



# CJM Connection

The *new* quarterly newsletter of Criminal Justice Ministry – St. Louis

Issue 1

[cjmstlouis.org](http://cjmstlouis.org)

Spring 2015

## PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT: Release to Rent makes successful reentry a reality



**Moving In...** After nearly five decades behind bars, Leon never imagined walking into his own apartment—until he met CJM and qualified for the Release to Rent program.

After serving 48 years in state prison, Leon was released at the age of 65. Even before his release he wondered how he could reenter society successfully. He hadn't been in a grocery store for decades. He heard that phones no longer had wires. He had nobody to offer him a place to stay, and, because of his crime, he could not live in low-income housing. Because he went to prison at the age of 17, he had never worked.

Leon's odds of reentering successfully redoubled when he was accepted by Criminal Justice Ministry's *Release to Rent* program. The program provided Leon with his own furnished apartment along with everything else he needed—food, hygiene products, clothing, a bus pass, and household products. More importantly, he would have a case manager to guide him through all the unfamiliar scenes, to teach him how to be a good tenant and neighbor, to help him find employment or volunteer service, and to even answer calls 24/7 in emergencies.

Without the assistance of Criminal Justice Ministry, Leon would have stayed at the state half-way house and been unlikely to transi-

tion into the community because he couldn't afford deposit and rent, had no rental history, and was without income until his Social Security check started. The CJM staff gradually helped him to take over his responsibilities.

Today he receives a small, monthly Social Security check and has learned how to use it wisely to pay for all of his costs. If he follows other *Release to Rent* participants, he will have less than a 10% likelihood of returning to prison—even after five years.

### The History of R2R

At its beginning in 1979, CJM started to meet the needs of the incarcerated through jail visits and tutoring sessions. Gradually, CJM began to meet the needs of the recently released. First, it was by providing basic items such as clothing, hygiene products, and a bus pass. By 2003—as the needs became greater—CJM started the *Release to Rent* housing program. Within five years, the Veterans Administration asked CJM to begin a similar housing program for eligible veterans with criminal records.

### From the Director

Some of us hang up as soon as we hear a survey on the phone. Others turn off as soon as they hear the word “criminal.” When I was seeking rental space for CJM's service center, I found many property owners eager to rent... until they heard it was for **Criminal Justice Ministry**.



Granted they could have good reasons for concluding the conversation. I believe, however, that many avoid the reality that some persons have made serious mistakes and committed crimes—but have paid their debt and need help when they try to move on.

That is why CJM exists—first to be sure that persons who are locked up have some opportunity for human connection, then to assist those who need support when returning to the community.

This isn't an original idea. In fact, CJM got the idea from Someone who welcomed persons who had been excluded from the community (like lepers and tax collectors), who searched out persons who made serious mistakes and committed crimes (like prostitutes and thieves). Sometimes people avoided Him too. CJM appears to be in good company! Please join us or continue your way of supporting us! Thank you!

*Carleen Reck, SSND, Ph.D.  
Executive Director*

Through it all, CJM has focused on person-to-person connection—a key to success for Leon and the more than 15,000 clients CJM serves each year.

## Save the Date!

Mark your calendars and plan to participate in these special opportunities to support Criminal Justice Ministry!

### Give STL Day Tuesday, May 5



On Tuesday, May 5, Criminal Justice Ministry will join more than 500 local non-profits in Give STL Day—a community-wide fundraising initiative. From midnight to midnight, simply visit [www.GiveSTLday.org](http://www.GiveSTLday.org), choose Criminal Justice Ministry, and use your credit card to contribute. Your gift on May 5 may increase in value through Give STL Day matching gifts and special awards.

### CJM Trivia Night Saturday, August 22



Bring your family, friends, and generous spirit to a fun night of trivia to benefit CJM's work to improve the safety and well-being of people affected by crime and the criminal justice system. This fundraiser will take place at St. James the Greater Gym in Dogtown. Registration begins July 1. For more information, visit [www.cjmstlouis.org](http://www.cjmstlouis.org) or email [info@cjmstlouis.org](mailto:info@cjmstlouis.org).

## Coping through the arts

A veteran-client of the Release to Rent Veterans Program recently found a way to share his feelings about recent events in Ferguson, Missouri. U.S. Army veteran Ronald Haynie played the part of Michael Brown Sr. in a short film about Ferguson. The video-reenactment has been screened by other clients in the program as well as CJM staff. Haynie used this medium to communicate how he felt inside. In the words of Haynie, "It's a beautiful thing!"

## VOLUNTEER VIEW

### Tom Cummins approaches "Throwaway Inmates"

When CJM volunteer Tom Cummins knocks on the door of a prison cell, the inmate's voice is nearly always welcoming, sometimes delighted.

