



# TRANSITIONS

*A Special Briefing for friends of Tennessee Prison Outreach Ministry*



## SUNDAY AFTERNOON WITH DAD

It was an unusually warm Sunday afternoon in February. In the midst of winter, a warm front helped the temperature reach a perfect 70 degrees. I was sitting in my car after arriving early as I waited for my 1:00 p.m. worship service at the local prison. As I waited, I noticed a young boy who appeared to be about 8 years old who was playing with a basketball in the parking lot. Standing beside him was a little girl, approximately age 2. No doubt this was brother and sister, waiting with their mom for their scheduled time

to go visit with an incarcerated man, who was likely known as “Dad.” The men of the prison could be seen from the parking lot, standing on the other side of the razor wire, playing basketball and enjoying conversation as they waited for their family members to be escorted through security for a visit.

I wondered to myself how long that young boy with the basketball had been coming to a prison to visit with his father. How many Sunday afternoons did that little boy wait outside the checkpoint? How many times had he been frisked, had his shoes run through a scanner, and how many times did he walk past that fence with its razor wire to see Dad? How many times had he asked his dad as to when he would be home? It just breaks my heart to see these children, so desperately wanting their incarcerated parents in their life, and many finding disappointment again and again.

Although TPOM cannot replace the role of a parent, we do seek to reach out to these children and give them hope through Christmas gifts, school supplies, and most importantly Camp COPE, the event that will be here again June 19-25 at Whispering Pines. We will have games, activities, Bible classes, and counselors, ready to spend a week with these children out in nature, giving them hope and helping them navigate parental incarceration. Growing up in today’s world is challenging in the best of circumstances, but how much more so when one or, in some cases, both parents are behind that fence wrapped in razor wire. It is a case that is occurring all too often as they try their best to raise these special children.

Once again, I am asking you to please sponsor a child with your donation. Consider a gift of \$175 to sponsor one child in this circumstance and allow them to attend our camp. If you cannot give this amount, a donation of any amount would be appreciated and would help us reach \$20,000, the total cost for this signature event. Through our collective efforts, we can hopefully keep these children from finding themselves on the other side of the razor wire when they reach adulthood. We pray that one day their own children will not be spending their Sunday afternoons waiting in a parking lot to see their parents on the other side of that fence.

Sincerely,

**Thomas Snow**

*Director, Tennessee Prison Outreach Ministry*



## OUR GREAT VOLUNTEERS

The many TPOM volunteers have an indispensable role to carry out in this ministry. Over a hundred new volunteers have been trained over the last year to serve as mentors or in other roles. Some volunteers provide tutoring and mentoring in several juvenile facilities around Nashville. Others provide a great experience for the campers at Camp COPE. Many different churches and volunteers provide meals for the community gathering at Rains Avenue each Sunday. Some teach life skills classes or Bible studies with individuals behind the bars or provide worship services. Others become correspondence teachers or write encouraging letters. Some volunteers provide helpful office support that frees staff for other projects. All of this dedicated work merits a “thank you” and once a year TPOM provides a **Volunteer Appreciation Dinner**. Please join us on Tuesday, April 5, 6:30 pm, at the Fellowship Hall at Hillsboro Church of Christ. A meal will be provided while we celebrate our great volunteers. Register today at [tnprisonministry.org/events](http://tnprisonministry.org/events).

# CONGRATULATIONS GRADUATES

We congratulate our recent graduates **Sally Finnerty, Nevin Merkerson, Steven Carter, Dorothy Clawson, Tiffanie Chapman, and Autumn Piehl**. These graduates inspire us because they have eagerly grasped the opportunities the program here provides them. When a resident graduates, they have a job, a plan, and the desire to build a positive future. Thank you to our supporters that make this ministry possible.



## RESIDENT SPOTLIGHT

### CHRISTOPHER SINTHAVONG

**Christopher Sinthavong** recently arrived at TPOM to participate in the Reentry Program. He describes what the program is doing for him as he works on building a new life.

**How did you hear about TPOM?** A fellow inmate gave me a TPOM brochure and I liked what I read. It seemed like the program had what I was looking for.

