

COLLEGE GUILD

Spring 2015 Newsletter

*RESPECT
REDUCES
RECIDIVISM*

THE PATH TO CHANGE

Jerold Z.

How often have we looked back on our lives and found ourselves appalled at where we have been. Then we realized that where we are going is an undiscovered country—unknown, unanticipated and unplanned? This is a reflection that might prompt one to ask, “How may I react in a way that propels me positively down this perilous path that I have chosen?” That is the question, formalized, that I believe all CG students eventually ask themselves.

We come from various pasts—some never imagined themselves imprisoned, others have significant criminal histories, and most are struggling with challenges that either contributed to or are the reason for their current incarceration. But we have one thing in common. We are stuck in a penal system that too often focuses on warehousing inmates rather than rehabilitating them. Anger, far more often than remorse, becomes our guiding emotion as we wait for programs and opportunities that never come.

It is true that circumstances may delay our departure from prison; that overworked case managers and staff may fail to recognize or even acknowledge our needs and desires; and that our self-worth may be put to question by those whom we once held most dear. But none of these—or any other justifications—need be stumbling blocks to our personal freedom,

College Guild helps us to remember that we are the owners and free agents of our own minds, that no one but ourselves can curb our imaginations or change our attitudes. It is our own responsibility to create opportunities where none appear to exist.

College Guild’s volunteers have mastered the art of encouragement. We are continually urged to ask

more of ourselves until, instead of seeing all that we cannot do, we become refocused on what we can achieve. We are guided to evaluate our talents, schedule our time, and effectively use every available resource to maximize our potential. With our mentors’ guidance, we create new worlds, imagine new life, and explore the realms of possibility through art and writing. We are asked to extend our education through every means available. And then we are prompted to consider: Have we shared our own talents, time and resources with somebody else today?

Before my incarceration I felt I was somebody. After several months in a segregated cell I began to doubt who I was. It was the introduction of College Guild by a fellow inmate that brought

new focus to my life and direction to my endeavors. CG assignments became contest and general submissions to national magazines. Before long, I found that I had gained the professional friendship and encouragement of several magazine editors. Imagine my surprise when I found that they didn’t care where I was writing from, only that I was submitting quality work. This year I have taken another step towards reaching a life goal - attaining a Masters in Fine Arts degree in Creative Writing.

Meanwhile my goals remain small, but consistent and achievable. I have seen my writing printed in nationally circulated magazines and I have placed well in competition against thousands of other writers and poets. All of this has been achieved while incarcerated.

College Guild has been a reminder that I can create my own opportunities. I imagine a future for myself, and I will make it come to pass.

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JEWELS by King A.

I think THANK YOU is at the top of my list of what I want to say. Your College Guild course is a wonderful thing that has entered my cycle of existence. I'm particularly satisfied with the latest study sessions that I been having with the comrades in our study group and in other locations on the prison yard. I've been able to exert some of my newly acquired knowledge on History Scholar – Unit 1. I was able to relay this knowledge to others in my study group in a way that they could not only grasp what was mentioned in the unit, but they also embraced it. To not only see my own personal growth and development become actualized, but also to be able to pass these jewels of knowledge onto others means that these jewels will always be with those that I've passed them on to. It's just a beautiful thing and it makes me feel good about myself, about my study cell and about what we're learning and doing. Once we learn, we become aware. Once we become aware, we start rejecting everything that's wrong with the social order of things, and then after that we start taking the initiative to make changes with SELF first, then in our world.

After completing Captivities – Unit 1, I've since reflected on certain issues about freedom, justice and equality. And with these issues fresh in the chambers of my mind's eye, I turned out the lights and just began to travel through the diameters of myself. See, I know this topic well because "freedom" is a word I've grown very familiar with over the last 7 years I've been incarcerated. The dictionary defines freedom as *exemption of liberation from the control of some arbitrary power*. I define freedom that way in a physical sense, but the element of freedom transcends the physical form to me. I say this because a person can be physically free but in a state of mental bondage due to the lack of knowledge of him or herself. I find it interesting that a person can sometimes have to lose his physical freedom to gain mental freedom in the form of self-awareness. One of the biggest lessons that I've learned from my experience of being confined is that a man only learns what he teaches himself. It took me years of experimenting with (mentally) high explosives in the laboratory of life to discover that freedom is a jewel that comes in degrees. Once a person obtains the proper knowledge of self, he is equipped to help free others by taking them through the same steps of enlightenment, which is what civilized people do once they truly understand what freedom is. This is how I learned the value of this jewel – to reap the benefits, I would have to give it away. Wow!

CG Alumnus Honored

Congratulations to College Guild alumnus, Larry Lehna, who was honored as a Chancellor's Medallion recipient by the University of Michigan. Larry received his Bachelor of General Studies degree, graduating with High Distinction. He was first admitted to UM through a program for non-traditional adult learners experiencing socioeconomic challenges. The Chancellor's Medallion is UM's most prestigious academic honor bestowed to students. As written on the University of Michigan-Dearborn's website, Larry's professors and advisors "want to express their gratitude to Mr. Lehna for his honesty, his unfailing wit and the spark he brings every classroom." Larry reports that his enthusiasm resulted in such diligence in completing his homework that professors began to ask the class, "Does anyone but Larry know....?" Larry's article, "Their Saving Grace", graced the Fall 2013 College Guild newsletter. The readers he had when he was a CG student would wholeheartedly agree with the comments of Larry's UM professors!

