



**Strafford County Department of Corrections**

# **Family Newsletter**

**October 2008**

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Dear Readers,

The article below was submitted by a father who is very proud of his daughter and carries this article with him. He requested that it might be submitted in the upcoming newsletter. I decided to submit it in both the family and inmate newsletter. I received not only his permission but his daughter's permission to share this very powerful writing with you. I also learned that today she attends college and is a very good student. In sharing this article with my Family Reception Center Volunteers it was decided that we might poll families to see if there is need or desire to offer a support group again for children or families that have loved ones incarcerated. We will be soliciting your input on this question in the very near future. If you wish to call me on this subject please grab my card and call or simply speak to my volunteers. Please remember it will not be counseling but merely a support group.

Marilyn Allen, Family Reception Center Coordinator

The blue and red beams of the squad car send light skittering into the deserted parking lot, briefly illuminating the darkened scene before plunging it back into darkness. I press my tiny hands against the rain speckled window and listen to the gentle hum of the heater. My vision is momentarily blurred as my warm breath hits the cool window, wiping away the misty vapor; I am once again exposed to the nightmare outside the car. My father stands a few feet from the car, his hands shoved deeply into the pockets of his worn sweatpants. His face swims in and out of colored shadow as the lights of the police car continue their timeless rotations. I watch as the queer light plays with the contours of my father's expressionless face. Nothing happens. Suddenly, the officers reach for their guns. Scrunching my eyes shut, I throw myself onto the floor and wait for the inevitable. Moments pass like years but nothing happens. I edge onto the seat and bring myself back to the window. The slumped figure of my father sits in the backseat of the squad car. Yanking the handle of the door, I throw myself into the night. I run toward my father but am quickly caught and pushed back into the car by my mother. I scream and toss my tiny body against the door. My little fists bang against the window as sobs wrack my body. I curl into a tiny ball and listen as the police car takes away my innocence.

The night my father was arrested was a night that forever changed my life. I saw my father in a different light from then on, a light that played with the contours of his face and changed the relationship that we shared. My father had always been my rock; he grounded me and made sure that I kept my head on straight. I always looked up to him, always felt safe in his arms. After that night, the arms that had for so long comforted me became icy and my perfect illusion of happiness shattered. I watched as my world crumbled and our family fell apart. In the instant it took to secure my father's handcuffs, my innocence was lost. For most of my life I have blamed my father for the things that have gone wrong. I always felt that had he been different, had he been there for me, my life would have been easier. My father's guidance and support would have no doubt had a large impact on my life but it is I who am in charge of my future and my own happiness. I had thrown away too much of my life being unhappy about things I cannot control.

Growing up I have found that happiness is something that is self-created and often self-destructed. Blaming my father was frivolous and mistaken. I see now that my misguided anger only hindered my vision and determination. Life is fleeting and I was selling myself short by allowing past mistakes to dictate my future. My father's arrest took so many things away from me, but it also *gave me* much more that my father ever could. From my hurt and pain I became strong and learned to stand on my own feet. Being lost for such a long time gave me the opportunity to discover who I was and where I was going with my life. My father showed me what I didn't want to become and the type of life that I never wanted to live. My father influences me every day of my life; locked away in a cell, he gives me everything I need to be exactly who I am. I can't foresee the future and I still have a lot to learn, but I know that where I am going is much different than where I have been. ~ L.B.

## Greetings from Programs!

Programs has several new volunteers that will be assisting with education, spiritual services and AA meetings.

Since our last report we have had 5 more inmate students pass the GED exam and several more are awaiting their results! GED education is offered free of charge to inmates at Strafford County DOC. We have some excellent teachers and volunteer tutors that can assist you in earning your GED diploma. Submit a request to programs if you have not already signed up!

Each graduating class is asked by Dover Adult Learning Center to share what their GED graduation means to them. Here is the response by a recent graduate. The graduate allowed me to submit it.

Congratulations to all who find the courage to move forward to accomplish this significant milestone and thank you to the graduate who has submitted their response. Hopefully it will give someone else the support needed to also try. I myself did not start college until I was 34.

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### What Adult Education Means to Me

Adult education means to me, that I am no longer referred to or think of myself as a "failure," a "drop-out," a "statistic," or "under-achiever." From this day forward, I am simply "a high school education achiever," which means many things for me. It forever and instantly changes a lifetime of negative feelings and self-loathing. It restores my hope and promise for the future. It means I now have courage, pride and determination, where once there was a debilitating shame, regret and humiliation. More personally for me, it means I have finally fulfilled and kept the promise of 35 years ago, of a little boy to his dying mother, "to graduate and get a good education."

