

**Ministry to the Drug Rehabilitation Center
At the
Bergen County Jail**

In 1995, Bergen County Jail unveiled an addiction wing called the Drug Rehabilitation Center. County and state officials attending the unveiling included then-Governor Whitman and Bergen County Sheriff Jack Terhune. It was Sheriff Terhune who shepherded the process of creating the 48-bed facility after the wing had been heavily damaged by a riot in June of 1990. Since the New Jersey Department of corrections had statistics supporting the fact that 68% of the inmates in the state had substance abuse related offenses, the thinking was that dealing with these addictions could possibly reduce the rate of recidivism, which was 70%. Based on local experience, the case was made that the percentage of inmates who had substance abuse related offenses and were incarcerated in Bergen County probably approached 90%. Therefore, if recovery from their addictions could be accomplished, these people could return to their families as contributing members of society.

From a professional treatment perspective, this 90-day program has a training curriculum focused on critical aspects of the life of an individual addict ranging from awareness of addiction to the development of life skills. The framework of the program is based on the 12-step (self-help) model where the individual takes personal responsibility for his addiction and subsequent recovery. Accordingly, the treatment program focuses on such developmental experiences as: individual and group substance abuse counseling, personal therapy, family counseling, vocational counseling, and academic training. Participants in the program must apply for entrance and are required to adhere to a mutually agreed upon contract. This program cannot be mandated; it must be entered upon on a voluntary basis after serving some period of time in the jail itself. The 100-by-150 foot wing is isolated from the rest of the jail and looks like a modern dormitory. Each inmate has his own bed and locker, complete with books such as Daily Meditations for Men and 12-step guides to recovery from addiction. It is also outfitted with computers, and a kitchen area.

As you know, a group of volunteers from West Side Presbyterian Church travels to the Drug Rehab to have dinner with the participants in the program three times a year – Thanksgiving, Christmas, and Easter. Dinner, dessert, and drinks are provided as well as a short devotional and discussion time. The volunteers assist in setting out and serving the food. Then they join the inmates at table for dinner and conversation.

West Side volunteers also provide Christmas presents to those men who have children and want to participate. Forms are taken to the facility for the men to fill out with their personal information, and helpers purchase, wrap, and mail the gifts. The Feisty Ladies provide Christmas cards and stamps for the inmates to mail to friends and family.

The next dinner at the Drug Rehabilitation Center will be held on Sunday, April 5, 2009. Anyone interested in attending the dinner or in gathering further information please call Beverly Cassidy at (201) 447-6592 or email at bliskcassidy@gmail.com