

SOCIAL ACTION MATTERS

A publication of the Social Action Council
Unitarian Universalists of the Cumberland Valley

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Editor of the Month: Kathy Bell kathybell@pa.net September 2007

UUCV to Co-Sponsor Sr. Helen Prejean at Dickinson College Lecture

October 4th at 7:00 p.m. - Anita Tuvin Schlecter
Auditorium

Sister Helen Prejean will be presenting the annual Fred Speaker Memorial Lecture entitled *Dead Man Walking, the Journey Continues*. Sister Helen is the author of *Dead Man Walking* which was made into an Academy Award © winning movie starring Susan Sarandon, playing the part of Sr. Helen. Her latest book, *Death of Innocents: An Eyewitness Account of Wrongful Executions*, is internationally known for its description of the torture involved in the death row experience and execution. Even as she maintains the humility of her order, Sister Helen has become a world renowned speaker, raising public awareness to the problems involved in the death penalty process. Sister Helen will be signing copies of her book after the lecture.

At the event, The Legislative Initiative Against the Death Penalty, another co-sponsor of the lecture will be awarding its annual *Justice Award* to the Pennsylvania Sisters of Saint Joseph Order and to Kathy Bell, UUCV member and prison activist. Sister Helen is a member of the Sister of St. Joseph Order.

Carlisle Harvest of the Arts Festival Saturday, October 13, 2007

For the first time, sponsored by the Social Action Council, UUCV will be an exhibitor at Carlisle's only Fall Festival. This provides the opportunity to promote UUCV as a strong and thriving liberal faith community in the Cumberland Valley and its Social Action Initiatives. UUCV artisans are encouraged to contribute original artwork of any kind for sale. All proceeds of these items will go to UUCV. Fifty percent will go to support the general fund and fifty percent will go to support the work of the Social Action Council. Items that are not sold at the Festival will go to the Auction for sale or bidding.

Additionally, the women incarcerated at SCI Muncy and at Cumberland County Prison have been invited to submit their creations for sale. One hundred percent of the proceeds of their sale will go to the women who made the creations.

Small Group Ministries are encouraged to join the Last Wednesday Small Group in selecting this project as your service project. You may contribute your creations for sale; assist in collection, sorting and packing the items the week before the festival; owners of large vehicles can help with transportation to and from the Festival. Persons able to set up and tear down the exhibit are needed as are persons to staff the booth through the day.

Anyone interested in supporting this effort should contact: kathybell@pa.net

Correctional Justice Initiative

Kathy Bell, Coordinator

The impact of the CJI on our congregation, the women at SCI Muncy and now Cumberland County Prison has exceeded all expectations. With financial sponsorship of UUCV member Margaret Jacobs, packets containing the Sunday sermons, readings and hymns of two services have been mailed each month this year to close to 75 incarcerated women. Ongoing contributions have enabled the CJI to respond to each request for financial assistance from an indigent inmate so far in 2007 with a money order of \$30-50 money order while also adding that inmate to the Sunday Packets mailing list. The August Packet mailing also included greeting cards from the younger children that were created during a summer Sunday RE session; a copy of the older children's Credo Statements; and flyers for Carlisle's Harvest Festival inviting the women's submission of artwork. (See Harvest Festival for more info.)

As the CJI Coordinator I have the privilege to read first hand each letter sent to UUCV, to understand the power of UUCV's care and periodic financial assistance in the women's lives. The women write frequently how the packet and/or the money order arrives to them just when they had lost hope that anyone cared or that they matter. Printed later are thank you notes and cards received. Please take the time to read each one so that you can fully appreciate the impact that our initiative has on the women.

A request for persons to serve as Pennsylvania Prison Society Official Visitors at Cumberland County Prison

resulted in Jon Tarrant and R.J. Phelps volunteering. Their Prison Society applications are in process and their mentoring will start soon.

NEEDED: Assistance is still needed to prepare the mailing of the Sunday Packets each month. Little skill is needed, just about two hours of your time at your convenience to help collate, pack and address the envelopes. Perhaps this is a project made for an older child in your family.

CJI funds recently paid the remaining fines of a terminally ill inmate at Muncy so that she can be released to a nursing home to live out her days in freedom instead of the prison's infirmary. She owed \$47.00 in fines.

