



Sesame Street's *Little Children, Big Challenges: incarceration*

Over 1.7 million (1 in 28) children in the United States have a parent who is in incarcerated and several million more have grown up with a parent in prison during some part of their early years.



The arrest and removal of a mother or father from a child's life can force a child to confront emotional, social and economic consequences that may trigger behavior problems and poor outcomes in school. And then there are the fears that these children are at a higher risk of becoming incarcerated themselves as adults.

This summer Sesame Street is addressing the issue of incarceration with the release of their newest toolkit *Little Children, Big Challenges: incarceration*. During its 40-plus year history, Sesame Street has tackled tough topics like death, divorce, poverty and military deployment. This project provides a bilingual multimedia toolkit to help parents and caregivers of children with a loved one in prison. The goal of this project is to reduce the levels of anxiety, sadness, and confusion children may experience during the incarceration of a parent. It equips parent and caregivers with the knowledge of what their child may be experiencing as well as suggestions for communication and support. TIFA will be partnering with Prison

LITTLE children BIG challenges: incarceration

Fellowship to distribute the Sesame Street *Little Children, Big Challenges: incarceration* resource kit to families during the summer and the rest of the year. These kits are designed to provide support and comfort to young children (ages 3-8) throughout their parents' incarceration.



Texas was selected as one of 10 pilot states to release these kits, in both Spanish and English, that will include a DVD with the Muppet segment, a Muppet storybook for children and a guide for parents and caregivers.

Our TIFA chapters are now in the process of ordering the free kits and they will be available later this summer through your local chapters.

Families and children of incarcerated parents have long been an almost invisible part of our communities. Sesame Street is providing a way to start a dialogue in our communities through news stories surrounding this often stigmatizing and alienating topic. TIFA looks forward to working with

Sesame Street and Prison Fellowship on this wonderful project.

To download the toolkit you can visit the Sesame Street website at: <http://www.sesamestreet.org/parents/topicsandactivities/toolkits/incarceration>

Sine Die for the 83rd Legislature

Now that the 83rd Regular Legislative Session is over below is a partial list of some of the bills that will become law. For the full text, visit <http://www.capitol.state.tx.us/>. When the budget becomes final, TIFA will print a list of some of the riders that have been attached to it.

SB 213 – (*Whitmire; Nichols*): Relating to the continuation and functions of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice, the

Continued on page 3

TIFA Contact

is the official newsletter of the Texas Inmate Families Association © 2013. All rights reserved.

Opinions expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily represent the policies of TIFA.

TIFA is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) of the U.S. Internal Revenue Code. Membership in TIFA is open to anyone. A Basic membership is \$25 per year and includes one newsletter subscription to the member address. A Basic Plus membership of \$35 per year includes all family members residing in one household and the inmate newsletter.

Executive Director
Jennifer Erschabek

Louise Elzner
Secretary

Board of Directors

Jim Nelson, Chairman, Austin

Weldon Bowling, Treasurer,
Harker Heights

Rita Castro, San Antonio

Robert Elzner, Austin

Jennifer Erschabek, Austin

Patt Jackson, Austin

Founders

Stuart M. DeLuca
Sheldon DeLuca

TIFA

P.O. Box 300220
Austin, Texas 78703-0004
Office: (512) 371-0900
Fax: (512) 371-0988
www.tifa.org
tifa@tifa.org



Thank You to Susan Fenner

TIFA's Board of Directors is delighted to announce that Susan Fenner has been awarded a "Life Membership" for her dedicated service to our organization.

As most of you know, Susan retired from her volunteer position of Executive Director last year. She has been the mainstay of this organization for 17 years and the face many of us associate with TIFA. She has held almost every position in the organization, including Chairman of the Board and Executive Director and kept us together through thick and thin. Susan has always been willing to help in any area and during her many years of service, she represented TIFA on the Reentry Taskforce, maintained the TIFA membership records, served as Editor of the Contact, and represented TIFA in the community.

