

## Closed!

The Michigan Department of Corrections announced on March 13 it had stopped in-person visits at all prisons, effective immediately, to protect inmates and employees from contracting or spreading the new coronavirus. As of that date, there had been no confirmed cases of the virus inside Michigan's prisons. Outside volunteers, tours and other groups are also lumped into the group of persons who will not be allowed entry into state prisons. The agency stated it will continue to monitor the situation to determine when visitation will be restored. During the period without visits, the department is working with its vendors that provide communication services to the prison population on enhanced services that may be able to be offered. We have also learned that All prisoner co-pays are waived for prisoners indicating they feel they might have influenza or COVIDo-19 symptoms. Prisoners have been encouraged to immediately report symptoms, but refrain from using healthcare for unrelated concerns (if not emergent) so as to not unduly strain healthcare resources.

## Open!

**Avoid crowds, avoid illness, stay healthy!**  
**DO NOT ATTEND OUR THIRD ANNUAL**

# HFP Unball!

**What COVID 19 means to you: Stay home!**  
**What COVID 19 means to Michigan prisoners: No visits!**  
**What Covid 19 means to HFP: Be there for them!**

When planning our third annual Unball, we had no idea how meaningful and how important this non-function would be. The Unball was designed, in prior years, for busy people who wanted to stay home with family while supporting the life-changing work of Humanity for Prisoners.

**The frivolous and whimsical concept for an Unball has been put aside in 2020! This is serious business!** You still don't have to buy a dress or rent a tuxedo. You still don't have to do your hair or makeup. You still don't have to get a sitter. **But, for the first time, you can honor the guidelines of our national and state leaders, avoid the crowds, and support critical assistance to our prisoners!**

Your donation WILL NOT be used to rent a hall, pay a caterer, or hire entertainment.

Your donation WILL help prisoners find estranged family members, obtain critical legal documents, get urgently needed medical care, and prepare to return to society.

**But most importantly during this national crisis, your dollars will enable HFP staffers to stand in for family members, and just "be there" for prisoners!**

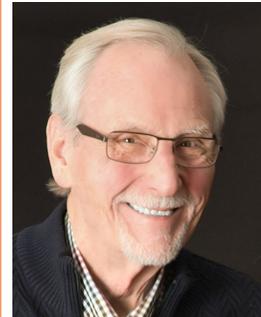
**Tickets are \$75 each (a real bargain considering this year's needs!)**  
**Sponsor a table to include your friends and family for \$500**  
**No donation is too large**  
**Include "tips" with baby-sitter, manicure, and hair-cut savings**

The gravity of the coronavirus came so late we were unable to stop the mailing of formal invitations. **The Unball won't be as much fun as in previous years, but its purpose and results are more meaningful than ever!** Don't wait. Send reservation checks to PO Box 687, Grand Haven, MI 49417.

## From the desk of Doug: What we take for granted Something precious

I went to Slang by Dictionary to find this one:

**The expression to take for granted means "to accept without question or objection," and often implies a lack of**



**appreciation or gratitude.**

I'm thinking about that a lot these days, because I'm in the "high risk" category for the dreaded coronavirus. I'm over 70, and I have a history of both lung and heart disease. So, after consultation with my wife, my family and my pastor, I'm pretty much in seclusion.

**I take for granted** the things like daily visits to the supermarket, daily runs to the post office, family get-togethers, a weekly lunch with Studebaker drivers, and especially my Sunday morning worship services.

Now, because of declared emergencies, I'm restricted. It's not quite solitary confinement, but Marcia and I are alone most of the time, and any communication must be done by telephone or email.

Chatting with my friends behind bars, I find a lot of similarity. Many delightful routines in their lives were **taken for granted**, something they didn't realize until incarceration. From that day on, life was not their own.

The meaning of and the reasons for incarceration are topics for another day.

Right now, I'm identifying, just a bit more, with the plight of a multitude of people I love who merely exist in prison. I'm finding, once again, that many things **taken for granted** are precious.

## HFP/UofM Law School Project



We are thrilled to announce that Humanity for Prisoners has created a pro bono project for students at the University of Michigan Law School. This will expand our capabilities for supporting our clients' requests for help with commutation applications. Students will be supervised by HFP's Vice President and Commutation Specialist, Holly Honig-Josephson, and by a U-M Law School Alumna, Kasia Szymborski. Attorney Szymborski was responsible for a third of New York's commutations last year! Students will pair up and work directly with a client in crafting a thoroughly prepared application. After submitting, they will follow up with the Parole Board as appropriate per situation. Holly reports that 28 law students are signed up for this innovative, new project!

## Welcome Mary!

Mary Grillo, of Grand Haven, has agreed to join our board for a 3-year term effective immediately, according to an announcement from board chair Russ Bloem. Mary currently serves as Charity & Justice Commission Chair for St Patrick – St Anthony Parish in Grand Haven, overseeing a multitude of teams and activities. She has been volunteering in that capacity for 5 years since retiring after a 25-year career with Ottawa County Community Action Agency. We're delighted to welcome her. Mary brings a strong heart for social justice and many administrative gifts to our board. She has also served on Diocesan projects and boards for 35 years.



## A compliment is verbal sunshine!

Atharva Veda

HFP President Matt Tjapkes reports that already this year nearly a dozen Michigan inmates have sent financial contributions to support our work! In addition, grants have been received from at least two Prisoner Benefit Funds from state prisons. High praise, indeed, for our team's daily provision of compassionate services!

## HFP President at GHHS



HFP President Matt Tjapkes speaks to a Health Class led by Jodi Heard at Grand Haven High School on March 14. Tjapkes spoke on mental health in Michigan prisons.

## On the air



HFP Founder Doug Tjapkes and Muskegon County Prosecutor DJ Hilson discuss mass incarceration and prison reform on Hilson's show on WUVS-LP.

## St. Poodle?

HFP Client Douglas Burgess enjoys his dog-training duties at Saginaw Correctional Facility!

*The last time Father Frank was here for Mass, I short leashed Byron to my side and got in line to receive communion. When it was my turn, I did the bow, stepped forward, and accepted the host by mouth. As I was crossing myself I heard some chuckles behind me so immediately looked down to check on Byron. My fur baby was sitting more perfectly straight than the poodle ever did (which is saying a lot), mouth open, and staring intently upward at the father as though he were fully baptized into the church, too. He did not want to move, either, which elicited even more good-natured laughter. However, a quick offer of Kibble was enough to convince him to trundle along with me and stop holding up the procession, which earned me a smile and a wink from Father Frank.*