

The Character Restoration Initiative Annual Report-2020

CRI Mission Statement: To inspire and empower imprisoned men with the character and skills for successful reentry into society.

This Character Restoration Initiative (CRI) 2020 Annual Report provides information that describes how CRI and programs for the men at Allendale Correctional Institution (ACI) kept moving forward during Covid 19. Even though volunteers were not allowed in, volunteers from Hilton Head, Mt. Pleasant, Bluffton, Wagener, Aiken, Fairfax, and Allendale continued to bring supplies and materials and provide support for our men. ACI lost two men to Covid, and volunteer donations helped support a Covid Memorial Garden designed and planted by the men in the Floriculture Program. Despite the challenges of Covid, the focus remained on the men and the CRI mission.

Impact of Covid

When the World Health Organization declared a Pandemic in March 2020, life changed for all of us who are residents of South Carolina and the United States. Covid 19 impacted the men at ACI, the administration and staff, and the volunteers who were accustomed to traveling to Allendale to support and guide programs alongside the men. The Program Center, where the Character Restoration Initiative had previously built one fully air-conditioned classroom and made space for three additional classroom



areas, was closed. The men were allowed to move freely only in their individual living units and meals were brought to each unit. ACI staff was reduced to essential only, and family visitation and volunteers were not allowed for health and safety reasons.

Starting in March 2020 the CRI Executive Board used Zoom to meet weekly. We were not in contact with the men until late June/early July 2020 when the lockdown was

lifted and men could leave the units. At this time, the Associate-Warden for Programs

allowed conference calls from her office with men in different programs and we listened to their program updates and needs. CRI continues to meet by phone on occasion with the men and staff and we continue CRI weekly board meetings on Zoom. As of the writing of this annual report, there is no date scheduled for volunteers to return.

Once the quarantine was over and the men were able to move about more, the program leaders were allowed to complete the CRI Program Requisition forms and we continued to order materials for the various programs.

During Covid quarantine all classes were held and led by our trained men who lived in the units. Holding classes this way was not the best; however, it served to support the continuation of classes and education in a safe and healthy environment for the men. Currently, the men are meeting in classes in the multipurpose building because the Program Center remains closed.

The Character Program and Covid

If a man is new to ACI, he goes to the Receiving Wing first. The men who are leaders in Receiving put the new men through a battery of tests that determine their immediate and long-term needs. The Receiving leadership introduces new men to the character program, the social contract and to basic character rules and information. Men who come to Receiving may stay in that wing for up to 90 days where they attend classes that include Basic Character 101. The character program is the foundation for all that takes place at Allendale.

The men at ACI sign a social contract which holds them to a standard that includes respect for each other, their environment, and their possessions. Character leaders are elected by the men to govern



each unit. The men hold each other accountable and issue zero tolerances and engagements (man-to-man communication on an incident or a behavior pattern) only after all efforts have been made to communicate with the man and help him change.

If a man does not demonstrate a willingness to change and to follow the character rules, he is moved to the Refocus unit where leaders work with him and help him to develop a redemption plan. If these efforts are not successful, the man is transferred to another institution.

Covid changed many of the rules and no men were transferred to other institutions; however, the basic character rules remained. Currently, a majority of the men have taken the Johnson and Johnson vaccine and those refusing will be given an additional opportunity for the vaccine.



Character-Based Housing Unit

Allendale Correctional Institution
P.O. Box 1151 / 1057 Revolutionary Trail
Fairfax, S.C. 29827-1151

Social Contract

By my signature below, I, _____, SCDC# _____, hereby declare that I willfully request to enter into Social Contract with the CHU Community, that I have been advised of the Social Contract and its rules, and that I will submit to them. I am also advised that I will be under peer review and that I will be judged and removed by my peers from this community if they determine that I have violated this contract. Furthermore, I will:

