

# Seeds of Hope Jail Ministry Newsletter

Fall 2011

Second Chance Reentry Initiative Mentoring Program

(SCRIMP)

## The Finney County Jail GED Program *Growing and Making a Difference*

In 2009, Seeds of Hope partnered with the Finney County Sheriff's Office, the Adult Learning Center and Garden City Community College to create a GED computer lab in the jail. GCCC donated used

year GCCC provided newer computers for the lab.

In April 2011 SCRIMP Mentor Joe Gonzales, who previously taught GED classes at the college, led the effort to make GED instruction available to men

*"My name is Jessica Ontiveros. I'm a single mother of seven children and was recently released from prison. I'd like people to know that Seeds of Hope and the SCRIMP Program is there if you really want to change your life." - See Jessica's story on page 2*

computers that became available due to equipment upgrades on campus.

Funding for curriculum and scholarships was provided by the Finney County Community Health Coalition Center for Children & Families. Volunteer computer lab monitors started providing services to incarcerated women in January of 2010, and later that

housed in the jail. Since that time six volunteers have served approximately 20 male inmates.

One participant, James Brown, recently completed the program at GCCC after leaving the jail and is now taking college classes in automotive technology. James is the third inmate to complete his GED during or

## MRT in Action

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Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT) is recognized nationally as a highly effective cognitive-behavioral program. It was created specifically for individuals who had experienced repeated incarceration and for whom earlier rehabilitation efforts had not been successful. MRT helps participants develop honesty, a sense of responsibility and higher levels of moral reasoning. SCRIMP staff attended MRT training in Idaho Falls, ID, in September so an evening class could be added to relieve overcrowding in the daytime class. The new class began Oct. 4. All SCRIMP participants are required to attend MRT on a weekly basis. Please feel free to sit in on a session if you'd like to learn more about MRT or SCRIMP.

after incarceration through Seeds of Hope. His story follows.

For more information about the GED Program contact Becky Upshaw at (620) 290-7916. For volunteer training call Brooke Hamlin-Lopez at (620) 272-0010.

## SCRIMP 1 year later: Changing Lives

### James' Story...



James Brown first came in contact with Seeds of Hope Jail Ministry while incarcerated in the Finney County Jail in 2008. The 28-

year-old husband and father of three signed up for the Crossroads Anger Management class offered by Seeds of Hope with funding from the Garden City Alcohol Fund Advisory Committee.

James was released from jail after the third of sixteen sessions and continued to meet with his instructor at a local church on Sunday afternoons until he completed the course in December 2009.

Our next contact with James came when SCRIMP staff introduced the new SCRIMP Program to inmates in December 2010. James joined the program after release while working toward his GED at GCCC.

What's most impressive about James is that he's not a quitter. James is on track to complete MRT in November 2011. He completed the GED Program in June 2011 and started Garden City Community College's Automotive Technology

Program in August. When James was asked recently how school was going, he replied with uncharacteristic enthusiasm, yet still in his calm, gentle way, "I love it!"

James recently shared with the group that MRT has helped him think about how his behavior affected others in the past, especially his wife and children. He made it clear that he is determined not to go back to that lifestyle. His focus now is on being a good husband and a good father, as well as a successful and productive citizen. James has been an inspiration to the SCRIMP staff and to his peers in the program.

### Jessica's story...



*Now that I've earned my GED, I'm going to sign up for the Automotive Technology Program at the college. I want to be a certified technician and eventually get a business degree and own my own business.*  
- James Brown, GED Graduate

How does the single mother of seven children rebuild her life and her family after spending three years in prison?

If she's smart like Jessica Ontiveros, she reaches out for any help available, starting with family members willing to take her in until she can get on her feet. Then she takes any job available while continuing to look for a second or better job.

Meanwhile, she works as hard as she can every day to prove herself to her employer, her parole officer and her family.

Jessica connected with the SCRIMP Program three days after she was released from prison. The program provided a cell phone and a gift card for gasoline to enable her to find a job during her second week. She also got help applying for the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program through Area Mental Health. She qualified for help with three months' rent, a damage deposit and utilities but was unable to find available and affordable housing large enough to accommodate her family.

