Volunteer Today *Spring-Summer 2003*

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Giving One's Time: The Essence of Human Life

Reprinted from an article published in the "Team Report"

Steve Schwalb, Assistant Director
Industries, Education and Vocational Training (IE&VT) Division

My hometown pastor had a favorite saying, "When you give of your money, you give part of your wealth but when you give of your time, you give part of your life." Reflecting on his saying, it seems to me that, in praising people who volunteer their time, there was a suggestion that, in doing so, they might be depleting the bank account called life.

Being so presumptuous as to edit his phraseology, I would conclude it, "When you give of your time, you improve the lives of others, you enhance your own life, and you realize the essence of human life."

So many things we do reflect this essential truth. Daily situations provide examples of the multiple beneficiaries of our generous donation of time. When we take the vows of marriage and commit to spend the rest of our lives with a spouse, don't we receive as much benefit as our spouse? When we have children, aren't we making an incredible, voluntary future commitment of time? But don't we reap immeasurable satisfaction too? When we volunteer to coach our child's soccer team, to be a Brownie troop leader, to work on the PTA, to usher at church, to tutor at a school, to collect clothing for the homeless, to take an elderly neighbor to the doctor, or to visit someone in a nursing home, do we just give of our time and get nothing in return? Clearly not. When we volunteer, other people benefit, but so do we!

We all know the key role volunteerism plays in a civilized society. We know that without a substantial commitment of voluntary, uncompensated time by people everywhere, the institution of marriage would wither; the family unit would unravel; our churches, schools,

community organizations, and nonprofit institutions would be dysfunctional.

We also know that the inverse is true: the more we all give of our time to others, the greater the multiplier effect in improving our own lives and the lives of others. Indeed, our efforts advance our collective humanity. So, the next time an opportunity to give of yourself presents itself, consider what's at stake and ask yourself whether you can afford not to.

As A Mentor

Alice DavisJohnson
Administrator, Volunteer Management Branch

National Volunteer Week was April 27-May 3, 2003. Earlier this year, USA Freedom Corps published an official proclamation by the President of the United States in observance of National Mentoring Month. Among the words of this proclamation, the President said, "Volunteers provide friendship and support to young people who are facing challenging situations, serve as positive role models, and help to instill important values, goals, and skills. Mentors help young Americans build confidence, gain knowledge, and develop the character necessary to make the right choices and achieve their dreams. Statistics show that at-risk children with mentors demonstrate improved academic performance and are less likely to be involved in destructive activities such as drugs, alcohol, and violence."

It is on this premise that thousands of BOP employees donate their time to primary and secondary level schools in their respective local communities.

In a message by the President in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on December 12, 2002, he also talked about a special needs population of youth, children of offenders. Statistics provided by Public Private Ventures of Philadelphia through their Amachi Program, indicate that more than two million children have parents in prison. Of this number, 70% are likely to be imprisoned during their lifetime.

Workplace-based mentoring is a high priority for the BOP and heavily supported by the Department of Justice. While we are correctional professionals, we also recognize our responsibility as citizens of this country to do our part in helping youth to reach productive adulthood. For this reason, our staff devote time to schools and community-based programs as volunteers. These opportunities allow us as staff to develop mentoring relationships with youth.

In addition, each year, we open the doors of our Central and regional offices for such specialized mentoring opportunities as Groundhog Shadow and Kids Day. We use this occasion to allow students to visit these BOP sites to learn more about job opportunities/ careers while bonding with a staff mentor.

Just a month ago, we lost a very special staff member, Julia McLaurin, who dedicated so much of her time to arranging for our staff to tutor and mentor children at our partnership school in Washington, DC. Just days before she died, she was still very much engaged in helping staff to serve the needs of these youth. Despite her health challenges, Julia served in a capacity of goodwill. As over 75 of our staff sat in reflection at her funeral, we listened as her priest repeated the many areas of volunteerism Julia offered at her church and in her workplace.

Whether an adopted school, scout meetings in their local areas, or staff providing academic based mentoring, staff volunteers are committed to making a difference as a mentor in the lives of youth.

We will continue to use mentoring and tutoring in our outreach efforts as two examples of how staff make their time count.

Me and the Boys: My First River Terrace Experience

Ralawna Cobb, Correctional Programs Division, Central Office

Dear Readers:

I am a mentor and a tutor. I am also a Federal Bureau of Prisons staff member at the agency headquarters in Washington, DC. I belong to a special group of people who set aside their primary work for an hour each week to visit elementary school students at a Washington, DC public school, River Terrace Elementary.

River Terrace is located in a segment of DC which has its challenges. Like many urban areas, economic oppression is a major issue which has tremendous impact on the children.

