

**MARCH
2013**

The Tool Box

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PLEASE NOTE:

Due to the duplication in information for the Tool Kit and Homeward Bound, newsletters, we will combine the publications. The name of the newsletter is **“The Tool Box.”**

Strengthening Community-Based Reentry Efforts Through Artmaking

By Jo Dufton, Special Project Manger
Kentucky Foundation for Women

The Kentucky Foundation for Women’s *Special Project* is partnering with community-based programs in Metro Louisville, to strengthen successful re-entry through artmaking activities especially designed for families affected by incarceration. Since 2008, KFW’s *Special Project* activities leaders have been creating art every Sunday night with families in the visitors lobby of the Metro Louisville Jail. Now, the Special Project is teaming up with community-based reentry programs to integrate artmaking into efforts to strengthen families and their returning loved ones.

The Justice Re-Investment (JRI) programs based in the Newburg and Shawnee communities are two important partners because of their shared commitment to working with individuals experiencing the challenge of reconnecting with their families and communities after incarceration. JRI’s programs for the Newburg and Shawnee communities are coordinated by strong community leaders, Rev. Roosevelt Lightsey, Jr. and Debora McGill, respectively.

An important component of the JRI model is the regularly scheduled RING (Reinvestment Neighborhood Group) meetings, which offer previously incarcerated persons, and their families, an opportunity to participate in a coordinated approach to successful reentry. In summer 2012, Rev. Lightsey invited KFW’s *Special Project* art activity leaders to partner with Newburg residents to create neighborhood artworks that exemplify values such as family, faith, and community.

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Special Project team members are trained to design community-based activities that provide co-leadership opportunities with RING families and neighborhood supporters. The Newburg community art project provided two-fold support to reentry efforts; 1) by offering returnees an opportunity to have a voice in determining the message to be conveyed in their community art project, and 2) by creating an opportunity for returnees to step into a role of cooperation and leadership.



Special Project art leaders attended RING meetings and shared in a dialogue with neighborhood families and residents regarding artistic options and creative ways in which everyone could contribute. Over the course of three weeks last summer, 25-30 individuals from the Newburg neighborhood, including Reinvestment Neighborhood Group (RING) participants, came together to experience the power of art as a family and community strengthening tool.

The first Saturday of the project literally got off to a rocky start. Art activity leader Michelle Amos reported, “We needed to sink two feet of PVC pipes in order to stabilize the bamboo poles that would hold the vinyl art panels. We attempted to dig at the first site, but the ground was too rocky.” Ms. DeAcquanita Masden, “Ms. Dee,” a key supporter of the Newburg program, “soon showed up with a couple of tables, water and snacks, and began making calls. Within ten minutes, RING participants and Newburg residents came to offer their help, and we moved to a second site where we were able to use a post hole digger to secure the foundation for our artwork.”

This unique partnership resulted in the design and creation of four community art pieces that bring attention to the Newburg area’s community fruit and vegetable gardens, and youth services facilities. Designed, built and maintained by Newburg families, the artwork celebrates both the heart of Newburg, and its commitment to growth and sustainability. Reverend Lightsey notes that, “Families were engaged; youth and parents worked together to create the art panels. Folks definitely took pride in participating, and it gave them a sense of contribution, of leadership, and of being a mentor to others.”

“Encouraging the youth and families to work together provided a springboard for conversations at home. ‘Hey, we did this! What did you think about that?’ Each time they see the community artwork it’s an opportunity to revisit that positive experience,” says Rev. Lightsey.

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How can art make a positive difference in the lives of previously incarcerated people returning to the larger community? “The community art project gives visibility to their voice,” Rev. Lightsey explains. “It gives them a platform from which to participate and be acknowledged – like staking a flag on the moon. We’ve been here!”

In December 2012, the Newburg and Shawnee JRI Programs each organized holiday gatherings for RING participants and neighbors. KFW’s *Special Project* activities leaders contributed their creative artmaking, adding to the strong sense of family and community in each neighborhood.

In Newburg, three activity leaders created holiday collages with individuals and families, and also worked with several participants to make a special group art project. After a delicious dinner organized by “Ms. Dee” Madsen, participants were invited to make decorative door hangers and/or collages, using a wide variety of pictures, papers, shapes, words and other materials. Linda Murray, one of the Special Project Team members, reported, “This activity gave parents and children the opportunity to interact in positive way, strengthening family bonds, a factor in successful reentry.”

