



Uniting children with their mothers and fathers in prison.

2007 Annual Report

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Kids Need Their Moms . . . AND Dads!

After last year's successful Father's Day pilot trip, Get On The Bus launched an expansion of its programming to include trips for children to both women's and men's prisons in 2007. In observing the emotional reunions between children and their fathers, it became abundantly obvious that children need access to their fathers just as much as they do their mothers.

As a result of interrupting bonding with either parent, incarceration can have many negative consequences for children, including: shame, social stigma, anxiety, sleep disorders, loss of financial support, weakened ties to the parent, poor school performance, and juvenile delinquency.

The two Father's Day trips brought 102 children to the California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo and the California Correctional Institute in Tehachapi. It was a joy to watch a family of six children run through the visiting room door into the arms of their waiting father who had collapsed to his knees in tears. A young woman was reunited with the father she last saw when she was five years old. Upon greeting him, she placed her nine month old baby, his grandchild, in his arms.

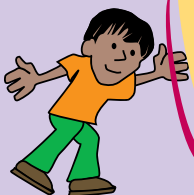
"The suspense built as this day came closer," shared one father. "I haven't seen my sons in four and a half years and I was able to let them know

that even though I'm in prison, they still have a father who loves them."

Following the San Luis Obispo visit, families were welcomed at a celebratory dinner hosted by Nativity of Our Lady Church. In a special ceremony, each family was wrapped in a blanket and prayed over by the volunteers. This symbolic embrace so beautifully expressed the message of Get On The Bus—no matter what circumstances brought you to the bus, you are understood, you are loved, you are accepted.



"It was the best day I ever spent with my Mom."
- Brandy, 17 years old





Letter From The Executive Director

The children served by Get On The Bus express gratitude in myriad ways: with their smiles and tears; with their excitement to see their mothers and fathers; with the joyful way that they pull on their T-shirts at the beginning of the day and clutch their teddy bears as they ride home. They inspire and remind us that our efforts are indeed not wasted.

There are people who do not understand why we bring children into a prison. They feel that the parents may be a negative influence and don't deserve to see their children. Get On The Bus is for THE CHILDREN . . . children who have a right to see, to touch and to talk to their parent in prison. Children who are also serving a

sort of sentence that they did not bring upon themselves. As one of the guardians wrote in a lovely thank-you letter, "Regardless of how anyone feels about the circumstances about how these women and men got to where they are, these innocent children will always need their mother's and father's love."

The mission of Get On The Bus has ignited a fire in the hearts of people throughout California. Both young and old are struck by an intuitive understanding that the children we serve are suffering. One day seems like so little, but it means the world to a child who only sees his or her mother or father for that one precious day each year. Collectively—you, your faith community, your school, your friends and thousands of other

Nothing you do for children is ever wasted. They seem not to notice us, hovering, averting our eyes, and they seldom offer thanks, but what we do for them is never wasted.

– Garrison Keillor

people from Sacramento to San Diego—gave 812 children a lifetime memory of a special day with their mom or dad.

I give thanks for the generosity, the hard work and the compassion that brought thirty nine buses filled with children to the waiting arms of mothers and fathers at seven different prisons. Our "caravan of love" grows and grows as the wheels on the bus go round and round.

Gratefully,
Sr. Suzanne Jabro, CSJ



It's All About The Children . . .

The greatest affirmation for the work that we do comes from the children themselves:

We are pleased to report the following totals for the 39 buses so generously funded by our donors. The Mother's Day trip took place on May 11th and the Father's Day trips took place on June 15th and 23rd. Buses originated from cities all over the state and visited seven women's and men's prisons in Chowchilla, Corona, Norco, Ventura, San Luis Obispo and Tehachapi.



"It was the best day I have ever spent with my Mom."

"I loved seeing and touching my mom."

"Can you let my Dad come home with me?"

"Thank you GOTB. This is the only time I ever see my Mom. Without you I would have nothing."

