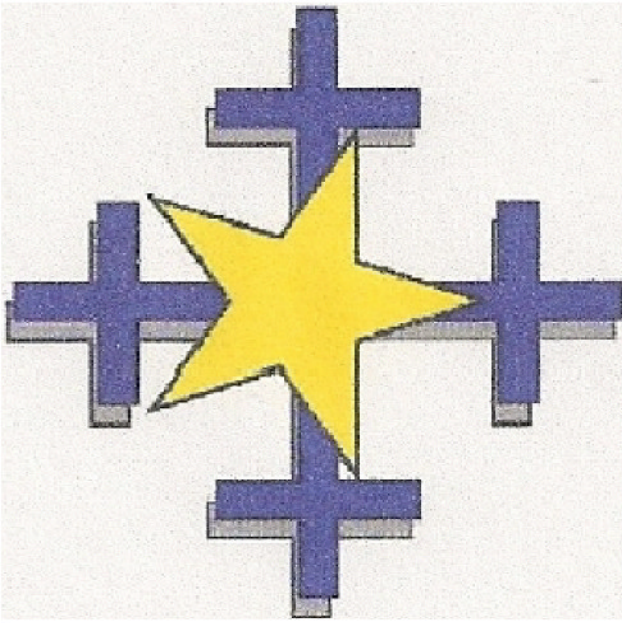


Texas Epiphany

Manifesting God to Incarcerated Juveniles
Volume II, Issue III, Spring 2010

www.texasepiphany.com



**"I pray that
Epiphany
Ministries
of Texas
will continue
to grow
and stay focused
on God's plans
for this,
His ministry!"**



Out of the Chair's Corner.....

It's April and our God has been busy painting beautiful spring flowers. Hope you can take the time for a "road trip" to see the magnificent hillsides! Absolutely incredible "Heavenly Art" with the Blue Bonnets, our state flower, the Indian Paint Brush and many more! How can any deny the Hand of God at work?

The Epiphany State Board members have been busy conducting Leadership Training meetings. It was voted to have 4 trainings each year—one each quarter, preferably in different locations, - so everyone would have a chance to sponsor a training in their area. As of today, we do not have a location or a date for the 2nd quarter Leadership Training. Dates and times will be posted on our website.

We have updated the Starter Kit with a new Tie-Dye T-shirt and a new dress code. Women are able to wear un-collared shirts. Men still have the same shirt guidelines, except they are able to wear the Tie-Dye T-shirts into the facility, unless the dress code for the facility they volunteer has different regulations. We will always abide by the facility dress code first if it's different from the Epiphany dress code.

Our next Epiphany State Board meeting will be in Austin on May 22, 2010, starting at 9 am. Lunch will be provided. Every Epiphany volunteer is invited to attend these board meetings. Meeting information is located on our website.

Chuck Talbot and Earl Dague along with others have updated the Leadership Training manuals and the Team Manuals. Thanks to all for the long hours it took to get these projects complete.

Don Toland has created an Epiphany database. We are hoping to get it up and running for every facility to use very soon. Don has volunteered his time and energy to create this wonderful tool. A huge "Thank you" for all your hard work, Don!

I pray that Epiphany Ministries of Texas will continue to grow and stay focused on God's plans for this, His ministry!

May you be blessed with the same measure that you bless!

Your State Board Chair,

Sinda Berge

TYC YOUTH: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS CONFERENCE

Plan now to attend the Texas Youth Commission's 26th annual conference for volunteers, now called the Community Connections Conference. The conference will be held in Houston at the J.W. Marriott Hotel at the Galleria on June 11-13, 2010. This annual event is designed to unite, educate, and empower community stakeholders who serve youth committed to the Texas Youth Commission. Our aim is to strengthen community partnerships on the grassroots level so that TYC youth successfully re-enter their communities, their families become engaged in their rehabilitative process, stakeholders collaborate in the provision of resources, and our children are saved.

Isn't it a wonderful thing that we are all different? Each of us has strengths and skills to share. And when we link our individual strengths together, we are invincible. Each community stakeholder is an essential piece of the puzzle in the successful reentry and reintegration of TYC youth.