Donations have been made in memory of the following:

Clem & Kathie Biddle	Barbara Cady
Marjorie Holland	Fritz Kempner
Susie Moran	Alex Severance
June Snow	

It is with gratitude that we remember Leonard Cirino who honored College Guild by including us in his estate.

Donations have been made in honor of the following:

Ann and Francis McMahon
Barbara Yuodsnukis

In Memory of Avery

In December, College Guild received a bequest in memory of Avery Harrington. This gift has allowed CG to hire a much needed half-time Administrator. A job description was written, ads posted, interviews conducted and by the end of January, our wonderful new Administrator joined the CG family! Despite moving the office, blizzards and the loss of internet for a week, Pat has taken on the critical jobs that the office volunteers, with their focus on getting course units to readers and students, are unable to tackle. We have already made progress in getting more prisoners off the waiting list. College Guild would like to express our deep appreciation to the family of Avery Harrington.

Financial Update

With the latest donation to CG, we were able to invest in what we hope will become an endowment. We are exploring the possibility of a match for the recent \$21,000 private donation made for a part time administrator's first year so that she can serve full-time. Our goal is to dramatically reduce our waiting list. Prisoners must now wait up to a year before we can send them their first units.

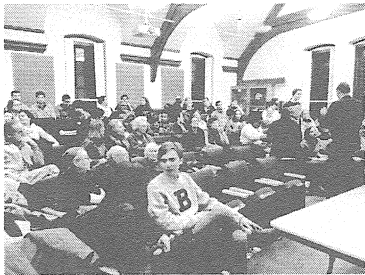
The other pressing needs are:

- \$2000 for a money-saving copy machine that sorts and collates, with service contract.
- We have just purchased computers and software for necessary upgrades (\$1200), and seek a donor to help cover those recent purchases.
- A database manager to redesign and update our databases and improve the website (\$1500).
- A summer intern for 250 hours of curriculum development and improvement (\$2000).
- As always, we need volunteers—especially during the summer and college break weeks. We are so grateful for any and all help from our supporters!

Film Screening at Bowdoin College

Broken on All Sides director Matt Pillischer and Maine NAACP president Rachel Talbot Ross recently held a well attended film screening, discussion and panel at Bowdoin College. The film is centered on race and mass incarceration. Nearly 100 people attended from the college and community.

For more information: www.brokenonallsides.com.



Bowdoin professors and students are joined by community members for the film screening at Bowdoin College recently.



From the left—Rachel Talbot Ross (Maine NAACP President), Matt Pillischer (award-winning documentary *Broken on All Sides* director), and event organizer Amanda Maisel.

Gray clouds, gray people
 Thunder claps, thunder voices
 No more sunny days and no sunny smiles
 Lightning strikes without mercy,
 So do men...

Bobby V.

Looking into an infinite mirror
 I do surmise
 Galaxies, stars...kings and queens
 In my daughter's eyes
 Michael M.

Always the savior
 Helping me to dispose of
 My ex-wife's attempts at cooking

Miserable breakfasts
 Burnt dinners
 And always you were there

A repository for
 Pot roast of the damned
 Less of a garbage disposal
 Than a co-conspirator

Dan G.

*Our broken band of merry thieves
 each one, now solitary, grieves.*
 Nicholas S.

Soul

As they say,
 when some one dies
 you must open a window
 to allow his soul
 to get out, and
 fly back to the sky.

I am wonder
 if I will die
 in this prison cell
 where there's no window at all
 then, what will happen to my soul,
 where it will go,
 how it will fly?

Yassin A.

Current College Guild Courses

Art of the Masters

Biography

Captivities

Creative Language

Dogs

Drama Club 1 & 2

Exercise & Relaxation

Families

Gardening

Greek Mythology

Histories

Journalism Club

Logic & Puzzles

Marine Biology

The Numbers Game

Philosophy

Poetry Club 1 & 2

Precision Drawing

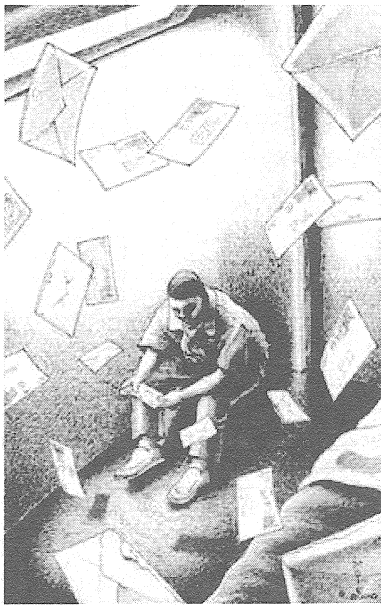
Sampler

Short Story Club 1 & 2

Sports

Travel

Artist: Matt Matteo



Frontiers of Justice, Vol. 3: The Crime Zone ©2000

OUR MISSION

*To stimulate in prisoners
an interest in life long learning
by providing a selection of free,
non-traditional correspondence
courses.*

HELP US SURVIVE!

My donation of \$14 provides free dictionaries to two prisoners.

My donation of \$49 buys 100 first class stamps.

My donation of \$75 supports one prisoner for one year.

My additional donation of \$ _____ helps us to continue offering the respect that can change prisoners' lives.

I would like to become a "Sustaining Friend" with an annual contribution of \$ _____.

contact us at collegeguild@gmail.com

College Guild can now accept donations via PayPal. Just go to our web page and choose the donate button.

Please send me more information.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Many thanks on behalf of College Guild volunteers and student-prisoners for your generosity!

Your donation is tax-deductible.

For more information go to www.collegeguild.org