

## **Self-Reflection Garden at Donovan State Prison – A New PATH - History of Project**

In 2002, Gretchen Burns Bergman visited Donovan State Prison with David Beck-Brown, and spoke to the inmate participants in the Amity Program. She asked one of the men how they could recover in an environment of cement and barbed wire, violence and anger. He responded that it is difficult, and said that “if you treat people like animals, they begin to act like animals”. He mentioned that they once had a garden, but it was removed when an inmate escaped a few years prior. After seeing the small, cold cells that inmates spend so much of their lives locked up in, she realized that without hope, it is almost impossible for an individual to begin the journey towards change and sobriety.

A New PATH (Parents for Addiction Treatment & Healing) does ongoing advocacy work to expand substance abuse treatment opportunities behind bars (as well as in the community). A few years ago Donovan State Prison only had 200 slots in the Amity program for people who sought treatment for addiction. The Hope program was added, bringing 200 more slots, but the need was much greater than that. 85% of people behind bars are there for alcohol and drug-related reasons. Donovan State Prison houses approximately 4500 inmates.

The concept of the Self-Reflection Garden sprang up as a first step to expanding addiction treatment and services in prison, and to give a sense of hope and empowerment to people whose lives are being wasted behind bars. Sylvia Liwerant and Gretchen Burns Bergman met with Warden Hernandez in January 2003 and were granted permission to begin the project. Peter Jensen, Undersecretary of the Youth and Adult Correctional Agency, also gave his endorsement of the project.

Beginning concept drawings were done by Laurie McLaughlin for the space provided in the Hope program in Yard 3. A committee was formed that included Caroline Stewart, Sylvia Liwerant, Mary Jo Grubbs David Beck-Brown, and Leah Fine. County Supervisor Ron Roberts gave PATH a grant for the garden and other projects aimed at reducing the stigma of addiction in order to increase access to treatment, and “Musical Gift to Recovery” fundraisers were held. With \$14000 of grant money and an additional \$5000 from the fundraiser, the seed money for the project was raised. PATH established the Ron Roberts Rehabilitation Fund for continuing donations.

Landscape architect Gary Stone was contacted in mid-2003, and he agreed to donate his talent to the project. He created a design that would instill hope and inspire self-reflection. In December 2003 the plans and the project were presented to the inmates who will be involved in the planning and upkeep of the garden. The response was enthusiastic and up lifting.

On January 30, 2004 inmates broke ground on Phase I of the 2-phase project (the second phase will have a labyrinth and garden patches). A ceremony of the Completion of Phase I was held on May 21, 2004 with two of the pillars being inscribed with the words “Hope” and “Unity”. A ceremony for the completion of Phase 2 of the project was held on July 29, 2004 that included the walking of the labyrinth, a rap recovery performance by inmate Pierre Alexander, and certificates given to participants. KUSI TV and other media covered the event. Two more pillars were inscribed with the words “Perseverance” and “Integrity”.

In September 2005 a fountain will be dedicated to the garden in a ceremony were the final two pillars will be dedicated with words chosen by the inmate participants.

For more information: A New PATH, 619-670-1184

Special thanks to these companies and individuals who have helped to make this project possible through their generous donations:

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Laurie McLaughlin  
Landscape Architect Gary Stone  
Manuel Silva & Associates  
KRC Rock  
Dixieline Lumber  
Walter Anderson Nursery  
City Farmers Nursery  
The Staff of Donovan State Prison  
The Hope Program of Donovan State Prison  
Inmates at Donovan State Prison

**And all of the individuals who have made this project possible, including:**

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The Hope program of Donovan State Prison  
Rudy Vaca, Videographer  
Sylvia Liwerant, Co-Founder A New PATH  
Gretchen Burns Bergman, Co-Founder A New PATH  
Caroline Stewart, President of the Board of A New PATH  
Mary Jo Grubbs, Treasurer of the Board of A New PATH  
Reggie and Frank, Inmate Team Leaders

**And a big thank you to everyone else (and there are many) who gave of their time and hearts to make this project a success.**