Although she is stepping back to catch her breath and catch up on all those chores that have been put on hold, Susan will still be active with us. She will continue to help and be a presence at the South Austin TIFA meeting.

I know each of you understand her need for a little break; when you see her, please let her know how much she has meant to you and your loved ones on this Journey.

— *The TIFA Board of Directors* ■

Message from the Executive Director, Jennifer Erschabek

As TIFA continues to grow, I stop and ask myself "What do people need and what questions do they have?" and how does TIFA respond to those needs....."



TIFA is foremost a community of people who care deeply for each other regardless of what has happened in our lives. They understand our sadness. In our fast-paced world of electronic communication, this kind of understanding, knowing and acceptance is a rare and precious thing.

When someone has the grace to hear us, see us, and love us – even when we are vulnerable, weak, and lost, we are deeply touched. Our need to be heard and accepted and not judged is fundamental. It is a core, base, and elemental need.

But sometimes we are so busy and so focused on our own worries and concerns that we don't listen to each other anymore. Do you hear or see someone with a problem? Ask yourself "what do they need?" and ask them "what's happening in your life?" and just listen...and listen...and love...and listen. Then ask, "How can I support you?" and they will know that you mean it.

"Listening is the oldest and perhaps the most powerful tool of healing. It is often through the quality of our listening and not the wisdom of our words that we are able to effect the most profound changes in the people around us."

— Rachel Naomi Remen, *My Grandfather's Blessings*

Continued from page 1 (Sine Die)

Texas Department of Criminal Justice, and the Windham School District and to the functions of the Board of Pardons and Paroles and the Correctional Managed Health Care Committee.

Confinement & Reentry

HB 62 – (*Guillen*): Relating to a justice or judge having an interest in a business entity that owns, manages, or operates a private correctional or rehabilitation facility.

HB 86 – (*Callegari; Cook; Laubenberg*): Relating to the criteria for review by the Sunset Advisory Commission of an agency that licenses an occupation.

HB 634 – (*Farias; Lucio III*): Relating to the verification of an inmate's veteran status by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

HB 797 – (*Thompson, Senfronia; Miles*): Relating to certain written information the Windham School District must provide to a person before the person enrolls in a district vocational training program.

HB 798 – (*Thompson, Senfronia*): Relating to certain actions taken by certain licensing authorities regarding a license holder or applicant who has been convicted of a Class C misdemeanor.

HB 799 – (*Thompson, Senfronia; Miles*): Relating to vocational training programs provided by the Windham School District.

HB 1188 – (*Thompson, Senfronia; Perry; Miles*): Relating to limiting the liability of persons who employ persons with criminal convictions.

HB 1544 – (*Allen*): Relating to the authority of a county to contract with a private vendor for the operation of a detention facility.

HB 1659 – (*Thompson, Senfronia*): Relating to certain actions taken by certain licensing authorities regarding a license holder or applicant who received deferred adjudication for certain offenses.

SB 107 – (*West*): Relating to the disclosure by a court of criminal history record information that is the subject of an order of nondisclosure.

SB 345 – (*Whitmire*): Relating to certain programs for inmates, including the abolition of the state boot camp program and the use of programs by volunteer and faith-based organizations.

SB 345 amendment: HB 2811 – (*Toth*): Relating to programs provided by volunteer and faith-based organizations to inmates in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

SB 369 – (*Whitmire*): Relating to certain information available to the public on a central database containing information about sex offenders.

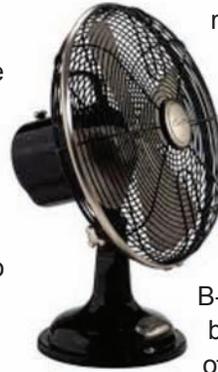
SB 1003 – (*Carona*): Relating to a review of and report regarding the use of adult and juvenile administrative segregation in facilities in this state.

