

# CPO Ministries

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

## Dan Gets IT! by Chaplain Corey Buchanan

We loaded up in the maroon CPO van. There were smiles, and there was laughter. Everyone was really happy! It was the occasion that had us bubbling with joy and excitement. It is good to be celebrated,



acknowledged, and honored - especially for hard work that often goes unseen! We made our way through downtown Chicago and eventually found our way to the Union League Club. The building was elegant, and it was clear that those who were members loved their elegant club. We made our way up to the sixth floor, a room filled with antique highly decorated oak. The room was already filled with people, and it was only a quarter past six.

We found our tables, and I was nervous! I speak fairly often to various crowds in various places - the jail, churches, banquets, conferences and seminars. I speak with notes and without notes. But this was different. Today I had a chance to stand

before a crowd of strangers to find words to express how much this man that has been used by God to impact my life and the lives of so many other inmates, ex-offenders, and many of our families. I was

nervous! I shared how glad I was that God called Dan from managing a tire company. I shared how glad I was that God called Dan from Multi Media Ministries. I shared how glad I was that Dan's father in law called him one winter day in February of 1987 to invite him to the jail for a worship service. I shared how glad I was that a group of South Holland businessmen joined Dan in also helping him confirm his call to fulltime Prison ministry and birthed CPO in 1994. I shared how glad I am that I met Dan in Division 11 at Cook County Jail in 1999. It was through Dan's ministry at Cook County Jail that God

transformed my life. I am thrilled that he received the Gutenberg award and I am really happy for the work, for the supporters, and volunteers of Chicagoland Prison Outreach.

**It was through Dan's ministry at Cook County Jail that God transformed my life.**

My good friend Matt Waterstone, Senior Pastor at First Reformed Church of South Holland, joined us that night and wrote these words in his weekly blog. "I was at this gala for my good friend and First Church Elder, Dan Swets, who was this year's recipient of the Gutenberg Award. Previous winners include Mike Singletary and Billy Graham. And now, our very own Dan Swets, who won this award as a result of his work as Executive Director of Chicagoland Prison Outreach (CPO). Corey, who serves as Chaplain for CPO, as well as our Director of Mercy & Justice Ministries, had the privilege of introducing Dan. I was reminded that night of the power of the Word of God. There we were, rubbing shoulders with some of society's wealthiest to celebrate a ministry that distributes, teaches and lives the Word of God to some of society's 'least of these.' But what separates CPO from other prison ministries is that Dan and Corey don't simply visit inmates or pass out Scriptures and offer a few comforting prayers. Don't get me wrong, they do that and so much more. Together, they have launched the 'Life Learning Program' which teaches

## Love changes lives and helps to make lasting connections.

The apostle Paul shares in the book of 1 Corinthians 13:13 “ Now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.” At the Cook County Boot Camp we experience and witness the words of 1 Corinthians 13:13 every day, every week. We see it through our everyday presence and through the work of our faithful volunteers, who unapologetically share the gospel of Jesus with love. It is through their bold witness and their compassionate teaching that we see lives changed and lasting connections made.



For example, on a stunning summer day at boot camp, not just any day - it was a graduation day. Graduation days are special for the entire compound because a group of men are to return home, while another group finds themselves closer to returning home. This graduation I found myself in the living unit of the graduates while they were just moments away from being released. You could almost smell the excitement in the room. Many of the men were thinking of the many things that they will be able to do, the many places they could go, and the people they could see. As the living unit was in chaos, I was in conversation with a young man, when out of the blue someone grabbed me. It was an abnormal grab. I turned around to see who it was. It was a young man who I recalled was in my Bible studies.

He always seemed somewhat unfocused and uninvolved in the teaching moment. He hugged me and said “thank you, I now have a relationship with Jesus - I have a personal relationship with God.”

On a Tuesday evening I was spending time with a group of young men when I looked through the windows and saw them. They have been faithful for so long, every Tuesday for the last for the ten years a team of CPO volunteers have gone into Cook County Boot Camp. That night I witnessed them make an



amazing connection with young men as they took the time to answer Bible questions. Questions that have plagued these young men for a very long time, questions that have prevented them from hearing and embracing the Gospel. They shared the truth with love and opened a door to a lasting connection.

Bible studies can be hectic. You have those who really want to attend and those who are attending just to stay out of trouble. Well during those times you always have someone who looks to redirect the study, to cause you to lose focus. This happens through the asking of odd questions. However I take questions seriously. A particular young man would

always ask me – “Is God real, and how do we know?” He always looked to disrupt study. I would make sure not to get upset with him. I just wanted to show him love and concern. After a few months God began to do something in his heart. He had lots of questions about God and he was concerned about being forgiven. I sat down with him in my office at Boot Camp. It was then that he had a moment, an encounter with Christ. He decided to follow Jesus. God changed his heart and he became my greatest advocate in Bible study and even invited me to come to teach Bible study

**continued on page 3**

**Love changes lives and helps to make lasting connections.** Continued from pg. 2

to him and his family once he was released! We share love in various ways both vocally and visibly. I am thankful to everyone who shares and shows the love of Christ to CPO. It is through your prayers and support that we are able to witness God's mighty hand at work.



