



## Welcome



It is with great pleasure that I welcome you to the first issue of *CORRvolunteer*, the quarterly newsletter for the Department's valued volunteers.

Since my letter to you all in early March, I have been greatly encouraged by the number of responses we have received from volunteers who provide a wide range of cultural, recreational and spiritual activities and support to prisoners and their whanau. In particular, many of our volunteers have related inspirational stories of the valuable work they have been involved with – stories that too often, perhaps, do not reach the wider audience they deserve.

It is my hope that the introduction of *CORRvolunteer* will help to promote a wider knowledge and appreciation of these positive stories that are part of the very fabric of prison life. I hope you

enjoy reading some of the personal stories from our volunteers in this inaugural issue.

This forum will also give us the opportunity to keep you up to date with progress of the review of volunteer policy and ensure that you are given the opportunity to engage in the review process.

May I take this opportunity to thank you all for the invaluable work you carry out in partnership with the Department.

## Contact Us

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Contact details for your Regional  
Volunteer Coordinator can be found  
on the last page.

***“You make a living by what you  
get. You make a life by what you  
give” Winston Churchill***

**Please remember to contact us straight away should you change address/phone number or should your circumstances change**

## Salute to a Southern Star

Margaret Morton, a PFNZ-sponsored volunteer in Christchurch Prison has special words of praise for South Island Regional Volunteer Coordinator Renee Jones. Margaret, who has recently been involved in tutoring a 'Creative Writing' programme, says Renee "exudes enthusiasm and is always interested in the success or failure of the sessions." She always has a smile and a greeting together with an optimistic approach which is admirable in the challenging environment of a prison.

## Literacy volunteering

Paul Dempsey is a volunteer who teaches literacy to the prisoners at the Youth Unit at Christchurch Prison. Paul has himself benefited from the work of volunteers earlier in his life. "It was volunteers that showed me the beauty of reading and writing and helped me to discover the self-esteem I never knew I had," he says. Paul stresses the importance of keeping sessions short when teaching adults. "We normally do twenty minutes then break to play a board game."

Although he is a shift-worker, often finishing at 6am, he never misses one of his tutorials at the prison and is considering extending his volunteering hours. "It is truly rewarding," he says. "I love it!"



## One volunteer's experience

I have recently been involved with Christchurch men's prison where I met prisoners from different cultures, faiths and backgrounds. One man in particular was very challenging.

He appeared aggressive and felt that no-one listened to him. I explained that my duty was to help and support him. I asked him to think about his situation and how he can move on from this. Eventually he came to the conclusion that he would contribute to activities with the other prisoners. I reminded him to be close to God and He will help him to overcome his weaknesses.

I planned a long term programme for him and pointed out some ideas and assignments to carry out. Also I asked him to write down comments to keep him busy until the next visit.

I believe that offenders are part of our community, they just need the right rehabilitation programme. I believe as a result of our communication, that I gained his trust and he had a list of questions to discuss with me at every visit.

After almost a year of visiting him and constant improvements, he is now looking forward to his new life after prison. Becoming a prison volunteer added valuable experience to my life.

*Thanks to Ibrahim Abdelhalim*

- More than **one million New Zealanders** are actively involved in volunteer work, both informally within their communities and through the 60,000 plus organisations that make up the community and voluntary sector.

## Waikeria prisoners benefit from Sathya Sai Service

Prisoners at Waikeria Prison in Te Awamutu benefit from monthly visits by the Sathya Sai Service, an organisation founded in the 1960s to enable its members to undertake service activities as a means to spiritual advancement.

The service in Waikeria has been delivered by volunteers since 2004, following a successful pilot programme in Auckland, where positive changes in prisoner behaviour and softening of attitudes were noted.

The programme consists of prayers, the sharing of experiences and yoga relaxation exercises. The underlying messages are of peace and happiness and being happy and making others happy.

## Sober reflection from Rolleston Prison

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) provides invaluable support to prisoners across New Zealand. AA Support Worker, Daniel Corry, describes a typical Monday evening visit to Rolleston Prison.

We have five meetings at Rolleston Prison on a Monday evening. I check my pockets are clean, no cell phone etc, we brief the gate staff about the purpose of our visit, how long we will be there for and sign in. We are designated a wing and taken to the room set aside for our meeting and wait for the prisoners to join us.

I usually pray for the meeting that night, for the people that attend and that we will get out of it what we are meant to.

