

MY FIRST NIGHT IN PRISON WAS THE WORST OF MY LIFE...



Prison Network Ministries

I was such a good kid growing up. An 'A' student who was always doing the right thing. I don't know what happened to be honest. The fact is that I wanted to fit in and be amongst the popular crowd of kids at school. I hated being 'geeky'. The cool kids smoked so I thought I'd give it a try. The first time I smoked a cigarette I'll never forget. Why I kept smoking I don't know, because it was horrible. Then one day an old friend from primary school said to me, "Come over to my house and we'll smoke some cones." I had no idea what he was talking about. I had no drug education whatsoever, all I knew was that 'drugs were bad' as a generalisation. So I went to his house after school and from then on I was a bong smoker.

In year 9, a number of things really unsettled me and I fell into a deep depression and needed medication. This caused me to have a drug induced psychosis.

By the time I reached VCE I had experimented with a number of different drugs. Once I passed year 12 I started hitting the rave scene, absolutely loving the lifestyle of going out and partying from Thursday night and coming home on Sunday. I loved the happy atmosphere of the clubs and the fact that everyone was so friendly and willing to accept me for who I was. By this time I had been kicked out of home several times and moved out on my own accord to live with my boyfriend at the time, although we were constantly breaking up and getting back together again.



I became very close to the friend who first introduced me to smoking weed. We would go out together heaps. He was one of my best friends. One night we went out chasing some juice (nickname for GHB) because we were heavily into that drug during that time. We drove to a friend's home, took some GHB and I drove home. I woke up in hospital

three days later to discover that my friend had passed away shortly after the accident. Apparently I had hit a tree about 5 minutes from home. I was only 20 years old, my friend only 19. I didn't realise how much trouble I was going to be in.

After spending about 3 months in hospital and rehab, I fell into deep depression and started along a very dangerous path. Thankfully I pulled myself together, cleaned up my act and decided to start a career – nursing.

Roughly two years later the trial for my case commenced. I was found to be guilty of culpable driving and was remanded in custody. I was one exam short of completing my nursing studies. My first night in prison was the worst of my life. I was so terrified. I stayed in one of the medical centre cells, which was cold and plain disgusting. Not to mention the AWFUL prison issue clothing I was forced to wear.

The first visit I had with my family and boyfriend were the worst and the hardest. All I wanted to do was cry and I know it was hard for them to keep it together for me as well. The look in their eyes when it was time to leave was pure hurt, like they couldn't bear to leave me there. It became a normality for me to strip off all my clothes and let officers search me fully naked after each visit. Although, I was lucky to have my twice weekly visits as I noticed that in fact, not all of the women got visits.

I remained hopeful whilst on remand. The day of my sentencing came and I was jailed for 5 years, with a minimum of 2 ½ years to serve in custody. In the cell I was held in at the court, I banged my head against the walls, cried and screamed. I was absolutely devastated.

Many events happened while I was in prison: lock downs, fights, lots of codes being called, high profile women who I saw on the news and crime shows would end up living next door to me. I had lots of counselling, including grief and loss counselling that I needed and had not received from the accident. I watched the women come and go and come back again. I grew close to a few who I found to be not bad people, just at a bad place at that time in their lives. Although I sometimes hated seeing girls who had become good friends of mine leave, it also meant my time was coming closer.

The day I sat in front of the parole board was very daunting. Once I found out my parole was granted, as well as my home detention, I burst into tears. I guess knowing that this nightmare was almost over was such a relief and I would almost be out.

The morning I left was a surreal feeling. Mum met me at the gates with Subway, my favourite takeout food which I missed the most. The drive home was just the weirdest feeling. EVERYTHING was weird, from being in a car to seeing the world again. The first time I went to the shops on my own I almost burst into tears, and that was just the local IGA supermarket!

I will never take my freedom for granted again. I enjoy the smallest things now, like riding in a car, jogging around the lake, and just being with my family and friends without needing alcohol and drugs. I will never forget my experience of prison. All the bad stuff, but also the good stuff that I learnt and was able to take out of there. I believe I am a stronger person for having lived through this awful experience and I am now really looking forward to my future and what it holds.

Jasmine

A NOTE FROM THE CEO



Welcome to the first edition of Inside Outside for 2011. There have been some changes within PNM over the last few months so I thought it would be a good opportunity to share them with you.

Katharine Goschnick was Coordinator of Volunteers for 4 years and an invaluable member of the PNM team. We farewelled her at the end of December, but are thankful that she will continue to assist us. On behalf of PNM, thank you Katharine!

