PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY





















IMPACT REPORT

2025

OUR MISSION

Promoting the health, safety, and dignity of people in prison and their families

WHEN THE WORLD AROUND YOU IS NOT THE WAY YOU WANT IT, YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE SIMPLY BY SHOWING UP.



Darnice & Jay

Darnice's brother is incarcerated at SCI Albion, and Jay, a dedicated volunteer, has been a crucial support, offering help and hope when it's needed most.

Show up for someone else. Show up for what you believe in. Just show up.

For the 238th year, the Pennsylvania Prison Society showed up. Volunteers, staff, supporters, and advocates showed up to keep families connected, showed up to help people behind bars access healthcare and maintain their dignity, and showed up to advocate for change.

In 2024-25 this community showed up strong. We showed up for the more than 10,000 families and incarcerated people who came to us for help—more than ever before. We showed up across Pennsylvania with the launch of new programming in Southwestern Pennsylvania, first-ever monitoring of jails in Northeastern Pennsylvania, and engagement events for incarcerated voters in Central Pennsylvania. We showed up powerfully, working with politicians and advocates in Dauphin County to end the policy of charging people daily fees for their incarceration, in Philadelphia to create a new Prison Community Oversight Board, in Pittsburgh to get youth out of solitary confinement, and nationally as part of a coalition to end exploitative phone costs for incarcerated people calling their loved ones.

This work is entirely dependent on the dedication and skill of our volunteers and the commitment and support of our funders. If you gave your time, thank you. If you provided your support, thank you. You are the backbone of this organization.

This report tells the story of what you made possible. The Prison Society's work flows from our vision, mission, and values. Our impact is a result of a huge collective effort and the support and goodwill of thousands of people. As you read this report, I hope you will feel a sense of pride and satisfaction in how we have shown up for each other, and for what we have achieved together.



Let's keep showing up.

Claire Shubik-Richards
Executive Director

Two Volunteers, One Mission: Showing Up



Sylvia
VOLUNTEER
PRISON MONITOR,
CENTRE COUNTY

Sylvia visits people in SCI Rockview weekly, and knows their stories, struggles, and families. She has been a tremendous asset to not only the people in prison at Rockview, but also their families.

"I volunteer because I want to see better conditions for people in prison. There are over 200 volunteer monitors like me across the state. We keep showing up, because it's easy to forget about this group of human beings behind bars—but we can't afford to."

Yvonne Newkirk is the best of Prison Society; her time and dedication to incarcerated people is profound. She is a mother, a sister, and a grandmother, and she knows what it means to be a loved one of an incarcerated family member. Yvonne visits facilities across the state, with a special focus on SCI Chester.



Yvonne
VOLUNTEER PRISON MONITOR,
PHILADELPHIA

"I talk as long as they want. They need someone to talk to. I'm just there to make sure they are getting treated in a humane way. I can't give up. It touches me inside. It touches my heart."

Showing Up for Each Other

For incarcerated people returning home, the list of challenges is long and varied, but social support and emotional resilience can prepare them to take on every challenge.

That's why we're proud that our Family and Community Supports programming is a bridge between incarceration and opportunity. This year, a researcher at LaSalle University conducted an independent review of our Building Connection program and found that our unique emphasis on social and emotional support is key to the program's success.



"Hope Alive" Peer Support Group meeting for people recently returned home

Aaron
VOLUNTEER MENTOR, PHILADELPHIA



Aaron dedicates his time to mentoring with the Prison Society. As someone who was formerly incarcerated, he understands the challenges of re-entry and uses his experience to guide others through their own transitions.

"People will be released. People will come back to society. The way they are received directly impacts you, your community, and your city. They have completed their sentences, and they won't be prepared unless support is in place. I do it in gratitude for the opportunities extended to me as a returning citizen. I believe it's my duty to give back and help others rebuild their lives, just like I was helped."

Powerful Steps Forward

360 Incarcerated people participated in "Building Connections" in the past two and a half years

3 New "Building Connections" sites launched in Western PA including Allegheny County Jail, SCI Greene, and SCI Fayette

#1 First-ever "Building Connections" program for women launched at Allegheny County Jail

Showing Up for One Person at a Time

Our unique access eenables us to be present, bear witness, and make a meaningful difference where it matters most. For people in prison, it means everything from offering a listening ear and providing hope to advocating for real solutions to the critical challenges they face.

