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Welcome to the June 2011 e-newsletter of the Prison Ministry Advisory Board of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester!

We offer this newsletter to our readers to highlight recent developments among the various ministries and agencies working with and through our members.

This issue spotlights volunteer opportunities at the Industry Limited Secure Facility for Youth in Rush NY. You will read about its history, residents, and opportunities for volunteers to help make a positive difference in the lives of its residents.

Volunteer Opportunities at the Industry Limited Secure Facility

Industry - Its Beginnings

In the late 1800's, the institution we know today as "Industry" was begun as the Western House of Refuge on the west side of Rochester (corner of Dewey Avenue and Bloss Street), and it was home for juvenile delinquents. The original site is now occupied by the Rochester Water Works. Then, in the early 1900's, a new facility was constructed on farm land in Rush, NY and renamed "Industry" where it remains to this day.

At the new site basic schooling, agricultural work, blacksmithing, and carpentry were taught to the residents. The institution continued to be a place for youth charged with low level offenses including truancy and delinquency, petty theft, etc.. A second companion facility "Oatka" (now called "Industry Secure Center") was established adjacent to the Industry campus for more serious offenders. In the late 1980's as youthful offenses became more serious, the main Industry campus became a "limited secure" facility with razor wire fencing around the perimeter.



Industry Limited Secure Facility

The Industry Limited Secure Facility, now operated by the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, until recently housed upwards of 100 residents, many of whom came from downstate areas. About five years ago, youthful offenders from Rochester became a greater part of the mix of residents as the state preferred to house youths nearer to their homes, with fewer residents coming from the downstate areas. Concurrently the overall numbers were also reduced. Presently, this facility houses around 45 youths, serving three months to one year of incarceration. The residents range in ages from 11 to 18 years, with the bulk of the population being 15 to 17 years old. Most are working at grade levels that are three to five years below their classroom grade.

INDUSTRY WELCOMES VOLUNTEERS

Since its relocation in Rush, NY, Industry has for most of this time welcomed selected volunteers to work with the residents in tutoring, mentoring, arts and crafts, spiritual guidance, and recreation. Over the years numerous operational models have been tried at Industry all aimed at improving guidance toward a more productive and law abiding life. Volunteers from many area churches, mosques, and synagogues have

donated their time to working with the residents, both in the cottages as well as working side by side with the teachers in the school.

During the early 2000's changes in administration and security procedures, caused limitations to volunteering and was temporarily not open to new people and groups. However with additional changes in administration, once again new volunteers are being welcomed and encouraged by the current administration in the Limited Secure facility.

SCOTTSVILLE ROTARY ASSISTING IN VOLUNTEER RECRUITMENT AND PLACEMENT

Beginning in 2009, the current administrative staff has been assisted by the Scottsville Rotary in reaching out to the greater Rochester Community seeking volunteer tutor / mentors in many educational, spiritual, and recreational disciplines to augment the programs offered to the residents. Mr. Richard Nereau of the Rotary has been leading this project. Just recently, Richard has informed us that they have begun a one on one mentoring program for residents which beginning during incarceration, and then continuing after release. Richard is personally mentoring a young man who was released last December. He writes: "*He passed all his regents while at Industry, and has returned to complete is education at a local high school. He is getting straight A's and is enrolled at MCC to start in the fall semester. He has his heart set on attending RIT to study Computer Science Engineering. . . Our motto for this Rotary project is '**Changing the Future, One Student at a Time.**'"*

TUTORING/MENTORING A SATISFYING EXPERIENCE FOR VOLUNTEERS

Many volunteers have found that sharing their time, enthusiasm, and skills with the residents has been a highly rewarding experience.

The gratitude expressed from residents to volunteers has been particularly heartwarming, often transcending cultural and ethnic backgrounds. A note recently received from an engineering professor from RIT who has been volunteering as a mathematics tutor for the past year is typical.

"For the last four months, I've had the pleasure of being a volunteer tutor at the IndustrySchool. Each week I spend an hour working with students on their mathematics skills. I have been impressed by the academic potential that they possess and their dedication to improving their understanding and abilities in mathematics. They work diligently on their studies every week.

I have found that the tutoring program is supported by dedicated people at Industry and the Scottsville Rotary. These people are passionate about helping the young men at Industry prepare for their futures and achieve their full potential. It is encouraging to see such dedication. This atmosphere makes being a volunteer tutor at Industry a great experience." - Harry Cooke, PhD, Professor, School of Engineering, RIT, member of St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Henrietta, NY.

Industry Needs You!

Currently, the Industry Limited Secure Facility is in need of volunteers who would like to tutor/mentor in reading, writing, math, science, computer skills, culinary arts and other trades, arts and crafts and recreation. In addition, Spanish speaking volunteers are also very much needed. **Those interested in volunteering at the Industry Limited Secure Facility with the assistance of the Scottsville Rotary should contact Mr. Richard Nereau at rcnereau@yahoo.com.** The Scottsville Rotary has been very helpful in assisting the placement of volunteers for the best match of talent and interest relative to need for services. The Industry Limited Secure Facility is located at 375 Rush-Scottsville Road, in Rush, NY, 14543.

A WORD OF GRATITUDE

The Prison Ministry Advisory Board of the Rochester Episcopal Diocese wishes to express its gratitude to the Scottsville Rotary and in particular Mr. Richard Nereau for their tireless efforts in helping to recruit volunteers and in assisting the staff in placing them within the Limited Secure Facility where they can be of most help to the residents. Through their well placed partnership with the facility staff, they are making possible a very meaningful relationship between the surrounding community and the residents to achieve most favorable outcomes after their release.

A FOOTNOTE

As this article was being prepared for publication (early June), we have just been notified that New York State has decided to close the Industry Secure Center formerly known as "Oatka", and to reduce the number of beds to 50 at the Industry Limited Secure Facility. Both moves have been prompted by the need to reduce the State's budget deficit. This development does not change the need for volunteers from the community to work with the residents at the Limited Secure Facility.

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

For more information about volunteering at the Industry Limited Secure Facility, contact Mr. Richard Nereau at rcnereau@yahoo.com. The Industry Limited Secure Facility is located at 375 Rush-Scottsville Road, in Rush NY 14543. To reach the facility by phone, call (585) 533-2600.

For more information about the New York State Office of Children and Family Services (the state agency that operates the Industry Limited Secure Facility, visit their website at www.ocfs.state.ny.us.

For more information about the Prison Ministry Advisory Board of the Episcopal Diocese of Rochester and its many related ministries, visit our website, at www.prisonministry-edr.org.

Prison Ministry - Episcopal Diocese of Rochester, NY

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