

THE Connection

THE NEWSLETTER OF WE CARE PROGRAM

MaY 2007

YOUNG ADULT REFLECTIONS



Eight young adults participated in this winter's internship program. The young men served as chaplain's assistants in the local Atmore prisons. Three of the young women rotated their service between Adullam House in Wetumpka, AL, a residential and educational ministry to children of inmate mothers, and assisting with food service in Atmore for the workers who are building our new headquarters facility. The fourth young woman worked in the office. Pictured above center are: Back: **Jake Peters**, Winkler, MB; **Maria Martin**, Manheim, PA; **Kenton Bucher**, Manheim, PA; **Delmar Weiler**, East Earl, PA; Ed Ranck (host & chaplain); **Brenda Steury**, Pleasant Lake, IN. Front: **Blaine Copenhaver**, Lebanon, PA; **Sheila Schrock**, Iowa City, IA; Doris Ranck (hostess); **Christina Adams**, East Norristown, PA. On the following pages are some insights from the interns about their time of service.

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Ful filling the Great Commission in America's Prisons



www.wecareprogram.org

1. How would you describe your time of service (what you actually did) during the term?

Christina - As a female intern this term, I would spend one week at We Care helping Doris prepare meals for our team, the prisoners who've been helping us, and the work crews, along with helping her clean around the house and bunk room. I would then spend two weeks at the Adullam House helping take care of the kids physically, emotionally, and spiritually. I also cooked meals and helped clean.

Blaine - Spent some of the prime years of my life listening and talking to the outcasts of America.

Kenton - Basically it consisted of talking with inmates and establishing friendships. Sometimes I taught a class and helped lead worship or taught a Wednesday night service. I also helped build the We Care building about 1 ½ days a week. There were also plenty of fun-filled weekends and group activities.



The young adults spend time worshipping their Maker on the beach.

Sheila - I worked in the office most of the time, bookkeeping, designing the newsletter, and any other jobs for Don and Dave.

2. Describe your spiritual growth and any learning experiences you have had during the term?

Jake - I have grown more in my spiritual walk in these few months than all of last year. I have learned to trust God with my life, and I have found out that prayer is the most you can do in any situation.

Christina - God is bringing me closer to Himself by stretching me and putting me in new experiences. He is showing me the way to become the woman I want and need to be, yet at the same time showing me how far I've come so far.

Delmar - I have learned a great deal about how to relate to people who came from broken homes and no Christian influence; God's forgiveness has become more amazing to me as I see men's hearts change drastically. I believe that I have grown in the areas of leadership and wisdom as I allowed God to work through me in prison.

Blaine - I never had a deep desire to see lost people saved until I saw the needs of so many hurting people. Before I lived for the weekend; now I live to see men change their lives.

Sheila - God's really been showing me how great His grace is in my life. I can never do enough or sacrifice enough to please God. It's nothing I've done or will do, but what HE has done. Only through my weaknesses is He able to display His strength.

Maria - I'm realizing that He sees the big picture and just being able to trust Him and make my faith my own!

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Published six times a year, *The Connection* provides news and views of friends of We Care Program. We Care Program is a non-profit, interdenominational organization consisting of Christian men and women who share a burden for and commitment to helping incarcerated men and women. We are accomplishing our mission by recruiting, funding, training, placing, and administering missionary chaplains and chaplain's assistants in prisons to provide friendship evangelism, teaching, peer counseling, and encouragement.

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3. What was your most memorable moment of the term?

Delmar - My most memorable moment was when God worked in a conversation with an inmate so that he went from "needing someone to talk to, but not about spiritual things because he already knew the Bible" to re-dedicating his life to Christ.

Jake - The time at the beach when we first came to Alabama. It was the first time I had given my testimony.

Sheila - Visiting Tutwiler Annex during Crusade and understanding more of what We Care is about.

Blaine - Sharing communion with the other young adults as we watched the sun go down along the beach.

