

# Women, Girls & Criminal Justice™

ADJUDICATION • CORRECTIONS • SUPPORT SERVICES

Vol. 9 No. 4

Pages 49 - 64

ISSN 1529-0689

June/July 2008

## *Building Homes, Building Lives*

### **Gender-Responsive Approach to Vocational Programming for Incarcerated Women**

In July 2001, Vermont Works for Women (VWW) established the state's first vocational training program for incarcerated women. Since then, VWW has developed a range of education programs for women incarcerated in Vermont prisons. The programs that have emerged since the initial pilot include:

- A construction trades training program that builds modular homes at the state's women's prison in Windsor;
- A mentoring program for women exiting prison;
- Prerelease employment support for women at two of the state's correctional facilities; and
- Post-release placement for the residents at a transitional home for women re-entering the community.

The organization is recognized in corrections- and community-based organizations as pioneering and effective. Over seven years, it has worked with nearly 300 women and provided them with significant employment support upon their release.

*See PROGRAMMING, next page*

## *Researching Complex Factors of Offending*

### **Examining the Connection Between Women, Employment, and Incarceration in Vermont**

by Tiffany Bluemle

Most women offenders are poor, undereducated, and unskilled. Many have never worked, have sporadic work histories, or have lived on public assistance. When the educational and work experiences of women under correctional supervision are examined, the data show that these women have been marginalized from the conventional world of work. (Bloom, Owen, and Covington, 2001.)

#### **Trades Training Program**

In 2001, Vermont Works for Women (VWW) piloted a trades training program at the new women's prison in Waterbury. In some ways, the terrain we negotiated was familiar: We have worked with thousands of Vermont women, some of them with prior criminal records, many of them with histories of physical or substance abuse, and most of them living at or near poverty. What was new for us was taking power tools into a correctional facility and encouraging women, whose every movement was supervised and prescribed, to work with these tools.

Before we launched the trades program, we phoned a dozen correctional agencies throughout the country, following leads from the Internet or from

conversations with public officials or practitioners in the field. Our goal was to identify and talk with others who had run prison-based training programs for women. Our conversations turned up few programs that enjoyed a long or sustained history, or that focused on teaching skills that would be marketable on the outside.

Today, Vermont Works for Women operates a year-round program building modular homes that are sold as affordable housing. It is an unusual collaboration that engages the energy, goodwill, and financial investment of scores of partners—the Vermont Departments of Labor, Corrections, and Economic Services; personnel at Southeast State Correctional Facility (SESCF) in Windsor; private contractors and suppliers; affordable housing agencies; individual and corporate funders; and community-based organizations.

Over the past two and one-half years, the program has produced two five-star energy-rated homes for first-time homebuyers and graduated over 50 participants. Program graduates eligible for earning time off their sentences through work have shaved more than 1,557 days off their minimum sentences—with a

*See INCARCERATION, page 58*

#### **ALSO IN THIS ISSUE**

Women, Employment, and Incarceration: A Vermont Case Study . . . . .	51
Maine's Experience With Replicating Vermont Works for Women . . . . .	57
Worth Reading . . . . .	61

PROGRAMMING, from page 49

In 2005, VWW launched a year-round training program at the Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor, VT. This program provides hands-on instruction in finish and frame carpentry, electrical wiring, plumbing, weatherization, and roofing through building modular homes that are installed as affordable housing units in Vermont communities. Since then, the program has trained over 54 women.

### *The recidivism rate for program graduates over the past two years—19%—is less than half the recidivism rate for the general female population (51%).*

Building Homes, Building Lives is a gender-responsive strategy to developing skills and capacities that are critical to meaningful, long-term employment. It is strength-based in its approach and encourages self-efficacy. It is holistic in its structure and challenges cultural biases that serve to limit women's aspirations and achievement. It is designed to meet women where they are—and to challenge them to become who they can be.

#### Program Benefits

The program's benefits to individual participants, correctional facilities, and local communities include the following:

- An opportunity for incarcerated women to learn marketable skills in fields that pay a livable wage;
- Training in both frame and finish construction skills, providing access to a range of jobs in the industry;
- Real and meaningful opportunities for participants to develop and practice "soft skills" in problem solving, communication, and teamwork;
- Continuous training that enables women to enter the program year-round;

- An opportunity for participants to develop a track record of employment and a portfolio of work;
- A reduction in the number of disciplinary actions issued against participants by corrections personnel; and
- New affordable housing units that are produced without competing with private industry (as only one to two units can be produced per year).

#### Promising Outcomes

The program's outcomes for the past two years are promising. The recidivism rate for program graduates over the past

two years—19%—is less than half the recidivism rate for the general female population (51%). Of those released from prison and eligible for work over the past two years, 75% found work. Seventy-six percent of those who found work maintained employment through the end of the fiscal year.

Because some crew members are eligible to earn time off their sentences for time worked, participants in the program earned a total of 1,557 days off their minimum sentences. This not only helped to ease prison overcrowding; it saved the state a total of \$195,000 in daily bed fees.

Over the past year, several states interested in the program have approached VWW for help in developing their own programs. Building Homes, Building Lives will be replicated in Maine this summer (see related article in this issue). Through seed grants from the John Merck Fund and Jane's Trust, VWW has developed technical and soft skills curricula, administrative materials, and an approach to technical assistance that addresses the needs and concerns of partners who are diverse and who operate under different mandates or ideals. The needs and interests of security personnel, for example, are different from those of adult educators—but the buy-in of both groups is critical to the program's ultimate success.

*For more information about Building Homes, Building Lives or technical assistance opportunities, please contact Tiffany Bluemle, executive director of Vermont Works for Women, at (800) 639-1472; TBluemle@vtworksforwomen.org.* ■

## WOMEN, GIRLS & CRIMINAL JUSTICE™

#### Board of Advisors

**Editor:** Russ Immarigeon  
**Managing Editor:** Roslyn Myers, Esq.  
**Editorial Director:** Deborah J. Launer  
**Publisher:** Felicia A Rosenfeld  
**Associate Publishers:** Mark E. Peel  
 Arthur H. Rosenfeld

**Barbara Bloom, Ph.D.**, San Jose State University, Petaluma, CA  
**Harold W. Clarke**, Director, State of Nebraska, Department of Correctional Services, Lincoln, NB  
**Angela Y. Davis, Ph.D.**, History of Consciousness Department, University of California, Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA  
**Kate DeCou, LICSW**, Assistant Deputy Superintendent, Hampden County Correctional Center, Ludlow, MA  
**M. Kay Harris, A.M.**, Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, Temple University, Philadelphia, PA  
**Meda Chesney-Lind, Ph.D.**, Women's Studies Program, University of Hawaii—Manoa, Honolulu, HI  
**Tracy Huling**, Justice Policy Consultant, New York  
**Jolanta Juskiewicz, Ph.D.**, Deputy Director, Pretrial Services Resource Center, Washington, DC

**Elaine Lord**, Superintendent, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility, Bedford Hills, NY  
**Joann B. Morton, D.P.A.**, College of Criminal Justice, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC  
**Sue Osthoff**, Executive Director, National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women, Philadelphia, PA  
**Paula Schaefer**, St. Paul, MN  
**Tracy Payne Wilson**, National Association Of Attorney Generals, Washington, DC

Affiliations shown for identification purposes only. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of a writer's agency or association.

Women, Girls & Criminal Justice is published bimonthly by Civic Research Institute, Inc., 4478 U.S. Route 27, P.O. Box 585, Kingston, NJ 08528. Periodicals postage pending at Kingston, NJ and additional mailing offices. Subscriptions: \$159 per year in the United States and Canada. \$30 additional per year elsewhere. Vol. 9, No. 4 June/July 2008. Copyright © 2008 by Civic Research Institute, Inc. All rights reserved.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Civic Research Institute, Inc., P.O. Box 585, Kingston, NJ 08528. Women, Girls & Criminal Justice is a trademark owned by Civic Research Institute and may not be used without express permission. The information in this publication is not intended to replace the services of a trained legal or health professional. Neither the editors, nor the contributors, nor Civic Research Institute, Inc. is engaged in rendering legal, psychological, health or other professional services. The editor, contributors and Civic Research Institute, Inc. specifically disclaim any liability, loss or risk, personal or otherwise, which is incurred as a consequence, directly or indirectly, of the use and application of any of the contents of this report letter.

*Literature Review*

# Women, Employment, and Incarceration: A Vermont Case Study

by Judy Harden, Ph.D.

Unemployment and related indicators of financial status are consistently associated with criminal activity and incarceration of women. (Bloom et al., 2003; Wolf, 2006; Steffensmeir and Allen, 1996; and Renzetti, Goodstein, and Miller, 2006.) However, very few of the studies addressing this relationship suggest interventions that might provide better opportunities for economic self-sufficiency among currently and formerly incarcerated women. The literature tells us little about how job training and better employment opportunities can make a difference in lowering women's rates of incarceration.

This article is a companion to Tiffany Bluemle's article in this issue that reports the results of a project that explores the relationship between job training and employment opportunities for currently and formerly incarcerated women in Vermont. This project also addresses questions about the nature of the relationship between economic marginality and incarceration, that is:

- What were the financial challenges existing prior to incarceration;
- What were the familial/community resources available for these women (especially in terms of education and employment); and
- What can the educational and employment histories of these women tell us about interventions needed to prevent future criminal activity.