This conference is designed for the following groups of people:

- TYC Volunteers & Employees
- Faith-Based Organizations
- Prison Ministry Groups
- Chaplains & Pastors
- Parents & Families
- Social Service Providers (CPS, DSHS, etc)
- Mental Health Practitioners
- Advocates for TYC youth
- Nonprofit Organizations
- Communities in Schools
- Academic Researchers & Educators
- Researchers
- K-12 Teachers
- Law Enforcement Agencies (i.e. HPD, TDCJ, etc.)
- Child Welfare Boards
- Texas Community Resource Coordination Groups
- CASA Volunteers & Employees
- Elected Officials
- Juvenile Probation (statewide)
- Harris County JDAI
- Judges
- Children Assessment Centers
- Greater Texas Community Partners (Rainbow Room)
- Civic Organizations (i.e. Houston Bar Association)

The conference is sponsored by the State Volunteer Resource Council for Texas Youth and the Texas Youth Commission. Other organizations involved include the Crockett Community Resource Council for Troubled Youth, Inc., Community Advisory Council for the Youth of Al Price State Juvenile Correctional Facility, Houston Area Resource Council for Texas Youth (DBA), Department of State Health Services, Texas Families of Incarcerated Youth, Texas Criminal Justice Coalition, Center for Children's Law & Policy Council, Texas Department of Family & Protective Services (CPS, PAL), Texas Juvenile Crime Prevention Center at Prairie View A&M University, The Inter-American Institute for Youth Justice (Justice4Youth) at the University of Texas School of Social Work, Children at Risk, Texas Council of Child Welfare Boards, Center 4 Children, Law, & Policy, PAL, HCJDAI, and UHCLLP. See page 3 for

Epiphany volunteers contribute more than 8,000 hours working with TYC youth in the past 6 months

Epiphany volunteers play a significant role in the rehabilitation of youth in the Texas Youth Commission. In fact, the time Epiphany volunteers spends with TYC youth constitutes more than a quarter of the total community involvement in the agency. During the month of January 2010 alone, Epiphany Reunion volunteers spent nearly 3,000 hours of time working with the young people.

The busiest Epiphany volunteers are Deborah Jo Fleeger, with 305 hours worked since September 2009, Lu An and Roy Bradshaw, with a combined total of 211 hours, Cole Jennings with 201 hours, Sherry Boutte with 103, and Nancy Voss with 102. TYC's manager of volunteer services, Tammy Vega, praises the volunteers and states, "Epiphany has established a strong foundation of service within the Texas Youth Commission upon which hundreds of young people are unconditionally loved and supported." There is more work to be done. Consider branching out from the Epiphany services by becoming a mentor. For more information about the mentoring opportunities, you should contact Tammy at 512-424-6090.

Tammy Vega

office/512.424.6090

fax/512.424.6283

 **Position Open:**

Wanted--An Agape Coordinator at the Board level to work on bringing in agape from all over and to work with the Agape Coordinators in the units. Apply by calling someone on the Texas Epiphany Ministries Board..



TYC Youth: Community Connections Conference

June 11-13, 2010 ~ Houston, Texas

J.W. Marriott Hotel

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN!

<http://www.tyc.state.tx.us/programs/volConf2010/index.html>

This 26th annual conference is designed to unite, educate, and empower community stakeholders who serve youth committed to the Texas Youth Commission. Our aim is to strengthen community partnerships on the grassroots level so that TYC youth successfully re-enter their communities, their families become engaged in their rehabilitative process, stakeholders collaborate in the provision of resources, and our children are saved. Each community stakeholder is an essential piece of the puzzle in the successful reentry and reintegration of TYC youth. **If you want to learn more and become better equipped to help the youth in TYC - you should really make plans to attend this conference! You won't find this level of training anywhere else in Texas!**

Each Community Partner is an Essential Piece to the Successful Re-Entry of TYC Youth into Society.

Isn't it a wonderful thing that we are all different? Each of us, and each of our organizations, has strengths and skills to share. And when we link our individual and organizational strengths together, we are invincible and our TYC youth can succeed.

REGISTRATION FEES

Regular registration (by 5/20/2010) **\$190**

Late and onsite registration **\$200**

Fee for continuing education credits: **\$10**

Saturday only registration **\$175**

Sunday only registration **\$35**

RESERVE GUEST ROOMS AT THE CONFERENCE HOTEL

Conference attendees are responsible for arranging their own hotel accommodations with the J.W. Marriott Hotel, by its **cut-off date of May 20, 2010**, by calling (800) 228-9290 and asking for the "**TYC Youth: Community Connections Conference**" group rate.