With the dedication of our incredible volunteers, we respond to every request for help, achieving not only tangible wins but countless moments beyond what numbers can capture.



Prison Monitoring Highlights

3,000+	meetings with incarcerated people
57	prisons visited
21	facility walkthroughs

Showing up with holiday cheer: 11 volunteers brought cookies, cards, and carols to 384 residents at Blair County Prison—Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer was the crowd favorite.



Peggy
VOLUNTEER PRISON MONITOR, CHESTER COUNTY

Peggy has helped nearly 200 people in prison this past year and stays in touch with at least 100 incarcerated people via email, answering about 50 emails a week on average.

"Most people are reluctant to get involved because they view people in prison as dangerous, but when you sit and talk to them, you realize they're somebody's brother, son, or father. They deserve the same dignity as every other human being. By volunteering and visiting, you show them that someone cares, especially when they don't have family or their families have disengaged."

PRISON MONITORING IN ACTION

Disability Advocacy
SCI Mahanoy

THE SITUATION: An incarcerated person with Huntington's Disease and multiple psychiatric disabilities could not speak or write and had difficulty communicating basic needs.

OUR ROLE: Society volunteers connected the incarcerated person with the Pennsylvania Institutional Law Project (PILP) and Disability Rights Pennsylvania to bring a lawsuit highlighting inadequate care.

THE RESULT: The lawsuit prompted systemic improvements in communication protocols: Ubi-Duo devices are now available for non-verbal communication, and non-verbal indicator signs are placed on affected individuals' cell doors.

Youth Solitary Confinement
Allegheny County

THE SITUATION: At least six youth were being held in solitary confinement. Some had been isolated for up to eight months and denied school, heat, and food.

OUR ROLE: Society staff and volunteers documented conditions and alerted the new jail warden.

THE RESULT: Most youth were removed from solitary, and all youth were reinstated in school.

Showing Up For Change

The people we hear from in prison, and the families who turn to us for help, inspire every step of our advocacy work. They share their stories with us, and in turn, we channel their experiences and needs into action.

The strides we make in our advocacy efforts drive much-needed change in policies and practices that directly affect people we serve.



This spring, we joined our advocacy partners at a press conference urging voters to support Ballot Measure 3 to bring greater transparency to Philadelphia's jails.

Advocacy In Action

- **STRENGTHENING OVERSIGHT:** After three years of persistent advocacy, we played a leading role in pushing through a citywide ballot measure that resulted in the creation of the Philadelphia Prison Community Oversight Board and a staffed office. This board will hold public hearings about the Philadelphia prisons, making sure it's more transparent and accountable to the public.
- **CONNECTING FAMILIES:** As part of a larger coalition, we helped secure FCC regulations that cap prison and jail phone rates; now we are actively defending these reforms in federal court.
- **REFORMING PRISON NUTRITION:** Our report on food in PA prisons inspired the Philadelphia Department of Prisons to rebid its food service contracts.
- **FORGIVING FEES:** Dauphin County eliminated $65 million in unpaid room and board fees, thanks to a coalition of advocates including the Prison Society.

HIGH-IMPACT MOMENTS

Connecting People In Prison with Elected Leaders



We had the honor of bringing Philadelphia City Council Members Brooks and Landau on a monitoring tour of CFCF, Philadelphia's largest jail.

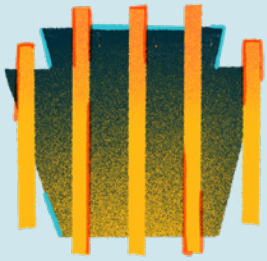
Empowering Voters With a Civil Rights Icon



In October, the **Reverend Jesse Jackson** joined our team at the Dauphin County Jail to register voters, a moment that underscored the power of civic engagement for incarcerated people.

PUBLIC RECOGNITION:

- Included in the Pennsylvania State FY25 budget—a major milestone in public recognition and support.
- Received the 2024 Torch of Global Enlightenment Award from the Harrisburg World Affairs Council.
- Awarded the Patriot Ledger Peace and Justice Award—recognizing our advocacy for dignity and fairness.



