

# CRJW

CENTER FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE WORKS

Uniting Children, Families and Communities Separated by Crime and the Criminal Justice System



*Family of services:*





## Dear CRJW Friends,

What a year this has been for us all! From lockdowns to remote work and school, the global pandemic has brought unprecedented disruption to our daily lives. 2020 has also been a pivotal year for social equity and justice reform, with people around the country coming together to demand change in the wake of the tragic deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and so many others. In this whirlwind of a year, we are reminded of the importance of the work we do at the Center For Restorative Justice Works, and the fact that we cannot do this without a community of incredible supporters.

We take this opportunity to recognize the volunteers, donors, and staff who power our mission to serve children and families with incarcerated parents. Thank you for opening your hearts and making a difference in our communities!

Too often, the criminal justice system overlooks the impact of parental incarceration on children. When a parent becomes incarcerated, the whole family experiences the impact of incarceration. A parent removed from the family can mean a child has to move in with relatives or enter the foster care system. It means the loss of critical family income and can result in lasting impacts on a child's wellbeing. Restorative justice starts with family reunification. Programs like Get On The Bus and Family Express help families restore and renew vital child-parent relationships.

In this year's Annual Report, we invite you to take a look at CRJW's celebrated programs and the people they impact. We share the stories of inspiring children and families. Their voices give meaning to the realities and challenges of parental incarceration, and to the hope that comes with family reunification and connection with a community of people who care. We are proud of this year's Stay Connected Programs, designed and launched by our Executive Director Lupe Rivera and our staff in response to the Covid-19 pandemic to make sure families stay connected.

For nearly twenty years, CRJW has been steadfast in our mission to support children and families impacted by parental incarceration. We thank you for being a part of this important work and for your continued support. And we wish you and your loved ones good health, happiness, and healing in these challenging times.

With Our Appreciation,

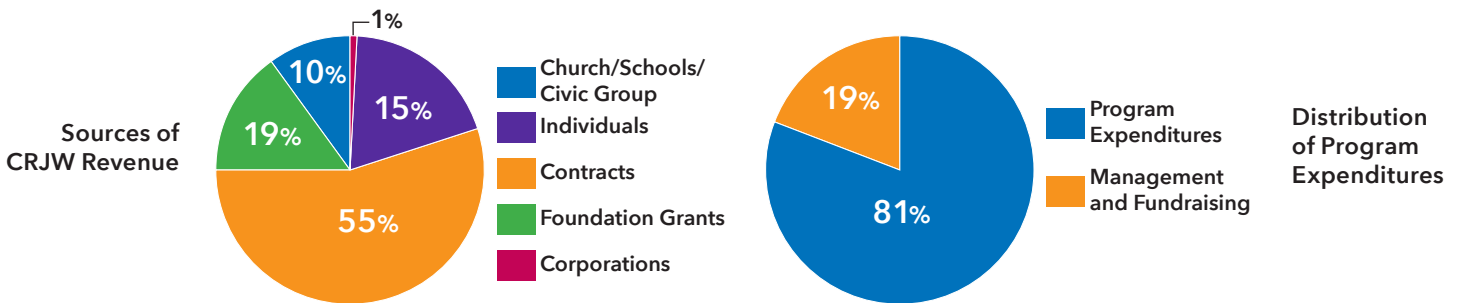
John E. Kalin  
Board Chair

# Financial Stewardship



The Center for Restorative Justice Works raises funds to support programs through a grassroots network of generous donors. Each donation adds a compassionate voice to our movement to keep families together when a parent is in prison. We are grateful to each contributor and to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for joining us in this mission. We are also proud that CRJW's commitment to transparency and responsible financial stewardship has been recognized with a **100% rating on Charity Navigator** and a **Guidestar Platinum Seal of Transparency**.

During the 2019/2020 Fiscal Year, CRJW raised **\$524,692**. The sources and use of funds are detailed below.



