

## PEACEPRINTS OF WNY

Peaceprints of WNY President Cindi McEachon recently sat down with IVC Buffalo Director Minnie Wyse and volunteer Al Culliton to review how IVC had helped Peaceprints this last year. The initial assignment was for a development manager to help Cindi keep up with local, regional and national funding opportunities, to identify unmet needs and spot development opportunities. From the first orientation meeting it was clear that the “re-entry” world Cindi knew so well was so unique that few understand it. By way of history, Peaceprints of WNY is a 501c3 not-for-profit organization providing services to men, women and young adults before, during and after they become involved with the criminal justice system. It combines over 40 years of dedicated work by two leading WNY not-profit prison ministries – Hope of Buffalo, Inc, incorporated in 1985, and Cephas Attica, Inc., incorporated in 1977 after the Attica riots. Peaceprints offers Reentry and Housing Programs designed to help formerly incarcerated individuals as they transition back into a world vastly different from what they might remember. In order to not re-offend and return to prison, they are challenged to develop new non-criminal patterns of behavior which allow them to function and succeed. In-depth discussions were necessary so that Al had a basic grasp of the history, structure, programs and goals of Peaceprints as well as an understanding of the incarceration explosion in the United States in the last 40 years.

As part of the learning process, Cindi invited Al to join her along with two Houghton college professors for the annual Federal Correctional Institution, McKean Reentry Summit in McKean, Pennsylvania.. The purpose of this event was to



bring together federal, state and local agencies, non-profits, colleges, employers, reentry advocates, community leaders and approximately 25 of the McKean inmates to share promising practices for the reentry process. Many of the presentations were given by inmates, some with long remaining sentences, who have developed into positive leaders and role models for other prisoners turning their lives in a new direction. Success was modeled at lunch by Chef Jeff Henderson, an award-winning chef, bestselling author and popular public speaker — and **an ex-offender who served nearly a decade in prison for drugs**, who spoke about his personal history, experiences as an inmate and post-release personal success. Jeff has run kitchens as Executive Chef at the renowned Café Bellagio and Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas.

The process of explaining helped Cindi “organize all that she had learned about incarceration and reentry” as she tried to educate someone else. It gave her an experienced businessperson to discuss her ideas with for making Peaceprints a “world class provider” of services for people before, during and after they become involved with the criminal justice system. She also was able to find solutions to many operational issues, such

as management of Peaceprint's information technology system. Cindi believes Peaceprints needs to provide even more services to the Minnie has seen that IVC volunteers bring a unique perspective, based on years of professional experiences, to organizations they serve and, in this case, the volunteer "helps build on the organization that is already here." Al's educational process still includes extensive research on the Internet to determine what reentry solutions have worked and which have not. Asked if the nominal fee paid to IVC was money well spent, Cindi said that "having someone like Al who I can bounce ideas off of is invaluable" especially in a small non-profit with minimal staff. Al indicated that the year with Peaceprints "has opened me up to a whole segment of the population who have passed through the criminal justice system and either been changed for better or worse as a result. I did not give it much thought before. Now I can see how difficult it is for former inmates to change their own view on life and then live that out and become a success such as Chef Henderson."

