



**Volume 17
Issue # 1**



**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF
TEXAS INMATE FAMILIES ASSOCIATION
CONTACT**

TIFA 2013 SURVEY: The Financial Impact of Incarceration on Families

When someone is incarcerated, most families experience financial losses as a result of the incarceration. However, the loss is greatest for those families who try to maintain the offender as a family member. In recent years, there has been improvement in the efforts of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and the Texas Legislature to help families stay connected but it has come at a cost. TIFA would like to know what that financial burden is for families and if there is a way to lower that financial burden. In 2013, TIFA would like to pursue requests to lower fees and profits and make it easier to have offenders moved closer to families for visitation.

Please fill out the survey on pages 3 and 4 by circling the appropriate answers and estimating the money you spend as a result of your family member or friend being incarcerated. Feel free to scribble in the margins and on the back of the pages but please place your answers in the blanks provided. The information in this survey will be kept confidential. Please return your completed survey as soon as possible by mail or email to:

TIFA - Financial Survey
P.O. Box 300220
Austin, TX 78703-0004
Phone: (512) 371-0900

Or scan and email to: tifa@tifa.org

Please return all surveys by Feb 28, 2013, and please, one survey per household address.

San Antonio Parole Packet Workshop to be held Saturday, January 26th.

A Parole Packet Workshop will be held in San Antonio on Saturday, January 26, 2013 at St. Mark the Evangelist Catholic Church - Shalom Room. Seating is limited to the first 50 paid registrations, so don't delay. Whether your loved one is coming up for parole soon, is currently in the review process, or if you wish to begin planning for their coming home now, this workshop will give you an opportunity to become familiar with the process and procedures and will prove to be invaluable as an information source.

Registration starts at 8:30 am. At nine o'clock, Jim Nelson, chairman of the TIFA board, will present opening remarks followed by the opening session which will include the following topics: (1) The Parole Process -TX Board of Pardons and Paroles (2) The Offender Interview - Institutional Parole Officer (3) What to Expect From a Parole Officer - TDCJ Parole Division. A working session will then follow - "Preparing a Parole Packet". Registration: \$25.00 per family (2 family members) - advance registration paid by check or money order. Details of a working lunch to be announced - seating will be limited. For more information, visit the TIFA web site at www.tifa.org or call (210) 387-1558. *(continued page 5)*

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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.

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Message from the Executive Director, Jennifer Erschabek

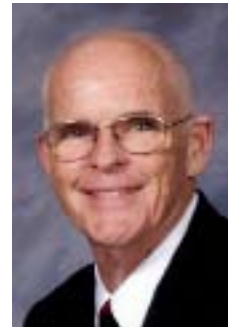
I was interviewed on the "Prison Show" talk radio show on KPFT-FM (90.1) in December, and the co-host asked me, "As the new Executive Director of TIFA, what is your vision for the organization?" I quickly replied that my wish is for TIFA to have the ability to help all families who have loved ones in the Texas criminal justice system. Later on, as I thought about it, I decided that the vision should be much larger.

Not any one person or organization can have all the answers and solutions. The actual solutions about how to best meet the challenges before us have to come from the people closest to the issue. TIFA must empower members to challenge a system that does not like change. TIFA needs to empower families, challenge them, provide them with the resources they need, and have them hold TDCJ accountable for their social and professional responsibilities.

We can only do this together. Let's make 2013 an amazing year. As TIFA members, let's seek out every family that needs our help, and together we will move forward, speaking with one voice to make a difference.

**Message from the Chairman of the Board,
Jim Nelson**

I am excited about the opportunities that TIFA has for growth in 2013. We will be making significant improvements to our website so that it has more information for our members and is easier to navigate. In January, we will start a chapter in Carrollton. Jennifer Erschabek and Raylene Truxton will be presenters at the February Prisoner's Family Conference in Houston. A parole packet workshop will be offered in San Antonio this month and in Houston sometime this summer.



