



COLLEGE GUILD

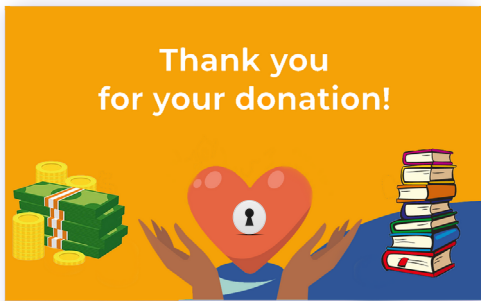
Educating Incarcerated People for Over 20 Years

News & Notes Volunteer Spotlight Meet Our Newest Team Member Student Art & Writing



Spring Newsletter

 **Need a Reason
to Support
College Guild?**
**Flip this over
for 50!** 



- N. Macauley Lord— \$1000
- Mark Jewett— \$500
- In Honor of Julie Zimmerman, Marjorie Laidman— \$500
- Alex and Joe Godleski— \$250
- Michael Wilson— \$200
- Erik Muther— \$150
- George E. Gill— \$100**
- John Edgar— \$100
- Joseph Weaster— \$100
- Berna T. Andrews— \$80**
- Mary Malia— \$80**
- Nathaniel Shed— \$60
- Anne & Mark Izydorczak— \$50
- Marvin Gatch— \$50



In Memory of Barbara Lady & Marjorie Howland, Anne Sturm-- \$25.00
Bold names are monthly pledges.
Data accurate as of 3/13/2023

Thank You From the inside

Thank you to you guys at College Guild, it has been fun and inspiring to receive your lessons. I have learned so much about myself as a writer and I use that newfound awareness to enlighten others.

SHAWN H.

I would like to thank everyone at CG for what they do, its more than most of us get anywhere else.

JOHN G.



News & Notes

- College Guild has hired its first ever Director of Philanthropy and Communications. Learn a little about Benjamin Lambright on Page 2.
- Lancaster State Penitentiary, in California is receiving media attention for training incarcerated persons to become addiction counselors. Source: Us Times Post.
- Idaho is under the microscope for placing mentally ill men and women, who have never been convicted of crimes, in state prisons. Source: Idaho Capitol Sun.
- Incarcerated men with life sentences in one Tennessee prison are working to help the recently incarcerated adjust to prison life and stay out of prison once they are released. Source: NPR.
- A new Georgia-based podcast, Prison Town, examines corruption and killings connected by investigators to Smith State Prison in Tattall County. Source: The Telegraph.

WHY WE SERVE



Mary Malia
Executive Director

I'm always asking myself, how do I ensure College Guild will be stronger five years from now?

In this newsletter, you'll read two pieces of writing by our students on the topic of groceries. Both brought a smile to my face and left me reflecting on other stories I've read on how bad prison food is, to the point of often being inedible, all for the sake of profit and punishment. Some prisons do better, but the norm is serving meals as cheaply as possible. An article I read recently at www.themarshallproject.org titled "What's In A Prison Meal" tells the story of how bad it is in some places. It's a disturbing article. What's the point? College Guild isn't here to provide food for the body but for the souls, the hearts, and the spirits of men and women in prison.

When our units arrive in the mail, they are a bit of mana in the desert. Food to nourish the mind. Food to sustain one's identity as a person. Food that bolsters one's hopes and dreams. Food that carries our students on journeys of the mind.

The food we serve is over 150 units from 29 courses on subjects from gardens to physics to philosophy. Ideas that are vitamins and minerals for the mind. Our curriculum comes to life as people inside and outside prison experience it. It provides our 600+ students with meaning and purpose. The feedback our 300 volunteer Readers provide is the seasoning that helps ideas explode with flavor.

Finally, our curriculum is the core of what we do. Without it there is no College Guild. Some of our courses are now 20 years old and outdated. As I ask my question— how do we ensure College Guild is here and more effective five years from now? One answer is that we focus on making our curriculum more robust, culturally inclusive, and current so students can relate to it and stick with us.

I hope you'll donate to ensure we can continue to serve and make our courses the best we can so that the hearts, minds, souls, and spirits of people in prison can flourish in spite of the conditions of prison life.