Several of the participants did not have children with them, but they actively participated in making collages and the creation of the “group collage.” Participants were asked to decorate a small “puzzle piece.” When they were completed and put together, the finished work of art spelled Peace, Love and Joy. “It was really quite beautiful and demonstrated the power of unity and collective work,” said Linda Murray.

One young woman made a collage dedicated to her daughter, then asked the group if she could explain what the pictures and symbols meant to her. She spoke lovingly about her daughter and how much the holiday season meant to her. This led to other participants sharing their collages, many of which focused on the importance of their families and faith. Participants encouraged each other and clapped in approval.

“Ms. Dee” Madsen coordinated the holiday gathering, contributed art supplies, and helped the activity leaders set up and clean up the art room. She encouraged all participants to take part in the artmaking and expressed appreciation for their work. Rev. Lightsey also participated in the artmaking, adding his own art to the group collage. As always, Ms. Dee and Rev. Lightsey welcomed all participants and created a positive and respectful environment for everyone.

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At the holiday gathering in Shawnee, three activity leaders made holiday frames with the participants there. Debora McGill, head of the Shawnee JRI program, and Tom Reese of Seven Counties, decorated the room, organized a lovely dinner, created awards and recognitions and collected gifts for everyone who came.

The frame-making art activity was family and holiday focused, to match the gathering. Children created unique and original frames with their parents, who helped and gave positive encouragement, fostering family togetherness. One child wanted to make a frame as a gift for his teacher. One of the activity leaders had thought to bring wrapping paper, and children eagerly began making frames as holiday gifts and wrapping them with the help of the activity leaders.

An adult participant at the gathering created his frame to showcase his achievement of starting his own business. In this case, the frame activity provided a positive place for community members to showcase their achievements. The families and children happily took supplies home to continue working on the frames. One Special Project Team member, observing the closeness and mutual aid between the participants, noted that the JRI-RINGS are not only strengthening family support but also building community.

"Art reaches out in a powerful way," Debora McGill confirms. "It can inspire, motivate, heal and transform. So let's make art together. "

The community art partnerships between the Kentucky Foundation for Women's Special Project and the JRI-RING families represent an exciting step toward building stronger, and more successful, re-entry efforts in the Metro Louisville community. The Special Project artmaking activities are designed to strengthen families and protective factors for children affected by incarceration.

The protective factors include:

- having a strong relationship with parents, caregivers and relatives;
- feeling academically competent;
- building artistic skills;
- having access to community recreation;
- being in a nonjudgmental 'safe space' that allows for authentic expression, showcasing accomplishments.

Integrated with strong re-entry efforts like the JRI-RING programs, the partnerships strive to combine essential, practical assistance for returning individuals with family and community strengthening activities that are necessary for successful re-entry.

PARENTING TIPS FOR MARCH 2013

Even if most children do not see the prison, they are likely to overhear a conversation that will reveal the truth. Most mail from prisoners is clearly marked as originating in a correctional facility, so the child (as well as the mailman and nosy neighbors) figures it out. If the prisoner calls home, the collect call operation usually says the call is from a prison.

Once children realize the truth, they feel lied to. They begin to develop distrust that hurts their relationships, especially with the person who made up the story. Lying to the child is often intended to minimize feelings of shame and stigma associated with parental incarceration. But it increases these feelings by creating a family secret. A family secret is a big burden for a small child.

Even when families tell children a parent is in prison, they often encourage the children not to tell others. This is not necessarily bad advice, since children can be cruel to each other. Other children may tease, isolate, or humiliate the child. Sadly, even school officials and parents of children's friends cannot be counted on to provide support to children of prisoners. The child who has no one to share concerns with can pay a high emotional price for keeping a secret.

Parents and caregivers usually need to weigh three choices: tell the truth and let it be out in the open, tell the truth and ask children to keep it quiet, or make up a story. Parents and caregivers then have to judge the dangers of each option to the child's emotional health.

When the child knows the truth of where the parent is, they usually next ask why.

WHY ARE YOU HERE?

