



70x7 Life Recovery

Building a new life

Relationships Change Lives

I recently had a visit from the vice chairman of our state's appropriations committee on corrections. His committee has \$2 billion dollars to spend annually on corrections (prisons) – approximately 20% of the State of Michigan's total budget. He wanted to find ways of being a better steward with that money. How refreshing! I was honored to talk to one of our leaders with that kind of earnest interest in doing good.

He wanted to learn how 70x7 Life Recovery was achieving a 4% recidivism rate when state-wide 30% of prisoners return to prison within three years of being released. He grasped both the financial cost of keeping people in prison as well as the human cost of children experiencing abandonment when a parent is taken a way for a really big time-out.

The answer, of course, as you know from your involvement with 70x7 Life Recovery and Criminal Justice Chaplaincy over the years, is that these lives are changed by relationship – relationship with volunteer mentors and the staff of 70x7 that point them to the most important relationship with God.

Our government spends a lot of money to do good things, but it can't change lives. However, the time and money that you invest in 70x7 Life Recovery is changing lives now and for eternity. You are part of advancing the Kingdom of God. Well done.



Tim Koning
CEO

70x7 Life Recovery is: A faith-based 501(c)(3) that brings church, business and community to bear on the challenges of reentry for anyone with a criminal record. We serve anyone with a history of incarceration who is struggling to find their place as an independent, productive member of the community.

New Outlook, New Life

After spending years in the federal and state corrections system, Marilyn was looking forward to her new life upon release. But instead, she dealt with discouragement and disappointment. She just couldn't find a job. There were plenty of interviews, but once the felony history came up, that was the end. Both the case worker at the halfway house where she was staying and her parole officer suggested 70x7. Marilyn knew as soon as she got there that this was the answer. She realized that the staff really cared about her and that took a genuine interest in her case. And, as a new believer (she'd come to the Lord in prison), she wanted a biblically based program. As Marilyn put it, "If they believe what I believe, I can't go wrong".

Marilyn went through the "Changes" curriculum and received a mentor whom she still stays in contact with. The benefits to



Marilyn have been a nurturing relationship and someone that she could talk with on spiritual matters.

Perhaps the biggest change for Marilyn has been her outlook. Largely because of her background and incarceration, she was victim to her own self-talk ... "you're not going to make it." But Marilyn has learned to know and love herself and has discovered her own worthiness. She can look at the doors that closed and even the incarceration as all

leading to a new and better life. And, she's a powerful witness, telling her story whenever she spots the opportunity to help someone.

Marilyn now works full time and is also an accomplished artist. In the background of her photo is some of her work. She hopes to take her gift to the next level as a professional artist.

Stepping Out In Faith

An Employer's Story

Abcor Industries, a manufacturer of powder coated wood components, is one of 29 companies partnering with 70x7 to offer employment for graduates of our program. We recently sat down with the CEO and Co-owner, J. T. Weis to better understand his heart and his experience as an employer.

J. T. had been a very successful senior manager of large, international conglomerate. But he wanted to do something more consequential, so left his employer to buy Abcor Industries. His primary goal for the business is a meaningful experience, which has three components that J. T. calls his "Triple Bottom Line":

- **People** – offering not just a second chance, but a third chance or more for those with a criminal history
- **Planet** – a sustainable, environmentally friendly manufacturer
- **Profits** and the charitable actions that they enable

“This place is not about your past. It's about your future.”

If that doesn't sound like your typical corporate statement, you're right! This is no typical company.

From the outset, J. T. wanted to offer employment opportunities to returning

citizens. He stepped out in faith, offering chances to not just those who had completed shorter sentences, but to those who had served lengthy sentences for serious felonies. Beyond just the work, Abcor offers dignity. "Think about someone whose



arrest and conviction make the news. Think about the prison experience. There's not much dignity left when someone is released", says J. T. What happens at Abcor is really a "dignity exchange". The employees are treated with dignity and respect as valuable contributors. They exhibit their dignity with their workmanship and teamwork. Sure, it was a risk. But with 2/3 of his production staff being returning citizens, he has never had one incident. Going even further, Abcor is committed not only to hiring, but even more importantly to development and retention. As he tells his employees, "This place is not about your past. It's about your future."

J. T. has appeared in Lansing on several occasions, conferred with Governor Snyder, and has spoken to groups of large west Michigan employers. As he says, "if a small, entrepreneurial company like us can do it, imagine what large corporations can do!".