Patt Jackson joins the TIFA Board

Patt Jackson is a native Austinite and graduate of Kaplan University. She is the proud wife of Rev. Ed Jackson. She has two sons, 3 step-daughters, 2 grand-children, and 6 step-grandchildren.



Since 1997, Patt has served in the criminal justice ministry arena as a Minister of Music, mentor, Bible-teacher, counselor, class facilitator and praise dance leader. She serves in this ministry, alongside her husband, as Co-Servant Leader for the Mt. Zion Baptist Church's

Church's Criminal Justice Ministry, since 2001. This Ministry includes a myriad of services to individuals prior to incarceration, during incarceration and after-care. She has received awards, certificates, and other accolades for her service.

After retirement, in October of 2011, Patt was led to organize Christian Churches Collaborating for Change (short name- 4Cs), where she serves as the current president. This is a coalition of churches focusing on criminal justice issues, while educating, informing and engaging church congregants. There are currently 14 churches who have joined and serve in this initiative.

Patt is very passionate about her service in the area of criminal justice. She brings this passion, her experiences and spirit to the TIFA board.

TIFA 2013 SURVEY : The Financial Impact of Incarceration on Families

1. What is the TDCJ # of your incarcerated friend or loved one? _____
2. Is your incarcerated friend or loved one male or female? **M or F**
3. Does your friend or loved one have any children? **Y or N** If yes, how many are under 18 years of age? _____
4. What is your relationship to the offender? You are a . . .
 - a. Spouse
 - b. Mother
 - c. Father
 - d. Brother
 - e. Sister
 - f. Child
 - g. Aunt
 - h. Uncle
 - i. Cousin
 - j. Friend
 - k. Grandparent
 - l. Other _____
5. In what year were YOU born? _____
6. What is your race/ethnicity?
 - a. White – not Hispanic/Latino
 - b. White – Hispanic/Latino
 - c. Black or African American
 - d. American Indian or Alaska Native
 - e. Asian
 - f. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 - g. Other
7. What is your employment status? Are you currently.....
 - a. Employed for wages
 - b. Self-employed
 - c. Out of work and looking for work
 - d. Out of work but not looking for work
 - e. A student
 - f. A homemaker
 - g. Retired
 - h. Unable to work
8. What is your total yearly household income?
 - a. Less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,000 to \$19,999
 - c. \$20,000 to \$29,999
 - d. \$30,000 to \$39,999
 - e. \$40,000 to \$49,999
 - f. \$50,000 to \$59,999
 - g. \$60,000 to \$69,999
 - h. \$70,000 to \$79,999
 - i. \$80,000 to \$89,999
 - j. \$90,000 to \$99,999
 - k. \$100,000 or more
9. Was the offender a contributor to the yearly household income before incarceration? **Y or N**
If yes, what was his/her yearly contribution to the household income?
 - a. Less than \$10,000
 - b. \$10,000 to \$19,999
 - c. \$20,000 to \$29,999
 - d. \$30,000 to \$39,999
 - e. \$40,000 to \$49,999
 - f. \$50,000 to \$59,999
 - g. \$60,000 to \$69,999
 - h. \$70,000 to \$79,999
 - i. \$80,000 to \$89,999
 - j. \$90,000 to \$99,999
 - k. \$100,000 or more
10. How long has your loved one been in TDCJ (not including county jail)? _____
11. How many live in your household including children? _____
12. Are you now caring for child(ren) of the offender that are not your children (ex. Are you a grandparent, aunt, uncle taking care of an offender's child)? **Y or N**
If yes, can you estimate the additional monthly expense of providing for the child(ren) for clothes, school supplies, medical, food, child care, other? _____
13. Do you contribute financially to the support of a child whose parent is incarcerated but does not live with you?
Y or N If yes, please estimate the cost per month. _____

(Survey continued from page 4)

