

# Texas Epiphany

Manifesting God to Incarcerated Juveniles  
Volume II, Issue IV, Winter 2011

[www.texasepiphany.com](http://www.texasepiphany.com)

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

Thank you everyone for your many contributions in 2010, and for your continuing contributions toward Epiphany Ministries of Texas. We had a great 2010 and now we are looking forward to an exciting 2011!

In 2010 Epiphany volunteers gave 22,649 hours to the TYC youth! This is a huge number of hours spent away from your homes and families. You know you're making a difference when the TYC Volunteer Coordinator from Austin replies to your email and adds this comment: **"TYC is much indebted to Epiphany for the enormous impact ya'll are making in these kids' lives!"**

Our next Epiphany State Board meeting will be in Austin, Tx. on Feb. 26, 2011 starting at 9:00a.m. Lunch will be provided. Every Epiphany volunteer is invited to attend board meetings. Meeting information is located on our website at: [www.texasepiphany.com](http://www.texasepiphany.com)

Once again, on behalf of Epiphany Ministries of Texas,  
THANK YOU!!

*May our God bless you with the same measure you bless others!*

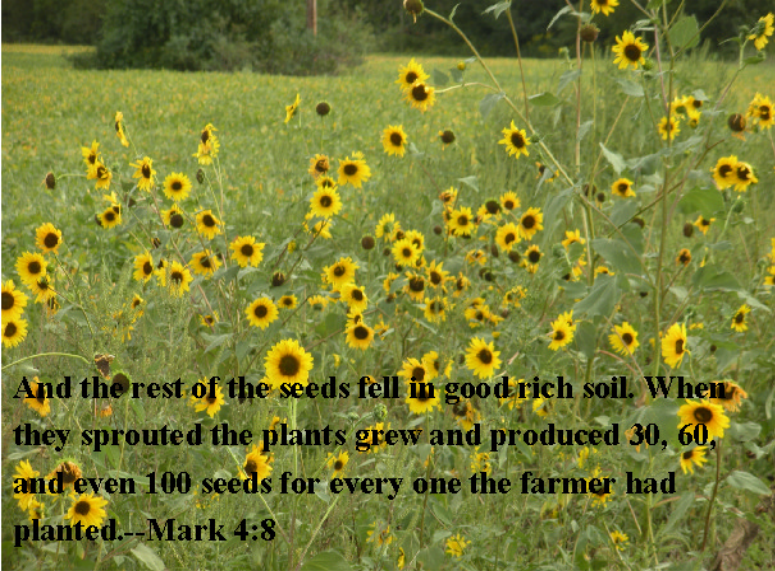
Your State Board Chair,

*Sinda Berge*



**"Preach the  
gospel  
at all times.  
Use words if  
necessary."**

**--St. Francis  
of Assisi**



**And the rest of the seeds fell in good rich soil. When they sprouted the plants grew and produced 30, 60, and even 100 seeds for every one the farmer had planted.--Mark 4:8**

We will support them with prayer and disciple them through reunion and through continued correspondence, but it is Christ alone who will stand guard over them and use every trial to bring about His perfect work.

"My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect (mature) and complete, lacking nothing."- James 2:2-4

Mike Jones, Spiritual Director, Giddings Epiphany #16



### **How important are the right friends?**

Former prisoners go back to their old neighborhoods and meet up with their old gang, or new people of the only type they may be comfortable with – criminals. But what people need is to stop hanging out with associates who tempt them with promises of easy money or drug-filled nights. They need to start hanging out with people who think about the consequences of their actions, who value legitimate jobs, sobriety and family – people who go to their A.A. meetings and G.E.D. classes, who are trying to rebuild their lives.

How important are the right friends? We know that people get into crime and gangs primarily because their friends do. Hanging around with delinquent friends encourages young people to think of themselves as delinquents, and puts them in a world where criminal behavior is easy to engage in and brings social rewards. We do not know as much about whether pro-social peer groups can turn people away from crime. But it is reasonable to believe that the right peer group can help.