Get On The Bus Firsts

Even though this was our 8th trip, each year just gets better and better as evidenced by the following firsts:

- The women's prisons allowed face painting which proved to be a big hit with the kids
- Each mother at the Valley State Prison for Women received an orchid corsage from her children provided by the Orchid Society of Stockton.
- At Norco, the Men's Prison Band gave a live performance while the All Saints Episcopal Church of Pasadena provided a barbeque lunch with all the trimmings.
- The Tehachapi visit was spiced up by a pizza party—a treat for both the families and the fathers.
- Schools, faith communities and civic organizations from San Luis Obispo donated and assembled "Stay Connected Backpacks" that included a camera, stationery and stamps so that children can correspond with their fathers.
- One Rite-Aid Pharmacy donated digital film processing as employees worked feverishly to gift each family with a beautiful portrait by the end of the visit.

	Children	Parents	Caregivers	Volunteers	# of Buses
Mother's Day Totals	710	366	369	211	37
Father's Day Totals	102	47	45	34	2
TOTALS	812	413	414	245	39



Our Donors

There are approximately 200,000 children in California who have a parent in prison. Each year we raise funds to provide a memorable visit for as many children as we can. We are joined in this expression of care by donors, foundations, businesses, faith communities, schools and civic groups who all help us to send more buses with each passing year. We are grateful for your partnership and moved by your generosity.

In its 2006-2007 fiscal year, Get On The Bus raised an astounding \$452,137.93. By carefully stewarding these donations, we are assured that there will be more children, more buses and more families united in 2008.

Space constraints enable us to print only the sponsor level donors, but we are grateful for every single donation, cash or in-kind, as well as for all of the prayers, good wishes and cards that we receive. Please forgive any errors or omissions.

Abundant Blessings

Each year we are humbled and sometimes surprised by the creative ways that we are supported by our growing grassroots network of friends. Some of these gifts are literally the biblical “widow’s mite” which means just as much, if not more, as the larger donations we receive. We share a few of these stories in gratitude.

- Women living at the prisons in Chowchilla and Norco conducted fundraisers that contributed \$6,000 to the program. They make very small wages from their jobs on the “inside” but gave with very large hearts.
- Cox Communications named Get On The Bus one of its Orange County Community Champions. As such, GOTB received a check for \$1,000 and will now go on to the national award competition. They also aired a public service announcement about the event.
- Nativity of Our Lady Church in San Luis Obispo hosted a benefit concert featuring local and Bay Area artists, as well as a performance of, “The Deepest Desire: Four Meditations On Love”, music by Jake Heggie (composer of the opera *Dead Man Walking*) and lyrics by Sister Helen Prejean, CSJ, (author of the book, *Dead Man Walking*).
- A group of senior citizens living at a San Diego mobile home park took up a collection at their weekly bridge party. This heartfelt donation came in a baggie filled with quarters, nickels and dimes. We cherished that donation in its humble package and honor the sacrifice it represented.

Each gift we receive is a blessing that affirms that we are not alone in this special effort to attend to the needs of the children we serve.



“My Dad loves me
and cares what
happens to me”



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*"When things get hard in here, I just remember the smiles on my childrens faces and the fun that we had that day. Then I have a huge smile on my face."
 - Tina, Mother*



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We received this touching anonymous note accompanying a donation:

"My only child is in jail, and I can only imagine how a child feels not having a mother around. Please make Mother's Day special for another mother. I want to support a child so he/she will remember a mother's love."

- George's Mom



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*"Thanks to all the churches,
organizations and people for
their support. What a blessing it
is to know that there are people
out here in the world that truly
care about family bonding."
- Antinisia, Mother*



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Growing For Good

Get On The Bus is pleased to welcome three very gifted women who will build our capacity to serve more children and enrich the depth of our organization in countless ways.



Rebecca Devereaux, Program Director, has been involved with a variety of justice and peace activities in the Archdiocese of Los Angeles (including Get On The Bus in the San Gabriel Valley). She has broad experience in developing and managing programs for at-risk children and for college students. She shares that her heart is touched by the work of connecting children with their parents and she feels, “blessed and humbled for the opportunity to help make Get On The Bus happen and to help create wonderful memories for GOTB children and families.”



