

Partners' Update...

Vol. 1, SPRING 2017

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Welcome!

This is the first issue of the Concordance Academy's volunteer newsletter, the *Partners' Update*. We are hoping to publish more updates throughout the year, bringing you news about the Academy, its program, participants, staff and volunteers.

Volunteer "partnership teams" are a critical part of the Concordance Re-Entry Model. The idea of partnership teams stems from Project COPE, the Academy's predecessor. Today, we continue this approach and believe these partnerships are two-way commitments, benefitting both volunteers and participants. Partnership teams help individuals who are returning home from prison achieve personal and professional goals, and participants teach team members important lessons about people whose life experiences may be very different from their own.

As a volunteer, you may be new to the program, or perhaps you took part, as I did, with a Project COPE partnership team. Either way, you may be curious about all that has been going on behind the scenes over the past couple of years – efforts that culminated in the release of the Academy's first class near the end of last year. We'll try to fill in those blanks in this newsletter.

Please let us know at volunteers@concordanceacademy.com if you have questions about the Academy or the newsletter. And if you wish to talk about forming a partnership team or ask about other volunteer opportunities within the organization, please contact Jeff Smith, EVP, Head of Community Engagement & Policy, at jsmith@concordanceacademy.com.

We hope you enjoy this inaugural issue.

Sincerely,

CANDACE O'CONNOR
Contributing Editor, *Partners' Update*

Candace O'Connor served on a partnership team and as a board member for Project COPE for 25 years, and continues in those roles for the Academy today. She is pictured here (front right) with her partnership team from Second Presbyterian Church and their partner, the late Michael Bradley.



CONCORDANCE
Academy of Leadership ●●●



Participants listened to and networked with three leaders in the St. Louis workforce at the Concordance Academy Education & Training Fair

“

The idea is to relieve the financial pressure of those first days out of prison when people are struggling and may fall back into familiar patterns with old ‘friends’ who lead them back into trouble.

- Jeff Smith, EVP, Head of Community Engagement & Policy

Concordance Academy Welcomes First Class

It took two years of planning and hiring, fundraising and recruitment, but around Thanksgiving, the first group of men and women enrolled in the Academy began to be released from area prisons to the community. These participants are now receiving post-release services from Academy staff. Altogether, 200 participants will be enrolled in 2017.

“We are delighted to see our efforts come to fruition with this first class,” says Danny Ludeman, Concordance Academy president and CEO.

The people released so far break down this way demographically: 82% are men and 18% are women; 76% are African-American while 18% are white. They range in age from 19 to 54, and they have committed various crimes, such as armed robbery, felony theft

and drug-related offenses. At this point, the Academy does not accept sex offenders.

The Academy’s comprehensive care team has been working with participants over the past several months at Pacific, Vandalia and Bonne Terre prisons. The team has provided pre-release services including therapeutic sessions, and educational and job readiness programming.

From the first day they are released, participants are paid a stipend while taking part in six weeks of intensive community reorientation.

The Academy has also been working with five affordable housing firms to find safe housing in the city and county for these participants. This housing is near bus lines, giving people access to shopping, and, most importantly, to Academy headquarters, where their employment, therapy, drug counseling, chaplaincy and legal services are based.

After the participants are settled into homes and fully engaged in Academy services, they will meet their new partnership teams, who can provide the key ingredients of friendship, warmth and helping hands.

“Through that first year after prison, the team will be a major contributor to their partner’s success,” said Jeff Smith, EVP, Head of Community Engagement & Policy.

“*They are eager for a second chance, and we are working hard to help them become successful.*”

- Danny Ludeman, President & CEO





A New Headquarters Building for the Academy

Concordance Academy has worked hard to find the perfect headquarters building that would provide the necessary classroom, office and general purpose space. It proved to be a challenging task. "Time after time, we encountered the NIMBY factor: 'Not In My Backyard,'" said Michelle Smith, EVP, Head of Finance & Administration.



Ultimately, the Academy located a large building at 1845 Borman Court within a Maryland Heights industrial office park. It is directly on a bus line and has its own large parking lot. The Academy has renovated and will only use the first floor in its initial phase. The renovation included conference rooms, a small library, a computer lab, a dining room for Fellowship Dinners, as well as kitchen space.

