

Welcome Aboard!



Dr. John Rottman, Professor of Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary in Grand Rapids, has been appointed to a three-year term on the HFP Board of Directors. The action was taken recently at the board's quarterly meeting. Dr. Rottman's late father, Jack did jail ministry at the Muskegon County Jail for many years and John admired his father's work from a safe distance. In 2010, one of his colleagues hoodwinked him into going with students on a weeklong visit to the Louisiana State Penitentiary, also known as Angola. God used that trip to show John some of the things he had been doing at Angola and he was hooked. He has developed relationships with inmates and staff at Angola and has visited numerous times. In 2011 he helped launch the Calvin Prison Initiative, and taught the first class at Hanlon Prison in Ionia for the Seminary. He is on the CPI steering committee and teaches in the prison occasionally. Speaking to CPI graduates, Dr. Rottman said: *The possibility of seeing people who are no longer defined mostly by the worst things that they have done in life, provokes hope in us...hope for the men, for their families, for their victims, for correctional officers...hope for our prisons and especially for the communities to which many of these citizens will return.*

Welcome to our team!

Hilary Phillips of Grand Haven has agreed to serve as the new Treasurer for HFP. She succeeds the Rev. Dr. Jared Cramer. Hilary has spent the vast majority of the past 20 years working in finance and accounting for the JSJ Businesses in West Michigan. Approximately 12 years of this time she was the Controller for Dake Corporation. She is currently the Account Manager at the Stow Company of Holland. Hilary has utilized her love of finance and accounting to serve in this capacity as PTA Treasurer at Griffin Elementary and also as Accountant for Trinity Reformed Church. She earned her Bachelor of Science in Accounting from the University of Phoenix.

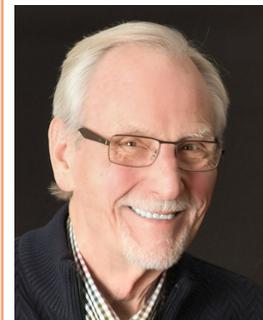


Seeing Stars - A rare opportunity!

Words of a Michigan inmate:

Quite by accident I found a spot where I can see the night sky without the security lights' glare ruining my view of the heavens. For the first time in the better part of a decade I could see the multitude of stars, including what I think is the Big Dipper. It's been so long since I last saw stars so clearly it was literally breathtaking. With zero cloud cover it made sky watching fun. I'll gladly let my dog pull me to this section of her potty area if it means a few precious moments of peaceful awe.

From the desk of Doug: Their moms would be proud!



Two of the newer faces on the HFP scene have more than one thing in common. True, Russ Bloem and John Rottman both come

to us from the campus of Calvin College and Seminary in Grand Rapids. Russ is VP for Enrollment Management at the college. John is Professor of Preaching at Calvin Theological Seminary.

But, their compassion for and their interest in prisoners involves trickle-down. It came, at least in part, from their mothers. Dora Bloem and Freddie Rottman loved the work of HFP, and supported us long before their sons knew much if anything about us.

Dora, my cousin, died at the age of 82 in August, 2013. Freddie (Fredreka) Rottman died at the age of 89 in July, 2017. And right up until the dates of their passing into glory, both of these Godly women continued to send not only their checks, but their kind and caring notes of support and encouragement, to me.

So, it should be no surprise that their sons have landed on our Board of Directors.

I'm excited about what our future holds with the involvement of Russ Bloem and John Rottman. Whatever that may be, I can say with no hesitation that it's due in no small part to the influence of their mothers!

"Only God Himself fully appreciates the influence of a Christian mother in the molding of character in her children."

—Billy Graham

Meet Dr. Bob

We'd like you to meet one of the key volunteers in our panel of professionals who provide invaluable assistance to the HFP Staff. Robert Bulten, MD, serves as our Medical Consultant, and coordinates our work with numerous medical professionals in a variety of fields. In his end-of-the-year statement for our Board of Directors, Dr. Bob said this:

It continues to be such a privilege to be a part of the HFP medical team, helping those who are forgotten by most of society. From Oct - the end of December I had 249 email exchanges between Doug, Matt, Susie and me. We did some letter writing to wardens, and even to Kyle Kaminski in Heidi Washington's office, trying to advocate for inmates who the system just doesn't seem to be proactive enough to attend to their various medical needs. And as Doug said before, "Sometimes they just need to have their hand held" — that's love expressed. I can't say enough about the dedication of these three people (above) with whom I have the most contact. If it weren't for their love and persistence, so many inmates would continue to suffer. Thank you for this opportunity to serve.



Some messages to Doug as he recovered from open heart surgery:

-I pray to God that your generosity and kindness to the lost souls you brought love and light to be looked upon as your reward to humanity, and you be given the strength and health to continue to be with us.



-I live in hell, but God allowed me to see many angels in this place, and you, my dear brother, are one of those angels! I love you and pray you'll get well soon.

-So glad to hear you are fine. In God, all things are possible, he is the best surgeon and healer I know, and I know you have strong faith in HIM!!!!!! The love many of us have for you is PRICELESS. You could never imagine how much you are thought of inside these prison walls. You have been family to many of us. So many have no one in the streets to get paperwork for them or to just check things out for them, and you and Matt are always there. Doug, we appreciate you sir, and the love I speak of is UNCONDITIONAL and UNEXPLAINABLE. I will close for now, but I just want you to know that we care .

-When I think of all the love you've sprinkled throughout this system, I hope you feel the magnitude of this return love. Much respect and gratitude.

FOIA Requests & Medical Issues top HFP requests in 2018

HFP staffers respond to a wide variety of requests as they seek to provide practical assistance to the everyday needs and problems of Michigan prisoners. But the two single largest categories remain medical care and legal information. We followed up on nearly 1,000 messages in 2018 that had to do with medical issues, medical problems and inadequate care. And, we dealt with a similar number of messages regarding needed legal documents. As a result, HFP Executive Director Matt Tjapkes reports that more than 300 requests were filed under the Michigan Freedom of Information Act on behalf of prisoners. Inmates are not allowed, by statute, to file their own FOIA requests. In all, the HFP staff responded to nearly 7,000 contacts in 2018.

MDOC finally deals with skin rash

As this newsletter went to press, the MDOC was shutting down the state's only prison for women in Ypsilanti. More than 2,000 women reside in the Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility, and all were being treated for scabies. Our office has been receiving complaints from women at the facility for the past year about pesky skin rashes. For a while scabies was suspected, then it was ruled out. Now, according to Detroit Free Press writer Paul Egan, officials have returned to their original theory and are doing something about it. Dr. Carmen McIntyre, chief medical officer for the MDOC, was quoted as saying it would have helped if dermatologists had been brought into the prison sooner.

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