After helping Jessica get temporary work and observing her strong work ethic, Seeds of Hope Vice-President Fred Palmlblade learned that several businessmen in Healy, KS, had formed an organization called Grow Healy. One of

their goals is to recruit families with children to move to Healy in order to avoid the closure or consolidation of their school district. Fred told Jessica about the organization and then recommended her to them.

A few weeks later Grow Healy welcomed Jessica and her children – who had been divided between Jessica's mother's house and her brother's house in Texas while Jessica was in prison – with open arms.

When they arrived at their three-bedroom, two bath mobile home, volunteers were waiting to assemble beds for the children. The entire home was furnished and the kitchen was stocked with food, including a beef bundle to fill the freezer Jessica's mother had provided. There was even a new swing set large enough to accommodate all seven children. Jessica was informed she would receive a credit of \$100 per child on her December rent so the children could have a good Christmas.

A follow-up visit to Jessica and her family several weeks later found them happily settled into their new home. The children shared how they

loved their new school, and that several agencies helped to provide school clothes and supplies. According to Jessica and 12-year-old daughter Alisa, they can't wait to get back home to Healy when they have to travel out of town to shop. The children are involved in sports and music at school for the first time, and their home is filled with all the things needed to grow happy, healthy kids.

Jessica never fails to mention how grateful she is for the help she's received from family and from government and social service agencies. She's now able to provide a home for her mother, who cared for her two oldest children while Jessica was in prison.

Jessica is a strong, resilient young woman, and the parenting classes she took in prison are definitely paying off; she is a loving, devoted mother. It only goes to show that all things are possible for those who are willing to work hard and never give up.



## **Seeds of Hope Jail Ministry Board of Directors**

- ❖ Sid Thomas
- ❖ Fred Palmblade
- ❖ Brenda Wehkamp
- ❖ Marian Mason
- ❖ Rhonda Goodloe
- ❖ Beth Beavers
- ❖ Scott Schurle
- ❖ Obed Fernandez

## **SCRIMP Update**

SCRIMP targets offenders who are assessed as high-risk for recidivism, are on probation or parole and are living in Finney County. The following information is taken from SCRIMP's quarterly financial and program reports dated September 30, 2011. This marks the completion of the first year of a two-year program.

One goal of the SCRIMP Program is to train at least twenty new mentors during the two-year funding period. Since the first mentor training in December 2010, a total of 31 individuals have attended mentor training. At the end of the first year, 14 mentors were actively serving SCRIMP participants inside the Finney County Jail. Six of these also serve as mentors to participants after release.

Another of SCRIMP's goals is to serve 40-50 participants during the two-

year grant funding period. During the fourth quarter ending Sept. 30, 71 participants – parents of a total of 153 children – attended Within My Reach relationship skills training in the jail. Thirty-eight completed the 10 week course, and two were admitted to the SCRIMP Program after release. They joined six new participants who were admitted to SCRIMP post-release during the same period. Two men were admitted pre-release, and six men and two women were admitted post-release.

A total of 34 participants have been admitted to SCRIMP since November 2010, with 26 actively participating during the fourth quarter. All participants are provided with case management services, MRT classes and opportunities to interact with SCRIMP mentors.

In addition, two participants were referred for and received mental health services; 16 were referred for substance abuse services and 13 received these services; 14 received employment services and 12 of these obtained employment; 12 were referred for educational services post-release; 10 were referred for housing services and nine of

these also received housing services directly from SCRIMP staff. Six of these participants obtained housing as a result.

