



Thresholds in Delaware County Newsletter Fall 2017

Updates on Thresholds Program Sites

About Us

- **Thresholds in Delaware County** is an organization of volunteers who teach decision-making skills in the State Correctional Institution, Chester; the George W. Hill Correctional Facility, Thornton; and the Juvenile Detention Center, Lima, PA
- P O. Box 114, Thornton, PA 19373
- 610-459-9384
- www.thresholdsdelco.org

WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We hope that the Thresholds in Delaware County Email Newsletter will be a useful source of information and that it will provide opportunity for discussion about the Thresholds program. Please help to energize this newsletter by sending feedback, comments, or letters to the editors in response to articles. We will publish them in future issues. Also, we welcome ideas for articles and news you would like to read about. Please send suggestions for making this newsletter useful and informative to you.

Email contacts:

gloriabeaming@gmail.com
Jascheffler1@gmail.com
joannematteucci@gmail.com

George W. Hill Correctional Facility: Report from Bill Vernon and Fran Battista
As we head into the final cycle at the Hill, 70 men and 26 women have completed Thresholds training. We are putting together a class of 24 men and 15 women, which could yield a grand total of 131. It's unlikely that all will finish, but we should certainly break through 100. An additional unit has been organized at the Hill to house the women.

Twenty-five percent of our clients in 2017 signed up for Pathway Forward, a joint venture involving GWHCF and DCCC, which allows our graduates that have a high school diploma or GED certificate to enroll in an associates degree program, certificate program, or vocational/technical program. The goal of corrections is to return citizens to the community, where they can assimilate as law abiding, productive members. Our program and our volunteers tutoring GED candidates are making evidence-based strides toward achieving that goal. We are emptying our prisons one client at a time.

SCI-Chester: Report from Tina Stanton

Currently at SCI-Chester we have 21 volunteers on our list. We can have up to 25, and I really need more. We have had classes of only nine or ten clients at a time, because that is all the teachers I have had who could teach at any one time. We can only teach as many men as we have volunteers. Three new volunteers from the last volunteer training workshop are currently active at SCI-Chester. That's great, but we could sure use some more. The paperwork and approval process is frustratingly slow sometimes, but it does get done. All our volunteers have completed it. Volunteers who are interested in teaching in the evening, please contact Tina for an SCI-Chester assignment.

Juvenile Detention Center: Report from Maggie Arbuckle

Being able to regularly deliver our Thresholds Program at the Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center has been a struggle of late, either because there aren't enough kids in the center, or because the second weekend of the month doesn't mesh with staffing at the JDC and our available teachers. Also, the number of available teachers on our teaching list has dwindled! Both the JDC and Thresholds want to keep this important program going, so please think about volunteering to teach at the Juvenile Detention Center.

Requirements include \$35 for Clearances: Criminal background, PA Child Abuse Check, FBI Background Check, fingerprinting & PREA Training at the JDC. Please contact Maggie Arbuckle if you are interested (mwa619@comcast.net).

Many Thanks!

TEACHER FEATURE

Interview with Bill Vernon

Volunteers with Thresholds in Delaware County are all familiar with Bill Vernon, the friendly and energetic Thresholds program director at George Hill. Even those who do not volunteer at George Hill are sure to remember Bill’s encouraging presence at Volunteer Training Workshops. In my interview with Bill, I asked him about his Thresholds experience, and his answers are sure to interest all members.

How long have you been with Thresholds in Delaware County, and how did you get interested in the program?

I joined Thresholds following my retirement from the Delco SPCA in October of 2015. I was first made aware of Thresholds by Maggie Arbuckle’s husband Joe, who served on the SPCA’s Board of Directors. He thought it was something I might enjoy and he was right.

What sort of work do you do with Thresholds?

I began as a Micro teacher after completing the Volunteer Training Workshop in October of 2015. I joined the Board of Directors in January 2016 and began training as a Macro teacher in the Spring of 2016. When Elek had to give up the Program Coordinator’s job due to illness during Cycle 5 in the Autumn of that year, I was asked to step up. Elek showed me how to recruit a class, assign them Micro teachers, prepare and co-teach the Macro class with Mike and Heather, issue weekly schedules, and cover teacher absences (although they rarely occur). I flew solo in Cycle 6 and I’ve been doing it without regret ever since.

