



April 2014 Newsletter

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Two FIT Peer Facilitators Honored on TV

WTVY, Dothan, AL recently featured the work of two of our peer facilitators, Dale Stewart and Ruben DeLeon on a two minute broadcast (<http://www.wtv.com/home/headlines/Inmates-involved-in-Jackson-Cis-Faith--Character-Based-Programming-Determined-to-Stay-on-Track--250661091.html>) as to their part in the "Genesis project". This project used the FIT Dating and Marriage course for meeting part of their requirements. We are pleased with the work of our facilitators and support person Beverly Shatterly as well as the Genesis program for choosing one of our courses. 87 of the 112 inmates who completed our course were awarded FIT certificates during the graduation ceremony. FIT peer facilitators are inmates, usually "lifers", who meet the regular requirements of leader training, are mentored by a FIT staff person, and have been recommended by the prison staff.

District 20 Court to Consider Adding FIT to List of Approved Courses

As mentioned in the March newsletter FIT is expanding its Character Development program beyond the pilot operation at headquarters in Bradenton, FL. Tom Walter and Rosemary LaLuz are working with the District 5 Court (Citrus, Hernando, Lake, Marion, and Sumter counties). Now we also have Joe Johnsick and Ted Gaines working with the District 20 Court (Lee, Charlotte, Collier, Glades, and Hendry counties).

Currently, the Bradenton operation has its Anger Dynamics course on the approved list in the District 12 Court (Manatee, Sarasota, and DeSoto counties) for sentencing and meeting requirements for regaining custody of children and other domestic issues. The local Department of Children and Families contract agency also sends referrals for clients who need help to voluntarily show progress being made. Classes are held at FIT headquarters on Thursday nights from 7 until 9 PM. The same program is used as the one used in prisons, jails, and halfway houses. The pilot program now regularly runs 2-3 FIT courses simultaneously to meet the needs of those referred.

Earlier this year, ground work was laid for a similar program in the District 5 area. Calvary Chapel and its pastor, Rev. Matt Andruss, agreed to host a special training session and to house the weekly classes for the general public and referred clients. Working to get the necessary approvals is ongoing.

On April 21, President Don Pratt and Board Members Joe Johnsick and Ted Gaines met with a judge and program coordinator in Ft. Myers to officially present our program. Pastor Phil Goss and Faith Assembly of North Fort Myers have agreed to house weekly FIT classes for the general public as well as the referrals that come in from the court and the Department of Children and Families. FIT is seeking approval of its entire curriculum. A similar meeting will be held later this month with the contract agency for Children and Families.

The Character Development program can really make a difference if followed through on, according to President Don Pratt. All three sites not only service those returning home from prisons throughout the state, they also service those exiting the local jails. FIT already services the Hernando Correctional Facility (Brooksville), Manatee Correctional Facility (Bradenton), Sarasota County Jail (Sarasota), Lee County Jail (Ft. Myers), and Collier County Jail (Naples). Though some exit incarceration into transition homes, most do not. This program allows for alternative sentencing and a path for child custody reunification at no expense to taxpayers and a support system of local churches for life-style changes for clients.

INTERNATIONAL 24-HOUR ONLINE FUNDRAISING EVENT MAY 6-7

This year, for the first time, FIT is participating in the Giving Challenge as its main, annual, fundraising event. All funds must be donated through the <http://www.givingpartnerchallenge.org> website from noon until noon on May 6-7. All proceeds will go directly to the main FIT office for distribution across our entire service area. We will be supplied with an instant tally of donations received. We trust that everyone will donate to make this year's fundraiser a success. Past fundraisers had to be more locally-focused due to the wide geographical limitations of an enterprise like ours.

There are special financial incentives in matching dollars and grants which are provided by various foundations for some of the donations, especially for those made right at the opening of the drive at noon on May 6.

Please consider a generous gift during our drive. We will post the results. Your gift is tax deductible and you will immediately receive a tax result to the email address provided. While you are at it, check out our detailed profile at their main website at www.thegivingpartner.org. Because of our transparency and the official review done, our recognition on this site is indicative of the sound foundation that FIT is built upon.

Donations for the special fundraiser are made by credit or debit card through the <http://www.givingpartnerchallenge.org> website from noon til noon on May 6-7. You can check it out anytime before launch time.

State-required statement

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"All funds will be applied where most needed unless otherwise designated"

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