Showing Up With Impact

2025 By The Numbers

14,000+	calls, emails, and letters to the Helpline
10,000+	email subscribers and followers on social
60+	meetings with legislators
35+	new volunteers
195	new donors
65	supporter updates
53	earned media mentions

FROM THE HELPLINE

Our helpline is a lifeline for people in prison and their families. Through calls, emails, and letters, we provide one-on-one outreach, ensuring that everyone is met with a timely, compassionate response

"You guys have provided more than a service. You have been kind, caring, and have given me peace of mind."



Our light is always on

Get help now:

215-564-4775

Scaling Impact For Families

FAMILY SUPPORT GROUPS: In fall 2024, we launched virtual support groups to create a safe, welcoming space where families can connect, share experiences, and find support as they navigate the challenges of loving someone who is behind bars.

BUSES FOR FAMILIES SEEING LOVED ONES: After a loss of funding and a long hiatus, we are happy to be restarting affordable bus service for Philadelphia families visiting loved ones in prisons 2-8 hours away. We hope to relaunch buses from Pittsburgh in 2026!

FAMILY RESOURCE SERIES: Our newly launched video series offers families practical step-by-step guidance on staying connected and supporting their loved ones during incarceration and beyond, empowering them with the tools they need to thrive.

"Participants discuss shielding incarcerated loved ones from both the hardships on the outside but also of the good things as well... It seems there are artificial walls in addition to the actual walls and barriers. Our groups create space to speak the unspoken."

—Jesse
SUPPORT GROUP FACILITATOR

Virginia
BUS CAPTAIN & VOLUNTEER MENTOR, PHILADELPHIA

Virginia has been showing up for the Prison Society for nearly 25 years, offering wisdom, consistency, and connection as a mentor and as a bus captain, helping her fellow passengers on the bus—and in life—navigate the stresses and sorrows associated with having a family member behind bars.



"My gift is connecting with people, and I use it in a positive, constructive way that may make a difference in someone's life. Being a volunteer isn't always easy. Sometimes, time and effort don't add up to the results you want, but I keep showing up. I don't judge myself. My goal is to be available, to be supportive, to be helpful—no matter what."

Showing Up to Celebrate

2025 Award Winners

Love Above Bars is our annual celebration, offering a unique opportunity to connect, celebrate our collective progress, and reflect on the impactful work happening across Pennsylvania.



John Topper, Incarcerated Person of the Year (SCI Mahanoy)



Joshua Vaughn, Human Rights Champion



Capt. Gerald Roundtree, Correctional Employee of the Year



Ernest Fuller, Volunteer of the Year

VISIT OUR WEBSITE OR SCAN THE QR CODE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THIS YEAR'S RECIPIENTS.





A Look Back at Love Above Bars 2024

150 to 230 attendance growth from FY'24

Quadrupled the net event revenue

$10,000 raised in one day, thanks to board and donor support

Pittsburgh Spring Event

We held our signature Pittsburgh event at Trace Brewing in Bloomfield this spring, bringing together a powerful community of supporters, friends, and partners to celebrate our impact and build momentum for what's ahead.

Darnice Ward, whose brother is incarcerated at SCI Albion, and Jay Aronson, a longtime volunteer and professor at Carnegie Mellon, shared moving stories about the realities of incarceration and the power of collective care.