[J.W. Marriott Hotel by the Galleria](#)

5150 Westheimer

Houston, TX 77056

The following room rates will apply:

\$85/night Single/double occupancy

\$95/night Triple occupancy

\$105/night Quad occupancy

Doctrine of the Epiphany Team

I am a member of an Epiphany Team, therefore, I am only one part of a complete being!

I am an imperfect earthen vessel, and I am here in a servant's role!

I will serve in humility and gratitude for the opportunity to be here, and will remember that the Holy Spirit calls for my love, patience, kindness, gentleness and self-control in all things!

I will pray for submission to the Spirit and for strength and commitment to be God's person rather than my own person during this weekend. I will remember that I am here only as an instrument through which God can work to renew His Church! I am here only by God's grace; I am here only so that He might do His mighty acts through me - Not because of me!

Epiphany Weekends in prayer and preparation:

Corsicana #16 July 9 - 11

Gainesville #21 July 23 - 25

Crockett #13

August 20 - 22

I will lift up other members of the Team and Stars in prayer and ask our Lord to strengthen them & reveal Himself to them in wondrous ways! I will not overstate or over-emphasize my role during this weekend by any word or deed!

I will not glorify myself; I will not glorify any other member of this Team, nor allow another to glorify me! I will use "I" as little as possible this weekend, and will remember that all others are the main reason for my presence and my prayers! 3

--full doctrine in Epiphany Team Manual ★


Letter from Chaplain Mark Rushing,

Crockett State School:

I am new to Crockett State School and had only been on campus two weeks prior to our scheduled Epiphany weekend. You can imagine that in the midst of orientation training, introductions to staff members, organizing my office space, acquainting myself with some 120 students, that all I needed to hear was that I would also be an active participant in something called the Epiphany. I must confess, being from out of state, that I knew absolutely nothing about the Epiphany ministry other than the definition of the term itself. However, I was blessed to have Donna Mims and Frank Smith provide me with a basic understanding of the potential this event had to impact our students spiritually and emotionally.

I was still a little apprehensive regarding the weekend as time approached, but began to notice a growing excitement among our students. I was bombarded with requests to be part of the Epiphany right up to my leaving the campus on Thursday night; and we had a waiting list of students clamoring to participate. It was truly a blessing to see the students this excited about something with a spiritual focus.


I attended the Thursday night commissioning service and was impressed with the commitment and sacrifice these volunteers were willing to make in order to reach out to our students. On Friday I witnessed the love, care, and concern they expressed to each of our students. I observed the noticeable change, the softening, the relaxing of our student's hardened demeanor over the next 3 days. It was truly amazing to see God use the love of these volunteers, and His word to break down barriers and dramatically impact the lives of these young men.

In closing I want to simply say that I was impressed by the structure, message teamwork, courtesy, and commitment your volunteers brought to this effort. I was able to see first hand that this is a valid and valuable ministry to our campus, and the Kingdom of God. Please know that I am committed to our ongoing partnership in providing spiritual ministry to the hearts and minds of our students. Please hear my heart felt gratitude as I say thank you for investing in young lives that are in need  of mending by

Writing Letters to Epiphany Stars

by Anne Wilkinson

Be sure you have the correct postage affixed. There should be no writing on the outside of the envelope except for the from and to addresses. Do not send cash, stamps, stickers, gifts, etc., unless you go through the proper TYC channels. Do not pass letters on to another team member. Do not give your phone number or home address. Photos are highly discouraged.

Keep the letter on a spiritual level, remember these young men can be very persuasive. We need to keep our appropriate boundaries and follow the rules. If there is ever a question concerning content, please contact a "seasoned" team member for help. 

Crockett Epiphany #12, February 19-21, 2010:

The good news is that 36 young men got the message that Christians in the "outside" world love them; and 24 young men entered the 4th Day world. Did all of these 24 accept Christ--No, I do not think so. Did all of these 24, plus some that left, hear that God Loves Them--Yes, they did. Were seeds planted in all; yes, they were. To God Be All the Glory!!!


