



Texas Epiphany Ministries

**Communicating God's Love and Grace to
Incarcerated Juveniles**

Volume VI, Issue VII, April 2015

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***But the one
who received
the seed
that fell on
good soil
is the man
who hears
the word
and
understands it.
He produces
a crop yielding
a hundred, sixty
or thirty times
what was sown.***

Matthew 13: 23

Chairman Notes

The Epiphany Ministry has continued to provide Spirit-filled retreats for the youth in the 7 established units around the state. Texas volunteers also supported the development of two new units, one in Kansas and one in the Rio Grande valley. The Kansas retreat held in early January was led by our own Roy Bradshaw and supported by a number of Texas volunteers and by the use of one of our trailers. The Rio Grande retreat also held in January was co-led Chuck Talbot and Graciano Casteneda from the Valley and supported with team members from the following areas: Houston, Corsicana, Dallas and San Antonio; the Valley team members were so enthusiastic and excited about having their first retreat.

Board reps for each unit around the state reported very positive, spiritually focused experiences for the young men and young women who participated in the retreats. As always, there were several youth across the state who self-identified as Muslim, Jewish, agnostic or atheist at the start of the retreats. The teams accepted each youth regardless of their stated beliefs, sharing God's love with them. Many of the youth began the weekend by holding back and not opening up. However by the end of the weekend, most were discussing the talks and some were openly sharing about their lives with Spiritual Directors and other team members. Some began to apply what they heard; for example one young man asked for forgiveness from one of his peers on Saturday night after hearing the forgiveness talk. The peer then turned around and asked for forgiveness too. By the end of the weekend almost without exception at each unit, the youth accepted their crosses as a symbol of their commitment to Christ. As many of you know, Staff at each unit were generally positive and supportive of the retreats.

Blessings,
Powerful/Patient Pat

Weekend Reports:

Brownwood Epiphany #29, 2/15

Preparations for Brownwood #29 were somewhat chaotic as the LD struggled with various illnesses of team members and their families while putting the weekend together. After losing the ALD to family illness, the LD invited the ALD from the Kansas #1 weekend to join the team. This lady worked extremely well with LD and a strong unity of leadership was provided. There were 29 girls on the Epiphany weekend with several requests for baptisms.

There were trials during the weekend but all were met with love and experience from team members picking up the slack. Overall, a very good Epiphany. Like many teams, this team has some serious prayer warriors.

Evins #1, 1/17-1/19/15

The team and stars of Evins Epiphany #1 were charged up with the energy of a child on a "Christmas" morning! As the team assembled, everyone was eager to get to know one another. The team got along in harmonious and respectful manner. The bond with veteran Epiphany volunteers and new team members grew quickly. Praise to the outside/inside kitchen/music team and superstars for their efforts and attention to detail; it made a huge difference to the Stars as judged by their reactions.

As always there were some opportunities for learning and improving. In the beginning, some stars got up, walked over and talked to JCOs or peers at other tables. There were also runners outside the cafeteria which distracted the stars but the team covered the team learned to retrieve their stars and to cover the windows to decrease distraction. Looking forward to Evins #2.

Gainesville Epiphany #30, 1/17-1/19/15

The Gainesville team is a really great team who have bonded and served past Epiphany weekends together. The team obviously cared for one another and was very friendly toward the board rep. Talks on day 1 and 2 were excellent. Day 3 talks were good. Many excellent parts of the weekend. Areas for improvement are clapping after meditations and life of Christ in the chapel, the prayer of commitment to Christ was not used, and the celebration could be more celebratory. Overall, a very good weekend.

Giddings Epiphany #24, 10/3/-10/5/15

Giddings Epiphany #24 was amazing with 36 stars beginning and completing the weekend. These stars had been encouraged and recruited to Epiphany by their peers and kept giving credit to their peers for encouraging them to go on the weekend. The Epiphany team was blessed to see the youth recruiting other youth to Epiphany. All the talks followed the outlines and the weekend went very smoothly.

At the end of the weekend, Chaplain Kennedy charged the new Stars to take God's love back to their dorms so revival could sweep through the campus. He said that 36% of the young men at Giddings have been on an Epiphany weekend.

Giddings #25, 3/20-3/22/15

The board rep reports that this is probably the best Epiphany weekend that he has witnessed. Time management was excellent. One star was removed at the start of the weekend when it was determined he had already attended an Epiphany weekend. Two stars were removed for behavior problems while away from the Epiphany weekend taking meds. The stars participated in singing and obeying rules early on Friday. Several of the talks were the best presentation of that talk ever observed. One talk was at first a concern as it seemed to deviate from the outline but was all in all an extremely powerful talk that addressed the goal of the talk. The team was very thoughtful and supportive of one another. They made an excellent witness to the Stars and staff. Everyone was very positive.

