



OPENING DOORSsm

A Prison Ministry

September 2005

Wondering why you received this Newsletter?

Please read on.....

As you begin to read the first words of this Newsletter, you may be wondering ... **how did my name get on a list to receive this?** So that's the place we'd like to begin as we prepare our very first Newsletter.

We invite you to glance over the list of our Board of Directors. As you do, you will recognize one or more names. That's it! That is how you were carefully chosen to receive this mailing – every Board member thought of people who might have an interest in knowing about us and the work we are doing. Your name was then added to our mailing list and we have “you” in mind as we write this first edition.

We hope you will begin to look forward to receiving our updates every month. We invite you to pray with us and for us to meet our growing needs. We will appreciate your encouragement along the way as we diligently undertake the work

continued on page 2

Meet Our Board

Colleen Fiant

Bryan Kittner

Allan Mitchell

Derf Roeger

Debbie Roeger

Neil Salyer

Turn to page 2 for introductions...

It all began when

How the Opening Doors partnership with the Ohio prisons began

Deborah L. Roeger, Founder & Executive Director



Have you ever had one of those times in your life when you knew God was calling you to do something but you were hesitant to acknowledge that it really was His voice? I did. My ultimate obedience led me to begin volunteering in a prison. That was in 1999 and the first prison was Marion Correctional – a men's medium security prison in Marion, Ohio.

continued on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- 1** Wondering Why?
- 1** It All Began When
- 2** Meet Our Board of Directors
- 2** Opening Doors through the eyes of....
- 3** Prayer Requests ~ Volunteer Needs

of strengthening our partnership with the Ohio prisons – the staff, those that are incarcerated, and those that are returning home!

In this first edition, we have set out to give you an introduction to our early beginnings. From month to month we eagerly look forward to sharing with you just how God is moving and providing for this incredible work called *Opening Doors*sm.♥

Meet Our Board Of Directors

Colleen Fiant Chief Financial Officer for DRC's Ohio Penal Industries; married to Linn Fiant, one daughter and 2 grandchildren. Prayer Elder at TLC. Became involved because, "I worked in the prison for 8 years and saw the powerful impact of the *Opening Doors* Program on inmates. I believe in Debbie and the work God has called her to do in the prison system."

Bryan Kittner Pastor of an inner-city Lutheran church in Dayton, Ohio for 16 years. Director of the Montgomery County Volunteer Jail Chaplaincy Ministry. Married with three children. "I became involved with *Opening Doors* after helping to equip prayer teams to support this ministry."

Allan Mitchell Formerly chief financial officer in the wireless telephony industry. Married to Antoinette for 35 years, with four children. Director/Treasurer of Partners for Citizenship and Character (Worthington) and Director/Secretary of Columbus Right to Life Society. Eucharistic Minister and Social Concerns Liaison. Became involved because: "I listened to Debbie communicate an early version of the *Opening Doors* vision, and I knew then that God was actively calling me to use my skills and experience to support the mission."

Derf Roeger An electrical engineering manager and father of two adult children, one grandchild. Board President, *Opening Doors*. Deacon, Bible Fellowship class teacher, Small Group leader and Halftime Ambassador at WCC. Active in Outside Brothers, a prison ministry at MCI, for 5 years. Became involved because: "I've witnessed God's power to miraculously change the lives of inmates from a victim mentality into a new life that knows real freedom regardless of their physical situation."

Debbie Roeger Retired attorney, married to Derf for 31+ years. Founder, Executive Director of *Opening Doors*. Bible Fellowship class teacher, Halftime Ambassador at WCC. Servant leadership team Halftime in Columbus. Became involved because: "God made it clear I was to lay down my fulltime profession and become a fulltime servant in the Ohio prisons."

Neil Salyer Former resident at M.C.I., *Opening Doors* graduate/facilitator, Horizon Program graduate and facilitator, member of Board of Directors for Grace Place Ministries, Adult Sunday school teacher, Outreach Director for Community UMC in Marion, OH. Became involved because: "of the impact that *Opening Doors* had on my life. It gave me the tools I needed to truly live my faith in a way that I had never been able to do before."

