



Uniting children with their mothers and fathers in prison.

2012 Annual Report





Letter from the Executive Director and Board President

When Sr. Suzanne Jabro, CSJ founded **Get On The Bus** in 1999, she was responding to the cry of the women she was visiting in prison who told her again and again, “We never see our children.” From that first bus filled with 17 children, **Get On The Bus** has evolved into a movement advocating for the rights of children who have a parent in prison to see, touch and speak with their mother and father.

While the heart of our program has not changed, its operation has grown into a statewide phenomenon fueled by the compassion and social justice commitment of so many faith communities, organizations and individuals. Our goal is to ensure that the children riding “their” bus will have a joyful, serene, loving and lasting experience despite being reunited inside of prison walls.

Sadly, the need for the program has also not changed and we have maxed out the capacity at several of the visiting rooms. The correctional justice system is beginning to recognize the value of a family experience and we now have a waiting list for new prisons requesting our program. The staff and board of directors are in the process of exploring ways to increase our capacity, make a longer lasting difference and to more deeply impact the families we serve. For instance, offering repeat trips at other times of the year and other ways to stay in touch so that children may feel part of a growing family relationship.

We continue to give thanks for the wellspring of generosity and love that enables **Get On The Bus** to serve over 1,000 children each year. Know that your investment fulfills a child’s deepest need to be held by the mother or father who is absent from their daily life and with whom they yearn to be reunited.

Katherine Culpepper
Executive Director

Tom Clough
Board President

*“The best part
was when
my mom was
holding me like
a baby.”*

- 8 year old visiting mother in
Chowchilla



Family Reunification . . . WORKS!

Research is finally catching up to what **Get On The Bus** has known all along . . . visiting is the simplest and most effective way to strengthen family bonds. And having strong family bonds is the most significant indicator of successful re-entry following incarceration. What we now know is that visiting is associated with significant reductions in recidivism—a benefit not just to children and families in reunified families, but to our society as a whole.

The Minnesota Department of Corrections recently completed a five year study documenting the relationship between prison visitation and recidivism among 16,420 offenders. Their research found:

- Offenders who were visited in prison (even just once) were significantly less likely to recidivate, with a 13% decrease in felony reconvictions and a 25% decrease in reincarceration on technical violations.
- The frequency with which inmates were visited also had a significant effect on recidivism with a correlation between more visits and greater decreases in recidivism
- The larger an offender’s social support system—families, extended family, friends, ministers and mentors—the lower the risk for recidivism.

With visitation having such clearly beneficial outcomes, the authors of the study advocate for the implementation of more “visitor friendly” policies. We applaud the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for partnering with **Get On The Bus** to provide families in California with a powerful tool to maintain their family ties and break the cycle of lifelong reoffending and incarceration.

“The best part was my Dad picking me up off the ground... and I’m almost taller than him!”

-Teenager visiting his dad at CMC



Holding Families Together; Holding them In Our Thoughts

In 2010, Michelle and her three siblings, watched in uncertainty and terror as their mother was arrested in front of them and taken away from their home in South Central Los Angeles. This traumatic event plays out all too often as 1 in 5 children is present at the time of their mother’s arrest. Today, Michelle is eight years old. Her siblings are ages 14, 4 and 2. This, too, reflects a bigger picture as 58% of children with an incarcerated parent are under the age of 10.

The children live with their maternal grandmother and had not seen their mother since that unforgettable day. But on May 4th, 2012, they “got on the bus” for the long trip to Chowchilla where their family was reunited at last.

The Grandmother’s work made her unable to make the trip, so two students from Mount St. Mary’s College volunteered to serve as chaperones. They picked the children up in the dark of the morning to meet their bus, then accompanied them with great care through a long and emotional day. This year, 80 of the families served by **Get On The Bus** required the kindness of chaperones.

The kids were over the moon to see their mother; the youngest—just a baby at the time of the arrest—

consciously meeting her for the very first time. When asked what she liked best about **Get On The Bus** Michelle exclaimed, “This was the best day ever! Even better than Christmas.” This is a phrase we hear frequently and one that witnesses to the anticipation and joy the **Get On The Bus** experience creates in the lives of children who have lost so much.

Michelle’s mother received a fifteen year sentence which means she will likely be incarcerated for most, if not all, of her children’s formative years. This first **Get On The Bus** trip was critical to these young children in establishing a positive visiting experience and assisting them in accepting and adapting to this new reality. Most importantly, this first visit assured Michelle and her siblings that their mother still loves them, misses them, and longs for the day that they can all be together again.

This family will need **Get On The Bus** to help them maintain a relationship with their mother. Everyone at **Get On The Bus** – volunteers, staff and donors – plays an important part of the caring community supporting them on their challenging journey. For one day a year we hold them in our care; for the rest of the year we hold them in our thoughts and prayers.

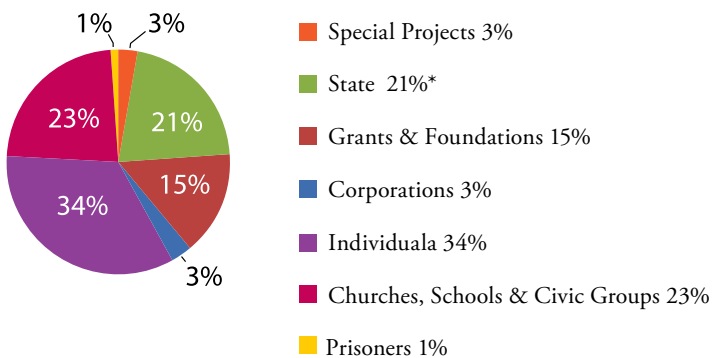
Financial Report

Get On The Bus is grateful for every single gift that unites a child with his or her parent in prison. Because of you, 1,170 children had the priceless opportunity to be reunited with their mother and father this year. The **Get On The Bus** Program was provided at 10 prisons in California; 3 women’s prisons and 7 men’s prisons, including New Folsom Prison, our newest prison partnership. In 2012, **Get On The Bus** increased the number of families reunited by 4%, despite visiting room capacity challenges at several of the prisons. 60% of the prisons served experienced increases in the number of participants — one as high as 150%. There is a waiting list of four prisons who have requested the **Get On The Bus** program.

