

IOWA CITIZENS UNITED FOR THE REHABILITATIONS OF ERRANTS

FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

There are two ways of exerting one's strength: one is pushing down the other is pulling up. - Booker T. Washington

Happy Winter Members! I want to personally thank everyone for all of their dedication and passion in 2021. 2021 was not an easy year for criminal justice advocates



at Iowa CURE. 2021 started normal with the legislative season rolling and bills being presented. In March the murders of a correctional officer and nurse at Anamosa State Penitentiary put a harsh halt on security and polices at the prisons in Iowa. A security measures were implemented there was an impact to mailings, books,

magazines and visitation. Iowa CURE has been working with the Ombudsman's office to get to the source of the changes implemented to the mailing and book policy changes. We will present our findings when we have them. We understand this is a pain point for many family members and inmates. We are not giving up on getting answers to the new policies.

I want to thank everyone that is a member. As a non-profit we do not generate revenue. Iowa CURE does have expenses that include mailing of newsletters, zoom membership, and website cost. Your membership helps us cover these expenses as we do not have an income to pay those cost. If you would like to make a donation above your membership cost your donation is tax deductible. We appreciate all of our members and the vital input you provide us to advocate for criminal justice reform.

Warmly – Wendy Wittrock, President of Iowa CURE

IOWA CURE

Please note the following about Iowa CURE:

- Iowa CURE is not a legal AID service organization and cannot offer legal services or advice.
- We are a volunteer only organization, therefore we have no paid staff and no legal staff.
- Do not send us your legal documents,
- We do not accept phone calls from prisoners.
- By contacting or joining CURE, you are NOT entering into a contract for services.

2021 CURE YEAR IN REVIEW

JANUARY 2021 – KOLBE HOSPITALITY HOUSE OF HOPE

Wendy Wittrock gave a presentation about a new nonprofit called Kolbe Hospitality House of Hope. This is a home that will provide lodging for family members who do not have the means to reserve a local hotel when they visit from long distances.

MARCH 21, 2021 – LEGISLATIVE UPDATE AND DETROIT CONFERENCE

Brian Carter provided us with a current legislative update. Larry Smith talked about the Detroit Conference sponsored by the Sentencing Project

APRIL 18TH, 2021, LIFERS THE TRANSFORMATION

Sue Hutchins provided an update on legislation for commutation and life without parole.

MAY 16TH, 2021, IOWA PRISON INDUSTRIES

Dan Clark is the director of Iowa Prison Industries. He provided us an update on new programs and products the shops are offering.

JUNE 20TH, 2021, MIDWEST COALITION

Sue Hutchins talked about the new Midwest Coalition that is being formed.

SEPTEMBER 18th, 2021 – OFFICE OF THE OMBUDSMAN

Bert Dalmer with the officer of the Ombudsman spoke with us about the changes in the DOC and complaints they have received.

NOVEMBER 20th, 2021 – Iowa CURE held their annual meeting.

BOARD MEMBERS

Wendy Wittrock – President

Sue Hutchins – Vice President

Richard Nordin – Treasurer

Mary Kay Dial – Secretary

Brian Carter

Carla Dawson

Eddie Bloomer

Heather Erwin

Jackie Robinson

Larry Smith

Carolyn Walker

Jean Basinger – Consultant

Because of the Omicron Virus meetings will be held via Zoom until further notice. Members will get a notification of the meeting along with a link.



MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION DUES NOTICE

Please remember to pay your Iowa CURE dues

Fill out the application form below and mail it with your membership fee to the Iowa CURE office address below

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Email _____

Annual Membership Fees

Prisoner	\$2
Individual	\$10
Family	\$20
Sustaining	\$50
Life	\$100

IOWA CURE
P. O. BOX 41005
Des Moines, IA
50311

Please remove me from this mailing list

Why should I join CURE?

Being a CURE member gives you access to experienced staff, reputable research, political action, community organizing, leadership and strategy development as well as informative fact sheets, action alerts, legislative and issue updates. **Please feel free to photocopy this newsletter/application to pass along to interested friends, family, associates or loved ones in prison.**

Voices to be Heard

Families and advocates of Voices to be Heard have been able to meet in person this fall. They were able to hold a costume party in October. Meetings are held on the first and third Tuesday of the month at Wesley United Methodist Church, 800 East 12th Street, Des Moines, IA 50316.