## Gender Specificity

Because there are multiple intersecting issues that result in a woman's incarceration, and because it is impossible to isolate any one factor, this project explores questions about the nature of the relationship between unemployment, underemployment, and other pathways to crime, including substance abuse, difficult relationships, child caring responsibilities, mental illness, and

*Judy Harden may be contacted at Women Evolving, POB 199, Calais, VT 05648; (802) 223-8997; JHarden1@gmail.com.*

family instability. A literature review of these topics will provide a context for understanding how increased economic self-sufficiency might ameliorate other factors associated with incarceration, such as a reduction in pressure to commit consumer-based crimes, the most prevalent category of crime among women.

In addressing these questions, special attention will be paid to gender-specific factors, such as the particular challenges that confront women's economic self-sufficiency in light of their role as primary caretakers of children, or the gender-related needs of women for job training opportunities. Finally, a primary goal of this project is to identify gender-specific job training and employment opportunities for increasing economic self-sufficiency among currently and formerly incarcerated women.

We will review the research that has been done on the circumstances under which women have been incarcerated, with special focus on the economic pathway to crime. Since there are multiple pathways to crime among women, none of which can be singled out as a primary causal factor, we will also review some studies in areas that form, with economic marginality, a web of concerns and stressors (Richie, 2001), including family instability, abuse history, and substance addiction. We will end this section with a review of studies that discuss approaches and programs that have been implemented, especially ones that focus on education and employment.

## Economic Pathway to Crime

When the educational and work experiences of women under correctional supervision are examined, the data show that these women have been marginalized from the conventional world of work. (Bloom et al., 2003, at 48.)

Women who have been involved in criminal activity face challenges and pressures, such as poverty-related deficits in education, employment history, and income, which marginalize them from

conventional employment. Moreover, nationally, an increase in the number of female-headed households, with a subsequent increase in child-rearing responsibilities for mothers, and economic policies that negatively affect women (especially mothers) disproportionately, have resulted in declining opportunities for mainstream living, let alone economic self-sufficiency. In this context, crime can become a means to survive.

**Low Educational Level.** Typical profiles of women involved in the criminal justice system indicate they have a very low level of educational attainment and few employment-related skills. (Anderson, 2006; Bloom et al., 2003.) In 1999, statistics compiled by the Bureau of Justice Statistics show that nationwide, and in Vermont as well, only about half of the incarcerated women in state or local jails had a high school degree. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999.) Among those who do become incarcerated, there is limited access to post-secondary education, and this access is further limited through Pell Grant eligibility criteria that prohibit grant awards for student loans to convicted felons. Drug offenses further limit women's access to education; those convicted are not eligible for educational opportunities through the Higher Education Act of 1998.

**Underemployment.** Lack of education has many far-reaching effects, one of which is underemployment and unemployment. At the time of arrest, well over half (60%) of the women in state prisons nationally reported that they were unemployed in the year prior to arrest, one-third of whom were not seeking employment. (Taxman and Cropsey, 2006.) In Vermont, an alarming finding was that half of the women in our incarcerated sample (again, see Tiffany Bluemle's article in this issue) had never worked at any time. In addition to the low wages earned by these women, most of the jobs required low levels of skills, leading nowhere. (Owen and Bloom, 1995.)

*See VERMONT, next page*

VERMONT, from page 51

Further, among those who reported employment, \$6.50 was the top wage earned by two-thirds of the women; most incomes fell below \$600 per month. The other sources of income among incarcerated women, according to researchers in California (Bloom et al., 1994) were largely illegal (31%), or some kind of public support (22%); only 37% were working at a legitimate job. Even women who have better-than-low-wage jobs earn less than men do historically. (Anderson, 2002.)

In comparing social backgrounds of male and female offenders (Chesney-Lind and Shelden, 1998; Steffensmeier and Allan, 1996), it is true that both tend to come from low socioeconomic status, are disproportionately from minority groups, are poorly educated, and under- or unemployed. The big difference between men and women is the greater extent to which women are responsible for dependent children (Bloom et al., 2003), which frequently limits their ability to pursue further education or full-time employment. In Vermont alone, 80% of the women in prison are mothers, and 75% were the primary caregivers at the time of arrest. (Baege et al., 2007.) Steffensmeier (1993) concurs that growing economic pressures on women stem from an increase in rates of divorce, illegitimacy, and resultant female-headed households, along with greater responsibility for children. He argues that these factors, among others, have resulted in an increase in property crimes and other consumer-based crimes, such as shoplifting, check fraud, welfare fraud.

**Primary Caretakers.** Most women involved in the criminal justice system are heads of households or the primary caretakers of their children (Baege et al., 2007), and in 1997, 32% of all female heads of households lived below the poverty line. (Bloom et al., 2003.) Welfare reform legislation in the 1990s has made it much more difficult for women to support themselves and their children. Other legislation has added to the burden of these women through making them ineligible for benefits if they have been convicted of drug offenses—which the great majority have been—until their involvement with the criminal justice system has ended. Further, convictions may make

them ineligible for public housing or Section 8 subsidies.

**Effects of Economic Policy Changes.** Because women appear disproportionately among the poor, changes in economic policy affect them more directly than men. For example, Haney (2004) cites studies in the United States (Sutton, 2000; Beckett and Western, 2001) that point to a negative correlation between welfare spending and rates of incarceration, so that the less money spent on welfare benefits, the higher the rate of incarceration in that state. This negative correlation has also been found to hold in cross-national studies. (Sutton, 2000.) Countries which do not care for the economically marginalized through welfare spending tend to rely on imprisonment of those people unable to sustain themselves through legal means. Imprisonment, especially for drug-related crimes, further limits their opportunities for becoming economically self-sufficient.

Thus, most incarcerated women come from backgrounds of little experience in the world of mainstream employment, with few educational or job skills to enable them to join that mainstream. Moreover, recent changes in some legislative or regulatory policies have unintended consequences which further marginalize these women economically, and which increase their vulnerability to alternative means of obtaining money, including crime.

### Other Pathways

Women who have become involved with the criminal justice system have experienced marginalization in other areas as well, most of which interact with low educational attainment and under- or unemployment to result in criminal involvement. Studies adopting the “pathways to crime” perspective, as described in Bloom et al. (2003), show the relationship between certain histories (personal abuse and trauma, family instability, mental illness, substance addiction, troubled or inadequate relationships, and criminal involvement) and economic and social marginality. Many of these factors are associated with poverty. According to these authors, “Among women, the most common pathways to crime are based on survival (of abuse and poverty) and substance abuse.” (Bloom et al., 2003, at 52.) This perspective attempts to take a whole life perspective when seeking to understand

causes of crime. These factors are not necessarily causal in a linear way, but they intersect with each other to create a web of stressors that impede movement towards adult independence and autonomy, especially economic autonomy.

### Substance Abuse

Drug and alcohol addiction are pervasive among incarcerated women and are directly or indirectly connected to the other pathways to crime. Women convicted of drug- and alcohol-related crimes comprise a large percentage of the incarcerated population and, historically as well as currently, female drug offenders have come from unstable families in communities lacking basic economic and social resources; these are poor women, and often poor women of color. (Martin, 2006.) According to Bloom et al. (2003), women’s involvement with drugs begins later in life than men’s because of tears in the social fabric of resources at the individual, familial, and environmental levels. This breakdown of protective factors is associated with:

an increase in childhood fears, anxieties, phobias, and failed relationships. The roots of female drug use often lie in psychiatric disorders that began prior to the drug use. (Bloom et al., 2003, at 42.)

The drug use frequently begins within the context of a relationship with a male sexual partner and becomes part of the sustaining fabric of that relationship.

**Not Necessary Connection.** Martin (2006) describes an interesting twist in the history of women’s drug use and criminality: It is an example of how criminality is sometimes related to shifts at the social-contextual or policy level, rather than simply changes in individual behavior. Martin’s historical review shows that white, middle-class women formed the majority of the opiate addict population at the beginning of the twentieth century because they were the heaviest users of medications that contained opiates. Thus, Martin argues, the connection between drug use and crime is not a necessary one, but one that is affected by factors such as the increasing availability of drugs like crack cocaine, scientific information showing the dangers of certain drugs, and, perhaps most importantly, the policy responses to drug

See VERMONT, next page

VERMONT, from page 52

use among women. The latter involves the major policy shift in viewing drug use as a criminal justice issue rather than as a health issue, and the shift in control of narcotics from physicians to law enforcement. The culmination of these shifts was Nixon's "war on drugs," which started in 1972, with associated punitive measures to control drug use, partly in response to increasing social disorder and rising crime rates in general. The accessibility of cheap crack cocaine (and ease of noninjection use) paved the way for an increase in involvement of poor women in the drug world, as well as an increase in the overall number of users and dealers. The policy response to this increase was ever-increasing punitiveness regarding the use and sale of drugs, and a subsequent development of an underground drug economy, including an increasing number and proportion of women under the control of the criminal justice system.

Thus, Martin's argument is that some women always used drugs and had addiction problems, but they were not related to crime until drug control policies shifted drug control to the criminal justice system. A link between drug use and crime was forged, an underground economy developed in order to supply need for now-illegal drugs, and addicts, already a vulnerable and needy population, turned to crime for income. The women who became involved in this underground drug economy were women who came from communities of extreme poverty and from families that were often involved in the drug culture, with associated levels of incarceration and fragmented family life.