Opening Doors through the eyes of

Encouraging Ellen, as she is known to *Opening Doors* participants, is a mother and grandmother. As a retired nurse, she loved to rock newborn babies in her arms as a weekly volunteer at Children's Hospital for the past 4 years. But she has found a new passion in an unexpected place -- going into prisons to lead an *Opening Doors* facilitation team. When asked why she does it, her answer came quickly and confidently, "it has been life changing for me. You can pray and read the Bible, this makes it more real. It has helped me have a closer walk with the Lord. I get a warm feeling from this that I don't get out of anything else I do. There is actually a feeling of peace and serenity that I do not get from other places I serve." She said what surprised her most about men and women in prison is how creative, imaginative, and even brilliant many of them are, "the potential for good blows my mind." Like most *Opening Doors* facilitators, Encouraging Ellen says she is shocked that she can be a part of what God is doing in the Ohio prisons. As someone told her recently, she "just comes alive when she talks about it!" ♥

COMING UP IN OUR NEXT NEWSLETTER:

- ♥ Information about how you can become an Opening Doors volunteer
- ♥ Introducing Stand In The Gap™ Ohio – a new ministry of Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc. for ex-offenders and the church

PRAYER REQUESTS:

- † New funding sources
- † Program Directors for:
 - Stand In The Gap™ Ohio (SITG)
 - Opening Doors prison programs
- † Contractual Relationships with Licensed Professionals to support SITG Ohio
- † Cooperative partnership with corporations to expand Opening Doors In The Workplacesm
- † Expansion of prison prayer teams and inmate prayer ministry

VOLUNTEER NEEDS:

- ◆ Program facilitators for inmate and staff programs
- ◆ Prayer partners
- ◆ Administrative support
- ◆ State-wide coordinator for inmate prayer requests

You might wonder if I was afraid. My honest answer? You bet I was! When God calmed my heart with these words, I found myself repeating them over and over on my first trip to Marion:

“So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.” (Isa. 41:10)

It would not have been my choice of a place to serve Him

I knew how to navigate corporate America. I had become experienced in the practice of law; but this was something totally new. I wasn't even sure I had anything to offer inside a prison. God knew exactly what He had in mind. In less than 2 years at Marion a solid curriculum for an innovative program called Opening Doorssm had been developed and successfully field-tested with inmates. A counter-part program for prison staff was also successfully implemented. The emphasis of both programs was on skills to resolve conflict. What was novel to Marion Correctional was the use of a 3-day facilitated (experiential) learning model in a prison environment. The inmates loved it, the staff loved it and the results were undeniable! In March, 2002 Dir. Wilkinson of the Ohio Dept. of Rehab and Corrections invited Opening Doors to expand into other Ohio prisons. A nonprofit corporation, Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc., was formed and the IRS approved its application to become a public charity. To date, programming has been held in 8 Ohio prisons with plans for additional expansion. ♥

For more on this story of one attorney's unexpected transition from the courtroom to the prison, go to www.Halftime.org or www.ACTIVEenergy.net and locate the April, 2005 feature article called: *Finding Freedom Behind Bars*.

Opening Doors of Ohio, Inc.
~ A Prison Ministry ~
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Watch our Newsletter in the coming months as we begin a series of devotional messages prepared for Opening Doorssm by some of the incredible brothers and sisters in Christ we have met in the Ohio prisons.

HEARING FROM YOU

Welcome along, we're excited you're joining us and we trust you will enjoy being on this journey with us! Just knowing you are there and you care is a great encouragement to us and our growing group of volunteers.

If you have suggestions or questions or if you know of someone else who would appreciate receiving our Newsletter, please e-mail me at: openingdoors@columbus.rr.com

Thank you, I look forward to your input.

P.S. Please keep us informed of any address changes so that you won't miss future issues of our Newsletter. To report a change of address, use the e-mail address listed above or call 614-543-0417.

Deborah L. Roeger,
Executive Director