BLEAK WALLS BROKEN HEARTS PUBLICATION

Companion Book to Bleak Walls Bright Minds.

When a person goes to prison many people, both in the public and within the system, are affected in a variety of ways.

The book Bleak Walls Broken Hearts contains stories of loved ones, professionals and volunteers that have a connection with offenders in Iowa's prisons. It was published in September of this year and is the companion book of Bleak Walls Bright Minds, a collection of 27 Lifer's stories in their own words. Both are available on Amazon.

Sue Hutchins' next book will be a collection of female Lifer's stories from the Woman's Prison in Mitchellville, Iowa. It will be published in the Fall of 2022 and will be available on Amazon also.



“If you don’t see the book on the shelf that you want, write it” – Beverly Cleary

LEGISLATION REGARDING LIFER’S IN IOWA

Last session two bills were introduced and went to the judiciary subcommittees, one in the Senate, SF126 and one in the House, HF377. SF126 deals with culpability of accomplices in commission of a Class A Felony and would change the sentence from LWOP to 25 years to LWP and is still alive for 2022. HF 377 is being broken into 3 separate bills for the upcoming session; a compassionate release bill, a raise the age of juveniles from 18 to 21 bill, and a commutation criteria bill. All these bills have bi-partisan support and are being introduced by Republicans.

As of December 15, Governor Reynolds has not commuted any of the 45 lifers that have been interviewed by her Board of Parole.

Iowa CURE is in support of all four of these upcoming bills.



KOLBE HOSPITALITY HOUSE OF HOPE

Progress is finally coming along with the home. New water lines were installed in August. This was a much-needed project for the home.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to making this update possible! New flooring has been placed in the living and dining rooms.

Next project is to install a central air conditioning unit and finish the kitchen remodel.

If you would like to volunteer or make a donation you can email Wendy at kolbehospitality@gmail.com.

Donations can be made online at www.kolbehospitality.com or

mailed to 403 North High Street, Anamosa, IA 52205.

All donations to the hospitality house are tax deductible.

COLORECTAL CANCER SCREENING

Iowa CURE has been corresponding with Dr. Matthew Morris, IDOC Medical Director and Jerome Greenfield, IDOC Health care Administrator, for several months on the quality of health care an incarcerated person should expect to receive from the Iowa Department of Corrections. Until this year Colorectal Cancer Screening was only available to inmates who were showing symptoms of or were over the age of 50. The United States Preventative Services Task Force (USPSTF) recently made a grade B recommendation to lower the age of colorectal cancer screening to age 45 years of age. The Iowa Department of Corrections is going to follow the recommendations of the USPSTF and has recently changed its policy by lowered the age for Colorectal Cancer Screening to begin at the age 45. The Iowa Department of Corrections assured us they will continue to monitor USPSTF and Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidelines, in order to help guide their policies, and to ensure that they provide incarcerated persons with the best possible care. Therefore, going forward once a person turns 45 years of age, they will automatically be scheduled to receive the Colorectal Screening yearly. If you are 45 years of age or older and have not been contacted to receive your Colorectal Screening, please contact your prison medical facility.

IOWA JUSTICE ACTION NETWORK

On April 15th 2021, Iowa Justice Action network invited us to Statement and discussion on the deaths at Anamosa State Penitentiary:

The tragic murder of two prison staff members at Anamosa has lent some momentum to reinstating the death penalty in Iowa. IJAN believes that reinstating the death penalty is not the proper solution to violence against prison staff.

The panelist were Chuck Hurley former senator, Tim Diesburg a retired COD employee, and Eddie Walker who is a returning citizen.

When you have a moment, please contact you legislators and ask them to oppose the death penalty amendment in SF534 and to question the bills other provisions as well. Rep. Jarad Klein is the Chair of the House Public Safety Committee. Please write or email him at jarad.klein@legis.iowa.gov voicing opposition to this legislation. Please also write your own legislators or senators.



IJAN CONFERENCE

IJAN held their annual conference via zoom. The focus was progressive prosecution. The keynote speaker was Satana Deberry who is the District Attorney in Durham County North Carolina. Satana spoke to the changes happening in the court systems in her office and around the country addressing mass incarceration, poverty and community involvement.

