

SPECIAL EDITION



Visions of Tomorrow NC

Life always offers you a second chance, its called tomorrow

Foresight Magazine

Visions of Tomorrow NC

We focus on assisting inmates transitioning back into the community by providing specialized job training upon release as well as help with resume writing, housing, family support and activities for the children.

Supporting our cause is as important as ever as we help our state's incarcerated build lives a new outside of prison with their loved ones by their sides.

www.visionsoftomorrownc.org



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JULY
2020

FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK

Hello All,

This is a special issue to share some news with you. I want to keep all of you apprised of what is going on as much as possible. My news does not spread as fast as inmate.com, but it is reliable. The body of this special letter will address 6 key essential subjects.

I want to remind you that it is up to YOU to follow the CDC recommendations as much as possible to avoid contracting and spreading COVID-19.

1st: I need to apologize for the numerous errors in our recent issue of Foresight Magazine.

We sent the draft file to print in error. Should you wish to obtain the finished copy, please have someone download and print it from our website. I have five new additions to my family; don't stop breathing, they are puppies. I have five new newfoundland puppies and I have added pictures for your viewing.

2nd: Let me express my sincere thanks for all the cards and letters. Helping those less fortunate is my passion. I wish I could do more. I am hoping to retire this year and devote more time to finding jobs, along with expanding my commercial cleaning business, so I can help those that are interested in learning the business to become self-sufficient and work for yourself.

3rd: Our organization does not help with any issues related to prison conditions. It requires much research and contact with NCDPS officials. We do not have the resources or manpower for this endeavor. Our organization is comprised of five board members all of whom are employed full-time. I deeply appreciate the time they spend volunteering with Visions of Tomorrow NC, none of this would be possible without them.

4th: We have added a housing request form to our website. If you need a copy; I am also adding one to this newsletter. Please be sure to submit it at least 60 days in advance. We welcome any comments, poems, art or otherwise that we can use in the magazine, keep it clean! As much as I enjoy reading some of your letters, we just don't have the time to answer them so don't think we aren't reading them, I just can't get back to you in a timely manner. Our next issue will be out December 2020. Everything must be in by October 15, 2020.

5th: It was recently brought to my attention through a letter from an inmate that they were told they could NOT obtain minimum status, work outside the prison, be paroled or receive a Mapp because they pleaded not guilty to their crime and were subsequently found guilty. THIS IS NOT TRUE.

I have verified with a local judge; that information is FALSE. No matter how you pleaded, you have been convicted of a crime and are now a ward of the State of NC as a resident of the NCDPS. The mission of the NCDPS Division of Adult Correction is to promote public safety by the administration of a fair and humane system which provides reasonable opportunities for adjudicated offenders to develop progressively responsible behavior. The NCDPS has nothing to do with your plea or court decision.

The NCDPS has policies and procedures in place to maintain order within their facilities. Your plea whether guilty or not guilty DOES NOT EXCLUDE YOU from any available programs within the NCDPS if you abide by its policies and procedures. We cannot provide any advice on court cases nor can we provide funds for an attorney.

6th: Please DO NOT send us inmate package orders. Our organization does not have the resources to purchase packaging for inmates. In closing, please know that my heart goes out to all of you that are incarcerated, I pray for all those that I know along with those that I don't know. Let me wish all the father's a belated Happy Father's Day despite your situation, you are alive; Thank God!