**Mandatory Minimum Sentencing.** Another example of how policy changes in the legal system can affect the rate of incarceration is the "war on drugs," which was associated with an 888% increase in the number of women incarcerated for drug offenses in a 10-year period. (Mauer et al., 1999.) Mandatory minimum sentencing structures removed judicial discretion in considering women's child-caring responsibilities when formulating a sentence, so that a significant increase in incarceration of women rather than probation or diversionary programs resulted. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999.) These laws also did not allow for distinctions among

levels of involvement in drug crimes, so that women who actually played minor or supporting roles in drug crimes were given severe sentences.

### Family Instability

Approximately 42% of incarcerated women come from a single-parent home (NIMH, 2001), a factor that is associated with a high rate of poverty (Anderson, 2002), and 17% lived in foster care or in a group home at some point during childhood. A study in Vermont among incarcerated women (Steele, 2006) showed that the great majority of 96 incarcerated women had had similar family fragmentation: 70% lived outside their home as a teen, 34% were placed in protective custody as a minor, and 30% lived in multiple foster homes. Among those living in foster homes, the range was from one to 45 different homes, with half of those living in more than six different homes. In addition, an astonishing 50% of women had an immediate family member who had been in prison. (Bloom et al., 2003.) This kind of background is one more indicator of the absence of conventional resources at the center of women's lives, resources that could support education and other means to employability.

### Abuse

Another aspect of family instability is the presence of physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, which is estimated to characterize anywhere from 40% to 80% of women in prisons across the country. (Owen and Bloom, 1995; Browne et al., 1999; Chesney-Lind, 1989.) Women involved in the criminal justice system are more likely than men to be victims as children or adults. Experiences of abuse in unstable family situations can lead to running away from home; efforts to survive on the street, a struggle for money that can easily lead to illegal sources of income given a paucity of conventional means. This can also undermine stability of or even access to education, personal self-respect and sense of integrity, personal sense of power in the world to achieve a goal, and emotional connections in the world. It is not surprising that women in prison have a much higher incidence of mental disorders than women in the community (and than men) and that this incidence is correlated with a history

of physical or sexual abuse. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1999.)

Women who have been subject to domestic violence need material and economic resources for housing, educational and vocational training, and job development skills to increase their likelihood of being able to begin new lives, independent of abusive partners. Without these resources, women are stuck in a dependent and vulnerable position, and are more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system.

### Gender Inequality

Steffensmeier and Allan (1996) observe that economic marginality and related criminal activity are also affected by gender inequality. They argue that patriarchal power relations affect women through victimization. Traditional gender roles are prevalent among both male and female offenders. For women, this contributes to lowered expectations of economic self-sufficiency and a corresponding reduction of motivation. Combine this kind of role entrapment with increased primary care-taking responsibilities and female-headed households through divorce and illegitimacy (Steffensmeier, 1993) and increased economic pressure occurs. Similarly, Richie (1996) argues that women and girls' vulnerability to male violence forces some out of the home prematurely, with negative effects on education and an increased need for money through any means possible.

All of these factors (limited educational attainment, under- and unemployment, gender inequality in the workplace, reduced assistance for those in need through social welfare policy, increasing involvement in the drug subculture, changes in the drug policies which disproportionately and negatively affected women, and a background of family instability and fragmentation, including various forms of abuse) have the net effect of disconnecting these women from conventional community resources like school, work, and stable family life, resources that protect most of us from ongoing struggles for economic sufficiency and support us in leading independent, productive lives. The absence of such resources and buffers in the lives of women leave them vulnerable to criminal activity as a way to survive.

See VERMONT, next page

VERMONT, from page 53

### Interventions

"Policies, programs, and services need to respond specifically to women's pathways in and out of crime and to the contexts of their lives that support criminal behavior." (Bloom et al., 2003, at 85.)

What is needed is:

Access to a full range of work and programs designed to expand economic and social roles for women, with an emphasis on education, career counseling, and exploration of nontraditional training; relevant life skills, including parenting and social and economic assertiveness; and prerelease and work/education release programs. (American Correctional Association, 1995, at 2.)

Policy shifts in the early 1970s resulted in the harsh and punitive sentencing of women. The current call for gender-specific programming, rather than haphazard and minor modifications of interventions essentially designed for men, is a refreshing change from the historical reality of interventions with women involved with the criminal justice system. One important aspect of gender-specific programming is that the complexity of pathways to women's criminal activity is approached through a continuum-of-care model that addresses issues beyond job training alone.

**Gender-Specific Programming and Continuum-of-Care Model.** Bloom and Covington define gender-specific programming as:

multidimensional and based on theoretical perspectives that acknowledge women's pathways into the criminal justice system. These approaches address social (e.g., poverty, race, class, and gender inequality) and cultural factors. These interventions address such issues as abuse, violence, family relationships, substance abuse, and co-occurring disorders. They provide a strength-based approach to treatment and skill building. The emphasis is on self-efficacy. (Bloom and Covington, 2000, at 11.)

Belknap (2000) suggests that such programs must include an orientation to women that goes beyond making them good wives and mothers to helping them become financially independent.

This means that interventions must go beyond parenting classes, for example, educational goals must go beyond the GED, and vocational programs must go beyond traditional feminine skills like cosmetology and cooking.

To take into account women's specific pathways to crime and the ways in which their involvement with crime is different from that of men, some authors (Bloom et al., 2003; Jacobs, 2001; Leadership Champlain, 2007; O'Brien, 2006) have emphasized the need for a model of "continuum-of-care" or integrated services to support women's advancement toward economic viability. Martin's (2006) discussion of the need for a comprehensive approach to drug treatment seems applicable to programs for increasing employability. She argues that focusing on one problem alone, such as drug addiction, is insufficient, in view of gender issues—women need support for increasing their belief in themselves and what they can accomplish, they need treatment for mental disorders resulting from histories of abuse and trauma, and they need support for their primary care-taking responsibilities. A review of case studies of successful programs for incarcerated women suggested that even education or job training itself is not enough, and should be combined with additional supports such as "educational programs that can help women critically examine their lives in relation to social structures framed by race, class, and gender" (Baeye et al., 2007, at 52), and programs teaching practical social skills needed in successful employment (how to deal with racism on the job, how to deal with a difficult boss, etc.). O'Brien (2006) concluded that women need to have support for a gradual re-entry into the labor market in such a way that they can also meet the sometimes complex and demanding post-release program requirements. This study also calls for a comprehensive approach to the multiple needs of women prior to their release.

**Same Resources Needed as Before Incarceration.** This call for a comprehensive approach to programming is echoed in a proposal based upon a review of national employment programs serving ex-offenders and upon interviews with formerly incarcerated women in Vermont. (Leadership Champlain, 2007.) Recommendations for a program for women in transition from prison

included job readiness skills, life skills that enhance a woman's ability to govern her own life, job placement assistance, child-care support, affordable housing, and flexible hours (to accommodate probation/parole requirements).

Richie (2001) provides another call for a comprehensive approach to the complexity of pathways to crime among women. She argues that most of the women re-entering their communities following incarceration need the same resources and supports they needed before they went to prison. These include:

- Substance abuse treatment;
- Physical and mental health care;
- Adequate, accessible, and affordable child care;
- Transportation;
- Safe and secure housing; and
- Educational and employment training and supports.

Family members are frequently limited in their own resources, public agencies have limiting eligibility requirements for their services, and women can easily become discouraged and pulled back toward illegal activity. Richie describes these needs as forming:

[a] complex web of concerns and stressors that often compete with and exacerbate one another. The woman will need an apartment to regain custody of her children, she will need a job to get an apartment, she will need to get treatment for her addiction to be able to work, and initial contact with her children may only be possible during business hours if they are in custody of the state. (Richie, 2001, at 380-81.)

**Broadening Base of Support.** Several studies give concrete examples of successful programs that involve a comprehensive approach to education, or preparation for employment, and which involve members of the community in addressing some of the needs of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated women in moving forward with their lives.

Several studies in the literature (Luke, 2002; Fine et al., 2001; Torre and Fine, 2005) reviewed in Baeye et al. (2007)

See VERMONT, next page

VERMONT, from page 54

identified successful components of educational programs for incarcerated women, including the involvement of community volunteers and professionals, creating “a community of learners,” which provided mentors and role models. Other components were voluntary participation in the program, an emphasis on completion of the program requirements for the resulting sense of mastery, and the development of critical thinking skills of benefit to the women making decisions toward getting their lives back together.

One example of an innovative program underway in Vermont that is based upon training by professional tradeswomen from the community is the Modular Home Project. (Vermont Works for Women, 2007.) This program combines job training with training in some of the “soft skills” related to successful employment. Training in nontraditional work for women occurs on-site, in the women’s prison, through the building of a modular home that is later transported to a home-site, available for purchase through local land trusts or housing agencies. Incarcerated women learn all the skills necessary for building a house—plumbing, electricity, construction, etc.—with the help of female professionals in these areas. An important component of this training is one full day (out of four days per week) devoted to the development of skills such as teamwork and the ability to function as part of a group working towards a larger goal; self-confidence in the face of new, unfamiliar tasks; problem solving; math competence; leadership abilities and learning to teach; good work ethics, commitment, and forbearance.