"I deal almost exclusively with those in isolation," he said. "The guys know what society thinks of them. They are part of the throwaway society like papers tossed aside, abandoned, out-of-mind, in prisons that are hidden in the country, off a side road. When anyone treats them like a child of God, they flourish. A chaplain can help bring them back to a sense of being part of a whole community."

Tom volunteers at the 2,700-bed Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center at Bonne Terre and the 800-bed Correction Center near Potosi. He listens and asks simple questions to encourage inmates to think through their current decisions. When inmates say they have stopped taking their medicine, stopped stress-relieving exercise in their cell, he simply asks why. If they say they

have stopped writing their families because the families don't write back, he suggests that they not let others limit their kindness.

Tom's is one of the few human faces that inmates see in the highly automated isolation sections of the two prisons. "My primary role is to be present to them, to reveal a different way of life," he said. "It seems to work."

*Some excerpts of the above from Patricia Rice, St. Louis Public Radio.*

### Volunteer opportunities available

You can help CJM by becoming a volunteer. Activities include assisting at fundraising events and serving as a pen pal for the people we serve. Contact us at (314) 881-6019 or [info@cjmstlouis.org](mailto:info@cjmstlouis.org) to learn more.



## Fr. John Vogler honored as 2015 CJM Awardee



*CJM salutes Fr. John Vogler, recipient of CJM's annual Jerry Prives Award.*

After nearly forty years of jail/prison ministry, Fr. John Vogler received the 2015 Jerry Prives Award from Criminal Justice Ministry on March 25 during the CJM Appreciation Event. This annual award, recently renamed for the late Jerry Prives, an unforgettable jail-house minister, recognizes extraordinary service and dedication.

Even before CJM was formed in 1979, award recipient Fr. John Vogler was doing and promoting jail ministry in St. Louis. As the years passed, he supported Criminal Justice Ministry in many ways—personally ministering to the incarcerated at least twice weekly while continuing to serve as a parish pastor. Recently Fr. John retired from his pastorate, but continues to volunteer with CJM. In 2014, he received the annual award of the National Convocation of Jail and Prison Ministry.

## Criminal Justice Ministry in the community

In addition to working directly with the incarcerated and recently released, the CJM staff tirelessly advocates on their behalf and collaborates with organizations across the region on criminal justice issues.

**Heidi Moore**, CJM staff, co-presented with Missouri Parole Officer Latrice Tate and Federal Officer Stephen Holmes at the Missouri Reentry Conference. The session answered the question, “Why Take the Risk? Supportive Housing for Sex Offenders.”

**Rose Rita Huelsmann, SSND**, CJM staff, provided two series of classes: Anger Management for ex-prisoners and Prison Ministry for deacons, as well as sessions for high school students about CJM’s ministry.



*CJM’s Heidi Moore presents at the Missouri Reentry Conference with state and federal parole officers.*

**Aaron Laxton**, CJM staff, and **Fred Rottnek, MD**, CJM board member, co-presented about HIV in the community at the annual conference of Empower Missouri (formerly MASW-Missouri Association for Social Welfare).

**Carleen Reck, SSND**, presented to both STAR (St. Louis Alliance for Reentry) and Empower Missouri on Community Housing for Ex-Prisoners.



## Correctional Health Care: A Forgotten Ministry of the Church

*By Fred Rottnek, MD, MAHCM*

*The following is an excerpt from an article written for the Catholic Health Association of the United States by CJM Board Member Fred Rottnek. Please visit [cjmstlouis.org](#) for a link to the full article.*

I never expected to go to jail. As a good Catholic boy, middle child of three in a good Catholic household of working-class parents in St. Louis, I grew up with the very best of intentions. I wanted to do something with my life worthy of the talents that God gave me. And I cultivated those talents, particularly in school, at a ferocious pace.

I entered medical school at Saint Louis University and, unknowingly began building my future practice as I chose electives that involved caring for the city’s homeless population. I loved it. . . . After I completed the family medicine residency, I joined the program’s faculty. The St. Louis County Health Department approached my boss about staffing the three county health centers with family physicians. He was hesitant when he learned the county jail and juvenile detention center were part of the deal. I told him that if we got the contract, I would take the assignment in corrections. . .

I never expected to spend time behind bars. But the last 13 years have been among the best of my life. I love my work. I love being in jail. . . .