Benjamin Lambright
Dir. Philanthropy & Communications

Do good and eat.

It's been my life motto for a long time now. So, I couldn't help but smile when Mary sent me her piece, which is so much about how we must nurture and nourish our world. For me, my path here included periods of homelessness and poverty. At times, "eating" was too challenging to prioritize above "doing good." That doesn't mean I was always stealing food or robbing people at gunpoint. I was born with enough genetic and cultural advantages that it didn't often come to such desperation.

However, it did mean working for companies that put toxic nickel dust into the air their employees breathe or companies whose supply chain exploits slave mining and sweatshop labor in Africa and Asia. I bought things to help me fit into a socio-economic class built by people who aren't (or don't want to be) aware of the broad impacts of their actions. You know, the sort of things we often shrug and say, "that's life" about. I don't blame anyone for living.

But, at a certain point in my education and career prospects, I began to see that "eating" was no longer on the line, and I could deepen the quality of my impact on this world. Unfortunately, I can't stop living as part of a country that consumes of the world's resources, and even as I try to live a responsible life, if I examine that life with a global view and any degree of honesty, I arrive at a conclusion: the scales are tipped rather selfishly in my favor.

So, I resolve to do more good. I give up some earning power. I sacrifice some time, and I try to move the scales closer and closer to equality by doing good (working for College Guild) and eating (getting paid by College Guild). I think that's all I want from us, from anyone... can we examine our lives and figure out how to equalize the scales?

A GROCERY STORE

By Shawn H.

I used to love going to the Grocery Store,
the one next to the bar,
the bar next to the fast food spot,
a visual tapestry of color,
a place of plentitudes

There I learned a variety of things,
the order of things,
That everyThing has a price.

I learned the place of things,
the need for things,
the responsibilities of things,
and the consequences of taking things
of which you have no right.

I could spend a whole day at the Grocery Store
Gorge myself in the isle of cakes, and roll around on the floor,
Dance my way to the Chips and snakes,
Smack my lips from the taste, prance and clap
Drum-packaged boxes with Celery Sticks in celebration.
Reading magazine adds trying to sell me trips and vacations.
Bagel ships dipped in Sweat Asain Chilli
Frozen Pizzas and Cheese Steaks from Philly
I spent a whole day at the grocery Store,
because I forgot what my mom sent me there for.

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Phouc N. Untitled Color Pencil and Pastel

Untitled

By Justin C.

A mere idea hatches
like an egg;
The fledging thought,
grows and grows.

It could be anything at all:
a tool,
a device,
an improvement,
a leap forward for us all.

Take care of the thought,
and help it get
its
wings.

Volunteer Spotlight!

While we love all our volunteers, we want to celebrate one in particular! He puts as much time and energy into College Guild as anyone, all from the goodness of his heart! Here he is next to a bit of his handy work after installing a brand-new door for us. Thanks, Richard!



Do you know a College Guild volunteer who deserves to shine? Are you a College Guild volunteer? Trust us, you deserve to shine! Email Ben@collegeguild.org to see how we can shine a little light!

Hurt People

By Derek T.

Jarvis had one of those faces I just wanted to punch. No questions asked. No provocation needed. And it didn't help matters that I stood close enough to the guy in the grocery store's crowded checkout line to smell the Axe Body Spray he'd overused and most likely put back on the store shelf. Close enough to listen to the guy's mother tell him repeatedly that she couldn't afford to pay for their groceries her insulin and buy him the game he wanted from Gamestop "Jarvis," she says, "won't you stop, please. You know I don't like telling you no. I just can't afford it."

"You don't even need your stupid insulin." Jarvis lifts a case of sodas out of the shopping cart and sets it on the ground beside the front of my cart. "Fine. I'll just go without my Dew, Mom. But last week you said you'd—"

"You can't just leave these pops there, Jarvis. For Heaven's sake," she says, a look of weariness dragging her gaze away from any onlookers.

"They go back in the cart then."