STAY SAFE! - Best to All,

Brenda Miles
Executive Director

Housing Resources

Local Reentry Council Coordinator

326 E Main Street
Durham NC 27701
Tel: (919) 560-7589
DurhamLRC@dconc.gov

Housing for New Hope Transitional

18 West Colony Place, Suite 250
Durham, NC - 27705
(919) 682-3777
<https://www.housingfornewhope.org/>

Freedom House Recovery Center

Transitional Living
601 Carlton Avenue
Durham, NC - 27701
(919) 425-5474
<https://freedomhouserecovery.org/>

Stsg Transitional House for Men 1101

N. Mangum Street
Durham, NC - 27701
(984) 219-1001
<https://straighttalksupportgroup.org/>

Partners Ending Homelessness

High Point Location:
815 Phillips Ave. High
Point, NC 27262

Greensboro Location:
1500 Yanceyville Street Greensboro,
NC 27405
Phone: 336-553-2715
Fax: 336-553-2716
<http://pehgc.org/>

AWORD FROM THE BISHOP

Many of you are familiar with the movie 'Do the Right thing' written and directed by Spike Lee. This 1989 film is one of the greatest films of all time because it has been deemed, "culturally, historically, and aesthetically significant."

Do the Right Thing explores an underlying theme of right and wrong, through Mookie, the main character of the film. Mookie must come to terms with and ultimately decide to do the right thing. The relevance of the film, its setting and its underlying theme are pertinent to a struggle that continues today.

For all the characters in this epic film there is an underlying moral code that they ultimately realize is at the core of human relationships. It is often referred to as the "Golden Rule". It was first cited in the Bible in Leviticus 19:18, in today's English it reads, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." These simple 11 words are so important that Jesus preached on its meaning and it is the basis of many other Biblical teachings.

Jesus reiterated the importance of this concept when he was asked what the greatest commandment is, to which he responded, "Love Your Neighbor as yourself". Some people think because they have committed a crime, they are no longer worthy and cannot be blessed. Nothing could be further from the truth. Redemption and forgiveness are foundational in the teachings of the Bible and the preaching of Jesus. Even while dying on the cross, Jesus asked that his murderers be forgiven and blessed with the promise of heaven. Being blessed and redeemed is available to everyone if they are breathing and willing to repent and commit to a life where they treat others as they wish to be treated.

It was Edward Hale that wrote "I am only one, but still I am one. I cannot do everything, but still I can do something. And because I cannot do everything, I will not refuse to do the something I can do." Even when mistreated, we must choose to do the right thing because God has chosen us to be different so that we can make a difference!!!

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. put this concept another way in the 1960s when he said, "We must learn to live together as brothers, or we will perish together as fools". To receive the blessing that you deserve in this life you must, Do the Right Thing.

Doing the right thing is not always the easiest, but it is ALWAYS the best for the body of Christ and those who love Him.

Blessings, as you choose to "DO THE RIGHT THING"

Bishop Luther K. Brooks

COVID-19 Precautions

Washing your hands properly is one of the most important things you can do to help prevent and control the spread of COVID-19.

Hands carry lots of germs and should be washed regularly to kill the germs. Wash hands while singing two verses of happy birthday:

- after coughing or sneezing into your hands
- after visiting the toilet
- before handling food
- when visibly dirty



LAUGH A LOT

There was an elderly couple who in their old age noticed that they were getting a lot more forgetful, so they decided to go to the doctor. The doctor told them that they should start writing things down so they don't forget. They went home and the old lady told her husband to get her a bowl of ice cream. "You might want to write it down," she said. The husband said, "No, I can remember that you want a bowl of ice cream." She then told her husband she wanted a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream. "Write it down," she told him, and again he said, "No, no, I can remember: you want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream." Then the old lady said she wants a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top. "Write it down," she told her husband and again he said, "No, I got it. You want a bowl of ice cream with whipped cream and a cherry on top." So he goes to get the ice cream and spends an unusually long time in the kitchen, over 30 minutes. He comes out to her and hands her a plate of eggs and bacon. The old wife looks at the plate for a moment, then looks at her husband and says, "Where's the toast?"



CONTACT

Foresight Magazine will be issued bi-annually. There is no cost to offenders. All copies can be downloaded from our website. You can reach us at Visions of Tomorrow NC for more information, sponsorship or inquiries, or to even join our community.

We look forward to hearing from you; and since service to humanity is service to God, why not contact us today and let us make humanity a better place.

