



Comments – Southeastern Correctional Institute Landcaster, OH – Christmas Wings Party December 3, 2005

Chaplain Bill Akridge sent the following report to the Rev. Gary Sims, Head Chaplain for the Ohio Prison System:

“We hosted the first ever Wings Christmas Party in the state of Ohio. We had an attendance of about 85 inmates, 200 inmate family members, 40 volunteers, and a whole host of support staff to include Warden Saunders.

We had a Bible story, a Christmas skit to include the children of inmates who played the part of angels, and Christmas carols. We also had crafts, and assorted mixers to get people involved. Ann Edenfield Sweet was the leader and did a super job. Thank you for putting me in contact with her and her ministry.

We also handed out Guidepost knitted sweaters to the children who attended. The inmates at SCI are to start knitting the sweaters for Guidepost magazine.

We also had a presentation by Debbie Walsh from Operation Starting Line.

We consumed over \$600 worth of pizza. Area churches furnished dozens upon dozens of cookies.

The *Lancaster Gazette* is to publish an article about the party. A video tape was made of the party.”

Additional comments sent to me included:

“Thanks again for a super day. The Wings Christmas Party had the largest attendance by inmates and their families at an event at SCI. I feel that God used the party to touch and heal some of our families.” Chaplain Bill Akridge

It was such a joy to hold our first Wings Party in an Ohio prison! I did an original 1 ½ hour training event for about 22 volunteers. After that all training and coordination was completed by phone and email. Yet, over 40 volunteers were able to give of their time and talents and a successful party was held. It's amazing what a few volunteers, some caring staff, and God's direction can accomplish!

It always touches my heart to type up these comments. If anyone EVER doubts that our efforts are worth it, all we ever need to do is read the words below to know that lives were touched, hope was given, and God's unconditional love was experienced. THANKS to all our volunteers who gave their love and time; for the staff who so graciously welcomed us and the family members with respect and care; for Guideposts Magazine who for 11 years has provided magazines, Christmas cards, sweaters, and other inspirational materials to all our guests; to the many volunteers who baked delicious homemade cookies; to the churches in the Lancaster area who gave so generously; to some of the grocery stores in the area; and lastly to Warden Mark Saunders and his staff at SCI, including Paula Duplessis and Chaplain Bill Akridge, for allowing us and trusting us to bring God's love into the prison.

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THANKS to everyone! I'm honored and humbled to work with all of you. In His love, Ann
Duplicate comments were not included.

I came to the Wings Party today because:

1. I wanted my children to have a happy holiday with their father.
2. Someone would be there that would love me.
3. I love my son very much.
4. To have family oriented time with my fiancée and children.
5. To spend time with loved ones.
6. To visit my brother and have fun.
7. To celebrate the joy of the Birth of our Savior with family.
8. I wanted to spend time with my grandson.
9. To celebrate Christmas with a loved one.
10. I thought it would be a nice program and it was.
11. I came to see my daddy.
12. I'm thankful for food.
13. The person who made a difference in my life is my brother.
14. Opportunity to share Christmas program with loved ones.
15. To see my dad.
16. All the men here are workers and I came to volunteer and lend my services. (The inmates were "trained" to be volunteers and helpers.)
17. I felt it would be fun.
18. To visit family.
19. My family member needs us.
20. Share the day with my son.
21. Pizza!! Family, for it's Christmas.
22. I wanted to be able to see my family and hear about the Lord.
23. Free visitation with son.
24. I needed some good time with the family.
25. So I could visit my boyfriend and he could see his kids.
26. I thought it would be a good way to help my children get to know grandpa better.
27. To have a Christmas celebration with my son.
28. Chauffeur.
29. Mother wanting to see son.
30. I wanted to see the impact of love for such a new event.
31. To see inmate and have fun.
32. My boys wanted to be with their Daddy.
33. Only time I get to see my granddaughter.
34. I'm always glad to take part in anything that would lift up and encourage our family members as examples.
35. To volunteer.
36. My husband asked myself and my son to come.
37. To spend time with family.
38. My fiancée is in prison and I came to see him.
39. I wanted to help folks have fun.
40. To see my husband and be with my family.
41. To see our son, Dad, and grandson.
42. To spend time with people that we love.
43. I was visiting my brother for Christmas.
44. Wanted to be with my son.
45. This is a good opportunity to be and celebration for Christmas for my son.
46. To celebrate the holidays.

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- 47. I love my husband.
- 48. I wanted to visit with my son and family together.