In prison, I'd see plenty of guys like Jarvis. Spoiled mama's boys who'd thrown one too many tantrums and wound up caged in a situation that their mommy couldn't bail them out of. These were the types of men who'd always receive visits on visiting day, always wore the nicest clothes and shoes, and always had the same family support upon their release from prison. Men whose prison experience's only adversity came when mommy's money didn't post to their account on time, or she bought him the wrong brand of chips on the vendor order she'd ordered. Situations that led to screamed phone calls about how unfair and inconvenienced these men's lives were because of Mommy's mistakes.

In prison, I'd seen plenty of guys like Jarvis and I wanted to punch them all as well, but didn't. Violent offenders tend to remain violent if they do not learn to confront the trauma which scarred them in the first place. I'd been a violent offender, and while caged, realized why I'd turned to violence at such an early age. This only happened because I'd been removed from the life I'd lived and tossed into a cell where I could finally reflect upon the man I'd allowed myself to become. At a very tender age, I'd only learned to identify with the most basic of human emotions: neglect, desire, denial, disappointment, envy, frustration, grief, humiliation, hurt, hatred, jealousy, rage, resentment, and vindictiveness. Fourteen states of being. Fourteen emotions that I'd lived every day of my life until eventually I'd been led to prison. In prison, I recognized that I didn't have to be taught to feel worthless, as that human trait had seemed to be my default setting from the womb to the day I looked at myself in that dingy scratched-up metal mirror hanging on the prison wall and saw the truth. I could do better. I deserved better. I could live better than being caged.

I'd seen plenty of guys like Jarvis, especially when I looked into that mirror.

"Jarvis, why can't you be good?" she says. For some strange reason, I believe the question to be rhetorical, but to me, at that moment, it sounds more as if she's asking herself "Where did I go wrong?" The mother ponders for a moment or so, then she digs out her wallet, pays for their groceries, and shoves the cart right past the store's pharmacy counter, on the way out.

I watch as Jarvis's perpetual sneer turns into a grin as he skips out the automatic doors and makes a beeline for the game store across the strip mall parking lot. Perhaps his mother kept extra insulin in reserve for these such moments. I noticed that he'd lost his wallet in skipping and it'd come to rest in my line of sight.

I smile at the cashier, pay, and try my best to calm the tempest inside of me. Jarvis had no idea just how close he'd been to needing major reconstructive surgery to repair the damage I'd fantasized doing to his stupid face. A fantasy best left in my own thoughts, as I knew very, very well just how uncomfortable the resulting handcuffs would feel as they enclosed my wrists— my entire being— like a familiar friend's embrace. As the cashier, a young brunette woman, wearing a UK hoodie beneath her loosely tied store smock, smiles and hands me the receipt, I wonder if she senses the anxiety I'm at pains to conceal. I often imagine everyone else can see the invisible prison that still cages me.

Over the years I'd spent incarcerated, I would participate in the prison's many different educational programs geared towards teaching inmates to cope with the aftermath of the ruin caused by their lives of criminal behavior and all-around debauchery. And it'd be through the drudgery of being forced to recall all of the broken relationships I'd left

Continued

Hurt People

continued from page 4

in my wake that I'd finally come to accept my role in ending up confined. I'd been the type of guy to punch first and worry about repercussions later. Could that explain why my entire prison experience had been one of solitude and trips to the hole for disruptive behavior? It served me right as I earned every punishment by using my anger, instead of my communication skills to resolve all of my conflicts!

My smile becomes real as I stop to scoop up the wallet hiding just beneath a newspaper stand, I neither glance around nor act suspiciously, I'm just the average Joe reading the day's headlines.

Time to see who this guy really is. I open the wallet as if it were my own. Possession being nine-tenths of the law and all.

The driver's license reads: Jarvis Spencer, Age: 26, Address: 5814 Mayweather Place.

Also inside the wallet is a photograph of Jarvis and his mother standing together in front of a field of sunflowers. The photo showed the two in better times, happier times, a few years past. Jarvis also had a total of ninety-three dollars and a limited edition blue eyes white dragon Yu-Gi-Oh card. Ninety-three-dollars. Five times the amount of money I've been recently released from prison with to begin my life.

Looking out the grocery store's gigantic windows I see, Jarvis's mom loading the last of the groceries into the trunk of a maroon Hyundai before slamming the trunk lid closed and walking towards the game store. My gaze returns to the photo of mother and son, and I wonder whether she was the one to choose the sunflower field. Jarvis didn't seem the sort to enjoy flowers and posing for family photos.

