

Save the Date!

HFP CEO Featured in “Behind Our Walls!”

Rare showing of award-winning documentary



Humanity for Prisoners invites you to attend our first annual autumn program, THE VOICES OF HUMANITY. This year’s program will feature Grand Rapids filmmaker Nathan Roels’ award-winning 45-minute video that tells the stories of eight prisoners inside Handlon Correctional Facility and the educational program [Calvin Prison Initiative] through Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary that brought them together. Behind Our Walls is a story of hope, transformation, and provides a glimpse of what prison reform looks like. One of the eight is our new President and CEO, Mark Hartman!

The event will be held at Central Park Place, 421 Columbus Avenue, Grand Haven. Seating in that facility is slightly under 200, so advance planning is important. Ticket price is \$20. The premier showing of the video in Grand Rapids was sold out, so watch for further ticket information on HFP’s Facebook page, or at our web site: www.humanityforprisoners.org.

“It’s not my story, it’s the story of these men, telling the story of transformation, working across difference, overcoming adversity, it’s stories of what they’ve gone through and the resilience they’ve shown,” said Roels.



From the Desk of Doug

CPI and HFP

Similarities & Differences



It should come as no surprise that HFP is featuring Nate Roels’ documentary “Behind Our Walls” in its first annual video fest.

Calvin Prison Initiative, subject of the film, is a partnership between Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary that provides a Christian liberal arts education to a group of Michigan inmates. It’s a great program!

There’s a lot behind our interest. Director and former interim CEO Dr. John Rottman was one of the founders of CPI. Our new CEO is one of the 8 prisoners featured in the video. And, the faces of many HFP clients will be seen in the production.

Similarities: We both share a genuine heart for prisoners.

Differences: CPI is faith-based and Jesus is taught in the classroom. Humanity for Prisoners is a secular 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable organization. We don’t teach Jesus. Instead, we model his behavior. Regardless of race or belief, we’re here for hurting and needy Michigan prisoners.

“You are looking at prisoners physically behind their walls and they have these walls built up internally due to the trauma they’ve gone through, the things they are currently going through,” said Roels of the film. “But I chose to use the pronoun ‘ours’ in the title, because this story includes us, as viewers too, recognizing our walls are up in our negative perceptions and unforgiveness of prisoners.”

To which the founder of HFP says, “AMEN and AMEN!”

— Doug Tjapkes, Founder

Voices Behind Bars

Spud juice down the drain!

"About the only victory for the good guys today is them finding seven gallons of brewing spud juice plus a whole bunch of already filled bottles, all of which they made the makers pour out in the storm sewer. As I'm fond of saying, 'Never a dull moment in the joint.'"

Editor's note: The term "spud juice" got its name back when prisoners were making liquor from potatoes. The name stuck, although officers and prisoners alike are telling us that prisoners are making homemade alcohol out of "mostly anything." They just let it ferment, then store it in soda or water bottles.

When a prisoner got transferred from TCF to SRF

"I miss the days at Lapeer where everyone, white, black, and Hispanic, managed to get along; and when we didn't there was always a group of guys to mediate any conflict before it got out of hand. Here? Mob mentality rules, and always at the lowest common denominator level, which surprises me because much of this prison is meant to prepare these short timers for going home in the near future. Instead, a majority of them prefer to spend their time drunk or stoned out of their minds, robbing and stealing, or finding other ways to get into mischief. It is the sort of mindset that makes me want to bang my head against a wall: I do everything I can just to get a look at the door to freedom, and these guys do everything they can to kick it shut in their faces."

On cuisine at WHV

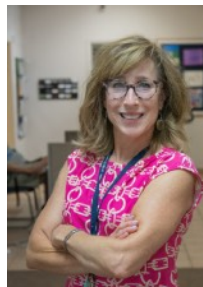
"...maggots in the milk, beetles in the greens, rotten vegetables! I'll just have to stick with noodles and oatmeal!"

On meaningful worship

"Tonight we had a pastor from Argentina conduct Mass. This is the sort of priest every

church ought to have. He loves people as much as he loves Christ and delivers a homily better than Pope Francis. We only get him once a month, but when we know he's coming, everyone shows up. He spoke on the Transfiguration and how the disciples were given that spark of hope while high on the mountain to sustain them during the dark trials in the valley below which were coming. His talk of a spark of hope, on how Jesus never fails to raise us up, really spoke volumes to me. The fact the Father is super dog-friendly and bent down to give my dog a good scratch while speaking with me just adds to why I like the man!"

Meet Jen!



We are pleased to announce that Jennifer Juhasz has agreed to serve a 3-year term on our Board of Directors. Jen has worked with us before. Jen and Doug once led a workshop for prisoners on how to prepare commutation applications. Jen

has criminal justice education and extensive experience in all areas of offender population services. She has been a West Michigan small business owner and remains active in several Lakeshore civic organizations. Welcome aboard, Jen!

MDOC Critical Staff Shortage!

A shortage of corrections officers is taking a toll on Michigan's prisons, according to Radio Station WLNS in Lansing. "With more than 1,000 open positions, current staff are saying they feel trapped too after being forced to work daily overtime hours to keep the facilities running." The Michigan Department of Corrections has admitted staffing problems, and says they plan on using \$12 million towards bonuses and recruiting.

Love

"Bind me to the medicine of love. Let me affect the transformation that leads to needed change. Light the torch of revolution in my heart. Stand me upright on a foundation of faith while I take the next steps. Build my voice as an instrument for defending freedoms which provide equality. Keep my motivations clean. Grant me the tools to see near and far, and find me adjusting the lens often."
— Pixie Lighthorse