14. Have you had to take on a second job because of the money that is spent for commissary, phones, visitation, child care, etc?
Y or N
15. During a year, how many times do you visit? _____
16. Approximately, how far do you have to drive to visit (round trip)? _____
17. How much would you estimate a single visit costs including gas, overnight stay (if necessary) and quarters for vending machines (not counting meals)? _____
18. Are there factors that prevent you from visiting? You can't visit more often or you can't visit at all because of.....
- | | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| a. health reasons | e. money |
| b. transportation issues | f. childcare issues |
| c. work on weekends | g. other _____ |
| d. distance (long distance travel) | h. does not apply, you can visit when possible |
19. How much do you deposit into your loved one's trust fund account per month? _____
20. How much would you estimate that you spend on magazines, books, newspapers, & writing supplies in a year?

21. How often (best estimate) do you receive a phone call from your loved one in prison?
- a. Every day
 - b. Twice a week
 - c. Once a week
 - d. Every other week
 - e. Once a month
 - f. Never – do not use the phone to visit
 - g. Other _____
22. How much would you estimate you spend on monthly phone calls? _____
23. How much would you estimate you spend on monthly emails to the offender through jpay? _____
24. Have you had to help pay the \$100 medical co-pay?
- a. Yes, for health (not dental) issues
 - b. Yes, for dental issues
 - c. No, offender has not had health issues
 - d. No, offender has chronic health issues
25. If you are purchasing care packages through the new ecommdirect program on Texas.gov, how much do you plan to spend per quarter? _____ per year? _____
26. Are you paying tuition for college classes? **Y or N** If so, how much per year? _____
27. Have you hired a parole attorney? **Y or N**
If yes, how much have you spent for a parole attorney? _____
28. Are there other bills or fees that you are paying because of the incarceration?
What is the bill? _____ How much are you paying per month? _____
29. Are you a TIFA member? **Y or N**
30. Would you like to receive the results of this survey? **Y or N**
What is your email address or mailing address? _____

Please return all surveys by Feb 28, 2013, and please, one survey per household address.
TIFA P.O. Box 300220 Austin, TX 78703-0004 Or scan and email to: tifa@tifa.org

Windham School District requesting additional funding for the next biennium

During the last legislative session, the Windham School District (WSD), which provides academic, vocational and life skills classes to offenders in TDCJ, received a 27% budget cut. This resulted in the elimination of 20% of the teaching staff by the end of August 2011. Because of this reduction in staff, the number of students participating in educational services was down from 80,000 in the previous year to only 63,000 in 2011-2012.

With the number of students receiving less educational services and WSD in danger of losing even more teaching positions, the District has requested additional budget dollars in an exceptional item to fund three initiatives.

1. Fund 59 positions that are not supported by the current budget
2. Fund transitioning to computer-based GED testing. In 2014, the GED Testing Services (GEDTS) will require that the GED will be administered by computer only although WSD will be allowed to transition over the next several years.
3. Reinstate school at 6 locations (Glossbrenner, Halbert, Havins, Johnston, Leblanc, and Sayle) that were closed after the last budget cuts to provide literacy classes to offenders who are close to release in substance abuse facilities.

The budget cuts to Windham, the reduction in federal education grants and the cuts to the educational budgets of colleges and universities mean that there will be fewer and fewer opportunities for offenders to earn a degree, learn a trade, to get a GED, or to learn other life changing skills. Education will indeed be an important issue in the next legislative session.

Photos from the Austin Parole Packet Workshop held October 21, 2012



Rissie Owens, Chair of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles, explains parole in Texas.



Great turnout for the Austin Parole Packet Workshop!



Jennifer Erschabek, TIFA Executive Director, introduces one of our speakers, Jorge Antonio Renaud, author of "Behind the Walls".



Rueben Shumake speaks about how TIFA helped him and his mother, Sandy Gomez, during his incarceration.