Like many of my fellow achievers, I procrastinated and avoided taking that first step, afraid of failing, feeling great doubt and trepidation, overwhelmed by the task before me and even a sense of embarrassment and humiliation, especially at my age of 47, for having never graduated in the first place. These feelings have marked my entire adult life with self-loathing and many regrets for what might have been, leaving me burdened with a heavy load of self doubt and a shameful secret I carried all my life. Not finishing high school or earning my G.E.D. diminished not only my career and the dreams of college to become a great writer and author, but my very identity. The most debilitating issue for me, personally, was the broken promise of a little boy to his dying mother in a hospital bed some 35 years ago, "to finish school go on to college" and become a great writer, so that I would, someday, finish and publish a book of short stories I started as a little boy, as a way to comfort and share with my mother, while riding at train each week to Boston to visit her at the hospital.

Now at last, "That some day has arrived!" For now I will "get back on that train" and finish the dream and promise of that little boy to go to college and become a writer, completing that book of stories to my mother, started so long ago. The dream now is to travel by train all across the country, meeting with other children of a terminally ill parent, to give their stories, their pain, their experiences and memories a voice and place in this book, to share with their own mother or father and perhaps share the gift and joy of writing, which I now have the opportunity to fulfill.

While many of my fellow achievers and graduates may come to this moment much younger than I, your hopes, your dreams and aspirations for your future lay brightly out before you for many years to come. I, however, at the age of 47 have a different yet equally hope filled vantage point to ponder and inspire me, as I look back at the past with an eye on my future. Finally free of the shame, regrets, humiliation and excuses. Replaced now with enthusiasm, hope and determination. This one thin sheet of paper has turned a life of shame into pride, humiliation into humbled gratitude and accomplishment.

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The barrier of not having a diploma is removed now. Nothing can stop me from achieving my goals, though the dream and promise of every little boy or girl to grow up to be president or a great statesman or ambassador on the world stage my have passed me by. Perhaps this day and this moment have equal promise and ever greater opportunity, by allowing me to be a great statesman or ambassador of sorts, of a different kind, on a different stage. By using myself, at my age and my story as an example, that with the help, resources and staff like those of the Dover Adult Learning Center, it's never too late to pursue an education, to achieve your goals and reach for your dreams. No matter what age or obstacles you may face, it's never too late, and always, always worth the effort. That this one this sheet of paper does make all the difference in the world; it did in mine and it will in yours too! And "that's what adult education means to me."  
~ L.E., May 27, 2008

**I wanted you all to read this article published in the Fall 2008 Sentencing Times This newsletter is part of the efforts of the Sentencing Project. In the August issue of our own Inside/Out newsletter as well as the Family Newsletter I spoke to you about the importance of voting as soon as your rights are restored. It is a form of empowerment of great importance. This is the story of one man's journey to accomplish just that and so much more. I hope it will inspire you to believe in the possibilities for your own efforts for positive growth in your life.**

**Marilyn Allen- Newsletter Editor**

### ***Activist Casts First Vote***

*Andres Idarraga had never cast a vote before he went to prison for six years at age 20.*

*When he was released in 2004, he realized he would not be eligible to vote until age 58. Rhode Island law barred people with felony convictions from voting until after completion of parole and probation.*

*In 2006, Andres helped organize voters to approve a successful referendum effort that restored voting rights to individuals upon release from prison.*

*Andres voted for the first time in the recent primary election and now looks forward to the presidential election.*

"I got to vote in the primaries and I was excited about that. I am now becoming more analytical about the election and paying a lot more attention to specific issues," the recent Brown University graduate said.

Andres started Yale Law School this fall, hoping to defend young people's access to a quality education.

## A Flower in the Wind by T.L.

I love to admire a flower in the wind  
And sometimes a petal will fall  
A rose of red in its full bloom today  
Is beautiful after all

I watch the flower as it tilts to the side  
The wind just seems to help her grow  
Her awesome color of silk so soft  
I shall carry through my thoughts as I go

I love to smell her fragrance in the breeze  
This brings to my nose a smell  
Of clouds and dreams of wonderful gardens  
In a sky of flower shows, "I shall dwell"

A wind of magic in the days  
When this flower puts on her grace  
She brightens the most beautiful of flower beds  
And brings such life to my face

"Oh shine" you magnificent flower for me  
In the wind you shall play a song  
Called I am the most beautiful flower there is  
And in the days I shall be here so long

Submitted by D.R.

### *A Prayer to the Lord*

*Lord, let the light shine  
Within every prisoner's soul  
Let us refuse the Devil's wine  
That makes a heart turn cold.*

*For prison is a place  
Where all the wrong must go  
Still there is God's grace  
Though the time passes real slow.*

*Let every inmate rejoice to God  
And each do a daily good deed  
Into the past let no prisoner prod  
And Lord, let no loneliness breed.*

*So Lord, Let there be peace  
To sooth each prisoner's pain  
Yes, Lord let every trouble cease  
As Your love shines through all  
this rain*

*Author unknown*

Dear Readers,

Thank you to all who participated in voting for "pick your favorite food." I received fifty-nine voting slips back.