Brenda - Crusade was the highlight of my term. I really have a desire to minister in the prison and I was challenged and blessed through the experience I had. Another great thing/experience is all the amazing people that love the Lord and are all around.

4. What was the most challenging aspect of prison ministry for you?

Blaine - Preparing and teaching a lesson that will impact the lives of the men in the prison.

Brenda - Learning to love, work with, and accept all people.



Blaine Copenhaver shares the love of Christ with an inmate.

Jake - Talking to guys when I didn't know what to say. It was also hard when I couldn't see if I was making progress or not.

Christina - Letting God change my heart, make me look forward and not to my past, and put full energy and love into what I do.

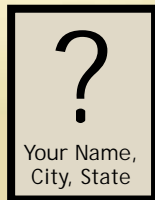
Kenton - Forcing myself to open up and just talk to complete strangers and investing time into their lives. However, once you break through, it is very fulfilling.

(continued on next page)

WANTED: YOUNG ADULTS

FOR FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION IN AMERICA'S PRISONS

Not yet captured:



Your Name,
City, State



Kenton Bucher,
Manheim, PA



Sheila Schrock,
Iowa City, IA



Jake Peters,
Winkler, MB



Christina Adams,
East Norristown, PA



Blaine Copenhaver,
Lebanon, PA



Maria Martin,
Manheim, PA



Brenda Steury,
Pleasant Lake, IN



Delmar Weiler,
East Earl, PA

Join us: October 8, 2007-
April 30, 2008

Apply by: August 15, 2007

ETERNAL REWARD

For more information contact
dave@wecareprogram.org.

5. What would you say to someone who is considering an internship with We Care Program?

Maria - Go for it! You won't regret it. It's a great place to grow closer to God and to reach out to those who are hurting!

Kenton - Ask God if "this" is you, take time to seriously listen to Him, and follow through. Don't worry about any fears you may have that may keep you from coming. God is faithful and mighty.

Jake - Are you prepared to be stretched? If you don't want to change, then don't do it. It will be hard, but you won't regret it if you go.

Delmar - I felt a distinct call to do this and that helped me from getting too depressed over seemingly unproductive days. To the person who may not sense that clear direction, it will be a challenging experience and you will grow. Maintaining a positive and determined attitude along with daily devotion to Christ is the key.



Jake Peters spends the majority of his time at Holman Correctional Facility.

Christina - Pray about it, but come if you feel led! Be fully prepared to be a part of changing someone's life and having your life changed at the same time. Be prepared to not only share God, but to get to know Him more yourself.

6. Summarize your experience in one sentence or less.

Delmar - It has been exciting, challenging, and fulfilling to follow God's clear direction.

Sheila - A time of growth, new opportunities, and great memories.

Maria - It's been a great time of growing with God and learning how to work together as a team for the glory of God.

Brenda - It's been so fulfilling, rewarding, etc...and I feel that it's exactly where I should be.

Kenton - The most stretching, challenging, helpful thing in my life that I will remember forever. 🙌

Read-A-Thon is around the

July is coming up quickly...and that means Read-a-Thon! We Care's fourth annual Read-a-Thon gives you an opportunity to help support our chaplaincy staff as they share the love of Christ with inmates.

Anyone of any age can read. Ask friends, family, and business acquaintances to sponsor you. Prizes are given to participants who raise the most funds.

Visit our website (www.wecareprogram.org) for more information and to download needed forms. Forms and information may also be requested by calling 251-368-8818.

With your help, together we can impact inmates for eternity.

corner

You Can Help!

Now that our headquarters project is nearing completion, we are realizing that some new sets of furniture would greatly compliment our new building. Following are specific items that we are still hoping to obtain:

Bedroom Suites
Living Room Suite

Large Dining Room Table and Chairs
Large Conference Table and Chairs

Also needed: Generator (45kw or larger) - 120/208V - 3 phase

Please contact Don Metzler at 251-368-8818 or don@wecareprogram.org to arrange for donations. Thank You.

