

Giving back to God what He gave to me....

A word from Deborah L. Roeger, Executive Director

Have you ever been entrusted with something precious by the owner to hold for a season? That's what it's been like for me since 2000 when the Lord birthed the vision of "opening doors" in my heart. As most of you know, the Lord has asked me to give back to Him what He had given me for a season. I was never meant to "own" it – He was gracious enough to teach me that marvelous, albeit challenging, lesson many years ago. Thus I have known for a long time I only held this work in trust - fully aware that someday He would come for it and I was to hand it back to Him. I am reminded of the familiar parable of the talents (see Matthew 25:14-30). It takes on new meaning for me in this season of transition. I have so greatly valued walking this journey with each of you. You have encouraged me, strengthened my faith and often I have seen you as "Aaron and Hur" holding my hands up when I got tired so I could finish well. I'm grateful I didn't bury the talent I was given! I 'm believing it has produced much fruit. After June 30 I am being called into a season of writing. I can hardly wait to see what the Lord has planned for me! God's abundant blessings to each of you. ♥

Meeting James

I have a deep belief that people can change. This may be the most useful thing that I bring to the men, women and youth served by Opening Doors because hope makes almost anything possible. For all of us serving them, I believe that He equips us for the good works He calls us to. When I first went to Brazil I didn't speak Portuguese. I didn't understand the culture or know how to help national pastors start and serve their churches. But I did see God at work and I know that He equips us when we need it. He is still at work. In 2005, after my wife and I served as missionaries in Brazil for nearly 18 years, we returned to the US and wondered what His next steps would be for us. In the course of prayerfully searching, I met Debbie Roeger and learned of the ministry of Opening Doors. Though there were no openings at the time, I was intrigued. For a year, I worked as a case manager for a large mental health agency. This was similar to what I did before moving to Brazil and was an opportunity to get reestablished in the US. I felt that it was a temporary assignment but did not know what it would lead to. A year later Debbie and I spoke again and it was time to join the team. Mental health casework was just the preparation I needed for Opening Doors and the men's program. For two years now I have been grateful to learn, serve and grow with the team at Opening Doors. Working with the men has been a joyful experience. On July first, following in Debbie's footsteps as the new Executive Director of Opening Doors, I will take the next step into what God has been preparing. As this step came into sharp focus I felt a sense of gratitude, excitement and something that ranged from challenged to overwhelmed. Debbie has done such a great job that many times the good reputation of Opening Doors precedes me in the community. I am grateful to be able to follow what she has

continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Meeting James
- 2** A Community of A Different Sort
- 3** Restored Relationships
- 3** Sarah's House
- 4** Messengers of Hope
- 4** Doubt Replaced By Hope

A COMMUNITY OF A DIFFERENT SORT

Have you ever thought about our natural response to having had enough of the people around us? We shut our doors, hide from view or take a vacation. But for the youth who have been adjudicated with a felony offense and therefore live in 'community' within Ohio's juvenile facilities those things are impossible. No one there has a door of their own to shut. No one can make plans to go on vacation. No one there can hide from the view of the guards. There is no way to turn off the drama that is part of everyday life in prison.

Juvenile offenders

are often angry, scared, distrustful and incredibly lonely. They are young broken individuals making up a fragmented community that is constantly shifting and without a doubt prison is an unsettling place to be.

They exist day to day sometimes looking for a fight, sometimes trying to

avoid one. Attending a program that offers conflict resolution seems awkward and unrealistic. Opening Doors is a conflict resolution workshop designed to teach all who will embrace the concepts, skill sets that will affect every area of life in a positive way. To go into a juvenile facility and patiently, lovingly teach youth who have perfected at a young age the art of being rude and unreceptive can be a daunting challenge. With faithful persistence however the rewards outweigh the inevitable rebellious confrontations of rebellion that often meet the initial activities. As one youth put it, "*I walked in thinking this program was going to be stupid. But, I walked out a different person.*" The following are some comments from two young people who loosened their grip on control and grabbed hold of the opportunity to experience the best side of 'community.'

"For me it was a wonderful learning experience and it taught me to look for something good in all situations even bad. The activities we did also

I walked in thinking this program was going to be stupid. But, I walked out a different person.

Continued on page 3

begun. I am grateful to serve and lead this team. I am eagerly watching (Ps. 5:3) to see what the Lord is up to next. Please join me in prayer for His protection and continued blessing. ♦

In Him who is our Hope, *James Himsworth*

Restored Relationships.... John (not his real name), one of the incarcerated fathers we served last year was released in early November. Before his release John's daughter delivered his first two grandchildren and he was very proud that he had "twin Grandbabies" (as he referred to them). These two babies were undoubtedly a large part of John's motivation to stay sober and drug free upon release. Tragically, three weeks after John's release, the children's father shook one of the twins so severely as to result in the child's eventual death. We walked beside John throughout the ordeal of the hospital visit, funeral, investigation and arrest. He was extremely frustrated that children's services removed the other grandbaby from his home stating the living conditions were less than desired. But John battled though the anger, frustration and pain however the urge to deaden the ache he felt continued to haunt him until he knew he alone could not refuse the pain relief that drugs or alcohol might offer. Thankfully because of the relationship John had allowed us to build with him, he called us **first** and we immediately arranged to transport him to an AA meeting nearby that same day. As only our gracious Heavenly Father can arrange, the AA speaker that day described a hauntingly similar life story of losing a grandchild recently and the urge to drown the pain. We were able to arrange for John to meet the speaker afterwards where he received additional courage and strength to maintain sobriety. Happily we can report John has stayed sober and drug free even though he has been unable to find permanent employment. With support, John has directed his frustration and disappointment into rehabbing another home *and* he has recently been given custody of his surviving GrandBaby. Restored relationships ... that's what we are here for.♥