Further support for a broad base of participation in interventions for incarcerated women comes from studies described by Fine et al. (2001) and Flavin (2004). They found that programs that include the participation of families and community members in the planning and implementation of training seem to be more successful than those involving the individual woman alone. Participation of people with no history with the individual women can help support family members or friends who are frustrated in their own sometimes long-term efforts to help and can help illuminate the way to more options.

Mentoring is one way for community members to be closely involved in helping women address the multiple challenges they face when re-entering the community. Mentors can play a critical role for women as they begin job training and seeking employment. (Hale, 2001.) They can offer a caring, continuous, stable relationship, and that relationship can be a model of how to establish and develop a healthy support system—something that is sorely missing for most women who become incarcerated—and can help them navigate the challenges of moving into the world of work. Since so much of the social fabric of these women’s lives is torn, successful programs must help to restore this; Flavin (2004) refers to this as mobilizing social capital. O’Brien (2002), in a study of formerly incarcerated African-American women in a residential program, found that those who had employment, housing, and an assigned mentor were the most successful.

Preliminary data from a small mentoring program in Vermont indicate a reduced rate of recidivism among women who worked closely with a mentor within the context of an active mentoring group. (Mercy Connections, 2007.) This program provides intensive training of mentors, with regular meetings of all mentors and mentees to discuss common issues, and the use of former inmates among the mentors.

### Policy Interventions

In addition to interventions described above that focus on the needs of individual women in regard to employment and job training, interventions at the policy level must be considered as well. The problems of unemployment, economic marginality, and related criminal activity must be defined beyond individual difficulties or “shortcomings.” That is, interventions must address the social-contextual factors that lead to and support criminal activity among women, including gender inequality in wages, sentencing laws and social policies that consistently disadvantage poor and minority women, and the growing disparity in income and opportunity that results in poverty and hopelessness. In addition, interventions should be based upon and commensurate with expanded social and cultural expectations of women’s

roles and work to include nontraditional avenues of work. (Martin, 2006.)

**Agency Partnerships.** One kind of response at this level is described by Berman at the Center for Effective Public Policy in her comprehensive study on gender-responsive approaches to transitioning women offenders from prison to community. She calls for partnerships with local or statewide workforce development agencies “in order to ensure that institutional education, job readiness, and employment training match the opportunities available to women on the outside.” (Berman, n.d., at 16.) It is also important to make sure that the job skills acquired will lead to jobs with wages sufficient for them to support themselves and their children, and that the job skills will be ones they can legally use (not for jobs which require a license their incarceration makes them ineligible for). Although subsidized employment and minimum wage work may be necessary as a beginning, this kind of work should be supported by mentors, family, and job training programs as a first step, with identifiable means and resources towards the goal of meaningful employment and sufficient wages.

**Role of Community.** In a similar vein, Richie points to the necessity for looking beyond individual women to the communities from which the women came, and to which most of them will return, and the importance of designing programs that strengthen the capacity of the community to work with this population. Through building linkages between community-based organizations and other services, prevention of incarceration could more easily be accomplished. Among other things, services would need to be close to where the women live, they would need to be gender and culturally appropriate, and would need to begin while the women are incarcerated. “A community-development approach would incorporate policy-level work, community organizing, and social-change strategies to increase the quality of community life overall and for women specifically.” (Richie, 2001, at 384.) This call for coordinated services for women returning to their communities is echoed by several studies. (Bloom et al., 2003; Jacobs, 2001; Martin, 2006.)

See VERMONT, next page

VERMONT, from page 55

### Alternatives Can Mitigate Speed, Frequency of Revolving Door

We continue to put more and more women behind bars despite the fact that most do not present a risk to public safety. Most of these women are mothers, and their families suffer greatly. We know that drug treatment and alternatives to incarceration are a much better investment of taxpayer dollars, and, unlike incarceration, these programs equip women to live self-sufficient, law-abiding lives in the community. (Anne Jacobs, Women's Prison Association.)

Rehabilitative interventions must also take into account the fact that some of the original pathways to crime become exacerbated by imprisonment: loss of employment, housing, and frequently reduced access to public assistance, educational and employment opportunities, and sometimes, even familial support. (Bloom et al., 2003; Baege et al., 2007; O'Brien, 2006.) Many of the social policies enacted in the nineties aimed at drug-related crimes had a heightened negative impact on women, in part because of their unique vulnerabilities: low levels of education with limited job skills, high rates of unemployment, subsequent high needs for public assistance, and primary child care-taking responsibilities. One example is Temporary Assistance to Needy Families, which makes women who are convicted of a drug-related felony offense ineligible for cash assistance and food stamps. Another example is ineligibility for tuition assistance for higher education. Public housing assistance restrictions can limit options for women, which in turn can limit options for safe (nonabusive), affordable housing in areas which would allow her to reconnect with the supportive resources and people she needs to begin a crime-free life with her children. Finally, the Adoption and Safe Families Act, which calls for hearings regarding custody of children after only a year of separation, can jeopardize a mother's parental rights and her movement towards family stability before she has even left prison. (Bloom et al., 2003; Jacobs, 2001.)

These added economic and emotional stressors often lead women back into reoffending, often through substance abuse relapse. Thus, incarceration itself can keep the revolving door going, without appropriate interventions that can lead to alternatives.

Alternatives to incarceration for non-violent nonfelony offenders (Jacobs, 2001; Bloom et al., 2003) have the potential to mitigate the speed and frequency of that revolving door for women and would in fact support a woman's efforts to get drug treatment, reconnect with her family and especially her children, and reduce the likelihood of reincarceration. In addition, some alternatives to incarceration could allow a woman to maintain continuity in job training and employment. The Vermont pilot study (Baege et al., 2007) of a sampling of women inmates and staff suggested that both groups questioned the appropriateness of prison as a place for many of the women, particularly first-time nonviolent offenders. Instead, this report called for the development of alternatives to incarceration through a collaboration among various facets of the criminal justice system including alternative correctional system responses, such as provision of livable wage job training during their incarceration, and the development of community supports, such as mentors, and programs that support job skill development and that increase job placement and educational opportunities.

### References

- American Correctional Association (1995). *Public Correctional Policy on Female Offender Services*. Lanham, MD: Author.
- Anderson, M. (2002). *Thinking About Women: Sociological Perspectives on Sex and Gender*. Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Anderson, T. (2006). "Issues Facing Women Prisoners in the Early Twenty-First Century," in C. Renzetti, L. Goodstein, and S. Miller, *Rethinking Gender, Crime, and Justice: Feminist Readings* 200-12. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing.
- Baege, M., et al. (2007). "Incarcerated Women in Vermont: A Report From the Vermont Research Partnership." Retrieved Jan. 12, 2008 from [http://www.UVM.edu/~vrp/IWICompleteReport\\_June\\_07.pdf](http://www.UVM.edu/~vrp/IWICompleteReport_June_07.pdf).
- Beckett, K., and B. Western (2001). "Governing Social Marginality: Welfare, Incarceration, and the Transformation of State Policy," in D. Garland, ed., *Mass Imprisonment: Social Causes and Consequences*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Belknap, J. (2000). *The Invisible Woman: Gender, Crime, and Justice*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth.
- Berman, J. (n.d.). "Women Offender Transition and Re-entry: Gender-Responsive Approaches to Transitioning Women Offenders From Prison to the Community." Washington, DC: Center for Effective Public Policy.
- Bloom, B., M. Chesney-Lind, and B. Owen (1994). *Women in California Prisons: Hidden Victims of the War on Drugs*. San Francisco, CA: Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice.
- Bloom, B., B. Owen, and S. Covington (2003). *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections.
- Brewster, D.R., and S.F. Sharp (2002). "Educational Programs and Recidivism in Oklahoma: Another Look," 82 (3) *The Prison J.* 314-34.
- Browne, A., B. Miller, and E. Maguin (1999). "Prevalence and Severity of Lifetime Physical and Sexual Victimization Among Incarcerated Women," 22 (3-4) *International J. of Law & Psychiatry* 301-22.
- Bureau of Justice Statistics (1999). *Correctional Populations in the U.S., 1996*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice.
- Chesney-Lind, M. (1989). "Girls' Crime and Woman's Place: Toward a Feminist Model of Female Delinquency," 35 *Crime & Delinquency* 5-29.
- Chesney-Lind, M., and R. Shelden (1998). *Girls, Delinquency, and Juvenile Justice*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Fine, M. et al. (2001). *Changing Minds*. New York, NY: The City University of NY Graduate Center. Available online from <http://www.ChangingMinds.us/>.
- Flavin, J. (2004). "Employment, Counseling, Housing Assistance...and Aunt Yolanda? How Strengthening Families' Social Capital can Reduce Recidivism," 3 (2) *Criminology & Public Policy* 209-16.
- Hale, T. (2001). "Creating Visions and Achieving Goals: The Women in Community Service's Lifeskills Program," 63 (1) *Corrections Today* 33-37.
- Haney, L. (2004). "Introduction: Gender, Welfare, and States of Punishment," 11 (3) *Social Politics* 333-62.
- Jacobs, A. (2001). "Give 'em a Fighting Chance: The Challenges for Women Offenders Trying to Succeed in the Community," 16 (1) *Criminal Justice Mag.* 44-47.