Phone
984-227-2167

Email
info@visionsoftomorrownc.org

Mailing address
PO Box 72822
Durham, NC 27722

EMPATHY VS SYMPATHY IN THE PRISON SYSTEM

Let us start by examining the meaning of empathy along with how it differs from sympathy. An empathetic person is someone who can relate to the plight of another while understanding their feelings. Sympathy on the other hand is an emotion that invokes sorrow and pity.

Someone who is empathetic does not necessarily have to agree with another person, but they can relate to and understand the needs of others. While a person who is expressing sympathy does not relate to what another person is going through, they are only saying, "I feel sorry for your plight."

Can a person be working in the prison system where emotions are often stifled and not expressed be an empathetic person? The answer is YES.

Empathetic people listen attentively to what you are telling them, putting their complete focus on the person in front of them. They spend more time listening than talking because they understand the difficulties others face, all of which helps to give those around them the feeling of being heard and recognized.

In the large complex North Carolina Prison System, the incarcerated often feel that their words fall on deaf ears. The size of the facility dictates how much employees can act on the empathy they feel for those that they oversee. Obviously in a facility that has less than 200 inmates, it is easier for prison officials to hear the voice of an individual and act upon their empathetic feelings. In larger facilities all voices become a drone, and the sheer numbers make any interpersonal interactions

between staff and inmates nearly impossible. I have never worked in the NC prison system. I can only imagine the variety of personalities that prison staff must deal with just judging by my 22 years in management. Over the years I have learned that listening, open communication and empathetic actions are vital to problem resolution.

I know some would say, "I don't need to listen to an inmate". Most inmates just want simple answers, they have questions regarding their health, programs available or how to move to the next level. Since sending out my first newsletter, I have received 47 letters to date, that are prison condition related, subjects for which we are not advocates.

A simple empathetic approach would be a system where inmates could deposit written questions and receive a response. I believe that by addressing inmate questions before they become issues would go a long way in facilitating a more peaceful, humane environment. Short simple responses to inmate questions are all that is required. The anxiety of not knowing is what causes disruptive behaviors.

This small empathetic step of timely answers to written questions from the inmates, eliminating harassment, false charges, and misleading acts would make prison employees job much easier.

As an inmate, YOUR JOB is to exhibit good behavior, accumulate good time credits, reduce your time, and get home as soon as possible. Do not hurt yourself by causing friction and becoming the center of attention to the prison staff.

I pray you all continue to stay safe and many of you will get home during the Covid-19 release.

Remember, they can bring you back if you don't follow the rules.

Voting Rights for Those Convicted of a Crime in North Carolina

There are many myths concerning voting rights by those convicted of a crime. At one time, convicts lost their right to vote. That is no longer True.

Quick Guide Voting Facts for those caught up in the Criminal Justice System in North Carolina

- If you are awaiting the disposition of a criminal case for a misdemeanor or felony, YOU CAN VOTE.

You maintain your Voting rights while awaiting trial.

- If you are convicted of a misdemeanor even while serving your sentence, YOU CAN VOTE

You can vote while serving your misdemeanor sentence by requesting an absentee ballot.

Be aware of deadlines for both submitting the absentee ballot request and sending it back.

- If you receive a pardon for a felony conviction. YOU CAN VOTE.
- If you are convicted of a felony, your sentence in North Carolina automatically includes the loss of the right to vote. However, upon the completion of all terms and conditions of your sentence, including probation, parole, post-release supervision, your right to vote is restored.

o You must register to vote; your past registration was cancelled upon your conviction.

➤ To avoid potential difficulties with registering and voting, you should ask for your Certificate of Restoration of Forfeited Rights of Citizenship from your releasing officer (N.C. Gen. Stat. 13-2). This is not necessary to register or vote but may make it easier should you encounter any problem.

Voting is an important right. Upon the completion of all the terms and conditions of your felony conviction sentence you should register to vote and cast your ballot.