Individual UUCV contributions to the CJI paid the cable bill for six months of the four women at SCI Muncy who are on death row. As they remain in their room (9'x12') 23 hours of each day, their TV provides an important link to the world and companionship. Different from women in the general population, they only have rare opportunity to earn money through a work detail. The cable fee is \$15.80 per month.

NEEDED: One or two persons able to visit a female inmate at Cumberland County Prison who is pre-trial on a capital case. Visitation is on Saturday mornings 7-9 a.m. and/or Wednesday evenings for 30 minutes. Except for her 83 year old mom who lives in Gratz and who recently lost her transportation, the inmate has no other visitors. Anyone who has contacts in Gratz who could provide Saturday morning transportation for the inmate's mom, contact kathybell@pa.net

In recent months, three Muncy inmates made financial gifts to the CJI. With those funds, \$250 of yarn was contributed to the Muncy STEP Program for older inmates who crochet blankets. The following is a message received from the STEP Case Manager

To Everyone: The women in STEP want to thank you for your generous time and consideration. We are making blankets for Divine Providence Hospital's End Stage cancer patients and the yarn was needed badly. Thank again for everything. Sincerely, The women of STEP and Lisa Baird, Case Manager.

The contributions also allowed financial gifts to two indigent lifers at Muncy. The Department of Corrections does not allow inmates who have financial resources to make direct contributions to any prison program or other inmate or to purchase items for use by inmates in any program. So, the existence of UUCV's CJI allowed the inmates to help others in these very tangible ways.

Change for the World September

-- Thirty Dollars for Thirty Women --

An annual collection sponsored by UUCV's Correctional Justice Initiative to aid incarcerated women at SCI Muncy who are indigent. The Department of Corrections defines indigent as any inmate who has less than \$11. UUCV's gift allows the women to purchase soap, shampoo and other personal items from commissary. Scheduling the collection in September this year instead of December allows the women the alternative to use their \$30 to purchase raw materials to create gifts for family & friends for the holidays. As in past years, in addition to contributing coins in UUCV's offering baskets, you can sponsor an inmate with a contribution of \$30. Be sure to put \$30x30 women on the message line of your check. The generosity of UUCV's contributors in 2006 provided thirty dollars to fifty four women. Contact: Kathybell@pa.net.

Muncy Thank Yous

To write to any of the following women, simply address your envelope with their name & their inmate number to: SCI Muncy, PA 17756. You are free to use UUCV's P.O. Box 207, Boiling Springs, PA 17007 as your return address

I wanted to write you and let you know that I have received the package and money order. I wanted to thank you not only for myself yet in behalf of everyone in SCI Muncy. I really do enjoy reading the packets and thank you for everything. I will keep you in my prayers and once again thank you for every thing! God Bless. Ginia Aponte OE9454

Thank you for all you have already done for me. Leigh Anne Jones 006527

I want to thank you ever so much for your kind givings. I don't know how to thank you enough for your monies. It means a awful lot to me. After opening the envelope and receiving the \$30 I fell to my knee's and thank God for someone, hearing and doing something with my prayer of needing something and having nothing. May God bless you for your prayers and kind givings. Pray for me that I get out of prison. Linda Hayes OH3464

I wanted to write and thank you for the mailings and for the \$30. Times have been extremely rough and it certainly was appreciated and needed. Thank you again. I think it's wonderful that you have become involved in our plight and hope you will continue. We do wish you would consider a craft fair sometime in the future as a lot of women are so talented and if someone

were to buy their work, it helps them stay financially above poverty. If you said you would have a craft fair I'm quite sure you would have a huge selection. Just a suggestion of course. Thank you again for your help. Always, Kelly O'Donnell OCO215 (Editors Note: See Carlisle Fall Festival for more information on this idea)

I wanted to send a very big THANK YOU for the very generous money gift you have given! I do appreciate your kindness and really just knowing that we (women in prison) are not forgotten. Thank you also for the transcript of the excellent Happiness Sermon. I wish the entire congregation well. Special hellos to Kathy & Jeb & Jon for befriending me and give me friendship and hope. Meghan Lippiatt

This is your friend inside Muncy, Edith. My feet are fine now. I have a wisdom tooth that needs to be pulled. I'm scared. I'm learning how to write on my detail (Editor's Note: A detail is a job for which the inmate earns money. Edith had a stroke since being in Muncy) I am the only one living in the infirmary with a detail. I make 24 cents a hour. Thank you for your love. Edith Anderson 008598

(Hand crafted card) **Thinking of You -**
Thank you very much for your thoughtful and kind gift! I really appreciate it.
Larita Brown OA1270