Here's the link to the article.

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/01/17/for-ex-prisoners-a-haven-away-from-the-streets/?nl=todaysheadlines&emc=thab1>



I don't know if this is within what Val (LD, Giddings Epiphany #16) had in mind when she gave us each a little soil pot and some sunflower seeds, but I wanted to share something with the team that just came to mind. Cindy took our little sunflower plants outside and transplanted them because they are outgrowing the pots. It made me think about the stars of Epiphany 16 who will receive the life of Christ and leave that weekend as new creations, as reborn children of God. The little soil pots on our window sill where these sunflower seeds came to life were a safe, protected nurturing place for a time. Though perfect for a time, that same environment that fostered new life and new growth was not well suited for them to grow to full maturity. For those plants to grow to maturity they have to be in deeper soil with room for the roots to grow. They must also face the elements of the outside world. The Epiphany weekend will be for those young men just like the little flower pots. Epiphany 16 will be the safe, protected nurturing environment where the good seed of God's Word will spring forth into new life in their hearts. As painful as it is on Sunday afternoon saying goodbye and watching them return to the dorms, that is the necessary next step for them to grow to maturity. Yes, the elements they will face are harsh. Those tender young plants will be thrust into the most difficult of circumstances. As much as we would like to protect them from having to face those trials, it is in those very trials that they will mature.

*(cont'd next column)*

All links in blue are active links and navigate to the website.

## Ultimate Gang

Written by a Star Following an  
Epiphany Weekend

*I have been in three gangs. However, I recently joined one that seems to rise above the rest. When you read this paper, I want you to keep an open mind.*

The first gang was called 88skins. This was a gang that when you left you were no longer in. We hated people because they had stuff we did not have. Well we would ride around all day getting high, stealing stuff, and fighting everybody who did not give what we wanted, respect. We were just a bunch of kids ready to ride at a moment's notice you could have told us the world was coming to an end and we would have run to meet it.

I got locked up in Giddings State School. I did not have my boys so I found some more boys. It was not long before I was in something else. Well we were just a bunch of boys who thought we should stick together. Well I was in it for awhile and I held it down for my stuff.

Well the third one that rises above all the rest is GOD's gang of Christians. You see I thought that it took violence to gain people's respect. Now I know that it does better to fight hatred and evil with kindness and love than it does to fight it with guns and murder.

Well remember I told you keep an open mind. Well this gang will take everybody it does not matter how old, what color your skin is, or even what you have done. There is no jumping in or shedding blood because the blood has already been shed it was the blood of Jesus Christ. He died on the cross for everybody in the world. To get in all you have to do is pray that the Lord comes into your heart to live. The most important thing is to never let anybody change your mind.



## Epiphany State Board Meeting

February 26, 2011 9:00a.m

Every Epiphany volunteer is invited to attend board meetings. Lunch will be provided. Meeting information is located on our website at:  
[www.texasepiphany.com](http://www.texasepiphany.com)



For God so loVed the world,  
That He GAve  
His on Ly  
BegottEn  
SoN

That whosoever

Believeth In Him

Should Not perish,

But have Everlasting life."

John 3:16



## Most Gangs in Texas Call Houston Region Home

**10,000 documented gangsters**

**225 gangs in Houston region**

**446 drug trafficking organizations**

**Source: Houston High Intensity Drug Trafficking  
Area, Houston Police**

Gangs now have a younger, more violent membership.

They generate a lot of crime, and they create a lot of fear. Those wearing Astros-type emblems and sporting local area codes are seen as posing the greatest local threat. A new website, [www.stophoustongangs.org](http://www.stophoustongangs.org) was launched by state and local officials to get better information to the public about how to spot gangsters and offer a way to give tips to cops about crime.



