

DEC 2015 **AFFECT** **NEWS BULLETIN**

A letter from our New Chair.

Dear All,

Firstly I would like to introduce myself to members of AFFECT who I have yet to meet, and tell you some of my background .

I first joined AFFECT in November 2013 as a telephone supporter and shortly after took on the role of fundraiser. I am also currently studying a business management degree at Portsmouth University and I use the work I do with AFFECT as part of my portfolio.

After becoming a trustee and learning more from Stephen about what goes on 'behind the scenes' within a charity, I was keen to introduce and develop new ideas, such as our social media page. You may remember stories included in previous bulletins regarding the skydive, the family fun day last summer and the Christmas fair. I hope to plan many more for 2016. If anybody has any ideas or would like to get involved please do take a look at our Facebook page 'AFFECT fundraising'. There is also a page called 'Action For Families Enduring Criminal Trauma', it would be lovely if any members would like to post thoughts or experiences about the organisation and its volunteers on the page. Creating more awareness of the organisation is something I am very keen on doing.

I am very enthusiastic about the work AFFECT does and appreciate how important our services are to many families. My aims are to create further roles within the organisation to strengthen our charity business and ensure we can continue to deliver our services to all current and future members.

As always we are always looking for new volunteers and to fill new roles. If you, or anybody else you know, may be interested in becoming a volunteer with AFFECT please do contact us via email affect01@hotmail.com.

I wish you all a merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Best Wishes

Emily rose Hodgson

'Brilliant News From emailprisoner'

HMP Stafford/Glenochil/Ranby & Dartmoor have now been added to the reply service where prisoners can

reply to your emailprisoner emails!

HMP Kilmarnock is the first prison in the UK to run a completely electronic service with messages and responses via touch screen kiosks. All messages are paid for by the sender so there is no cost to the taxpayer.

'Read the Inside Time prisoners newspaper on line'

You would find the Inside Time newspaper packed full of information, poems and letters from serving prisoners, legal pages and much more. Give it a look! Don't forget to check out the prisoners Xmas greetings messages to their loved ones, only available on line, NOW! Check out to see if you are too late now to e mail or fone your Xmas greetings to go into the next issue. Ask for Lucy Forde 01489 795945

<http://insidetime.org>

'Order your Jailmate Card for only £2.99'

Jailmate Cards are GREAT! For any occasion or just as a special support message. There is a great selection and you can personalize them with photographs and make up your own wordings for the front and inside. Sent direct to the inmate. So easy!

jailmatecards.co.uk

On The Outside

Two years ago, I thought my life had ended when my husband was sent to prison to serve an eight year sentence. His release date is 11 June 2017; half of the sentence, in some ways it seems pointless to give eight years if he won't serve that length of time! At the time I could think of nothing else other than when he gets out. I visited him every month for the first year, even though it was an 800 mile journey for me. His trial was held where the crime was committed; he was done for 6 counts of child abuse that happened 26 years ago to his own two children that I knew nothing about (from a previous marriage). I met him 10 years prior to this in a pub, we married the following year, much in love at the time, no mention of a past; he just said he divorced, no more than that, like lots of people.

The day we had our daughter was amazing, I was 49 at the time so very special. He doted on her, no cause for concern. Then when she was six, the Police came with this bombshell that I never knew about. My life was shattered. Luckily I have six other adult children from a previous marriage that kept me together. They hated the fact that I went to see him, but I had to, I needed to know why, I'm still waiting for the answers to my questions as you can't say what you want to in the prison, and social services tell me nothing.

As time has gone by, with the help of counselling, the Doctors and my family, I feel different, I feel now, why am I being punished as well? It's not my fault, none of it; I just fell in love with a man I didn't actually know. My daughter who is now eight, still doesn't know where her Daddy is or why he's not seeing her. No one where I live knows because it happened miles away and it wasn't in my local paper! It makes things very lonely for me as I have to keep this burden to myself all the time. This year I have turned a corner. I've worked very hard, he left me with no money, a mortgage,

with debt and in a very low mood, but I've managed to sort it. It can be done, there is light at the end of the road. I still feel very sad about it all, but I know in my heart that it's over; he has a life sentence now, a sex offender for the rest of his life. I need my family around me; I can't have them if I choose him. This is what I've achieved, you can too, be brave.

I've changed my home, redecorated it, took his stuff out and put it in the loft out of sight. I went to the Citizens Advice Bureau to get help in creating a budget for my money, they were great. I work 16 hours with tax credits, things are very tight but it can be done. I'm so proud of myself. I stuck to the budget and paid the repayments on time. You can get help with electric, gas and water, ask ask ask. I go to car boot sales for toys, clothes etc. Or face book and selling sites. I sell stuff myself at car boots, at the last one I raised over £100 so it can be done. I do dog walking and babysitting for people, anything that will bring some money in; I've even been on two holidays using £9.50 breaks (from the newspaper). I would help anyone who doesn't know what to do if I can, being like this is awful, but I know it does get better. Try to get out when you can, just walking, look for free vouchers for days out, or buy one get one free, get out there.

I feel so much better for this, with AFFECT being there, I can't thank them enough for having someone to talk to. You're a lifeline I can't thank you enough really.

One day I know he will be released and will want to see his daughter, what happens then I don't know and as I can't find out, in the meantime I'm loving life for my little girl, she needs me, she's my world.
Jane

Christmas Affect.

This time last year I was facing my first Christmas with my teenage son in prison. Growing up with his sisters I passed on traditions precious to me. We created our own too. We had spent Christmas days apart previously when he spent time at his dad's every other year, but we could speak on the phone whenever we wanted and I would always spend time with him at some point over the main festive period. He love's Christmas and all that it entails.

Last year as the advent calendars and Christmas wrapping started to appear in the shops I started to dread what was coming. I didn't want to buy a tree or decorate the house. Wrote only token Christmas cards, and closed off from as much as I could. It was all just too painful. I thought I would never want to face Christmas again. But, things can change....

This year I have bought a tree and some new decorations. Am singing Christmas carols on Christmas Eve with friends and trying to do things that he enjoys so that he can live it through me. I

have unpacked his old homemade tree decorations from nursery, and, as in previous times will hang them with pride and love. I will add a silent wish for him to stay safe and know how much he is loved.

We are sold an ideal image of Christmas, of jolly family scenes, where everyone is present, where happiness and laughter is at the centre of everything. Sadly, this is no longer my reality. However, though I continue to be separated from my son, this year I have realised, that we can still be connected through our shared love of Christmas and the rituals and traditions that I can perform for us both.

Recommended reading for some of our members

"Facing the future"

A Guide for parents of young people who have sexually offended.

By Simon Hackett ISBN 9781898924944

"Children and young people who sexually abuse others"

By Helen Masson & Marcus Erooga
ISBN 978-0415354134

GROUP GATHERINGS

Will be held at 12.30 on: Saturday.

05/12/2015, 05/03/2016, 04/06/2016
03/09/2016

PLEASE NOTE: I got the date of the March Gathering wrong in the last News Bulletin. Apologies!

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the writer and are not necessarily those of the editor or of AFFECT.

I would like to thank everyone who has sent pieces for the bulletin. If you have any comments or anything you would like included in the next newsletter please contact us.

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