

# CJM Connection

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



Thomas Casey, CJM's new Executive Director and Christine Syberg, Operations Director



Terrell Jackson, Veterans Housing Caseworker speaks with a current client

Dear Friends of CJM,

## From the desk of the ED

It is with great excitement, hope and gratitude that I join you in service to those who have been impacted by the criminal justice system.

Excitement because CJM is a strong organization, with a stellar reputation for ministering to those who are imprisoned, assisting those who have been involved in the criminal justice system as they reenter society, and providing housing assistance to veterans and the long term incarcerated. It is an organization that has been growing in services through combining with Let's Start, by purchasing apartments to expand housing options, and offering a new housing program for women. We are poised to serve more people, to help them to successfully reintegrate into society.

At the same time, we are living through a time of great disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and what is being called a national reckoning on racial injustice since the death of George Floyd in police custody. All our lives have been impacted: from the ways we work; shop and learn; our economic stability; how we worship and how we relate to each other.

The people we serve, those incarcerated and those trying to reenter society, the institutions we work with to deliver services, and our staff and volunteers who provide the services have not been immune to these disruptions. We know that jails, prisons and other congregate care facilities are especially vulnerable to outbreaks of communicable diseases, and the drastic steps taken to limit outbreaks have meant we cannot go into the prisons to minister, and it has impacted the normal release process for those leaving prison.

The CDC has observed that, "long-standing systemic health and social inequities have put many people from racial and ethnic minority groups at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19." These are the same populations that are overrepresented in our criminal justice system.

On top of COVID, the protests, vigils and dialogues around racial injustice – particularly in our historical approach to law enforcement – are very relevant to our work. They have also caused many of us and our clients to experience increased levels of anger, stress and anxiety that can hinder our work. I find hope in the conversations I have been having with our staff, clients, board leadership and volunteers. We are a community of hope and faith, one that believes in the human spirit because we experience people who have overcome darkness, addictions, and hardship to be transformed. While we may not be able to do everything we would like to, especially our ministries within the prisons, our work does continue online and, with appropriate safety precautions, in person. Thanks to our dedicated staff and volunteers, people can obtain essential supports from First Services, to meet virtually as part of the Let's Start program, and to move into our Release to Rent housing.

Thank you for your participation in this transformative work, and for your support in these disruptive times. It is my hope that we will be able to meet soon as we resume more normal activities.

Tom

## Are you ready to VOTE?



### You can register to vote online:

<https://sl.sos.mo.gov/elections/voterregistration/>

### Last Day to register to vote in November 3rd Presidential Election? October 7th

### Did you know that a convicted felon, that has completed probation and parole can vote?

"Yes. Upon completion of your sentence and probation or parole, you are eligible to vote in elections. Individuals who have been convicted of an election offense, whether a felony or misdemeanor, are not allowed to vote."



Criminal Justice Ministry's Trivia Night is anticipated as a fun, competitive, fundraising event on our annual calendar. Due to COVID - 19, we need some input from you - our cherished volunteers and supporters - to make this event happen and happen in as safe a manner as possible. Please help us to make the right decisions by taking our survey:



## CJM School Supply Drive

We are supporting The Little Bit Foundation in August by collecting school supplies. Please drop off supplies at 1100 S. Jefferson, 63104; Monday - Thursday, 9:00 AM - 12 PM. or you may email [danelled@cjmstlouis.org](mailto:danelled@cjmstlouis.org) to arrange your drop-off. Here is a list of requested items:

- Colored pencils
- 8-12 pack Crayons
- 24 pack Markers
- 8-12 pack Highlighters
- Notebook, wide ruled
- Loose leaf, wide ruled paper (150)
- Glue sticks
- Pencil box/pouch
- Folders, two-pocket



Breaking down barriers to learning

"We are committed to breaking down barriers to learning for students living in poverty through partnerships and programs that serve the needs of the whole child."



## Congratulations to CJM's Woman of Achievement, Toni A. Jordan

Started in 1955, the awards program that was to become the Women of Achievement Awards began a legacy of celebrating service. Today, WOA continues to honor women whose volunteer service has made an impact in the community. This year's awards presentation will be televised on September 14 at 7 p.m. on KETC (Channel 9).

Toni Jordan, *Let's Start* Program Coordinator at Criminal Justice Criminal, was nominated for this prestigious award by longtime volunteer, Joan Lipic. "Toni does an amazing job with women and with those struggling with drug issues. Toni's spirit is so full of life and this award was a great opportunity to expose the good work of *Let's Start*."

CJM acquired *Let's Start* in April of 2019.