Derf Roeger, Co-Founder

Sarah's House ready and waiting

Imagine with me for a moment that you are 18 years old and you have just spent the last two years behind locked gates and barbed wire fence inside Scioto Juvenile Correctional Facility. You were surprised to find yourself there but time has passed and now you are about to be released. As you sit and ponder your options you are struck by the reality that your dad is in prison and your mom is a crack head, the last time you heard from her she was living in another state with some man you never met. The tears fall in the moments when you are all alone, you're scared; but you hide that truth from the others as you wonder, "what in the world am I going to do?" This situation happens more than you can imagine. Many of the girls we meet there in Bible study have no parental guidance in their lives. Many have never seen a husband and a wife married, living in the same house together sharing goals and dreams and visions. Thankfully there is Sarah's House – a gift from God. Sarah's House offers residential Biblical discipleship to young women as they leave Scioto Juvenile. If they choose to live here after release, we model boundaries set by loving parents, provide them with a safe place to live, help each one seek employment and give her a hand up. We have served three young women already. Each one has been unique in her needs and in her length of stay. But Sarah's House has made an impact in their lives - now they know there is someone who loves them and cares for them and will be there to help them in a critical time of need. Every young woman deserves this chance. We offer ourselves to God and to these young women to give them the hope that we have in Jesus Christ for our future and for theirs. We are ready to receive whoever God is calling next.♥

Jon and Peggy Pence, Resident Directors

taught me a lot about working together and using teamwork. I learned a lot about myself too. I realized it's not always what other people think or do it is always up to me. I really appreciate everyone coming in on their own time to do the program. That showed me that there really are people that care about us. I just want to thank them for coming in." This letter was signed – Sincerely.

Another letter read; "Since I was put into the Opening Doors Program I have learned so much. I talk to a lot of people and especially my room mate about change and how you can come about it. I have learned several problem transforming skills and I have applied them to my life and the problems I face. I have found that when I think about things before I do something and take my thoughts captive there is a better outcome in the situation. I try to recognize the good things about people even when a negative situation is happening. I find that when I am patient and I continue to do the right and good thing that right and good things happen to me. I walked into the Opening Doors Program thinking that it was going to be stupid and I wasn't going to relate to these people but after three days of the Program were up I was disappointed that it was over because I had learned so much. And when I walked out of the doors, I walked out a different person."

Both of these letters are proof that when youthful offenders learn to use the tools to express themselves in positive affirming ways there will be a greater quality of cooperation living in 'community' with others. As the effects of this program go with each one back into the community at large upon release, there will be a harvest of the seeds planted within the prison walls and others will grow. I recommend becoming a volunteer with Opening Doors of Ohio whether it is with juvenile offenders or with the adults – your life will never be the same. You too will grow and become a more effective member of 'community.'♥

Collyn Wooden, Mentor Coordinator

*'Doubt replaced by confidence'
is an incredible blessing!*

On my way back from dropping off a state grant application this week, one of the men we serve called to say he had been invited to give his testimony Sunday in church. He was nervous about it but glad for the invitation. He then went on to say that he now thinks that God had a plan for him in placing him in a sober house in Westerville. He has not always felt that way and in fact has at times wondered if God had forgotten him there. But he now reports that God had something for him. It was great to hear his previous doubts replaced by confidence. ♦ *James*

Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc.
~ A Prison Ministry ~
P.O. Box 281
Lewis Center, OH 43035
www.openingmoredoors.org

NON-PROFIT
US POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT NO. 143
LEWIS CENTER, OH
43035

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Keep us informed of address changes so
you don't miss future Newsletters.

Mailing Address
Street Number and Name
City, State 98765-4321

YOU ARE INVITED!

Tuesday June 30th we will commemorate the leadership transition of Opening Doors of Ohio. You are invited to a great dinner and an evening of testimonies and introduction to staff. Scott Arnold, Executive Director, Central Ohio Youth for Christ will share a message of vision and perspective. We hope you can join us as we praise God for what He is doing.

Place: Xenos Christian Fellowship café
located near Cleveland Ave. and I-270
1340 Community Park Drive • Columbus 43229

Time: 7:00-9:00 pm

Cost: \$15 per person

Please **RSVP** to dinner@Openingmoredoors.org

For the past three years the gender responsive programming provided to women through Opening Doors[®] in the Family and Opening More Doors[®] for Women has empowered over 100 women to be able to become successful. This is no small task, as the temptations of their old lives often aren't any farther than the other side of the fence. Often the women we work with have lived through trauma that would break anyone's spirit. Sadly, for some it has taken away all hope - but not for all. By helping women plan for release from prison and providing interventions that equip them to become employed or educated, have basic needs met, begin to reunify with their family, and facilitate healthy communication, Opening Doors has literally been used by Christ to transform lives. ♥
Bryan Davis, Case Manager

What an amazing privilege it is to be
messengers of Hope!