What do you find rewarding about your work with Thresholds?

In 1974 I graduated from Northeastern University with a bachelor’s degree in criminal justice. While law enforcement has undergone several changes since that time, reform has come slower to corrections. Through Thresholds, I’ve seen the amazing life altering changes that treatment programs, life skills training, and enrichment opportunities can bring to folks. I feel fortunate to be part of an organization recognized for delivering those opportunities to a grateful population that are genuinely working on turning their lives around.

What do you find to be the most challenging part of working with Thresholds?

The most challenging part of the job is being unable to provide the Thresholds program to everyone that wants it. Even those who get started are sometimes transferred or discharged before completion, and lack of space restricts our ability to accommodate all our applicants.

Have you encountered any clients who had notable stories or insights as they learned the Thresholds decision-making program?

Many clients learn for the first time that they are unique, important, and irreplaceable.

Do you have any ideas or suggestions for the Thresholds in Delaware County program?

I have always felt that Thresholds in Delaware County is the flagship of the fleet. We’re providing materials and training to fledgling programs in county, state, and juvenile facilities as far away as Connecticut. Rather than using this opportunity to provide ideas and suggestions, I would rather provide heartfelt gratitude to all of our volunteers that have lifted us up as a model toward which other chapters can aspire.

“Life has no elevator. You have to take the stairs.”
Unknown

“A master can tell you what he expects of you. A teacher, though, awakens your own expectations.”
Patricia Neal

“Leadership is not wielding authority;

CLIENT FEATURE

The GED Program at George W. Hill Correctional Facility

Since February 2016, Thresholds in Delaware County has run a GED tutoring program in cooperation with the Education Department at George W. Hill Correctional Facility. Since many Thresholds volunteers may not be familiar with this branch of our work, this article will provide some background.

In 2016, our Board approved a request by Rosanna Denney, then Interim GED Coordinator at George Hill, to allow volunteer teachers to tutor clients who were working toward achieving their GED certificates. Elek Fenyes, Thresholds Program Coordinator at that time, felt that this project could provide an interesting teaching alternative for volunteers who found themselves temporarily without clients. A six month pilot proved to be a success, and the program has continued ever since.

Conrad Follmer, Education Coordinator at George Hill, reports that approximately 110 clients are officially enrolled in the prison's GED program at this time, including about 93 men and about seventeen women. The program offers men the support of six instructors, who teach the four subjects of the GED test at three levels, and one instructor who teaches all women all subjects at all levels. At this time, Thresholds provides two tutors.

A further educational opportunity branching from the GED program at George Hill is Delaware County Community College's Pathway Forward program. Begun about four years ago by Elek Fenyes, DCCC English professor Matthew Brophy, and Asst. Director of Admissions Darren Lipscomb, Pathway Forward identifies clients who have completed the Thresholds program, have a high school diploma or GED certificate, and are interested in furthering their education after release. These clients are given guidance in applying to DCCC to enroll in an associates degree program, certificate program, or vocational/technical program. Twenty-five percent of our 2017 Thresholds graduates signed up for Pathway Forward.

TEACHER NEED TO KNOWS!

Security Training for Volunteers

Security training for Thresholds volunteers is mandatory, and volunteers must be recertified annually. The following training options are available for those visiting George Hill or SCI-Chester.

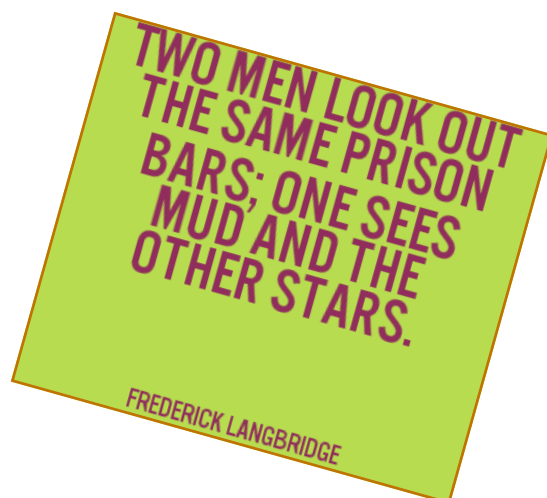
George W. Hill: contact Bill Vernon with your choice of training date