See VERMONT, page 63

*Program Replication*

# Maine's Experience With Replicating Vermont Works for Women

by Becky Hayes Boober, Ph.D.

If, as the proverb suggests, "imitation is the sincerest form of flattery," then Maine flatters Vermont's Building Homes, Building Lives program by replicating it through an interagency, collaborative effort. Program replication necessitates a process of engaging appropriate partners and stakeholders, developing a strategic plan, mobilizing resources, implementing, evaluating, and celebrating. Currently, Maine's Department of Corrections is using this process to modify and implement the groundbreaking Building Homes, Building Lives program that was developed by Vermont Works for Women (VWW), a not-for-profit agency that teaches incarcerated women the skills necessary to build modular homes and other construction projects.

## Background

In 2002, Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) opened its Women's Center at the Maine Correctional Center in Windham and instituted a gender-responsive, therapeutic community designed to empower its female residents with the skills and supports they need to live a thriving, crime-free life after release. In developing the Women's Center programming, Maine adhered to the research-based principle that women's pathways to offending differ from and are often more complex than men's. Their criminogenic needs are confounded by multiple, interconnected problems that reflect individuals, family systems, and micro and macro environmental factors, such as social stratification of privilege. (Sydney, 2005.) Bloom, Owen, and Covington (2005) point out that women's offending behaviors are often linked to factors such as the struggle to support themselves and their children in a society that gives fewer economic privileges to women, a history

*Becky Hayes Boober serves as the executive director of the Maine Re-entry Network and director of Women's Services, Maine Department of Corrections, 111 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333-0111; (207) 557-5019; Becky.H.Boober@maine.gov.*

of trauma and victimization, substance abuse issues, mental illness often tied to early abuse, economic and social marginality, homelessness, low self-efficacy, and relationship issues or pressures. Because their pathways to offending are different, women's recidivism risks and transition needs vary from those of their male counterparts and require a different approach. (Boober and Fortuin, 2006.)

The Women's Unit at the Maine Correctional Center integrates gender-responsive theories into its programming, release planning, and community follow up by adhering to the research-based principles of gender responsivity. The unit, which houses 77 minimum and medium custody women, maintains a daily emphasis on people, not programs, as recommended by Jeremy Travis (2004). It recognizes the fact that humans are complex and their behavior results from an elaborate web of influences, and not just their recidivism risk factors. Therefore, the center is a strengths-based (Graybeal, 2001) therapeutic community environment with an emphasis on skill building, treatment, relationships, and self-efficacy. Transition planning is multidimensional and addresses social, cultural, and therapeutic issues, including gender-responsive factors such as relational violence, family and natural support relationships, substance abuse, co-occurring disorders, poverty, cultural norms, and nonprivileged status. (Bloom et al., 2005.) As a result, it boasts a recidivism rate of less than 10% (7.5%) for its SVORI clients and 20% for the entire women's prison population.

**Continuous Evaluation, Improvement.** Dedicated to these principles of gender-responsive and evidence-based practices, MDOC also engages in a process of continuous improvement and evaluation. Internal reviews revealed that a program deficit was the lack of vocational skill-building opportunities to prepare women for socioeconomic stability after release, a key need identified in gender-responsive literature as the fifth principle: Women need to be empowered to improve their individual self-sufficiency and the social

socioeconomic conditions for women. (Bloom et al., 2005, 2003.) This program deficit was confirmed when Patricia Van Voorhis, sponsored by the National Institute of Corrections, conducted an evaluation of the Women's Center in summer 2005. While Van Voorhis recognized the Women's Center for its gender-responsive, relational community that addresses the fact that "many women offenders have life experiences that diminish their feelings of personal effectiveness and value" (Van Voorhis, 2005, at 2), she also noted:

Women will need more opportunities for vocational training . . . while incarcerated if they are to: a) improve employment prospects upon prison release; and b) increase their likelihood of achieving educational and vocational advancement, since post-release training (while still valuable) must compete with other demands. (Van Voorhis, 2005, at 9).

She also recommended the establishment of a prerelease center with work release opportunities, which was in fact accomplished with the opening of the Women's Re-entry Center in Bangor in November 2007.

**Vocational Programming.** Because MDOC is committed to providing vocation training at both the Women's Center and the Women's Re-entry Center that will prepare women for careers in high demand/high growth industries and will reduce their economic marginalization, it consulted with the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL) to align the development of vocational programming with labor market statistics and with MDOL's insights into industries most receptive to hiring persons with criminal convictions. Construction was identified as a rapidly growing industry paying livable wages and committed to hiring women, often due to contractual incentives. Specifically, construction of modular homes incorporating environmentally friendly concepts was targeted as a growing Maine industry.

*See EXPERIENCE, page 61*

*INCARCERATION, from page 49*

dollar value of \$195,000. The savings generated by the program are even greater when one considers that program graduates recidivate at less than half the rate of the state's average rate of 51%.

VWW's work with incarcerated women has been motivated by the belief that women's criminal activity results, at least in part, from their financial vulnerability and their inability to envision a way out of poverty and dependence—a belief affirmed by years of conversations with women incarcerated in Vermont.

### **Integrate Interventions With Training, Employment Opportunities**

It is only in recent years, when the number of women in prisons across the country has increased at an alarming rate, that correctional research has begun to specifically focus on incarcerated women and their pathways to crime. Public debate about what can be done to reduce the number of women cycling in and out of prison has often tended to focus on the need for increased residential and outpatient programs for treating alcohol and other drug dependency issues. Often left out of the discussion—or reduced to a passing reference in research on incarcerated women—is the role that stable employment plays in a woman's successful transition out of prison, in her ability to resist relapse, and in her success in avoiding reincarceration.

This article describes the work-related experiences of Vermont's incarcerated female population as reported by the women through surveys and interviews. In the aggregate, their stories point to a conclusion that, while treating women for addiction or trauma is critical to helping women avoid recidivism, interventions are more likely to be successful when integrated with training and employment opportunities.

Battling addiction and trauma, which for many women is a life-long struggle, requires developing a full set of resources—both internal and external—that are cultivated through individual relationships, through counseling or participation in support groups, and, we believe, through work. Affirmed by our interviews with some of Vermont's incarcerated women, work can provide an arena in which one can develop

confidence through meeting goals or discovering new talents, establish new social networks, and find connection to a broader purpose. Work is also critical to achieving financial independence. For those in abusive relationships—relationships that are often linked to women's entry in the criminal justice system as offenders (Browne, Miller, and Maguin, 1999)—work often plays a central role in helping a woman escape patterns of isolation and dependence.

Until now, Vermont Works for Women staff could only support this view with the anecdotal evidence and placement rates of program graduates. Last spring, VWW was one of three organizations chosen by the Vermont Women's Fund to participate in a new grant program focused on economic justice and independence. The grant's flexibility and the Fund's clear interest in women's economic independence allowed us to conduct research to learn more about women's pathways to prison; develop an understanding of their past employment histories, attitudes towards work, and plans for the future; and to take note of their suggestions for interventions that could prevent future criminal activity, encourage self-direction, and support independence.

We are hopeful that this article offers a fuller picture of the histories, hopes, and possibilities for Vermont's incarcerated women, and that it can provide grist for current debates about ways to support incarcerated women in their efforts to achieve economic and emotional self-sufficiency.

### **What the Women Told Us**

The purpose of this research was to describe the employment preparation and work experiences of women currently under the supervision of the Vermont Department of Corrections. During fall 2007, data were collected in two ways: through a written survey completed by 58 women and through one-on-one interviews with 19 women. Randomly selected participants at both the Southeast State and Dale correctional facilities voluntarily completed surveys or participated in interviews. Any distinction between survey or interview participants is noted in the results when relevant; in most cases, percentages refer to survey results, while quotes are from the interviews. When no distinction is made, the results apply to the group of

women as a whole. Overall, interview participants shared similar demographic, criminal histories, and work experiences with survey participants.

#### **Demographics and Pathways to Crime.**

In our interviews and surveys, women described significant financial challenges, including limited access to financial resources. For varied reasons, few of the women viewed employment as a means of addressing these challenges.

**Children.** The women who participated in this study were comparable to incarcerated women throughout the country: About half were under 30, almost three-quarters had children under 12, half had preschool-aged children, and nearly two-thirds were primary caregivers at the time of their arrest.

**Education.** Over half had a high school degree or less, with about 10% of the women completing less than an eighth grade education. About one-third of the women had completed some college coursework, with only 10% completing an AA or BA degree.

**Family Background.** Many of the women interviewed told stories about growing up in families where a parent's work, sickness, or substance abuse resulted in limited parental support. Over half reported that their families were either somewhat poor or very poor. Over 33% of the women surveyed were in foster care at some point in their childhood.

A majority of the women said that their criminal activity began between the ages of nine and 15:

I got suspended from school in the 4th grade for having alcohol.

I started getting in trouble at 12, 13-years-old. At 14 I tried heroin, by 15 I had a habit. At 16 I was on juvenile probation for writing bad checks.

I did a burglary when I was 14.

I started drinking with my grandmother at nine or 10.