*The Department actively engages with individuals and volunteer organisations to develop relationships, address concerns and remove barriers to encourage the involvement of more volunteers in prisons. As a result, the number of registered volunteers has grown from approximately 1,500 to 2,900 volunteers. The Department is continuing to proactively seek opportunities to increase this growth.*

Extract from Department of Corrections  
Annual Report 1 July 2005 – 30 June  
2006

Years ago, we used to take biscuits, smokes etc. Once that stopped, we found that those prisoners who attend are the ones who really want to.

Drug and alcohol addiction affect many people and being able to talk about our addictions and face them on a day-to-day basis gives hope.

We aim to change mindsets and plant affirmations (“I am a good person, I will cope when I finish my time”). Another priority is encouraging prisoners to get support on the outside, so that they may choose to attend a meeting instead of going to the pub. How many people are released from prison on Friday, go meet their mates at the pub and then are back in trouble by Monday? The cycle continues until you achieve ACCEPTANCE – I cannot drink, I cannot take drugs, I will have to make changes, I must get myself support, I want a good life sober, and I want to be there for my family.

If they make the right choices, get the support, work the programme, chances are they will achieve victory – a clean and sober life.

## Am I a Volunteer?

Evelyn Riddell from Nga Peka Matauranga O Waitaha, asks the questions...

A volunteer.

Am I a volunteer?

What is a volunteer?

If it someone who sees a need in a certain area and goes all out to get something done about it, then I am a volunteer.

If it is spending hours working with others to achieve a goal, then I am a volunteer.

If it is someone who, after being told it can't be done but then finds a way to do it, then I am a volunteer.

However, I do not consider myself a volunteer.

In fact, I don't think I even like the word!

I am just an ordinary person giving a helping hand when and where it is needed, like many other people.

Have I experienced good practices?

What defines a good practice?

Is good practice being polite and friendly? Then I have experienced good practice.

Is good practice trying to improve things and showing that you care?

Then I have experienced good practice.

Is good practice being there for someone, no matter what the situation?

Then I have experienced good practice.

## Review of volunteer policy – progress report

As you will no doubt be aware, the Department's Policy on Volunteers is currently the subject of a comprehensive review.

Since the current policy was implemented back in 2004, there has been a remarkable growth in volunteer numbers, with nearly 3,000 registered volunteers now listed on the Department's database. During 2006/2007, the Department signalled its commitment to developing and maintaining a strong and progressive volunteer strategy in prisons, as part of the goal of meeting the rehabilitative and reintegrative needs of prisoners, by appointing a number of Regional Volunteer Coordinators and myself as National Advisor: Volunteers. With the new positions in place, it was considered timely to review all aspects of the current policy, engaging with all key stakeholders, both internally and externally, as part of the process.

The policy review is now well underway, with initial consultations having taken place with a number of stakeholder groups. Opportunities are being made available for individual volunteers to make their views known on a number of key issues.

On page 5 you will find an invitation to give your views on the way the Department contributes to the expenses incurred as a volunteer.

In the meantime, your views on any aspect of your prison volunteering, whether positive or negative, can be e mailed to [volunteering@corrections.govt.nz](mailto:volunteering@corrections.govt.nz) or posted to me at;

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## Petrol Vouchers – your views?

The Department of Corrections recognises that volunteers inevitably incur some out of pocket expenses, particularly in relation to transport, and so currently offer active volunteers \$100 worth of petrol vouchers every year. Volunteers who complete at least six prison visits in the preceding twelve months are eligible to receive these vouchers. Where a volunteer operates in more than one region, only one allowance of \$100 is payable per annum.

The current system is valued by many volunteers, particularly those whose visiting activities involve travelling substantial distances, but has a number of inherent difficulties. For example;

- The allowance does not reflect actual expenses incurred and is, in fact, payable to volunteers irrespective of whether they drive or even own a car;
- Many volunteers choose not to claim the vouchers at all;
- According to IRD guidelines, this allowance is almost certainly taxable;
- The current system can be complicated to administer and audit.

Your views on the value, fairness and appropriateness of the current petrol voucher system are invited. We would be interested too in receiving your views on possible alternatives. You can e mail your thoughts on this issue to [volunteering@corrections.govt.nz](mailto:volunteering@corrections.govt.nz) or by post to;

Russell Underwood  
National Advisor: Volunteers  
Department of Corrections  
Private Bag 1206  
WELLINGTON 6140

Please take this opportunity to make your views known and inform this important policy issue.

