



February 2009

Dear Bus Coordinators:

Welcome to the **first edition of the Coordinator Connection!**

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To our new volunteers, welcome to the wonderful world of Get On The Bus! To our veterans- thank you for sticking with us year after year! We are so glad that you have decided to join us as we prepare to make a difference in the lives of so many children by enabling them to touch, see and feel their parent! We promise it will be a unique and rewarding journey and are delighted to share this path with all of you! This newsletter will let you know about upcoming events, opportunities and will give you updated tips and tricks on fundraising and outreach. We will also be spotlighting some of our fantastic Bus Coordinators to help all of you hear from each other and share ideas and motivations along your Get On The Bus journey. Together we CAN and DO make a difference in the lives of so many.

TRAINING DAY WAS A HUGE SUCCESS!



Saturday was our Training Day and we had almost a 100% attendance! There were so many smiling faces, and our group is really starting to become more diverse. The day was filled with SO MUCH information, and I hope you've been able to take a few deep breaths and let everything soak in. I know I have a real busy inbox for my email- which means many of you left the training READY to get started!! Thanks again to all of you that were able to give up a whole Saturday to Get On The Bus!

A few important things to remember. The Crossover dates are approaching! I have emailed you all the flyers for Crossovers at the prisons, so please let me know if you did not get one and I will be happy to send again! I'm going to a few of them and I am so grateful for this opportunity to learn more and really connect with the community that we are helping.

Conference calls are smaller this year! That means everyone gets a chance to share! See your handbook for the for the call schedule and dial-in instructions. If you don't have a schedule please email me and I will get it right away.

The next few calls are:

**February 4th- TOMORROW!- for all CMC Bus Coordinators
12noon to 1:00pm**

February 9th - CTF and San Diego Bus Coordinators 12noon to 1:00pm

February 10th – CIW Bus Coordinators 12noon to 1:00pm

February 11th- Chowchilla SoCal Bus Coordinators 12noon to 1:00pm

DIRECTIONS : Use a land line. Try to be near a computer. Dial 1-888-745-1469. When prompted, enter code: 818-980-7714

BUS COORDINATOR SPOTLIGHT



Velveeta Mason has been working with Get On The Bus for 3 years. She started her journey out of her love for children and deep desire to help others. When asked what brought her to Get On The Bus, she said "I truly feel that the children are the ones that are forgotten about when a parent is incarcerated. Also I feel that the parent must have a longing to be with their child and it must be very difficult to know that you cannot hold you child everyday." Velveeta has had some great stories and successes with Get On

The Bus and I'm delighted to have her as our first-ever Bus Coordinator Spotlight!

I asked Velveeta to tell us about her most memorable story from her bus. Velveeta shared " My most memorable experience actually occurred two years ago. I went to my aunt's house one day and mentioned that I needed to get home to work on paperwork for Get On The Bus. She asked me what that was because she had heard something about it. It turned out that she heard about it from a cousin of mine that is incarcerated at Valley State Prison for Women. I didn't even know that this cousin existed! I then found that she had 6 children, five of whom would be coming to the prison for the event. I have the fantastic opportunity to not only bond with the children that were riding my bus, but upon arrival I was able to meet 6 cousins that I didn't know I had. I now have a relationship with 3 of the girls and one of the boys. One of the boys is actually now living in LA with my aunt, so I am able to see him regularly." What a remarkable story!

Word on the street is that Velveeta's bus team was extremely creative last year with their fundraising and bear-raising. We asked about her success stories from last year? "The biggest success that we have had with fundraising is our "Bear Table". On four consecutive Sundays previous to the event, we set up a table on the patio at church where parishioners can sponsor a bear. We have all types of bears from 'Build-A-Bear' on the table and people can donate any amount \$25 and up to sponsor a bear for the bus ride. We have many people that simply come up and hand us \$100 or in some cases more! I have found that when there is something that someone can do to help a child, they are very compassionate and give as much as they can. We also have children that will come and give their allowance to support this. We also have the "Build the Bus" poster. We have made a cut out of a bus and put it on poster board. People can then make donations to "Build the Bus". Their donation can go for a window, a tire, the steering wheel, etc. Kids really like this one because they get to make the donation and then place the piece of the bus that they want on the poster.

We all met Clyde Beswick at training last weekend- and this year Clyde and Velveeta will be working side by side! She says " this will actually be the first year that we are working together, but I can say that it will be a fantastic partnership. Clyde has the time needed to make calls, follow up on paperwork and ensure that everything is getting done. I have a great tracking system that will ensure that everything is done on time and correctly. I know that Clyde has been involved in the past and I am looking forward to working with him this year."

