



OPENING DOORSsm

A Prison Ministry

January 2006

I Have Placed Before You An Open Door (Rev. 3:8)

A word from Deborah L. Roeger, Executive Director



Sometimes walking on the path God has directed your feet to take can be hard – *really* hard! But obedience often allows us to meet others along the way we likely would not otherwise

know. When I first met Christine Money, she was sitting behind her desk as warden at Marion Correctional. Over the years I made a lifelong friend -- no, more than a friend, a sister in Christ in the truest sense of the word. I asked Chris if she would be willing to share something about Opening Doorssm from a warden's perspective. It will be a reflective article as she transfers to her new Department of Youth Services role where she will be used mightily by the Lord to bring His love, truth, light and hope to the kids incarcerated by the state of Ohio and to their families. What a blessing to say that our feet are on this path together. May we leave no traceable footprints of our own, but only those that are His! ♥

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1 Opening Doorssm Through The Eyes Of A Prison Warden
- 2 Why Inmates Recommend Opening Doorssm
- 3 Opening God's Word – A Devotional Thought
- 4 Prayer Requests

Opening Doorssm Through The Eyes Of A Prison Warden

It is my pleasure to be able to share what Opening Doorssm has meant to me and the impact that this program has had on the lives of the men incarcerated at Marion Correctional Institution (MCI) as well as the staff. During the past 9 ½ years, many people from the faith community partnered with us to provide incredible growth opportunities to offenders. As a result the MCI community has experienced a dramatic cultural change. When I met Debbie Roeger in the summer of 2000, I listened to her talk about her calling to serve those in prison and quickly invited her to join the newly formed Horizon Interfaith team as a volunteer. After consulting with the Horizon Program Coordinator, we invited Debbie to develop a conflict resolution model for this new 48-men faith dorm. In response, she designed and piloted Opening Doors. Now fast forward five years. Over these years new volunteers have been trained and Opening Doors has been conducted countless times. I made it a habit to attend as many program graduations as I could and I always asked the men to share their thoughts about the program. They have shared many poignant responses. Some of the most touching testimonies came from men who

"I've just completed the program and now feel like I've just returned from a 3-day cruise. The time we shared with other inmates brought us closer together and is now trickling down to friends..." Inmate Nov. 2001

had served between 10-20 years in prison and confessed they had never ever shared anything on a personal level with a fellow inmate. Many expressed relief to finally share their heavy burdens with others who did not judge them. There

continued on page 2

Why Inmates Recommend Opening Doorssm To Others

continued from page 1

When we look past the prison uniform our program participants wear, we find real people, just like you and me. Here's what some of them had to say about their experience:

"Plain and simple, these last 3 days have been phenomenal!" RCI April '04

"The program was great at breaking down barriers and facing ourselves." WCI April '04

"Opening Doors is a once in a life-time opportunity to grow in a way that I feel behind these walls one fails to do." ManCI Jan. '04

"it gives a place to be real." MCI Nov. '01

"the program allows inmates to see each other in a different perspective & may cause them to think about their thoughts, actions & behavior in a different manner." ManCI Jan. '04

"the camaraderie between the group is priceless." MCI Nov. '01

"I wasn't a trusting person...I've learned to open up and trust." ORW May '04

"I felt like a human being again. I felt a closeness to others I haven't felt in a long time." MaCI March '04

"The program is like a great big wind of fresh air in a polluted and hard environment." MaCI March '04

"It's the best [program] I've ever had in prison. It's more than just questions and answers. It's hands on learning." OSP Oct. '03

"it does what it is designed to do—help others deal with life, offers self-love and hope!" OSP Oct. '03

"it gives you ideas and tools to use in decision making and it allows you to feel cared about, which in turn gives you hope and motivation to try to do better." OSP Oct. '03

"You accomplish in 3 days what other programs take 6 or more months to accomplish." ManCI Aug. '04

"Opening Doors is a step closer to being on the outside instead of prison." MCI Nov 2005

"it helps you to learn how to think outside the box." MCI Nov.'05

were times that tears were shed and times of great joy and celebration. I remember hearing from a man at the camp after he attended Opening Doors. In his words, going through the program was like being on a three day cruise! For those days he did not feel like a prisoner. This might make some people nervous; but I believe that in addition to incarceration, our responsibility is to heal, restore and prepare for successful return to the community. Opening Doors does just that as it touches lives on a deep level. One of my fondest memories of Opening Doors is when I received an invitation from men housed in Protective Control to bring some of my key staff to a presentation.

Due to the infusion of programs, including Opening Doors, the transformation was miraculous! ... I have witnessed Opening Doors touch incarcerated men and volunteers in very deep ways.

Those men had completed Opening Doors and decided to develop a detailed proposal to add a wide variety of rehabilitation programs to their small, specialized prison community. Several men participated in a presentation which was well thought out and one of the most professional presentations I have ever witnessed in my career. These men applied the principles they learned in Opening Doors and took positive control of their environment. In the past, this unit was the most dysfunctional housing unit in the institution. Due to the infusion of programs, including Opening Doors, the transformation was miraculous! I attribute some of the success of Opening Doors to the fact that the facilitator teams are both outside volunteers and offenders. Together they become a powerful team. The volunteers bring their rich diverse backgrounds and unconditional caring and the inmate facilitators contribute their experiences from incarceration. This combination has modeled how to work together to provide programs. I know that these experiences bless the volunteers as well as the offenders. MCI also piloted a version of Opening Doors for staff. I was a participant in the first 3-day program. My experience was incredible! Our group connected in a way that was never expected. Those close relationships still exist

continued on page 4



Opening God's Word

Who is watching you?

