



OPENING DOORS®

A Prison Ministry

May/June 2006

ECDI, Exofac, Rachel's House, Teen Challenge and Opening Doors® share an uncommon passion to serve incarcerated women returning home to their families in Franklin County, they also share almost \$442,000 in new funds to serve them!



Collaborative partners with Governor Taft

From left to right: Ron Wolfinger & Barbara Sanders (Teen Challenge); Governor Taft; Pastor Jan Ruark (Rachel's House); Marla Taylor (Exofac); Jennifer Hines (ECDI) and Deborah Roeger (Opening Doors).

On May 9, 2006 Governor Bob Taft announced grants exceeding \$15 million to 71 community and faith-based organizations spread across 50 counties in Ohio. Taft told the grant recipients, *“government is not always the most effective messenger of hope and inspiration to heal broken lives.”* According to the Governor, the Office of Faith-Based and Community-Based Initiatives (GOFBCI) was created, *“so that we could partner with service organizations that are already positively impacting individuals, families and communities across Ohio.”* The \$12 million awarded under the Ohio Strengthening Families Initiative targets three critical areas: ex-offenders and their families, at-risk youth and supporting healthy marriage. The funding will help grantees create and strengthen partnerships to enhance their work and reduce the number of children born out of wedlock, lower the child-poverty rates and break cycles of crime and incarceration. Another \$2.7 million was awarded specifically to provide ex-offenders with job training and education so they can successfully re-enter the workforce and adjust to a healthy and stable family life. The GOFBCI is partnering with the Ohio Dept of Rehab and Corrections to manage these grants. Opening Doors is excited to be among those faith-based organizations announced as grant recipients. In addition to our collaborative work with females leaving prison, Opening Doors also received a separate \$100,000 grant to complete a similar demonstration project with adult male ex-offenders and their families in Franklin County.♥

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Where do YOU stand?

State prison systems could offer the following four alternative prison policies for people who have committed nonviolent crime. What do you prefer the state implement?

- **Policy 1:** Treat prison as punishment and do not offer rehab services to people either during their time in prison or after their release.
- **Policy 2:** Make state-funded rehab services available to incarcerated people while they are serving time in prison.
- **Policy 3:** Make state-funded rehab services available to incarcerated people only after they have been released from prison.
- **Policy 4:** Make state-funded rehab services available to incarcerated people both while they are in prison and after they have been released from prison.

And The Survey Said . . .

In an April 2006 national public opinion poll about American attitudes toward rehabilitation and reentry of prisoners to their home communities, 70% of those surveyed prefer making state-funded rehabilitation services available to incarcerated people both while they are in prison and after they have been released from prison.

Source: "Attitudes of US Voters toward Prisoner Rehabilitation and Reentry Policies," by Barry Krisberg, PhD and Susan Marchionna

A BRIGHT VISION FOR A NEW TOMORROW

As Opening Doors heads towards its seventh year of prison ministry, we turn the corner with an entirely new vision. When this work first began in July, 2000 in one prison we had no idea where the Lord would lead us and who we would serve. What began as a conflict resolution program in that first prison has now turned into a well organized systematic way of assisting offenders strengthen their family ties, become better parents and return to the community with the support of their own family and a spiritual family from the church. The grants that were awarded in May will permit Opening Doors to pilot the work of Opening Doors® In The Family to 20 male offenders and 20 female offenders. In each case, we plan for the work to begin inside the prison. Research clearly shows that offenders who have the support of their family during the term of incarceration simply adjust better to prison life; and not surprisingly, these individuals are more successful when they return home. In the early beginnings of our work, God made clear that Opening Doors was like John the Baptist. We have understood for the past 6 years the part of the illustration that we are laying a new foundation and even that we are among the first to demonstrate that a faith-based organization can be a successful partner to government. What we are now seeing is perhaps the most remarkable piece of the analogy.

“And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, **to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers**” (Luke 1:17; Malachi 4:6) ♥

www.OpeningMoreDoors.org

Have you seen our new website?
Have you seen our new website?

If not, we hope you will stop by soon. Grant funds from the Ohio Compassion Capital Project allowed us to complete the work.



Opening God's Word

Helping each Other

“But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal.” 1 Corinthians 12:7

We all have spiritual gifts that allow us to help each other. Some can sing. Some can teach. Some can encourage others. Everyone has something that they can contribute to the good of the Kingdom and for his fellow man.