### Jailhouse Medicine

People do not aspire to be in jail. The majority of our patients are people who engaged in behaviors that resulted in incarceration. Something went terribly wrong at some point in their lives, and we seek to provide the best care possible to individuals whose health problems are only part of the story. Sometimes that means treating our patients with more respect than they have for themselves. . . From the standpoint of a medical practice, we have the same problems any practice faces: patients who don’t take care of their health and don’t stick to treatment regimens; unmotivated staff; burned-out staff and providers; administrative pressures; and working to stay ahead in a daily routing of putting out fires. But in correctional health care, the difference is that we are treating a population society usually keeps out of sight and mind. . .

## CURRENT ISSUES

*CJM helps one client at a time. Changes in law, however, can assist many by removing unfair obstacles to reentry.*

### RESOLVED

- ✓ Food Stamps are now an option for former drug abusers who have completed terms and treatment and are returning to the community.
- ✓ St. Louis City has decided to drop the box on job applications which must be checked by felons. This move to “Ban the Box” means that an employer will at least review the application and/or meet the person before deciding to consider or not.

### NOT RESOLVED

- Missouri still applies automatic minimums to sentences without considering individual cases.
- Missouri requires lifelong registration for ALL sex offenders, creating more work for police supervisors and adding housing/employment obstacles for the “Romeo & Juliet” offenders and others who pose no risk to the community.
- Missouri still executes to demonstrate that killing people is wrong.
- Many persons who have served long terms with an excellent institutional record cannot be considered for early release.
- While City of St. Louis has “banned the box” on job applications, the issue has yet to be resolved at the state level. Missouri Senate Bill 44, now awaiting placement on the Senate calendar, would prevent the automatic discarding of felons’ job applications by state agencies.

### A Healing Ministry

Correctional health care encompasses nearly all the corporal works of mercy, and many of the spiritual works of mercy as well. It is ministry. These are the people who were cared for by the saints and are visited by Pope Francis. We bring them pastoral care, but we also bring them health care.

*Fred Rottnek is medical director of corrections medicine for the St. Louis County Department of Health. He is an associate professor and director of community medicine in the Department of Family and Community Medicine at St. Louis University.*



**Criminal Justice Ministry**

P.O. Box 15160

St. Louis, MO 63110

**Save the date:**  
CJM's Annual  
Trivia Night returns  
August 22.  
Details inside!



*This gathering of "Connectors" gives ex-prisoners in CJM housing programs the opportunity to develop their social skills with CJM staff and volunteers.*

## Project ReConnect Client Success Story

When one of the Project ReConnect clients needed a place to live, he chose an apartment that could also house his mother. He is working one full-time and one part-time job to be able to continue renting there after the transitional program. His mother has great hopes for her son as he reenters, and she expresses great appreciation for his thoughtfulness.

CJM is one of four agencies who collaborate on Project ReConnect, which assists persons who are "maxing out" of Missouri prisons and returning to St. Louis. While other CJM programs work closely with the parole officers of clients, Project ReConnect clients have completed their terms and lack the help of these probation officers.

Eric Schultz case manages CJM's participants in ReConnect, under the direction of Heidi Moore. He works with each client to meet individual needs such as housing, work clothes, medical needs, and other necessities.

### Ways to Give

There are many ways to support CJM's important work:

- Use the enclosed return envelope or contribute online at [cjmstlouis.org](http://cjmstlouis.org).
- Through the Missouri Neighborhood Assistance Program (NAP), qualified business donors may receive a 50 percent Missouri state tax credit when making a contribution to CJM. Email [info@cjmstlouis.org](mailto:info@cjmstlouis.org) for information.
- Designate CJM when ordering from Amazon. Search for Amazon Smile and designate CJM or simply go to <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/46-2647318>, then order as usual. Amazon will donate 0.5% of all eligible purchases to CJM.
- Attend our trivia night on August 22 or contribute online on May 5's Give STL Day. More details inside.

## WHO WE ARE

### OUR MISSION

To improve the safety and well-being of individuals affected by crime and the criminal justice system, their families and their communities in the Greater St. Louis Area through person-to-person assistance rooted in Jesus Christ's message of love, reconciliation and hope.

### OUR HISTORY

Since 1979, Criminal Justice Ministry has served persons in Missouri prisons and jails as well as many returning to the St. Louis area. Formerly sponsored by the Society of St. Vincent DePaul, in 2013 CJM became an independent 501(c)(3), affiliated with the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

### OUR BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Mary Abkemeier, President  
 Andrew Daus, Vice President  
 Jerry Nichols, Treasurer  
 Joseph Burgoon, Secretary  
 Jeff Finnegan  
 Kyle S. Klosterman  
 Andrew Malloy  
 Mark McKenzie, SJ  
 Olivia Rasp  
 Fred Rottnek, MD  
 Derrick Ross  
 Matt Witte  
 Durwood Woolridge

