

CHICAGOLAND PRISON OUTREACH

BASED IN CHICAGO, IMPACTING THE WORLD AROUND US

Walking in Faith: Celebrating 30 Years of Changed Lives Through CPO

Corey Buchanan, Executive Director

Warm, sunny days in September are always a blessing and they feel even more special when a partnering church holds a community fundraiser for CPO. The event was a success, but what truly stood out was a special moment in the church parking lot. Congregants and community members gathered around, sitting at tables or standing, as one of the young men I met almost 20 years ago when I first joined CPO shared his story.

The pastor interviewed both of us and as I listened to this young man speak, I was deeply moved. He shared how God intervened in his life while he was incarcerated, the challenges he's faced since his release, and how CPO has been there for him every step of the way.

Today, he is a successful businessman who gives back by hiring other men who have been incarcerated. He loves Jesus and continues to strive to walk faithfully with Him.

It's a beautiful reminder of the Lord's goodness in stories like his, and it's humbling to know we all have a part in these incredible journeys of faith. Over the past 30 years, the ministries of CPO have impacted thousands of lives. We are deeply grateful to God for the life and legacy of this ministry.

As we continue this mission, I humbly ask for your ongoing financial support of CPO. Your generosity allows us to continue serving offenders and their families and to witness more life-changing stories like this one.



SAVE
the
DATE

CPO'S ANNUAL
EVENING OF
THANKSGIVING

May 20, 2025



The Journey from Despair to Hope in Cook County Jail

Dan Swets, Director of Ministry

Greetings to you all in the strong name of Jesus!

I'm still here, continuing the work I've been doing for nearly 40 years, and I want to express my deep gratitude for your support and encouragement of CPO. Our 30th anniversary banquet in May was unforgettable, with over 600 attendees! Praise God for His abundant blessings!

I would like to share with you a brief narrative that I have asked a dear friend of mine to write about his experience while he was in Cook County Jail and after his release.

Have you ever climbed a mountain?

My life changed forever when I was arrested and placed in Cook County Jail.

At first, I thought I could handle it, but as my court dates dragged on, I realized I wouldn't be leaving anytime soon. I began to understand that incarceration wasn't just about confinement - it was about watching your life stand still while the world around you moved forward. During this time of despair, I met Dan Swets, a chaplain at Cook County Jail. What struck me most was his dedication - rain or shine, Dan was there to bring us the Word of God. After his visits, we would spend hours discussing the message he shared. Even when the deck was locked down due to violence, Dan still made the effort to visit. I remember one particularly tense day when, despite his difficulty walking, Dan climbed a flight of metal stairs to reach me. He prayed with me, answered my questions, and shared verses for the next day.

That simple gesture changed my life. For the first time, I didn't just hear about God - I truly learned about Him. I started to consider God's principles, and it transformed me.

When I was sentenced and transferred to another facility, Dan promised to visit wherever I ended up. I didn't expect him to follow through, but to my surprise, he found me and sent a letter. Dan kept his word, visiting me and encouraging me both as a man and in my faith.

After my release, Dan continued to stay in contact, helping me keep my focus on God through the challenges of life. He never sugarcoats things - he speaks truth straight from the Word of God.

Dan has been my mentor, brother, and friend. I truly believe that if I had a friend like Dan earlier in life, I might not have needed to endure the pain of incarceration to discover the Good News.



A Season of

Giving

Our Christmas Angels of Hope program is in full swing and our outreach continues to grow every year! At the time of print, we have **144** families signed up to receive gifts, **573** children who will wake up on Christmas morning with three presents, **32 churches and organizations buying, wrapping and delivering gifts, and countless** volunteers helping to bring the love of God to the families of incarcerated individuals.

We are always looking for churches and organizations to come on board to provide gifts for our families. If you or your group would like to partner with us for 2024, please email our office at office@cpoministries.org.

Thank you for your ongoing support of this incredible program! We ask that you continue to pray for the success of this initiative, for the Lord to bless the families we are connecting with, and for a safe and joyous Christmas for everyone who is touched by the Angels of Hope Program. **Merry Christmas!**



Built To Last

Chaplain Joe Carlson

"If any man is in Christ he is a new creation, the old has gone the new has come." We can read 2 Corinthians 5:17 in a few seconds, but the reality of turning a redeemed heart into a transformed life takes time. In the past nine years, I've had the privilege of meeting with hundreds of people who say they want to have a new life. But old habits and the call of old friends sometimes makes for a bumpy ride on the road to redemption. But there are signs of life too!