1. **Respect others** by controlling my noise level (i.e. talking, bouncing balls, religious activities, games on the rock, dragging/stomping feet, popping of wet clothes, and music from rooms). Violation is defined as any noise that can be heard from a distance of 8 feet away.
2. **Respect others** by maintaining personal hygiene (i.e. showering daily, breath/brushing teeth, clean clothes and bedding). Violation is defined as any odor, fluid, or mess that offends another person as a result of their necessary proximity.
3. **Respect others** who live in/clean the living area. Violation is defined as any mess, trash/litter left behind, cleaning of bowls in the showers, graffiti or abuse of the living area.
4. **Respect others** by controlling physical contact. Violation is defined as any threatening/abusive gesture or contact, horseplay, or bullying.
5. **Respect others** by not taking possession of property that is not my own. Violation is defined as the taking or possession of property that is not my own.
6. **Respect others** by giving them their own personal space (i.e. in cells, stairways, physical crowding). Violation is defined as any encroachment upon space identified as unique, reasonable, or personal, to include brushing against another person.
7. **Respect others** by controlling my verbal communication. Violation is defined as any threatening, abusive, agitating, antagonizing, indifferent or inconsiderate verbal communication with any person.
8. **Respect others** by scheduling personal activities at a time/place that does not interfere, impede or disturb another person. Violation is defined as any activity that impedes the activities of another person who has an expectation or right to the space/time, such as cleaning, washing, exercising or monopolization of the microwave/shower/telephone.
9. **Respect the program** by following the requests/orders of *any person* acting in an official capacity/position, holding my fellow participants accountable to this Social Contract and being present for and participating in all mandatory programs (i.e. Ten for Ten, Town Hall Meetings, Formal Engagements) and classes. Violation is defined as failure to comply with the verbal directives of any officer, staff member, program coordinator or community official *acting in an official capacity* or failure to comply with the minimum program participation requirements.
10. **Respect myself** by never acting in a way that degrades my human dignity, that of another person, or the community. Violation is defined as actions such as sexual deviancy, all sexual acts, self-mutilation, tattooing, displaying indifference to others, and verbally ridiculing myself or another, gossiping, slander, plotting against another person or belittling the reputation of the community.

Signature

Date

Skills for Successful Reentry

Educational, Spiritual, and Vocational

The character program is the foundation for all that is accomplished at ACI. Educational, spiritual, and vocational skills are available through programs facilitated by volunteers. Some of the educational programs are strictly for getting a man prepared for his GED and some are tailored to teaching the basics of different vocations. Classes offered at ACI include beekeeping, sustainable agriculture and ag-



business, horticulture, floriculture, quilting and crocheting, commercial driving, welding, pottery, barbering, painting, and painting techniques, and music and musical instruments. There are also programs representing special areas such as the cats and dogs living in the units with the men who are in the Character Graduate Units, the Scrabble Club, Journalism, the Pat Conroy Book Club, the Veterans, Toastmasters, and a Christian-based book club. One additional area of CRI support is the Helping Hands Program for the twenty plus men in wheelchairs and for men using walkers. All programs assume that men will follow the character social contract and hold each other accountable.

When a man signs the social contract, he agrees to practice good character in all phases of his life at ACI. Programs at ACI are successful because the men strive to live the social contract.

Programs at ACI are approved by the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC). CRI uses three (3) categories for programs, educational, spiritual, and vocational. CRI believes that all three areas are



necessary to provide men with the skills needed to be successful upon release. The majority of the spiritual programs are under the chaplain and staff at ACI. Kairos, Jumpstart, and Freshstart are the top three spiritual and Christian-based programs at ACI. These three (3) are volunteer supported as are most of the other spiritual programs.

A long-time ACI volunteer who is a retired school superintendent established a program at ACI that teaches men how to teach classes. Men who teach at ACI are called facilitators. Men who want to become facilitators must take the course, graduate with an 85 or above, and attend all sessions. The men just recently developed an advanced course for facilitators.

When men come to ACI needing their GED or Receiving discovers an addiction issue, the men are often sent first to the unit that houses the Addiction Recovery Program. Other addiction programs at ACI include Peer Support, a partnership between SCDC and the Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS) and AA/NA/EA (Alcoholics, Narcotics, Emotions Anonymous). The men in leadership have determined that assisting men first to identify and work on addiction helps with the



man's ability to work toward a GED. Men also have AA/NA/EA meetings available at different times and different days in the units. CRI places the orders for the Addiction Recovery Program and the AA/NA/EA programs. Orders include books, videos, time sober chips, and workbooks. Addiction programs are a major factor in helping men to prepare for release.