**Crimes.** Nearly half of the women who participated in the study had been incarcerated for drug- or alcohol-related crimes, and nearly half for money-related crimes (embezzlement, forging checks, shoplifting). It is important to note that there was some overlap in these two categories: Some drug-related crimes (drug dealing) were related to getting money,

*See INCARCERATION, next page*

*INCARCERATION, from page 58*

and some money-related crimes were related to drug addiction. Nonviolent crimes included embezzlement, driving under the influence (DUI), drug possession, petty larceny, credit card fraud, retail theft, bad checks, and violations of probation. Only 10% of those surveyed were incarcerated for violent crimes.

Among those surveyed that said their crimes were related to a need for money, many told us that a drug habit or child support issues contributed to this need. Among the things women told us:

I needed money to take care of my son and rent, bills.

My bills kept piling up so I had to [steal].

I lost my job, unemployment ran out . . . went on welfare but [it was] not enough money to pay the bills.

[There were] no good jobs so I sold drugs.

[I] could never get by [and] needed to feed my children.

I had left my husband and [writing bad checks] was the only means of living that I had.

Most of the women in this study reported serious financial difficulties prior to their arrest—whether or not their crime was related to getting money. These difficulties included outstanding bills ranging from \$2,500 to over \$45,000 (in two cases). These bills were for back rent, credit cards, restitution, utilities, medical expenses (70% did not have medical insurance), motor vehicle fines (75%), and loans.

**Employment Histories.** Two-thirds of the women surveyed indicated that they were unemployed at the time of arrest, and only half had ever supported themselves through employment. Of the third that had been employed at the time of their arrest, well over 50% had been employed less than a year, 30% had been employed for fewer than three months. Almost half had relied on public assistance, and half reported income from illegal activities. Ten percent reported supplementing this income with child support or family loans.

Although some women were financially stable prior to engaging in criminal behaviors, many of the interviewed

women reported never having thought about how they might support themselves. Some had no idea what it would take to be self-sufficient, and many interviewees noted that they had never experienced earning enough money to be so. In addition, many commented that they never had the kind of familial or peer encouragement that would enable them to see themselves as competent and capable of finding and keeping a job.

[When growing up] I didn't think about [work]. I always thought, "I am never going to work, never. I'm just going to marry a rich man."

Dad sold drugs. That was my model for getting money. It seemed to work. We always had stuff. He looked like he was enjoying it.

I never had a lot of stability. When I do get stability, it's not my own. [I'm] dependent too much on others . . . [I] live with my sister, [depend on] my boyfriend to drive me.

I never had anyone at home who showed me how to work . . . I don't do well on my own.

[I think] a lot of women only know the most minimum way to live, to think about jobs. That's what they grew up with and that's what is all around them.

I've never lived alone. I've never really had to pay my bills on my own, none of that kind of stuff. And when I think about doing it, or when I got out there, obviously, I panic. And I think I can't do this.

Part of the difficulty these women had in seeing work as a meaningful part of their lives was that many started having children before they finished school or entered the world of full time work.

I never had a grasp of what I wanted to be when I grew up but then I became a young mother, so I never really had a chance to fulfill dreams I wanted to as far as my work and that sort of thing.

I never thought about a career or work ethic . . . I got pregnant at 16 and only made it through ninth grade, and dropped out of high school . . . I have mostly been raising kids.

**Prison's Opportunity.** Interestingly, prison can offer many women new-

found time and unique opportunities to build marketable skills. Residents at Southeast State Correctional Facility in Windsor, for example, can participate in building modular homes or working in the plate and print shop.

Commented one participant in the modular home program at SESCOF:

I'm really, really enjoying building houses. I never thought that as old as I am that this would be an option for me . . . I feel like I'm accomplishing something and the fact that these homes are going to low income families makes me feel even better about what we are doing. Seventy-five cents an hour is what we make here and it doesn't pay for anything, it barely pays for phone calls home, but it's the fact that we're doing it, and we're learning something. I feel good about it. It's helped a lot with my recovery.

But a third of the women we surveyed said they were not currently preparing for a job in any way, and half the women skipped our question about this altogether. The ones who said they were preparing described activities (writing resumes and cover letters) that are limited in their potential to lead to employment. Only a few were practicing interview skills or getting direct help.

Many women who recognized the value of educational and work opportunities also noted that their options in prison to build skills or take courses were limited.

I'd like to see [prison be] more like a work camp where everybody was able to have a job . . . because women just wait and wait and wait to get a job here . . . it took me seven weeks before there was an opening . . . I went out of my mind . . . I watched a lot of women who had trouble being inside the dorms and then start a job and there's a whole change in them . . . they're not having as many problems inside because they're out in the field all day . . . doing work.

One woman commented that she is scared to be on her own on the outside, having never had role models or other support for working. She advocated for increasing work opportunities within

*See INCARCERATION, next page*

*INCARCERATION, from page 59*

jail—if only to give women the experience of doing something every day.

We need to have practice with having a job. We can't just go from sitting in here all day to working every day.

Another woman noted that job opportunities within prison walls ought to be relevant to job prospects on the outside:

[Right now] the jobs only relate to what we do here (i.e., cooking, cleaning). It would be better to have jobs where you can transfer the skills to jobs outside. VCI (the license plate and sign making shop at Windsor) is great, but how do you transfer those skills?

In addition to the importance women ascribed to being able to work while incarcerated, many expressed a hunger to learn more in general—through computer or college-level courses or classes in financial management, business, accounting, or parenting.

I think more classes would be awesome . . . A lot of women don't know computer skills . . . you need that in any kind of business training . . . the basics that would help somebody get in the door, entry level.

Women just make cards (on the computers). I do crossword puzzles. We could learn Excel and how to do PowerPoint but no one comes in to teach us . . . Many women here do mom-mail and that's great but it's crafts. Many women here need an education. We need more than high school classes.

While some expressed high expectations for themselves upon their release—starting a small business, for example, or building their own home—many confessed later in their interview a deep-seated sense of hopelessness about actually achieving their goals.

They worried about not having the resources to cope with complex and overlapping transitional challenges: financial responsibilities, childcare, finding safe and affordable housing, employment (even having the right clothes to wear when looking for work), and meeting requirements of probation and parole.

I will need to work and will have to do my education at night but I also don't want to leave my son alone. I worry I will have a harder time getting a job because of my criminal past.

I've been here for almost a year now. And I hate to admit it but I am institutionalized. It scares me to death because everything here is not perfect, but it's structured. I need that stepping piece to go back out in the community.

Most of the women interviewed did not feel that they could shape the direction of their lives. When asked in the survey to name the one thing that would make the difference in being able to get a job upon release, nearly a third cited the need for the "support of [my] boyfriend or family." While this response can be interpreted in a number of different ways, it is striking in its basic implication: that the women we surveyed and interviewed viewed their success as dependent upon somebody else.

#### **Implications for Policy and Practice**

The women in this study had little or no education, little or no work experience, not much opportunity to address either in prison, and no sense that a good job would help them out of the severe financial difficulties that in many cases contributed to their incarceration. These results and the role of women's economic marginality in behaviors that lead to incarceration suggest a need for a more comprehensive approach to develop their capacity to be financially independent.

The recommendations that follow incorporate our belief that employment should be a key part of the way policy-makers and practitioners think about women's pathways to crime and various approaches to rehabilitation, transition, substance abuse, and trauma treatment.

**Activities.** Broaden training, education, and placement activities of women serving time in prison or in the community. While there are more options today than existed for incarcerated women eight years ago, more must be done to prepare women for the economic realities they will face upon release. Suggestions presented by interviewed women included strategies such as providing access to college-level courses, work opportunities that build marketable skills, personal

financial management training, computer skills development, and placement efforts that commence long before a woman leaves a facility. Such programs should harness the resources of organizations and employers outside correctional facilities whose connections to the community are key to transition.

We must view work not simply as one among many requirements of probation or parole, but as a critical component of transitional planning. For many of us, work builds confidence, offers structure, helps us set and meet goals, exposes us to new social networks, and connects us to a broader purpose—in addition to allowing us to pay our own bills.

**Employment Opportunities.** Develop part-time and flexible employment opportunities for women transitioning from prison to work. We must recognize that women released to the community might not be able or ready to assume full-time work right away. We should also consider the role that supported employment could play as an alternative to incarceration for nonviolent offenders with limited work histories. By providing both structure and job experience, transitional part-time employment that is connected to regional employers and supported by classroom work and counseling has enormous potential to stabilize women in the first critical months post-release and to encourage their development as long-term, law-abiding contributing members of society.

Transitional employment models targeting men and women transitioning from welfare to work or ex-offenders have been piloted across the country—in regions as diverse as Minnesota (Lifetrack Resources), Philadelphia (Transitional Work Corporation), Illinois (Heartland Alliance), and Georgia (GoodWorks!)—and enjoyed significant success.

**Community-Based Providers.** Draw upon and support the talent and resources of community-based organizations and educate women about these resources. Many of the women who were interviewed in the study were unfamiliar with the supportive resources upon which they could draw after their release—or confused about eligibility requirements. Women must be better prepared to explore and access these resources before they return home.

