

# Freedom Project

from prisoners to peacemakers



## Summer 2011 Newsletter

- ◆ *Interview with Monica Wood* by Simone LaDrumma
- ◆ *From the Helm...* by Board President Fran Howar
- ◆ *A View From "Inside"* by Kathleen Macfarren
- ◆ **Commencement Address**
- ◆ **Freedom Project Calendar**
- ◆ **July 15 Fundraiser**

### Freedom Project interview with Monica Wood by Simone LaDrumma

*I met with my friend Monica Wood, member of the Freedom Project Board of Directors, on a cool and semi-sunny Seattle day. Over coffee and doughnuts at our favorite coffee shop, Monica filled me in on what's been happening with Freedom Project over the last couple of years. Turns out, it was a lot.*

"In 2009 Freedom Project moved from a small house in the Central District to a larger office in SODO. This office had a training room and more space for events, and for returnee drop-ins and volunteers," Monica said. "Jay Jackson was our Executive Director at that point, and he shepherded us through this move. Jay resigned in Spring of 2009 to take a position with Mercy Corps in Guatemala."

Monica took a bite of doughnut and a sip of coffee before continuing. "We interviewed for a new Executive Director and found Joanne Conger, who had good experience with social agencies, a host of skills and knowledge and was graduating from a degree program at Seattle University in nonprofit management. And she fell in love with the vision and mission of Freedom Project." [*Privately, I thought, "So what's not to love about Freedom Project?"*] "Then," she continued, "the economic downturn hit us hard, as with so many other non-profits. Money dried up and we found ourselves scrambling just to keep the office open and the prison programs running."

"Sadly enough, we had to lay off a number of staff members and Joanne, our Executive Director, chose to go to volunteer part-time status. In the Fall of 2010 our 'Virtual Thanksgiving Fund-raiser' brought in enough money to keep us going for another few months."

"We moved out of our office and Joanne steered us through the process of settling into a new and much less expensive one in the Fremont/Wallingford district at 3644 Albion Place N. While smaller, this is a great location, with rooms for offices, meetings and trainings – and it feels more like "us".

"In January Joanne resigned to take a paying job and move into the next step in her career. **Verne Garvie**, whose title had been Operations Manager, agreed to take over many of Joanne's duties. He is full-time staff and is, in essence, the 'hub' of Freedom Project. Daniel McNally, our only other paid staff member (part-time), serves as our IT guy. And as always, FP functions through the generous support of its community of volunteers.

"So where is Freedom Project at now?" I asked.

"We're in the process of expanding our Board. We have one new and gifted member, with a couple others expressing strong interest. Despite the financial struggles, there is a fresh breeze blowing and a new aliveness in the air for Freedom Project. Plans are afoot for a fundraiser with successful entrepreneur and ex-con Dave Dahl of Dave's Killer Bread." [see page 4]

"We have plans for more fundraisers and open houses at our new office. We are still eking out our existence, month by month, and are in need of financial support to continue."

Thanks for the updates, Monica! We'll check in with you again soon.



## FROM THE HELM . . . by Fran Howard

There is an old saying describing how we sometimes feel when facing difficult challenges: *“The ocean is so wide and our boat is so small.”* The meaning of that has come home to me when I, as President of the Board of Freedom Project, try to steer our organization through difficult financial times. I take great pleasure and responsibility in making sure that our little boat safely maneuvers its wide and sometimes stormy sea, doing our work of peacemaking and reconciliation with a small but dedicated crew. It is tempting to give in to tiredness and want to rest in a safe harbor. It is then that I remind myself that ships were meant for sailing, not for safe harbor.

Freedom Project may be a small organization but we are definitely out on the sea, changing the world, one life at a time. This happens when the men and women in prison, through learning and practicing the principles of Nonviolent Communication and Mindfulness, learn a new way to see themselves and others. They learn the Truth of who they are and speak it. This Truth, that each of us has worth, is what ultimately sets us free.



Fran with Verne Garvie

People are tired of conflict and wars. They are tired of using fear, intimidation and punishment to get people to change. Instead, we focus our attention on what need a person is trying to meet by *not* doing what we want, and then finding better strategies to resolve differences where everyone’s needs are met.

