



Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Brad Livingston
Executive Director

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE

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RPD CHAPLAINCY ADMINISTRATION

February 18, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

As the Warden of the L.V. Hightower Unit in Dayton, Texas, I strongly endorse the Kairos program for incarcerated men and women. Hightower is a prison unit with approximately 1400 male inmates. Kairos was initiated at Hightower in October 2008 with Kairos #1. We are currently getting ready for Kairos #12 on March 26-30, 2014. We have two Kairos weekends lasting Thursday thru Sunday twice a year usually in March or April and October.

Kairos has been a positive influence for the inmates at Hightower as well as the officers and staff. That was not always the case. In the beginning, the officers and staff resented the Kairos volunteers and the weekend. They thought the Kairos weekend would cause them more work. However, that quickly changed as the officers and staff began to see the positive effect of the weekend and how the behavior of the 42 inmate participants changed for the better. The Kairos program at Hightower also uses approximately 42 additional inmates who serve as stewards and musicians. The stewards and musicians are Kairos graduates who volunteer as Agape servants for the entire weekend. In addition, about 44 TDCJ trained volunteers are present to lead the Kairos program for the weekend.

The entire unit has responded positively to the weekend and the positive effect usually lasts for several weeks. Even the non-participants behave better because of the Agape love shown by the volunteers who personally deliver a dozen cookies to every man on the unit. The officers and staff began to notice that most of the inmates were better behaved after the Kairos weekend and in effect caused them less work.

The key to the success at Hightower has been the commitment of the volunteers towards the Kairos Community and the Hightower Unit. The relationship between the Kairos volunteers and the Hightower Unit officers and staff is excellent. The volunteers abide by the TDCJ rules as well as Hightower rules. In addition, the inmates could not believe that the outside volunteers would take off from work and pay for their own expenses for the four days to participate with them during the Kairos weekend. They could not believe that the volunteers would make a twelve-month commitment to come back every Saturday for the two-hour Kairos Prayer and Share Fellowship held in the gym. Another benefit for the non-participants was the Kairos music, which they could hear while they were out on the recreation yard. You could see them stop and listen to the Kairos music coming from the gym and even sing along.

In closing, I strongly endorse the Kairos program for incarcerated men and women and highly encourage wardens at other prison units to allow Kairos into their units.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D. Blackwell", written over a horizontal line.

David M. Blackwell
Senior Warden, Hightower Unit

Our mission is to provide public safety, promote positive change in offender behavior, reintegrate offenders into society, and assist victims of crime.

L. V. Hightower Unit
902 FM 686 Dayton, Texas 77535
936-258-8013