The highlights of the party for me were:

- 49. Seeing the children and watching them. Kids with the halos in the play.
- 50. Seeing smiles on everyone's faces.
- 51. Spiritual feeling.
- 52. When I went up on the stage with my dad.
- 53. Being able to spend time with my family and the pizza. (I haven't had pizza in over two years.)
- 54. Crafts and decorating cookies.
- 55. Spending time together.
- 56. Spending time with my loved ones and making cookies.
- 57. Seeing the children interact with their father.
- 58. The freedom with our son uninterrupted.
- 59. Seeing my daughter. Bringing my daughter and getting an extra visit with my son.
- 60. All the little kids.
- 61. How all the Wings volunteers were so helpful.
- 62. Making cookies. Everyone being together. Little kids doing activities. Time with family.
- 63. Great time to visit with our son.
- 64. Great time doing crafts with my daughter.
- 65. Singing with my family.
- 66. Everything! Just wonderful!
- 67. Visiting other families. Mostly finding out about a support group. (Wings for L.I.F.E.)
- 68. Being able to interact with my guests.
- 69. Interaction with loved ones – participation in activities.
- 70. Singing and eating.
- 71. Freedom to move about unrestricted.
- 72. Doing crafts and cookies.
- 73. The "Play" and the fudge brownie.
- 74. Interacting with other families.
- 75. Playing games.
- 76. Spend time with my family.
- 77. Opportunity to bring more than one kid.
- 78. Decorating the cookies.
- 79. Meeting people.
- 80. Sitting around the table eating pizza and talking.
- 81. Pastor's Christmas story.
- 82. To eat.
- 83. Fellowshiping.
- 84. Making crafts with the children.
- 85. See our loved ones. Food and games.
- 86. Singing and fellowship with one another.
- 87. The sweaters were great!
- 88. Getting to see family.
- 89. To see dad.
- 90. The crafts.
- 91. Making the wreaths and singing and the skit.
- 92. Touch of the outside. Get to observe a lot of things!
- 93. Getting to know other people. Feeling not so alone.
- 94. Seeing the turnout.
- 95. Being together as a family.
- 96. See my husband do things with our daughters.

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97. The pizza, cookies, and getting to do those things with my family.
98. Watching the children.
99. Getting to meet the other inmates and loved ones.
100. Being with wonderful people.
101. Making Christmas cards and wreaths.
102. Taking our daughter around to do crafts.
103. Playing the games.
104. How God was lifted up and the real reason for the season was made known.
105. Singing Christmas carols.
106. Watching the kids have fun and the families together.
107. The play!!!!
108. Gives us a morale boost.
109. Fellowship and food.
110. That they got to spend time together and do things like they used to.
111. Group participation.
112. Helps the inmates and families and gives them something to look forward to.
113. It's a great help to our family.
114. Singing, birthday month, spending time, with his kids.
115. Watching husband with kids.
116. To see my brother/son. This was like a gift.
117. To see husband/grandson.
118. The joyous moments of family being together.

The Prison Officials should continue to allow Wings Parties in prisons because:

119. The inmates and their families need an outlet to fellowship together.
120. Other families can come for families to communicate. Something different for inmates to do.
121. We're having a great time.
122. To let inmates know that they are loved and needed.
123. We all like this format very much. The parties ought to be continued and all visitation should incorporate this same sense of openness and friendship. – Table #100 Evaluation
124. It is a good way to bond with my family.
125. Children need time to bond with family members who are in prison.
126. It's something to look forward to. It brings families closer.
127. It is good to do games with families. (Especially for kids.)
128. Helps families.
129. Morale booster for families.
130. It is a good way for inmates to get to celebrate a little Christmas.
131. Good for children to have time to interact with their kids.
132. Getting to visit with inmate's friends – people we heard about, but did not know.
133. Making and decorating cookies.
134. The kids deserve it and it's a beautiful thing they're doing.
135. It builds families and friendship.
136. It helps morale and keeps us close to our loved inmates.
137. So people can see their family and people can't see them very much. It will mean so much to them.
138. This makes families closer to the inmates and helps families have positive memories to share.
139. Prison families need fun times together to strengthen family relationships.
140. There were no problems. Gives families a chance to see each other.
141. It sure makes the inmates a more caring person.
142. It's good. It gives opportunity to visit family without stress.
143. Good thing to continue.
144. Good for morale and as a family unit.

