

CJM Connection

The bi-monthly newsletter of Criminal Justice Ministry -St. Louis

In this Issue:

- Let's Start at CJM, with Toni Jordan
- Upcoming Events
- The Injustice of Innocence Forum
- News and Updates
- Ways To Give



Let's Start at CJM, With Toni

by Fatema Medhat

In 1979, Criminal Justice Ministry (CJM) started serving individuals impacted by incarceration. Ten years later, Let's Start began supporting the same population, focusing on women and children involved in the criminal justice system. On April 1st, 2019, these two organizations will merge, combining their long traditions and expertise to increase their impact on St. Louis' justice-involved populations and our community. With similar missions, CJM and Let's Start have often collaborated. However, at a time when nonprofit resources are scarce, the two organizations have often found themselves competing for the same funding. Discussions began in early 2019 to increase efficiency and efficacy by combining forces as a single organization, an idea that becomes a reality on April 1st when Let's Start merges with CJM. The partnership allows two key programs developed and managed by Let's Start – the women's support meetings and the family visit program – to continue, while solidifying CJM's recent expansion into serving women and children. Let's Start Women Support Coordinator, Toni Jordan, will officially join the CJM staff and continue the same quality services under the title Let's Start at CJM. The official partnership is taking place on April 1st at CJM's FIRST Services department office, and will be celebrated at two upcoming events: the annual Let's Start Gospel Brunch, April 13 at the St. Vincent DePaul Church Hall, and the annual CJM Recognition Dinner, April 25 at the Moulin.

Toni brings extensive experience working with justice-involved individuals to CJM, as well as having experienced incarceration herself. After her mother passed away in 2004, Toni promised to turn her life around. "I knew I needed to be the woman God placed me on this earth to be," said Toni. "The things I was doing to obtain drugs while I was out there living the homeless life...I knew that wasn't the life God had planned for me. I knew that I had to change." After her mother's death, Toni overcame her 20-year addiction and is now 15-years sober. Before going to prison, Toni said she shoplifted to support her habit and her children. In prison, her stealing created tremendous guilt. It was so intense that she would pray for God to take her hands away. But, God had a better plan for her hands. In prison, she learned to sew. With the help of local reentry programs after her release, she landed her first job sewing for a dance apparel company. Thinking back to her former prayers, Toni said, "Things can be productively done with something that I first used in a negative way."

After more hard work, Toni became a peer support specialist in 2009. She brought a unique and important perspective to the job. Toni knew first-hand how reentry support programs can change lives. In 2011, Toni became a peer support specialist trainer through the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH). Prior to her role at Let's Start, she worked with the St. Louis Empowerment Center, Queen of Peace Center, and Behavioral Health Response. At Let's Start, Toni facilitates client support programs and monthly bus trips to Vandalia Correctional Center for family members. She also assists clients by making referrals and connections to other organizations and support resources. Toni wants to continue helping women inside and outside of prison, by giving back to her community. "I'm so excited to start helping those women at CJM...I just know that this merger is going to be good. Whatever keeps Let's Start programing available to support women, I'm here to do it."



Upcoming Events

CJM's Recognition Dinner

Registration is open & we are almost out of tables.
CJM Recognition Dinner, **April 25, 6-9PM.**

Join us in celebrating all those who support Criminal Justice Ministry with dinner, cocktails, fund-a-need and presentation of the 2019 CJM awards.

Click here to RSVP or Donate:
<https://CJM2019.givesmart.com>

Let's Start Annual Gospel Brunch

The 5th Annual Let's Start Gospel Brunch is open for registration. Join us for a brunch to support women in the criminal justice system.

Brunch will be located at St. Vincent DePaul Church
April 13, 10AM-12PM.
1408 S. 10th Street

Click here to buy your tickets:
<http://letsstart.org/upcoming-events>

FREE Class at CJM

Anger Management:
6 consecutive Thursdays
9am-12pm
The next class starts
May 9, 2019.

Advance registration is required:
To register, visit our website
at www.cjmstlouis.org
or call us at (314) 652-8062.



SAVE THE DATE
GIVE STL DAY IS
MAY 1st, 2019.



Injustice of Innocence

On March 28, Criminal Justice Ministry partnered with the Midwest Innocence Project, the Clark-Fox Family Foundation, and the Bail Project, to host a free forum focused on exploring innocence within the criminal justice system. This event was led by professionals and directly impacted individuals. Event attendees learned about the reality of wrongful convictions, the problem with plea deals, and the discriminatory nature of cash bail.

We would like to thank everyone who attended the forum for their support and willingness to learn about the issues that occur within the criminal justice system that are often hidden and not discussed in the community.

This educational event is a part of a series of forums that are hosted by Criminal Justice Ministry. We encourage everyone to attend and hear stories from individuals that face these injustices and learn from professionals and educators about the issue. Stay tuned for the next forum by CJM and other community partners.

News & Updates

Our supporters have continued to help CJM grow and assist more clients. CJM also celebrates ongoing criminal justice reform at the state level. The following developments will expand CJM's impact:

- Stay tuned during the month of April & help us win a \$500 prize by being the first donor to any organization on Give STL day, **Wednesday, May 1, 2019**. You can schedule your donation ahead of time and start your own campaign for CJM. To check out our page, click on the link: <https://www.givestlday.org/CJM>
- With the help of several supporters, including Berges Family Foundation, CJM recently purchased a building at 4648 Gravois. This will help dozens of post-incarcerated Veterans and other individuals with affordable, rent-controlled housing.
- CJM still needs items for our new Food Pantry. With your help, we can open soon and start helping our food-insecure neighbors. Please consider donating canned tuna, chicken, salmon, peanut butter, canned beans, canned vegetables, cereals, granola bars, nuts, pasta & pasta sauce, ramen noodles, chips, etc. Get creative and help us gather food items!

Ways to Give

<p>Activate a CJM Partnership, the easiest, most effective way to give.</p>	<p>Attend a CJM event and learn more about the criminal justice system.</p>	<p>Shop using AmazonSmile and designate CJM when purchasing items.</p>
<p>Volunteer at the CJM office or a prison/jail.</p>	<p>Donate money, food or in-kind items for clients.</p>	<p>OR Make a purchase on our website store to support CJM clients.</p>

Click on the "*Get Involved*" button on CJM's to learn more...