I am writing to thank you for the generous gift that you have sent to me. You'll never truly know how much I appreciate you keeping me in your prayers. I thank you for all of the literature that you sent me. I think that it is wonderful how you reach out to many of us women who are incarcerated. It helps to show us that people still do care about us and not have forgot about us. I deeply thank you. God Bless!
Melissa Ashton OH3312

How are you today, fine I pray. This leave me doing good and I hope that you are the same. I got the letter and the money I really do thank you for helping me now. I am in a wheel chair sometimes. I can't get around that good. I wanted to thank everyone of you for your helping me today. May God bless everyone of you and keep you so strong always. Please keep on praying for me. I love you all and pray for you all the time. I like your songs that you send me. They are very good songs. I like to have them to sing and prays the Lord for He is good all the time and I love the Lord for he brang me from a mighty long way and I am glad about it now. I am 66 years old and I am still here. I do not get to see my family at all now. They are so far away from here. It's been 23 years since I saw them now but I pray that God will make a way for me to see them again in live. Love always. Jessie Grove OO7119

Thank you so much for the \$30 I received from your congregation. I really appreciate it very much. Thank you also for mailing me your Sunday worship schedule for I do miss attending church services. Though I attended Protestant Services, the Unitarian services seem similar. SCI Muncy has a prison chapel with outside attendees often but the services seem so restrictive and the inmates are herded in, checked for I.D. etc. It's the same as anyplace we go or participate in here, that any religious or spiritual moment you may feel is pushed aside. I look forward to continuing to hear from you and once again let me say thank you. Percy Gully OB5240

Thank you so very much for the bulletins, songs and prayers and money order. God Bless and keep you always. Dannielle Hadley OO8494

I thank you for the \$30 you sent to me. I appreciate the money so much. God bless you all. I read the literature you always send me and I'm inspired by the things that's said to give me even more strength to look forward to better successful living. I've written songs, storys and poetry for years, but I haven't been able to get an agent to help me get any of my writing published yet. I'm trying to make the best use of my life to accomplish my goal yet I will keep trying. I won't give up. Somehow, I know my positive thinking to believe I will one day have my goal. Thank you for the song sheets too, I like them. I share them with my friends. I meditate for continued peace and blessings for your beautiful members of the UUCV. Peace, joy and abundance always be yours in blessings. Love always, Frances Haskins 004756

I do hope that this letter find you to be alright and also in the best of health and of spirits, as for myself I am well and alright. Each letter and packet in which I receive from you seems to make my day run a little bit more smoother and takes away my pain - physical and emotional. Like there was this day where I was sitting upstairs in my room, I was really sad cuz I was thinking about my mom and dad - they are deceased now. Well mail came at 4:30 but it did not get passed out to us until 5:15. Anyway, I received a manila envelope from you all. I immediately sat down and opened it, in it were these pamphlets one with the Eight Steps Towards Happiness & Satisfaction in Life, #6 lifted my spirits. It reads "Invest time and energy in friends & family, this one was made for me and sent especially for me since I no longer have any parents. I truly thank you for all that you sent to me. I don't feel so alone anymore, ya know? My blessings are abundant, and I am grateful for them and for the other ones to come. Thank you so very much UUCV. Please write back soon or when you can. God Bless you! P.S. Again, thank you! Send More Packets Soon! Lizetta Lee Haynes OB5295

My name is Lateefah Johnson. I am an inmate at SCI Muncy. I am writing to you all to say thank you for your prayers and support. I don't write often but I felt the need to let you all

know that receiving the packets from you all every month have helped to lift my spirits. Lateefah Johnson OF595

My name is Carol King and I am a woman on Death Row at SCI Muncy and I have been here for 13 years. Thank you so very much for the packets that you sent us. We always enjoy them. I recently lost my mother and I would also ask your members for prayers at this time. Thank you. Yours truly Carol King OC7210

Hello! I hope you all are well and in good spirits. Thanks! you so much for the money you sent. It will help me so much! I am so grateful for your kindness, support and prayers. I feel very blessed and fortunate. Things are going well here (Ed.Note: Cumberland County Prison) I am enjoying the sense of freedom I have now. I thank the Lord each day for this opportunity and am making the most of every hour and every minute. His love sustains me through some of the difficult times. At night I feel kind of lonely, out of place at times. Please pray for me, that I am able to endure and overcome these times. My deepest thanks again. God Bless you all! Love & prayers Beth Markman (Ed.Note: Beth's capital conviction & death sentence was overturned and she awaits a new trial at Cumberland County Prison)