Gainesville Epiphany #20, January 16-18, 2010:

A good weekend overall. The cancellation of #19 and the re-start of #20 impacted the weekend. In addition, Gainesville experienced a new wave of hardened youth with strong aggressive tendencies that the team had to deal with. As a result, some Stars were removed from the weekend. Chap. Payne intervened for 3 of the youth to reinstate them. Epiphany is blessed to have Chap. Payne. His compassion for the youth and love for the Epiphany ministry is unmatched. Moving between the gym and chapel resulted in a loss of approx. 1 1/2 hrs due to distance.

Al Price Epiphany #6, March 5-7, 2010:

The weekend got off to a slow start with the unit short of staff and not getting the boys from the dorms in a timely manner. After sitting in the hallway for an hour or so waiting for the rest of the boys to arrive, 10 boys left and fill-ins were brought in. We had some of the worst of the worst but once the weekend commenced everything ran fairly smoothly with 30 stars and 14 superstars. It was a small but devoted team and all 30 young men received unconditional love and encouragement. The weekend ended with 26 stars

Giddings Epiphany #15, May 6-9, 2010:

An awesome weekend with a large team of 50. Everything ran smoothly with God in control. Began weekend with 36 stars and ended with 33. What God wanted of him. There was a young man named A.J. that the chaplain said had not smiled or participated in anything since he had come to Giddings 2 years ago. By the end of the weekend he was smiling, singing, and dancing. Of the 33 young men, 32 accepted their crosses and answered, "And I love Jesus." The superstars were extremely cooperative and helpful and asking, "What do I need to do now?" One superstar got to go home on Sunday and came by to say goodbye to the team. The weekend began with a Thursday night baptism in the Ramada pool (not an Epiphany activity but a member of the team) and ended with a super  closing. What an awesome God

Connecting Christ's Body: God's Church at Work
Restorative Justice Ministries Network
Sam Houston State University
Huntsville, TX, Summary by Marilyn Jackson

The Conference opened with Restorative Justice 101 by Emmett Solomon, Exec Dir, RJMN of Texas. Restorative justice means: Crime is a violation of people and relationships. Crime creates obligations to make things right. Justice involves the victim, the offender, and the community. Justice seeks solutions which promote repair, reconciliation and restoration. Retributive Justice means: Crime is a violation of the state. Crime is defined as lawbreaking. Justice System determines blame and administers punishment. Justice is a contest between the offender and the state. Legislative issues were presented by Dr. Ed Davis, Professor, Sam Houston State, RJ Coordinator. A TDCJ chaplaincy report by Richard Lopez, Director of Chaplaincy Support said that TDCJ currently has 2300 beds in Christian dorms and will have 3300 by end of 2010. A great deal of helpful information was given out and some great testimonies.

First Contact Ministry, a ministry of Huntsville's First Baptist Church, provides a great deal of re-entry assistance including finding jobs, clothes, managing substance abuse tendencies and more is available. It provides networking across denominational lines for ex-offenders' successful re-entry into family and society. Website info is www.thewelcomeback.org. You can also contact Bill Kleiber at kleiber@sbcglobal.net. Another great resource is The Hospitality House which offers inmate families a refuge for healing and a place to stay when visiting family and friends who are incarcerated in the Huntsville area. Everything they need is provided. They just need to bring their clothes.

The Christian Restorative Justice Mentors Association is located in The Woodlands. Go online to www.crjma.org or call at 281-292-0442.

It was an outstanding conference with a great deal of resource material. I encourage each of you to attend an RJMN Conference when you can.



Restorative Justice Ministry Network's Vision is "Biblical Solutions to Criminal Justice Problems."

Restorative Justice is a process for all the parties affected by a crime to collectively seek ways to recover from the resulting trauma. We believe that Restorative Justice reflects Biblical concepts rather than retributive models of justice. It is a different way of thinking about crime and our response to it. It focuses on the harm caused by crime - repairing the harm done to victims and reducing future harm by preventing crime.



Restorative Justice Ministries - pt. 2 by Chuck Talbot
Prison inmates are sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, aunts and uncles

Prison Ministries began at the Friendswood UMC in 1993. The spiritual focus was based on Matthew 25:31-46. A few years ago we changed the name to "Restorative Justice" to be better aligned with the Texas Annual Conference, United Methodist Church. Through Epiphany Ministries and KAIROS, FUMC has many volunteers who are involved in ministering to the needs of victims, inmates, ex-offenders, criminal justice professionals, and families of all of those impacted by crime.

