

# Volunteer Update

ISSUE 2

DECEMBER 2006/ JANUARY 2007 ISSUE



## From the Volunteer Services Coordinator

This has been an amazingly busy and rewarding month for the Volunteer Services Program. We had our final Volunteer Training Workshop of the year where 27 participants attended and learned about Restorative Justice and their part in OAR's driving force. After the session I received great feedback and it was more than clear to me how everyone in the OAR Family plays a special role in this important fight.

Project Christmas Angel was a great success and we were able to reach 800 children with over 300 volunteers wrapping many of the gifts.

In the midst of all this I submitted the ExxonMobil Com-

munity Summer Job Program application in hopes of receiving a grant to hire a summer intern. Keep your fingers crossed!

I am excited about the future events that are coming up such as our visit to the Prison Gallery of Art on January 28th and our White House Tour in February. For more information on these don't forget to take a look at the third page of every Volunteer Update.

We are continuously working on our Volunteer Update so beginning with this issue I am pleased to introduce a new feature. Michael Anderson, OAR Volunteer, part of the Computer Skills Facilitators Team, and now Volunteer Update Article Correspondent

will be researching news articles that will be featured in the Volunteer Update. Please look for the

article he has provided for this issue on the second page. In this issue you can also read a really great story from Kayra Alhambra, OAR Volunteer, which encouraged me and allowed me to reflect. Jeremy Rinker, Community Service Program Coordinator, also received an eye-opening story from one of our juvenile clients' personal experience.

All of us here at OAR would like to wish each of you Happy Holidays and a Prosperous New Year! See you in 2007!



### Inside this issue:

The Invisible Road	1
I Wish I Knew Then	2
Michael's Article Choice	2
Classroom Tips	3
Events of Interest	3
Please take Note!	4
Volunteer Opportunities	4

## The Invisible, Long, and Difficult Road

By Kayra F. Alhambra, OAR Volunteer

With the holidays rapidly approaching, in a recent Hispanic Support Group/Life Skills session which I facilitate at the ACDF, we talked about the Thanksgiving holiday.

I asked the participants to reflect on the meaning of this holiday and to think about one thing they are grateful about. After a few minutes, when invited to share their thoughts, individuals said they are grateful for things such as their good health, their families, etc. They unanimously agreed that even though they were in jail, separated from their families, with many problems, and facing an uncertain future, they all had things to be grateful about.

Then, one person, still immersed in his thoughts, raised his hand and in a serious tone, said "I am grateful to be here in jail, because otherwise, who knows where I would be." After a brief pause, he added, "I am certain that I would be in a much worse place, most likely with my feet facing forward and my toes pointing up", implying that he would likely be seriously wounded or no longer alive.

During his months of isolation from society, this participant shared how he found himself in gradually deeper reflection about the life he had been leading, what this has done to him and what brought him to this place. He talked about how he

sees things differently now than when he first arrived at the ACDF. "If you had asked me 10 months ago, I would have said, what inner child? this has nothing to do with me" --referring to one of the topics we had been covering in the sessions— "and I would have blamed others, like the deputy, for things that I did not like or did not want to accept". He further elaborated, "after looking more closely and honestly into my past, now I know that my inner child not only exists but that it has deep wounds from a childhood of neglect and hardship. I am also no longer blaming someone else for what

*Continued on Page 2*

## The Invisible, Long, and Difficult Road

### *Continued from Page 1*

is happening to me. I know now, that the deputy is just doing his job". He finally stated, that he wants to be there for his family and to raise his children differently, revealing that "I realize now that I don't have to do the same to them that was done to me growing up". It was obvious that he had been traveling on a long, painful, uphill road paved with initial episodes of denial, anger and blame. Getting to this point, of finally understanding what the high-risk life he had been leading was doing to him and

his family and recognizing that he no longer could afford or was willing to face the ever increasingly harmful and destructive consequences of such a life, must have been a difficult and long process. I found this story to help raise awareness, that for emotional healing and effective change to start to take place, many must travel a similarly difficult road, often taking a long time, to reach a better destination. It is a reminder, that patience and empathy are particularly important when some participants' progress appear slow or

non-existent, as each individual's needs for help and time to reach his goals for a better life are different. The positive impact of deep, honest, personal reflection regardless of how long this process may take, and the inspiring insights and learning shared by those who choose to embark on such a journey of self-discovery, healing and growth, cannot be underestimated.



## "I wish I had known then what I know now"

By Danny, OAR Community Service Client

Having grown up using computers, many teens are more comfortable with this form of communications technology than our parents are, so we don't always take seriously their warnings of any dangers that may be associated with them. I wish I had known then what I know now. If I had, my life right now would be much different.

I was a fairly typical freshman in high school. I hung out with my friends, took part in sports and enjoyed playing video games and talking with my friends on the computer.