\*The figures above are unaudited as of the printing of this report. CRJW is independently reviewed by Banks Accountancy and the review is available by February of each year.

## Keeping Families Connected During the Pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has created heartbreaking challenges for children of incarcerated parents. **With your support, CRJW's work to keep families connected has risen to meet the moment with *Stay Connected Projects!***

*Stay Connected* provides personalized postcards, family video messages, and Stay Connected kits with postage, stationery, and envelopes at no cost so that families can maintain consistent contact while visits at prisons are postponed. Stay Connected has been a lifeline for children and families who have not been able to see each other for many months and are concerned about the health and safety of their loved ones.

This program would not be possible without the support of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation and California Correctional Health Care Services. Working together, we launched an innovative program that lets video messages be exchanged between families and incarcerated loved ones.

“Social relationships are the cornerstone of society. During crises, these relationships are more important than ever for personal wellness. CDCR and CCHCS recognize this and want to do all we can to help families stay connected during these unprecedented times. We are very thankful to partner with Center for Restorative Justice Works to help keep our families connected.”

– *Liz Gransee, Deputy Director of Communications at California Correctional Health Care Services; Krissi Khokhobashvili, Chief, External Affairs – Office of Public and Employee Communications*

We thank CDCR, CCHCS, and participating institutions for their continued support and partnership in creating pathways to family connection, support, and hope. As soon as in-person visits resume, our buses will start rolling again! We look forward to welcoming families to “get on the bus” sometime soon.



– *Postcard Participants*

### Institutions Served (Events & Stay Connected Projects)

- |   |                                    |                            |  |
|---|------------------------------------|----------------------------|--|
| Avenal State Prison                         | California State Prison, Solano    | Folsom State Prison        | Pleasant Valley State Prison             |
| California Correctional Center              | California Substance Abuse         | Folsom Women's Facility    | Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility |
| California Correctional Institution         | Treatment Facility, Corcoran       | High Desert State Prison   | Salinas Valley State Prison              |
| California Institution for Men              | Calipatria State Prison            | Ironwood State Prison      | San Quentin State Prison                 |
| California Institution for Women            | California State Prison, Centinela | Kern Valley State Prison   | Valley State Prison                      |
| California Men's Colony                     | Central Calif. Women's Facility    | McFarland Female Community | Wasco State Prison                       |
| California State Prison, Corcoran           | Chuckawalla Valley State Prison    | Reentry Facility           |  |
| California State Prison, Los Angeles County | Correctional Training Facility     | Mule Creek State Prison    |  |
|   | Deuel Vocational Institution       | Pelican Bay State Prison   |  |

## Volunteers & Interns

We could not serve thousands of California families without an amazing community of volunteers who donate their time, their energy, and their compassion to our mission.

### Meet The People Who Make This Possible

I first learned about the Get On The Bus program when I was incarcerated at Valley State Prison for Women in Chowchilla, California. I've also been a participant on the Family Express bus to go see my loved ones at CCWF. As a volunteer, I see the children's reactions to visiting and witness their love for their moms. Regardless of where the parent is, the love is so very much present, both for parent and child, but



sometimes that love just needs a little help to reach where it's meant to be.

I believe love heals all. That's why I volunteer with CRJW, an organization that helped love to reach me at a point I needed it the most. Being part of that same organization and sending love back is truly amazing and a blessing.

– Blanca Ruiz Thompson, GOTB Volunteer

Throughout my two years with CRJW, I have had the amazing opportunity to work closely with great families from the Get On The Bus program. I was honored to support GOTB at its annual Christmas event. It was extremely heartwarming to see how the GOTB program brought together families and created a supportive community. I learned how my work with GOTB not only helps reunite individual families, but also aids the unification of a larger community. As a third-year college student, I became an intern for CRJW, where I have the privilege of providing continued support for families during this difficult time and working closely with the GOTB staff. My experience with CRJW has provided me with a sense of purpose, empowerment, and community, as well as fueled my passion for helping others. I am extremely proud to be a part of such a special mission and organization.