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making His appeal through us....." 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV)

If we are a Christian, we are a new creation and Christ's ambassadors. Webster defines the word ambassador as "a country's representative in a foreign land." How we act and behave reflects upon the country (Kingdom) to which we belong. You never know who is watching you or what they think about where you are coming from, or who you "represent".

Whenever someone comes from another part of the institution, or even from another institution, the inmates "size them up." They watch their behavior, actions, wondering "what are they about?" Having never been incarcerated before, I was scared, a loner, guarded. I stood out, but not in a good way. I was an easy target to be preyed upon. My first year, or so, was actually a hell on earth.

Through Opening Doorssm I found that you could get to know people deeply and spiritually in just a few days. We laughed, learned and grew together. I actually built some lasting relationships of integrity. The greatest gift of all was that while being a facilitator for Opening Doorssm I realized a desire to get to know Christ. I wanted to know that Creator of inward power, that Changer of hearts, the One who was freeing me from anger and hate to compassion and understanding.

Months later, a new inmate sat down at the table where I was studying God's Word. After a brief conversation he said, "I've been watching you. You are always at peace, happy and smiling all the time. I want what you have." I told him about Christ, about my experience in Opening Doorssm -- my whole testimony. He decided to

turn to Christ. He signed up to be discipled and for Opening Doors.sm

As Paul told the Corinthians, "We are ambassadors for Christ." People are watching how we behave and act. It is not what we know, but what we do with that knowledge! I am proud to be an ambassador for Christ and Opening Doors.sm - Bruce King

Reflective Question: *Who is watching you?*

Scripture References:

Psalms 103; Joel 2:1-2, 12-17; 2 Corinthians 5:20 – 6:10; Matthew 6:1-6; 16-21

About the Author: Bruce is a past graduate and frequent facilitator of Opening Doorssm programs at Ross Correctional. He is a graduate of Kairos #7 RCI and actively involved as a discipler in "Discipling Another To Love Jesus" (DA2LJ). He is currently working on a degree from Family Radio School of the Bible and Christian Union Bible College. The time, energy and skill freely given by Bruce as a volunteer inside facilitator for Opening Doorssm at Ross has been instrumental in allowing us to program there often.

A PERSONAL NOTE OF THANKS!

As many of you know, we just invited others for the first time to become personally involved in Opening Doors. For almost 5 years, we funded this work entirely from our personal finances after I left the legal profession and became a fulltime volunteer for the Ohio prisons. In early 2005, we were very grateful when our Bible Fellowship class became our first monthly contributors. Throughout the year additional gifts were given by a growing number of others either by in-kind contributions or in cash and we also received our first grant. The result of our year-end invitation was highly encouraging as many more of you reached into your personal finances to help expand our work in 2006. Our hearts are warmed by your generosity and your partnership with us in this ministry. Our Board has been praying for the gifts you shared asking God to multiply their use for His Glory and bless each giver! We would be remiss, however, if we didn't also take this time to say a special thanks to our core volunteers. All the money in the world could never replace what you do so well. *Thank you everyone.* Debbie Roeger

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- † Our first Stand In The Gap,tm
Ohio (SITG) spiritual families
- † Opening Doors In The Familysm
- † SITGtm Program Director
- † Opening Doorssm Program Dir.
- † Contractual relationships with
licensed Christian counselors
to support SITGtm
- † Corporate partnerships
- † Expanding prison prayer teams
& Prayers For Prisonerssm
- † New Funding Sources

Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc.
 ~ A Prison Ministry ~
 P.O. Box 281
 Lewis Center, OH 43035-0281
 Deb.Roeger@OpeningMoreDoors.org
 614-543-0417 • 614-361-6783

NON-PROFIT
 US POSTAGE
 PAID
 PERMIT NO. 143
 LEWIS CENTER, OH
 43035

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Keep us informed of address changes so you don't miss future Newsletters.

Mailing Address
 Street Number and Name
 City, State 98765-4321

continued from page 2

today. In closing, I have witnessed Opening Doors touch incarcerated men and volunteers in very deep ways. I also have personally been blessed by Opening Doors and I am excited to have watched it expand into other prisons in Ohio. After just a few days in my new role at the Ohio Department of Youth Services, I can already see the need for Opening Doors to help heal some of our most fragile youth. I am sure 2006 will be an exciting year for Opening Doors and I am happy that I am going to be part of that adventure.♥

by Christine Money

Editor's Note: Chris' career with the Ohio Dept. of Rehab and Corrections spans 25 years with 3 assignments as prison warden -- the last 9 1/2 years as warden at MCI where her leadership transformed the prison culture by creating a highly successful partnership with the faith community. With the new year, she begins a new challenge as Special Assist. to the Director of the Ohio Department of Youth Services where she will be responsible for reentry services to incarcerated youth and their families. I believe we're about ready to witness another miraculous cultural shift take place!

HEARING FROM YOU

Because we believe good stewardship of our resources is important, please inform us should you decide you want to receive future Newsletters by e-mail. For those who no longer want to receive our Newsletter, we will honor your request by removing your name from our mailing list.

Deborah L. Roeger,
 Executive Director

Watch for new developments on our website at:

WWW.OPENINGMOREDOORS.ORG

This project will be completed by award-winning web designer Jon Davis, Ingensis Ltd. using funds from our 2005 Ohio Compassion Capital Grant.

614-543-0417 • 614-361-6783