Voting is so important. This is your opportunity to make a difference in the laws and changes in the legislation. Remember that every step in your journey through the criminal justice system was guided by laws that were created by those elected in the past. You can change the future by voting for candidates who will work to reform the system.

NC inmates released before November will be on post release for 9-12 months, the completion of all terms and conditions of your sentence will not be fulfilled in time to vote in the November 2020 elections. You will have the opportunity to register and vote in future elections after the terms and conditions of post release are met.

Lawsuit Seeking Statewide Prisoner Releases



MY POINT OF VIEW

I regret to inform you, that there has not been an update on the court case between ACLU v NCDPS. This case involves issues relating to the releasing of inmates during the pandemic as well as others that I would rather not mention now.

As a state employee, I am always puzzled by the decisions made by those in charge including our legislators, judges, and bureaucrats.

The issue that concerns you the most at this moment as we are looking for early releases to protect inmates during the coronavirus pandemic crisis concerns who is eligible for release. The COVID-19 release eligibility specifies that, "Offenders who have been convicted of crimes against a person will not be considered."

My questions and I am sure they are yours concerning who can be released during the COVID-19 include:

- Is there a reason someone that will be released in less than a year is not considered?
- When they are released under normal conditions, their underlying crime against a person remains, so why can they not be considered for release under the COVID-19 early release?
- If he or she has committed an offense toward another human, what will change in a few months?
- Are they saying that one life is worth more than another?
- Will the difference in a few months change the offense?
- Have they considered the behavior of the offender during his or her time of incarceration and their progress towards rehabilitation?

There are so many things wrong with this directive, every crime in some way affects another person, whether it is banking fraud, white collar theft or a burglary.

In the end all crime affects another person. By depriving someone of their property and financial resources the victim has been impacted, possibly causing them not to be able to pay rent, obtain credit etc. The crime may not have subjected them to physical harm, but they were harmed.

I am throwing these questions out for discussion. In my opinion the reasoning is bureaucratic politics. That is why I am a strong proponent of encouraging you to exercise your right to vote. Most of you will not qualify to vote this year, but you will be eligible to vote again in the future.

I want to stress to you; how important it is to VOTE. Those that are making the decisions as to whether we live and how we live are given these authorities by voters. These decision makers are people who have money and do not have to worry about a paycheck, just the next dinner party they will attend. It is all about who you know, like getting job promotions; I will not touch that one, now, it is a discussion for another time.

I do not have one dime in this dollar, but I can assure you this decision affects my core. It offends my thoughts about right and wrong. While many of you will not be able to vote this time, some of you can certainly make a difference the next time, and the election after that one, and the next one after that one. Together we can change the power by changing the decision makers.

If I can encourage just one person to vote and make a difference, I feel like I will have made a difference for us all.

LAUGH A LOT

A young boy came home from school and told his mother, "I had a big fight with my classmate. He called me a sissy." The mother asked, "What did you do?" The boy replied, "I hit him with my purse!"



WE NEED YOUR KIDS!

It is extremely important that you continue to be involved with your children, even though you are restricted by your incarceration. Children are the foundation of the family as well as being the leaders of the future.

Visions of Tomorrow NC had a host of outdoor activities, events, and functions in the planning stage for children before COVID-19 changed our world. We have made the necessary adjustments and have reallocated our energies and resources into programs that can happen even during the coronavirus pandemic.

Along with fleshing out some great home ideas that will keep your children active, busy, and engaged, our gifting programs will continue. We plan to move ahead with our School Supplies Giveaway, Winter Coat Drive and Toys for Christmas Program. We are gearing all our programs to children between the ages of 5 to 13. Please keep mentoring your children to the best of your ability during your hardship.

We encourage you to sign up your children for the Visions of Tomorrow NC Children's Programs. Please provide us with the names and ages of each of your children between the ages of 5 to 13 along with the name and contact information for their caretaker, guardian at home parent or grandparents.

We can not provide for the individual needs of any one child at this time. However, our goal is to provide for ALL of them equally with special Visions of Tomorrow NC Children's Programs.