Sister Theresa Harpin, CSJ, Regional Coordinator - Central Coast, has 10 years of experience in campus ministry and over 20 years in parish ministry where she collaborated with prison chaplains. She began working with Get On The Bus as field study for a study program and was hooked. “I love the children the staff and my local team. I love being engaged with my CSJ sisters and community members who have embraced Get On The Bus because it embodies our charisma of unifying love.”



Rosalinda Vint, Regional Coordinator - Southern California, In addition to this part-time position, she also works with Women of Substance & Men of Honor, Inc. assisting people who have been released from foster care and the young adults in/out of prison. As a past ward in the foster care system herself, she has a passion to reach out to those youth that need help! She attends Lighthouse Christian Church in Newbury Park and holds a ministerial license from the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel. She is married and has three adult children, three grand children and a commitment to reach out to youth in need.

Grassroots Greatness

We are in awe of the compassionate and generous women and men below. They are the public face of Get On The Bus, the interface with children and guardians, the heart of their local effort to fund and fill one or more buses. They represent many faiths, ethnicities and communities, and personify love of neighbor as self. Thank you and God bless you.

Bakersfield

Rev. Jenell Mahoney, Jan Thomsen
First Congregational Church, Bakersfield

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Fr. James Rude
Diocese of Fresno

Long Beach

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First Congregational Church

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Beverly Clarke, Debbie Gauer, Laruen Greenwade,
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All Saints Episcopal Church, Beverly Hills

Los Angeles – South

Tony Fadale, Samuel Spicer Jr.
Friends Outside
Matthew 25 - American Martyrs, Manhattan Beach

Oakland

Dennis Flannery
Catholic Charities - Diocese of Oakland

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Pasadena

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Archdiocese of San Francisco

San Gabriel Valley - East

Marsha & Gaston Turcotte
St. Dorothy Catholic Church

San Gabriel Valley - West

Margaret Sardo
St. Bede the Venerable

San Jose

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Just Faith, American Martyrs
Nativity of Our Lady, San Luis Obispo

Santa Rosa

Anne Marie Clifford, Joan Warner
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Stockton

Thien Nagmick, Rose Punzalan
Catholic Charities - Diocese of Stockton

Ventura/Santa Barbara

Deacon Bob & Penny Fargo, Charla Mooney,
Catherine Conneally-Salazar, Rosalinda Vint
Padre Serra Parish
St. Mary Magdalen Catholic Church

Visalia

Nancy Turk
Visalia Seventh-Day Adventist Church

Behind Every Bus . . . is a great Bus Driver

Get On the Bus contracts with Coach America to supply the buses and drivers for our two “mass transits” for Mother’s and Father’s Day. Michael Waters, CEO of Coach America/Franciscan Lines/Grayline San Francisco Sightseeing, distributed a touching memo to all of his drivers asking for their “sensitivity and awareness” in working with the families and encouraging them to think of the assignment as, “a highly satisfying day in which the drivers and our company play a huge part

in reuniting families, if for only a few hours.” While a handful of the drivers are simply “doing their job,” the vast majority minister to their riders with great tenderness and compassion.

Viola was the bus driver from San Bernardino. A former trucker, she loved spending the day with the kids. From time to time, she would shout out motherly guidance such as, “Tell the Lord thanks and bless your food before you start eating.”

As the bus parked and families

disembarked, volunteers were surprised when Viola asked for a T-shirt and followed the families into the prison. At that very moment, they learned that Viola’s own daughter is serving a prison sentence and Viola would be surprising her with a visit.

You just never know who will “get on the bus.”



Uniting children with their mothers and fathers in prison.

Southern California Office

3424 Wilshire Blvd, 2nd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(805) 807-0640
socaloffice@getonthebus.us

Program Director

3424 Wilshire Blvd, 2nd Floor
Los Angeles, CA 90010
(818) 741-5815
director@getonthebus.us

Northern California Office

1125 Ferry St
Martinez, CA 94553
(925) 335-9314
nocaloffice@getonthebus.us

Central Coast Office

221 Daly Avenue
San Luis Obispo, CA 93405
(805) 440-1013
centralcoastoffice@getonthebus.us



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