“ We are incredibly excited to have our first home.

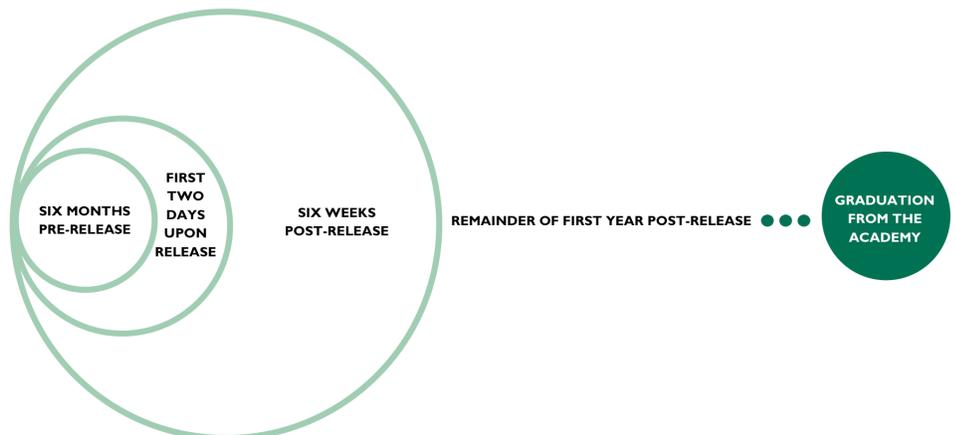
- Michelle Smith EVP, Head of Finance & Administration



The new location is also in the vicinity of several of the region's top employers, including hospitality/lodging, distribution and logistics companies. Many of these employers will work with the Concordance Employment Agency in the future.

A Re-Entry Timeline

Here is an overview of how the Academy's 18-month program works:



A Strong Partnership with Bryan Cave

In June 2016, Bryan Cave LLP – an international law firm based in St. Louis – and Concordance Academy announced the creation of a new Bryan Cave-Concordance Legal



SHELBY HEWERDINE
Concordance Fellow,
Legal Services

Fellowship. The attorney will spend half of his or her time at Bryan Cave and the other half on pro bono work for Academy participants, who may come home from prison with outstanding warrants, child support issues, or other pending legal matters.

The program began in fall 2016 with Shelby Hewerdine as the first legal fellow. So far, she says, she is enjoying her experience and learning a great deal. She will spend two years in this position and then be succeeded by another Bryan Cave fellow. A second lawyer will be added in fall 2017.

An Honor for Concordance Academy



Concordance Academy is one of 56 local organizations chosen as finalists for the 2017

Arcus Awards, sponsored by the St. Louis Regional Chamber. These annual awards honor groups, companies and institutions that make St. Louis “a more attractive place to live, work and invest,” according to the Chamber.

The Arcus Awards comprise 10 categories, and the Academy is up against four other groups for the *BMO Harris Spirit of St. Louis Award*. The winner will be announced on February 23 at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis.

Jeff's Corner... EVP, HEAD OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & POLICY



Joining Our Cause by Creating a Team

Partnership teams are at the heart of Concordance Academy. They provide the friendship and support that participants lack in their lives but so desperately need. As time goes on and more participants enroll in the Academy, new partnership teams will be needed to support them as they return to the community.

In the past, congregations – including those of Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and Muslim faith – have been the source of those teams. But the sheer number of people the Academy is serving demands a broader approach. The Academy is delighted to work with teams from any background.

Could your business form a group who could adopt a partner? Or do you simply have a group of friends or relatives looking for a new way to make a difference? Do you belong to Rotary, Kiwanis, Optimists or other service groups? You'll need four to six people who are willing to attend training and then commit five or six hours a month to helping change a life. No experience is necessary – just kindness and an open mind.

If you are interested, please contact me at jsmith@concordanceacademy.com





Randi Naughton, anchor of FOX-2 News in the Morning, emceed the evening's program

Yippee-ki-yay! A Successful Western Fling

A rollicking evening of fun and fundraising took place on October 22 at the Ritz-Carlton in St. Louis. More than 400 people attended — some dressed in fringed shirts, 10-gallon hats, and cowboy boots — for the second annual Concordance Academy gala, which this year had a country-western theme.

