



Reuniting children with their mothers and fathers in prison.

memorandum

To: GOTB Friends, Bus Coordinators and Leadership
FROM: Sr. Suzanne Jabro, CSJ
Executive Director, Women & Criminal Justice
DATE: 11 October 2006
RE: What's new at Get On The Bus

As vacations slowly come to an end and we return to a regular rhythm at work, school and home, the Get On The Bus Team is gearing up for it's 8th year of service to families separated by incarceration. Some of the wonderful highlights from 2005-2006 include the following:

- We served 587 children, reuniting them (and their 309 caregivers or child companions) with 309 incarcerated parents.
- We grew to 31 buses from 22 buses in 2005.
- We had 332 volunteers in 19 regions throughout the State.
- We piloted the first ever Father's Day visitation to the California Correctional Institution for Men in Tehachapi and San Luis Obispo and the Ventura Youth Correctional Facility.
- We raised over \$300,000 from individuals, businesses, foundations and groups, thereby increasing not only funds but friends.

With such sudden and extensive growth, we also experienced some growing pains and we outgrew capacities in many areas. Like any 8 year old ... we were all energy and enthusiasm, while still a little chaotic and un-coordinated. For this reason, during the summer we decided to hire a full-time Director to grow along with Get On The Bus so that I can be freed up to work on the mission and vision of Women & Criminal Justice and the Network. Rev. Giovanna Piazza, a former volunteer, began as Director of Get On The Bus in September. Giovanna will focus on standardizing our organizational systems, integrating our communication and strengthening our ecumenical partnerships. Giovanna is anxious to meet each

of you very soon. In the meantime, if you would like to get in touch with her she may be reached at getonthebus@earthlink.net or by phone at (213) 637-7456.

We have much to look forward to this year.

- We are beginning the new Chowchilla Family Express, under the leadership of its Director Eric DeBode, in the Spring of 2007. Once a month, the CFE will transport family members on rotation from different areas in the state to the two women's prisons in Chowchilla. According to the Department of Correction and Rehabilitation who is funding this new project, we will be able to begin planning in January with bus trips starting in March. Stay tuned, there will be much more on this exciting new program as service begins.
- We are looking forward to adding more buses in Fresno, Visalia, San Francisco, Long Beach and the High Desert. (If you know someone who would be a great new Bus Coordinator from one of these areas, please contact Giovanna soon.)
- We anticipate hiring a part-time Southern California Area Coordinator to complement Sr. Claire Williams, CSJ who is our Northern California Area Coordinator.
- We are planning a first ever "Parent's Information Night" in the prisons to show the mothers and fathers what we do and to answer their questions.
- We are expanding the Father's Day Visit so that more children can be reunited with their fathers.
- We are working on a new website which will allow us to make information available in a more organized, timely and easily accessible way.
- We await the Annual Report, due from the printers soon. Watch your mailboxes for your copy!
- We are celebrating YOU! We have heard from many of you who have committed to coordinating buses from your area again this year. *Save the Date: our Teaming & Training Day is Saturday, 27 January 2007, 10 a.m. – 4 p.m. at Mount St. Mary's College.*

Thank you for your dedication and hard work on behalf of the children. Your tireless efforts on make this work not only possible but exceptional. YOU are essential in this ministry of hope and healing, and we are grateful for YOU!