

Inmates mentoring inmates at Indiana State Prison

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Members of the first LifeChange Mentor Training for inmate mentors: 7 inmates, Wayne Beachy, Lifechange Trainer and their Bible teacher, Peter Bylen.

The idea of inmates mentoring inmates began in the heart of Wayne Beachy as he prayed for more volunteers to mentor the hundreds of inmates at the Indiana State Prison.

Beachy began mentoring in 2004 at a local county jail in Goshen, Indiana. Tim, the man he was mentoring was moved to Indiana State Prison (ISP). Tim never expected to see Beachy again and was very pleasantly surprised when he came to visit and offered to return weekly to visit him.

The Indiana State Prison is located in Michigan City, Indiana about an hours drive from Beachy's home. It is a maximum security prison for adult males; however, minimum security housing also exists on the confines. The average daily inmate population in November 2006 was 2,200.

Indiana State Prison was built during the Civil War to house prisoners of war. Today, three out of four inmates are in for murder, making it is one of the most dangerous and possibly one of the most dreaded prisons in the United States. The first thing one notices as they approach the facility is the massive wall fortressing the entire prison. No one can see in, and there is no way the inmates can see out. ISP is truly its own city behind walls.

Beachy and Tim's mentoring experience began with Beachy mostly listening to Tim share about his life. Beachy soon saw the need for a more structured learning experience whereby he could systematically share God's Word while applying it to Tim's daily needs.

Beachy located the LifeChange Mentoring Curriculum online. He became trained as a LifeChange Trainer and began using the discussion guides during their weekly meetings. Soon more inmates were asking for mentors. Beachy recruited and trained other volunteer mentors but the number of inmates wanting mentors far exceeded the number of available volunteers.

Beachy approached the Chaplain with the idea of training inmate mentors from among the spiritually mature residents of ISP. Their first inmate mentor training included 7 inmates and a volunteer

Bible teacher, Peter Bylen.

The inmate mentors have many good things to say about the program. They all agree that it has brought new meaning to their lives to be able to help others.

One inmate mentor said when asked why he became a mentor said, “To bring the love of Christ to the people and show them they aren’t forgotten. I believe it really helps the mentees to see that the other inmates care. It brings peace of heart and mind in their lives that they didn’t have before.”

He continued, “I had a person who felt like he had no hope of living life until I took the time to be a friend and show him how Christ can give you life in here as He did for Paul in prison. I’d like to see more inmates give of themselves in the program, see it grow in the prison and in other prisons.”

That is Beachy’s desire also, for godly men who happen to be inmates to have the opportunity to share the love of Christ with fellow inmates inside the walls of the prison system.

If you are interested in learning more about the LifeChange Mentoring experience and the inmate mentor program, contact Wayne@lifechangementoring.org or go to <http://www.lifechangementoring.org> .