Marisa Coster commenced with PNM in early January and has taken over the role of Coordinator of Volunteers, 2 days a week. It's great to welcome Marisa who brings with her a wealth of experience.

Lyndel Baldwin also joined us in January this year in a new position of 'Remand Worker'. There are quite a number of women on remand and we are looking forward to seeing how this role grows and develops. Chelsea Leatham will be working alongside Lyndel a few days a week in a joint role of Remand/Support Worker.

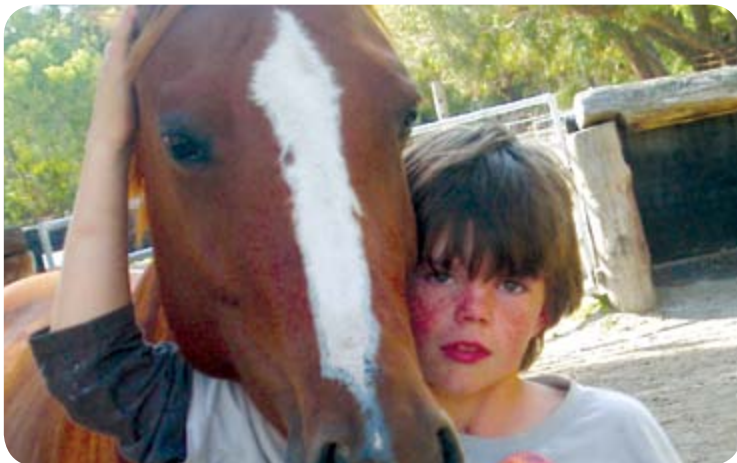
Board members are often invisible contributors who give of their time to oversee PNM. We were sad to receive Roger's resignation after serving 4 years on the Board, but delighted to welcome a new Director in Paul Joy.

It was with great sadness that we heard of the passing of Marjorie Swales on December 10th 2010. Marj has left behind a wonderful legacy at PNM and we dedicate this edition of Inside Outside in her honour.

Blessings,

Deb Redford

CAMP SNAPSHOT



My name is Connor and I'm writing to inform you about all of the amazing and unforgettable camps that I have attended. Mill Valley Ranch, CYC the Island, Forest Edge and the Adventure Resort. Trust me, I never get sick of going and when the camp is over I well and truly do not want to go home.

Camps for me is a chance to leave whatever problems (and homework.....ha-ha) behind and go and enjoy myself doing horse riding, surfing, archery, swimming, games and most of all to learn more about the Lord. Camps like these actually introduced me to God and I am thankful to all of the camps for their love for me, God and all the other children.

Thankfully, through camp I have made lifelong friends and had unforgettable experiences. I hope you all have as much fun as I have had.



EVENT NIGHT



**Eastside Christian Church
Saturday March 26th - 7pm**

“Remember those who are in prison as though, you were in prison with them”

Hebrews 13:3, NRSV

Eastside Christian Church is holding a night to raise support for Prison Network Ministries with special guest speaker and Patron - Lisa McInnes-Smith.

Come for a fun filled ladies night out, invite your friends and hear stories from some of the women as well as hear a great message from Lisa.

Eastside Christian Church:
32 Stud Road, Bayswater



A TRIBUTE TO MARJORIE SWALES

who passed away at Olivet Aged Persons Home Ringwood, on Friday December 10th 2010.

Marjorie May Swales OAM – 1936-2010

Mark 14:8 “She did what she could;”
For her Lord and in the service of others.



SWALES. - Marjorie OAM. Marj had a long association with correctional services in Victoria. She worked tirelessly with women in prison since she was 16 years old and provided a great amount of support to prison staff. Some of Marj’s achievements included receiving an Order of Australia Medal for her service to the welfare of women and having the mother and baby unit at HM Prison Tarrengower named after her. Her best recognition and what she will be remembered for most in Corrections Victoria, was the respect she gained from both staff and prisoners. She was an unassuming and very humble person who will be sadly missed by many, especially those in the Women’s Prison Region. Our deepest sympathies to her family. - Commissioner, Corrections Victoria Robert J. Hastings APM and staff of Corrections Victoria.

Over the years, Marj cared for and supported so many young girls and women she met in prison, that her relationships with them were intrinsically intertwined with her own, over several generations. She was at various times; mother, sister, friend, aunty, grandmother and/or counsellor to more women than most people have ever got close to.

Marj had a deep-seated passion for the plight of women who were often powerless in their situations. She was a strong, caring and non-judgemental lady. Her driving force was always the ‘girls’ and their children. She had an extensive network of social workers, churches, solicitors, business professionals and of course, the team that comprises Prison Network Ministries.