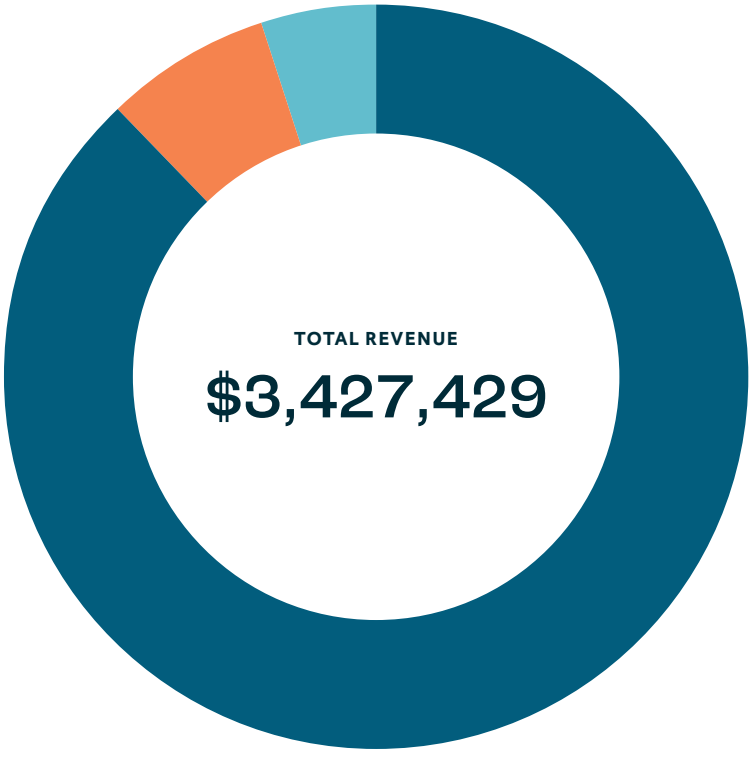
"It was an honor to speak in such a welcoming space. For the first time, my mom felt truly understood. Please don't stop this powerful work".

—Darnice

WE'RE DEEPLY GRATEFUL TO EVERYONE WHO SHOWED UP TO OUR EVENTS—AND TO TRACE BREWING AND TRIPLE BOTTOM BREWING FOR OFFERING A SPACE WHERE CONNECTION COULD TAKE ROOT

A Smart Investment

Total Revenue

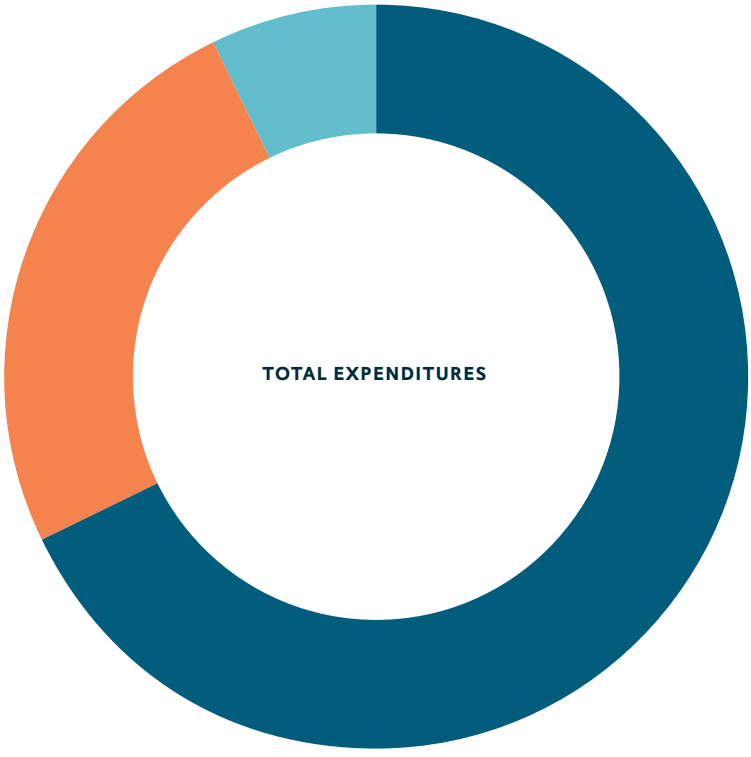


- GRANTS **88%**
- INDIVIDUAL DONATIONS **7%**
- PROGRAM REVENUE **5%**

"With our sound financial position and growing support, we have been able to expand our programs and increase the impact we can have. Together, we turn that support into action that drives systemic change, while making a difference for each individual and family we touch."

—Matt Maron
TREASURER

Expenditures



- PROGRAM **68%**
- ADMINISTRATION **25%**
- FUNDRAISING **7%**

Great Ways to Give

MONTHLY GIVING

Monthly gifts provide dependable support that helps us advocate year-round for the dignity and rights of incarcerated people and their families.