**What concerns did you have when you first arrived?** I was concerned about going back to the old life. But once I met the people here and started the program, it gave me a new outlook on life. I could see the success of the program and started to believe it could help me be successful.

**How did your job search go?** I quickly found a job through Industrial that was an assembly job. I like it and I'm working through the 90-day roll-on period to get hired for a permanent position.

**What role did spiritual guidance have in your transition?** I read the Bible a lot behind bars. The encouragement to be humble and kind gave me a way to live. It gave me guidance on how to act. I still read the Bible every morning. Often the word hits the spot with exactly what I need.

**What goals for the future do you have?** I want to rekindle the relationship with my youngest children and their mother. I know it will take time and I will have to be patient. I want to repair the relationship with my father and he has faced some illness lately. It would be a great weight lifted if I could make that relationship better.

**Do you have advice for others preparing for reentry?** Stay on the right track. Don't let anyone get in the way of your success. Find your spiritual awakening and trust in the Lord. TPOM is a great place and will give you the tools for success and your transition back into society.



Scan the QR Code (left) to donate or you may contact Thomas Snow at [tsnow@tnprisonministry.org](mailto:tsnow@tnprisonministry.org) or 615-668-8281 for more information.



Sally Finnerty



Nevin Merkerson



Steven Carter



Dorothy Clawson



Tiffanie Chapman



Autumn Piehl



## MEN'S BREAKFAST OPPORTUNITIES

New TPOM events are being planned for men who are interested in hearing more about ways to volunteer at TPOM. The first Men's Breakfast is set for Saturday, May 7, 8:30-10:00 a.m. at St. Ignatius Orthodox Church in Franklin. There will be a second breakfast at NorthField

Church in Gallatin on June 11 from 8:00-9:30 am. The need for greatly expanding the number of mentors in area facilities and at TPOM will be presented to this gathering of potential volunteers. The guest speaker at St. Ignatius will be **Steve Hagen**, former NFL and college football coach. **Walt Leaver**, Vice-President of Student Relations at Lipscomb University will speak at Northfield. In recent years, Steve Hagen has provided leadership training and currently serves as a TPOM volunteer. Walt Leaver is on TPOM's Board of Directors. To be a part of one of these exciting gatherings, register at [tnprisonministry.org/events](http://tnprisonministry.org/events).

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## WOMEN'S EVENT

The 2nd Annual "Come and See" Women's Event occurs on June 16, 6:30-8:30 pm, at the Old Natchez Country Club in Franklin. We will be "Celebrating the Women of TPOM's Women's House." Attendees will have the opportunity to hear from the women who are living in the transition house and graduates as well who have deepened their faith in God. There will be a meal and entertainment. Register on TPOM's website. (This will be a Ladies Only event.)

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Register for all events at [tnprisonministry.org/events](https://tnprisonministry.org/events).

### Mentor Gathering

March 16, 2022, 6:30-7:30 pm, TPOM Reentry Center

Those who are mentoring now or in the past, including those mentoring by correspondence, have much to learn from each other. In our mentor gatherings, we come together to support one another and learn new ways to deal with mentoring challenges.

### Basic Training for New Volunteers

April 2, 8:30 am-12:30 pm, TPOM Reentry Center

If you would like to volunteer or mentor with TPOM, whether with those in either our men's or women's reentry homes or those who are still incarcerated, this is required training. This in-person workshop will be held at TPOM, 136 Rains Avenue, Nashville 37203.

### Volunteer Dinner

April 5, 6:30 pm, Hillsboro Church of Christ

Everyone who is currently volunteering or has volunteered in the past is invited to this celebration. We will have dinner, entertainment, door prizes, and hear an inspiring testimonial from a TPOM resident. Volunteers are encouraged to bring a guest.

### Men's Breakfast (Franklin)

Saturday, May 7, 8:30-10:00 am, St. Ignatius Orthodox Church, Franklin

### Advanced Volunteer Training

May 14, 8:30 am-12:00 pm, TPOM Reentry Center

For those who have already attended the required basic training, we offer advanced training on a variety of subjects that can help you gain a deeper understanding of your work with justice-involved individuals. This in-person workshop will be held at TPOM, 136 Rains Avenue, Nashville 37203. Register at [tnprisonministry.org/events](https://tnprisonministry.org/events).