*See INCARCERATION, page 63*

## Worth Reading

by Russ Immarigeon

### *Parenting*

#### **An Intermediate Sanction That Fosters the Mother-Child Bond: A Process Evaluation of Summit House**

by Pauline K. Brennan

18 (3) *Women & Criminal Justice* 47-80 (2007)

In this research article, Pauline Brennan, who teaches in the criminal justice department at the University of Nebraska, Omaha, conducts a process evaluation of the treatment of women in a mother-child residential program located at three sites in North Carolina (Charlotte, Greensboro, and Raleigh). In particular, she interviews 15 women to assess “how that program builds competency in the relationships that [the women] have with their children.” Women are eligible for the program if they are charged with a felony drug or drug-related offense and face a possible jail sentence.

Brennan opens the article with a description of the program’s purpose and intake process. She also provides a review of the theoretical and empirical literature, including strong evidence that children matter to incarcerated mothers and parenting programs are valuable to them. Brennan notes:

Research on “best practices” indicates that more effective programs for female offenders with children are designed to preserve the family unit, foster the mother-child bond, and provide parenting skills, including discipline techniques without abuse.

Later, the article assesses the program’s impact in terms of these three issues.

For this study, Brennan reviewed a complete range of program-related documents from intake forms to client prog-

ress notes. She made two visits to each site (six visits in all), which occurred in July, August, and September 2004. She also conducted 29 face-to-face interviews with program administrators and staff and 15 similar interviews with mothers in the program. Finally, three program graduates were interviewed.

Brennan reports that mothers in the Summit House program value the ability the program provides for them to be with their children. This ability to be with their children, the author suggests, motivates the mothers to comply with program components. Brennan states:

While at the Summit House, the resident mother acts as the primary caretaker of her child(ren), and she agrees to two alternative discipline techniques—time out and redirection. Moreover, residents are expected to participate in all in-house parenting groups, complete assignments in the nurturing and child development curriculum, work toward attainment of set parenting goals, cook nutritionally balanced meals, and attend to their children’s health needs.

Summit House is a behavior modification-based program and its day-to-day activities include writing journal entries and receiving “point reminders.” Mothers in the program are given information and lessons about child safety, supervision, development, nutrition, and discipline. Significant emphasis is also given to health and dental care. Overall, the mothers view the program positively because it grants them time with their children, both those who live with them at Summit House and those who reside elsewhere outside Summit House. Still, while there was much routine mother-child contact, not all moth-

ers saw their children daily. Residents reported anxieties about reconnecting with their children, especially outside the confines of Summit House.

Interestingly, Brennan gives rare attention to assessing whether the program actually serves as an alternative to incarceration for women. She suggests three questions that may measure “the likelihood that the female offender would have been given a jail or prison sentence if not for the Summit House option.” The three questions concern previous arrests not related to current offenses, violations of probation conditions, and self-perceptions of the consequences of not completing the Summit House program. These questions are suggestive: 10 of the 15 residents were, in fact, in the program because of probation violations, but this does not appear to be an inherent or particularly strong indicator of “alternativeness.” Undoubtedly, some of the mothers may have ended up in jail or prison, but improved methods are needed to adequately measure this important, and rarely raised, question.

Brennan concludes with several recommendations:

- Staff should more closely examine the long-term effects of mother-child separation;
- Staff should provide additional methods for facilitating the mother-child-family reunification process;
- Staff should improve mothers’ access to community-based mental health services;
- Staff should expand prereunification counseling; and
- The program should hire a parenting expert as a regular staff member.

*Available from: The Haworth Press, 10 Alice Street, Binghamton, NY 13904-1580; (607) 722-5857; www.HaworthPress.com. ■*

*EXPERIENCE, from page 57*

### **Fact Finding in Vermont**

In Maine, corrections and labor departmental staff researched evidence-based and promising practices in construction training programs for women

in correctional settings and quickly became interested in the Vermont Works for Women program. Initial partners were identified and asked to participate in a fact-finding tour in July 2006 at VWW’s invitation. Visiting representatives of agencies working together on

this project included the Maine Correctional Center’s deputy superintendents of security and of programming and the Women’s Center unit manager, MDOC central office directors, executives from

*See EXPERIENCE, next page*

*EXPERIENCE, from page 61*

the Volunteers of America Northern New England (VOANNE), MDOL assistant to the commissioner, Maine Housing's executive director and program director, and Women Unlimited's executive director. We learned early on that involving persons in key leadership roles in these organizations from the program's inception helped to solidify the interagency partnership critical for successful replication.

VWW staff members and representatives of Vermont's Department of Corrections were extraordinarily helpful and candid with their descriptions of their experience and of the curricula they had developed in building life and employment skills and in the technical aspects of building a modular home within a correctional facility.

Following the tour, the fact-finding committee concluded that the program was an effective model for Maine to replicate. The Maine project was named Women Building Futures (WBF): An Opportunity to "Retool Lives." Like the program in Vermont, WBF decided to build on Maine's tradition of strong, interagency collaborations to incorporate a social justice component. As part of their training, the program participants would build modular homes sold with MaineHousing financial subsidies to homeless or low-income families and individuals throughout Maine.

MaineHousing agreed to provide funds for the materials to build the first house and to distribute the homes built by WBF to families who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. MaineHousing's home ownership loan programs would provide resources for the families to purchase the modular homes, land, and land preparation. The vocational program would use proceeds from the sale of each home to purchase the materials needed to build the next home. Additionally, MaineHousing agreed to work with Women Unlimited to insure that the modular homes built complied with MaineHousing's "Green Standards." These energy-efficient standards would make the homes more economic for low-income families to heat and maintain.

### Partnership

A critical step in the model replication was development of the partnership. Additional stakeholders were invited into

the collaboration and roles were clarified. VOANNE agreed to mobilize the needed resources for the project. Within a few months, they had solicited \$200,000 in foundational funds. MDOC provided \$25,000 toward site preparation and budgeted for all facility operations (classroom heating, for example) and security-related costs to run the vocational education program. Women Unlimited was selected as instructors for the modular home construction National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) certification program. WU had provided instruction for Vermont Works and began conducting NCCER certification construction basic courses in the Women's Center and the Maine State Prison. Later, they offered the courses for women at the Women's Re-entry Center. They also worked closely with MDOL to design strategies to place women in post-release career opportunities or apprenticeships. Women, Work, and Community provided other needed supports for the women, such as Individual Development Accounts. Trades groups and specific construction corporations joined the partnership and donated \$150,000 worth of expertise and materials for the site development and construction of a 3,680-square-foot training building. In hindsight, a group Maine should have included was representation of the Women's Center residents.

The partnership developed a strategic plan for implementation and established subcommittees. A budget of almost \$250,000 was developed. Later, the budget was increased by over \$276,400 to reflect both increasing construction materials costs and a larger training building site. The final plan includes operating annual budgets of around \$600,000 and will be self-sufficient by the fourth year through the sale of the homes. The average home selling price will be \$95,000. Twelve women will be in the training and production program at any given time and will be paid a work stipend. As part of the strategic plan, partners' roles and contributions were clarified.

### Challenges

A challenge in maintaining an effective collaboration during a long-term project such as this is keeping all partners engaged throughout the process. During the initial phase, all partners were actively involved in establishing the project's strategic plan, budget, Maine-specific modifications, and "branding" of the

project. Subcommittees were assigned and began working. However, keeping all partners engaged was more difficult during the start-up phase when fundraising activities became a main focus and were dominated by the partner charged with that responsibility. Because members of other subcommittees had less time-sensitive tasks, they could have easily become less engaged with the process. Therefore, frequent communication was needed to stimulate their ongoing interest.

Other factors delayed the start-up phase. For example, MDOC began experiencing dramatic women's population overcrowding conditions and had to focus on developing immediate responses. Legislative support and funding for a system of re-entry supports for women, including the construction of a 38-bed Women's Re-entry Center, prompted the need for MDOC energy and attention to be diverted temporarily from the WBF project. This new continuum of women's services also created the need to change the focus on which residents would be targeted for participation in the WBF vocational training. Additionally, the city planning board review process took longer than initially anticipated. Frequent email communications kept all partners informed of progress and informal conversations among the membership continued to assure all partners of the value of their contributions to the project's success, even if their roles would be prevalent in later phases of the project.

Currently, Maine is poised to fully implement Women Building Futures with ground breaking scheduled to occur with the spring thaw. Women Unlimited will conduct the NCCER construction basics courses for interested women this spring. Women completing that series will then be eligible for the full energy-efficient modular home construction curriculum when the training building is completed this summer. Both process and outcome measures for evaluating the program have been established and a data tracking program is developed.

### Replicating Programs: Key Steps

The Maine WBF collaboration is grateful for the ongoing support of Vermont and for those who are funding this important opportunity to expand its women's programming. For other jurisdictions interested in replicating good ideas for

*See EXPERIENCE, page 64*

## INCARCERATION, from page 60

Community-based providers can play a pivotal role in supporting state efforts to reduce incarceration and recidivism rates by facilitating connections among community service providers. Because they do not carry the authority to punish, such organizations are sometimes in a better position to provide the immediate, front-line support and continuum of care that will help a woman avoid sanction or reincarceration. (Richie, 2001.)

**Measure Intervention Impact.** Improve the ability to measure the impact of interventions through regular data collection. This study was undertaken and privately funded because currently no system adequately tracks employment data on women entering and leaving state correctional supervision. The capacity to collect and analyze a continuum of data on women entering and exiting state prisons is necessary in order to measure the impact of particular employment initiatives. Intake surveys could be developed to help identify upon entry into the Department of Corrections

system a woman's prior employment history, wages earned, and sources of supplemental income. In addition, the DOC could track any courses or work activities a woman pursued while in prison. Following release and until parole, the DOC could also track job-search activities and employment information (employer, position, wages, and benefits).