Part of what I do with CPO is coordinate the Letters of Hope ministry to people in the Illinois Department of Corrections. I send out a quarterly "Chaplains Letter" to those who I've encountered over the years at the jail. Here is a part of a note I received in response to a recent letter I sent out.

Tim writes, "It's been seven years since our visits at Cook County Jail. I have never responded to you. But you have never stopped reaching out or praying. I thank God for that. Along my journey God has looked out for me. God has kept me safe and built me into a man that I can say I'm proud to have become. Thanks, Chap, for never forgetting the ones in prison."

Pray with us for all the CPO staff and volunteers to stay faithful in our going, listening, speaking, praying and watching for God's Spirit to make new creations in Christ a reality in impossible situations.

The Class of 2024

This year, the Outreach Career Centers at both our Roseland and Evanston campuses will hold **ten** cohorts of classes in welding, electrical and carpentry, hosting nearly **125** students! All of our vocational students come to us with a criminal background and receive training in one of these three technical skills, along with employment services, resume building, math comprehension, life skills training and more, all at no cost to them. Students leave our campuses with not only training to find employment in their respective fields, but also a team of support behind them as they find jobs, build careers and begin to rebuild their lives.



30

Years

1994 - 2024



1994
Chicagoland Prison Outreach is established



1998
Life Learning Dorm holds its first graduation



2000
CPO Bible studies begin in Cook County Jail



2005
Outreach Career Center in Roseland is established



2008
Automotive classes are made available, along with the existing carpentry classes



2012
Angels of Hope grows to assist 155 families with Christmas gifts



2013
Youth Programming begins at River Valley Detention Center



2016
Ministry begins at Westville Correctional Facility



2020
CPO holds a virtual banquet at the onset of the Covid pandemic



2023
Outreach Career Center in Evanston is established

How Worship and Community Are Transforming Division 6-1H

Richard Zekveld, Life Learning Community Chaplain

I step into Division 6-1H, the Cook County Jail living unit that houses CPO's Life Learning Community.

Today, they want to sing "Trust in God" by Elevation Worship. David and Tabitha Johnson just taught it to them at our leadership summit. "I trust in God, my Savior, the One who will never fail. He will never fail. I sought the Lord and he heard and he answered. That's why I trust him." It's a beautiful thing to hear a room full of men sing their hearts out.

We've seen the truths about God proclaimed in this chorus become reality in the trenches Division 6-1H. We've seen them in the lives of men that Christ has claimed. We've seen them in the fledgling Christ-centered community that is forming on 1H.

Satan doesn't want this to happen! We remind ourselves of this when Satan sows chaos on 1H or when things don't go according to (our!) plan. But through the dust of construction and chaos, we see Jesus consistently at work in hearts and in the 1H community. We see the core group of men he has raised up within to lead and love in Christ's name. He will never fail!



Annual Operating Budget:



Programming Allocation:



YOUR GIFTS AT WORK:

Your donation does more than just fund programs - it offers hope to incarcerated men and women, as well as their families. Your generosity enables us to provide critical educational opportunities, vocational training, Bible studies, and discipleship programs that help transform lives.

When you invest in CPO today, you're partnering with us to create lasting change. The lives of prisoners, former inmates, and their loved ones are being transformed - and through them, your financial support has the potential to make a difference for generations to come.

HOW TO GIVE

By cash, check or money order
Send to PO Box 63, South Holland, IL 60473

By credit or debit online
Visit www.cpoministries.org/support-us

\$100 gift \$250 gift \$500 gift \$1000 gift

RETURN THE SECTION BELOW IF YOU WISH TO BE ADDED TO OUR MAILING LIST OR WOULD LIKE TO REQUEST ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone Number: _____

Email Address: _____

Please send me more information on:

- Making a reoccurring gift on a monthly basis
- Becoming a volunteer or a partnering church with CPO
- Giving stock, real estate or business interests, which may reduce my taxes.
- Giving from my IRA, which reduces my taxes.



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