News of Note

VOL. 39, NO. 2

Atmore, Alabama

May 2007

Skrant Partners with We Care Program

We welcome **Larry Skrant** as a We Care Associate. Larry is the director of **Changed Lives Ministries**, Spencer, OH. He has been involved in the past several We Care Crusades and felt led to inquire about partnering with We Care. That stirring led us to a position at Belmont Correctional Institution, St. Clairsville, OH, where Larry

will serve as a part-time assistant chaplain. What is unique and special to us about this situation is that the state chaplain at Belmont has been requesting assistance from We Care for several years, not only because he needs the help at this facility of 2800 men, but because he



Larry Skrant

believes in We Care's mission. You see, **Chaplain Jeff Burger** is a former We Care chaplain's assistant. God bless you, Larry and Chaplain Burger, as you work together to share Christ's love at Belmont.

Thank You!

A special **Thank You** to **Twin Pine Auto Group**, Ephrata, PA. Because of their generosity, we were able to purchase a 15 passenger van from them at an unbelievably discounted rate, providing us with a van that exceeded our expectations. We look forward to using it for various needs for many years to come.

Welcome Back!



Once again, we are delighted to welcome back a former staff couple, this time, **Steve and Carol Stoltzfus**, from Himrod, NY. The Stoltzfuses now bring to five the total number of former staffers serving on our team! In 1983, Steve and Carol served a one-year assignment with We Care during which Steve was an assistant chaplain at Frank

Lee Youth Center, Montgomery, AL. After 24 years, God is calling Steve to once again serve in that position. The Stoltzfuses come with the blessing of their home congregation, Cornerstone Bible Fellowship. God bless you, Steve and Carol, as you begin your time of service and adjust to life in the South again.

Construction Update

Work continues to proceed ahead of schedule, and we continue to be amazed at the provision of God throughout all aspects of the construction of our new headquarters building. We are currently finishing the plumbing and A/C work as well as painting the trim and doors. Although we have a good bit of work that is yet to be completed, we are confident enough of our progress to have set a move-in date of **June 25**, one month ahead of our projected schedule! Praise God for His faithfulness. We have certainly been recipients of and witnesses of His grace and provision throughout the entire construction process.

Feeling Called?

We are praying that God will lead someone to join our family for a term of missionary prison chaplaincy in the Atmore area. There are several opportunities to consider at Fountain and Holman. Searching for housing should not be an obstacle since we will, later this summer, have a large mobile home available on our headquarters property that would be more than adequate for a family to live in. If you have any sense of leading in this direction, please contact dave@wecareprogram.org.



Special Addition

Congratulations to **Irvin and Kathy Martin** on the birth of **Kaden Bryce** on March 5. Kenton, Michelle, Justin, and Durrell seem quite pleased to have another brother. Irvin is serving as Chaplain at J.O. Davis Correctional Center in Atmore, AL.

Spring Banquets a Success

Once again we have been tremendously blessed by the generosity of our Pennsylvania friends. Two March banquets, held at New Holland and Franconia, were attended by approximately 650

friends and supporters. Thanks to those who gave and to the businesses and individuals who underwrote the costs of the meal and program, we were blessed with donations netting over \$40,000. We

also owe our thanks to committee members **David & Mary Landis** and **Alvin & Dawn Landis** (Franconia), and **Jeff Pfautz**, **Caleb Minnich**, and **Mel Brendle**, (New Holland) for the work they did in planning and solicitation.



Montgomery, AL

Tutwiler Prison for Women

On a recent visit to the intake dorm, I ran into an inmate who had been a chapel worker in 2005. She came up to me kind of shy-like to say “hi” and ask how I was doing. I think my mouth dropped open, but I managed to ask, “What brought you back?” She told me that her sister and niece were killed in a car accident and she just gave up on life. When someone came to pick her up to take her to meet with her probation officer, she refused to leave the house, so she was back in prison for violating her probation.