After watching a scary movie with some friends I decided that it would be fun to play a prank based on the movie we watched. I was instant messaging some of my friends and I thought I would try the prank on one of my friends. I used the same email address

and attempted to duplicate the dialogue that the character in the movie had used. We went back and forth for a few minutes, but when she began to say she was scared and asked who it was I signed off. I didn't think much of it, thinking I would tell her about the joke the next day when I saw her at school.

The next morning everything seemed normal at the school until mid-morning when all of the students were brought on to the field for some type of evacuation drill. County police and other law enforcement officers were beginning to swarm the school. It wasn't until I heard some rumors that this was happening because of a threatening conversation a student had the night before. I got a sickening feeling in my

stomach thinking that I hadn't seen my friend yet that day so I hadn't told her that it was me who had played a joke on her. I ran over to see if she had contacted anyone about the conversation. Apparently, her mother had heard her talking to a friend about the instant message from the mysterious stranger (aka me), gotten scared and contacted the police. I told my friend it had been me playing a prank but it was too late. I knew I had to go talk to someone in charge and try to explain the misunderstanding. My friend and I were taken to the principal's office by the police and we told them what had happened. However, instead of them just lecturing us I was put

*Continued on Page 3*

## Michael Anderson's Article Choice



### **Transitioning Programs are Essential for Nation's Prisoners**

A Nov. 22 Free Lance-Star article ["Prisoners returning to society"] raises an important issue.

Each year, 650,000 inmates are released from prisons in the U.S. and, depending on the jurisdiction, from one-third to two-thirds of them end up back in prison in short order.

Successful re-entry depends on providing education, treatment, and rehabilitative therapies while the offender is still in prison.

Upon release, community-based transitional programs that can provide life-skills training, job-interview skills, and assistance seeking both an affordable place to live and a job are essential.

Inmates struggling with substance-abuse problems and temptations should receive continued treatment during this transition.

Some inmates have been rejected by their families, and others return to the families

and neighborhoods where their criminal activities took place.

In either case, without solid transition planning, we see far too many of them back in prison.

The members of our association believe that the provision of effective transition programs is the single best way to reduce the rate of recidivism in our prisons.

December 5, 2006 by Paul Doucett Executive Director of the Association of Private Correctional and Treatment Organizations.

<http://fredericksburg.com/News>

## "I wish I had known then what I know now"

### *Continued from Page 2*

under arrest and led from the school in handcuffs with a jacket over my head to hide my identity.

I have never been so frightened in my life. What I had assumed would be an anonymous message, a joke -- certainly nothing to be carried out or taken seriously-- had become my worst nightmare. I was at the police station for several hours completely alone. Late that afternoon, I was brought before the judge in a courtroom. The prosecuting attorney told the court that I had committed a felony by threatening bodily harm over the Internet. My mom was the only person in the courtroom who was there for me and she requested I be released to her custody for an appearance in court again the next day, explaining to the judge that I had never been in trouble and that I would be under her constant supervision. When the judge

refused to let me return home that night and I was led away to go to the juvenile detention facility, my heart sunk. I was crying, my mom was crying and it was the lowest point in my young life. I will never forget it.

When I arrived at the facility that evening, I was given a uniform to wear and all of my personal belongings were put in an envelope for safekeeping. Needless to say, it was the longest night of my life.

In court several days later, I was told that I was facing a class six felony for my computer "prank" and remanded to the juvenile facility until my trial date -- a date several weeks away. While I did the right thing by taking responsibility for my actions, I did not know then that what I had done as a joke would be taken so seriously. There is no tolerance for such behavior and no adequate excuse for it, even if you

are a minor. This lesson I learned the hard way.

After apologizing to the court, my family, friends, the community, my school, and to my classmates for the fear they had felt when they thought there might be a real threat to their safety, I was put on two years probation, given a list of behavioral rules to follow, assigned community service hours, and given a curfew from my probation officer.

What I did in a few minutes on my computer changed the way I have and will live for the next two years. There are days when I am very down about my situation and days when I know that it has made me a stronger, more mature teenager. While some of these highs and lows are typical of just being a teenager, my moods are also attributable to my needing to be accountable to the legal system.

## Classroom Tips– Combating Boredom

Offenders often get bored because they are not fully engaged mentally and emotionally in the process, through no particular fault of the group members or the facilitator. Consequently anything that can increase the energy level of the participant or engage them or make the process exciting for them is welcomed by all. The following group activities have this effect on the group process:

**Role Playing:** is one of the most effective ways to get offenders involved and thinking in a group. Role plays involve play acting any situation that you want to demonstrate, clarify, or study objectively. You

must participate in the process yourself to help offenders get over their fear of role playing. Role plays can be used at any time or anywhere. The only limit is imagination. Any situation that is reviewed in a thinking report or problem log can be the subject of a role play, with group members and staff playing any combination of roles.