From a Testimonial Letter: *I would like to share a few minutes with you from my heart. I am 60 years old and have been recovering from heroin addiction for five years now. Although I struggle every day with this disease, God has provided a way for restoration. Not only for the dependency about the drug but restoration for the crimes I committed to others during my life. My mother or my father was not there for me setting good role models, as both of them were alcoholics. They didn't care so I didn't care. From early adulthood to senior status in my life, I went wrong. Having a father and a brother sexually abuse me, a mother who hated me and threw me to the dogs early in life. But, God heard my plea and restored me through the Epiphany Ministry of Texas --not as an entrant in prison, but as a volunteer. By being there for young men and women who so desperately need to be validated, my healing came forth. Ninety nine percent of these young men and women in the state schools (TYC) or prisons (TDCJ) never had a mother or father to guide them in positive ways. They never knew what goals were. They never knew what love meant. They never knew there was hope, just hopelessness. They never were able to ask for help because that would show weakness. All these things, the Epiphany Prison Ministry addresses and provides for them.*

If you would like information about RJM, KAIROS, or Epiphany Ministries or how we can help, call Chuck or Anne Talbot at 281-482-7535.



"... our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ."

1 John 1:3



Excerpts from a Star's Letter:

Here are some excerpts from a letter a Giddings Epiphany team member received from a young man I had lost track of for at least 4 yrs in TDCJ. He went through Giddings Epiphany #6 (about to have #15).

"You don't know how surprised and how big of a smile you just put on my face. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw your letter. It filled me with so much emotion and feelings that I was surprised at my reaction to your most welcome letter, I was really surprised you wrote. It has felt like everyone I once knew has forgotten of me. No one writes and your letters was a blessing.

I went through a very bad and dark time. I gave up for awhile to be honest. Things were very bad and I went back to the person I used to be. It was a very bad time and sometimes it feels like I slowly slip back. I have been trying to get back to myself, the person you met. I don't want to travel down that road again and am trying to strengthen my home and faith once again. Your letter really put some joy in my heart again. Thank you. I still find it hard to believe you wrote. But I guess the Lord knew my struggle and sent an angel to help lift me again."



From Prison Ministry by Lennie Spitale

Excerpts provided by Sherri Jones

Prison is a culture of hardness.

This is a place where men and women are caught up in the culture of the cool and the callous.

Doors clanging, locks clicking, handcuffs, stainless steel, riot gear, bars, wire.

The cursing, the angry challenges, the bragging, the threats, the constant noise.

Attitudes are tough, eyes are unrevealing, tattoos are defiant, muscles are flexed, gaits are cool, fists are clenched, scars are deep, and weakness is scorned.

Weakness must not be admitted-weakness invites the wolves.

Enter Christian volunteers:

They smile in unfeigned friendship.

They seem genuinely happy to see you.

They shake hands. They touch.

They actually hug!

They speak kind words, soft words, words of friendship, and personal vulnerability.

They display weakness.

They talk about Jesus.

The message of HIS touch breaks the bonds of the culture.

There is no freedom like the freedom Jesus Christ can bring.

If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed -John 8:36

Jesus Christ loves prisoners; He moves freely about on every

prison yard. He knows that prisons are a great place to find HIM.

Men and women at the end of their own resources, needing someone to touch them. And He does!



A Salvation Story from Big Piney, WY

By Chaplains Drew and Pam Crabtree, Mobile Ministry Unit, from the *Oilfield Christian Fellowship Newsletter*

A few months ago Carl Felts stopped by the Mobile Ministry Unit door, but didn't come in, state he did not have time to come inside and didn't need any coffee or anything to eat, but felt God wanted him to stop and say something. "Do you remember me?" I told him I did remember him

He went on to say that the first time he had stopped in he had only been out of prison 3 weeks and had gotten the job in the Jonah field. He said since that time he had gotten married, and his wife was a brand new Christian and was reading her Bible as was he. In fact he had pages coming out of his "God's Word for the Oil Patch" and asked if it would be possible to get a new one. Pam and I said sure and gave him a new Bible. He went on to say he still had his job, a Christian wife, and life was good. I began to thank him for sharing that with us and that he had obeyed God's urging to stop and tell us. He said "oh, no that's not what God told me to tell you." Then he hesitated for a moment before he went on to say, "You don't know how many people you influence each day just by coming out here to the oil patch. I've seen you out here many days since the first time I stopped and have went on by, but just seeing the Mobile Chapel here reminds me to pray and I just start praying after I drive by. You see, sometimes I fall off the wagon. I don't always do things as I should, but when I see this chapel sitting out here it is a reminder to me and I climb back on the wagon. I know there are other people like me, so you need to know that just you being here in the oilfield helps a lot of us, even if we don't stop."