The panelist that followed District Attorneys presentation included a panel of attorneys, experts from the Vera Institute, and returned citizens from Iowa. The documentary Just Us, which was produced by Maya Ben-Shahar and Cedric Theus, was debuted. The conference will be put on YouTube for the public to watch.

In September 2021 Iowa CURE was a sponsor to IJANs Conference.

An Unexpected Kindness: Unique donation provides assistance and perspective **– December 21, 2021**

On November 15, 2021, EveryStep staff getting ready for another day of wrapping and packing EveryStep Grief & Loss Services Cheer Boxes at an Urbandale warehouse discovered the facility had been broken into overnight. Two vehicles, electronics, volunteer resources and Cheer Box items had been stolen.

As word spread through the media, donations started pouring from individuals, groups and businesses to help replace the items needed to fill the Cheer Boxes, which are delivered to families and individuals feeling the loss of a loved one during the holidays.

One heartfelt donation came from an unexpected source — a group of prison inmates.

“I was reading in the Des Moines Register about the break-in at the EveryStep warehouse,” says Gary. “Saddened at such a heartless act, I decided the Lifer Organization of Fort Dodge Correctional Facility (FDCF) — a group of inmates serving life sentences for which I serve in a leadership role — would donate to help replace the Cheer Boxes lost in this break-in.”

The Lifer Organization and a handful of other groups within FDCF involve themselves in fundraising efforts with the inmate population throughout the year and 75% of the proceeds go to charities. EveryStep Donor Database specialist Barbara Pottorff was informed of the intended donation. She admits she was a bit surprised to learn of the source, but a phone call with Gary quickly dispelled her skepticism.

“Personally, Gary renewed my faith in humanity,” says Barbara. “I’ve never had contact like that with a prisoner or a felon, so talking with him opened my eyes to the possibility that prison reform really can happen. He led the charge to do something so selfless and good it made me cry.”

Gary, who was sentenced to life more than 30 years ago, says charitable work through the Lifers Organization is a way for inmates to try and bring something positive out of their incarceration. “Crime, at its core, is the most selfish act one human being can commit against another. That means criminals are inherently some of the most selfish people. To overcome that selfishness, we have to learn empathy. We have to discover the joy that comes from giving of our time, talents and resources in order to truly see the devastation that comes from a life of crime and victimization. As a leader amongst the inmate population, I try to educate as many around me as I can to that reality.”

Gary decided to reach out to other prison groups to donate as well, with a commitment by the Lifers Organization to match all donations the other groups provided. This resulted in the Spanish Affairs group donating \$2,000 and the Growth Organization giving \$750. With the Lifer Organization’s match, the donations totaled \$5,500.

“Lifers often have a difficult time atoning for the crimes we committed. Instead, we must seek opportunities to pay it forward by impacting the lives of others in positive ways,” says Gary. “We want the world to see there is still humanity within these prisons and in the hearts of those residing within them. If our donations can help restore some faith in humanity for those who suffered the loss, all the better.”

After learning more about EveryStep and its many programs, ranging from Nine2Thrive™, which supports the healthy development of babies during pregnancy, to hospice support and services, the Lifers Organization decided to continue working with EveryStep, and has committed to donating \$2,000 for EveryStep’s 2022 Adopt-A-Family holiday program. “This is a privilege for us to be a part of,” says Gary. “I’m glad we were in a position to help.”

To learn more about EveryStep and its programs, including Cheer Box and Adopt-A-Family, visit <https://tinyurl.com/2f2mp2h6>. To financially support EveryStep’s programs, visit www.everystep.org/donate. If you or someone you know is struggling to find the support they need, please contact EveryStep at 515-558-9946. Or, complete the commitment-free, confidential “Find Care” form on EveryStep’s website at everystep.org/find-care. EveryStep staff will follow up with a phone call to answer your questions and provide assistance.

THE SENTENCING PROJECT

Sue Hutchins has been meeting monthly with the Sentencing project and is putting together a collection of success stories from juvenile lifers throughout the country on film. Additionally, what Sue is going to do here in Iowa is publish as many stories from the Iowa juvenile lifers that are willing to participate. Sue is reviewing the option of a zoom presentation to put on YouTube. There is the possibility that a book will be published of this presentation to send to legislators.