**Role Reversals:** is one of the best ways to help develop empathy. This allows the offenders to play roles that are not normally their own. This is a form of role play in which you specify a role for the offender that is distinctly different from the one he or she would assume in real life.

**Images and Metaphors:** diagrams and images that illustrate an idea or an experience are useful communication tools. Images, whether presented verbally as metaphors or visually as pictures can focus offenders' attention more sharply than the use of literal language alone. Use of images encourages imagination.

The key to combating boredom in your groups is **energy**. Energy is only limited by imagination!

Let us know how these tips are working for you in your groups or in your one on one sessions.

## Events of Interest

**Prison Gallery of Art:** The new Prison Gallery of Art features the art of incarcerated men and women across America. All art is for sale, with proceeds divided between prison artists (where permitted) and the Prisons Foundation, which supports the arts and education in prison and alternatives to incarceration. The Prison Art Gallery is located at 1600 K Street NW, Suite 501, Washington DC. They are open Monday through Friday 9:30am to 5:30pm. We have been able to coordinate a special day for OAR Volunteers

to visit the gallery. On Sunday, January 28, 2007 at 2:00pm the gallery will open just for us! Space is limited to 25 please RSVP early. The location is metro accessible by the Orange Line McPherson Square stop. Visit their website to view more works at [www.PrisonsFoundation.org](http://www.PrisonsFoundation.org)



"We Sing to America"

**White House Tours:** One of our very own OAR Volunteers and Board Member has provided us with the opportunity to tour the White House. OAR Volunteers and staff will be able to schedule 2 tours in February. We will have a Friday morning available and a Sunday afternoon. If you are interested in taking a tour please contact me ASAP. Space is limited and we need to have all of your information in to the Presidential Office far in advance.

# OAR Offender Aid and Restoration

Court Square West Phone: 703-228-7030  
1400 North Uhle Street Fax: 703-228-3981  
Suit 704 E-mail:  
Arlington Virginia 22201 info@oaronline.org

SERVING THE COUNTY OF ARLINGTON AND THE CITIES OF  
ALEXANDRIA AND FALLS CHURCH

Order your Flowers Today  
Contact OAR's First Subsidiary:

Sage Flowers  
7018 Commerce Street  
Springfield, Virginia 22150  
703-451-3021  
www.SageFlowers.net



## Please take Note!

### Reminders

\*We are still accepting donations to assist with Postage for Project Christmas Angel. If you know of anyone that would like to make a tax deductible donation please keep this great cause in mind.

\*Don't forget to submit your Volunteer Stories to Elizabeth so that we can use them for fundraising and in our materials.

\*If you will be facilitating courses or working one on one with clients during the Holiday Season please call the detention facilities first before you go in case they are short staffed or in case of inclement weather. Here at the numbers to call:

Alexandria: Central Control (CPJ1) 703-838-4017

Arlington: Lobby 703-228-7286 or Central Control 703-228-7172

## OAR's Mission

OAR, a community-based restorative justice organization, blends compassion and accountability to assist offenders in leading productive and responsible lives, to the benefit of all.

## History and Purpose

The OAR movement began in 1968 when a group of concerned Citizens led by Jay Worrall Jr. responded to a prison riot in Charlottesville, Virginia. These citizens envisioned an improved criminal justice system in which inmates are assisted by trained volunteers from the community. Through ongoing contact with community volunteers it was hoped that inmates would be empowered with information and encouraged to transform their experiences toward responsible and productive lives. The ultimate goal was to break the costly cycle of recidivism and create a more just system. This nationally recognized model program was incorporated as OAR/USA in 1973 and currently has affiliated but autonomous offices in four states. OAR serving Arlington, Alexandria, and Falls Church, began in 1974.

## Volunteer Opportunities

\*Spanish Speaking Volunteers are needed to facilitate courses with an established curriculum in the detention facilities and at the OAR office. Flexible times: Weekday, Evenings, and Weekends all available.

\*Day time Weekday Volunteers are also needed for a variety of courses in the Alexandria Detention Center and at the OAR office.

\*Mentors are needed for our clients in the detention facilities. Training and Materials provided!

If you or anyone you know might be interested in Volunteering with OAR please don't hesitate to have them contact Elizabeth, Volunteer Services Coordinator, at 703-228-7031 or at [ejones@oaronline.org](mailto:ejones@oaronline.org)

## Calendar

### December

25 OAR will be closed for the Holiday

### January

1 OAR will be closed for the Holiday  
28 Prison Gallery of Art Visit

### February

TBA White House Tours  
10 Volunteer Training Workshop