

Lionheart Update Spring 2018...

The Lionheart Foundation continues to make a life-changing difference for thousands of incarcerated adults, highly at-risk adolescents, and at-risk teen parents through the Houses of Healing, Power Source and Power Source Parenting programs. Our programs are thriving and there is a lot of enthusiasm and interest in our newest resource, EQ2, which will be published this summer. It is an exciting time for the expansion of our efforts. It indeed has the feeling of Spring at Lionheart!

POWER SOURCE for highly at-risk adolescents

GREAT NEWS.... The initial raw data at the Sacramento Regional Conservation Corp (SRCC) where we are doing Power Source is great. In a comparison of the students who started in the Youth Build cohort last June without Power Source and the cohort who started this January with Power Source, there has been an 80% increase in attendance. That impacts so many other components of outcome.... So exciting!

(SRCC is Sacramento's largest education and workforce training program for 18-25 year olds)

Maggi Schubert, CEO. GPS Social Enterprises

Followed by: The group we are working with at the Conservation Corps had drug tests the other day and ALL 16 of them were clean of any substances. That is the first time ever they have had that and we credit that to Power Source and Aldo and Walt's [the facilitators] impact on the youth.

The POWER SOURCE Training: A Program to Prepare Lifers and Long-termers to Facilitate a High Impact Program for Young Prisoners (18-24): This program, being delivered in two CA prisons, is proving to be a great success. A high percentage of the young men reported being able to handle their anger in a more positive way, take more responsibility for their actions, have greater insight into their choices, and live with greater hope. All participants reported that they would recommend the program to others. Survey feedback from the young adult prisoners in the first round of the program facilitated by lifers and long-termers included:

.... The impact has been great. There's so much I've learned & grown to understand.

.... It helped me to see things in a positive way even when it was a bad day.

.... I thought I was stuck in my ways & that's not the case. We just needed a lil guidance to return to our true selves.

.... It gave me insight into my life - now I look at everything differently.

.... The Power Source program has given me the "tools" to not only better my life but if my son, nieces, or nephews have any questions about problems as they get older I will be able to answer them truthfully just like I wish someone in my family would have done for me.

.... If it can help an anti-social pessimist like myself then it can help anyone.

When we asked the young men enrolled in the Power Source Program what the pros and cons of having older prisoners facilitate, their responses included: *We have positive prisoners to teach us right from wrong; They walked the same walk I did growing up, with gangs, crime, drugs & money; They know firsthand what it is like to be in my shoes; When I feel like I'm going to screw up*

I know I can talk to them; He would encourage me to come to group whenever he saw me in the yard.

Clearly, when given the opportunity to facilitate this structured social and emotional learning program for young prisoners, the lifers and long-termers are taking it to heart and impressively rising to the occasion. What an invaluable resource right there in the prison! Hopefully when the findings of this program are published, they will inspire many other prison systems to offer the same training.

As we had anticipated and hoped for, prisoner-facilitators also greatly benefitted from the groups. One wrote, ***“facilitating allows for the creation of purpose, meaning, and restoration.”*** In the surveys distributed at the end of the program other prisoner-facilitators wrote:

- ❖ It is rewarding but also a great responsibility. I've learned more about myself and have been conscious of my thoughts, words, and actions to make sure I model the behavior I want the youngsters to adopt.
- ❖ It's giving me a sense of giving back. I feel like I'm actually living out my "living amends".
- ❖ A highlight was to see the “light-bulb” go on in a young person’s mind as a direct result of hearing a concept or idea from the curriculum.
- ❖ It has reinforced my belief that groups, if well led and consistently held have the power to change lives.

Indeed!!!!

The next round of this training program starts in July as a new group of lifers and long-termers go through the training. They then facilitate the program with other young prisoners.

Power Source in India: Although not our focus, there continues to be enthusiasm for our resources internationally. Last week we received an email from a woman we have been in communication with in India. She wrote, *“I just wanted to send you a quick note that we are getting ready to facilitate Power Source with the first group of 35 boys from the age of 16-18 in a juvenile home and a children's home. There are those who were convicted for crimes and those who are street kids - abandoned or orphaned. We will be slowly translating these into Hindi and I feel like we will be able to adapt it to India. Please know that I am just deeply grateful to Lionheart for this gift to us and to the children of the world.”*

EQ2: Over the past 8 months, with support from The Boston Foundation and our donors, Lionheart has been conducting 6-session EQ2 pilot trainings with staff in 5 different sites (teen living programs, a community program, and a transitional emergency placement program). This Spring EQ2 will also be piloted in a residential care setting. As experts increasingly understand, managing the traumatic stress reactions that high-risk youth often present with can take a profound toll on the well-being of staff and result in trauma symptoms permeating the larger organization. EQ2 is created to increase staffs’ awareness of youth trauma behavior while helping them build relationship-focused competencies.

We have received very positive feedback from direct care staff along with the ultimate feedback from a supervisor – ***“We have seen a culture change because of the EQ2 training.”***

The following are a few comments that shed light on how EQ2 supports staff, increases their understanding of the impact of early trauma, and directly impacts the young people they serve.

- Whenever I felt disrespected I used to react right away. But now before I react, I breathe. I take my time and use a Cool Thought.
- EQ2 has helped me to look deeper into the underlying causes of behavior and to be more effective in my role when extreme behaviors and thoughts arise.
- The training provided new skills. It caused me to stop and think about how I handle situations and about all the trauma that our kids have experienced. It allowed me to look at the youth in a different light and gave me more understanding and patience.

A few weeks ago Lionheart exhibited at the Association of Children’s Residential Centers annual conference and Beth presented on EQ2. There was a great deal of interest in EQ2 and Lionheart’s youth resources with doors opening to local agencies as well as interest from programs across the country.

Houses of Healing: The Prison Project

A volunteer in the Federal Bureau of Prisons reached out to the chaplain within that system to inquire about instituting a Houses of Healing Program. The chaplain responded that HOH is one of the “model programs” in the Bureau of Prisons.

The HOH Self-Study Course for Prisoners in Solitary Confinement: Although the funding Lionheart received from the CA Dept. of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) for this program has ended, 63 additional prisoners in CA’s solitary units have registered and participated in the course. Formal research on this program will be published in early 2019. Once published, we will pursue opportunities to present this research at conferences and promote the utilization of this solitary program.

As you may recall from our last update, the Houses of Healing Self-study Course is also being offered on Death Row in San Quentin. To date, 23 death row prisoners have participated. This week we heard from a man who wrote that information about the course is now spreading by word of mouth within death row.

I am eternally grateful and thankful I was able to participate and be a part of the program.
Death row prisoner

It is inspiring to see the growth of death row prisoners even in this unimaginably bleak situation. A death row prisoner recently wrote, “*If a person truly puts in the time to study this course, they can find true peace within.*”

Next week we expect to receive the outcome of a new 3-year “Innovative Grant” offered by the CDCR that Lionheart has applied for. In addition to the many youth, adult, and staff projects on

our plate, next month Beth and I will visit the CA prisons where our programs are being implemented.

Requests for Lionheart's trainings, programming, and resources have surpassed our staff's current capacity. It has become clear from our day-to-day operations that Lionheart needs to add staff to keep pace with the demands that we are currently facing. As a result, Lionheart is planning to enter into a strategic and business planning process to expand our operations and increase our impact.

As we move into this next stage of changing lives and building positive futures, I ask that you please consider donating to the Lionheart Foundation.

<http://lionheart.org/donation/>

I am, as always,
Most sincerely and gratefully yours,

Robin Casarjian
Executive Director