



Explosion!



HFP activity statistics skyrocket

2017 astonishing totals break all records!

First Quarter Contacts* - 1,033 (compared to 690 in 2016)

Number of prisoners served already this year - approximately 350

HFP Board of Directors forced to take new look at staff and volunteer needs

DO PRISONERS APPRECIATE OUR SERVICES?

Sharon writes:

“Spring is a time of hope, promise, and rebirth. I have renewed hope that God will rescue me from this imprisonment because of your intervention. I will always be grateful that you set the wheels in motion for a miracle to happen! It takes a band of angels to do God's work. Thank you for being one of those angels.”

ALL THE MORE REASON WHY WE NEED YOU!

It's easier now than ever before to set up a regular contribution to keep HFP down in the trenches, in the front lines! Contact Matt at info@humanityforprisoners.org.

*We label all calls, email messages, Facebook messages, and letters as “Contacts” rather than pleas for help, because all are *not* requests. Some involve other types of messages. All messages that demand a response are labeled as “Contacts.” These messages may come from prisoners, family members and/or loved ones.

Should prisoners be paid? How much?

One can debate whether prisoners should be paid for jobs they accomplish while behind bars, or how much they should be paid. Read on.

Says Wendy Sawyer, in a Prison Initiative article:

The question of wages paid for prison labor is an important one, especially when we consider the relative costs of fees charged and things sold to incarcerated people. The value of a dollar is different when you earn pennies per hour. (And in six states, the wage is almost always zero pennies per hour.) In Colorado, for example, it costs an incarcerated woman two weeks' wages to buy a box of tampons; maybe more if there's a shortage. Saving up for a \$10 phone card would take almost two weeks for an incarcerated person working in a Pennsylvania prison.

Here are wages listed for Michigan prisoners, which haven't changed since 2006!

Starting prison wages for most Michigan prison jobs:

Unskilled	\$.74 per day
Semi-skilled	\$.94 per day
Skilled	\$1.24 per day

That's probably why HFP hears so many complaints from prisoners about health care. Michigan prisoners must cough up a \$5 co-pay for every visit to the doctor's office!

And then there's the new JPay tablet now being offered to state inmates.

Said one prisoner to HFP: "Did you see the new promotional here about the JPay 5 tablets for the people to instantly purchase music? That's good, but can you get us a prisoner wage increase, since by those standards a person has to work 3 hours to purchase a song."

The price of songs: \$1.06 to \$1.99 each!

Quoting Wendy Sawyer again:

Making it hard for incarcerated people to earn real money hurts their chances of success when they are released, too. With little to no savings, how can they possibly afford the immediate costs of food, housing, healthcare, transportation, child support, and supervision fees? People with felony convictions are often ineligible for government benefit programs like welfare and food stamps, and face barriers to finding stable housing and employment. And they may leave prison with just a bus ticket and \$50 of "gate money," if they have no other savings. So the meager earnings from prison work assignments can be essential to a person's success – and even survival – when they return to their community.

From the desk of Doug: Preaching: Words or Action?

Another church recently turned down our request for financial support. I was disappointed, but not surprised.

The very nice delegate explained to me that his church preferred to spend mission dollars on agencies that actually teach the message of Jesus.

While we've received that impression in talks with other churches, it was the first time we've heard the message in such a direct manner.

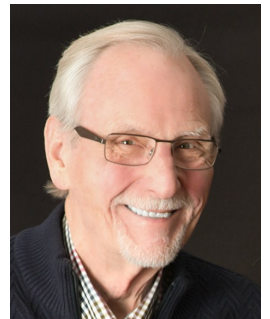
I'm writing this column at Easter time, and so my thoughts are on Jesus a lot these days.

It's funny, but when I think of Jesus, his teaching and preaching aren't the first things that pop up in my mind. I think of the countless stories in the gospels about the marathon sessions of healing sick people, even raising a few from the dead, showing amazing compassion to thousands of hungry people who came to hear him, holding little kids on his lap, having dinner with the down-casts of society, and showing forgiveness to a prostitute.

And that's kind of how we see our work in this office. We think that holding the hands of needy people behind bars, people of all creeds and colors, people who have been labeled by some as the “worst of the worst,” is what Jesus would do. Isn't modeling Jesus just as important as teaching Jesus?