When you come to prison or a new housing unit, quite often you are quiet and just observe your surroundings. Yes, some people are leaders, some followers. Many men are social and some are loners. Some people, like me, are jokesters. I like to break the tension with laughter.

In Opening Doors®, we learned to relax and share ourselves with each other. No one was judgmental or critical. Many men, who started off being quiet, opened up to share what spiritual gifts they had. We laughed together, cried together and became a cohesive group, bound by the same spirit. What I remember the most was the healing power of laughter. Laughter made us feel better; it brought us closer together. We became family. No one wanted the three days of “Opening Doors” to end.

My spiritual gift of laughter brings smiles to others and lifts their spirits. I especially like to use it when I see a conflict situation or tension arise. Do you have a spiritual gift? Share it! You will be surprised at the blessing you receive from sharing a part of you with others.

Reflective Question: What have you shared with others lately which has helped them?

About the Author: Ricardo Gartrell is currently at Ross Correctional in his tenth year of incarceration. He is a graduate and facilitator for Opening Doors®, a graduate of Kairos #1 (RCI), a singer/songwriter, keyboard player and member of RCI Gospel Quartet. His participation and facilitation of Opening Doors programs adds a contagious joy for all involved.

Scripture References:

Psalm 104 * John 20:19-23 * Acts 2:1-11
1 Corinthians 12:4-13

One Body - Many Members

One of the most frequently asked questions about the work of Opening Doors® is whether we are affiliated with Kairos or Prison Fellowship. Both are so well known that even people who aren't active in prison ministry have often heard about these distinguished organizations. I'm very supportive of the work each of these ministries do in Ohio prisons. However, as I reflect on the often asked question, I am also reminded of God's perfect plan. *“For in fact the body is not one member but many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body,” is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. And if they were all one member, where would the body be?”* (1 Cor. 12)

I remember well one day several years ago when I was making a short presentation about our work and every other speaker at the event was from a well established prison ministry. The Lord made it clear that day that He was doing a new thing. We are “the new kid on the block,” we do not replace the effective work done by others, we have simply stepped into our rightful place for the work we have been called to do. ♥

Deborah Roeger,
Founder / Executive Director

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- † Wise grant stewardship of all funds awarded under Ohio Strengthening Families Initiative
- † Marion Juvenile pilot program June 5, 6 & 7
- † Funding / Volunteers for SITG
- † Corporate partnerships to do more prison staff programs
- † Expanding prison prayer teams & Prayers For Prisonerssm
- † Additional New Funding To Pay For What The Grants Can Not

PRAISE REPORT:

Our new website

The new grant funding we have received

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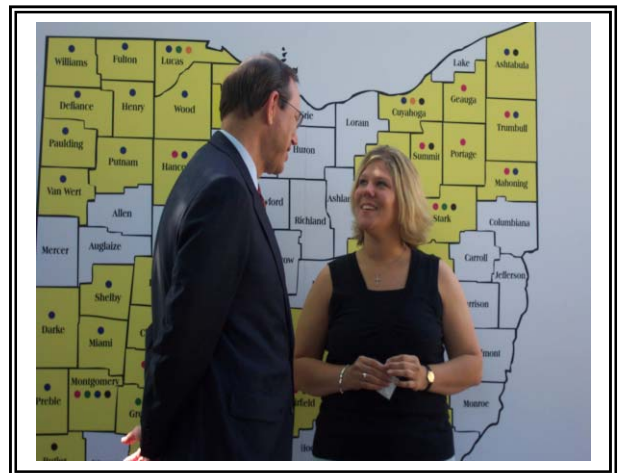
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“I began drugs at a young age and ended up in prison,” was the tearful testimony of Shauna Charles to the press and the grant recipients attending the May 9 Press Conference in the backyard of Rachel’s House. Her simple words about what God had done in her life and how Rachel’s House had helped her after she left prison could not have been a more powerful way to “sum up” what these new grants are about most. People helping people build better lives, offering new hope, indeed offering the second chance President Bush said all people deserve. Shauna gasped with excitement as she caught a glimpse of her own father in the audience she was addressing. Our hearts rejoiced with her, tears freely flowed among those listening and we were all encouraged as the God of the Bible became real through the evidence of a transformed life. ♥



Shauna Charles with Governor Taft

“Now my kids have a mother. My children and my family thank you today.”