SB 1185 – (*Huffman*): Relating to the creation of a mental health jail diversion pilot program.

SB 1289 – (*Williams*): Relating to certain business entities engaged in the publication of mug shots and other information regarding the involvement of an individual in the criminal justice system; providing a civil penalty. ■

Summer Heat Preparations

It is that time of year when employees and offenders will be affected by extreme heat conditions. As a reminder, due to the potential for extreme heat conditions in upcoming months, it is imperative that everyone takes precautions to help reduce heat-related illnesses. Administrative Directive 10.64, "Temperature Extremes in the TDCJ Work Place", and Health Services policy B-15.2, "Heat Stress" should be reviewed by staff and offenders for general awareness.



- Ensure employees and offenders are aware of the signs and treatment for heat-related illnesses by conducting training.
- Provide additional water. Ice should be provided if available to employees and offenders in work and housing areas.
- Restrict outside activity (work hours) in accordance with AD 10.64.
- Ensure all staff and offenders working in areas of extreme heat (i.e., field, maintenance, yard squad) are provided frequent water breaks.
- Refrain from transporting psychiatric in-patient offenders to another facility via chain bus.
- Transport offenders during coolest hours of the day.
- Screen outgoing chains to ensure that the selected mode of transportation is appropriate.
- Allow offenders to take fans when being transported off the unit for medical appointments.

Continued on page 4

Continued from page 3 (Summer Heat)

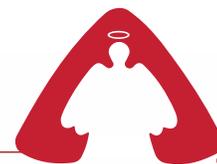
- Utilize INFOPAK report (IMS042) listing offenders with heat-sensitive medical restrictions (includes but not limited to offenders on psychotropic medication).
- Load and Unload transfer vehicles as quickly as possible. (Security at every back gate is the first priority, but we must always be aware of heat-related issues when buses occupied by offenders sit for any length of time. Every reasonable effort should be made to ensure buses get in and out of the back gate in a safe and expedient manner.)
- Transfer vehicles parked for more than 15 minutes are required to place a fan, previously purchased, on the vehicle. Units should ensure that fans, extension cords, etc. are in place and available when needed.
- Store paper towels on transportation vehicles to be wet down to utilize in emergencies. (transportation)
- Water coolers on buses should be refilled at various times during the day to maintain water at appropriate temperature. (transportation)
- When utilizing fans, air should be drawn through the structure and exhausted outside. Take full advantage of the fresh air exchange system and/or prevailing winds to assist in the movement of air as applicable.
- Increase airflow by utilizing blowers, when and if appropriate, normally used to move hot air in the winter. Attach ribbons to vents to ensure blowers are being used appropriately. Ensure all maintenance to blowers has been completed.
- Allow additional showers for offenders.
- Allow offenders to wear shorts in dayroom and recreation areas.

- Make water available during meal times.
- Make sure window screens are clean so as not to restrict airflow.
- Remember that offenders' fans should not be confiscated due to property restriction during this time. Fans should only be confiscated if they are considered contraband. (i.e., they have been altered.)
- Fans will be allowed in all custody levels (to include administrative segregation and disciplinary status). Offenders with fans stored based on these restrictions shall have their fans re-issued for the time period specified in this posting.

- All offenders shall be permitted to purchase a fan if they do not have one.
- Ensure that the fan re-cycling program is in place, allowing the permanent issue of a fan to an offender who has been indigent for the previous six months on a first-come, first-serve basis. Offenders who have significant medical needs, based on a condition or medication that is negatively impacted by the heat, shall be given priority.
- Wardens are encouraged to coordinate with their Food Service Department to ensure their ice machines are working properly. ■

Angel Tree

Prison Fellowship Ministries has an Angel Tree program for the children of incarcerated parents that involve churches in the communities where the families live. During the summer, the Unit Chaplain is responsible for distributing forms to offenders so that they can sign up for a gift, purchased by the participating church members, but given in the name of the incarcerated parent. The sign up period for the program ends August 31. ■



ANGEL TREE®

A Program of Prison Fellowship®



Grievances: Pro and Con

By Teri LeClercq, Ph.D., author
of *Prison Grievances:
when to write, how to write* (Amazon, \$9)

As you already know, inmates can bring attention to prison condition problems only through grievances. You also know that most inmates are reluctant to write a grievance, fearing retribution. What then, should you advise your inmates?