Carl also said he was trying to go back to see the men he was in prison with and share Christ with them



News from Cherie Townsend, TYC Exec Dir

A milestone for our agency was the appointment of the TYC Board. We are extremely fortunate to have board members who are dedicated to our mission of improving the lives and opportunities of the young people in our care and custody. The Board has set an aggressive schedule of meetings for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2010 and will be actively working to learn all aspects of TYC operations and practices. I welcome their enthusiasm and vision.

Board Meetings Scheduled: May 21, 2010

June 25, 2010

August 27, 2010

For more information, contact Cherie Townsend or Tammie Vega at TYC, Austin.



Excerpts from Mentoring Gang Members, Gang Fact Sheet #1

General Guidelines for working with Gang-affiliated Youth

40% of youth in TYC admit they are gang members

"The most important thing to remember is that trust must be earned. Without this, nothing else will occur." Minister Robert E. Lee

Most youth who join gangs have experienced few trusting relationships outside of their gang family. Traditional role models such as parents, grandparents, teachers, and clergy are often absent or have let youth down numerous times through broken promises and scanty support.

This does not mean that gang-affiliated youth cannot develop a solid and trusting relationship with a mentor or other individual outside of the gang. But how does a mentor begin to earn the trust of a mentee who is hostile to authority? The answer to this question is patience, as well as willingness on the part of the mentor to pursue the relationship.

If the process of building this relationship is hurried, or the mentor comes off as something other than "real" to the gang member, then the relationship will founder. Being "real" is nothing more than relating a genuine concern for the gang member, and the ability to act on this concern without it sounding contrived, preachy, or presented in a culturally inappropriate manner. Being "real" means the mentor does not condemn their mentee for their actions, or launch into a diatribe about their immorality. To be "real" is to listen, understand and help (if help is asked for).

The following tips are some general rules of thumb to help mentors gain and keep the trust of their gang-affiliated mentees. The guidelines are simple, but must be applied consistently, and wholeheartedly.

Be reliable. Most gang-affiliated youth have been let down numerous times.

Always look for the positive in the youth.

Find out what youth like and build on this. Their interests are your foundation for building a solid relationship.

Be real. Do not be somebody you are not.

Absolutely do not make any promises you cannot keep. (Epiphany rules say make no promises.)

Never talk about the youth behind his/her back.

If there is a problem, deal with it immediately and privately.

Be a good role model. Practice what you preach.

Avoid stereotyping. All youth are not the same.

Be accepting of the youth's description and perception of their life experience.

Be aware that every person has different experiences than you.

Recognize your communication style and be comfortable with it.

Listen to the youth. And he or she will listen to you.

Be very aware of your body language. Remember, gangs do a lot of posturing and may feel threatened by sudden hand movements.

Strive to understand your mentee's language. Do not be afraid to ask, "What does that word mean?"

Make your mentee feel valued, significant, appreciated and accepted.

Let them know when you feel uncomfortable.

Avoid taking things personally.

Remember, you cannot help those who do not wish to be helped. Do not force a situation.

Do not push too much. Back off! **Epiphany solution: Pray!**

Listen, Listen, Love, Love

To read more about mentoring gang-affiliated youth, go to the full article at www.emt.org/userfiles/Gangs.pdf



- Tips from Brother John Earl:**
- ◆ Never give the devil a ride—he will want to drive.
 - ◆ Give satan an inch and he'll be a ruler.
 - ◆ Nothing else ruins the truth like stretching it.
 - ◆ Opportunity may knock once, but temptation bangs on the front door forever.

Sopapilla Cake

Beverly Moreno, Garza County Juvenile Corrections Center

Epiphany Weekend, Post, TX

Layer canned croissants on bottom of 9 x 13" pan.

Mix:

2 packages of cream cheese

1 cup sugar

1/2 cup butter

Spread on croissant layer, then layer more croissants on top.

Melt 1 stick butter, 1/2 cup sugar, cinnamon and pour over top of croissants.

Bake 30 minutes at 350 degrees. Yummm!!