Soon after arriving back at Tutwiler, she helped an inmate who was choking in the cafeteria. She managed to dislodge the blockage and was greeted with applause and cheering, which overwhelmed her. Later she got to thinking, “Maybe there is still a reason to go on living, and maybe there is a reason why I am still here.” My thoughts went to Jeremiah 29:11, “For I know the thoughts that I have toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you an expected end.”

God has given me another chance to minister to a hurting sister. There are so many wounded and so little time to minister to each one. More prayers are needed, and more workers for the harvest of souls. Is God calling you to come and help these often forgotten, hurting inmates? You supply the willingness and God will supply the power.

- Anna Miller

Staton Correctional Facility

The headline stated, “World’s tallest man saves two dolphins.” The dolphins had chewed the sides of their pool and got pieces of plastic lodged in their stomachs. Aquarium officials tried to remove the objects with instruments, but they wouldn’t reach. It took the 42-inch arms

of the world’s tallest man to reach into the dolphins, pull out the pieces of plastic, and save their lives. Without the help of Bao Xishun (7’9”), the dolphins would have died.

In Isaiah 59:1 we read, “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear.” The sin that we allow in our lives brings death. There is nothing that we, or another person, can do to get rid of the sin. We can pretend it’s not there, maybe even try to cover it up with good works. But our sin still brings death. Only Almighty God with His long reaching arms can save us. Only our heavenly Father can hear our cries of repentance. Only our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ can take away our sin by His sacrifice.

Those who are lost sometimes feel they are past the point of no return. I’ve talked to some men in prison who feel they are too far gone. They have rebelled against God their whole lives and don’t know where to start in building a relationship with Him. Some feel like maybe they have to be able to quote so many scriptures, or go so long without sinning, before God will save them. I heard an atheist say recently that Christians live lives of bondage, that we can’t really live life to its fullest. It is really the opposite. The arm of God frees us from the bondage of sin, cleanses us from all unrighteousness, and gives us an eternal home in heaven. Praise God for His “long arms”!

- Carl Carpenter

Atmore, AL

Fountain Correctional Facility

Recently I interviewed an inmate for a tutoring job in the Fountain chapel’s pre-GED program. Nothing odd there; I interview a lot of inmates. What was different about this man was that prior to our talk, I had asked several other inmates about him, and they’d given him probably the greatest compliment one inmate can pay another; they told me that “he’s real.”

When an inmate says a man is “real,” he means the man acts the same in the dorm or on the yard as he does when the chaplain is standing next to him. A real man prays and reads his Bible even when the camp is locked down. He doesn’t cuss or tell dirty jokes. His word is solid and can be taken at face value. He will work hard at any task given him. Looking back, it is the real men who have been the

most trustworthy and reliable assistants and tutors we have had.

And most important of all, when real men are transferred and you see them in another prison, or freed and you catch up with them in the free world, you will find them holding on to their integrity. A real man does not have a jailhouse conversion; a real man has had a conversion.

The interview went very well, and we will plug that inmate in as soon as there is an opening for him. For he IS a real man, and that means that he is a resource we can’t afford to waste. Real men are valuable men, and there never seem to be enough of them around.

-Mike Strehlow

Approximately seven years ago I became acquainted with one particular inmate in the Faith Dorm. He agreed to become involved in a long-term mentoring relationship. We became very good friends, and I was excited to see how he was growing in the Lord, in dorm leadership, and encouraging others. My wife and several family members had the opportunity to meet him during family nights where we ate together in the visiting yard. Our close friendship continued for at least three years until he was released almost four years ago. He moved back to northern Alabama where he got married, got a good job as a diesel mechanic, and bought a house.

Several weeks ago he called to fulfill a promise to come back to visit. That recent visit was a time I had looked forward to for seven years. My wife and I were honored to host my friend, his wife, and their two children in our home for several days. After sight-seeing, a ferry ride, eating out, four-wheeling, and a chicken barbeque, the weekend was completed by worshiping together with our local congregation on Sunday morning. At Grace Fellowship my friend was surprised to see several former inmate friends, as well as family members of some others.