"Don't do it," the voice of Reason bleeds in my mind before being drowned out by my inner criminal telling me to "Do it! Do it! The jerk deserves what he gets." I agree.

"5814 Mayweather Place," I say to myself. Outside the window, Jarvis's mom enters the GameStop store.

The stoic blonde woman behind the counter at the pharmacy doesn't bother to look up from the phone in her hand as I step up. "Is it a pickup or drop off?" she asks.

Maybe I should just walk away and toss the wallet before someone calls security. I'm a second away from doing just that when I recall Jarvis's carefree skip out of the store and the way he'd left his mom alone to load groceries. I picture my fist crushing into his face. Over and over and over. I decide, then and there, to put it all on the line. "You got something for Spencer? 5814 Mayweather Place," I say.

"Spencer?" The woman says, looking up from her phone to my face and the countless tattoos covering my skin. Her eyes settle upon the huge cursive letters inked into my throat and neckline that bear the words: hurt people hurt people. I see the questions written clearly on her face. How could I explain to her how much those four words had changed my life? How I'd needed them to place as a constant reminder, where I'd never, ever, lose sight of them? Or that I once spent an entire weekend filling out page after page of victim Impact forms for a Moral Recognition Therapy Program that made me list all of the people in my life whom I might have hurt, how I'd hurt them, and the exact source of pain I'd been feeling at the time I'd caused them to suffer whatever harm I'd committed. An entire weekend. It hadn't even been the shame of all my wrongs that had gotten through to me, no, it had been the abundance of names and pages I'd forced myself to recall in order to actually let the program work for me. Working the program just to get my certificate was no longer working for me. I had to change me, to change me.

I ended up with nearly a hundred people. Nearly a hundred chances to fight the loneliness. I'd felt my entire life, if only I hadn't pushed them all away.

"Yes," I say, fumbling the wallet in my hand and dropping it on the counter. The pharmacist's eyes go from my face tattoos to the photo of Jarvis's mom.

"Your Karen's son?" she says "Jeff?"

"Jarvis," I say, and flash her the license in the wallet like that'd fix everything.

Continued

Hurt People

continued from page 5

“Jarvis,” she corrects herself, reading the info. “You threw me off when you used the old address. She’s on Hearn’s Street now.”

“A force of habit,” I say, closing the wallet and looking away. “I—”

“Your mom told me you’d gotten into a spot of trouble a few years ago and...” Her words trail off as her eyes return to the words tattooed on my neck. “She had to move because of—”

“Because of me,” I say. “I’m not that man anymore.”

The pharmacist, Jen, I finally noticed her name tag as she moves to the fridge and grabs a bag, returns to the counter, and tells me the cost. Before she hands me the bag, she raises the sleeve of her smock and shows me her left arm and the many scars hidden beneath. “Hurt people sometimes hurt themselves, too,” she says. “If we’re lucky, us hurt people can heal people. We just have to allow ourselves to move past the pain.”

I’m speechless as I pay and nod before I rush out of the store. Jarvis and his mom are coming out of the GameStop as I step up and hand him his wallet.

“You dropped this in the store,” I say.

Jarvis looks at me with questions and opens the wallet. I use the silence the hand his mom the bag with her prescription in it.

“What’s this?” Karen asks.

“A gift from Jarvis,” I say before trying to walk away. I still had a bus to catch.

“Jarvis?”

I put Jarvis and his mom behind me, then the parking lot, then the entire strip mall.

My mother abandoned me when I was still a child, and I’d never once taken a picture with her. The day after she left me with a strange stranger while she went inside a dope house to get high, my mother OD’d with a needle in her arm, and I’d found myself in an emergency shelter for abused children. That same day I got into a fight with an older boy who told me my mother would never come back for me.

I’d balled my fist and struck the older boy over and over and over again.

Jarvis had one of those faces. I just want to punch... and only a mother could love.

I put Jarvis behind me, and picture myself standing beside Karen in front of a field of flowers her smile shined brighter than the sun.



Phouc N. Untitled

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Today!




