

Forum For Understanding Prisons (FFUP)

A 501c3 non profit

Mission statement

FFUP is a prisoner support group dedicated to finding ways in which concerned citizens can make changes in our justice system. We believe community involvement in the justice system is mandatory if our communities are to be healthy and truly safe. We write to prisoners from Wisconsin and around the country, work with family members, advocate within the system, and help spread the word to our fellow citizens that we citizens are responsible for the well being of those we lock up- that every prisoner has a story.

Contact information:

**FFUP; c/o 29631 Wild Rose Drive
Blue River, WI 53518; 608- 546-3993;
contact: pgswan3@yahoo.com;
www.prisonforum.org**

For the same crimes, Americans give sentences with lengths twice that of the English, three times that of the Canadians, four times the Dutch, five times the Swedes and 5 to 10 times as long as French. Yet these countries' rates of violent crime are lower than ours, and their rates of property crime are comparable.

Incarceration rates for blacks and Latinos are now more than six times higher than for whites.

*From: "UNLOCKING AMERICA", a study done by US prison "experts" thru the JFA Institute ;
www.jfa-associates.com; recommended to all*

FFUP's overall Goals

- 1) A wise prison policy based on the reality of who we have incarcerated and studies showing programs that work, not on politically generated hysteria.
- 2) We work to spread the message that we are all brothers and sisters and those that are abused learn to abuse unless there is healthy intervention that teaches another way.
- 3) We need to put our energies into growing healthy vibrant communities that can support families that are in trouble with treatment instead of incarceration, with programs for kids, college diplomas, and jobs instead of gangs, isolation and thuggery.
- 3) Punishment has a place but should be meted out with love and respect and the sure knowledge that we are molding the future. Revenge has no place in a wise system for it breeds anger and continues the cycle of violence. We need to claim our hearts and brains back and proclaim that a humane system is also the safest and costs the least. Respect for all is needed.



Let's stop the cycle:
Monkey bars to prison bars.
Drawing by WI prisoner, DarRen Morris

Snap Shot of Problems/the FFUP View

- 1) Our prisons are now the defacto mental institutions in the country and segregation units are the new bedlam. IF we have the courage to open our hearts, look, listen and feel, we can do better.
- 2) Our spending on corrections is out of control, unquestioned and unmonitored. Our prisons are jammed with people who should not be there. We incarcerate more and longer than any other country in the world. You know how many inner city kids we could send to a college or tech school on the 20 to 60 thou a year we spend to incarcerate one person? It costs about \$4000 a semester at UW Lacrosse, less at a tech school. Why track inner city these kids to prison? Why not to apprenticeships and college and good jobs? Alternatively, we could follow Minnesota's lead, make our communities safe and use the money saved to we could pay down the deficit. Don't listen to the fear mongering.
- 3) There is precious little treatment in prison. The rehabilitation that does go on, happens in spite of a heartless system not because of it. Future generation will look on in awe and outrage at the inhumanity we have perpetrated here. We can look at it now and change it.
- 4) FFUP works with many prisoners who are yearning to study and gain skills and cannot get the materials or tutors. Many leave prison that cannot fill out an application form. And we, the citizenry, give the DOC almost no support for the rehabilitation efforts it does make.

FFUP PROJECTS
Hub of work is directly with prisoners:

1) Answering letters from prisoners. We advocate for them and help teach them and their family members to advocate for themselves.

2) We Give voice to prisoners through blogs and website. Hundreds of prisoners have their profiles art and writings on our web and blogs.

3) A major work is with the mentally ill in segregation units, many of whom try to harm themselves. At present time, we are working with prisoners on newsletter and mail mentoring project and are trying to establish a working relationship with some staff to improve conditions n segregation. **Outreach Work**

4) Education campaign to show legislatures that they can drop their knee jerk tough on crime stand and to advance a wiser prison policy which has prevention and treatment as first priorities and uses incarceration last.

5) Putting pressure on DOC and congress to release prisoners who are eligible and ready for parole. WI is spending \$20 to 60 thousand a year each on 4000 plus "Old Law" prisoners: those convicted before the truth in sentencing law in 1991. This law required future sentences to be restructured and served in full. The DOC policy is to hold each of the "Old law" prisoners for as long as possible even though all are eligible for release and many committed their crimes 30 or more years ago and are now different men

6) Two Bill Proposals, one for juveniles waived into adult court, the other for the elderly. We are working with a legislative aide to finish these two proposals and will present them to the legislature and to the public to show there is support for giving a second chance to prisoners who are no longer dangerous.

Dreams

We hope to work closely with other grassroots organizations , like the 11X15 campaign, to form a coalition where we complement each other's efforts and together help develop an effective safety net for those most vulnerable while developing a real release

pathway for prisoners who have served their time, rehabilitated themselves and are ready for a full life free in the world. In addition to this we will all have to work to make sure programs and materials for personal learning and advancement are made available to those already in prisons.

Prisons should not be a jobs program , We need to start this discussion:

WHAT ARE OUR PRISONS FOR?



Protest: Scholarships cut as Michigan spends more on prisoners than college students.



Protest: "Please save my daddy's job": protest at Michigan prison closing



2007 protest in Madison by friends and families of prisoners: "return our loved ones"

Where your donations go:

Money: All funds go to FFUP projects. We put out newsletters and mailings; help indigent prisoners with postage, hygiene supplies, internet glasses, books, long underwear etc. For the general population, copying and postage is a main expense.

Funds are needed especially now are: Reading, educational material for mentally ill in segregation.

Time: Volunteers are needed to help with internet, fundraising projects, and brainstorming. We help prisoners get their voices heard through our blogs, all linked to web www.prisonforum.org.

We are setting up a by-mail mentoring program for segregation units, volunteers needed.

Always, prisoners need penpals. Contact FFUP to get involved with this.

Volunteers are needed to help with internet, fundraising projects, and brainstorming.

There are many ideas for the future and help is welcome on any level. Please contact FFUP if you are interested in helping or have questions. All ideas welcome.

608-536-3993; pgswan3@yahoo.com

Send donations to:

FFUP;

c/o 29631 Wild Rose Drive, Blue River, WI 53518

All are tax deductible

Make checks out to: FFUP Fund

FOLLOW MINNESOTA: According to the non-profit WISTAX:

In 2008, corrections WI spent 133 % more than MN, and had

13,613 more inmates than its neighbor. MN puts its corrections money into the community's hands which set up treatment and prevention programs. The crime rates are about equal for both states.

IN 2008, Corrections was Wisconsin's third-largest general fund program behind only the UW System and school aids. (Corrections spending surpassed UW funding in 2010.)

