. You will not find many people that have a passion for inmates and make the choice weekly to walk through prison gates, but Larry finds strength in supporting individuals locked away from society.



Larry is a Narcotics Anonymous volunteer who represents his Pittsburgh affiliated home groups “How” and “No Matter What”. He has spent over twenty years as a volunteer at multiple SCIs. He recalled his first experience at SCI-Greensburg, noting, “When the door opened and then closed behind me, I just remember thinking, ‘Until I let the God of my understanding take over, all the barbed wires and bars didn’t mean anything.’” When he was asked why he keeps coming back week after week, he said, “I get fed. When I see people getting involved and wanting to change, it’s worth it.”

It has been difficult to find dedicated volunteers for the self-help meetings at SCI-Somerset. These volunteers often travel quite a distance, and are sometimes turned away due to lockdowns or other security issues. The travel, time away from their loved ones and outside obligations can be taxing on a volunteer. Many look at the conditions of volunteering behind bars as a burden, but not Larry. When he calls into the Substance Use Disorder (SUD) Department, Ms. Clark, the Supervisor said, “He thanks us for what we do and for allowing him to come into the jail. In fact, he requests to do more.”

Larry is firm in following the principles of NA and presenting their message. His passion for recovery echoes through his comments regarding abstinence, change, and growth that he shares with the NA participants. This is confirmed by Anthony, an NA participant, who says, “Larry tells you how important the meetings are even if you don’t want to hear it. He clearly outlines what we have to do.” Not only do Larry’s words motivate recovery, his actions do as well. Larry has over 26 years clean and sober because, as he says, “the program works if you work it”.

Recovery is a life-long journey. It is imperative that those in addiction know recovery is possible. People like Larry who are willing to share their experiences, strengths and hopes inspire others to succeed. Larry inspires NA participants as well as the staff of the SUD Department. Thank you Larry for sharing in order to serve others seeking recovery at SCI Somerset. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Somerset Volunteer of the Year.



## **SCI Waymart 2019 Volunteer of the Year Benjamin Levanduski**

Ben Levanduski volunteers to lead the Eastern Meditations group at SCI Waymart, where he has been serving since 2017. Ben started volunteering at Waymart when a student of his who regularly attended one of his public Yoga classes asked if he was interested in serving as a volunteer to the inmates. This student, who happened to be a Unit Manager at SCI Waymart, was very enthusiastic about Ben's talent as a spiritual teacher. This staff member, Mr. David Gorman, now serves as Corrections Classification Program Manager at the institution, and he highly recommends Ben as the Volunteer of the Year.

Ben greatly enjoys the time he spends volunteering at SCI Waymart, and feels inspired by the enthusiastic and consistent participants. The inmates enjoy Ben's teachings and find personal growth from this group. The group meets once a week, and serves members of the Buddhist and Hindu communities in SCI Waymart as their main religious meeting. The group is also regularly attended by inmates of other faith traditions. The group divides their time between a discussion based on Buddhist, Taoist, and Vedic philosophy and the practices of Hatha Yoga and meditation. Ben has been practicing yoga for eight years and teaching for five years. He is certified to teach yoga through the Kula Yoga Center in Stanhope, NJ and has done continuing study at the Himalayan Institute in Honesdale, PA. He is also a member of Two Rivers Zen Buddhist community in Narrowsburg, NY, and is pursuing an ordination program through that community. He began practicing yoga and meditation in a drug and alcohol abuse treatment center and has been in addiction recovery for over seven years. He incorporates the principles of recovery into his presentation of yoga and Buddhism. Ben is a full-time student in the pre physician assistant program at Marywood University and works in various home health, elderly care and social service settings.

Ben says, "I have learned that consistency and effort go a long way, and do not tend to go unnoticed. I have also had my own unconscious biases revealed and challenged, and learned to be patient. I have learned that it is more important that participants benefit from the group than it is to give any specific impression or convince anyone to adopt the same exact beliefs or practices I have. I have learned to value forgiveness and respect for self and others, and feel grateful I have overcome some big mistakes in my life and not let them define me. It is a great honor to watch others in that process and perhaps offer them some insight. There is also an unmistakable feeling and appearance of calmness and focus on many faces at the end of the sessions that speaks for itself."

Thank you, Ben, for your selfless and generous service. Congratulations on your selection as the SCI Waymart 2019 Volunteer of the Year.



**Bureau of Community Corrections  
2019 Volunteer of the Year  
Constance Pearson**

In 2016, Pittsburgh Community Corrections Center met Constance Pearson through a chance phone call. She heard of the center after a chance meeting with a reentrant. She inquired what the women at the center needed and how she could donate. Three years later she has had a huge impact on the center. She started by donating some clothes. This led to a relationship between the CCC and Treasure House Fashions, where Constance has been a program manager since 2001.

This allows PCCC reentrants to volunteer at the boutique several times during the year. The boutique, a nonprofit helping women with a history of incarceration and poverty, also provides the center with items as they are needed. This includes items such as winter coats and interview clothing.

Ms. Pearson also oversees a community service project in Pittsburgh where several PCCC reentrants volunteer each week. The Third Presbyterian Church in Pittsburgh, a short walk from PCCC, welcomes volunteers every Wednesday to create kits for Days for Girls. Days for Girls is an international organization that provides washable menstrual hygiene solutions and health education to girls in underprivileged countries. Days for Girls is committed to supporting a girl throughout her entire lifecycle, from providing her with a DFG kit, to teaching her health education, to offering training for her when she grows older so that she can produce DFG kits and support hygiene in her community. With the help of PCCC reentrants the church has nearly tripled their production of the DFG kits, while providing transferable sewing skills to PCCC reentrants. Third Presbyterian Church now serves as a reception center for DFG kits made in the region. All of the kits are quality checked by PCCC reentrants.

Finally, Ms. Pearson has introduced PCCC to several Alcoholics Anonymous leaders and coordinates their weekly program schedules with the PCCC counselors. Ms. Pearson has been an integral part of the successful reintegration of the PCCC reentrants. That is why the Pittsburgh CCC proudly selected Ms. Constance Pearson as the BCC 2019 Volunteer of the Year. Congratulations Constance and thank you for your dedicated service.