A Life-changing Relationship – Amalia and Carole

When 18-year-old Amalia entered prison, anger and resentment ensured the first four of her 9½ years would be isolated. Then, she saw an opportunity. Another inmate participated in a building trades program and Amalia wanted in. She asked the instructor, “Mr. B.” how to become a part of it, and he told her “ticket-free for 6 months.” He wanted to see that she could change her behavior. Mr. B. prepared her to be mentored by Carole, to hold down a full-time job and be promoted, and to excel at parole. “People would never put us together, but here we are, and Carole is my mentor for life.” Carole summed it up beautifully. “Amalia has been easy to love because she is so responsive. Maybe she thought I was a bit crazy at first, but we were each vulnerable at the right times to build trust and here we are now with a precious friendship.” Amalia and Carole would practice driving in a big church parking lot and she now has her driver’s license. She also moved into her own apartment and Carole’s family helped. And, in December, Amalia joined the 70x7 Holland Advisory Council. It is amazing what God can do in 18 months!



Your Retirement Planning Can Also Do Kingdom Work



In Matthew 25, Jesus in talking about His return, says, “whatever you did for *one* of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”

Marilyn, whose story is in this newsletter is just *one of many* that we are able to serve. We are thankful for all of our generous donors whose gifts further our ministry and help restore lives and families.

As stewards of what God has blessed us with, we strive to use our resources wisely and prudently. And even as you plan for retirement, you can serve others. Consider a charitable gift annuity. It’s a simple arrangement where you make a charitable gift (part of which is tax deductible) and then receive fixed annuity payments for the remainder of your life. You can receive payments at the time you choose and can also have payments go to family members.

For more information, contact Keith Woodman

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or phone **(248) 421-5545**

Returning Citizens Become Longer Term Employees

A fundamental component of the 70x7 program is job placement of those completing our program with one of our 29 partnering employers. The placements are made through our staffing agency, New Day Staffing. All employers are looking at retention, especially in the current job market. Looking at results over the last three years, we have found that **39%** of those placed through New Day Staffing are **hired in by the employer**. Of those, **63% stay with that employer for one year**, and **40% for at least two years**. That’s a win for the employers and also a testimony to the commitment of the men and women who have completed the 70x7 program.



Thank you to all of our donors!

Your generous giving allows us to continue the work that we’ve highlighted in this newsletter. You can give by check or credit card using the enclosed envelope.

Or, give electronically on our website at www.70x7liferecovery.org.

And, you can give by phone. Just text **NEW LIFE** to the phone number **444999**.



Donor Spotlight

Hudsonville Ice Cream Family

Willie Walker, former 70x7 participant and current Mentor, presents Donor Relations Manager, Marybeth Sims, a gift on behalf of the Hudsonville Ice Cream Family. "We have benefited greatly from your efforts and Willie's contributions to Hudsonville Ice Cream. That, by itself, is plenty of reason to try to help in some small way but there's an even bigger reason. This passage from Hebrews sums it up much better than I could."

"Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God."

— Hebrews 13:16

SAVE THE DATE!
OCT. 9, 2019
70x7 Annual Fundraiser
and Silent Auction

**"He Makes Beauty
Out of Ashes" - Isaiah 61:3**
Wednesday, Oct. 9, 2019
The Pinnacle Center
Hudsonville, MI

70x7 Now Serves the Families of the Incarcerated

For many years, 70x7 has helped men and women being released from the corrections system. We are now expanding our ministry to serve the families of the incarcerated, beginning right at the moment of sentencing. The families have significant challenges and obstacles. The corrections system is difficult to understand and navigate ... families don't know how to visit or how to communicate with the loved one, for example. For many, there is a real sense of isolation, as friends and relationships fall away. They're also dealing with emotional issues ... anger, shame and resentment to name a few. Add to all of that the financial and childcare hardships and you can see how the families are also serving a very difficult sentence. Our new family program, **"Stronger Together"**, meets twice a month in Holland and Grand Rapids. We offer information, hope, support and community. Our goal is to not only minister to the families, but also help in reconciliation and restoration of the family upon release, which will help in breaking the generational cycle of criminal behavior.



70x7 Featured in Grand Rapids Magazine



The February issue of Grand Rapids Magazine included a 4-page story on 70x7. The story includes photos and a great description of what we do. To see the article online, go to our website (70x7liferecovery.org), select either the Holland or Grand Rapids Program Center page and then click on "Stories." Or, key in this link: www.70x7liferecovery.org/gr-news



70x7 Life Recovery



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