Children need the truth, and in most cases they should get it, either before or at a visit. They are looking for a way to make sense out of what has happened. They become nervous and anxious if the answers they get do not make sense to them. Keep in mind:

- Children understand the idea of being punished for breaking rules.
- Young children need simple descriptions of the offense. "Dad hurt someone," "or "Mom stole something," or "I took drugs, or I sold drugs that are not allowed."
- Older children will have more questions and may need more detail.
- Truth is easier on kids than what they imagine.

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Most children hear things about the crime either on the street or within the house or family. This knowledge will confuse them tremendously if they have not been told the truth.

An incarcerated parent may want to steadfastly maintain innocence, or believe the sentence is unfair, or consider bail excessive. These things need to be talked about without undermining a child's respect for appropriate and lawful authority or triggering fear and distrust. When the focus is not so much on whether the incarcerated parent's circumstances are "fair", but on how the child's parents, counselors, and teachers deal with unfairness, children can learn positive ways to advocate justice and fight discrimination and racism. Acknowledge that the incarcerated parent did something wrong and also that the criminal justice system unconsciously or unfairly added on an extra penalty because the offender was African American or Latino. Minority adolescents may need to know they are at greater risk of arrest, detention and incarceration, and to be prepared for that possibility.

Often when one parent is incarcerated, children become overly concerned about and attached to the other parent or primary caretaker. They fear that he/she too will be taken away. Talk of how unjust the system is may increase the child's fear that the remaining parent may be taken away next.

Many prisoners, who are guilty as charged, struggle with the fear of being rejected if their loved ones knew the truth. They say they are innocent to keep their families.

Many children are extremely angry. They feel abandoned by parents who risked incarceration by their conflict with the law. In most cases, the incarcerated parent simply needs to apologize to the child for the upset and upheaval that he/she has caused. They need to ask the child to forgive and to be a partner in rebuilding their lives.

It takes courage to have these conversations. It means risking anger and rejection. It means admitting causing pain to those you love. The child's caregiver, and other adults in the child's life, can help by supporting the child's relationship with the incarcerated parent. This support helps build the honesty that is required for parents and children to sustain their family bonds through this crisis.

The parent in prison, the child's caregiver, and outside parties such as social workers, may disagree about what to say about the arrest and incarceration. This can be hard to resolve. If the incarcerated parent is concerned about how the information about him/her is given the opportunity to share it directly. Hopefully he/she can be persuaded that the child is going to learn the truth eventually, and hearing it directly from the incarcerated parent is the best way to hear it.



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WHEN ARE YOU COMING HOME?

Throughout the entire process from arrest to release there is often tremendous uncertainty about when a prisoner will come home.

Most people know the range of possible outcomes: the maximum sentence one could receive if found guilty as charged, the sentence available if the defendant accepts the plea bargain offered, or the chance that the case will be dismissed altogether. For some, denial is so great that they never seem to consider the possibility of prison or jail sentence. Their instinct is to reassure their children that they will be out soon. When children seem distressed about a parent's incarceration, and beg their parents to come home, parents naturally want to offer relief. They often say "soon" or "It won't be long now." A child expecting a parent to come home from prison is devastated when the parent fails to arrive.

Children handle all this uncertainty best when they have honest answers—even when that means saying "I really don't know". Young children do best when they measure time in seasons or holidays. "It looks like Mommy will be home after 3 summers or 5 birthdays." Longer sentences around long no matter what adults say to soften it. "Dad will probably get out when you are 18" is truly a lifetime to a 6 year old. Children are very concrete though. The truth is easier for them to grasp than vague answers like "It will be a long time".

When talking about when a parent is coming home, remember to consider where "home" is going to be. There are children whose parents will be released from jail or prison, but will not be living with the child. Sometimes, when the parent wasn't living with the child before the arrest, it is clearly understood that he/she won't be living with the child after release. But the arrest or incarceration of a parent often impacts not only on the child's custody, but also in the parent's relationship to a spouse/lover. The free world parent may find someone new while the partner is in prison. Children may imagine longed for reunions or family living situations. The harmfulness of these fantasies can be reduced when parents are honest about their plans.

ARE YOU OKAY?