Thoughtful friends – I continue to need and appreciate your monthly spiritual packets. I was especially helped by the past one on peace and New Years Prayer by Norbert Capet (Ed Note: Singing the Living Tradition). Thank you for the \$30. I am able to support myself here at Muncy as I do not smoke or crave many commissary food items. Actually I had just saved some money to renew two magazine subscriptions, National Geographic and Arts & Antiques. I have strong interests in art and all of nature so the \$30 covered the renewal as I order from a discount publishing house. It is my feeling and belief that I am provided with housing and three meals a day plus the clothes I wear so I truly do not “need” many other essential items. So many in the world barely get by on so,so much less so please if you have funds to mail, sent it to those in dire situations. Thank you so for your on-going literature and thoughts of me. May the beauty of this world bring peace to all Namaste Gay Morley OB1262

Thank you so much for your generosity. The money you sent was a very big help to me. I genuinely appreciate being thought of. I also enjoy the information that was sent along. Especially, the prayer for the new year. I welcome any religious material you have to send. Once again thank you and God Bless. Marian Roland OK4952

Hand crafted card: Just a little note to say **THANK YOU** in so many ways! You're kindness is greatly appreciated! Yours truly, Shonda Dee Walter OJ8227

Thank all of you and especially Jesus. It was a blessing at the RIGHT time. I read your songs and praises. I also put the memo about the ARTS FESTIVAL out on my unit. I get out 9/1/08. I would love to come to you church and services. And I would love to give back in anyway that I could. God Bless. Joyce Mazza OJ8465

Hi, I'm writing to thank you so very much. The money you had sent helped me in more ways then you will know. The card I received in my packet was from a boy named Michael. This touched me in many ways, my own son's name is Michael. I'm told I will be here at Muncy for six more months to complete a program. While in this program, I'm no longer able to work. If there is any way in the future that you can help me out I do thank you from my heart. I do look forward to hear from you. Tabnya Billet OM1191

I received the package and the money order. Thank you so very much. It all came at a very trying time in my life. I seem to be at a point of hopelessness and frustrations at every turn. Just when I thought no one was out there and God couldn't be listening I received this literature. For the past year I've been trying medication for HIV none which seem to be working – trying to get help with my legal work and non contact with my family or son. It feels like its just more than I can bear. I don't know what the future may hold. I do want you to know you are doing good work. May God Bless you and the UUCV. Frances Jacobs OH1527

UUCV GLBT Initiative

Alan Franklin, Coordinator

This year's edition of Pridefest went off on Saturday, July 28, almost flawlessly. Perfect weather, the Parade bigger and better than ever, UUs making an even more impressive showing than in the past, and the Biblical imprecation-shouting protestors were, if anything, less in evidence than before. The best thing, perhaps, was that this year 6 UU churches combined their efforts - Harrisburg, Boiling Springs, Gettysburg, York, Lancaster and Reading. We marched together in the Parade, resplendent in our blue Tshirts with the big chalice on the front and our church's name on the sleeve, with somewhere around half a hundred of us and a band from Harrisburg making a brave show. We combined also to share a large booth with plenty of space for our displays. We at UUCV set out Kathy Bell's Correctional Justice Initiative trifold from the SAC table in our Social Hall. Our UUCV contingent in the Parade (5 people)

was rather smaller than in the past, but others of us worked at Pridefest in various capacities. And a fine time was had by all!

To cement this growing spirit of contact and cooperation among these six area UU churches we are planning what we will call a "Six Church 'Picnic'" here at UUCV in November or early December. We will invite those folks from each of the other 5 churches concerned with GLBT issues to come share a Service with us, have a simple repast after the Social Hour, and spend some time together discussing issues and enjoying some general schmoozing. If UUCVers who would like to join in hosting these folks who want to take part it would be most marvelous. You're invited! More later as the details develop.

There is little to report yet on the effort to get a local ordinance passed in Carlisle that would supplement the State Human Relations Act, protecting GLBT folk in their jobs, housing, and public accommodations as the Act does not. Carlisle Mayor Kirk Wilson asked for the opportunity to obtain a study of the potential impact of this ordinance on Carlisle, mainly in terms of cost, and other problems Council members might see with it. Michael Strong, a graduate student at Shippensburg U., is currently doing the work and is expected to complete his report early in the Fall. We will then review the report before asking the Council to proceed with adoption of the ordinance, attempting to meet what objections by Council members appear in it.