## Resources for Ex-offenders in the Free

There are many resources available for ex-offenders. These are some of the organizations that offer assistance

:


- **His Father's Heart Ministries:** a safe and casual atmosphere where Jesus Christ is central to the healing. Multiple locations in Houston area. Work on self-esteem and breaking the cycle of destructive behavior. Meets requirements for parole for substance abuse, anger management and others. Helps create a smoother transition for ex-offenders reentering the world.
  - First Baptist Church of Hempstead, 11th St. & Washington, Hempstead, TX 77445, phone 713-996-0980
  - Northwest: 5715 Northwest Central Drive, Suite F-109, Houston, TX 77092, ph 713-996-0980
  - Spring Branch-Long Point Baptist/Houston's First Baptist, 8009 Long Point, Houston, TX 77055, phone 713-554-8801
  - Heights: Grace Bible Church, 1111 W. 14th St, Houston, TX 77008, ph 713-996-0980
  - Third Ward: The Forge-City of Refuge, 3150 Yellowstone Blvd, Houston, TX 77054, phone 713-664-5054
  - Southwest: College Park Baptist Church, 7887 Beechnut, Houston, TX 77074, ph 713-818-5071
  - Downtown: First Presbyterian Church, 5300 Main Street, Houston, TX 77004, ph 281-347-0229
  - Spring: Klein United Methodist Church, 5920 FM 2920 Rd, Spring, TX 77388, ph 281-353-8202
  - Fifth Ward: Small Steps Nurturing Center, 2902 Jenson Dr, Houston, TX 77026, ph 713-236-0330
- **Other Ministries:**
  - **Jersey Village: Jersey Village Baptist Church, 16518 Jersey Drive, Houston, TX 77040, ph 713-466-610**
  - **Cypress Assistance Ministries** provides counseling and job search assistance for ex-offenders and other assistance, 11202 Huffmeister Rd, #A, Houston, TX 77065, ph 281-955-7683
  - **Hope Inn Christ**—a program and after-care home for those young men who want to change their lives y to be accepted into program. More information at [www.hopeInnChrist.org](http://www.hopeInnChrist.org), P.O. Box 1572, Decatur, TX 76234, ph 940-399-3333, email [HopeInnChrist@hotmail.com](mailto:HopeInnChrist@hotmail.com)
  - **VIP Shuttle Service** provides charter service to families of incarcerated currently incarcerated in Texas. More information at [www.prisonshuttle.com](http://www.prisonshuttle.com), phone 1-800-847-6808
  - **Restorative Justice Ministries Network:** Information available at [www.rjmntexas.org](http://www.rjmntexas.org)



## TYC Treatment for Capital and Serious Violent Offenders

The Giddings State School operates a Capital and Serious Violent Offender Treatment Program for youths that are committed for murder, capital murder, and if the offense involved the use of a weapon or deadly force. The program helps these young people connect feelings associated with their violent behavior and to identify alternative ways to respond when faced with risky situations in the future. Participants in this program are required to reenact their crimes and to play the role of both perpetrator and victim. *(con't next column)*

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The Giddings Capital and Serious Violent Offender Program has gained worldwide attention and been featured on several national news programs. It is one of TYC's most promising specialized treatment programs. Research shows that participation in this program reduced the likelihood of being re-incarcerated for any offense by 55%, and for a felony offense by 43%. 

**"For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD. They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope." –Jeremiah 29:11**

# TYC Treatment for Chemically Dependent Offenders

Chemical dependency treatment programs are offered at Giddings, Gainesville, Crocket State Schools; Al Price, McLennan Co Unit I, and Ron Jackson Unit II state juvenile correctional facilities; Evins Regional Juvenile Center in Edinburg; and McFadden Ranch in Roanoke.

Program components include chemical dependency education, group and individual counseling, and living and social skills training. Participants examine their life stories, offense histories, and relapse cycles. The criminal behavior is addressed through linking the use of drugs to the youth's life story and offense.