1. How serious is the problem?

If it is a matter of life and death or physical abuse, then the inmate should alert the prison staff but can also write directly to a court. If the problem is serious enough that the inmate believes the System should do something about it, then by all means, write that grievance.

I spoke with a mother whose daughter was “in trouble” for writing so many grievances. How many, I asked. “Oh, she writes one every few days.” Goodness! When I asked if her daughter is continuing a personal habit from her real-world years, the mom admitted, yes. That daughter was always complaining or whining about something. Is she willing to take the consequences of the administration’s reading one more complaint about something they can’t control (bad weather, lock-down, lack of staff)?

2. What if the staff does retaliate against the inmate for writing a grievance? Some inmates report being taken to solitary; some get their cells tossed; some lose

privileges. Each of these reactions is officially labeled something else: “uncooperative” “struck an officer” “illegal cell phone.”

Power belongs to the staff and not the inmates. Yet TDCJ has an official policy stating a zero tolerance for any staff that retaliates against a prisoner who grieves. Interestingly, this last legislative session, Rep. Sylvester Turner of Houston introduced a bill that would



have codified this policy, making it a law. Then, if staff retaliated, staff would be breaking a law as well as TDCJ policy. This bill disappeared after the committee accepted it. So the policy was not turned into law.

A Suggestion

The inmate needs to make 2 copies of the original Step 1 and Step 2. He should send one copy to you. He should keep one copy. At the top of the grievance submitted, he should write COPY 1. That helps alert the reader that other people know a grievance is in progress. For additional help, please see my blog: prison-grievances.com.

Editor’s Note: TIFA has donated 100 copies of Terri LeClercq’s book to the Windham libraries ■

Questions and Answers about the TDCJ ECOMM Direct Purchase Program for Friends and Family: Care Packages – Part Two

- Q.** When do the new quarters start?
- A.** The dates for the beginning of each quarter are on the web page. Calendar quarters are based on the following dates:
January 1- March 31;
April 1 – June 30;
July 1 – September 30
and October 1 – December 31.
- Q.** If an indigent offender has a lien on their trust fund account for other financial obligations such as the \$100 medical fee will this affect what the offender will receive when you order \$50 of care package items for them?
- A.** If you order items for an offender, the offender will receive those items unless some of the items are not available in the commissary. If those items are not available the offender can choose to make a substitution of equal value for the item. However, if money is deposited in the offender’s account, a percentage of the money will be taken to satisfy any liens on the account. The eComm Direct Purchase Program is a good way for religious groups to provide an inmate with hygiene or food items in lieu of sending money to the trust fund.

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5 (Questions & Answers)

- Q.** When you pay for care packages can your loved one pick what they want or do you have to order it for them?
- A.** The purchaser chooses what items to purchase. The offender can only make a substitution of equal value if the item ordered is not available.
- Q.** Will there be other items that will be available in the future?
- A.** The items on the list will change due to availability. They do intend to have other packages in the future such as writing material and holiday packs.
- Q.** I was ordering a package from the web site when it closed. Will my things in the cart be saved or will I have to start over when I sign back in? I thought I would be able to complete my order, I didn't know I would be kicked off.
- A.** No, your items will not be saved in your cart. You will have to start over.
- Q.** Who is in charge of the care package web site?
- A.** Texas.gov
- Q.** Where do the profits from the sales of care packages go? To education and recreation for offenders or to the Texas general revenue fund?
- A.** The on-line sales are treated the same as all other commissary sales. All profits are used for the operation of all unit commissaries, inmate trust fund, ID cards, recreation programs, library books and periodicals, televisions in dayrooms, The Echo inmate newspaper, and the salaries and benefits for all commissary & trust fund staff.

