

# NOTES FROM PVS STATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT

OCTOBER, 23, 2010

## I. Discussion on Mission Statement

- “S” for “Support” is frustrating. We are not allowed to communicate outside of visits or follow-up after release, so visitors do not feel as if they are providing true support.
- This issue has been evolutionary and hits the reality of dealing with the BOP. Over time they have tightened up the rules on all visitors and volunteers.
- Should we add “private” prisons to federal and military?
- The terms “we offer friendship and a listening ear to help prisoners prepare to assume a useful place in society” really opens the door on re-entry issues but what does that mean programmatically and practically for PVS?
- “To be attentive listeners” is critical because this is our unique promise and purpose. We are different from other groups, such as prison ministries, because we are a meeting of just two people for an hour to achieve a level of intimacy. And we do this almost as an act of civil disobedience that in the face of the “lock them up” mentality, we bring humanity and both the visitor and the prisoner benefit.
- We should consider eliminating the word “friendship”. Should we add the word “mentors”, but if we do, how do we resolve issues of follow-up support?
- We do prioritize prisoners on death row, segregation and those with long sentences.
- Mission Statements should have: 1) opportunities or needs we address – purpose, 2) what we are doing to address those needs – business, and 3) what principles or beliefs guide our work
- How have changing realities impacted our mission and how should we change it?

## II. How are PVS goals and priorities set?

- By funding first, Director and Tradition; the Board is part of that tradition.
- We are not setting goals or priorities but we are drifting; we are reactive not proactive.
- Executive Committee and Board set short term goals of 3-6 months.
- We did not implement prior long range plan, in reality, many decisions are made locally not at the national level.
- Executive Director and Board should focus on big picture thinking, vision and moving forward.
- How do we communicate our vision and mission? In the recruitment process, at the Workshop, local coordinators communicate it as does the Executive Director.

- We do not plan well in funds management, we apply our limited funding to where the fire is, not where we would like it to be.

### **III. What competencies do we bring to carry out our mission?**

- We have the ability to collaborate with the prison system, which is increasing crowded and less humane. We have to be careful that we are not co-opted by the systems. Do we work “with” the system or “in” it?
- Our visitors have a combination of skills and traits: open minded, little prejudice, non-judgmental, self-disciplined, willing to follow instructions and accept roles, patient and tolerant of frustrations such as just getting in, supportive, focused on visit.
- We are not an advocacy organization and we understand corrections and the reality of security.
- We focus on the visitor – this is the essential piece of PVS.
- Prisoners also need to be competent and work through the rigors of requesting visits and processing. We need to keep perspective that we are likely getting the more competent prisoners who volunteer. The prisoner also needs to be non-judgmental.
- Our long term success is also a competency.

### **IV. Review of pie charts and funding and where we spend time**

- There is some confusion regarding the definition of “staff” – paid versus unpaid.
- Some Board members spend time in visitation – does this divert time away from Board tasks?
- Little time is spent by the Board and staff on fundraising. There is also little time spent on evaluation.
- In many organizations Board members are major sources of funding. Visitors are a huge source for PVS, not just in donations, but in their hidden costs of time and transportation. PVS is volunteer owned and operated. If we accounted for the visitors’ time, energy and commitment and expenses it would be huge. So it needs to be a major organizational priority to see to the “care and feeding” of visitors. We need to sustain their commitment and the Workshop is a key piece of this.
- Relationship building among visitors, person to person, is as important as the relationship with the people in prison. This is why the local coordinator is so important.
- Who is our customer? Visitors, staff, BOP, and prisoners.

### **V. Partnerships and Cooperative Agreements**

- BOP, DOD and AFSC are partners.

- So are the spectrum of religious organizations that facilitate a sense of mission and ethical necessity of serving prisoners.
- Also are the services and support of all sponsoring organizations. We need to reactivate some of these sponsors, especially those we have a spiritual connection with in mission. Do we have an antiquated list of sponsors? It may be that the organization is not providing a great deal of support, but they are a fertile place to find visitors and contributors.
- CFC and private companies are also partners.

## **VI. Competitors**

- We do not have relationships with prison ministry organizations such as Prison Fellowship, Crossroads, Aleph and Kairos, but we compete in the same volunteer pool.
- Their mission is somewhat different. They want to build their organization not just connect person to person.
- Restorative Justice Organizations; state legal prison societies and other organizations are also competitors.

## **VII. What are our goals and what changes are needed?**

- Need to expand the number of volunteers and locations visited and grow as the prison system grows.
- Need to expand staff by 2-3.
- Need to create a deeper impact and empower and train volunteers to be even more effective. Can we help them with techniques to draw out a prisoner and provide survival techniques for visiting?
- Need to assess the impact of visits on prisoners.
- Need to clean up office efficiencies and lower dependence on paper processes. We need to develop archive systems and automate reports. It is difficult to work on strategic issues if you are buried in paper. Board needs to support staff in providing efficiencies.
- Should explore PVS' involvement in mentoring and prisoner re-entry.
- Need to establish a planning and evaluation process for staff and the Board. It should have a developmental intent.
- Need to increase commitment and participation in fund raising. Fund raising is a means to end to achieve our goals.
- Need to plan for succession in Board and staff and capture institutional memory. Before this we need to know where we want PVS to go.

