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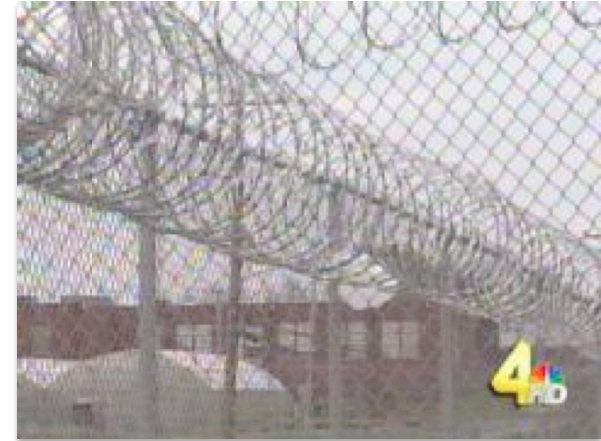
Women's Prison Program Aids In Re-Entry

Leaving The Cocoon A Christian-Based Mentoring Program

Reported By Regina Raccuglia

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NASHVILLE, Tenn. --After seven years in prison, Marissa Martin is thankful for every day of freedom.

After using and dealing hard core drugs and finding different ways to make some quick money, she found herself at an all-time low.

"I'm an addict and an alcoholic," she said. "Being involved in some pretty heinous things, that was definitely my rock bottom."

Martin was arrested on charges of facilitating a murder and ended up at the Tennessee Prison for Women. But behind bars, Martin got a mentor through the Leaving the Cocoon program.

"She was there to talk to me about everything," said Martin.

"I just started mentoring women myself," said Vicki Harvey, who founded the Christian-based Leaving the Cocoon program three years ago.

Now it is the only re-entry mentoring program used by the Tennessee Prison for Women and will soon help the men at Charles Bass Correctional Facility.

She said of all the women who go through her program, less than 10 percent find themselves back behind the barbed wire fences a second time.

"That just shows you if you have someone in your corner who's rooting for you, that's saying, 'You can do it,' (it helps)," Harvey said.

Since Martin left prison three months ago, she found a job and a halfway house to call home with the help of her mentor.

"It was hard getting a job on my own because everyone's looking for jobs, and I have an extra strike against me," she said.

Harvey said everyone deserves a second chance.

"They're only one decision away from being in prison themselves," said Harvey.

Related Link:

Leaving The Cocoon; <http://www.leavingthecocoon.net>

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