When asked what Velveeta was most looking forward to about this year's Get On The Bus, Velveeta had plenty of things to say! " I am looking forward to a few things. The first thing I always look forward to is looking at the applications. I love to see that some of the names from the previous year are not there. This is great because it hopefully means that the parent is no longer incarcerated! Also, I enjoy working with all of the volunteers. I always love to see how many people want to be involved. Of course, I am looking forward to seeing my cousin. I do get to see the children on holidays, and one regularly, but it is nice to see my cousin who is incarcerated. And mostly I love the expression on the children's faces as they are united with their moms. There is no greater joy than to see the smile on their faces when they see their moms. The end of the day is a little rough, but the letters and bears they receive make that a little easier."

Basically, I love this opportunity. I feel that we are really making a difference in the lives of the moms and the children. In some cases we are able to unite not only moms with children, but brothers and sisters. Some of the children live in separate homes and do not get to see each other. I am very blessed and grateful to be a part of this and have been united with my own family in the process."

Thank you Velveeta for sharing with everybody! We are lucky to have you with us this year and can't wait to see you and Clyde as a team!

OUTREACH ALL STARS: KEEP US INVOLVED IN THE



COMMUNITY!

Here is the YOUTUBE video address
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IIPLESTAfHU>

As much as we would love to be everywhere at once, unfortunately we can only reach so many people and so many places. Fortunately, though, this is where you all come in! You are our eyes, ears, and voices in your community, and we greatly rely on you to help us branch out and spread the word in new areas. Anything you can do to help us in this endeavor would be wonderful, whether it's leaving extra brochures in your office break room, putting together a display for an event or gathering in your community, or letting us know about an event in your area that you think we should be attending or give a presentation at. We are always working to increase awareness of Get On The Bus and our mission and would love to spread awareness as much as possible! Please send any suggestions or ideas you have to me at Karen@getonthebus.us.

I look forward to hearing from you!

THE GET ON THE BUS MISSION:

Get On The Bus mobilizes communities across California to improve the lives of women, children and families affected by the criminal justice system. Get On The Bus provides free transportation and a day filled with activities and remembrances for hundreds of children to visit parents in prison on the Fridays before Mother's Day and Father's Day.

FABULOUS FEBRUARY FUNDRAISING:

February is upon us and let's face it, it's the month that is famous for LOVE! Valentine's Day is just around the corner and you can make it a memorable one by dedicating your day to Get On The Bus!

Here are a few ideas for FUN and FABULOUS FUNDRAISING!

1. Send out a Valentine's Day card or email to those that are close to you. Tell them that "this year your heart is dedicated to Get On The Bus" and you'd like to invite them to donate or participate by volunteering with you!
2. Set up a "Kissing Booth" at your church, work or organization. Buy a few bags of Hershey's KISSES and make a sign to ask for "Donations for a Kiss" that will go to benefit the lives of children in your community!
3. Be a "Personal Vending Machine" — Buy some Valentine's candy from a warehouse store or on sale at a grocery store and make your own "wrappers" that promote Get On The Bus. Let your co-workers know that they can satisfy their mid-afternoon sweet craving and do something good at the same time.
4. And the can't -fail "Chocolate Extravaganza." Have a delicious all you can eat chocolate party for \$15/person. Have local bakeries/candy stores donate your chocolate and host it at your house, church or find a company that may donate space for the event. You can also incorporate a raffle and/or auction with items donated from local community vendors. What a delectable way to help Get On The Bus!

Don't forget to share the fundraising goal with your team and of course, call or email if you need more ideas! Stay tuned for Marvelous March Fundraising tips!

THANK YOU FOR ALL THAT YOU DO:

This year is the 10th anniversary of Get On The Bus. It's incredible to imagine how far we have come since the day that two nuns decided to MAKE CHANGE HAPPEN. And boy did they ever! Get On the Bus has grown from just 1 bus to just about 49 busses in just ten years! I love to daydream and imagine what our beloved organization will look like in ten more years! I can just picture so many more happy faces on thousands of children. Hundreds more parents released back into their loving child's arms. And a community that embraces that family with acceptance.

The work we are doing is important. We are helping the healing process. We are giving children a day that will definitely remember for the rest of their lives. We are reuniting children with their mothers and fathers.

Thank you all so much for all that you do. You have all inspired me and I look forward to a great year with all of you! Together we CAN.

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