My experience at River Terrace has been inspiring and unforgettable. When I first volunteered to be a tutor, I was very skeptical. I didn't believe that one hour a week would really make a difference in the lives of the students. Also, I had never tutored anyone before, and I was not certain that I had anything to offer.

The first few weeks were difficult and slow. Two of the three young men assigned to me were at least two grades behind in their ability to read and comprehend. Also, one of these boys was very quiet and withdrawn, and it was hard to get him to participate. However, once a good rapport was established between me and the boys, they became more comfortable with me and confident. I began to see improvement in their reading comprehension skills, and a bond was developing between me and the boys.

As my service continued, on Tuesday mornings when I would come into the classroom, things began to show marked changes. I was met with smiles, bright eyes, and an occasional hug, instead of the long and serious faces I was introduced to. Even my quiet student began to participate and interact on his own. Most importantly, he began to talk. Also, the teachers at River Terrace began to comment on and praise the boys' improvement in both their reading and behavior.

As I reflect upon my River Terrace experiences, I recognize how much of a difference one hour per week can make in the lives of children. My three boys, Donnie, Tyshawn, and Maxx, have developed their own very special place in my heart. I hope I have been as much an inspiration to them as they have been to me. I plan to continue volunteering at River Terrace in hopes of creating similar relationships with other children and providing them with a positive influence.

Former Vietnam Prisoner of War Visits Sheridan

Federal Prison Camp (FPC) Sheridan, Oregon

Since the beginning of 2003, we have listened anxiously to news reports which spoke inevitably of war with Iraq. We have felt a range of emotions, including overwhelming pride and concern for those who were serving in our armed forces on land, air, and sea. We have listened anxiously as newscasters have brought us word of gallant rescues and the sad reports of casualties.

While men and women were away fighting in this courageous battle, there were thousands more who remained behind here in the U.S. Many of these were persons who knew well the trials of war, for they had served in earlier wars themselves. Some of these men and women, like United States Navy Commander David J. Rollins, now share their time and experiences as volunteers.

Just prior to the war in Iraq, Commander Rollins visited FPC Sheridan, Oregon. He and his wife traveled from San Diego to Sheridan to address graduates of an inmate leadership program, the "21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership."

Commander Rollins' story was one of courage and valor. He shared memories of his capture, confinement, torture, and survival. Commander Rollins was stationed aboard the USS Kitty Hawk as the Operations Officer of the 114th Fighter Squadron when he was shot down on May 14, 1967, near the end of his second tour of duty. After being held captive as a prisoner of war (POW) for years by the North Vietnamese, he was released on March 4, 1973.

As a result of the talents of fellow prisoner, Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) John M. McGrath, US Navy, Commander Rollins displayed drawings which provided graphic details of the experiences he and others encountered as POWs. In addition, the program included a reading of the "21 Laws" by inmate participants, music, and award presentations.

As a highlight of his visit, Commander Rollins received a surprise telephone call from Admiral Thomas Moorer, Former Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff. In his call, Admiral Moorer, commending Commander Rollins for his dedication and service to his country, noted that he is "one of the Navy's finest heroes." Commander Rollins' presence for this program was inspirational to all who attended, inmates and staff alike.

"Make It Sew"

Federal Medical Center (FMC) Rochester, Minnesota

Three inmates from the Federal Medical Center in Rochester, Minnesota, volunteer their time by crocheting hats and mittens for children at the local Riverside Central Elementary School. The parents of children at this school are financially challenged and are unable to provide essential foul-weather gear.

To date, 35 hats and one pair of mittens have been donated. One inmate mends seat cushions for the school. Four cushions have been mended.

In addition to the charitable work performed by the inmates, staff at the institution participated a book drive in January. A combination of 60 new and gently used books were donated to children involved in the *Hand in Hand Family Literacy Program* at Riverside Central Elementary School in February for their "I Love To Read" month.

Making Time Count For A Cause

Federal Detention Center (FDC) Seatac, Seattle, Washington

As the population of inmates at FDC Seatac is growing, staff have considered options for community service projects to minimize inmate idleness. As a result, a partnership with Project Linus - South Puget Sound, was established. The program, a 100% volunteer nonprofit national organization, provides new, handmade, washable security blankets and afghans to seriously ill or traumatized children. To date, Project Linus has been an ideal outreach effort by serving those most in need. In addition, the project provides ways for female offenders at Seatac to identify positively with the community.

The craft yarn and supplies needed for the inmates to make the products are donated by Project Linus. Community volunteers come into the institution and teach the inmates the techniques to be able to complete the art and craft projects. Of the many attributes of knitting, the craft:

- Has a calming effect and helps relieve stress.
- Provides a sense of accomplishment for the inmates in completing a project.
- Provides an avenue for creative expression.
- Provides an opportunity to the offenders to connect with the needs of children and the community.

Inmates are excited to be a part of the project and have been able to complete more than 10 blankets in a single month.