**From The Director's Desk**

On Wednesday, September 26 my wife, Judy, and I took the 100 mile trip south on I-55 to Pontiac, Illinois to visit Randall Jarrett at the maximum security prison there. We have made that trip many times before to visit Randall, but this time was different. Randall is serving a life sentence there.

20 years ago he was living in Alabama racing cars and living a fast lifestyle. He married his 18 year old girlfriend when he was 19. They had three children. His fast living got him in trouble and he was arrested. While he was at a prison work camp he escaped and fled to Chicago where he resumed his former lifestyle.

He had his wife and kids moved to Chicago to be with him, but he hadn't changed. He got in trouble again – this time big trouble. He was arrested and charged with a capital murder.

**He got in trouble again  
– this time big trouble**

After several years awaiting trial and having no family in Chicago, Kerri and the kids moved back to Alabama. Sometime later they divorced and Kerri got on with her life. In the mean time, Randall had a life changing encounter with Christ, while in CPO's Life Learning Program and began a transformation that is nothing less than miraculous. This is also when the father/son relationship began between Randall and me.

Randall had continued communicating with Kerri by mail – mostly because of the kids at first – but now his letters became much more spiritual and uplifting. Over time Kerri's relationship with the Lord was revived and they actually did Bible studies together by mail.

More recently they both became convicted that their divorce was an act of disobedience – a sin. A sin, like all others, for which they needed to repent and turn back to God. They understood that God was serious when He said that what He joins together, no one should separate, and since neither of them was married to another at the time, they decided that the God honoring thing to do was to get married again. Now this was a huge decision with major implications. Randall is in prison with a life sentence and she is living in Alabama. Well, Kerri packed up and moved to Pontiac to be near him and Randall asked his "pops" (that's me) if he would marry them and if "mom" (Judy) would be Kerri's attendant at the wedding (in prison).

What a wonderful blessing it was to be a part of this event. Even though Randall and the three other inmates who were attending him were on one side of the glass and Kerri, Judy and I were on the other; and Randall and Kerri couldn't touch each other, the wedding was nothing less than a beautiful picture of the love of Christ operating in the hearts and lives of His people.

**the God  
honoring  
thing to do  
was to get  
married  
again.**

You may not know it, but all of you who support the ministry of CPO were there with us. Your prayers and your gifts hold up the ministry of CPO and help to make moments like this possible.

Randall and Kerri want you to know how grateful they are that we could do this with them and for them – all, of course, for the glory of the powerful name of Jesus!

# Dan Gets IT! Continued from page 1

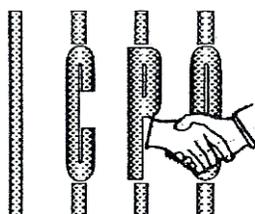
ex-offenders life skills, such as, welding, automotive repair and carpentry skills. While ex-offenders are taking classes (many of them are being taught by retired professionals in that field) they are also attending Bible Studies and growing in their faith. Not to mention the Thanksgiving baskets and Christmas presents that are distributed to inmates' families that might not have enough for the holidays. Oh and did you know that they recently planted a community garden in Roseland that is being taken care of by ex-offenders?! That's what I love so much about CPO. Their mission is not only sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, but also discipling individuals deeper in their faith. It's too small a thing to simply pass out a Scripture or read a Bible passage or offer a prayer and then call it good. For ministries like CPO, all those things are just the first step in a marathon journey of allowing the Gospel to transform all areas of life. CPO, like many para-church ministries that do what the greater Church can't or won't do, is under a bit of a budget strain. It is what it is. As Dan told me, "money is going from hand to mouth right now." And while he and the rest of the team at CPO have 100% confidence and trust that the Lord will provide, I felt moved to put something of a challenge out there to all the readers of this blog. I have a hunch that if everyone reading this letter would donate, CPO would be completely caught up on their already slimmed down budget."

Nights like this remind us how good our God is. They remind us of the many people who have been touched by CPO. They remind us of those who faithfully support and pray for CPO, and we ask that you will continue to celebrate with us, and pray for God's continual provision, protection and progression in our personal lives as well as in the life CPO.

## CPO Reaps A Huge Harvest



After years of sowing and reaping spiritually, Chicagoland Prison Outreach, in partnership with the Cook County Sheriff, has planted, nourished and has now harvested a community garden on the grounds of its ministry and training center in Roseland. Initially the harvest of squash and zucchini came in so quickly and plentifully that we had to bring it to the Greater Chicago Food Depository. Since then we have arranged to have the food distributed through the Agape Center in Roseland. Some is used for the meals they serve to kids after school and some will go to needy families through local partnering churches.



**Chicagoland  
Prison  
Outreach**

Matt. 25:36

### **Board of Directors**

Dan Bruinsma Nyla DeGraft  
Larry DeYoung Scott Olthof Brian Oswald  
Dan Swets Kathy Vander Heyden

*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)**

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