- Need to develop new kinds of partnerships with Criminal Justice programs for interns, organizations such as Volunteers of America and national prison chaplaincy groups.
- Need to plan for significant mission changes in the event DOD or BOP are subject to political or policy changes that would significantly cut the number of visits.
- Need to develop performance measures on how we are doing and goal achievement by identifying 4 or 5 key measures that we track constantly.
- Need to diversify staff, Board and visitors.
- Need to increase public education and support.

*Based on the discussions of goals and needs, the Board decided to initiate four task forces.*

#### **VIII. Task force #1 – Increasing the number of visits and number of facilities visited**

- Part of this goal is to give priority to facilities with waiting lists and where there is currently no visiting taking place. We prioritize high security (USPs) facilities first then medium security (FCIs). It is important to resolve the issues of setting priorities since this impacts recruiting, local coordinators, and other staff efforts.
- Action plan for increasing visits includes:
  - Using available data, analyze the current list of prisons, number of visitors for each and waiting lists for each.
  - Use this information and PVS's emphasis on high security and medical facilities to design recruiting and training priorities.
  - Staff and local coordinators will assist in achieving priorities.
  - Should also develop a process to establish priorities in the future. Consider establishing a Program committee on Board to establish priorities and drive increases in visitors.
  - Board will assist to match funding to priorities. We believe clarifying priorities will allow us to expand our capacity more efficiently.

#### **IX. Task Force #2 – Improve quality and impact of visits**

- We need more feedback from prisoners on what they find useful on visits. Action steps on this goal include:
  - Developing 2-4 questions for visitors to ask prisoners to gather feedback, then collect and analyze information.
  - Train visitors who need help in taking prisoners to a deeper levels and draw out inmates. This can be included in next year's workshop and as best practices.
  - Encourage local coordinators to develop visitors, speak with them after visits, pair them up with another volunteer and develop local solutions.

- Explore the use an intern to assist with survey development and data collection and another to accompany visits and documents observations on what works.
- The first year will be an assessment period, and then years 3 to 5 will be implementation. In later years PVS can partner with other organizations such as Kairos to boost our visitor cadre. Trainers and recruiters will have valuable input on this issue.

#### **X. Task Force #3 – Increase recognition of program**

- Who would be the intended audience for information/publicity on PVS?
  - Everyone who does not know about PVS
  - BOP staff down to line officers that can see benefits and how we consider security in our efforts.
  - Media
  - Potential Board members, volunteers and contributors, including foundations
  - Large religious communities where PVS has had successful recruiting
  - Need to expand beyond recruiting to outreach
  - It is important to bring about awareness that we serve an underserved and deprived client community with limited access to services.
- Action Plan – Year 1:
  - Develop social marketing techniques and polish and disseminate our message
  - Develop template materials for speeches, newsletter articles, brochures, and CFC events. Develop a speaker’s bureau approach and involve local coordinators to use local markets for the media templates developed.
  - Develop the processes needed for local visitors to engage religious organizations including committee structures
  - Request that sponsoring organizations put a PVS news article (which we will provide) in their newsletter annually.
  - Set aside a small advertising budget.
  - Develop anecdotal evidence of impact of PVS on inmates and their re-entry - publish success stories.
- Actions Plan – Year 5
  - Hire a media specialist/publicist part time to create a variety of copy.
  - Improve web media with dedicated resources to maintain web content including recent events.

- Look at developing a regional approach through more recruiters to assist local coordinators.
  - Cultivate younger people to build future capacity for volunteers and donors; broaden base target audience.
  - Push media/recognition of PVS into more diverse communities.
- Action Plan – Year 10
  - Look at decentralized structure with local and regional chapters.
  - Develop regional and distance learning training versus centralized training.
  - Seek an endowed award for BOP staff that excels in support of PVS.
- Resources Needed:
  - Need information on impact and numbers of visits and visitors
  - Existing information (such as Associate Warden’s survey) and media products we already have need to be utilized, evaluated and updated.
  - Can we bring in an outside research project to analyze impact? Assist existing staff to expand this area by creating automated reporting systems to reduce manual paper processing.
  - In long run expand paid staff and funding for program manager to drive expansion and pay for volunteer transportation costs.
  - Board needs to be more outwardly focused on community and social networking. This may require a change in board make-up if members cannot dedicate time to these efforts. There may be some representatives of sponsoring organizations that may be better placed in an advisory board role.

#### **XI. Task Force #4 – Human Resource Issues**

- Need a committee to manage personnel issues, Board nominations and succession planning.
- Also to lead evaluation of staff and Board annually
- The group needs to create a Board job description, provide copies of resumes of Board members to each other, and evaluate if changes in Board membership are needed.
- They should also develop an employee handbook.

## **XII. All Task Forces**

- Need to use skills people to assist us that already exist in our volunteer base. We should reach out to ask that they join the task forces.
- Task Forces will report to Board at April meeting and provide updates during Executive Committee teleconferences.
- Task Force #1 Will be led by Dan Doyle and also include Rachel Osborn, Lena Prewitt, and Denise Carpenter.
- Task Force #2 will be led by Jim Matsen and also include Elaine Silverstrim.
- Task Force #3 –will be led by Murray Hiebert and also included John Vanyur, and David Poundstone.
- Task force #4 will be led by Joe Davies and include Phyllis Taylor and Rick Boardman.

John Vanyur