At the State level, bills have now been introduced in both the House and Senate to amend the Human Relations Act so as to prohibit discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity and expression. These bills have been introduced in the legislature numerous times before, to no avail, but with the winds of political change blowing there is more hope this year than ever. The House bill has 75 sponsor, the Senate bill 22. None of our Representatives or Senators are among them. We have work to do!

And this year an excellent opportunity is a-building. Efforts are now being made to develop a State-wide advocacy organization among all the UU churches in the State, to be called UUPLAN (Unitarian Universalist Pennsylvania Legislative Advocacy Network). There will be regional subdivisions, East, West, and hopefully Central PA. One of the issue areas UUPLAN will be concerned with is "Lesbian and Gay Rights", and we will be organizing our representation. An organizational meeting will be held in Harrisburg on Saturday, Sept. 29. Beyond that, it seems very likely a lobby day will be arranged this Fall, when volunteers will go to visit Senators and Representatives in Harrisburg to persuade them to back the amendments to the Human Relations Act. It will be a time for us to be making personal visits and writing letters. Stay tuned!
Alan Franklin, Coordinator, GLBT Justice Initiative

MARCH IN WASHINGTON – George Fohs

September 15, 2007

A.N.S.W.E.R. Coalition is organizing an anti-war protest in Washington DC timed to coincide with the report by General Petraeus on the "Surge" in Iraq. See http://www.pephost.org/site/PageServer?pagename=S15_homepage. Your Social Action Council is organizing a UUCV group to attend, and is coordinating activities with other groups in our area. We must have a count by Sunday, August 19 to determine whether \$25 per person bus transportation is feasible. Sign-up at the SAC table! If you cannot attend the service, contact George Fohs at (717) 249-6106 or gfohs@pa.net. Please indicate whether you want to: ride the bus (if available); provide transportation; or get a ride. Limited sponsorships for children's bus fees may be available.

Bursary Project

Priscilla Laws, Coordinator

Last December and January UUCV raised funds to support a year of schools for 54 girls from Zambezia – a north central province in Mozambique. Recently Karen Butt, a Canadian Missionary who manages the Bursary Project, reported that 53 girls who are currently attending schools in Namarroi town – the administrative headquarters for the province. Although most of these bolseiras (bursary girls) are attending grades 6,7,8, several girls are in grades 9 and 10. In addition there are 12 more girls in their second year at the Nicodala Teachers College near Quelimane where Karen and Bill Butt manage several projects for the Christian Council of Mozambique.

Karen reports that she has been able to stretch our contributions so that we are also providing partial support for 50 more girls attending school in Molumbo. This community is the largest and most northern of the four villages that our bolseiras (bursary girls) come from. It has a newly formed grade 8 class and next year grade 9 will be offered. The girls in the Molumbo area who are currently in grade 8 will no longer need to go to Namarroi town to study until they are ready to enroll in 10th grade. So the number of

girls coming from smaller villages in the region to stay at the Molumbo lar (residence) there is growing. Our extra bursary funds help provide food and school supplies for some of these girls, and also provides some of the salary for a lar manager and guard. Since UUCV's extra bolseira funds help support the Molumbo lar, Karen thinks we should add these girls to the list of students UUCV is supporting. So there are currently 115 girls being supported fully or partially thanks to your help.

Virginia Jackson, UUCV member is traveling with me to Mozambique in mid-September to help review the project. We'll be with Karen Butt and her helper Adelia Raul for a full week between September 13th and 20th. We are slated to hang out with the girls in Namarroi over a weekend, present UUCV's CWTF August contribution to the congregants at La Igreja Metodista, visit with bolseira parents in several of the smaller villages, and visit the lar in Molumbo which houses a large group bolseiras from surrounding villages. Finally, on our drive back to the City of Quelimane from Namarroi we'll stop off and see the group of 12 future teachers who are finishing their two-year program in Nicodala.

Do Good, Feel Good

By Lisa Farino for MSN Health & Fitness

Submitted by Dee Lauderbaugh

Few of us are immune to the frustrations and challenges of daily life—family problems, conflicts at work, illness, stress over money. When we get depressed or anxious, experts may recommend pharmaceuticals or therapy. But a newly emerging school of thought suggests that a simple, age-old principle may be part of both the prevention and the cure: Help others to help yourself. There's no shortage of research showing that people who give time, money, or support to others are more likely to be happy and satisfied with their lives—and less likely to be depressed. Could helping others be the key to weathering the inevitable storms of life?