Cornerstone is the program that supports men who want to get a GED. Cornerstone leaders work with men in math, science, English, and writing skills to prepare them for taking the GED offered by the Department of Corrections. One side of one unit at ACI is dedicated to Cornerstone and the men who are working toward a GED. The Cornerstone Program Leader and his team plan and teach the classes as well as serve as support for the men working on their GED's.

Each unit at ACI has a small library of books for men. CRI built bookcases in the program center for over 1200 donated books. The men serving on the ACI Library Team catalogued all of the books and were ready to begin checking out the books when Covid began. Since Covid, multiple volunteers have donated books and videos that include The Great Courses. The ACI Library Team has developed a library cart that goes unit to unit to provide men and programs opportunities for reading and checking out videos.

How CRI Pays for the Character Initiative and the Programs

Volunteers did not play a major role in the lives of the men at Allendale Correctional Institution until late 2010 into early 2011. Several volunteers from Hilton Head started volunteering at ACI and over the years volunteers came together from other communities and formed the tax-exempt organization that supports the men and programs at ACI.

The Character Restoration Initiative is the tax-exempt organization that strives to raise funds for the program needs at ACI. CRI accepts individual donations, applies for grants, and appeals to special interest groups in order to provide the programs and classes at ACI. In addition to the many volunteers who donate materials and funds for the programs, CRI also writes grants. Recently, CRI has received grants from The Church Mouse of Hilton Head Island, LowCountry Community Church of Bluffton, United Way of Barnwell Serving Allendale, the Winthrop Family Fund of the Coastal Community Foundation, Fury Young, and the Sunshine Foundation of Barnwell County.

What Is the Return on Investment?

The average stay in prison for men at ACI is 7 to 9 years. Men come to Allendale from multiple states, multiple countries, and multiple locations within South Carolina. Latino, African American, Native American, and Caucasian are some of the ethnic groups represented at ACI. CRI volunteers have worked with administration, staff, and the men at ACI to encourage the practice of good character as well as educational, spiritual, and vocational development.

Men who are the trained facilitators at ACI teach the classes. For the first time, this quarter's classes will be evaluated by the men in each class. Men will also evaluate the facilitator on their teaching skills. CRI hopes to be able to collect data that proves the men are learning and studying at high levels.

All men must sign-in when attending class and are expected to complete assigned work. These records are kept for each class. Before Covid, men in the classes would talk to volunteers and express their appreciation as well as any needs to compliment the variety of opportunities offered by the programs.

CRI is currently working with the Warden's Character Committee to develop a measure for the character program.

Even though volunteers are not at ACI to date, CRI, through donations and grants, has been able to support all volunteer-led programs and also complete the following this year.

1. Grants enabled CRI to provide 25 different programs at ACI with a minimum of \$300 each and a maximum of \$1,000.
2. Donations allowed CRI to purchase a 12' x 24' greenhouse for Floriculture, Horticulture, and Sustainable Living.
3. Church donations helped to support printers in each living unit for the in-unit classes during Covid.
4. Volunteer donations allowed CRI to purchase a stand for a 55-gallon volunteer-donated aquarium for the fish raised by the men in Sustainable Living through the aquaponics gardening project.
5. Donations and grants combined allowed CRI to purchase a commercial washer and dryer unit for the men in Helping Hands.
6. Grants provided a wet/dry vacuum for the animal program, sugar for the bees, seeds, fertilizer, and tools for the ag-related programs, instruments for the music program, supplies for the art programs, clay for pottery, and sewing materials for quilting and knitting.
7. Volunteers donated wheelchairs, walkers, puzzles, books, guitars, and yarn for programs.

CRI would like to express appreciation and thanks to all who have given and donated to support the character process at ACI and the programs which help prepare the men for release. We are so proud of our men taking the lead and facilitating classes with no volunteers on the inside.

Character Restoration Initiative Board

Camille Nairn, Chair

Kent James

Tom Conner – Secretary

Martin Lippiett – Treasurer

Mark Epps.