Freedom Project is part of a great wave of compassion, leading to understanding and peace. History may be on the side of violence to resolve differences and disputes, but the future is on the side of nonviolent communication. This is not a quick fix to the ills of the world, and thus could lead to discouragement and burnout. It is then that we need to remember our purpose and mission, and celebrate that.

This is not easy work, but it is so worth the effort. At times I feel impatient because our world is fraught with danger and we hold the power of our own destruction. And I am also an optimist. I believe we are moving in the direction of a higher consciousness where we treat ourselves and our fellow beings with respect and compassion. I am so grateful to be part of such a powerful movement, and that Freedom Project offers all of us opportunities to learn a new way of being in the world ... to be seen for who we are, rather than being judged solely on what we have done, and to know that there is a place at the table for each of us. Peace and Kindness to All,

~*Fran Howard*

President, Board of Directors

## A VIEW FROM INSIDE by Kathleen Macferran

In a men’s prison in Washington State, I was trying to convey the idea of “power over” vs. “power with” others. The men inside weren’t buying my “touchy-feely power with” version of how to solicit cooperation and create safety. One of them said, “That won’t work in here. Don’t get me wrong, I think that’s a great idea most of the time, but when you’re backed into a corner, you’ve just got to come out swinging.”

I asked to explore that because if it was true that a nonviolent approach couldn’t be an effective model in times of challenge and controversy, then I wanted to know. I didn’t want to be investing so much of my life into something that didn’t hold up at the very times I needed it most. The men agreed. I asked for an example of a situation where they thought “power over” was the best or only solution for cooperation and safety. One of the men volunteered an example. He said he was in charge of the weight room and spent several hours a day there. By the looks of him, I had no reason to doubt his story. He said sometimes a guy would come in and try to take over the room or an area by not letting other guys have equal access to the weights. “When that happens,” he said, “you don’t tell them what you’re feeling and what you’re needing. You take them into the bathroom and let them know the rules (i.e., beat others up without a camera documenting the event). The next time he comes in he moves over when you say ‘move’ He cooperates real nice after learning the rules.” Several men nodded in agreement. “OK,” I said, “he seems to be doing what you want after you beat him up. Can you ever turn your back on him after that?” “Hell, no. He’d jump me!” “Can you turn your back on his friends?” “Hell, no. I’d be beaten to a pulp.” “So have you... (*continued on page 3*)



## ...A VIEW FROM INSIDE (continued from page 2)

...made yourself more safe or less safe?" The silence in the room let me know they were carefully considering the answer. Finally, one of the men said, "Less safe." That's what I was thinking, too.

We finished the exercise by having the man in charge of the weight room role play a scenario where he tried to find a solution to the "problem" by getting the needs of both the other man and himself up on the table and searching for a strategy that would meet all needs. He had to do this in a way that didn't come across as backing down. After that role play, I asked the same question: "Can you turn your back on this guy now?" "Sure. He'll treat me real nice. He knows I'm on his side."

"Can you turn your back on his friends?" "Yup. He wouldn't let his friends mess with me." "So have you created more safety or less safety for yourself and others." "More." "Yes, and it was at the point in the role play when the other man trusted that you really valued his needs equal to your own that you created enough connection to establish good will and safety between the two of you. That was the moment of power; power *with* him."

I felt some relief after this exchange, because it did reconfirm my trust that nonviolence can be a powerful path in the scariest of times and places. I think all of us in the room got that on some level. Some of the participants realized that the "coming out swinging or showing the other person who's boss" strategy was what landed them in prison in the first place. Maybe that strategy wasn't as convincing anymore.

~*Kathleen Macferran* Certified Trainer with the Center for Nonviolent Communication

## Freedom Project IT Manager Gives Commencement Address

We wish to extend our congratulations and gratitude to Daniel McNally, Freedom Project's Information Technology Manager, who delivered the Commencement address at the Washington State prison complex (TRU) in Monroe on June 14. The event was attended by hundreds of family members and friends of the 141 graduates, as well as Department of Corrections officials, and officials, faculty, and members of the Board of Trustees of Edmonds Community College. In Daniel's inspiring talk, which was directed to the graduates, he spoke of his personal journey from incarceration, to his current status as a student at the University of Washington. His message of encouragement stressed the importance of education, envisioning one's future, hard work, and determination to accomplish one's dreams.