Feel-good research

Carolyn Schwartz, a research professor at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, didn't start out looking at the value of helping others. Instead, she wanted to see if receiving monthly peer-support phone calls from fellow multiple sclerosis sufferers would benefit others with the disease. But over time, a surprising trend emerged. While those receiving support appeared to

gain some mild benefit, the real beneficiaries were those lending a supportive ear. In fact, those who offered support experienced dramatic improvements in their quality of life—several times more so than those they were helping.

The benefits of giving aren't limited to those who are ill. When Schwartz later looked at more than 2,000 mostly healthy Presbyterian church-goers across the nation, she found that those who helped others were significantly happier and less depressed than those who didn't.

This phenomenon is nothing new. Paul Wink and Michele Dillon found a similar pattern when they looked at data collected every decade on a group of San Francisco Bay Area residents beginning in the 1930s. Those who volunteered and engaged in other forms of giving when they were adolescents were much less likely to become depressed, even as they got older. New research suggests there may be a biochemical explanation for the positive emotions associated with doing good. In a recent study published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, participants' brains were monitored by MRI scans while they made decisions about donating part of their research payment to charitable organizations. When participants chose to donate money, the brain's mesolimbic system was activated, the same part of the brain that's activated in response to monetary rewards, sex, and other positive stimuli. Choosing to donate also activated the brain's subgenual area, the part of the brain that produces feel-good chemicals, like oxytocin, that promote social bonding.

Why doing good works

These results may seem surprising, especially since our culture tends to associate happiness with *getting* something. Why should we humans be programmed to respond so positively to giving?

“As Darwin noted, group selection played a strong rule in human evolution. If something like helping benefits the group, it will be associated with pleasure and happiness,” explains Stephen Post, Ph.D., a research professor of bioethics at Case Western Reserve University who co-authored the book *Why Good Things Happen to Good People* with Jill Neimark.

While evolution may have primed us to feel good from giving, it may not be the only reason helping others makes us feel better. Since depression, anxiety and stress involve a high degree of focus on the self,

focusing on the needs of others literally helps shift our thinking.

“When you’re experiencing compassion, benevolence, and kindness, they push aside the negative emotions,” says Post. “One of the best ways to overcome stress is to do something to help someone else.”

Even better, feeling good and doing good can combine to create a positive feedback loop, where doing good helps us to feel good and feeling good also makes us more likely to do good.

“Numerous studies have found that happy people are more helpful,” says Dr. David Myers, a social psychologist at Hope College and author of *The Pursuit of Happiness*. “Those who’ve just found money in a phone booth are more likely to help a passerby with dropped papers. Those who feel successful are more likely to volunteer as a tutor.”

When giving isn’t good

While doing good is generally good for the doer, Post stresses that there are two important caveats. First, the caregiver can’t be overwhelmed. There’s ample research showing negative mental and physical consequences for givers who are overburdened and stressed by their duties—or who do so much they don’t have time to have fun and take care of themselves.

In addition, while helping others can be a great antidote to the mild depression, stress, and anxiety that is a normal part of the ups and downs daily life, Post emphasizes that it’s not a cure for severe depression. “If you are clinically depressed, you need professional help,” Post says.

But for people who aren’t severely depressed and who give within their limits, helping others can bring joy and happiness—and better health and longevity too.

Some people wonder if these positive benefits make helping others an ultimately selfish act. “If the warm glow and ‘helper’s high’ that people experience when they help others is selfish, then we need more of this kind of selfishness,” says Post.

How to help others—and yourself

Incorporating kindness into your daily life isn’t difficult. Here are five easy things you can do to help others—and yourself:

- **Volunteer.** Research shows that people who volunteer just two hours per week (about 100 hours per year) have better physical health and are less depressed. To find volunteer opportunities in your area,

visit [Volunteer March](#) or contact your local church or school.