MIDWEST COALITION

Nebraska and Iowa are inviting surrounding states to work together with regard to sentence issues of mandatory minimums, lengthy sentences and LWOP.

IOWA CURE 2022 INITIATIVE

In 2022 Iowa CURE will be putting their focus on ventilation and air conditioning at facilities that do not have these features. There are several living units at Anamosa State Penitentiary and Mount Pleasant that do not have adequate ventilation. This results in mold in the living areas.

Iowa CURE will also be focusing on the prescription medications and distributions. If you have been impacted by the limitations in the medications or treatment you have received or have had a delay in receiving your medications, please let us know.

NEWS FROM MARYLAND

Maryland will no longer allow the sitting governor to overturn parole decisions for inmates serving life sentences, removing itself from a list of three states that still give governors that authority.

The Maryland General Assembly voted this week to revoke the governor's ability to reject parole board recommendations, ending a consequential policy that has shaped the prospects of early release for hundreds of inmates in the state, the vast majority of them Black.

Those with life sentences would have to serve 20 years before being eligible for parole, up from 15 years. And they would still have to earn recommendations for release from at least six of the 10-member, governor-appointed Parole Commission.

INTERNATIONAL CURE

(CURE) is a grassroots organization dedicated to the reduction of crime through the reform of the criminal justice system (especially prison reform.).

Prisons should be used only for people who absolutely must be incarcerated. And that those who are incarcerated should have all of the resources they need to turn their lives around. A person is sent to prison AS PUNISHMENT AND NOT FOR PUNISHMENT. The only punishment is the loss of freedom.

In 2023 International CURE will have its 9th global conference in Nairobi, Kenya. Pan Africa CURE will host the conference. Iowa CURE would like to send one or two board members to the conference. If you would like to make a donation to make this possible, please go to our website www.iowacure.com to make a donation or mail a check to Iowa CURE Mailing address: P.O. Box 41005, Des Moines IA 50311



BOSTON — The Baker-Polito Administration today announced that Governor Charlie Baker is commuting the first-degree murder sentences of Thomas Koonce and William Allen to second degree murder, making each immediately eligible for parole. The Parole Board, serving in its function as the Advisory Board of Pardons, recently recommended commutation for both Mr. Koonce and Mr. Allen.

The Massachusetts Constitution grants the Governor the power to commute, or remit, a portion of a criminal sentence. Governor Baker issued updated Executive Clemency Guidelines in February 2020. Petitions for commutation are reviewed by the Advisory Board of Pardons. The Board evaluates the petition, weighing the factors laid out in the Executive Guidelines, and makes a recommendation to the Governor. The Board had recommended that the Governor commute the sentences of both Mr. Koonce and Mr. Allen to second-degree murder. The commutations must now be approved by the Governor's Council. If approved, Mr. Koonce and Mr. Allen would be eligible for a parole hearing and would be on parole for life if parole was granted.

"The authority given to me by the people of Massachusetts to commute and pardon individuals is one of the most sacred and important powers of this office," said Governor Charlie Baker. "There are few things as important to me in this position as ensuring justice is served for the individuals impacted by a crime and my responsibility to ensure fair application of justice to all. To make these difficult decisions, I spent months carefully weighing the circumstances of the two terrible crimes, the actions of the two men since and the Parole Board's recommendation for commutation. I believe both men, having taken responsibility for their actions and paid their debt to the Commonwealth by serving sentences longer than most individuals found guilty of similar actions, deserve the right to seek parole from prison. I hope the Governor's Council carefully weighs the facts of these cases as well as the undeniable impact on the families involved and reaches the same decision."

According to the updated guidelines released in February 2020, commutation "is intended to serve as a strong motivation for confined persons to utilize available resources for self-development and self-improvement and as an incentive for them to become law-abiding citizens and return to society." Commutation does not excuse or negate an inmate's criminal conduct, nor is it a review of the trial or appellate legal proceedings that resulted in the inmate's conviction.

