



Missouri CURE

New and Notes

December 2005

STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

Greetings and happy holidays to all!

This has been a year of highs and lows for Missouri CURE. On one hand, we had a very successful and informative statewide meeting last summer and national CURE co-founder Charles Sullivan has expressed an interest in holding a national meeting in Missouri. On the other hand, the lack of participation by Missouri prison families is a frustrating and disappointing reality.

It certainly is not due to a lack of interest about prison issues. We had a large crowd at the statewide meeting in Columbia. Guest speakers Jeananne Markway of the Department of Corrections, Dana Thompson of Probation and Parole, Tammy Gillespie of University of Missouri Extension, Brad Bond of Release to Rent and Susan Robbins of Prison Fellowship provided an informative and interesting session. Jeananne talked about restorative justice projects, including CDs, videos and other materials aimed at helping young people avoid illegal substances and criminal activity. She showed us crafts and items made to benefit the elderly, abused women, children, and others in need. She also discussed the state's commitment to reducing recidivism through a new re-entry program.

Dana addressed general probation and parole policies and answered a variety of questions from the public. Citing the lack of information for families about the parole process, Missouri CURE asked to work with the department to develop a pamphlet that educates families on the process. (Probation and parole has written a new booklet for families of men and woman who are already on parole or who are on probation.)

Brad discussed a re-entry program in St. Louis that works with paroled offenders who do not have a strong family support system to help in their re-entry into society. Susan discussed Prison Fellowship's programs for offenders and their families, including Angel Tree, marriage seminars, and religious programming.

The meeting was well attended by family members and CURE supporters across the state. Board members were encouraged by their enthusiasm and willingness to help. After all, with numbers comes strength.

Five months later, we are discouraged.

In recent years, Missouri CURE has helped reduce phone rates in the state. We have provided input on visiting, which helped bring about changes four years ago. Our members worked to start or renew marriage seminars in several prisons. The advantages of working together were clear.

Somehow, that message seems to have been lost.

Most of the communication we have received from families after the meeting has focused on their own issues. Those writers wanted help with their individual problems, but were not interested in working on CURE committees to improve conditions for all.

Missouri CURE by policy does not take on individual cases. Instead, we address larger issues that affect prisoners and their families. In Missouri's large system, there are many prison issues to address. However, doing so takes more than a handful of people working for change.

Obviously, family members are all busy. However, even a few hours a month would be a big help. No one on the board is Web site savvy – we need a volunteer who knows how to maintain a Web site who could improve our site and update it as needed. That is something that could be done at home from anywhere in the state.

Other tasks that require volunteers include answering letters from offenders, researching prison issues on the Internet, following legislative efforts, helping to write/print/distribute the newsletter. There are many ways to help, even for those who are strapped for time. We need more volunteers on our committees, such as those addressing medical care, religious issues, legislation, sex offender issues, restorative justice and capital punishment. Donations of stamps and envelopes are always welcome.

One of the most important things you and your families can do is to join CURE. Consider the difference in political influence an organization has when it has thousands of members instead of hundreds. Imagine the impact Missouri CURE could have on the legislature if at least one family member or friend of the 30,000 plus incarcerated men and women in this state joined Missouri CURE.

Consider how much more influence we would have if each offender was represented by three or four family members or friends.

The New Year is approaching, with its promise of a fresh start. We urge you to make a resolution that you will encourage your family and friends to join CURE, take on one task, and help continue efforts for positive changes.

For those of you who have been our ardent supporters, we thank you, we appreciate you, and we look forward to working together in the future.

Paula Skillicorn
Missouri CURE chairman

REMINDER!

When joining Missouri Cure you will receive a state newsletter every three to four months.

You will be put on National Cure's mailing list and you will receive a quarterly newsletter.

To renew your subscription with Missouri Cure you must send payment directly to Missouri Cure. If payment is received by National Cure, it will be considered a donation newsletter every three to four months.

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CURE is **NOT** a service organization; CURE has **NO** legal services.
CURE is an all-volunteer non-profit criminal justice advocacy organization.