Marjorie May Swales was a significant Australian – a woman of influence – a person of impeccable character, inner strength and dignity.

(An extract from a ‘nomination reference’ for an OAM, by Barbara J Hickingbotham, Former President of the Board - Prison Network Ministries)

INTRODUCING OUR NEW STAFF!



MARISA COSTER
Coordinator of Volunteers

I’ve recently relocated from Queensland to Melbourne; have 3 adult children, a daughter-in-law, 2 grandsons and one teenager living with me.

My background is in ministry & management within a Church environment, having had extensive experience in pastoring & working with volunteers.

I believe each individual has been created uniquely by God on purpose, for a purpose. I am passionate about doing life alongside people to help them reach their potential in life.

I’m looking forward to working with all of our volunteers as together we serve the Lord through the ministry of PNM.



LYNDEL BALDWIN
Remand/Support Worker

Having raised three sons and a daughter, my husband and I are currently the proud grandparents of six granddaughters and two grandsons. I completed a Bachelor of Arts (Counselling) degree in 2009 and gained valuable counselling experience at Anglicare, as well as Sacred Heart Mission, St. Kilda in the Women’s House. I am excited about joining the team at Prison Network Ministries and look forward to the challenges this position will bring.

PNM STAFF



Back from left – Deb, Lyndel, Laurel
Front from left – Chelsea, Marisa, Alex

“THANK YOU ST MARK’S FOR THE CHRISTMAS GIFTS”



Talking to Chelsea about her role at the prison brought up a discussion about the needs of the women in prison. Their main need was for unconditional love and I wondered if there was some way we could show them that. Through further discussions and Chelsea talking to some

of the women, we came up with a shortlist and decided on what we would give, and that we would give it at Christmas time when the women most needed to know they were loved. The toiletries (toothbrush, toothpaste and deodorant) were provided by a contact that was able to get them wholesale. We then asked the church for donations of pretty mugs and facecloths so that each of the 300 ladies could receive a gift. The response was overwhelming. I have never attempted anything like this before. We had more than sufficient to cover the cost of the toiletries and enough mugs for each girl to get a gift. Many acknowledged the fact of ‘there but for the grace of God go I’. The ladies in my bible study group happily spent a morning packaging them before handing them over to Chelsea to deliver. It was such a blessing to be involved in this as well as hopefully, being a blessing to the recipients.

Linda

Well it's that time of year again and we only know this because everyone is hyped up for the big Christmas party. That's where we get to see our children and watch them open presents!

We all lined up with great excitement to receive our gifts this year. The new ‘receptions’ are like little kids coming out to the tree Christmas morning not knowing what they’re getting. For the girls that have been in here for previous Christmas’ you can say without a doubt that it’s going to be the usual.

However, this year was a BIG surprise! It was like ‘gold’ receiving the Christmas pack from St Marks. Things like toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant etc go a long way in prison. Basic necessities like hygiene products are hard to afford when you have little or no money. It was also great to get a coffee mug which was different to everyone else’s.... it’s rare to have something unique in here. The overall response of the gift was one of great gratitude. We all wish to say a very big THANK YOU!

From all the women at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre.

OUR REGULAR PROGRAMS

- Tuesday:** Christian discussion group, sports/craft programs, visits
- Thursday:** Sports program and visits
- Friday (three weekly):** Tarra craft program
- Saturday (four weekly):** Sports event -‘Game on Day’
- 1st & 3rd Sunday of the month:** Fun with Mum
- 4th Sunday of the month:** Sunday Live

HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF LEAVING A BEQUEST TO PRISON NETWORK MINISTRIES?

PNM’s mission is to support women who are, or have been in the Victorian prison system; providing practical, emotional and spiritual support to the women and their families; bringing hope and encouragement to enable them to reach their full potential.

You can help us achieve this mission by leaving a bequest. Your generosity will become a living testament and continue to bring hope.

Go to our website <http://www.prisonnetwork.org.au> and click on the ‘My Legacy’ link on the donate page for more information.

CAN YOU HELP?

Housing – Do you have a 2 bedroom flat/unit or house available for rent, particularly in the Blackburn area? Do you know someone who does? There are women who are in desperate need of accommodation and PNM has been discussing what ways we can assist. In our next Newsletter we will focus on homelessness and the major issue it is, but in the meantime, if anyone has a unit or house right now...we would love to hear from you.



Prison Network Ministries

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