Thomas Koonce is a 54-year old former United States Marine who has served 30 years in prison for the murder of Mark Santos. On July 20, 1987, Mr. Koonce fired out of the window of a car during an altercation in New Bedford, fatally wounding Mr. Santos. On June 23, 1992, a Bristol Superior Court jury convicted Mr. Koonce of first-degree murder, and he was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. During his time in prison Mr. Koonce has participated in significant programming, become a leader to help other inmates benefit from some of those same programs, and helped to establish new programs, including the restorative justice program at MCI-Norfolk. Mr. Koonce earned a Bachelor of Liberal Studies, magna cum laude, through Boston University's prison education program. He has been active in his church and employed throughout his incarceration.

William Allen is a 48-year-old man who has served 27 years in prison for his role in the murder of Purvis Bester. On February 8, 1994, Mr. Allen and a co-defendant broke into Mr. Bester's Brockton apartment intending to rob him, and the co-defendant fatally stabbed Mr. Bester. On August 29, 1997, a Brockton Superior Court jury convicted Mr. Allen of first-degree murder for his joint participation in the robbery, and he was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole. While incarcerated Mr. Allen participated in significant programming – among them restorative justice and violence alternatives – as both a student and a facilitator. He has earned vocational licenses to be a barber, food service worker, and law clerk, served as a Eucharistic minister for the Catholic community, and consistently held a job, including working as a companion and assistant to severely mentally ill patients at Bridgewater State Hospital.

Jean Trounstone
latest book, *Boy With A Knife* (April 2016)
Prof. Emerita MCC
(c)508-254-2131

RESOURCES

- ❖ **IA-NE NAACP** Betty Andrews, President, 1620 Pleasant St., Ste. 210 Des Moines, IA 50314
- ❖ **Federal CURE** P. O. Box 15667 Plantation, FL 33318-5657 FedCure@FedCURE.org
- ❖ **CURE for Vets** 535 Queen St Philadelphia, PA 19147 Jcautilliz003@yahoo.com www.vets-cure.com
- ❖ **Friends of Iowa Women Prisoners** Website: friendsofiowawomenprisoners.org Facilitator: Vi Darsee vddarsee@q.com Phone: 515-225-8349 Meets 3rd Tues of each month at noon at Wesley UMC 800 E. 12th St, Des Moines, IA
- ❖ **Health Care for Re-Entry Veterans Program** Brian Brooks: VA Medical Center, 3600 30th St, Des Moines, IA 50310, 515-577-8068 Brian.brooks@va.com; website: i.va.gov/homeless page.cfm?pg_38. Eligible: Those who are currently incarcerated by the DOC-Fort Des Moines and prisons (not in jail or released from prison)
- ❖ **Voices To Be Heard / Des Moines CURE** Support group for persons who have a love one in prison, parole or probation and those concerned about people in the criminal justice system. Meets the 1st and 3rd Tues – Wesley UMC. Support group for adults and special program for children from 6 to 7:30 p.m. Contacts: Jean Basinger 515-277-6296 or jeanbasinger@gmail.com, Melissa Nelson 515-280-9027
- ❖ **Life Long CURE** Willis Harris 665 Willis St, Ste. B-1 Detroit, MI 48201, phone: 313-442-3929 Self-stamped, self-addressed envelope for brochure everyonesmom4@comcast.net
- ❖ **CURE International** Charlie and Pauline Sullivan P. O. Box 2310 Washington, D. C. 20013 cure@curenational.org
- ❖ **Iowa Coalition 4 Juvenile Justice** (now a focus group for Iowa CURE) Website: ia4juvenilejustice.org Sr. JoAnn Talarico, Facilitator P. O. Box 41005 Des Moines, IA 50311
- ❖ **CURE Sort – Sex Offenders Restored Through Treatment** P. O. Box 761 Milwaukee, WI 53201-0761 wbowers8@cox.net
- ❖ **Iowa Justice Action Network** - Al Hays or Sue Hutchins - allen.hays@uni.edu or 319-504-9096, hutchins_sue@yahoo.com, 575-343-0202, www.iowajusticeactionnetwork.com
- ❖ **Living Beyond the Bars** - Mike Cervantes mike.livingbeyondthebars@gmail.com www.livingbeyondthebars.org
- ❖ **Kolbe Hospitality House of Hope** Wendy Wittrock, www.kolbehospitality.com, kolbehospitality@gmail.com
- ❖ **Iowans Against the Death Penalty** Marty Ryan, P.O Box 782, Des Moines IA 50303, 515-229-4578, info@iowansagainstthedeathpenalty.org