**Programs for Girls.** Support and broaden access to programs for girls and teens that develop self-esteem, promote career awareness, and improve financial literacy. The majority of the women in the study indicated that as children and teens they had not thought much about work, careers, or about how they might support themselves. Because many interviewees noted that their path to criminal activity often began by their early teens, early intervention and prevention programs are necessary for this vulnerable population.

While in prison, many women described feelings of diminished self-esteem and hopelessness. An investment on the front end, when girls are still developing a sense of who they are and

who they can become, could reap dividends that have both social and financial rewards over the long term.

**References**

Bloom, Barbara, Barbara Owen, and Stephanie Covington (2001). *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders Project*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections.

Browne, Angela, Brenda Miller, and Eugene Maguin (1999). "Prevalence and Severity of Lifetime Physical and Sexual Victimization Among Incarcerated Women," 22 (3-4) *International J. of Law & Psychiatry* 301-22.

Richie, Beth E. (2001). "Challenges Incarcerated Women Face as They Return to Their Communities: Findings From Life History Interviews," 47 (3) *Crime & Delinquency* 68-89.

*Tiffany Bluemle serves as the executive director of Vermont Works for Women, 51 Park Street, Essex Junction, VT 05452; (802) 878-0004, ext. 101; TBluemle@vtworksforwomen.org; www.VTWorksForWomen.org. This article was a joint effort: written by Tiffany Bluemle; researched by Judy Harden, Ph.D., Jean Lathrop, M.A., and Colleen MacKinnon, Ph.D.; and edited by Wendy Love, Executive Director, Vermont Commission on Women. Support for this research provided by The Vermont Women's Fund and The John Merck Fund.* ■

## VERMONT, from page 56

Leadership Champlain. (2007). *Fresh! A Proposal for VT Works for Women*. Burlington, VT: Author.

Luke, K. (2002). "Mitigating the Ill Effects of Maternal Incarceration of Women in Prison and Their Children," 81 (6) *Child Welfare* 929-48.

Martin, S. (2006). "Female Drug Offenders and the Drug/Crime Subculture: Gender, Stigma, and Social Control," in C. Renzetti, L. Goodstein, and S. Miller, *Rethinking Gender, Crime, and Justice: Feminist Readings* 107-124. Los Angeles: Roxbury Publishing.

Mauer, M., C. Potler, and R. Wolf (1999). *Gender and Justice: Women, Drugs, and Sentencing Policy*. Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project.

Mercy Connections (2007). *The Vermont Women's Mentoring Program*. Burlington, VT: Author.

National Institute of Mental Health (2001). "The Facts About Eating Disorders and the Search for Solutions." (No. 01-4901). Rockville, MD: National Institutes of Health.

O'Brien, P. (2002). *Evaluation of Grace House: Using Past Experience to Inform*

*Future Results*. Chicago, IL: Jane Addams College of Social Work.

O'Brien, P. (2006). "Maximizing Success for Drug-Affected Women After Release From Prison: Examining Access to and Use of Social Services During Re-entry," 17 *Women & Criminal Justice* 95-113.

Owen, B., and B. Bloom (1995). "Profiling Women Prisoners: Findings From National Survey and California Sample," 75 (2) *The Prison J.* 165-85.

Renzetti, C., L. Goodstein, and S. Miller (2006). *Rethinking Gender, Crime, and Justice: Feminist Readings*. Los Angeles, CA: Roxbury Publishing.

Richie, B. (1996). *The Gendered Entrapment of Battered, Black Women*. London: Routledge.

Richie, B. (2001). "Challenges Incarcerated Women Face as They Return to Their Communities: Findings From Life History Interviews," 47 *Crime & Delinquency* 368-89.

Sanger, D., et al. (2003). "Female Incarcerated Adolescents With Language Problems Talk About Their own Communication Behaviors and Learning," 36 (6) *J. of Communication Disorders* 465-86.

Steele, L. (2006). *Foster-Care Among Incarcerated Women in VT*. Windsor, VT: Author.

Steffensmeier, D. (1993). "National Trends in Female Arrests, 1960-1990: Assessment and Recommendations for Research," 9 *J. of Quantitative Criminology* 413-41.

Steffensmeier, D., and E. Allan (1996). "Gender and Crime: Toward a Gendered Theory of Female Offending," 22 *Annual Rev. of Sociology* 459-87.

Sutton, J. (2000). "Imprisonment and Social Classification in Five Common-Law Democracies," 106 *American J. of Sociology* 350-86.

Taxman, F., and K. Cropsey (2006). "Women and the Criminal Justice System: Improving Outcomes Through Criminal Justice and Non-criminal Justice Responses," 17 (2/3) *Women & Criminal Justice* 5-27.

Torre, M., and M. Fine (2005). "Bar None: Extending Affirmative Action to Higher Education in Prison," 61 (3) *J. of Social Issues* 569-96.

Vermont Works for Women (2007). "The Modular Home Project." Paper presented at the 12th Adult & Juvenile Female Offenders Conference, Baltimore, MD.

Wolf, A. (2006). *Reducing the Incarceration of Women: Community-Based Alternatives*. Washington, DC: National Council on Crime and Delinquency. ■

## SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION

**Women, Girls & Criminal Justice** (WGC) is published six times annually. A basic one-year subscription to WGC is \$159 plus postage and handling. Non-exempt New Jersey and New York residents please add appropriate sales tax.

### TO ORDER

Complete the information below and mail to:

Civic Research Institute  
P.O. Box 585  
Kingston, NJ 08528

or online: [www.civicrosearchinstitute.com](http://www.civicrosearchinstitute.com)

- Enter my one-year subscription to **Women, Girls & Criminal Justice** at \$159 plus \$14.95 postage and handling.
- Enter my order for **Forensic Mental Health: Working With Offenders With Mental Illness**, edited by Gerald Landsberg, DSW, MPA and Amy Smiley, Ph.D., for \$125 plus \$10.95 shipping and handling.
- Enter my one-year subscription to **Offender Programs Report** at \$159 plus \$14.95 postage and handling.
- Enter my one-year subscription to **Community Mental Health Report** at \$159 plus \$14.95 postage and handling.
- Enter my one-year subscription to **Juvenile Justice Update** at \$159 plus \$14.95 postage and handling.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Firm/Agency/Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Purchase Order # \_\_\_\_\_

### Missing or damaged issues?

Call Customer Service at 609-683-4450.

**Reprints:** Parties wishing to copy, reprint, distribute or adapt any material appearing in *Women, Girls & Criminal Justice* must obtain written permission through the Copyright Clearance Center (CCC). Visit [www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com) and enter *Women, Girls & Criminal Justice* in the "Find Title" field. You may also fax your request to 1-978-646-8700 or contact CCC at 1-978-646-2600 with your permission request from 8:00 to 5:30 eastern time.



COPYRIGHT CLEARANCE CENTER

### EXPERIENCE, from page 62

quality programs with proven results, the following key steps are essential:

- Identify your unique needs, challenges, opportunities, and strengths. Data-driven decisions need to address underlying challenges rather than surface symptoms.
- Select and engage a leadership team with broad representation of stakeholders, including potential funders, interagency partners with diverse perspectives and resources, and program participants.
- Integrate evidence-based practices and gender responsiveness into the existing or emerging infrastructure, using other sites' experiences as a guide. Ask many questions.
- Develop a strategic action and evaluation plan and timeline, carefully clarifying the roles and responsibilities of each partner.
- Mobilize resources (funding, human resources, site and site development, training curriculum, etc.).
- Keep partners engaged through transparent activities and communication, shared decisionmaking and contributions, intermediate successes, and celebrations.
- Modify the plan to accommodate emerging opportunities and unanticipated challenges.
- Implement.

- Evaluate and improve implementation.
- Celebrate!

### References

Bloom, B., B. Owen, and S. Covington (2003). *Gender-Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*. Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Corrections. NIC accession no. 018017.

Bloom, B., B. Owen, and S. Covington (2005). *Gender-Responsive Strategies for Women Offenders: A Summary of Research, Practice, and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Corrections. NIC accession no. 020418.

Boober, B.H., and B. Fortuin (2006). "Without Walls or Cash: Creating Thriving Women's Re-entry Outcomes Through Interagency Collaboration," *J. of Community Corrections* 15, 2, 6-11.

Graybeal, C. (2001). "Strengths-Based Social Work Assessment: Transforming the Dominant Paradigm," 82 (3) *Families in Society: The J. of Contemporary Human Services* 233-42.

Sydney, L. (2005). *Gender-Responsive Strategies for Women Offenders: Supervision of Women Defendants and Offenders in the Community*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice National Institute of Corrections. NIC accession no. 020419.

Travis, J. (2004). "In Thinking About 'What Works,' What Works Best?," 13 (4) *J. of Community Corrections* 4-6 and 33-34.

Van Voorhis, P. (2005). *The Women's Center: Maine Correctional Center, Maine Department of Corrections*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice National Institute of Corrections. ■

### WOMEN GIRLS & CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Civic Research Institute, Inc.  
4478 Route 27 P.O.Box 585  
Kingston, NJ 08528