The results of your voting for your favorite food indicates that your favorite breakfast main dish is eggs (particularly scrambled) followed very closely by French toast, and your favorite breakfast sweet is scones. At lunch Italian subs were the favorite. Tuna and meatball subs were winners at dinner with chicken in various forms also being very popular. The top dessert choice was cheese-cake followed closely by ice cream and then chocolate cake or any chocolate dessert coming in third.

The information gathered has been submitted to the head of dietary. I hope this was a fun activity.

Marilyn Allen

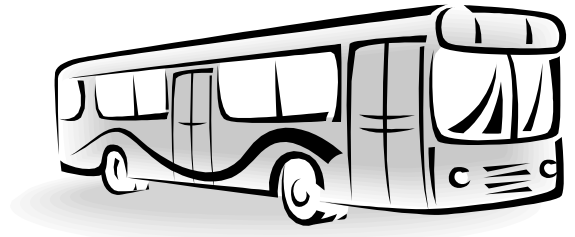
### Submitted by D.R.



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## Fast transit coming to Dover

By Leslie Modica



DOVER — Holiday shoppers will be able to pass on downtown parking congestion this year after the city rolls out the first route of the long-anticipated FastTrans service.

The city and the Cooperative Alliance for Seacoast Transportation (COAST) are hoping to launch the new "flexible route" system around Thanksgiving with the first available run to link the downtown transportation center to the city's North End.

The Sixth Street route of the service will feature several scheduled stops along the northern corridor, including the Strafford County Complex, the Exit 9 Park and Ride, Liberty Mutual and Measured Progress, Dover Transportation Planner Bruce Woodruff said.

COAST has long run a scheduled bus service in Dover, but it is the Dover-tailored flexibility of the planned FastTrans service that makes it one-of-a-kind in the area.

Rather than limiting riders to a rigid pickup and drop-off schedule, FastTrans will feature "call stops" that allow passengers to call the COAST dispatch to schedule a pickup at one of several stops in the neighborhood.

For a \$1.50 fee, residents can then hitch a ride to anywhere along the typical route, and eventually, to the transportation center where riders would have the option of riding the FastTrans to other parts of the city.

"In the end it's not a loop and not a straight line service," Woodruff said. "It's a pulse that has specific ends and beginnings and a couple of mainline stops."

Woodruff said the city is hoping to add a second route, which would serve the Portland Avenue and Henry Law Avenue area of the city in the spring.

A third route in the southwestern portion of the city may be launched sometime next year. The initial planning for the service has been in the works for nearly a decade, and with increasing gas prices, Woodruff said the final stages could not come at a better time for passengers.

"This route will allow (riders) to get to the Park and Ride and go to work without taking their car every day of the week," Woodruff said.

Woodruff added that the service will help "make the connections" to the various hot spots in the city and give visitors a chance to come to Dover without ever bringing their cars.

And more people using public transportation means fewer cars on the roads and taking up parking spaces downtown.

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"We're really integrating all aspects of transportation and parking for the downtown, especially for the big traffic generators," Woodruff said. "We have the ability to make the downtown more walkable and livable. Plus it's making the air better and saving gas for folks. It's a great economic benefit."

COAST has already put in orders for two 16- to 18-passenger buses for the route, but will likely be running its regular buses until those arrive, Woodruff said.

The entire project is being funded without municipal property tax dollars by using federal grants secured by COAST, state grants secured by the city and the city's transportation reserve fund, which is generated through vehicle registration fees paid by residents.

Strafford County will also pay for a portion of the service in exchange for providing a stop at the county complex.

The city was approved by the state Department of Transportation for a \$500,000 Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) grant in 2000, but Woodruff said inflation since the funds were granted has pushed the estimated costs of the project to about double the funds currently secured, making it impossible to run the service with three full routes for three years as originally planned.

He said the city plans to meet with state officials on Nov. 19 to try to secure additional CMAQ funding for the project.

If additional money is not granted, the city will likely run two routes for about 18 months to two years, Woodruff said.

Once CMAQ funds run out, the city may choose to continue running the program out of the Transportation Reserve Fund, which Woodruff said is estimated to take in between \$160,000 and \$180,000 annually in the future and would likely be able to sustain the service.

In the meantime, both the city and COAST are moving forward quickly with hopes to have the first route online before the holiday season so residents can begin to learn first-hand about the service.

"We're out to prove that this will be a success and the proof will be in the pudding," Woodruff said.

