



The Rotary Club of Gig Harbor

Women's Prison Program

P.O. Box 342, Gig Harbor, WA 98335

2014 IN REVIEW: THE ROTARY WOMEN'S PRISON PROGRAM

2014 was the 2nd year of the Rotary Women's Program—a year in which new programs and services were launched and planning initiated for others. It is an honor to share the following brief summary of activities, events and accomplishments with you.

ROTARY REENTRY EMPLOYMENT TRAINING (RET) PROGRAM

With some 25 Rotary and inmate instructors participating, 5 RET courses were completed inside the prison, bringing the total graduates to date for 2013/2014 to 220 women offenders. Several new instructors taught the RET course this year, including Rotarians, non-Rotarians and offenders (all classes are team taught by 4 instructors—2 Rotarians/friends of Rotary, 2 offenders). Offender-taught/Rotary monitored RET classes were also introduced this year. 10 additional RET courses are now scheduled for 2015. Several curriculum changes were made including completion of typed reentry plans suitable for use in legal proceedings and the preparation of personal & employment portfolios. Additional changes are underway for 2015 to include short videos of ex-offenders sharing their experiences following release and interviews with employers describing what they look for when hiring new employees. Based on our surveys of inmates (every class is now surveyed) over 60% report they have been incarcerated previously—clearly underscoring the need for reentry employment training.

WOMEN'S PRISON SCHOLARSHIP ENDOWMENT FUND

Launched in January of 2014, major donations by the Gig Harbor Rotary Foundation, the Seattle Police Foundation/IF Project, the Gig Harbor Rotary Auction "Raise the Paddle", Giving Chicks and Roosters and the Mid-day Rotary Club took the women's prison scholarship endowment fund to over \$79,000 in 2014—an excellent beginning in its first year of operation toward an eventual endowment goal of \$500,000. With all funds managed by the Gig Harbor Rotary Foundation and a scholarship team reviewing applications, to date \$17,000+ in scholarships to 9 offenders/ex-offenders were approved in 2014. Tacoma Community College, Evergreen State College, University of Washington, and Clark College are some of the initial colleges involved. Scholarships to technical, trade and professional schools, apprenticeships, professional license and certificate procurement are also eligible uses of funds. With the help of Eric Boles, former NFL football player & President of The Game Changers, a brief 3-minute video for scholarship fundraising was prepared by Seat of the Pants Productions and may be viewed at <http://vimeo.com/seatofthepantsproduction/review/90697985/ea379e04a1>

PIERCE COUNTY MENTOR PILOT PROJECT

A modest scale 2-year Rotary Mentor Pilot Project was launched in 2014 with a primary focus on the 15 Rotary Clubs in Pierce County. An initial presentation to recruit mentors was made at the annual Rotary District 5020 Conference in Whistler BC, Canada in May— followed by presentations to the Pierce County Rotary Presidents Council, Gig Harbor North Club, Mid-Day Rotary Club, Tacoma North, Tacoma South, Port Orchard, and Shelton Clubs. Additional presentations to several Rotary clubs are planned for 2015. Mentors are coming forth to volunteer from these clubs and are being matched with offenders prior to release. It is hoped the experience of Rotarians/friends of Rotary from the business community who come alongside female ex-offenders following release will gradually change the minds, hearts and attitudes of the business community. The impact of the RET instructor experience and the mentor experience is already evident in the changing attitudes and perceptions seen in instructors/mentors toward women offenders. Arrangements for monitoring and evaluation of the pilot by faculty from a local college/university are being explored. The hoped for results of the mentor pilot are twofold, 1) a significant reduction in offender recidivism and 2) changed minds, hearts & perceptions toward ex-offenders by the business community.

FELON-FRIENDLY EMPLOYER DATA BASE CREATION

Efforts were initiated in 2014 to collaborate with the Pierce County Community Partnership for Transition Services to participate in the use of data base information now being created for King and (eventually, hopefully, also Pierce and other counties) on felon-friendly employers willing to hire ex-offenders. Over time it is hoped data bases of felon-friendly employers state-wide can be formulated as a tool to assist women ex-offenders find employment. Employment is a significant factor in curbing recidivism.

An initial web site for the Rotary Women's Prison Program was created in 2014 by an outstanding husband/wife team of volunteers in Issaquah, and over time will hopefully include links to a wide variety of resources available to women ex-offenders from around the State of Washington. The website is: www.rotarywomensprison.com

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2015

2015 looks promising. The roster of both Rotary/friends of Rotary instructors and offenders for the 2015 RET courses is nearly full. Several Rotary Clubs have asked for presentations and these and other volunteer organizations will be asked for volunteers to both teach and mentor offenders in the pilot. A total of 20-25 mentors for the pilot will be recruited. Clubs are also being asked to donate to the scholarship endowment fund and a number of them have responded. Other efforts to raise scholarship funds will be initiated. Several additional scholarship applications from women offenders are anticipated during the year.

Thank you very kindly for your support and encouragement.

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