



The magic is in the stories . . .

The numerous hours of hard work yielded fruit in countless, priceless moments of tenderness, relationship and love. We share just a few of the highlights:

- 16-year-old Mary had a hard time sleeping the night before the visit since she last saw her father when she was just two years old.
- Anna, said that she felt “God’s hand in this” when she received the request from her son’s father to see him. She traveled with her less than enthusiastic 13 year old boy, stating firmly, “he will thank me for this later.” That reluctant son shed tears at the end of his visit.
- Pam waited anxiously for the last bus to arrive at CIW, having learned only the day before that her daughter and three grand children would be visiting—grandchildren she had never met or held.
- John has been incarcerated at CMC for 12 years and had, “heard about the visiting room,” but had never been inside of it. Upon entering, he became so overwhelmed that he was almost unable to cross the threshold.
- Luke, a handsome young man in his twenties, traveled to see his father and to proudly introduce him to his wife and infant son.
- After a group therapy session, a father at CTF took the brave step of reaching out to his estranged son—whom he had never met—and was rewarded with a GOTB visit.

We’d like to express our sincere appreciation for your efforts in making GOTB 2011 possible. **YOU make it all possible.**

We hope you’re having a wonderful summer and are enjoying many relaxing and special moments with your own families.



Uniting children with their mothers and fathers in prison

Get On The Bus Report to Volunteers Mother’s Day & Father’s Day 2011

In November you’ll be receiving the 2011 GOTB Annual Report, but we didn’t want to wait to share this update on our events.

The 2011 Get On The Bus Season is done! In sum:



- 56 buses were hired to drive approximately 11,000 miles across the state of California. 1355 minor children (and their caregivers) or adult children (along with their kids) were delivered to 16 events at nine prisons between seven weeks of May and June. A total of 600 moms or dads were united with their children.
- 1037 volunteers worked tirelessly for months leading up to these events, fundraising, completing forms, arranging chaperones and counselors, securing donated food or making or securing blankets.
- Approximately 380 volunteers woke up very early (or stayed up very late) to board these buses and journey with their families.
- Another, 300 volunteers arrived at prisons to manage the numerous and varied responsibilities of event day logistics.

The numbers by prison...



| Prison | Minor Children | Adult Children | Moms/Dads | Caregivers |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------|------------|
| Central California Women’s Facility | 240 | 57 | 125 | 112 |
| Valley State Prison | 279 | 41 | 137 | 131 |
| California Institution for Women | 83 | 6 | 33 | 17 |
| California Men’s Colony | 260 | 36 | 132 | 112 |
| Folsom | 29 | 1 | 15 | 17 |
| Correctional Training Facility | 166 | 52 | 96 | 83 |
| Salinas Valley | 39 | 6 | 23 | 24 |
| San Quentin | 13 | 3 | 10 | 12 |
| CSP-Solano | 35 | 11 | 24 | 27 |

Like any major undertaking, everything didn't always go perfectly

This year, our Friday special visit day was cancelled by the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation in Sacramento forcing GOTB to merge with general visitation, which caused long lines at Central California Women's Facility and a huge crowd in the gym at Valley State Prison on the May 6th Mother's Day weekend. But the 1,242 family members involved continued smiling, brushed off our apologies, and gave us tremendous positive feedback despite the less than perfect conditions. We are strongly urging Sacramento to reinstate our Friday event day next year. (Note: the Mother's Day events at were the largest ever, we united over 300 children with their mothers at each facility).

It rained at our June 12th events at California Men's Colony in San Luis Obispo - the first time ever. All involved jumped into problem solving to deal with capacity issues once the use of outdoor patio areas was eliminated. The 12 buses spread over a luxurious six hour visit suddenly became two sessions of six buses each. The site receptions were a big help in the mad dash to improvise. Once again, families seemed to understand the factors beyond our control and appreciated our energy and commitment to make it work.

We worried about lockdowns at Salinas Valley State Prison in Soledad for the June 18th visit and breathed a sigh of relief when we found that almost all of our dads (thanks to Sacramento) would be available for visits. That same weekend, we shook our heads in disbelief when the bus driver of Bus #14 tried to maneuver a turn in Bakersfield and broke the bus wheel against the curb. Four hours later, the bus finally reached the prison where the wonderful Visiting Lieutenant, Sgt. De Los Santos, kindly extended visitation to accommodate them and all of our other families.

In the category of silly statistics . . .

GOTB served approximately:

- 2,000 pieces of pizza
- 1,330 sandwiches
- 456 hamburgers and
- 250 chicken nugget meals. (This doesn't count meals that were prepared and provided during the bus trips).

We also painted faces, helped with crafts, and printed and distributed over 2,000 photographs. Most importantly, we watched children as they sat in their mother's or father's laps, touched their faces and nestled in for hugs. We watched secrets being shared and families playing games together

Together, we were GREAT!

We received many kindnesses and wonderful gestures from prison staff. Key staff even came in on their day off. At Salinas Valley State Prison, several staff members volunteered for the entire day. At San Quentin's inaugural event, prison staff gave an orientation to the families during breakfast so they would know what to expect. Rick Hill, Folsom State Prison Warden, came in from his vacation to attend the inaugural GOTB event. At California Men's Colony, popsicles were prepared for the kids, and Central California Women's Facility literally had a red carpet rolled out to receive us. Across the street, at Valley Spring Prison, decorations covered the gym walls and tumbling mats were laid out for kids to play.

Parishes, churches and other groups made breakfast to feed families and send them off on their journeys. At the end of the day, other communities gathered to welcome them, hear their stories, and offer them dinner before the journey back home. Blankets and travel bags were handed out, and the teddy bear and parent love letter ritual was played out to help bring emotional closure to the GOTB experience.

At the central office, we watched volunteers—long-term and new—work diligently over weeks and months, tending to myriad details. We observed the competing obligations you juggled (professional and family responsibilities) along with your GOTB commitments. We know that numerous volunteers manage serious health concerns, the care of special needs children and/or deal with the continuing stress and anxiety of the incarceration of their own family member. (A huge shout out to Inmate Family Council Members!) We don't know how you do it. **And on behalf of the of the GOTB families of 2011, we thank you for doing it!!!!**

Thank you for completing the surveys and giving us valuable feedback on your experience. We are reviewing all feedback for changes and improvements in procedures. If any of you would like to speak with us personally, please feel free to call! Our number is 818-980-7714. Kathy Culpepper, Executive Director, can be reached at ext. 13. Hilary Carson, Program Director, can be reached at ext. 12.