- **Informally offer help to family, friends, and neighbors.** Lend a needed tool, bring dinner to someone who’s sick, feed pets for neighbors on vacation, or offer a ride to someone who lacks a car.
- **Donate.** It doesn’t have to be a lot of money. Toss change into coffee cans at cash registers or support local organizations by buying a raffle ticket. Look for opportunities to give within your means. You’ll help make the world a better place and make yourself feel better too.
- **Listen.** Sometimes all others need is someone to lend a sympathetic ear to make them feel heard, cared for and loved.
- **Make other people (and yourself) smile.** The easiest way to make other people happy is to act happy yourself, even if it’s not how you feel. “Sometimes we can act ourselves into a way of thinking,” says Myers. “So like the old song says, ‘Put on a happy face.’ Talk as if you have self-esteem and are outgoing and optimistic. Going through the motions can awaken the emotions.” *Lisa Farino is a freelance writer based in Seattle and a regular contributor to MSN Health & Fitness.*

Pennsylvania Prison Society – Advocating for One Life—Kathy Bell, PPS Official Visitor

On June 25th I received a call from Liz Spikol of the Pennsylvania Prison Society headquarters asking that I assist a daughter of a woman named Vickie who was an inmate at Muncy and was dying. Liz reported that the family had been trying to gain her release for 2 months without success. I never learned how the daughter, Cassandra got to the Prison Society but that would be interesting to know.

Back Story: Vickie had been at Muncy just a matter of months, arrived there sick on a retail theft conviction, had surgery soon after arrival where she learned her condition was terminal. Vickie wrote to the superintendent asking about compassionate leave and was told that PA had none and that she should be in contact with her attorney and the judge. Vickie herself never wrote to her attorney asking about the potential of a medical release - which becomes critical to her story. Instead, her family began a writing campaign to her judge. Knowing the judge could do nothing without a petition, the judge's clerk

simply forwarded the letters to Vickie's defense attorney, Berks County Assistant Public Defender. But, the clerk never phoned any of the writers to tell them the judge could do nothing without a petition - another important piece in the story. So more and more people wrote the judge. Having heard nothing directly from Vickie asking that he file a medical petition on her behalf, her attorney did nothing with the letters nor did he call any of the writers as he believed it was a violation of her confidentiality - another important piece of the story. So, that was the status when I stepped into the puzzle. Many people writing letters, getting no response, nothing legally being initiated for her and Vickie continuing to decline.

Monday: I talk to Cassandra that afternoon. She gave me the judge's name and phone number. First, I phoned Muncy and spoke with the superintendent to confirm that Vickie's condition was as critical as Cassandra described. The superintendent said her condition was grave. The prison had extended visiting privileges for family members so that they could visit as their schedule allowed and assigned two inmate "hospice" workers to be with her around the clock - working 12 hour shifts. These hospice workers were part of a program implemented by PPS's Phyllis Taylor in 2002. I believe there were 12 who completed the course but I don't know how many remain at Muncy.

I phoned the Judge's office, spoke with his clerk found that the judge was on vacation for the week and the need for a petition from her attorney before anything could happen. The clerk gave me the public defender's private number and I called him. He said he needed a document directly from Vickie along with medical records to confirm her terminal condition. I questioned her ability to write such a letter and said I would get back to him.

I phoned the superintendent again with the new information. She put me on hold and learned that at that moment Vickie was aware, a family member was visiting who would assist Vickie in writing the letter and signing the release of information authorizations. The infirmary administrator was also on vacation and the superintendent said she would coordinate the preparation of a letter etc. from the Muncy medical doctor to be faxed to the public defender.

I phoned Cassandra and updated her on my progress and advised her that she needed to contact a local (Reading) hospice program for an

intake interview as the superintendent said that Vickie would need professional care if/when the judge signed the petition. The Superintendent also said that Muncy could not "hold" Vickie once they received a signed petition.

Tuesday: I visited Muncy on a regularly scheduled date and included Vickie my visit list. I saw her in the infirmary and met her hospice worker. She had just received her mid-day medication and seemed not aware of my presence. Regardless, I spoke to her informing her of the effort that was taking place to gain her release. Her hospice worker had been collecting names & phone numbers of visiting family members and said she would be in contact with them about the efforts. I repeatedly encouraged Vickie to hang-on so that she could be released to her family.

Before leaving the infirmary, I phoned the superintendent's office and asked that a good friend of Vickie's, also at Muncy for whom she had been asking that morning, could visit. The inmate had put in a regular request but had not yet heard anything. The secretary said she would expedite the visit authorization. I also phoned Keith McConnell to confirm that he had received the fax request from Vickie and her medical information which he had. If not, I was ready to hand carry them myself. I also gave him my assessment of her condition and reported that I didn't think we had much time. He reported the petition was almost ready and would be presented to an "emergency" judge because of her Judge's absence and that I didn't think we had until his return on Monday to wait.

