

COOKIES.....AND A SUPPORTIVE CHAPLAIN!!!!

By Mary Nelson, KO National Trainer

In all the years of serving on Kairos Inside weekends at Broward Correctional it did not occur to me how blessed we were to have a waiting list of inmates wanting to attend our weekends. All we had to do was post the date and the Chaplain and staff did all the work. Why, we even had a reserve list of inmates in the event someone went to lock or home! We as a team did not have to worry from one weekend to the next where our 'participants' were coming from. That worry was handled beautifully and willingly by others. (See page II-5, 6 in the Program Manual 2005 edition.)

Kairos Outside does not have the institution recommending 'guests' for outside weekends. We rely heavily on the Kairos Inside volunteers to promote our weekends. This is true even when an area has been in existence for years. You see, one of the goals of Kairos Outside is to encourage those women who have relatives and close friends in prison and hopefully have participated in Kairos Inside.

Since we have found it necessary to postpone weekends due to a lack of guests we are begging you to promote Kairos Outside in your respective institutions. Invite a Kairos Outside volunteer (preferably a former guest) to speak at your closing. Encourage the Chaplains to become familiar with Kairos Outside. If permitted by the institution place a KO brochure in the inmates' folder. Talk with the inmates on a one to one basis at reunions.

Cookies are not going to be enough! We need ALL OF YOU!

We do want to thank all the Kairos Inside communities, who intentionally push Kairos Outside and we hope that the residents that you minister to, are blessed because of the support that Kairos Outside gives to their family members and friends. We are all in it together and with your help and the grace of God, the whole family will experience the love of Christ which transforms all of our lives.

When the above article was published in the summer issue of God's Special Time I received positive feedback; both from those in the KO community but, more importantly, from those of the KI community. Needless to say, I was stunned that someone had advised a state that it would DETRACT from a weekend if a KO volunteer were to be given five minutes at a closing to 'pitch' KO. The dictionary defines DETRACT as: to draw or take away; to speak ill of or belittle. And yet the MISSION OF KAIROS is to bring Christ's love and forgiveness to...all incarcerated individuals, their families, and those who work with them, and to ASSIST THE INCARCERATED IN THE TRANSITION TO BECOMING A PRODUCTIVE CITIZEN. Having been on more than a dozen KI teams I heard repeatedly from inmates their desire to not only make amends but wouldn't it be wonderful if there was something for their loved ones to attend. Fortunately there are communities who have taken that a step further. They are doing Kairos Outside/Inside! There is a saying: 'Strike while the iron is hot' which fits perfectly the intent of this idea. When a Kairos Outside wife, daughter, sister, etc. speak from the heart, I submit this DOES NOT detract from a weekend. Rather, it is a Grace-Filled opportunity to truly bring reconciliation where it is needed most.

The Ultimate Gift

By Marilyn Elkins, International Kairos Outside Subcommittee Chair

Can you imagine receiving an “Ultimate Gift”? One that could change your life. Better yet can you imagine giving that gift to someone who has stood by you thru the worst time in your life? Kairos Outside is the “Ultimate Gift” that a resident can give his/her mom, sister, wife, grandmother or friend. There is very little a resident can do to for their family to show how much they are appreciated and loved. Every Kairos Inside teams I’ve been on, one of the first questions I’m asked by the residents, is there a weekend like this for my relatives/friends.

We have the opportunity to help the residents give this “Ultimate Gift”. What a wonderful way to end a weekend, to know that a similar weekend is available for their family/friends. Think of the impact on their family; when they experience the change in their son/daughter/husband/friend, and learn that a similar weekend is available for them.

Unless you have or have had someone inside you can only imagine what it must be like. Many live two lives, one the public sees and knows, the other goes to the prison on weekends to visit their loved one, and no one knows they have someone in prison. The feelings of failure, guilt, isolation, anger, despair, shame and depression just to name a few. Kairos Outside provides a safe place for our guests to talk out and deal with these emotions with others walking the same walk. Many are amazed to know there are so many others going thru the same thing. Also amazing to them is the unconditional love the team gives, and that God has not forgotten or forsaken them.

What better way to invite guests, than to give a brief talk at the closing telling about Kairos Outside and providing a means for them to pass the information on to their family. I am talking from experience, you see, October 1994 my son attended a Kairos and signed me up for the next Kairos Outside in February 1995. He was so excited to tell me that he had signed me up. Giving me the Ultimate Gift that changed my life.

I would like to request that the Board of Directors give permission to all the Inside Kairos weekends to allow a 5 minute presentation at the closing to explain how the residents can give “The Ultimate Gift” to their relatives/friends.