Headlining the event was rising country singer Brett Young, while Randi Naughton of FOX-2/KTVI was emcee. Other features of the event— which was underwritten by Marilyn and Sam Fox, Thelma and David Steward, Centene Charitable Foundation, and Susan and Danny Ludeman— included a silent auction that raised \$70,000, raffles that made \$12,500, and a fund-a-need that brought in \$420,000. Altogether, the gala raised more than \$1.2 million. Event co-chairs were Diane and David Katzman, Kerrin and David Kowach, and Peggy and Jerry Ritter.

Several St. Louis companies also helped to sponsor the evening, among them: Maritz, Laclede Gas Company, Wells Fargo Advisors, Ameren Missouri, ARG Recruiting Group, Ascension Health, Edward Jones, Ernst & Young, HLK and the St. Louis Cardinals. Linda Robinson organized a volunteer team from Wells Fargo Advisors to staff the registration table and act as spotters during the fund-a-need event.

But the evening wasn't only light entertainment. Danny Ludeman gave moving remarks about the critical need for re-entry services, while Bill Rone recounted his personal story of incarceration.

"There wasn't a dry eye in the place when he spoke," said Danielle Hurtt, EVP, Head of Marketing, Communications & Development.



“ We greatly appreciate the St. Louis community and its support as we build the foundation for what we believe will be a game-changing organization. ”

- Danny Ludeman, President & CEO



Brett Young entertained with a high-energy performance



Guests were inspired by Bill Rone's heartfelt testimony

Learn more about why the leadership team supports our mission...



Danny Ludeman, President & CEO, previously served as CEO of Wells Fargo Advisors, where he increased revenue from \$300 million to \$10 billion during his tenure. Upon retirement, he followed a spiritual calling to serve others, leading to the founding of Concordance Academy. Danny remains active in industry and civic affairs, serving on several local boards. He also attends Covenant Seminary, where he is pursuing a divinity degree.

Danny has appointed a senior leadership team, all experts in their respective fields. Here are brief bios of each one, with a brief comment about why they are involved with a program to help ex-offenders:



“ I am eager to work for a higher cause, inspired by the effort, and excited by the opportunity to create societal change.

Danielle Hurtt, *EVP, Head of Marketing, Communications & Development*, joined the Academy after more than a decade at FleishmanHillard. There she served as director of marketing, senior vice president and partner of the firm’s corporate communications and marketing department, which she founded.



“ Working here provides an opportunity to give back to the community that gave me so much. Growing up in East St. Louis, the impact of mass incarceration was front and center, and it has touched my extended family.

Roderick Nunn, *EVP, Head of Education and Employment*, previously worked at St. Louis Community College as president of the Forest Park campus and vice chancellor for economic development and workforce solutions. Before that, he directed the public workforce system for three governors in Missouri and Illinois, winning numerous awards. He has a doctor of management degree from the University of Maryland-University College.





“ My husband has lived through the experience of being formerly incarcerated, and I am committed to helping others avoid having to go through what he did.

Barb Shepard, *EVP, Head of Human Resources*, came to Concordance Academy with more than 30 years in the human resources field for such nonprofits as Great Circle and such for-profit firms as Wagner Brakes, Todd Uniform, Laclede Steel, and Doe Run. She has earned both MBA and JD degrees.



“ I came to Concordance because of my desire to give others the same type of second chance that I was blessed to receive when I returned home.

Jeff Smith, *EVP, Head of Community Engagement & Policy*, was professor of urban policy at The New School's Milano Graduate School in New York City. From 2006 to 2009, he represented St. Louis City in the Missouri Senate after having narrowly lost a race for U.S. Congress. He has a PhD in political science, and has written three books, including *Mr. Smith Goes to Prison*, a prison memoir and argument for reform.



“ I chose to work here because I get to work alongside amazing colleagues to build a best-in-class organization. We are changing the lives of our participants as well as the multi-faceted effects of reincarceration on our community, making St. Louis a better place for everyone.

Michelle Smith, *EVP, Head of Finance and Administration*, has more than a decade of experience working in the federal judicial and criminal justice system. She was most recently managing partner of a Houston-based architectural firm.

