

PRISONER VISITATION AND SUPPORT

A volunteer visitation
program to federal and
military prisoners
throughout the United
States

Hello PVS Community:

As we begin a new year, we wish you good health in what we hope will be the waning months of the pandemic. It has been a long year for all of us, and we are particularly mindful of the people we serve who have been doubly impacted by imprisonment and deadly disease.

At PVS, we have been working to bridge the pandemic gap between our volunteer visitors and the people they visit. Early in the pandemic, the federal Bureau of Prisons allowed PVS volunteers to write letters for the first time in decades. While everyone agrees it is not the same as face-to-face contact, we've heard from visitors and inmates alike that letter-writing has been a lifeline in maintaining relationships.

We are also working to make sure that our visitors are ready to go back to visiting when the time comes. Our volunteer Training Team is putting together the finishing touches on a much-needed updated training manual, and Zoom is at least allowing us some "face to face" onscreen training.

Here at the PVS office in Philadelphia, Eileen, Emily and I continue to be grateful for the volunteers and supporters who are the backbone of the organization. You make sure that the people we serve in prison are not forgotten, but are treated with the humanity they deserve. Thank you.

Molly

PVS Welcomes New Board Members

Over the past few months, PVS has welcomed three new members of our Board of Directors. We appreciate their time, energy and dedication on behalf of PVS!

Michael Guerra is an attorney based in Brooklyn, NY and new to PVS. He won the New York Bar Association's 2018 Jeremy G. Epstein Award for Outstanding Pro Bono Service based on work on behalf of undocumented immigrants. "While the country confronts significant challenges, the mission of PVS becomes even more pertinent and valuable," Mike says, "and I hope the Board can find ways to amplify that message at a critical time for the organization and the nation."

Liz Leshner is retired and busier than ever! She has been a PVS visitor at FCI El Reno in Oklahoma for six years, but has been visiting prisons much of her life as the daughter of parents who visited while she was growing up in England. Liz

says: "As a PVS Board Member, I look forward to being in a position to support PVS in urgent consultation with the new administration, addressing the heightened level of distress – faced by both prison staff and prisoners – at this 'dark' time of incarceration."

Tom Slick, a retired financial executive, has been a visitor at FCI Sheridan in Oregon since 2009, an experience he has described as transformative. "PVS visitors, staff and board members make up a wealth of talent," Tom says. "It is my hope in serving on the board that we can garner sustainable financial resources to support these individuals as they work to achieve our mission which is to provide prisoners with regular, face-to-face, contact from the world outside of prison to help them cope with prison life and prepare for a successful re-entry into society."

Stay Tuned for PVS' New Look!

After 50 years, our logo was looking a little dated (don't we all?). Be on the lookout for our new, refreshed look – coming soon to PVS materials near you!

Testimony from a Prisoner

"For the time we sit together all the walls and razor wire melt away. Just two friends drinking soft drinks and talking about life, family, current events, and the future. For those precious few hours I am no longer in prison because the outside free world was brought to me."

Gregory Marcinski
FCI Otisville

[Click here to read Gregory's full testimonial on being visited by PVS.](#)

Prison Issue Highlight: Mourning Our Losses

[Mourning Our Losses](#) is a crowd-sourced memorial to honor the lives of people who died in prisons, jails, and immigration detention facilities in the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The site seeks to restore dignity to the faces and stories behind the statistics of death and illness from behind bars. They believe that a loss of any human life warrants mourning. They offer a platform for grief, healing, community, and reflection for all those touched by this preventable tragedy.

You can visit the website and sign up for their newsletter [here](#).

Volunteers Needed!

Looking to help PVS in a different way? We'd love to talk! We are looking for volunteers to help us in several areas:

- **Training Team:** For visitors looking to share or expand their skills. Monthly Zoom meetings and follow-up tasks, helping PVS ensure visitors are comfortable and following the necessary rules.
- **Fundraising/Development:** PVS receives no government or other

institutional funding. We have a great base of support, but it could be bigger! Help us raise money to expand our visiting to more prisons and eliminate our waiting lists!

- **Finance:** Any bookkeepers out there? As a small organization with a staff that “does it all,” we could use some help with our books.
- **I.T.:** See above – if you have expertise with setting up networks or using technology to improve efficiency, we’d love to hear from you!

If you are interested in volunteering for PVS in these or any other ways, shoot us an email at pvs@prisonervisitation.org or give us a call at (215) 241-7117.

In Memorium

In 2020, we lost many treasured current and former visitors.

Georgiana Williams, FCI Ashland
James Reilly, FMC Devens
Fiora Houghteling, FMC Devens
Michael Alliston, FMC Fort Worth
Mary Ann Marcus, FCI Phoenix
Sister Monique Schwirtz, FCI Waseca

Susannah Makes

Would your Valentine like a piece of one-of-a-kind handmade jewelry?

At [Susannah Makes](#), your gift will also express your love for PVS!

Susannah has several new pairs of the popular earrings with Roman Era Glass and some lovely new beaded necklaces.

As always, all proceeds from Susannah Makes go to PVS!

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