- Q.** Who is putting together the care packages for the programs? Will other companies be allowed to supply care packages?
- A.** Currently the Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services is packaging some of the items. We will be issuing open market solicitations for these packaged items. We are hoping that some competition will result in lower package prices.
- Q.** If a wing at a unit goes on lock-down is the whole unit considered locked down by e-Comm?
- A.** Yes, the e-Comm software does not have a field to capture the information about wings in a unit. The Commissary Department has a request to include this information in a future software upgrade. ■

TIFA Workshops, an Exciting Success!

The TIFA Parole Packet Workshops have been a great success. We had over 100 people attend our Conroe workshop and 70+ at the Ft. Worth event. Rissie Owens spoke at the Conroe workshop and Michelle Skyrme was our speaker at the Burleson (Ft Worth Chapter) workshop. These workshops have helped families



Pat Prophitt, Raylene Truxton and Jorge Renaud at the Eagles Nest Ministry in Conroe

learn more about the parole process and how to put together a parole packet. They have also provided an opportunity for families to visit with the parole board members who have been wonderful and answered each and every question. Our next workshop will be in Amarillo on Sat. Aug 24. People are already signing up for the Amarillo workshop and people are calling about the Carrollton/Dallas workshop in October. Our December workshop is scheduled for Pearland just south of Houston.

Be sure and tell your family and friends to visit the TIFA web site at www.TIFA.org for more information, our newest chapters and a registration form. And you can now register for our workshops on-line through PayPal. For additional information call the TIFA phone line at 512-371-0900. These are very popular workshops so get your registration in as soon as possible. TIFA is pleased with the success of these workshops and that our members are finding real value in them. ■

Texas Workforce Education Conference

Jennifer Erschabek, the TIFA Executive Director, was asked to speak at the Texas Workforce Education Conference on June 28th in Huntsville, Texas. She explained TIFA's mission, vision and projects to a crowd of over 100 attendees. The Conference was hosted by Lee College in support of their mission to provide TDCJ offenders a variety of quality academic and technical programs in a unique and challenging environment based on active and collaborative learning

Continued on page 7

Continued from page 6 (Education Conference)

outcomes. Other speakers included Mick Normington - Texas Workforce Commission, Mary Sue Molnar- Texas Voices, Paul Allen- Division Chair, Lee College and Donna Zuniga- Dean, Lee College. ■



The following is information taken from the presentation by Mick Normington, Business Specialist from the Texas Workforce Commission.

Balancing Will and Skill: The Changing Jobs Market of Texas

In today's slower economic times and ever changing job market there is major competition for jobs and, for ex-offenders who have to overcome a criminal history, getting a job can be even more difficult. Employers in Texas are looking for workers with the right skills and willingness to be flexible in their career moves. This means that ex-offenders have to go above and beyond in their willingness to be flexible and also in preparing themselves by developing a solid set of technical skills. The Texas Workforce Commission has described it as a balancing and blending of will and skill. This is becoming more and more critical in finding a job and keeping a job.

Look for the rest of this article in the TIFA October Newsletter. ■

2013 Vision Summit

The Travis County Sheriff's Office (TCSO) will be hosting the inaugural Vision Summit: *Looking Toward the Future of Re-entry* conference in Austin, Texas from September 10-13, 2013. Considerable, positive reform is occurring all around the country and we can make our communities safer by reducing recidivism, improving re-entry outcomes and assisting those who return from jail or prison through enhanced communication, coordination and collaboration of involved community organizations.

The mission of the Vision Summit is to awaken and ignite communities to attain a unified vision and thriving re-entry process that enables the incarcerated to amend their place in the world, by showcasing effective programs, listening to each other and networking to make future possibilities a reality today.



