CONNECTIONS
PRISON MINISTRY

Summer/Fall 2025

Isaiah 58:9-12, '"If you get rid of unfair practices, quit blaming victims, quit gossiping about other people's sins; if you are generous with the hungry and start giving yourselves to the down-and-out, your lives will begin to glow in the darkness, your shadowed lives will be bathed in sunlight. I will always show you where to go. I'll give you a full life in the emptiest of places—firm muscles, strong bones. You'll be like a well-watered garden, a gurgling spring that never runs dry. You'll use the old rubble of past lives to build anew, rebuild the foundations from out of your past. You'll be known as those who can fix anything, restore old ruins, rebuild and renovate, make the community livable again."' (MSG)

This is how we summer...

With a small amount of trepidation and some very kind volunteers, we welcomed about 350 people throughout the afternoon to Kindness on June 28th for our Open House. It was such a beautiful and energetic afternoon, and while it was wonderful to serve many of you at Kindness Café & Closet who are dear to Connections Prison Ministry, it was very special to meet new people who were driving by or who had heard about Kindness' Open House by word-of-mouth. We also had the opportunity to renew past acquaintances who came because we'd been advertising prison ministry. We wish to give a shoutout to our dear friend, Aurora Carey, and our volunteers, who are responsible for the success and camaraderie of the day.

Narva & Freddie Courtney

Then, on August 2nd, we were given the great privilege to host and cater a fajita luncheon for one of our own. Our very precious Lieutenant Narva Courtney has just celebrated her retirement from Fremont Correctional Facility where she has spent two-and-a-half decades! It was an honor to throw the Lieutenant a party and to let her experience unfettered adoration from those she has rubbed shoulders with for years. Would you believe we hosted over 75 people in our home on August 2nd! Please meet Lieutenant Narva Courtney. She is one of the most genuine and conscientious people we know. She has devoted her life to helping others. Although she has had every reason to carry herself with swagger and authority, she is the kindest lady. CDOC will be hard-pressed, as there simply is not a replacement for Lt. Courtney. Now, it is her turn. Her turn to be doted on and served, her turn to enjoy her large family and a new pace in life, her turn to be celebrated and remembered with awe.

Additionally, on August 10th, we partnered with a local hair stylist, Mikayla Robinson of Kaizen Beauty Institute, to host a community-wide "Back-to-School Bash" where Mikayla and her stylists offered free haircuts and styles in our parking lot at Kindness. We helped to serve several dozen families to receive some haircare tips and cuts and to be ready to send their children for school pictures, as well as school clothes shopping and food from the food trailer. Thank you, Mika, for letting Connections host the event you so kindly sponsored for the community.

Please wander through our photo album below so you can feel like you have been with us if you were unable to attend any of our events or allow your meandering to bring back some sweet memories if you shared them with us. Kindness continues to be and even become all that we

believed the Lord was building when the dream blueprint of a closet and café was birthed in us. We are unable to express the uncanny visitors and drop-ins and conversations which take place inside the walls of Kindness on a daily basis. While our desire is to meet a person's greatest need by sharing Jesus with so many who are seeking solutions in the craziness of this world today, we come away day after day, so very blessed ourselves. Recently, our own family, Jeff and Darcy Gott, in addition to our dear friends and board members, Jan and Chuck Carr, were staying with us. They got to experience the hub of *Kindness* for several days. Each said the same thing we utter… ***'There truly are no words to describe what happens daily at Kindness; you almost have to experience it for yourself!'*** The faithfulness of a God who stretched on human skin to walk among humanity is quite poignant in the broken places of someone's journey to overcome a sin-wrecked existence. He meets each of us at the shadow of the cross and offers a hope that the world doesn't give, which also means the world can't take that hope away. We are gratefully able to consistently share this Jesus wrapped in human skin with those who come through Kindness' doors, and do our part to restore some dignity that has been lost to many.

In fact, we were asked to partner with one of the community corrections—or halfway houses—in El Paso County, known as Embrave, aka Commcor. This came about through our help to a gal back in June who was sent to us from her case manager at Embrave. Andrea is a County direct sentence to the halfway house where she will serve two years. When she arrived at Kindness, Andrea had nothing. Literally, ***NOTHING*!** Everything she had on was borrowed. Drea, as she likes to be called; was also very broken, hurting, shame-filled, and angry. We were able to give Drea a wardrobe which some of you provided to her through your donations. She left with tears in her eyes and a smile on her face, grateful that someone saw her and cared. We continue to walk with Drea and visit her as often as we can, taking her basic-essentials she needs, but most importantly, earning trust and showing her Jesus. She's growing, focused, and her appreciation is shown in the ways she is now giving to other women in her circumstance at the halfway house.