– Liza Escun, CRJW Intern

## Family Express

Family Express provides free transportation and family reunification services to children and families across California on a weekly basis. By offering safe and reliable transportation to visit a parent or loved one in prison, Family Express offers the opportunity to restore and build those precious family relationships that mean so much to us all.

### Ryan shares what Family Express means to him and his family

Thank you, Family Express, for helping me and my dad visit my mom. I only get to see her once a week, but I look forward to it all week. My dad is unable to take me because it's too far and we have no other way to get there besides the Family Express bus. All my other friends get to see their mom every day after school and I wish I could see my mom after school too. I have to wait all week to tell her about everything that happened, but whenever we go I never get to finish. Time goes by so fast.

I haven't seen my mom since March because of the virus, and I don't know the next time I will see her. I do get to talk to her, but it's only once a month. I'll be happy when Family Express can take me and my dad back to see my mom. It's fun to

ride the bus to see my mom. I have met new friends and we get to play games on the ride there. Before the virus, the best part of my week was visiting my mom. I always look forward to it.

– Ryan, 12 years old



## Get On The Bus

For nearly twenty years, Get On The Bus has been reconnecting families and building stronger communities by reuniting daughters and sons with their incarcerated mothers and fathers on Mother's and Father's Day each year.

*Get On The Bus has been a transformative experience for Rosie and her family*

Our loved one has been incarcerated for over twenty-four years. About seven years ago my two boys and I started getting on the bus. We knew GOTB was a good program and we had heard so much about it. Our first experience was through a really big church. They went all out – it was just so nice! It's a good experience for younger kids, especially ones who don't get to see their loved ones very often. They get to enjoy a different side of their dads through Get On The Bus. They get to eat pizza together, which makes everyone happy, and it takes us out of the typical visit. GOTB visits give families a lot more freedom and allow for a more intimate visit than would otherwise be possible. Every year it has been a pleasure for them. Now we take my grandson, who is four, and he just loves it. "We're going on the big bus!" he says.

The staff are great people, and I hold them dear to my heart. GOTB has been there to support the kids and our family through this journey. I am already a volunteer with GOTB, and my husband looks forward to becoming a volunteer when he gets home so that we can offer the same support we have received to other GOTB families.



My husband was granted parole this year. After 24 years he will be out! We just can't wait for him to come home. He's ready to come back into society and be the best he can be. Even with these tough times right now, it's going to be a happy ever after ending for us. Thank you GOTB, I appreciate everything you do!

– Rosie Purintun, GOTB Participant and Volunteer



## Staying Connected

Letter writing is an essential way for children to connect with their incarcerated parents, not only as a method of communication, but also as something to hold onto and cherish.

*See what exchanging letters with mom has meant for A.J.*

My auntie told me about the Stay Connected program, and I wanted to hear about how me and my mom could stay in contact. She calls every week and I can send her letters in an email, and I write letters and send drawings to her. When I get letters from my mom, I fill up with happiness because I know that she wrote to me, and I run to my room and read them. She sends me some really cool things, like science. She sends me some *National Geographic* stuff that I enjoy reading. And she enjoys reading my letters, too!!! When she calls, we talk about all the stuff we sent each other. Also, she sends me the certificates she gets when she finishes a class or a job. I keep them safe

in a binder. I am so proud of my mom because she's taking classes to make better choices. I have a treasure box for all the letters she sent me. She sends me so many letters that my treasure box is almost completely full. My auntie says she will get me a bigger one. I am so happy that I can talk with my mom and we can send letters to each other, but I hope I can see her soon.

– A.J., 9 years old



# Camp Suzanne

Camp Suzanne provides a rare opportunity for a child to spend quality time with a mother in prison. The camp program is a combination of art and family support, offering a platform to renew and nurture the critical relationship of mother and child. Camp Suzanne is a chance for children to heal and reconnect with their incarcerated mothers in safe and caring spaces.