San Antonio Parole Packet Workshop January 26, 2013 (continued from page 1)

Registration form for San Antonio Parole Packet Workshop

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone number: _____

Email Address: _____

Are you a TIFA member? _____ Yes _____ No

Please return this form with registration fee to: TIFA - Workshop, PO Box 300220, Austin, TX 78103



Children of Prisoners LIBRARY

www.fcnetwork.

Why Maintain Relationships?

Facts and Issues:" CPL 102

By Ann Adalist-Estrin

Adapted from How Can I Help?, published by the Osborne Association, Long Island, New York, used with permission

Is prison visiting good for the child of a prisoner? Is it good for the parent in prison? Is it good for the family?

There is no one right answer for every situation or family. But there are many families and children that can benefit from maintaining family ties through the crises of incarceration.

Can contact with a parent in prison benefit children?

Each family situation is different. The potential benefit to children depends greatly on how much support they receive. There are many adults who are important in the lives of children of prisoners. Children can benefit when adults help with letter writing and phone calls. They can also benefit when these adults participate in preparing for and conducting visits.

Potential Benefits to Children

*** Correcting frightening images**

What the child imagines about the incarcerated parent's conditions and circumstances is likely to be much worse and more frightening than the reality. As depressing as a prison visiting room may be, it is far better than what many children imagine.

*** Talking face to face**

Parents in prison can talk with their children about their crime and life behind bars in ways that can decrease the child's guilt and feelings of responsibility. Parents in prison can help their children feel worthy and lovable.

*** Learning that you are not alone**

Seeing other children and families at prison visits helps families know their situation is not unique. There are people who understand.

*** Preparing for release**

Maintaining contact through visits, phone and mail is also important to prepare the incarcerated parent to be re-united with the family upon release. Without contact, the child may experience the parent's return as an intrusion. The child may be confused when the newly released parent brings a change in parenting style and rule to an established routine in the family. This can be true whether or not the parent will live with the child.

*** Preventing termination of parental rights**

For children placed in foster care because of parental incarceration, visits are important to avoid permanent placement.

These visits assure children that their parents have not voluntarily abandoned them to strangers. In the lives of foster children, ongoing visiting creates continuity. Also, courts may be less inclined to terminate the rights of a parent who, while incarcerated, worked to provide parental support.

*** Healing grief and loss**

The pain of separation can overwhelm children in foster care and other children of prisoners. Maintaining the relationship between the child and the parent in prison is important to the child's adjustment and healing.

Can contact with family members behind bars benefit families?

Families can benefit from bridging the gap between jail and community. Families are complex systems. The absence of a part of the system has a powerful impact on its functioning. Family members in prison can be a vibrant part of the family if communication exists.

While prison limits the activities that a family member can perform, a prisoner can still fill an important role in family life as mother, father, spouse, partner, or sibling.

But families can only benefit from their relationship with an incarcerated member when and if they stay in communications.

Can contact with families benefit prisoners? The family is probably this country's most valuable weapon in fighting crime. Prisoners who receive visitors, maintain family ties, and are released to stable home environment are more likely to succeed in leading productive, crime-free lives.

Prison inmates clearly benefit from family efforts to stay in touch. Families can provide an incentive for prisoners to grow, learn and change. Families can help prisoners stay in touch with what is going on in the world, easing their transition back to society. Some parole authorities see strong family ties as an indicator that a prisoner is better prepared for release.

Many parents in prison can contribute positively to a child's upbringing. Prisoners who have failed as citizens can succeed as parents. Prison can be an opportunity to become a better parent - more caring, concerned and informed.

Prison may not be the best place to improve one's parenting, but it has been done. Around the country, there is growing interest in starting and expanding programs to help prisoners learn the skills of parenting. The Directory of Programs at www.fcnetwork.org lists many examples.

Chapter news from around the state

Carrollton - New Chapter!