We fall back on words sometimes credited to St. Francis of Assisi: “Preach the gospel every day. Use words if necessary.”

I hope my church, and your church, might understand this. We need their support.



On Prison Visitation

Gail: Permanently restricted from visiting her fiancé!
“Donald was cited for sexual misconduct during our visit which is completely absurd. They have permanently restricted me from visiting him. He has been locked up for 12 years and this is the first ticket in a very long time. I asked for a shift commander and I was refused. I also asked to see this video that supposedly shows the sexual misconduct during our visit and I was refused.”

Tonya: Missed final visit with mom due to prison ban!
“My mom passed away last October, after I had made multiple requests to get my visits back. She died suddenly and it was very unexpected. I was unable to see her, even for a visit, because of this issue. I am truly heart-broken.”

Melissa, a teacher with two small children, who makes a long drive to visit her husband, has some suggestions and ideas for the MDOC:

“Please consider **improving the quality of the visiting environment**. I appreciate the amenities offered in the visiting room, like vending machines, a water fountain and hand sanitizer, toys, books, games, etc. I count on these items to help provide a positive experience for our family when we commit to being there for most of the

day. But if the expectation is for children to behave ideally, variety and cleanliness of these things would go a long way.

“Boredom fosters poor behavior, and over the last nine months there has been **little to no variety** in games, books, or toys. In fact, the quality of these items is steadily declining as they get worn out, broken, or lost. I would like to know the policy on donating developmentally appropriate items to the facility in order to refresh the selection and keep kids occupied. I would also love to see these items properly stored and periodically cleaned to preserve their quality.

“**There are few meal options**. When a parent has to choose to nourish young children on candy, soda, and junk food if and when the vending machines are even stocked, the result can be very frustrating. This is not to say there are *never* options, but I count it lucky when there is juice or something besides burritos or burgers for the kids during a visit, which can be hard on a little person’s digestive system. Suggested food items: salads, pizza, lunchables, milk, yogurt, cheese sticks, jerky, dried fruit, cereal bars and trail mix, to name a few.”

John Mulder can breathe again!

Singer/Songwriter John Mulder, wonderful and kind Spring Lake physician who, among other things, heads up HFP’s Sweet Freedom gospel music ensemble, has a new lung! We were heartened when he sent out this message on April 12:

As I write this note, I am preparing to head over to Vanderbilt University Medical Center. The call came about an hour ago, and the team has indicated that they have identified a lung suitable for my transplant. Sometime this afternoon, my scarred, poorly functioning lung will be replaced with a healthy one. The grim reality is that someone younger and more vital than me unexpectedly died today. And in the midst of their immense grief, his family made an incredibly courageous, generous, and compassionate decision to allow parts of him to live.

As this newsletter goes to press, John is recovering well, and will be in Nashville near the hospital for months. He and Lisa covet your prayers for continued healing, that his body may continue to accept and welcome the new organ.

**Donate To HFP
Online**

Humanityforprisoners.org

A food shortage in some facilities?

“These past few weeks have been something! Easily 2-3 meals a week are subbed. Sometimes the subs don’t match the meal replaced in nutrition values. Portions crazy sometimes. One day, out of 4 oz. Sausages, they gave us 1 and 1/2 hot dogs (which menu states are 2 oz each). So not only shorted a full ounce, no buns...ONE slice of bread! And most weeks, couple / three times weekly they keep running out of items. And I don’t mean on the last few people coming into the dining hall - I mean full units. Example: Couple of days ago, with the sloppy Joe we were due tater tots. My unit, E, was 7th (out of 8 units). When my unit got to "chow", NO tater tots. They were short tots for two units (that is 360 people!). How can you wind up that short?”

SAVE THE DATE

HFP wants to thank you!

You’re invited to an HFP “Thank You Party”

Monday, May 22, 6:30-8:30 PM

Desserts by Design

320 Columbus Ave, Grand Haven

HFP staff, volunteers, directors and Development Committee members simply want to thank you for your interest, support, prayers and involvement.

No pitch for gifts or contributions. No cover charge.

Refreshments and Music