

# CPO Ministries

September, 2013

Chicagoland Prison Outreach P.O. Box 63 South Holland IL 60473 708 331-3301  
www.cpoministries.org



## *From The Director's Desk*

There is nothing that encourages me in ministry more than a personal story (or stories) of a life changed by the work of the Holy Spirit through the proclamation of the Gospel. This is especially the case when CPO's holistic approach to ministry impacts not only the inmate, but his family as well.

At our annual banquet this past May, we were blessed to hear from 2 individuals – Aaron, an ex-offender and his mother, Mary. Aaron was a participant in

*His life was truly changed.*

CPO's Life Learning Program in Division 11 at

Cook County Jail. He shared how he was profoundly impacted by the Bible studies, the worship, the prayers and the fellowship. His life was truly changed.

While in the program, Aaron signed up his mother and family for CPO's Angels of Hope Christmas gift program. For many years while Aaron was incarcerated, I personally visited his family at Christmastime and had some incredible times with them in prayer. His mom also joined CPO's Rhoda Fellowship, which is a weekly Bible study for women who have a loved one in jail or prison. Mary not only has been abundantly blessed, but she has been a blessing to Darlene – our Rhoda Fellowship leader – and the other ladies as well.

As we found out that evening, Aaron now has a job at the Ford plant on the south side of Chicago, and his family no longer needs the assistance of the Angels of Hope program. Aaron and Mary and their family, however, continue to stay connected with us – and we wouldn't want it any other way!

As I have said many times in the past, your support is what makes it possible for CPO to provide these and so many other programs for people who are in desperate need of the grace of God for salvation and deliverance. God is working in wonderful and powerful ways, and He is using us (you and CPO) to facilitate His work.

Thank you!

Dan Swets, Executive Director



*..she has been a blessing to Darlene – our Rhoda Fellowship leader – and the other ladies as well.*

## Staff Spotlight – Dennis Raatjes

Dennis Raatjes began with CPO in 2000 as a volunteer and was hired in 2001 to direct our educational programs at the jail. CPO's educational ministry, Outreach Christian School, was established at that time. Since then, Outreach Christian School has expanded to include vocational training for ex-offenders at our ministry center in Roseland.

Presently Dennis serves as CPO's chaplain in Division 2 at Cook County Jail and also leads Bible studies on Wednesday mornings for the students in our vocational training program.

At the jail he spends much of his time meeting with small groups of inmates and leading them in Bible study. Relationship building is a primary goal of the ministry of CPO, and Dennis is faithful to that ideal. Fellowship is established and friendships are made – even in jail! Following release it's not unusual for some of those friendships to continue.

As Dennis says, "In everything CPO is involved with we fully recognize that God is in charge and we depend on His leading and His blessings."



## There's Hope! by Corey Buchanan

In the first half of the year the Chicagoland area has experienced 186 homicides with a third of the homicides being young people in their twenties. Am I disappointed? Yes. Discouraged? A little. Hopeful ?

**Am I disappointed? Yes.**  
**Discouraged? A little.**  
**Hopeful ?**  
**ABSOLUTELY.**

ABSOLUTELY. For the last nine years I have been serving as Chaplain with Chicagoland Prison Outreach. My assignment is at the Cook County Boot Camp which is an adult facility providing alternative sentencing for those who have been convicted of non-violent offenses. I have heard every story imaginable, stories that would make you cringe because of the pain and misery, stories that

would upset you because of the senseless evil, and I hear, I see and I experience stories of joy, stories of forgiveness, stories of redemption, stories that give me hope. Recently there are three stories that have filled my heart with hope, stories of young men who are far from perfect.

Clinton, Jaqual, and Ojo. These young men have not arrived but they are allowing God to work in their lives. Their stories remind us that God is still working in our midst.

I met Jaqual two years ago. Jaqual is 20 years old and has been in DCFS for most of his life. His father is in prison and his mother is addicted to drugs. Jaqual grew up in the projects, and was very impressed with life on the streets until he was incarcerated. It was during his incarceration that he encountered the Christian program from Chicagoland Prison Outreach at the Cook County Jail while awaiting trial. Jaqual was sentenced  
(Continued on pg. 3)



## **There's Hope!** (Continued from pg. 3)

to Cook County Boot Camp. It was there I met him; he was selected for our Vocational Carpentry Program which prepares a student to take the Carpenter Union Apprentice Test. Jaqual began to grow in his Christian faith at Boot Camp. He graduated at the top of the class receiving the highest award an inmate can receive. Jaqual was released to DCFS custody and began attending church First Reformed Church of

### ***Jaqual began to grow in his Christian faith at Boot Camp***

South Holland with me. His commitment was not to go back to a life of crime and drug addiction. Jaqual has not been re-arrested, he has not used drugs and he is currently working as an Administrative Assistant in Lisle, Illinois. He has recently received his GED, and will be attending college in the fall. Jaqual has even heightened his study in God's word, and it is a joy for CPO to walk with him in his new life in Christ.

I met Clinton four years ago at Cook County Boot Camp. It was there we began a discipleship relationship. Clinton, who was once a gang leader and a drug dealer, made a commitment to follow the Lord. He is not perfect by any means -

### ***..once a gang leader and a drug dealer, made a commitment to follow the Lord.***

he stumbles and falls like the rest of us - but Clinton has not been re-arrested, has abstained from drugs and now is a Director of Ministry who visits recovery homes to provide hope to the residents. He serves as a

minister at his church and leads the men's ministry. He is currently in school with the expectation of attending Moody Bible Institute in January.



Lastly, there is Ojo. I met this young man last year at Cook County Boot Camp. Like so many, he promised me that he would live a different life once released. He promised he would stay connected to me and to ministry. Since his release, Ojo has been witnessing and sharing the gospel with his family and friends. The greatest excitement in his life is seeing his family now walk with the Lord. Once a week He goes into various Chicago neighborhoods to share the gospel of Jesus

Christ with gang bangers and drug dealers. He ministers to the homeless a few times a week making visits to Lower Wacker Drive to cut the homeless men's hair. He is currently finishing school at Larry's Barber College where he has been asked to become a barber instructor.

### ***..greatest excitement in his life is seeing his family now walk with the Lord.***

Is their pain all around us? Absolutely! But there is hope around us as well. As I think of these stories and so many more, I see what the constant is in all their lives. They came in contact with people who believe that God is powerful enough to change their lives. People who have hope, hope not in a system but hope in God, hope in His word, hope in His promises, and hope in His power.

Corey Buchanan  
Associate Director

## Friends of CPO Keep us in your prayers:

Currently we have encountered several new challenges down at the Boot Camp due to recent changes in administration. From these changes, our bible study leaders have had to cancel and reschedule multiple bible study sessions already and there may be more difficulties to come.

Also, our welding classes started up once again on September 11th. We are very excited to help teach these students about Christ, and life learning skills as well as different welding methods through this class.

God Bless, CPO Ministries

### MEMORIAL GIFTS (Received in the last 12 months)

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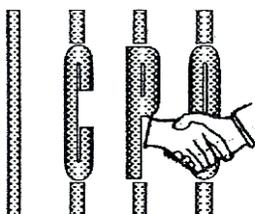
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Matt. 25:36

**Chicagoland  
Prison  
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*If you would like more information on CPO or would like to be a CPO volunteer, please call or write us.*

**Donations may be given on our web site [www.cpoministries.org](http://www.cpoministries.org)  
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