The first meeting of the new Carrollton TIFA Chapter was held Tuesday, January 8th, at the Church of the Nazarene, 1529 E. Hebron Parkway (a map is available on the TIFA.org website). At this first meeting, Jim Nelson, TIFA Chairman of the Board, presented updates on what's going on with TIFA, and Rueben Shumake, a recently released inmate, answered questions about his experiences with TDCJ, the parole process and reentry. Rueben's mom, Sandy Gomez, a member of the Austin Chapter, was supported by members of that chapter as she put together Rueben's parole packet. Rueben was released in March. He will be in Denton for six more months and will attend the Carrollton Chapter (in fact, Rueben will be presenting the program next month!). The next meeting of the Carrollton TIFA Chapter will be February 12th, at 7pm.

Also attending this first meeting were the pastors of the Church of the Nazarene, Dr. Stanley F. Seat (currently the Interim Senior Pastor) and Chaplain (MAJOR) Charlie M. Lummus, USA (RET) and their wives. We appreciate the support the pastors have already shown in welcoming TIFA to their church."

Killeen - New Chapter

Dr. Weldon Bowling knows the pain of having a loved one incarcerated. His son was convicted on drug charges that placed him in a prison more than 350 miles away from his home in Harker Heights. It was a shocking experience, and one that led Dr. Bowling to a non-profit organization, the Texas Inmate Families Association (TIFA), an organization that helps the families of the incarcerated. Dr. Bowling has started a local TIFA chapter in Killeen hoping to help people in Bell, Coryell and Lampasas counties. Currently about 2,500 Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) inmates are from the three county area.

One of the most common problems relatives encounter when a family member goes to prison is the sheer distance. TDCJ does not place a high priority on the location of the prison and the distance families have to travel when making unit assignments..

There are many obstacles besides traveling distance to family visitation. Even prison policies can cut off a prisoner's visitations as a form of punishment for fighting or other forms of bad behavior. Seeing family members, however, gives inmates a reason to behave, which ultimately may count towards parole and an early release.. It can also lift an inmate out of depression. Visitation barriers are just some of the issues that TIFA works on in meetings with TDCJ. To learn more about the chapter in Killeen, please contact Dr. Bowling at (254) 690-3341.

NEWSLETTERS TO BE DELIVERED VIA EMAIL AND ONLINE ACCESS

It is essential that we find as many ways as possible to save money. Wherever possible, we will begin distributing the Contact to members via emails. Each issue will also be available online in the Members Only section of our website. "Hard" copies will be mailed to inmates and to all members who do not have internet access. If you do not need a copy mailed to you, please let us know in the office. Your cooperation is most appreciated!

THANKS TO STATE HOUSE PRINTING

Many thanks to State House Printing in Austin for their printing of the Contact at reduced cost.

TIFA Texas Inmate Families Association P.O. Box 300220 Austin TX 78703-0004

Please fill in the information requested and mail with your dues to the address above.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail address _____

The following optional information will be used only for TIFA membership and member services.

Inmate's Name _____ TDCJ ID # _____

Current TDCJ Unit _____ Inmate is my (example: son) _____

Please check the appropriate dues level and membership status in the box on the right.

- I am a new member.
 I am a renewing member.

- \$25 Basic
 \$35 Basic Plus

\$_____ Donation

Total Enclosed \$_____

Local Chapter currently
attending:

Newsletter Form

Revised February 2012



Vol.17, Issue #1

TIFA

PO Box 300220

Austin, TX 78703-0004

Current members: Please note membership expiration date on address label.

Austin

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

Corpus Christi

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

Killeen

3rd Tuesday, 7 pm
Central Christian Church
1301 W. Trummier Road
Killeen, TX 76541
(254) 690-3341

Beaumont

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

Dallas

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

**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

Carrollton

2nd Tuesday, 7:00 pm
Church of the Nazarene
1529 E. Hebron Parkway
Carrollton, TX 75010
(512) 371-0900

Ft. Worth

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

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

Conroe

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

Houston

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

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