145. It builds spirit and a better Christmas.
146. The relaxed rules are very much appreciated.
147. Allows our loved ones to be a part of family gatherings.
148. They are fair; they're right; makes families feel good. Boosts morale.
149. It helps the morale of inmates and their families.
150. It's a change to see one of our family.
151. They are fun and get the families to unite.
152. Families need to be supportive.
153. It's a good family gathering – it makes the prisoners feel not like a bad person.
154. More informal setting than visitation.
155. It's a great help to our families.
156. Like meeting other families.
157. Not so isolated.
158. It gives the prisoner time to be with kids and family.
159. It is a good thing.
160. It helps during the holidays.
161. Chance to meet staff and family of other inmates.
162. To give them a chance to interact with one another.
163. Yes – to visit easier with family.
164. It's good.
165. The boys need a cheering up.
166. Giving guys a loving time to relieve the stress.
167. Having family together, more relaxed.
168. It allows us to do something with our prisoners.
169. All things work together for good for them that love the Lord. – Romans 8:28
170. We can see our families!
171. All went well (no problems) and it involved all of us.
172. Helps inmates and families get through the holidays.
173. It's such a blessing.
174. It's a time for inmates to connect with family during the holidays.
175. Gives inmates a chance to interact with family. Gives family a chance to visit in much better atmosphere.
176. Allows Christianity to be proclaimed.
177. It allows us to see whoever is in here for Christmas.
178. It brings out the compassionate and caring side of the correctional officers.
179. It is a good party around Christmas that you can spend with your family.

I appreciate the Guideposts Magazines, sweaters, and books; delicious donated cookies and supplies from many individuals and Krogers, Meiers, and Carnival food stores; First Presbyterian Church, the Episcopal Church, the Good Shepherd Church, and many other churches of Lancaster, Ohio who bought the pizza; the Lancaster Eagle Gazette newspaper; other many volunteers and sponsors who are to numerous to mention to tell them all thanks and:

180. You allowed my children to have a real Christmas with their father.
181. For the sweaters and for sponsoring such an important event.
182. Thank you for having faith in us.
183. Thank you once again for giving my family the opportunity to act like a family together.
184. Thank you for a great day with my son and friends.
185. Thank you and Merry Christmas!
186. We really thank you for thinking of our men. They need something nice once in a while. THANK YOU VERY MUCH! It was excellent!
187. We thank you for your kindness and we appreciate it!
188. We had a wonderful time. It was nice to spend time with our family member in a fun, non-stressful environment.

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189. God bless you for seeing everyone as a Child of God!
190. Thank you for making this possible.
191. Thank you very much for letting us come together for this gathering. God bless!
192. Thank you so much for this special day! It really helped with the holidays.
193. I really appreciate your support, and I will continue to stop at your store.
194. Thank you from the bottom of my heart. I thank you for sharing the Gospel to all of us.
195. THANKS! My kids had a great time – and so did I.
196. Good lookin' now.
197. Nice idea. Those who knit didn't have to do it. Thanks!
198. Thank you so much.
199. Thank you and God Bless!
200. The volunteers are as nice as can be. Everything went so smoothly. Thanks to the volunteers, warden, and
201. Thank you! We enjoyed this time. We were all involved. Thanks to the warden for being so nice.
202. Thank you, Merry Christmas. Happy New Year. Appreciate time and effort.
203. I love to see my dad.
204. You are greatly appreciated!
205. Thanks for making it possible for sharing our Christmas Day with our family.
206. Thank you for allowing me the chance to celebrate Christmas with my family and meet other inmate families.
207. Thanks for the help. We will remember all of you.
208. Thanks! Without your help this would not be possible.
209. Thank you so much for everything you've done. We really appreciate it.
210. Thank you! Thank you! Thank you!
211. Regular visits – only touch at the beginning and at the end. Today could hug all the time!
212. Thank you and you are most generous to brighten these men's day!
213. They do the inmates good to know someone besides family cares.
214. I love daddy!
215. Thanks and Merry Christmas.
216. Thanks and consider doing it again. We would welcome you back!
217. We always go to Meiers. Thank you.
218. Thank you. It lets the inmates know that someone cares.
219. May God bless you and keep up the visits.
220. Thank you very much!
221. Thank you for a nice program.
222. Very special to have this opportunity to be brought together.
223. We appreciate everything they're doing.
224. Thank you for letting us have a nice visit and enjoying doing everything.
225. Daddy had fun.
226. Keep up the good work. Thank you so much.

Extra comments:

227. Need play area for young kids and toddlers.
228. Church vans to bring families.