Texas Juvenile Justice Department Comments

Bob Boggess attended the November 22, 2014 Texas State Epiphany Board meeting and commented on the impact of Epiphany on their kids. He quoted one of the case workers who observed, "I don't know what it is, but there is something different about the kids who have gone on Epiphany." While TJJD employees may sometimes not know what it is that makes these kids different, any Epiphany volunteer can tell you what that difference is.

To submit stories for the newsletter, send to Marilyn Jackson at mswj99@yahoo.com



Remembering the beginning of Epiphany at Giddings State School , 2002 and 2003

Those first young men were the forerunners to change and were persecuted when they went back to their dorms, even assaulted. Things began to change about 2007. Things have changed--the tide has fully turned now and the waiting list for the Epiphany weekend is always longer than the number of stars that can attend a weekend. Many of the stars are now going to chapel services and recruiting their peers to go with them. Some stars/superstars are holding Bible studies in their dorms and praying together. Epiphany is God's heart poured out on these juvenile prisoners, and they're growing in number and influence.

Many of our team members have become mentors. The mentors see individual juvenile inmates several times a month, apart from Epiphany. The Giddings team feels much like the apostle Paul in 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13; Jesus loves the prisoner and hears their groaning, so He sent them Epiphany. God rewards the teams as we get to behold Him laboring with us effectively at Giddings State School. We rejoice now and will rejoice together with you over and over in Heavens, when we meet these precious Stars, shining in His Presence.
--Lovey Dovey Linda Graeter

Galatians 5:22-23

A group of a few men and I travel out to Giddings State School to provide chapel services and mentoring to the students. After three years we were beginning to feel like we were making some progress but the boys were still a little "stand offish" with us. They didn't seem totally comfortable lowering their guard emotionally. Then one Saturday, as God would have it, a buddy and I were mentoring at the same time the Epiphany team was having an Epiphany Reunion. We finished meeting with our boys in the visitation area and were on our way back to the front gate when we heard raucous laughing and singing coming from the chapel.

We just had to know what was going on so we did what any good Christian men would do...we quietly let ourselves into the chapel to spy on this gathering. Once we got in we stood near chaplain's office in silence, jaws dropped open, to see the formerly muy macho boys visiting, laughing and having a wonderful time. We had never seen the students like this! I found Chaplain Kennedy and asked him what was going on. He said it was an Epiphany Reunion. I wanted to know more so Terry introduced us to Loretta and Patty. They patiently answered my questions and said that there was an Epiphany weekend coming up in the Spring (2014). I asked how I could be a part. They asked if I had ever been to a three day event like Emmaus, Tres Dias, etc. They explained that we would need to experience a three day weekend to be part of the inside team for an Epiphany Weekend. My friend and I drove back to Montgomery with our heads spinning. We talked about what we saw, what we heard.

I called a friend I knew who was part of Tres Dias and actually asked him to please sponsor me so I could go back go back and work on an Epiphany! He and his wife sponsored my wife Jenny and me in the Fall of 2014 and shortly afterward I started emailing/cyber-stalking Jean and Loretta so I could be a part of the NEXT Epiphany. They graciously let me join the team and after going through #25 with this wonderful team....I'm hooked! -- Joyful Jack Flannery

In Memory
Katherine Jo Lynn "Kay" Davis
Volunteer Coordinator, Mart
Sunrise: November 14, 1954
Sunset: February 8, 2014

*She was different, she was special and unique in a thousand ways.
She was giving, she was loving and we will miss her all our days.
She knew sorrow in great measure and was stung by illness too. But neither could defeat her,
nothing her faith subdue.*

*And when she heard death coming she did not cower in fear. Instead she called out boldly, "My Lord, I'm over
here." Of course, the Lord has welcomed her with his angels magnifying.
The beauty of that celestial place, devoid of pain and crying.*

*And so instead of mourning as we remember her this hour, We really should be celebrating
the blooming of a flower.*

*But forgive us Lord, for pining and wishing she were here.
It is hard to give up someone we have come to love so dear.
Because you see...*

*She was different, she was special, unique in a thousand ways, she was loving, she was giving and
we will miss her, miss her, miss her all our days.*

Anonymous--from Kay's "Homegoing Celebration", February 8, 2014

Robert "Bob" Erwin Rush
June 8, 1940 - April 17, 2014

Bob volunteered at the Texas Youth Commission, providing Christian fellowship to troubled young men.

He served on every Mart Epiphany team from Mart Epiphany #1 to #19.

The boys loved him. Even though Bob had to carry his oxygen bottle with him,
he kept going and kept working Epiphany.

Bob loved to talk and was quick to tell a corny joke, give advice about the care of animals
and would never hesitate to express his opinions, even if they were unsolicited.

Bob gave of himself. Even when his breathing became labored,
making even routine activities difficult, Bob would still insist on helping distribute
pantry items whenever the community food truck rolled in to Mart.

On April 17, weary from his journey, Bob crossed his final cattle guard,
leaving this physical world and passing through the pearly gates
to enter the Kingdom of God.

Taken from "In Memory of Robert Erwin Rush"