Two participants who completed Within My Reach in the jail also completed MRT and all other SCRIMP Program requirements during the fourth quarter. Program requirements include:

- Completing a Substance Abuse Questionnaire at intake and at 6 month intervals
- Consenting to allow parole or probation officers and SCRIMP staff to share information relevant to their progress
- Cooperating with SCRIMP's Program Manager in the creation and implementation of a personalized case plan
- Meeting with a SCRIMP mentor individually or as part of a group for four hours monthly, for at least 6 months
- Actively participating in and completing Moral Reconation Therapy in twelve months or less
- Complying with the terms and conditions of parole or probation supervision
- Directing all requests for material or monetary assistance to the Program Manager and not to mentors or volunteers

Also in the first year, 10 participants were dismissed from the SCRIMP Program during the fall quarter: three due to failure to meet program requirements, three due to court or criminal involvement, two due to lack of engagement and two due to relocation outside Finney County.

Four of the 26 SCRIMP clients served during the fourth quarter were reincarcerated due to revocation of their probation, reflecting a revocation rate of 15.3%. This

compares to a baseline revocation rate of 29% established in 2009.

Nationwide, approximately 67% of those released from jail or prison are reincarcerated within three years of release.

## Financial Report

The U.S. Department of Justice's Officer of Justice Programs granted Seeds of Hope \$298,849 to implement the SCRIMP Program over a period of two years. Operations began in November 2010. At the end of its first year, SCRIMP's expenditures totaled

\$124,294.08 and included the following:

Category	Expenses	% of Total Budget
Personnel	\$ 53,769.07	51.61
Fringe Benefits	\$ 15,392.72	52.67
Travel	\$ 4,374.80	37.15
Supplies	\$ 2,982.36	42.61
Consultants & Contracts	\$ 36,232.51	34.82
Other	\$ 12,024.80	27.38
Total	\$124,294.08	41.59

## From the Program Manager

*I sincerely hope that being part of the planning and implementation of the SCRIMP Program has been as positive an experience for Mentor Coordinator Brooke Hamlin-Lopez and MRT Facilitator Rhonda Goodloe as it has been for me. However, I'm concerned about how recent changes at the U.S. Department of Justice may negatively impact the success of the program.*

*In late October I received notification that we would no longer be allowed to use grant funds to provide meals or refreshments at SCRIMP functions. My first thought was that some of our clients wouldn't show up without the incentive of a free meal. This has proven to be true. In the two weeks since this change went into effect, attendance at MRT class has decreased from an average of nine participants weekly during the fourth quarter to an average of just three participants weekly in November. I know that some of our clients are truly hungry when they arrive for MRT class. I'm also concerned that the atmosphere in our groups has changed from that of a friendly opportunity to learn from SCRIMIP staff and mentors to a more formal classroom experience.*

*Likewise, only six members attended our November Advisory Board meeting compared to 25 attendees at the April meeting where lunch was provided. This may be as damaging to the success of our program as the decrease in client participation, since community communication and collaboration are crucial to provide for the needs of those reintegrating into our community from jail or prison.*

*My previous experience working as a prevention consultant to community coalitions throughout southwest Kansas taught me that food is a crucial factor in getting folks to show up for meetings. I'm concerned and saddened that this change may negatively impact our clients and the success we enjoyed during our first year.*

*Becky Upshaw*

## Ministry Needs

- ❖ Receptive individuals who are committed to making positive changes during and after incarceration
- ❖ Volunteers to serve as mentors
- ❖ Board members to participate in Seeds of Hope planning and business activities
- ❖ Donated inspirational or motivational books or magazines (paperback with staples removed or hardback with covers removed), greeting cards, writing paper, and envelopes
- ❖ Employment opportunities for ex-inmates (Information about free government bonding and tax credit programs is available.)
- ❖ Transitional housing for both men and women during reintegration
- ❖ Monetary donations
- ❖ Volunteers to serve as lab monitors in the Finney County Jail GED Computer Lab (No teaching experience or knowledge of GED materials required, and training is provided)

For more information, contact

SCRIMP Program Manager Becky Upshaw at (620) 290-7916 or [beckyupshaw@gmail.com](mailto:beckyupshaw@gmail.com) .

Please email [beckyupshaw@gmail.com](mailto:beckyupshaw@gmail.com) or call (620) 290-7916 if you'd like to be added to or removed from this mailing list.

Second Chance Reentry Initiative Mentoring Program

(SCRIMP)

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