The Art of Story-Listening

Art is expression. Every expression is unique and beautiful. Even in thick and dense forests, each tree is unique, and no two are exactly alike. There is not a standard definition or procedural steps to explain the Art of Story-Listening. I believe it's a space that is created when a person genuinely cares about another human enough to listen to them. The Art of Story-listening is a mindset that subconsciously tells you when you meet someone new or different, "I wonder what his or her story is?" or "I wonder what the story is behind this person." It is a mental eagerness to learn, not born of gossip or nosiness, but an eagerness to story-listen, which is born of love.

LAUGH A LOT

A child asked his father, "How were people born?" So his father said, "Adam and Eve made babies, then their babies became adults and made babies, and so on." The child then went to his mother, asked her the same question and she told him, "We were monkeys then we evolved to become like we are now." The child ran back to his father and said, "You lied to me!" His father replied, "No, your mom was talking about her side of the family."



LAUGH A LOT

My friend thinks he is smart. He told me an onion is the only food that makes you cry, so I threw a coconut at his face.



Case Managers

Case Managers are your go-to contact source within the facility. Your Case Manager is there to support you, helping navigate the bureaucracy of forms and deadlines. I know how difficult it may be to communicate with Case Managers, I also encounter this problem. When I get frustrated about a lack of a timely response, I must remind myself that they are mostly overwhelmed because of being short staffed.

Although it is not our fault that Case Managers are assigned case loads that are hard to manage, we must all have a little understanding. Let's remember the old saying, "You can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar". Be respectful, patient, and non-confrontational when communicating with your Case Manager. If we all work together in the most peaceful way that we can, we will accomplish more. It will put Case Managers at ease and make them more willing to go beyond in helping you.

YOU MUST communicate with your Case Manager; they cannot read your mind. You must tell that what you need. Your Case Manager is there to support YOU. If you are eligible for work release and need a job, need housing when released or have personal issues, YOUR Case Manager is who you NEED.

Although it is your responsibility to come up with your personal home plan, sometimes you cannot do it alone due to the limits of confinement and no outside sources to help you. Visions of Tomorrow NC is here to help you; however, many Case Managers are informing me that inmates are not providing them with the information that is needed. This slows down the process for you and me in finalizing your Home Plan. It is your job to communicate the necessary information to your Case Manager.

Send your Case Manager a message requesting their assistance with the services you need. If you have followed the proper procedures in contacting your Case Manager and after a reasonable amount of time waiting, you do not hear from them, contact me. Although I do not have a hot line to your Case Manager, I will see what I can do to assist in communicating with your Case Manager.

Let's work as a Team, YOU, Your Case Manager and Me to come up with a responsive system, free from tension and anxiety. Let's spread some honey and cast away the vinegar.

PROGRAM QUESTIONNAIRE

FIRST NAME _____ LAST NAME _____

DATE OF BIRTH ____/____/____

WHAT IS YOUR COUNTY OF CONVICTION _____

WERE YOU CONVICTED OF A FELONY MISDEMEANOR

OPUS # _____

DATE OF RELEASE ____/____/____

ARE YOU A SEX OFFENDER? Yes No

CASE MANAGER _____

TELEPHONE # _____

FACILITY _____

ADDRESS _____

WHICH CITY/COUNTY IN NC WILL YOU LIVE _____

CONTACT PERSON WHERE YOU WILL RESIDE _____

RELATIONSHIP TO YOU _____

WHAT SUPPORT DO YOU NEED (please check) JOB HOUSING BOTH

ARE YOU INTERESTED IN JOB TRAINING? YES NO

DO YOU CURRENTLY HAVE A SOCIAL SECURITY CARD? YES NO

NOTE: THIS FORM MUST BE SUBMITTED AT LEAST 6 MONTHS PRIOR TO RELEASE

VISIONS OF TOMORROW NC

P.O. BOX 72822, DURHAM, NC 27722 984.227.2167

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