Over 300 attendees from all over the country are anticipated to attend this summit. The Vision Summit will be a highly educational, exciting and memorable event; top presenters in the field of re-entry will inspire the attendees to go back to their respective communities and create change.

For more information: <https://www.tcsheriff.org/community/events/257-2013-vision-summit-looking-toward-the-future-of-re-entry> ■

Texas C.U.R.E. Free Fan Project Reminder!

Please don't forget to send your \$20.00 donation for this year's Texas C.U.R.E. Free Fan Project. This project makes sure that indigent inmates in the TDCJ are provided a chance to apply for a free fan. The summer months are here and the deadline for donations is July 31st.

TIFA is proud to report that at the last Parole Workshop we collected \$170 in donations for the fan project. Please remember, it takes your help to ensure the Free Fan Project's continued success.

Send your \$20.00 donation to:
Texas CURE Fan Program,
P.O. Box 38381, Dallas, TX 75238-0381 ■

In the next issue of the TIFA Contact look for the following articles:

- Balancing Will and Skill:
The Changing Jobs Market of Texas**
- The Financial Impact of Incarceration
of Families Summary**
- The Parole Workshops for 2014
Summary of the Vision Summit**



Texas Inmate Families Association

Strengthening families through support, education, and advocacy

TIFA
PO Box 300220
Austin, TX 78703-0004

CONTACT
Vol.18 No.2

TIFA Chapters

Amarillo

1st Monday, 7:00 pm
Buchanan Street United Methodist Church
617 N. Buchanan
Amarillo, TX 79107
(806) 626-7728

Austin

1st Monday, 6:30 pm
Sunrise Community Church
4430 Manchaca Road
(just south of Ben White Blvd.)
Austin, Texas 78745
(512) 371-0900

Austin North (Cedar Park)



Starting in Sept 2013
Visit TIFA.org for more info.
(512) 371-0900

Beaumont

1st Tuesday, 6:30 pm
St. Jude Thaddeus Catholic Church Family Life Center
6825 Gladys
Beaumont, Texas 77726
(409) 246-8146

Carrollton

Church of the Nazarene
1529 E. Hebron Parkway
Carrollton, TX 75010
(512) 371-0900
Visit TIFA.org for more info.

Conroe

4th Monday, 6:30 pm
Montgomery County Library
104 IH-45 N
Conroe, TX 77301
(936) 228-0905

Corpus Christi

1st Monday, 7:00 pm
Molina Neighborhood Center
614 Horne Road
Corpus Christi, TX 78416
(361) 461-4954

Dallas

3rd Wednesday, 6:30 pm
Oak Lawn United Methodist Church
3014 Oak Lawn Avenue
Dallas, TX 75219
(214) 734-9037
Lynnies@gmail.com

Ft. Worth

1st Monday, 6:30 p.m
Ol' South Pancake House
1507 S. University Drive
Fort Worth, TX 76107
(817) 798-9010

Houston

2nd Tuesday, 6:30 pm
Acres Home Branch Library
8501 West Montgomery
Houston, TX 77088
(832) 393-1700

Killeen

4th Tuesday, 7 pm
JQ Adams Post 223
208 South Park St
Killeen, TX
(254) 690-3341

Pearland/South Houston

2nd Wednesday, 6:30 pm
Pearland Westside Library
2803 Business Center Dr., Ste 101
Pearland, TX 77584



Rio Grande Valley (San Benito)

No regular meeting, but materials and help are available at:
START Center
743 N. Sam Houston
San Benito, Texas 78586
(956) 399-7818

San Antonio

2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm
St. Vincent De Paul Catholic Church Parish Hall
4222 Southwest Loop 410
(Frontage road - between Hwy 90 and Valley Hi exit)
San Antonio, Texas
(210) 680-3505

If you are interested in starting a TIFA chapter in your area, please contact the TIFA office.

It only takes 3 TIFA members to organize a new chapter. We will provide chapter guidelines and support.

(512) 371-0900