TO HONOR & REMEMBER

Making a tribute or memorial gift is a meaningful way to honor someone while making an impact on the community served by the Prison Society.

GIFTS OF STOCK

Donating appreciated stocks or securities can provide you with significant tax benefits while supporting our work.

PLANNED GIVING

Leave a legacy that will benefit future generations.

EMPLOYER

Many employers offer matching gift programs that can double—or even triple—your donation. Check with your employer to see if your gift qualifies and make your support go even further.



IN MEMORIAM

This year, the Pennsylvania Prison Society honors the memory of several cherished members of our community who passed away:

Robert Blair,
Bernard Granor,
Harriet Kaylor, and
Carole MacCullum.

Each of these people shared a deep commitment to justice, compassion, and the dignity of every person. Through their generosity, advocacy, and belief in our mission, they helped advance the Society's enduring work to support incarcerated people and their families.

We are profoundly grateful for their service, their friendship, and their lasting impact on the Society and the communities we serve. Their legacy lives on in our continued efforts to create a more just and humane world.

If you know of someone important to the Prison Society community whom we may have unintentionally missed, please let us know so that we can honor their memory in the future.

WE OFFER TREMENDOUS THANKS TO ALL THE FOUNDATIONS THAT HELPED FURTHER OUR CRITICAL WORK:

Dolfinger-McMahon Foundation
FISA Foundation
GlaxoSmithKline
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Showing Up Stronger

The work we do across the state is funded in large part by the generosity of individual donors. Thank you for helping us show up stronger and make a lasting impact!

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Up to $499

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HONORING 25 YEARS OF EDITORIAL EXCELLENCE

A Tribute to Dr. Rosemary Gido



In 2025, the Pennsylvania Prison Society proudly recognizes Dr. Rosemary Gido for 25 years of extraordinary leadership as Editor of *The Prison Journal*.

Under Rosemary's thoughtful guidance, *The Prison Journal* has remained one of the nation's most respected publications on corrections, criminal justice, and reform. Her steadfast dedication to academic rigor and balanced discourse has helped ensure that the Journal continues to be an essential resource for practitioners, policymakers, scholars, and advocates alike.

Beyond her editorial excellence, Rosemary has been a trusted partner and advocate for the Society's mission. Her commitment to elevating diverse voices and evidence-based perspectives has deepened understanding and inspired progress within the field.

We are deeply grateful for Rosemary's decades of service, vision, and care. Her work has strengthened the bridge between research and practice, ensuring that *The Prison Journal* continues to inform, challenge, and guide those working to improve the criminal justice system.

From all of us at the Pennsylvania Prison Society—thank you, Rosemary, for 25 years of insight, integrity, and impact.

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Staff & Leadership

In FY25, we added roles that boost internal operations, including a Finance and Operations Manager, Helpline Manager, Data & Research Manager, Digital Media Manager, and Family & Community Supports Manager (Western PA). With 21 staff members by year-end, we're more equipped than ever to deliver impact—thanks to the dedication of our team, supporters, and board.

STAFF

Claire Shubik-Richards, Executive Director

Noah Barth, Prison Monitoring Director

Emily Cheramie-Walz, Development Director

Kirstin Cornnell, Family and Community Support Director

Jena Croxford, Culture and Communications Director

Leigh Owens, Education and Advocacy Director

John Hargreaves, Senior Advisor

Dzemila Bilanovic, Prison Monitoring Manager (Eastern PA)

James-Brian Byers, Family and Community Support Manager (Western PA)

Angela Damiano, Prison Monitoring Manager (Western PA)

Matthew Githens, Finance Manager

Andrew Peifer, Family and Community Support Manager (Eastern PA)

Andres Perez Correa, Digital Media Manager

Jessica Reed, Prison Monitoring Manager (Central PA)

Dr. Emerson Waite, Data and Research Manager

Rachel Webster, Senior Finance and Operations Manager

Michael McKee, Helpline Manager

Connor Demchick, Development and Helpline Associate

David Meade, Graterfriends Associate

Joseph Robinson, Mentoring Coordinator

Cass Tilley, Prison Monitoring and Helpline Associate







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