Research shows that chemical dependency treatment at McFadden Ranch, a non-secure facility was found to reduce the likelihood of re-arrest for a violent offense by 37%, re-arrest for a felony offense by 19% and re-incarceration for any offense by 13%.



## Caution from a TYC Volunteer Coordinator

You may not want to hear this, but when students ask you to personally give them a Bible, it is the tip of the iceberg for manipulation. It accomplishes three things: it gets you to drop your guard because it is what you "want to hear", it encourages a "special relationship" between you and the youth, and you begin to think there must be times when it is ok to give things to students. Don't do it!

You can honestly rejoice that the student wants to learn more about God's Word and the Bible, but you are encouraged to immediately share that joy with everyone (no special relationship) and, if at Epiphany Reunion, walk the student over to the chaplain (or write a note to the chaplain). Let the chaplain fulfill the request. TYC has hundreds of Bibles of every type. This demonstrates that volunteers and the chaplain work together for the "good of all", and it gets God's Word into the hands of the student, regardless of his motivation.



# Reading the Bible

It's as juicy as reality TV and has enough scandal to boot. Flip through its pages, and you'll find some of the most powerful social mores underlying Western civilization. Yet the Bible remains one of the greatest books *never* read. According to researcher George Barna, only 28% of Christians have read the Bible cover to cover. According to Ted Cooper, agnostic-turned Christian, a book-club approach to reading the Bible encourages a sense of community, holds people accountable and fosters a unique sense of ownership."If we read only parts of the Bible, we really can't understand the breadth of the story, the message in the Bible."

Taken from "Taking on Bible Literacy", *Houston Chronicle*, June 5, 2009.



## TYC Volunteer Services Department FY 2010 Annual Report

- 1,645 community volunteers enrolled in the program. Demographics of the volunteer population consist of:
 

Gender:	50% Female; 50% Male
Ethnicity:	65% Caucasian; 20% Hispanic; 14% African-American
Marital Status:	70% Married
Tenure:	Average 2.54 years; (Maximum 33 years)
- 103,120 hours of service contributed by volunteers, valued at \$2,088,118 based upon the value of the volunteer hour, as determined by the Independent Sector. (This value is based upon the average hourly earnings of all production and nonsupervisory workers on private nonfarm payrolls as determined by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, plus 12% to estimate for fringe benefits.) This is an increase of 11,701 hours from 2009.

The top two producers of volunteer hours were:

Chaplaincy & religious volunteers	33,089
Epiphany volunteers	22,649

Full report and much more can be found at [www.tyc.gov](http://www.tyc.gov).



## Letters from Stars of Krier Epiphany #9

*(Letters from Krier con't)*

To All of My Angels! I would like to take the time to say thank you again for sharing your experiences with me in Epiphany. I got all of your letters and they were all beautiful. God bless you all. God sent you to show me where He is and I found Him. And for that I am thankful. Epiphany was such a great experience; I appreciate everyone's time and effort to put forth to make everything possible, but of course none of this could be possible unless God allowed it, so praise God! I hope to see everyone at our reunion - I am looking forward to it!

Until next time, God Bless,  
Compassionate Christopher

Well, first off let me start this letter with May God Be With You, and bless y'all! I would like to say thank you for everything. I had a great time with each and every one of y'all. I learned that the path with God is so much better than the path I was going. Forgive and Forget seems to be making my life so much easier. My relationship with our Father is much more open and at ease. I will remember y'all for this - the Lord put y'all in my life to do me good and it is working. If some of y'all can make it and get away from y'all's past, I can make it as well. Again, thank y'all for everything - may y'all be rewarded for this in Heaven. 11-6-20: The day the Lord truly became my Savior.

Sincerely, Awesome Angel *(con't next column)*

### Al Price Unit Setting Up Chapel

The Al Price facility has been using the gym for reunions and for Epiphany weekends. The chaplain has been successful in procuring a space that was previously a dorm to be transformed into a chapel. The Al Price Epiphany team is helping with the modifications and materials needed to turn the dorm into a chapel.

