

# TRANSFORMATIONS

## From the Executive Director

I recently finished reading a book entitled *Life on the Outside: the Prison Odyssey of Elaine Bartlett* by **Jennifer Gonnerman**. It tells of a young woman with four children who was picked up with four ounces of cocaine, charged with attempting to distribute the drugs, and given 25 years to life. She made the most of her time in the New York prison, taking all of the life skills classes that were offered, and even finishing a two-year college degree. She was able to secure a pardon after 16 years of incarceration.

**On the Outside:** Despite all of the training she had received, and despite being an obviously intelligent woman, she was unprepared and unsupported in her transition back to society. Her children were, understandably, angry; the social support she tried to get was spotty and bureaucratic; it took her months and months to find work; she could not make enough to move out of her mother's Section 8 Public Housing, where she was living illegally with three of her four children and a grandchild. Two of her children were in and out of prison.

**Get it Right!** The OAR staff will be reading this book over the next few months to remind ourselves that the work we do – inside and outside of the detention centers – is vital to the well being of our clients, their children and our community. We need to “get it right!” We want to make sure we and our volunteers are teaching well the critical skills our clients will need when they come home and face daunting challenges.

We hope you will consider asking your church, mosque or synagogue to participate in being a friend to one of our clients for six months once they come out of prison or jail. They need a friend in the first critical months of their reentry.

**Gail C. Arnall**

## NEW RECORD SET: 127 OAR CLIENTS SECURE JOBS IN FIRST QUARTER

The OAR Re-entry staff members were able to help 127 clients find employment during the first three months of this fiscal year – July through September, 2007. As of mid October, 126 of these people are still employed.

“We are working harder than ever to find employers who are willing to work with us and our clients,” said **Will Wilson**, OAR Director of Re-entry and Outreach. “We work to find a match between what the em-



ployers need and what skill levels our clients have to offer. We are certainly proud of what our clients are doing to secure and maintain these jobs,” he said.

Because the unemployment rate is so low in Northern Virginia, businesses are looking for qualified employees. The process of finding a company over time is getting harder and harder.

Many have never thought about hiring an ex-offender. But, consider this: former offenders are so grateful that someone will give them a second chance, they usually will stay at the job and grow with the company instead of changing jobs frequently. Further, former offenders know that they need to keep the job. They will often be one of your best employees.

If you have a business, or know of a business that is looking for qualified employees, give **Will** a call. It is perfectly fine to specify the types of offenders that you do or do not want working for you. **Will** can be reached at [wwilson@oaronline.org](mailto:wwilson@oaronline.org) or at 703-228-0071.

## HELP A NEIGHBOR: FORM A FAITH-BASED SUPPORT TEAM

Taking care of the “least of these” is a commandment in all religious traditions. So it is common sense to believe that those who are active in their faith communities might be interested and able to help individuals who are returning from incarceration.

That is the idea of our new Faith-Based Initiative, supported by the Arlington Community Development Fund, the US Department of Labor, and the Philip L. Graham Fund.

Over the next nine months, we want to find at least 25 faith communities in Alexandria, Arlington and the City of Falls Church who are willing to form a Support Team to “Help a Neighbor.” What is required?

- Creating a Support Team of at least 3 people.
- Participating in a three-hour training on do's and don'ts, and how to be an effective Coaching Team.
- Meeting weekly for the first two months, to be decreased over the next four months.
- Sending status reports via email to an assigned OAR Case Manager.

OAR clients are mothers and fathers. About 45% are over age 50. Almost 25% are female; 54% are African American; 16% are Hispanic; 22% are Caucasian. About 80%

engaged in non-violent crimes; most have been designated felons – for drug possession, larceny, embezzlement or theft. All have made mistakes that took their lives in a bad direction. Most want to find a way out. All who come to OAR for help have decided to turn their lives in a better direction. And all need our help to do so.

If you would like to hear more, or arrange to have someone come and speak about this initiative, please contact **Sue Bell**, Manager of OAR's Faith-Based Neighborhood Initiative, e-mail her at [SBell@oaronline.org](mailto:SBell@oaronline.org) or call her at 202-486-0777.