Mostly the child wants to be reassured that the incarcerated parent is safe, secure, and able to manage the difficult circumstances. Children are very sensitive to their environments. Many children travel home from prison visits in silence or in tears because they are deeply distressed over separating from the parent. They also feel they are abandoning their beloved parent to a dreadful place.

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Some parents would like to assure the child that they are safe and happy, but unfortunately, they cannot. Prison is not an OK place to be. It is not necessary to tell children the horrors of incarceration to teach them that imprisonment is a punishment. It will only worry the.

Answers to the question, “Are you OK?” such as “I am not OK in here but I can certainly handle it”, or “I am OK in some ways. I have a bed and food and books to read. But I am not OK because prison is not a good place to be. And most of all I can’t be with you” balance the truth with some reassurance that the parent misses the child and is not in severe danger.

DO YOU LOVE ME? DO YOU BLAME ME?

These are not questions that children ask directly. Yet the purpose of much of the communication discussed throughout this article is directed to answering these questions: “Do you love me?” and “Do you blame me?”. The goal is to insure that the child does in fact feel loved by the incarcerated parent and others, and does not feel responsible in any way for the terrible circumstances in which the family finds itself.

Children often blame themselves for their parent’s mistakes. A child who pressured parents for an expensive gift may think that the parent’s subsequent arrest for selling drugs was related to an effort to get the desired object. Similarly, a child who has been angry at the parent may believe the subsequent arrest was somehow caused by their negative thoughts about the parent.

Parents generally see little connection between their criminal activity and their children, and certainly do not commit a crime for the purpose of abandoning their families. But children often interpret the parent’s behavior solely in connection to themselves. “If you cared about me you wouldn’t have gone to jail (left me).” Parents should be unwavering in their assurances that the child is loved unconditionally: that the child did nothing to cause the incarceration.

This information is provided by the New Jersey Department of Corrections, Division of Programs and Community Services, Office of Transitional Services. The title “What About Me?” is a guide for discussing your incarceration with your children.

Probation and Parole District 7 Pilots MRT (Moral Reconciliation Therapy)

Moral Reconciliation Therapy is a concept designed to enhance social, moral, and positive behavioral growth. It is a cognitive behavioral approach that is designed to work with traditionally resistant populations. While the title of the group includes the word therapy, the group therapy is delivered in an educational style to facilitate cognitive skills.

In December 2012, Officers Leslie Haun and Jennifer Pelle, District 7 Re-entry Liaisons, gathered potential candidates from a pool of female parolees whose LSCMI scores ranged from moderate to high and whose conduct on supervision had put them at risk of being revoked. The candidates were then interviewed by Officers Haun and Pelle. The five females who were most inclined to participate in the program, after being informed of the requirements of homework and group presentations, were chosen.

The first class was held on January 10, 2013 and the participants were given the MRT workbook and the first assignment was to be completed prior to the beginning of the first class. A participant's group presentation is graded on a pass fail system which is evaluated by the facilitators and other group members. The MRT program consists of a "Freedom Ladder" which is a 12-16 step checklist. Twelve of the sixteen steps must be completed successfully to graduate from the program.

The participants in the program have been very excited to participate and come prepared each week. The participants, overall, are doing well and have had many positive things to say about the program including, "This group is different because in past groups I would say what they wanted to hear. Now I am thinking about what I am saying." The facilitators are also seeing positive changes in the participants.





For Immediate Release

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DOC Introduces Family Engagement Sessions

FRANKFORT, Ky. (Feb. 25, 2013) – The Kentucky Department of Corrections’ Reentry Branch hosted its first “Family Engagement Session” recently in Bowling Green. The meeting was held in partnership with the Southern Reentry Council.

The Family Engagement Sessions are designed primarily for family members and significant others of individuals who have been newly incarcerated and those that are nearing release. The Department of Corrections, in partnership with local reentry councils, will host these sessions throughout the state. The sessions are scheduled in the evening in order to accommodate working families. Upcoming sessions will take place in Covington on March 19; Paducah on March 20; Owensboro on March 21; Elizabethtown on March 26 and Louisville on March 28. Locations and more information can be found at:

<http://corrections.ky.gov/reentry/Pages/FamilyEngagementSessions.aspx>.

“I believe family is one of the most important parts of a successful reentry process,” said Warren County Detention Center Major William Baker. Baker serves as the executive director of the Southern Reentry Council. “Inmates housed in jails are provided several program opportunities; however, participation in programs is not always communicated to family members. This information is a good tool for families wanting to provide support.”