From Project COPE to Concordance Academy

Three members of the Project COPE team transitioned into key roles with the Academy, and continue to serve justice-involved adults in the St. Louis community.



Henry Allen

After joining the Project COPE team in 2014 as a volunteer coordinator, Henry helped recruit and train partnership teams. Today he is the Partnership Team Coordinator for the Academy and works closely with volunteers, under the leadership of Jeff Smith.



Ronnie Shepard

Ronnie Shepard served as Project COPE's Property Manager, helping with routine maintenance and facility upkeep. He continues in that role, while also working as an evening supervisor for the Academy.



Tyrone Washington

From 2009 on, Tyrone was the capable, well-liked office manager at COPE. In October 2016, he transitioned to the role of Community Support Specialist for the Academy. He helps participants move into housing, obtain their IDs and facilitates life skill classes. He even helps with the audit and occasional IT problems.

CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

February 23

Arcus Awards at the Hyatt Regency St. Louis

March 16

Jeff Smith speaks to the St. Louis Chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women

March 17

Fellowship Dinner for participants, staff and family at the Concordance Academy Headquarters

COMING SOON...

Annual Partners' Event

We're in the early stages of planning our annual partners' event for later this spring. This time, we hope to hold it at our new facility, so all our volunteers can see what it's like. As usual, we'll honor past partners, honor our teams and celebrate the program with dinner and conversation.

Concordance Academy Open House

We will be having a reception and opening our new building to guests this spring.

DATES FOR THE ANNUAL PARTNERS' EVENT AND CONCORDANCE ACADEMY OPEN HOUSE WILL BE COMING SOON!



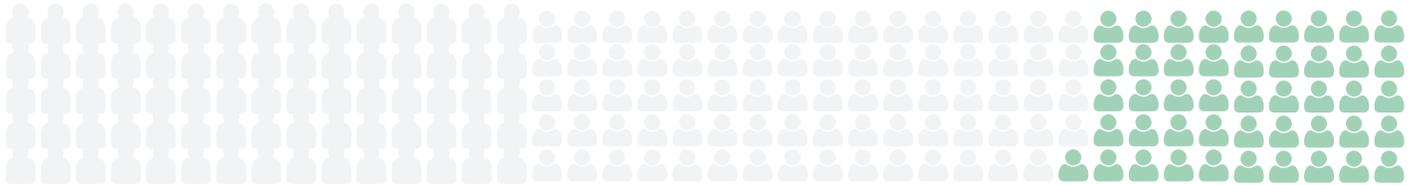
The Issue...

77%

REARRESTED
WITHIN 5 YEARS
NATIONALLY

Our Pioneering Effort

Throughout the United States, in cities and small towns, 100 million people are suffering the devastating effects of incarceration. They return to society with a great desire to change but then face ostracism and discrimination. They feel as though they are wearing a scarlet letter – “F” for felon – on their foreheads every day. Not surprisingly, **77 percent go back to prison within three to five years of release.**



How do we address this massive problem? A few decades ago, a small St. Louis organization called Project COPE began matching individuals newly released from prison with volunteer teams from local congregations; later, COPE added transitional housing for 10 partners at a time. They did valiant work for years, but Concordance Academy offered a chance to take a new look at the same problem.

Concordance Academy of Leadership is founded upon the COPE model but is more broadly conceived. It provides a full range of evidence-informed services: substance use programming, employment and job readiness skills, cognitive therapy, spiritual and legal services. Academy staff begin working with men and women six months before release and continue for one year afterwards.

After months of planning, the Academy is implementing this service model with its first class of newly released partners. It's an exciting time, and staff is actively recruiting partnership teams that will replicate the success that COPE teams did in helping ex-offenders.

If you are not already on board, please join us in this pioneering effort. **We are aiming to reduce reincarceration rates by 33 percent**, and we are the first organization in the United States to offer a set of holistic, integrated, evidence-driven re-entry services. Within five years, we hope to be serving men and women across the country. We must not let this chance slip by – but it can't happen without your help.

Our Goal...

1/3

REDUCTION IN
REINCARCERATION
AMONG PARTICIPANTS
AND A POSITIVE
RIPPLE EFFECT