## Seeking inspiration from Stroppy the Cow!

Claire Richardson from the Waikato Baptist Church in Te Awamutu draws on her talent for poetry in communicating positive messages to the prisoners she visits in Waikeria Prison. Her poem, 'Stroppy the Cow', was written to communicate the message that there is always a way to make a change for the better in life. Says Claire, "It is a matter of personal choice. Once it is known that there is a better way, we all have the power to choose. When something significant happens in my life, I like to write a poem. I was able to read my 'Stroppy' poem to the guys in a group in Waikeria as an example of change from bad to good".

An extract from 'Stroppy – The Cow with a Difference' by Claire Richardson is reproduced below.

She gave us five years  
In which she had no fears  
The name 'Stroppy' just stuck  
But how changed was our luck  
When her nature did change  
If we could but arrange  
A new name for her now  
It would have to be 'Peace'  
Oh, what change in a cow!  
And she now has her release  
From her life on our farm

She is now laid to rest  
Far from trouble and harm  
The sun sets in the West  
Stroppy's memory lives on  
Even though she has gone

She stood out in the herd  
Those black spots on the white  
The markings I preferred  
To the Friesian alright  
Stroppy out on her own  
A shining example  
She had certainly grown  
And we now need to sample  
A lesson from this cow  
An instruction on 'how'  
We can all make a change  
In our lives here and now.

## Pathway to Volunteering

Evelyn Riddell from Nga Peka Matauranga O Waitaha recounts her pathway to prison volunteering:

My pathway began over 20 years ago when I became the administrator for several government training programmes. Some of these programmes included Te Reo, Tikanga and Maori Performing Arts (Kapahaka).

It was clear that a lot of our trainees (as they were called then) were in trouble with the authorities and facing gaol terms. It was a common occurrence to see a blue uniform arriving at the top of our first storey premises, while at the same time seeing a trainee disappearing down the fire escape at the rear of the premises!

It was one of those trainees, who after going to prison, requested I visit him. After a while, we identified a big need for programmes within the

prisons where Maori prisoners could identify with their heritage through learning Te Reo, Tikanga and Kapahaka. This was arranged, with programmes being delivered to up to 40 prisoners in the old visiting room in Paparua.

For the first couple of years this programme was delivered by volunteers. Many of the prisoners had no or limited knowledge of identity, whakapapa or te reo, but were eager to learn.

Over the years we have faced many challenges in providing these services. I still spend many hours of my time in meetings, organising and planning, to ensure that programmes are being delivered, but I don't consider myself a volunteer. Just a person who identified a need and feels that all Maori prisoners should have a right to their heritage and te reo and is passionate about getting it done well.

The rewards are many. For example, seeing the satisfaction and pride in the faces of prisoners when they take part in a Powhiri, stand to Whaikorero, Mihi in te reo or perform Kapahaka. The tikanga and respect they show when manuhiri are present and their stance when they stand to speak. But particularly, changes in direction and pathways taken by the prisoners upon release.

### An invitation

You are warmly invited to send in your personal accounts of 'good practice' in your prison volunteering activities. A selection will be published in future issues.

## Regional Volunteer Coordinators

The Department of Corrections' Regional Volunteer Coordinators (RVCs) are responsible for the overall coordination of volunteer engagement, training, administration and monitoring and are your first point of contact for all local issues. The RVCs are:

Jeanette Voyce (Rimutaka/Arohata/Wellington)

Tel: (04) 529 0921 [jeanette.voyce@corrections.govt.nz](mailto:jeanette.voyce@corrections.govt.nz)

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### **Do you volunteer in Wellington, Rimutaka or Arohata? Interested in further training?**

#### **GETTING GOT**

Prisoners can be some of the most unscrupulous and manipulative people in New Zealand, who have made a career out of bullying and deceit. It would be naïve to think that just because they are behind wire, these prisoners will stop using manipulation as a means of self gain.

'Getting Got' seminars ensure volunteers are alert to the tactics prisoners may use to manipulate them and are aware of the issues involved in staying safe in this environment.

All Department of Corrections staff also complete 'Getting Got'.

For further information, contact Jeanette Voyce on (04) 529 0921 or e mail [jeanette.voyce@corrections.govt.nz](mailto:jeanette.voyce@corrections.govt.nz)