The first half of the two-hour session focuses on information such as where the offender could be housed and what programs and services are available. Families that will be working with an offender who is nearing release are encouraged to attend the second half of the meeting which focuses on reentry. Programs the offender may have participated in, the role of the family in reentry, what to expect when an offender is under supervision and common requirements of supervision are explained.

“Family engagement is paramount to successful reentry because the majority of the time, family is the first and last support system,” said Division of Probation and Parole District Supervisor Mark Stonex. Stonex also serves as the Southern Reentry Council’s deputy director.

Several attendees commented after the session they felt the meeting was beneficial and will help them better understand the needs of their family members who are incarcerated.

Representatives from the department’s reentry branch, Division of Probation and Parole and staff from area prisons will be available at each of the Family Engagement Sessions to answer questions. Additionally, service providers in the area may be available to discuss resources for the families and information about reentry resources will be available.

Kentucky Department of Corrections Family Engagement Sessions

Questions? Call the Reentry Branch at 502-564-2220

Reentry Council Name	Location	Day / Date / Time
Northern Kentucky Reentry Team	Florence Government Center Lower Level Conference Room 8100 Ewing Blvd. Florence, KY 41042 859-442-1601	Tuesday, June 11, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Northeast Kentucky Reentry Council	A New Avenue 1211 Forest Avenue Maysville, KY 41056	Tuesday, June 25, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Green River Reentry Council	H.L. Neblett Community Center 801 West 5th Street Owensboro, KY 42301	Thursday, May 9, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Western Kentucky Reentry Council	Lee S. Jones Park Building 311 Lee S. Jones Park Road Eddyville, KY 42038	Tuesday, June 25, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Southeast Kentucky Reentry Task Force	Laurel County Detention Center 206 West 4th Street London, KY 40741	Tuesday, May 21, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Southern Kentucky Reentry Council	Bowling Green FOP Lodge 150 Corvette Drive Bowling Green, KY 42101	Thursday, June 20, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Central Kentucky Reentry Council	Wesley Hilltop House, Inc. 1001 Skyline Drive Elizabethtown, KY 42701	Tuesday, June 4, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Louisville Metro Reentry Task Force	Beargrass Christian Church—Fellowship Hall 4100 Shelbyville Road Louisville, KY 40207	Thursday, May 23, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Bluegrass Reentry Council	Northeast Christian Church, Room 202 990 Star Shoot Pkwy Lexington, KY 40509	Tuesday, June 11, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
Eastern Kentucky Reentry Council	Pike County Fiscal Courtroom TBD	TBD 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session
FIVCO Reentry Council	Cannonsburg Trinity United Methodist Church 11620 Midland Trail Ashland, KY 41102	Thursday, June 27, 2013 6:00 p.m. - Entry Session 7:30 p.m. - Reentry Session



February 28th – Officers Staci Garlough and Jerry Brumley met with Class D Inmates at the Boyle County Jail to answer questions about being on Parole, HIP & MRS. This meeting was such a success that Boyle County Jail staff has asked both officers to return every two months to speak to new Class D groups.



February 13th – Supervisor Warren Lambert and Officers Linzie Abell and Keith Hedgespeth met with Central Office staff member, Star Smith-Wright in the Bardstown P&P Office to discuss re-entry programming issues.

February 28th - Officers Linzie Abell, Keith Hedgespeth and Jennifer Neagle attended an Inside Out Dads program at the Marion County Jail.

DISTRICT 6 ...

HOW WE SHOW OUR REENTRY EFFORTS!!!!



February 19th – Officers Paige Lutz, Staci Garlough, Samantha Bright, Keith Hedgespeth and Assistant Supervisor Michelle Parker along with Central Office Staff member, Star Smith-Wright were involved in a meeting with Healing Place Treatment Center staff members regarding re-entry program guidelines and issues.



February 7th – Officers Paige Lutz and Staci Garlough facilitated a 24/7 Dads Re-entry Program and Graduation at the Healing Place Treatment Center in Campbellsville.



February 28th – Officer Paige Lutz attended a New Directions Re-entry Meeting at KCI in Frankfort.