Jesus is using these initial negatives to develop friendships in the darkrooms of incarceration and justice involvement, which we trust will create lifelong scrapbooks and forever friendships. Such opportunities have earned us a new partnership: the staff at Embrave approached Peter, asking if we would be willing to partner with them to supply needs and essentials that other men and women might have while serving sentences there. It has been formulated that those serving time at Embrave who are eligible for an incentive can receive a clothing voucher to Kindness worth $50. We donate the clothing they choose to spend their voucher on. (We earn $5 for each voucher given). Did you know in the six weeks since we began this partnership, we have given away over $2,600 worth of clothing and shoes! Thanks to your donations and financial gifts, we're meeting needs for both men and women at Embrave and our community.

I must admit, I am undone. 2 years ago, we dreamed of a voucher program where we could immediately provide essentials to those walking out of prison with nothing. The first glimpse was conceived of this vision of *Kindness* that God was birthing in us—when the infancy of what Kindness might look like and become was still so small and unrealized—one of its characteristics was a venue where men and women coming out of the justice system to begin again could go to shop and walk away with a measure of dignity restored. The fruition of this partnership with the halfway house has stirred such gratitude in our hearts because we literally are watching God grow a dream out of the passion He instilled in us.

With humility, I want to say thank you. I began this letter with the hope that I could convey our gratitude for the many small and large ways in which you bless us, whether prayers, clothing donations, volunteer services or financial gifts, or *all the above*. Thank you for your support; for always being faithful to read our newsletters and updates. As I write this, I realize the depth of our gratitude can't be measured unless these stories and pictures are shared. We are appreciative to all of you for the many faceted ways in which you serve the Lord by supporting Connections Prison Ministry. We may not be able to connect with each of you personally, but please be

assured, none of the ways in which you choose to bless Connections & Kindness, goes unnoticed. We treasure our relationship with each of you; you are a true blessing to us.

Many Blessings to you!

Michelle

Thank you to all for celebrating with me on my special day. It was a wonderful and memorable send-off. I loved all of the gifts, cards, hugs, and the great food provided by Peter, Michelle, Carol ("Mrs. Gott"), Robert, and all of the other individuals who contributed. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

As this retirement marks the end of a chapter, a new chapter will begin in my life to share more love. Love you all.

~ Narva Courtney

When God gives you a new beginning, don't repeat old mistakes!

Did you know?

√ Michelle is a writer. She is working on a book after winning a publishing contest. You can read some of her writings online at connectionsprisonministry.org/devotionals/ or scan the QR code...

√ We cater! As many of you know, for quite some time, we've hosted events offering good food. This summer we have been able to take this to another level by catering some parties and events, offering all the fixings for BBQ plates, and pulled pork and jerk chicken, as well as a fajita fiesta. Are you throwing a party and need it catered? Give us a shout out and let us see if we can supply what you are hoping for! All proceeds go directly to support the ministry.

Kindness Open House

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone.

~Titus 3:3-8

Our first back-to-school bash was a great success!
We look forward to making this an annual event supporting those in our community.

An unexpected ministry opportunity has been connecting with high schoolers from Doherty High. Not only are we able to serve them over their lunch hour, but also in the clothing closet, as kids today are great 'Thrifters'! In addition, some of these kids have parents who are in the justice system, which means another generation is immersed in the effects of incarceration. We are able to walk alongside some kids who are separated from a dad or mom serving time and connect some dots while they are apart.

New shoes/clothes & starting a new chapter in life!

"Truly, I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of my brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me."

~Jesus

Jesus… Ridiculously KIND!

Did you know?

√ We connect with men/women at multiple community corrections facilities throughout the State. Our clothing voucher program has been a great success so far and we are looking for expand this to provide clothing to more people in need. Each voucher provides $50 worth of clothing, shoes, backpacks, etc. As mentioned in the article above, we have given away almost $2,600 in clothing and other items since we started this program. We are expecting this number to increase as the fall and winter months arrive and the need for winter coats become a priority.

√ During the summer months, public transportation in Colorado Springs has been free. This has been a huge blessing for many of the men and women we work with. It's also been a great cost savings to CPM not having the expense of providing bus passes. But as September begins, we will be providing bus passes again as needed. Each Bus pass is $63 which provides unlimited rides for 1 month. Thanks for assisting in making this happen.

Financial support

As always, thank you for your financial support!
Your generosity continues to meet needs and provide support for those in need.
We can't do this without you!

There are several ways to give listed below.

Financial donations can be made via the following money transfer apps using the CPM contact number (720.579.5122)
Zelle, PayPal, & CashApp.
You can also send a check made out to Connections Prison Ministry.

*Check it out...A new way convenient way to support Connections.
Scan the QR code to set-up a monthly gift or give a one-time gift.

All gifts are tax-deductible!

Connections Prison Ministry 501c3
PO Box #64261
Colorado Springs, CO 80962
720.579.5122
connectionsprisonministry@gmail.com

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FB: KindnessCafe&Closet
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