It is so great to be a part of what the Lord is doing in the hearts of those behind bars as well as in the free world. The sowing - watering - mentoring relationships must continue, whether we experience the long-term connections or not. The need is so great and the opportunities are so many. How about seeing how the Lord can use you in the We Care Program ministry?

-Lester Huber

Holman Correctional Facility

On a recent morning when I arrived at the prison, I went to the chaplain's office where I was all alone for a few minutes. One of the inmates had made a video to advertise the upcoming *Long Distance Dads* class. He had done an excellent job and had put pictures to music and a few words from some of the men who had graduated from the last class. It hit me again why I am in prison ministry, to see the faces of men in prison desiring a change in their lives. That particular week had been one of those where I felt like all I did was problem-solve and deal with disciplinary issues. But at that moment God came near and I sensed His presence. I stopped and thanked God for that moment in time and was able to look at the problems as people who need the Lord. - Bob Depew

Being with We Care prison ministry for a number of years has been a desire of my heart and now hearing from some of the inmates confirms my call.

One wrote, "I'm very appreciative for We Care Prison Ministries. We Care has done a lot to foster Christian growth here at Holman prison. Lives are being changed and renewed weekly here. Prison ministry is very special and difficult work. I (we) thank God for His precious provision of We Care Prison Ministries...I'm a Bible-believing Protestant Christian who received the gracious gift of salvation shortly after my incarceration thirteen years ago. I have been up and down and side to side, but about seven years ago I began to experience real Christian maturity. I met Brother Lee in 1999 here at Holman prison. Brother Lee has [been a mentor to] me for the past eight years. We prisoners are so thankful to have free world help and support."

A note from two other inmates says, "We would like to share what our experience has been with your ministry at Holman Prison. You have contributed to the eternal salvation of our souls and the standard of our lives through your sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the example of your actions...We first met approximately ten years ago. We were immediately impressed with your genuine desire to share your personal salvation and your desire for others' salvation. All of this took place in an environment that was sin filled and full of Satan's disciples, yet you showed a fearlessness and determination that

directly resulted in the change of our personal lifestyles. Over the years we have smoked cigarettes, marijuana, and shot drugs. We are proud to say that we no longer do any of these things; we have been clean for three years and we now live in the Holman Faith-Based Honor Dorm. We both work for the chaplain's office both directly and indirectly, and we are strong believers in Christ. We have expressed the heartfelt gratitude and unquestionable need we have for your ministry." - Lee Hochstetler

Century, FL

Century Correctional Institution

Over the past few years I've taught numerous different classes in several prisons. Recently, I finished a class of Bible studies taken from Genesis 1-11. The final tests are graded, and now I need to print certificates for the men. Most of the men look forward to getting a certificate of completion. Many of them dropped out of school and never received a high school diploma, so getting a certificate can be a big deal to them.

Before long I will be starting another *Long Distance Dads* class. This will be my ninth time teaching this twelve-week course and my first time at Century CI. The course covers many different topics, such as nurturing, being consistent, being involved, learning when to let children learn on their own, and how not to smother their children by being too demanding or overbearing. Dealing with anger, responsibilities, failures, etc. can be scary for some of these dads. Most of them did not have a loving dad as a role model.

Another class I teach is called *Living Victoriously in Christ*. This course deals with sexual idolatry and requires the students to spend a lot of time in the Bible. The premise of this course is that as men yield every other area of their lives to God, they will then also be able to live victoriously in this battle. In the process of teaching this class and grading these lessons, I find it very rewarding to see some of the men gain understanding and deep spiritual truths. Sometimes they surpass my knowledge and experience a powerful insight that really

Sometimes they surpass my knowledge and experience a powerful insight that really strengthens their faith.

strengthens their faith. Experiencing this with them is awesome. I marvel with them at God's grace and how He ministers to us and becomes more and more precious. I also get to enjoy some of the creative thoughts that they write. Not long ago, I came across a classic one. The topic for that day was dealing with Solomon and how his many wives led him into idolatry. One particular inmate was struck with the fact that "Solomon had 700 wives, 300 girlfriends, and 1,000 mothers-in-law!" I trust that most of the men reading this article have a great mother-in-law, as I do, but for many of these inmates in-law relationships were/are far from pleasant. This being true, imagine what a nightmare this observation could bring! Yet what a joy for me to see him perceive a concept not readily seen on the surface.