1. It feels great! Helping others helps us!
 2. College Guild is dedicated to providing education and skills training to incarcerated individuals. 3. Education is one of the most effective ways to reduce recidivism 4. More than 2.3 million people are incarcerated in the United States, and many lack access to education to help them prepare for life after prison. 5. According to the RAND Corporation, inmates who participate in correctional education programs are 43% less likely to return to prison than those who do not. 6. College Guild cannot free their bodies, but

50
Reasons
to support
College
Guild

entirely by mail, which makes them accessible to incarcerated individuals in facilities without access to technology. 22. The organization's courses are FREE and accessible. 23. College Guild is one of the few organizations in America that can reach inside of solitary confinement. 24. Our students have a lower risk of disciplinary infractions and violence. 25. Incarcerated individuals who participate in education programs while incarcerated are more likely to maintain positive relationships. 26. College Guild courses are designed to promote personal growth and self-discovery.

we can free their minds. 7. College Guild courses are self-paced, which allows incarcerated students to work at their own speed and balance their education with other responsibilities. 8. College Guild has been in operation since 2001 and has served thousands of incarcerated students across the country. 9. According to the National Center for Education Statistics, only 9% of incarcerated individuals in state and federal prisons have completed a postsecondary education program. 10. College Guild courses are designed to be accessible to incarcerated individuals with varying levels of academic ability and experience. 11. Our courses cover a wide range of subjects, including business, humanities, social sciences, and more. 12. In addition to college-style courses, College Guild also provides writing and art workshops, helping incarcerated individuals develop their creative skills and express themselves through their work. 13. Education feeds the soul and the mind. 14. According to the Vera Institute of Justice, inmates who participate in education programs while incarcerated are more likely to find employment after release. 15. College Guild courses are facilitated by volunteer mentors, who provide feedback and support to incarcerated students throughout their studies. 16. College Guild is committed to promoting social justice. 17. College Guild reduces the impact of mass incarceration on communities across the United States. 18. According to the Prison Policy Initiative, the United States incarcerates more people per capita than any other country in the world. 19. College Guild courses are designed to promote critical thinking, communication, and problem-solving skills. 20. College Guild students are more likely to participate in other positive activities, such as volunteering and community service. 21. College Guild courses can be completed

27. We help incarcerated individuals develop a sense of purpose in life. 28. College Guild volunteers are committed to helping incarcerated students achieve their goals. 29. Our students are less likely to engage in anti-social behaviors. 30. College Guild's courses are designed to promote diversity and inclusivity. 31. We help incarcerated individuals learn about different cultures and perspectives. 32. College Guild's courses provide incarcerated individuals with a sense of accomplishment and pride. 33. Learning boosts self-esteem and confidence. 34. Education programs can help reduce the stigma associated with incarceration. 35. We promote a more positive view of formerly incarcerated individuals. 36. Education programs for incarcerated individuals helps reduce the economic and social costs of crime. 37. College Guild helps incarcerated individuals develop their full potential. 38. Incarcerated individuals who participate in education programs while incarcerated are more likely to have a positive attitude towards themselves and others. 39. You don't know how close you've come to prison until the gavel falls. 40. A black person is five times more likely to be stopped without just cause than a white person. 41. College Guild courses help incarcerated individuals focus on their future and plan for success. 42. Our courses help reduce the risk of substance abuse and other negative behaviors. 43. Education programs for incarcerated individuals improve overall prison management and reduce costs. 44. Your donation saves you money in taxes twice! As a deductible donation and as reduced taxes supporting the prison industrial complex. 45. DIGNITY. 46. HOPE. 47. EQUALITY. 48. JUSTICE. **50. LOVE.** 49. *Respect Reduces Recidivism.*



**COLLEGE
GUILD**

Please donate today.

College Guild depends on individual donors like you to continue make education free and available to incarcerated persons who might otherwise have no interaction with a world beyond the prison walls.

Your donation provides mutual respect and community to those who need it the most. We don't want to let a single future slip between the cracks, but we need your help. **Won't you make your gift today?**

If you recieved this Newsletter in the mail, you should have also recieved an envelope and donation slip. If you did not, you can visit collegeguild.org and click "Get Involved" to make your gift.