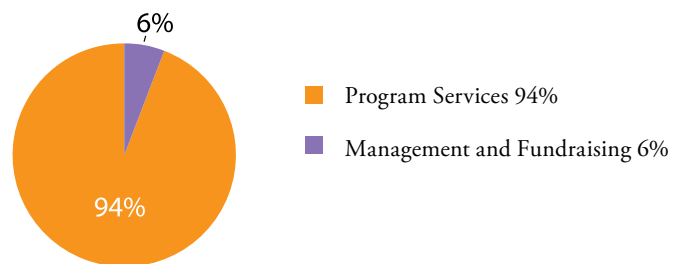
	Children	Parents	Caregivers	Volunteers	# of Buses
Mother’s Day Totals	671	341	396	174	27
Father’s Day Totals	499	284	347	585	29
TOTALS	1,170	625	743	759	56

Get On The Bus is a program of the Center for Restorative Justice Works (CRJW). The other programs of CRJW include: the Chowchilla Family Express, a state contract to provide transportation to unite families with women serving sentences at women’s prisons in Chowchilla; Cross-Over, a program providing women serving sentences at the California Institution for Women in Corona with personal and spiritual development opportunities in collaboration with volunteers from “the outside”; and Cultivating Dreams, a bio-diverse garden on the grounds of the California Institution for Women tended by a partnership of incarcerated women and college students from the Claremont Colleges.

Sources of CRJW Revenue



Distribution of CRJW Expenditures



*1) The revenue received from the state funds the state contracted program, the Chowchilla Family Express. Get On The Bus does not receive any state funding.

2) In 2012, CRJW changed its fiscal year to October 1 through September 30th to align the flow of Get On The Bus revenue with expenses. Independently reviewed financial statements will be available as of December 13, 2012 and can be requested by e-mail: mari@crjw.us or by phone at (818) 980-7714, ext. 10.

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“Get On The Bus is the best resource we have. You mean a lot for families like us.”

– Caregiver



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We Need YOU!

Get On The Bus volunteers come from many different faith communities, cities and towns throughout California. They are families, social justice ministry teams, college students and friends who all work together to lead, coordinate and fund what has been called “a caravan of love”. They are people with huge hearts and a passion to share the **Get On The Bus** story with others. They know how to work together, divide the labor and create an experience of welcome, warmth and compassion.

Get On The Bus offers a meaningful opportunity for service that you will never forget. There are over 20 tasks that each bus team can share or delegate to bring others into the experience. Does this sound like something you or your church, temple or mosque would like to experience? Call us today at (818) 980-7714 or click on the “Get Involved” tab at the top of our webpage, www.getonthebus.us.

Bus Coordinators

Get On The Bus uses a de-centralized grassroots volunteer model that places leadership and responsibility in the hands of dedicated and capable local bus teams. It is with a tremendous sense of respect and deep gratitude that we recognize the efforts of all of the **Get On The Bus** Team Leaders. We couldn't do it without you!

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Children are the collateral damage of a broken criminal justice system and families torn apart by intergenerational crime and poverty. In order to bring about changes that will benefit children and families, it is essential to understand who is in prison and how children are left behind.



A Closer Look At Those We Serve

- 78% of the nation's jail and prison inmates grew up in a fatherless household, even though only 15% of today's adult population grew up without a father (www.menstuff.org/issues/byissue/fatherless.html)
- Approximately 80% of women prisoners have been sexually or physically abused before being incarcerated (http://www.womenprisoners.org/resources/critical_statistics.html)
- A Survey of California's prisoners in 2008 found that 14% had been in the foster care system at some point in their lives. (Child Welfare Journal of Policy, Practice, and Program—Special Issue, Racial Disproportionality in Child Welfare, vol. 87, no. 2, 2008, p. 169-188, www.cwla.org)
- More than 60 percent of parents in state prisons are incarcerated more than 100 miles from their last place of residence; (Sentencing Project, 2009).
- California has the largest prison system in the country leaving nearly 200,000 children with a parent involved in the adult criminal justice system to 856,000. (Simmons, 2000)

The generosity and support of our donors and volunteers allow Get On The Bus the opportunity to unite children with their mothers and fathers in prison.

Thank you.

The Children of Incarcerated Parents Bill of Rights

I have the right to be kept safe and informed at the time of my parent's arrest

I have the right to be heard when decisions are being made about me

I have the right to be considered when decisions are being made about my parent

I have the right to be well-cared for in my parent's absence

I have the right to speak with, see, and touch my parent

I have the right to support as I face my parent's incarceration

I have the right not to be judged, blamed or labeled because my parent is incarcerated

I have the right to a life-long relationship with my parent.

Developed by the San Francisco Partnership for Incarcerated Parents.



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“The best part was seeing how happy my Mom was when she got to see her children.”

–Teenager visiting mom at Chowchilla,

www.GetOnTheBus.us