**OAR STAFF**

Gail C. Arnall, Executive Director  
 Sue Bell, Grants Manager  
 Denise Costley, Women Empowered for Change Program Coordinator  
 Rudy Curtis, Re-entry Advisor  
 Juanita DeShazior, Re-entry advisor  
 Kathy Hollins, Administrative Coordinator  
 Odalis Jimenez, Administrative Assist.  
 Susan Jiofack, CSP Case Manager  
 Christian Jones, MASTERS Men's Educational Unit Coordinator  
 Elizabeth Jones Valderrama, Dir. of Volunteer and Education Services  
 Catie Paradiso, Assist. Cord. of Volunteer and Education Services  
 Rachel Sparico, CSP Case Manager  
 Nicholas Tar, Re-entry Advisor  
 Will Wilson, Director of Re-entry and Outreach

**OAR BOARD**

Bruce Griffin, Chairman  
 Kayra Alhambra  
 Christina Beibesheimer  
 Bruce Blackman  
 Pamela Bulloch  
 Michael Carleton  
 Jennifer Christie  
 Bill Cleveland  
 John Pettiford  
 Robert Price  
 Elissa Rumsey  
 Nancy Swift  
 Tom Ward  
 Gail Arnall

**MEET OUR NEW OAR STAFF**

**Odalis Jimenez** is our new Receptionist and Administrative Assistant. So when you call the office, you will likely speak with him first. Not only has **Odalis** had extensive experience as an AA, he is bi-lingual, which make our Spanish speakers much more comfortable when calling and coming into the office.



**Catie Paradiso** is our new Assistant Coordinator of Volunteer and Educational Services, working closely with **Elizabeth Jones Valderrama**. **Catie** started with OAR last spring as an intern, finishing the required 600 hours of counseling required for her



Master's in Community Counseling from Marymount University. She has been working inside and outside of the two detention centers for the last six months. She began her full-time employment with OAR in November.

**Nicholas Tarlebba** is our new Re-entry Case Manager, located in the Arlington Office. While finishing his Master's Degree in Theology and Ethics at St. Mary's in Baltimore, **Nick** worked with various community organizations to secure funds and other support for offenders and others. He has jumped in quickly to learn all about the resources in our community and establish his own personal relationships with agencies with whom we work on a daily basis.



**HELP PRODUCE OAR'S NEW TV SHOW**

Five staff and volunteers are taking the training offered by Arlington Independent Media (AIM) to be ready to produce a monthly TV program about OAR and the various issues surrounding the justice system in this area, the state and the nation.

"We are excited about the possibility of sharing information with the citizens of Northern Virginia via the public access channels in the area," said **Gail Arnall**, OAR Executive Director. "We are convinced that people in this area will help those who are returning from incarceration, if they only knew how to help."



If you would like to work on creating a monthly program, please let us know. We need additional people to learn how to work the cameras, sound system, lighting and editing. Not only will you learn something, we plan to have a lot of fun at the same time.

Go online now and register at [www.arlingtonmedia.org](http://www.arlingtonmedia.org) to take the Introductory class. Then sign up for either the Studio Production Class or the Editing class. You must take the one-night Introductory class before taking other classes. OAR can provide scholarships to cover the cost, so don't let money be a factor in your decision. Come join the fun!

**BOOK YOUR TRAVEL WITH OAR**

**WWW.OARTRAVEL.COM**

Good News! You can go to [www.OARTravel.com](http://www.OARTravel.com) and book your travel - all kinds of travel.

OAR has entered into partnership with YTB to offer OAR supporters yet another way to support OAR. When you are planning a



trip, log on and see if our prices and offerings meet your needs.

OAR receives a portion of the commission from the sale of all tickets.

Let us know what you think about this new service.

**Join us in Breaking the Cycle of Crime: Volunteer!**

Contact OAR's Director of Volunteer and Education Services, **Elizabeth Jones Valderrama**, at [ejones@oaronline.org](mailto:ejones@oaronline.org)

## COMMERCE BANK SPONSORS NONPROFIT LEADERSHIP FORUM

**Bob Danzig** grew from a childhood spent in five foster homes to two decades as nationwide head of the Hearst Newspaper Group and VP of the Hearst Corporation. He was the keynote speaker at a Nonprofit Leadership Forum, sponsored by Commerce Bank, the Northern Virginia Community Foundation and the Arlington Community Foundation.



Three OAR staff members and a Board member attended the day of seminars and training. They are pictured here with **Mr. Danzig**. The day was a reminder of the privilege we have in working with our clients and seeing them succeed.

## A THANK YOU FROM A SAGE FLOWERS CUSTOMER

Dear SAGE Flowers:

Today is my birthday! But the real news is that one of my friends sent me flowers! I don't remember telling her about SAGE Flowers, but she remembered and ordered the bouquet from them! The arrangement, the vase, and the flowers are magnificent. And, coming from SAGE Flowers made this even more special! I am so impressed by what you all are doing!

I will check today to find out if our company can set up a cor-

porate account with SAGE Flowers. I know we send a lot of flowers, and perhaps we can give that business to SAGE Flowers. ~**Kat**

Order Today!