During this week-long summer program, children spend mornings and afternoons with their mothers on prison grounds, engaging in fun activities like dancing, creating art, games, and having a movie night with mom.

*"Camp Suzanne made us even closer than we were and I just feel we have an unbreakable bond."  
– Camper, 11 years old*

By working together on art projects, playing games, and making music, mothers can connect with their children in deeply meaningful ways that have long-lasting impacts on both mother and child.

*"Can we please watch another movie with our moms again? I loved watching a movie and having popcorn with her."  
– Camper*

*"My favorite memory from camp was visiting my mom for the first time in person."  
– Camper, 14 years old*

*"Camp Suzanne is my only chance to heal and rebuild our relationship."  
– Camp Suzanne mother.*



Transition4Success provides employment and training opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals at the Center for Restorative Justice Works headquarters. Our mission is to support positive post-prison outcomes for returned citizens by helping them adjust back into society with a sense of self-worth and dignity. Transition4Success participants bring meaningful insights and ideas, which help us continually improve CRJW programs to meet the needs of children and families.

*Paul shares his Transition4Success story*

## Life Lessons Learned Through the Humility of Others

I didn't know that my work at CRJW would unite families, give birth to hope, give flight to dreams, and teach me so very much about life. Transition4Success instilled in me a confidence and sense of purpose that continues to serve as a driving force in my life today. I evolved a strong work ethic, learned computer skills and programs, and gained a profound appreciation for the selfless contributions of staff and a vast network of volunteers. More importantly, the unwavering support of the entire CRJW staff provided a key element in my successful transition back into society... humility.

I am currently employed in the field of social work and mental health services. I continue to pursue my goal of earning a BA in Psychology. I am active in the movement for social justice and prison reform. I've worked hard to maintain a productive transition and to reciprocate the positivity I have been gifted throughout my journey. In looking back at those very first steps I took upon parole, I can't imagine where I would be today without the skills, support, and life lessons I gained through my association with The Center for Restorative Justice Works and Transition4Success.

*– Paul Banchich, Transition4Success Participant*





CrossOver, also called Women Of Wisdom (WOW), provides monthly support services at the California Institution for Women. This volunteer-driven program invites community members to cross into the world of prisons and to foster transformed understanding between the outside community and those experiencing incarceration. CrossOver restores community relationships and creates awareness about the real impacts of the criminal justice system.

**Jan Urban, Program Coordinator, talks about CrossOver in 2020**

Volunteers from the community cross over prison walls monthly to be in compassionate conversation with our sisters inside, offering emotional support and advocacy before the Board of Parole Hearings. The number of inside attendees as well as volunteers has grown over the years. We now have 24 community volunteers and average 40 attendees a month.

Well, that was the case before the Covid-19 shutdown mid-March 2020. We miss our sisters terribly and don't see an end to this separation for many months to come. We had such great plans already in

place for 2020: sharings and group discussions led by volunteers and inside leaders on vulnerability, restorative justice, parenting, shame, and domestic violence; and performances by the Los Angeles Street Symphony, which were to be open to the Yard.

In the interim, as we wait to be reunited with our sisters inside, we have organized hundreds of books to be delivered to



CIW for continued education and sharing. As Women Of Wisdom we know that great healing can be realized through compassionate friendship and acceptance of whom we have evolved into being right here and now. We look forward to reestablishing our sisterhood soon, God willing.

– Jan Urban,  
WOW Coordinator

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# Our Donors

Space constraints limit us to only listing donations received by September 30, 2020. We are very grateful for every donation that we receive; please forgive any omissions.

## Grants & Foundations

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A big thank you to Sr. Teresa Lynch, for the wonderful photos that appear in this report. Quotes are provided by real people: sons, daughters, caregivers, and incarcerated people.



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