



FAMILIES THAT MATTER

Newsletter - January 2011 *Happy New Year!*

Contact Families That Matter Staff members Sr. Alice Gerdeman and Julie Przybysz at: 513-579-8547 or alice@ijpc-cincinnati.org & julie@ijpc-cincinnati.org



Judy Hogan, Families That Matter member and mother of Shawn Hawkins, meets with Sr. Helen Prejean and Sr. Alice Gerdeman.

Sr. Helen Prejean meets with FTM

When she was in the Greater Cincinnati area, Sr. Helen Prejean, CSJ met with Judy and Chuck Hogan, the parents of Shawn Hawkins. Shawn could have a viable innocence case if the courts or the Governor would do a review of his case. Sr. Helen's visit was covered by the Cincinnati Enquirer and gave renewed energy to work to save Shawn. More facts about his case are available on the IJPC Website:

www.ijpc-cincinnati.org

since February 2006. In the same period, 22 men were executed. In other words, more people left death row through judicial reversals than executions.

How many more people awaiting execution should not be on death row?

Review of 2010 Demonstrates Lack of Support for Death Penalty across U.S.

(Following statistics taken from Death Penalty Information Center's Year End Report: www.deathpenaltyinfo.org)

Public Opinion:

- In a recent national poll conducted by Lake Research Partners, 61% of U.S. voters chose various alternative sentences over the death penalty (only 33% chose the death penalty).
- In the same poll, 65% supported replacing the death penalty and using the money saved for crime prevention.
- Most voters in death penalty states said they would continue to support elected officials if they voted to replace the death penalty with a sentence of LWOP (life without parole). A variety of election results support this finding.

Fewer Death Sentences:

- The number of death sentences in 2010 will be 114, near the historic low recorded last year and

Commutations & Executions Update

Since 1995, IJPC has had as one of its major programs working against the death penalty. We have mourned each of the 41 men executed by the State of Ohio and the 3 men executed by Kentucky. The last on this list is Michael Bengé – executed by Ohio on October 6, 2010.

The following execution dates are set in Ohio: Frank Spisak – Feb. 17 and Johnnie Baston – March 10, 2011. **Online and paper petitions can be found on the IJPC website ijpc-cincinnati.org. Please sign and ask friends to do the same. Every signature helps.**

Kevin Keith and Sidney Cornwell had their sentences commuted by Governor Strickland. Both now have life without the possibility of parole. Gregory Wilson's execution was blocked by the court over concerns about the State of Kentucky's lethal injection process and questions about Greg's mental capacity. In each case we hoped for more but we are still grateful.

27 men on Ohio's death row have had their convictions vacated or their sentences reduced

about 64% less than the number in 1996, when death sentences peaked at 315.

Innocence Discovered

On October 27, Anthony Graves was released from prison in Texas. Anthony had been in prison for 18 years, 12 of them on death row. Graves was released from death row after prosecutors conducted their own investigation and found him to be innocent. This happened after students of the University of Houston Law Center Innocence Network did their own investigation and an article about the case appeared in Texas Monthly about the case. Anthony is the 138th person to be exonerated in the U.S. since 1973.

Questions Abound:

More and more prominent persons are coming forward in their opposition to the death penalty. As he retired after his nearly 35-year term on the U.S. Supreme Court, Justice John Paul Stevens said that the lone vote he regrets is the one that he cast to restore the death penalty in 1976. Justice Stevens is willing to speak out about what made him change his opinion. In a recent article published in the New York Re-

Noteworthy Quotes:

“Innocents have undoubtedly been executed. Alcoholic, drug-addicted and incompetent lawyers – have been assigned to indigent defendants. ~ Bob Hebert of the New York Times stated in an Op-ed article on November 29th, 2010

“I’m of the opinion that we should eliminate capital punishment.”

~ Reggie Wilkinson, Ohio Prison Director from 1991 to 2006.



Sr. Helen Prejean speaks on the phone with Sean Hawkins’ brother during her Ohio visit in November.

OTSE Announces New Strategy

OTSE, Ohioans To Stop Execution, has as its goal the elimination of the death penalty in Ohio. The main strategy has been to seek a moratorium on executions while a thorough study of the present system was undertaken. OTSE has been and remains confident that any impartial review would show how broken and unjust the system is.

With three states having abolished the death penalty in the last few years and several more getting very close OTSE has adopted a new strategy to push Ohio toward abolition. The hope is to identify and organize people in every one of the 88 counties who will educate others and speak out about against the death penalty.

This is a major task but one that needs to be done. Are you willing to help? Do you know of a church or other group that would want a speaker? Lent is coming up. What a perfect time to address this issue in the faith community!

Contact Renee at 513-543-1585

New FTM Staff Member Julie Przybysz, who worked full time with Families That Matter from 2006-2009 will be back in the office for 10 hours a week while earning a masters degree in social work. Julie is very excited to return and to work again with Families That Matter. She looks forward to speaking with and meeting the family members and hopes to contribute and offer support to the important work of FTM.

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