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## NEW OPPORTUNITIES FOR PROJECT CHRISTMAS ANGEL JOIN US ON TUESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2007

Many of you have been long-time volunteers in support of Project Christmas Angel. Last year this project provided toys for about 1,000 children of parents incarcerated in the Arlington and Alexandria Detention Centers. We will meet again to wrap presents for children at St. Andrews Church, located at 4000 North Locom Lane, Arlington, VA 22207 (off Military Road) on Tuesday, December 11, 6:30 to 9 p.m.

As in past years, you will be given the names of children in a family, along with information that the parent has provided about what each child enjoys doing. Then you will go around the room and "shop" - picking out toys for each child. The toys are largely provided by the Marine's Toys for Tots program. You will

then wrap the toys in Holiday wrapping paper.

The NEW opportunity is for you to deliver the packages to the families directly. Last year we spent about \$2,500 for postage to mail the packages, most of which were mailed to



local addresses.

This year, because some volunteers expressed interest in actually handing out the presents, and because we would like to save money, we are going to ask you if you want to make the delivery yourself.

We will try to match your zip code with the family who will get the presents. If you do not wish to deliver the package yourself, just say so and we will gladly give you names for children that are not in local areas.

If you are planning to come to this wonderful annual Holiday event, and you are able, please bring a toy, game or gift card for a teen. We are always short on presents for teens. If you cannot come this year, consider contributing funds to help pay for supplies and postage - perhaps your community club or faith community could make a contribution.

See you on the 11th of December!

## WHY TRY? TRAINING A BIG SUCCESS

Over 100 people from all types of organizations and agencies attended the two-day Why Try? training offered by OAR.

We wish to thank those who provided underwriting for this unique event:

- Arlington County Sheriff's Office
- Arlington Community Foundation
- Arlington Parks and Recreation
- OAR Board Member
- Arlington Juvenile & Domestic Relations Court

The evaluation of the training has been very positive, and many attendees have already ordered the very affordable training materials to institute the Why Try? curriculum in their programs. One attendee wrote:

*"Excellent presenter, passionate and intense. Thank you for giving me the passion to stick with what I love to do and not to worry so much about if I'm making a impact. I'm there."*

Our thanks to **J. Allen** who facilitated the training, and to **Christian Moore** who made the training available at a significantly reduced price.



Participants learning one of the 10 metaphors of the Why Try? Program

Join us in Breaking the Cycle of Crime: Volunteer!

Contact OAR's Director of Volunteer and Education Services, **Elizabeth Jones Valderrama**, at [ejones@oaronline.org](mailto:ejones@oaronline.org)

# **OAR** Offender Aid and Restoration

Serving the County of Arlington and the Cities of Alexandria and Falls Church since 1974

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

Remember to designate OAR

This year during your Workplace United Way or CFC campaign Designation numbers United Way # 8078 CFC # 26226

## **OAR MISION**

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 Richmond, 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. OAR serving Arlington, Alexandria, and Falls Church, began in 1974.

## **VOLUNTEER NEEDS**

- Computer Lab Monitors
- Spanish Life Skills Instructors
- Stress Management Instructors
- Expressive Arts Instructors
- Critical Skills Instructors
- Volunteer Library Administrator
- Literacy/ GED/ ESL Tutors
- Anger Management Facilitators
- Sage Flowers Volunteers
- Customer Service Instructors
- OAR Newsletter Editor
- Project Xmas Angel Coordinator

## **OAR'S WISH LIST**

- Yarn for WEC Baby Blankets
- Educational Materials: Dry erase & over head markers, Whiteboard erasers, Transparency paper
- Holiday Wrapping Paper
- 2 Small or Medium Shredders
- Standard Xerox Copy Paper
- School Supplies: #2 pencils, manila & pocket folders, composition & 1 subject notebooks, color pencils
- \$10-\$20 Holiday Gift Cards
- \$5 Fast Food Restaurant Cards
- \$5 Metro Cards & Bus passes
- Ivory Resume paper

## **SUPPORTING OAR**

Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to support the good work of OAR. Visit [www.OARonline.org](http://www.OARonline.org) to make a secure online payment. You can send checks made payable to OAR to: 1400 N. Uhle St, Suite 704, Arlington, VA 22201.

## **THANK YOU SUPPORTERS**

- Alexandria and Arlington Sheriff's Offices
- Arlington Community Development Fund
- Arlington County
- Arlington Inter-Faith Council
- Arlington Kiwanis Club
- Cafritz Foundation
- City of Falls Church
- Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation
- Gannett Foundation
- Phillip L. Graham
- Shrewsbury Foundation
- United Way Community Impact Fund
- US Department of Labor
- Verizon Foundation
- Virginia Department of Criminal Justice
- Virginia Law Foundation
- Weissberg Foundation

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