



Visitors' Services Center

2008 Annual Report

1422 Massachusetts Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20003
202-544-2131
www.vscdcjails.net

Board Members

John Clark, President
Betsy Biben, Vice President
Bryan Young, Treasurer
Akin Akinmurele, Secretary
Roy L. Austin Jr.
Leona Bennett
Rainey Brandt
Claire Johnson Fay
Kyrus Freeman
John Graham
George Holland
Mary Kennedy
Kathy Patterson
Andrew Wise

VSC Staff

Ann Keep, Executive Director
Betty Gatewood MSW, Program
Coordinator
Bill Chandler, Jail Case Management
Sarah Coleman
William Napper
Carla Norde
Mary Elizabeth Pate
Curtis Ruffin

Our Mission

Toward our overall goal of reducing recidivism, VSC's mission is to help inmates maintain their family ties and to help them, as well, create and strengthen ties to the community through a combination of direct services and referrals so that they are better prepared for release back to a community we all share – to live, to work and to raise their children.

Our History

Since 1969, Visitors' Services Center has been a strong bridge keeping inmates linked to their families and communities. Our development was inspired by the Jail staff who requested help in handling the overwhelming number of inmate requests and thought that an outside organization of citizen volunteers could be of help.

Our Accomplishments in 2008

In Calendar 2008, we assisted 3,178 inmates and ex-offenders and handled 6,723 requests for assistance

2,000 families and friends of inmates were provided information on jail routines, including how to deposit money, pick up property and set up a telephone account through our pamphlets *Most Frequently Asked Questions by Visitors to the DC Jail*.

3,000 inmates received our pocket guide upon release, helping them identify services near the jail to get a meal, take a shower, join a Sunrise AA program, find shelter, job training, drug treatment and much more.

Inmates in all 18 cellblocks were provided 20,000 request forms throughout the year describing and offering our services

City officials were furnished with our report identifying the immediate needs of ex-offenders upon release. VSC also provided testimony to the DC Council on ways to mitigate the problem.

Our quarterly newsletter *VSC Look-Out* updating job training and placement services, drug treatment programs, housing and other community services was provided to the entire jail population.

27 families with children received "bedtime stories" recorded in their fathers voice from books and tapes VSC provided.

Winter coats were provided to the children of inmates and warm blankets to ex-offenders who needed them.

81 inmates were assisted in preparing their income taxes

276 ex-offenders visited our office to get funds for ID, tokens, use our telephone, fax and internet, prepare a resume, register to vote, pick up property which we had stored for them – and have waffles or a grilled cheese sandwich.

VSC Honors Volunteers

In June, VSC held its second annual George E. Holland Award Celebration to recognize the outstanding contributions of individuals in their work with offenders, ex-offenders and their families. The event was hosted by Covington and Burling LLP. The honorees were:

- Mary Elizabeth Pate, long time VSC volunteer
- Leona F. Bennett, Deputy Warden, DC Jail
- Samuel F. Harahan, Founding Director, Council for Court Excellence

Recognized by the Catalogue For Philanthropy as one of the Washington region's "best small charities."

VSC Expenses Fiscal Year 2008

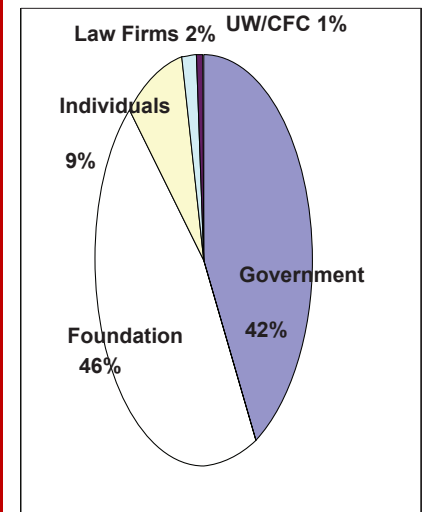
94% of each dollar contributed supports programs for clients

Program Expenses: \$249,922
Management/general: \$10,634
Fundraising: \$5,317

Our supporters included the following:

DC Government
United Planning Organization
United Way
Combined Federal Campaign
Law Firms
Weissberg Foundation
Clark-Winchcole Foundation
Blum Kolver Fund
Phase Foundation
Eugene and Agnes Meyer Foundation
Jovid Foundation
Herb Block Foundation
Cafritz Foundation
Capitol Hill Community Foundation
Workers of St. Albans
Arcana Foundation

