

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Your teaching talents are needed inside our prisons

In response to an article about prisons without air conditioning, a recent Zing!er suggested the answer is to "educate and rehabilitate inhabitants to have productive citizenship opportunities." That Zing!er might be surprised to learn that incarcerated men and women would take more classes if available.

Most prisons struggle to find qualified instructors and volunteers to offer courses and provide enrichment programs. For months, I have tried to find peo-

ple willing to sponsor prison Toastmasters Clubs and to teach in a creative writing program. Usually, I get an abrupt "no" or, more often, no response. When I asked a chaplain why recruiting people for prison work was so difficult, he gave three reasons: they don't think it's possible, they're afraid, or they believe once people are locked up, they should be forgotten.

Everyone benefits if these women and men, once released, have the productive skills needed to be good citizens and contribute to society. Why do we make it so difficult for them to do so?

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