Recertification for current volunteers may be done on two dates:

1. **Oct. 28, 8-10 a.m.** at the GWHCF Training Center, when new volunteers have their day-long security training
2. **November 10, 6-8 p.m.** in the Visitation Room at GWHCF, followed by the (optional) George Hill Volunteer Appreciation Dinner

SCI-Chester: contact Tina Stanton (Tinastanton77@gmail.com) with any questions

The annual security orientation is scheduled for Thursday, **Nov. 16, at 5 p.m.**, followed by the annual Volunteer Appreciation Dinner. SCI-Chester currently needs active volunteers.



New Volunteer Training Workshop: October 21 and 22

Thresholds in Delaware County will hold its Fall Volunteer Training Workshop on the weekend of October 21 and 22, 2017, at Neumann University in Aston, Pennsylvania. Saturday's session will run from 8:45 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., and Sunday's session will be a half day. For over 20 years, Neumann has provided training space for us, and we are grateful for their ongoing support.

The Volunteer Training Workshop is designed to encourage new volunteers by providing them with tools and personal support to build their confidence as new Thresholds teachers. The following points are covered:

- An introduction to Threshold's model of the 6-steps to decision making
- An introduction and personal contact with current Thresholds teachers, offering workshop participants an opportunity to hear and learn from the experiences of these veteran teachers
- An overview and introduction to the many tools available to new teachers: Teacher's Manual, Participant's Guide to the 6-steps, and lesson plans
- Additional training in security procedures at the George W. Hill Correctional Facility or at State Correctional Institution -Chester will be scheduled for those interested in volunteering at one of those facilities.

Two easy and fast ways to register are available:

- Call the Thresholds phone number at (484) 301-0590
- Register online at www.Thresholdsdelco.org

Current Thresholds members are asked to spread the word and encourage interested friends, colleagues, church members, etc. to register for the workshop.

Thresholds members are also welcome to participate in the Volunteer Training Workshop during the 1-1 training breakouts. If interested, please contact Maggie Arbuckle by texting or calling her at (610) 585-1386.

Leisure Reading Materials for Inmates

Dana Keith handles the Law Library-- helping inmates with questions & making copies of certain legal pages for them. She also collects books for leisure reading which she shares with each of the blocks. A rolling cart is kept in each Counselor's office. Once a week, anyone who wants to borrow a book can ask to look the books over at the times the Counselor is in his office.

Dana gets donations from various places & is always looking for more books. She prefers paperback editions for the main prison & usually sends hardback books to the DUI building. If you would like to donate books, please make sure Dana is not on vacation. Take your bag or box to the Administration Bldg. directly across from the Visitors entry door. There is a desk there to take the parcel labeled for DANA KEITH. The administration desk will call her BUT THEY WILL NOT HOLD THE BOOKS IF SHE IS OUT! They will go to the trash! Almost anything you can think of is allowed & if you're not sure Dana always looks them over before placing them on the blocks. She expressed a need for dictionaries-large or small. So if you wonder why you keep that old dog-eared Webster's now is the perfect time to pass it to someone who really needs it. I have heard all of my clients express the need for a dictionary. You can also contact me, Gloria Beam via gloria-beaming@gmail.com & I am willing to pick up books to be delivered to GW Hill.

**Thank you to those of you have already sent your annual gift
following receipt of our appeal letter in September!**

We truly could not provide the Thresholds program to so many inmates in Delaware County without your loyal and generous support!

For those of you have not donated yet--it is never too late!

Gifts of any amount are very much appreciated!



**Thresholds in Delaware County
P.O. Box 114
Thornton, PA 19373
www.thresholdsdelco.org
Facebook: Thresholds in Delaware County**

**Sincere thanks to Judith Scheffler for her work on putting this
newsletter together! We hope you enjoyed the update!!!**