Funding Sources



United Way 8207/CFC 53470

Our Values

At VSC, we know that helping people charged with breaking the law is an unpopular cause in a community that is, at times, overwhelmed with crime. We offer no excuse for criminal behavior but we recognize that virtually all prisoners return to the community to live, to work and to raise their children. Many inmates, prior to arrest, have dropped out of the support systems which, hopefully, were available to them -- family, health care, education, employment. To re-enter the community, they need help. It is in everybody's interest to give it to them

Measuring outcomes is very important in the evaluation of a human service agency. VSC's work lays the initial groundwork of trust with inmates so they will accept help when they leave the jail. Its outcomes are met when inmates take the next step in recovery. The emergency room is a good analogy for Visitors' Services Center. An emergency room doctor has great influence on people in their greatest hour of need; talking about domestic violence to a woman with suspicious injuries, and helping her find immediate help can result in a much better life for her. ***The education the doctor provides and the immediate linking to the next step, results in a positive outcome.*** Yet the emergency room doctor never knows that final outcome. VSC provides that important link to the next step in preventing recidivism.

United Way 8207/ CFC 53470

Visitors' Services Center
www.vscdcjails.net

From the Executive Director's Desk

Dear Friends:

As I look back on 2008, I see a year of great achievement. We had our greatest growth in community support, and improved our infrastructure to better meet the needs of our clients. In October of 2007, VSC had only \$15,000 in our general operating account and one certificate of deposit as the result of a sudden loss of a government grant. We acted quickly to ensure that VSC would survive beyond September 2008.

And we did survive - thanks, in large part, to the DC Government which included us in the Emergency Supplemental Appropriations legislation, thanks to the United Planning Organization which increased our annual allocation, thanks to many foundations, new and old, who chose to support us and thanks especially to the hundreds and hundreds of individuals throughout the Washington area who believe in and care about our work with inmates of the DC Jail.

As we look forward to 2009, we anticipate a year of great challenge due to the overall economy. Wishful thinking of determining ways to increase our capacity to serve this dramatically underserved population is not a difficult task: translating our information into Spanish for non-English speaking inmates and visitors; providing civil legal services, designing a small program of job placement are needed to serve our clients. Raising funds, however, for this population is never easy. We thank all of you who have supported us and hope you will continue to do so that we can continue to serve the inmates at the DC Jail.

Ann Keep, Executive Director

A Family Member writes

I have observed many waiting rooms in my time, but never have I encountered staff and clients as polite as those at VSC. Clients reciprocate their respectful treatment with politeness. Even when a request can not be met, the staff gives them the honor of explaining why and helps them locate other places to assist. No one is simply cut off with a "we don't do that here". People are assisted in finding their own solutions.

Our Volunteers: The heart and soul of VSC

Who are they?

Over 70 Volunteers contributed more than 1,440 hours of service in calendar 2008. Included among our volunteers are students at George Washington University, American University, Bowie State and Howard University, an antitrust attorney, a correspondent for a national magazine, an accountant who provides tax filing assistance, and a retired social worker. Also among our volunteers are several ex-offenders who welcome the opportunity to "give back" and assist others.

Why they do what they do

VSC volunteers answer more than 6,000 requests annually, each motivated by his or her own reasons. Some commit their time and energy out of an interest in the larger criminal justice system, others because of their views on jails, sentencing length or capital punishment. ***Once at VSC, though, they shelve their opinions and concentrate on each inmate request bound by a simple sense of fair play.***

It is not hard for volunteers to put aside their personal views and help an inmate send his child a birthday card, or arrange for a neighbor to feed a dog, or reach a doctor to notify the jail of a medical condition, or talk to an attorney, or help an inmate who just wants to call his mother to tell her that he loves her. Guided by that same sense of fair play, VSC volunteers also see in inmate families the unintended victims affected by a relative's incarceration. Volunteers help the whole family by picking up a paycheck to pay rent or arrange for an inmate to record a bedtime story for his 4-year-old son.



GREATER WASHINGTON

Recognized by the Catalogue For Philanthropy as one of the Washington region's "best small charities."

1422 Massachusetts Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20003
202-544-2131

2008 Annual Report