**FP: a small organization doing big things...**inside prisons and within our communities.

**Washington State prison inmates who completed at least 40 hours of FP training had significantly lower recidivism rates** after release that those without training (according to an Antioch University Study that has not yet been published) saving Washington State \$5,000,000 annually.

**FP always welcomes volunteers** to go into prison or help at our office. If you want more information about volunteer opportunities, contact Katie Talbot at [katieT@freedom-project.org](mailto:katieT@freedom-project.org)

**FP would not exist without your generous support and we thank you for everything you have done.**

Would you be willing to **continue supporting FP** using one of the following options?

- ◆ **Ongoing monthly:** You can set up a monthly contribution by clicking "Donate" on the FP website [www.freedom-project.org](http://www.freedom-project.org)
- ◆ **One time:** send a check to POB 22021 Seattle WA 98122 --or-- by clicking on the "Donate" [www.freedom-project.org](http://www.freedom-project.org)
- ◆ **Join us** for Community Circle or Mindfulness Groups, see calendar on page 4 for details
- ◆ **Sign up** for NVC training
- ◆ **Volunteer!** contact Katie our volunteer coordinator! (206) 325-5678 / [katieT@freedom-project.org](mailto:katieT@freedom-project.org)



## ~In Prison Programs~

### WA State Prisons in Monroe:

#### Twin Rivers Unit

Each Monday: Mindfulness Class,

Each Wednesday: NVC class

Each 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend: Full weekend NVC Workshop

#### Minimum Security Unit

Each Tuesday: NVC class

Each 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday: 1 day NVC workshop

#### Washington State Reformatory

Each Thursday afternoon: NVC Class

Each 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday: 1 day NVC workshop

### WCCW Washington Correctional Complex for Women:

#### Mindfulness Meditation Introduction sessions

Sundays, June 19, July 3, August 21, 6:30-8:20 pm

#### Advanced NVC Workshop (No-fault Zone)

Saturday, July 9, 9am - 2pm

#### Basic NVC 2-day Workshop

Saturday & Sunday, July 23-24, 9am - 2pm

#### Advanced NVC Workshop (Graduating from Guilt)

Saturday, August 13, 9am - 2pm

#### Basic NVC 2-day Workshop *TENTATIVELY*

Saturday-Sunday, August 27-28, 9am - 2pm

## ~Public events~

### Community Circle- open to the public

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays 6:30 to 8:30pm

### Full Circle Mindfulness Group

1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesdays 7 to 9pm

### July

#### 15 July 7pm FP Summer Fundraiser!

Playback Theater, Music and Prizes with Guest Dave Dahl of Dave's Killer Bread at the Om Cultural Center 2210 N Pacific Street, Wallingford neighborhood, Seattle. Requested Admission is \$10 donation to support FP

#### 23 July Community One Day NVC Training

9am to 3pm FP office St \*\* Tuition 50% OFF

### August

#### Transforming Group Culture: Leading with Compassion and Clarity August 14- 19<sup>th</sup> Camp Brotherhood

Kathleen Macferran and Karl Steyaert

#### 20 August Community One Day NVC Training

9am to 3pm FP office \*\*Tuition 50% off

### September

#### 19 & 20<sup>th</sup> September Immersion in NVC

18 year or older. Contact Verne at (206) 325-5678 or nvc@freedom-project.org

### October

#### 9 – 14<sup>th</sup> October NVC and Mindfulness in

Institutions and Prisons at Cascadia Center at  
Camp Brotherhood

Kathleen MacFerran, Karl Steyaert

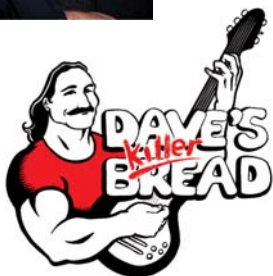
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Call 425 239 9431



## Come Meet and Hear Dave Dahl, ex-convict, who had become a smashingly successful Pacific Northwest businessman and community hero!

Your attendance helps men and women in prison and after release learn a proven way to engage the world through Nonviolent Communication. Hear Dave's inspirational story, learn more about how members of our community are shifting into positive action roles and responsibilities to help make the world, and our community, a better place.



FRIDAY, JULY 15, 2011 7-9 PM

at OM CULTURE CENTER

2210 N Pacific Street in the Wallingford Neighborhood

ADMISSION: \$10

◆ Play Back Theatre! ◆ Music! ◆ Door Prizes!