### Men's Breakfast (Hendersonville/Gallatin)

June 11, 8:00-9:30 am,  
NorthField Church, 2100 Nashville Pike, Gallatin 37066

### 2nd Annual "Come and See" Women's Event

June 16, 6:30-8:30 pm,  
Old Natchez Country Club, 115 Gardengate Dr., Franklin 37069  
The Women's Event returns this summer. Mark your calendars and reserve your place by registering on the TPOM website. (This event is for ladies only.)

### 2022 Annual Benefit Dinner - TPOM and Tokens

September 27, 2022, George Shinn Center at Lipscomb University  
The Tokens Show plans to return! Mark your calendars now for this year's event. Registration opens July 1, 2022.



## GRADUATE SPOTLIGHT

## SALLY FINNERTY

**Sally Finnerty** recently graduated from TPOM Reentry. She speaks about her experiences in the program and the new future she now sees as possible.

**Tell us how you came to TPOM.** My original thought was to make parole and go home, but my first home plan didn't work out. Another inmate who got to go to the TPOM seminar at Bledsoe gave me a brochure and it looked like a good program. By the time I talked with Cynthia and Michelle, I knew it was the place for me.

**What were some of the things you were thinking about when you first arrived?** I was nervous. I left prison with nothing--no clothes, no money, no idea even how I would make a phone call. But we pulled up to the house and it was so beautiful, so much more than I had imagined. I got clothes from the supply at Radnor, was handed a phone to use, and food stamps were ready for those first days. Everything fell into place. There was a lot to do, but it was not overwhelming. The program anticipated my every need. From picking me up at the bus station to buying my first McDonald's meal, there has been someone at every step of the way to tell me what's next.

**How else has TPOM been able to help with your reentry?** Fred worked hard with me to find the appropriate place. I ended up at Jason's Deli and it's been a good job for me. The classes have been very good and the AA group was good. The interns and the counseling really helped me. I'd love to give back someday soon. People here helped me with the spiritual side of things as well. Sometimes you may get tired, but you keep going and the program works. It helps you develop habits that you should have. Someone is always available if you need some help, but most of the time they anticipate what you need.

**What do you think people need to understand about incarceration?** There is a lot of loneliness. I missed talking with others about normal daily life. In most cases during incarceration, there is not much preparation for a woman to come into the workplace. The college courses in some places are a great idea. Some people might be surprised how much a simple project like providing a gift bag at Christmas time means to the incarcerated.

**What goals do you have for the future?** I've got a 13-year-old son that I've stayed in contact with almost daily. I'll go where he needs me to be. If TPOM comes to Memphis (near her home), I want in, at least as a volunteer. I think helping other people who have had this experience will give me a purpose.

**What advice would you give others who are considering the program?** If you're ready for a positive life change, this is the place to be. Open your heart and soul. With God's help and TPOM, you'll be able to be successful.



## TENNESSEE PRISON OUTREACH MINISTRY

136 Rains Avenue • Nashville, TN 37203

### BOARD SPOTLIGHT



Kimberly McCall recently joined the TPOM board and brings academic credentials, experience with the justice system, and a heart for this ministry. She currently serves as the Academic Director and Assistant Professor at the Gray Institute for Law, Justice, and Society at Lipscomb University. For four years she worked as Staff Attorney for the Chief Justice of the Tennessee Supreme Court. She recently taught a pre-law course in the LIFE program that Lipscomb offers at the women's prison. She was deeply impressed as the women shared their faith and stories and discussed the relationship between law

and justice. We are grateful for the gifts and caring heart that Kimberly shares with the ministry.

Kimberly says, "It is an honor and joy to get the opportunity to support the good work that the Lord is doing at TPOM. The continued growth and impact of this ministry reveal the very real need and the effectiveness of TPOM's services. I pray for God's continued blessing upon this ministry and for all of the individuals who work with and are somehow touched by TPOM. This is a very exciting time for TPOM, as it continues to grow and flourish, and I look forward to seeing the different ways God will use TPOM to further His Kingdom."

#### BOARD MEMBERS

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**Tennessee Prison Outreach Ministry**  
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