Thank you! The three days I spent at Epiphany, I got closer to God and I opened my mind and my heart to God's word. I thank God for bringing all of these hard-working angels together, and creating a program just for us, us misled kids. I really appreciate it a lot. In this experience I learned how to pray. I learned how to bless the food. I also learned how to forgive and forget. I really learned a lot, just sitting and listening to everyone's stories, stories that us kids could really relate to. Just like us, some of the Epiphany members have had their ups and, like us presently, they've had their downs. This program, this little 3-day program, has blessed me by letting me know that I am loved, and that I am not alone. I've found out that no matter how much I've doubted God, I know he's always going to be there for me and my family. He's got my back forever and he's a forever friend and he's one person who I can put all my trust into. And I never have to worry about being hurt again. I can't thank the Epiphany members enough. . Epiphany really meant a lot to me - Charming Christopher



### Violence Ends Where Love Begins

#### Restorative Justice Ministries

God works through the restorative system in unbelievable ways, but real. Following is a testimonial from a young man. "It's been a bumpy ride since the Epiphany. Things got much harder as I slowly gave my life to Christ. It was so hard but I wanted to give up. But the people at the Epiphany gave me hope and love which I never had before. Nobody ever wanted me anyway. Now I have a real family and life in prison isn't the same. I know how to forgive and wrote my parents a letter and told them it's okay. They only teach me what they were taught by their mothers and fathers. You treated me as though I was your son and it is the first time I felt loved. My Epiphany family now gets me through the lonely days in my cell. I haven't caught a case since the Epiphany, aren't you proud? I know I am capable of stuff now and can teach my family good things. But guess what? Now I can teach my mom how to love. By the way, I just had a baby girl with my baby's mama. I'll be 16 yrs old soon.



## Easy Seafood Chowder

- 1 stick butter
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 celery stalks, chopped
- 3 cans (10 to 12 oz) cream of potato soup
- 3/4 lb shrimp
- 1/4 lb bay scallops
- 1 qt half & half
- pepper, to taste
- 1 can (18 - 21 oz) New England clam chowder

Instructions: Saute butter, onion, and celery in stock pot. Add rest of ingredients. Simmer for 10-15 mins. or put in crockpot. Optional: add fresh corn off the cob. prepared for team supper, Giddings by Sinda Berge and the wonderful outside kitchen team!



## Who Are the Youth in TYC Facilities?

The youth sent to the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) are the state's most serious or chronically delinquent offenders. In fiscal year 2010 (9/09 – 8/10), 52% of new arrivals had committed violent offenses.

- ♦ 93% were boys, 7% were girls.
- ♦ 44% were Hispanic.
- ♦ 34% were African-American.
- ♦ 21% were Anglo.
- ♦ 44% admitted at intake that they are gang members.
- ♦ Median age at commitment was 16.
- ♦ Median reading achievement level was 6th grade (four years behind their peers).
- ♦ Median math achievement level was 5th grade (five years behind their peers).
- ♦ 32% were identified as eligible for special education services.
- ♦ 5% of the TYC new arrivals were English language learners.
- ♦ 83% had IQs below the mean score of 100.
- ♦ 72% had high or moderate need for alcohol or other drug treatment.
- ♦ 42% had high or moderate need for mental health treatment.
- ♦ 79% had parents who never married or who divorced or separated.
- ♦ 36% had a documented history of being abused or neglected.
- ♦ 56% came from low-income homes.
- ♦ 72% came from chaotic environments.
- ♦ 44% had families with histories of criminal behavior.
- ♦ 11% had family members with mental impairments.
- ♦ 38% had more than one felony adjudication.

More information available at [www.tyc.gov](http://www.tyc.gov)



## Excerpts from Prison Ministry

by Lennie Spitale

"The power of the Holy Spirit displayed in the life of a Christian bringing the truth of the gospel in the genuine love of Christ can penetrate even the darkest and hardest places."