- Marvin Bender

Marysville, OH

Ohio Reformatory for Women

"Oh, I believe in God! I've believed in God all my life." Her father died in January. She thought she'd dealt with his death fairly well but admitted that when she thought about him she felt bad to her stomach. In fact, her whole body felt bad. Then she admitted she felt guilty because she'd made him take out a loan from a loan shark so she could get more drugs—which landed her in prison.

"What can be done about that guilt?" I asked, since she had already stated she believed in God.

"I guess nothing. My father's gone. I guess I'll have to learn to live with it," she said wearily. I explained to her that, by God's grace, 2,000 years ago her sins had all been put on Jesus Christ, and the anger God felt at what she had done was all vented on Jesus, if she could accept His forgiveness by faith. We talked more as she sat there open-mouthed. "That's just not right...it just breaks my heart...I'll have to think about that," she said quietly. When I explained the Grace Exchange where He not only took her sins but gave her His righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21), she looked at me and smiled, "I already feel lighter."

I believe she now "believes in God" more than ever. - Wilma Mullet

PERSPECTIVES

with David R. Landis
President

I'd love to hear from you.
Contact me at
dave@wecareprogram.org



As you will notice by reading our cover article, the Young Adult Internship is a growing, vital aspect of We Care Program. I marvel that, despite the negativity that often characterizes the portrayal of young people today, there are still some who are passionate about their walk with Jesus.

This should be a living testimony and example to some of us, myself included, that there can be a lifestyle that demonstrates humility, servanthood, and devotion to the causes that so touched the heart of Christ. When I stop for a moment to imagine the pictures of servitude that are taking place throughout our ministry sphere that include these young adults, I see examples of what Jesus so readily demonstrated for us.

First, He left His home environment and pursued the mission and calling that His Father had ordained for Him. These young adults have left the familiarity of their home communities, their friends, their churches, their families, and their social networks. In a day and age where occupational status is elevated above sacrificial service, this step in itself is one that deserves commendation. Only God knows what impact this time of service will have on their future, but it is evident from the many who have gone before them that a unique perspective and deeper wisdom is gained for future work and ministry that cannot be learned in any other way except to get in the trenches and serve the hurting.

Not only did Jesus leave His home, He went where others would not go. He spent time with sinners. Somehow, in the purity of His motivation, He was able to acquaint Himself with those who were tainted, but not be

tainted Himself. In fact, His presence more often resulted in transformed lives. These young adults have ministered to the "least of these." The young men have spent a majority of their time being friends with men in prison. The young women have spent the majority of their time serving in a home for children of incarcerated mothers. Truly most today would not consider these worthwhile causes. Although the results of their labors may not be immediately evident, I believe there will be evidence of their labors in eternity, and I know they have witnessed at least some measure of heart change toward Christ.

Having overseen numerous young adults serve their terms in the last several years, I can say that I have been enriched to have worked alongside these young men and women. They remind me that God is still moving in the hearts of Christian young adults today. They are an example to me of persons who are pursuing a higher call, willing to go where needed and be used in whatever capacities are asked of them. Despite frustrations and disappointments, they have persevered. Not only have they made a difference in the lives of those who they came to show God's love to, they have also been a blessing to our We Care Family as well. Thank you, Blaine*, Delmar, Kenton*, Jake, Sheila*, Brenda*, Maria, and Christina!

**Blaine and Kenton have extended their terms with We Care. Sheila's one-year assignment will conclude at the end of July, and Brenda will be remaining on staff at the Adullam House, Wetumpka, AL. 🏹*



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