Wednesday: I spoke with Superintendent who said Vickie remained alive and seemed to be rallying apparently from the news of her potential release. I spoke to Vickie's brother-in-law (who answered Cassandra's phone) to confirm that Cassandra had hooked up with a hospice program. I also said that we might need a courier to transport the signed petition from Reading to Muncy or Camp Hill where DOC legal is located. He agreed to follow-up on those tasks. Late afternoon I got a call from the public defender. The emergency judge had denied the petition. At this point, I was devastated as I thought that all we had to do was keep her alive and get the petition to the judge and the job would be done. I asked the public defender what happened next. He said he was returning in the a.m. to her Judge's clerk as it might be possible to reach him on vacation. If not, he was going to another judge for second consideration of the petition.

I phoned the superintendent with the news. She said she doubted that she could accept a petition brought by a family member. She said she thought it had to come in regular mail, overnight delivery or by a sheriff but she would confirm with DOC legal. I phoned Cassandra - got the brother-in-law and gave him the news. The hospice services were lined up. But, transporting Vickie from Muncy to Reading was in limbo as she had no medical insurance and no ambulance service had agreed to transport her that distance without guarantee of payment.

Thursday: Vickie remained alive and worsening. The public defender phoned and said that he got the petition signed by a third judge, that he needed to return to the first judge to vacate his denial and he would send the signed petition by overnight mail with delivery by 10 a.m. Phoned the brother-in-law with update. Everyone hoping that Vickie can hold on.

Friday: 7:30 a.m. received a call from the Superintendent that she had a signed petition and Vickie could be released. Apparently, she learned from DOC legal that they have a secure fax line and they received the signed petition which was good as a hard copy to the prison. As the daughters hadn't expected this news, they were at work and would be off shift at 3:00 p.m. Learned from brother-in-law that they could not get an ambulance. Spoke to Superintendent again about possibility of transporting her in a private vehicle. She said that the infirmary could prepare some comfort items for Vickie for the trip and thought it more important that she leave the prison even if not in the most desired method. Told her the daughters would be going to Muncy right from work and expected to arrive around 6:00 p.m. At 8:30 p.m. got a call from the brother-in-law who had heard from the prison that the daughters had not yet arrived. Everyone is worried about them and about the possibility of Vickie not holding on. By this time, we all agreed that even if Vickie died in the parking lot of the prison or at a rest stop of the turnpike in her daughters' arms, it would be a victory of our efforts.

Saturday: 9:30 a.m. received a call from Cassandra, Vickie's daughter who said that Vickie was home at Casandra's sister's home, with hospice delivering equipment at 10:00 a.m. Friday night, they had encountered a traffic tie-up on the highway and didn't get to the prison until 10 p.m. She held her mom in her arms in the back seat during the trip home fully expecting her to expire during the trip. Both Cassandra and her sister are certified nursing

assistants and expected to be their mom's primary caregivers for the time they had with her. I phoned the infirmary at Muncy to let them know that Vickie had arrived home and asked that they pass the word to the staff and other inmates living at the infirmary who were all aware of the drama.

Postscript: Vickie lived 2 1/2 weeks in her family's care before she died - far longer than anyone expected her to survive if she had remained at Muncy. She had periodic times of awareness and knew that she was home.

The superintendent and I agreed that as a consequence of our experience with Vickie's case that Muncy needed to develop a process with the assistance of its Pennsylvania Prison Society team at Muncy to aid other women like Vickie to seek release from prison because of their medical condition. We mutually agreed that we need not wait until an inmate was actively dieing to initiate the process. We are now collaborating on the development of the process and the identification of the women who will be targeted for the initiative. This will be Vickie's legacy.

Since "Vickie's Week", A group of less than 10 women has been identified to be in the first group of this freedom initiative. Two are not competent to know the efforts being made to aid their release from prison but four women though very ill with a fatal prognosis are aware that they may have the opportunity to live their remaining days in freedom. It doesn't get much better than this....

UUCV's Social Action Council

Kathy Bell – *Correctional Justice Initiative*

Kay Echo

Alan Franklin – *GLBT Initiative*

Julie Ham

Priscilla Laws – *Mozambique Initiative*

Harold Piety

John Tarrant

Meetings 2nd Tuesday of each month at Priscilla Laws' home