Requirements for Effective Prison Ministry:

1. Be Yourself.
2. Speak the truth with compassion.
3. Love inmates and correctional officers with the love of Christ.
4. Live under the influence of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God.

Prison is about freedom--the lack of it. The Christian volunteer must never underestimate what a crucial role he or she plays in the lives of these dear men and women. In many cases, it is literally the difference between life and death. The kind word, the listening ear--and most of all, the thread of hope--are offered through the physical presence of the volunteer. We know, of course, that it is Christ Himself expressing His love through us but at that moment the imprisoned soul may know only that someone cares. The greatest agent of change the world will ever know is a personal encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ. The presence of the Christian volunteer is visible evidence of God's love. You can imagine how refreshing it is, then, when they can speak to someone who has no other intent but to befriend them in the name of Jesus Christ!

And in the words of Sherri Jones, Epiphany volunteer, who shared this bit from the book, "What a blessing to be a 'vessel of Christ's compassion' and a 'messenger of His grace' with all of you!"



## **TYC Treatment Program for Offenders with Mental Health Impairment**

The number of youths committed to TYC with severe mental health problems has increased greatly in recent years. The severity of these problems also has increased.

Youths who are diagnosed with severe mental health problems and/or illnesses may receive specialized treatment at Corsicana Residential Treatment Center and at Crockett State School. Those with unstable mental illnesses who are also dangerous to themselves or others receive care at the Corsicana Stabilization Unit.

The immediate goal for this group is treating the basic mental health problem or illness and allowing the youths to regain control over their behavior. Once this is accomplished, the young person is better prepared to benefit from treatment that focuses on changing the delinquent and criminal patterns of behavior. The final goal concerns reintegrating the young person with his or her family and community in a program that addresses his or her mental health and correctional therapy needs.

Youth with mental health problems pose a particularly difficult problem for TYC, yet the specialized treatment is showing promise. Research showed that specialized treatment in a secure restriction program reduced the likelihood of being re-arrested and of being re-incarcerated for a felony offense by 13 percent.



### **Prayers for When You Feel Lonely**

*Hope.* O God of hope, fill me with all joy as I trust in You, so that I can overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. When I'm feeling lonely, I put my hope in You because You are my rock, my fortress, and my deliverer in whom I take refuge.

- Romans 15:13, Psalm 18:2



## **TYC Treatment Program for Sex Offenders**

Specialized treatment for sex offenders is provided at three TYC institutions. (Prior to FY 2004, this treatment also was provided by specialized contract providers.) The sex offender treatment program (SOTP) builds on the agency's treatment program using cognitive-behavioral strategies and a relapse prevention component. Youths in the program receive additional individual and group counseling interventions that focus on the youth's deviant sexuality, in particular, and on deviant arousal patterns and deviant sexual fantasies, which contribute to the youth's sexual abusiveness.

Additional program components include psychosexual education and, for those with histories of abuse, trauma resolution therapies. The latest research shows that participation in this program reduced the likelihood of being re-incarcerated for a felony offense by 50 percent, re-arrested for a violent offense by 46 percent, re-arrested for a felony sex offense by 37 percent, re-arrested for a felony offense by 29 percent, and re-arrested for any offense by 28 percent.



### **Epiphany Ministries of Texas Dress Code**

As representatives of Epiphany Ministries of Texas, our dress, grooming, and personal hygiene affect both the institution's impression of the Ministry and team morale. It is the policy of Epiphany Ministries to maintain a personal appearance standard to show respect to self, the institution, and the Stars. The standard is intended to be above TYC, TDCJ, and county minimum requirements, as long as it is nondiscriminatory. In general, clothes should not be tight fitting and have no logos other than approved logos. The only "T" shirt allowed is the official Epiphany "T" shirt. Shoes shall be closed toes and heels.

