

1st Wings Party
December 20, 2008
Cheyenne Mountain Re-entry Center
Colorado Springs, CO



The 1st Wings Party in a Colorado Prison was held on December 20, 2008, at the Cheyenne Mountain Re-entry Center. There were 22 volunteers who helped with the party. They were from Colorado and New Mexico, at least 10 different churches and denominations, and represented at least 6 different ministries. There were about 110 people total at the party including the staff, who were very helpful, accommodating, and welcoming. Music was led by Rev. Paul Hilker on the keyboard, along with about 12 resident choir members. Of course the children helped join the choir during various songs, and everyone loved the music.

The Bible story was a Live Nativity including Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus, a stable, an innkeeper, many shepherds, sheep, 'wise people', and of course a room of heavenly angels. Fun was had by all, and the story had never been quite so lovingly shared. The residents helped their children decorate cookies and make Christmas cards while the adult guests learned about the history of the Wings Ministry, and various ministries shared all the opportunities available to the residents and their families.

Dinner of pizza, cookies, and punch was shared by everyone in groups of 10 people. Fellowship was shared around the table, family Christmas traditions were shared, and people talked about special angels/people in their lives. New friendships developed and it was a fun time of getting to know one another around each table.

Of course a Wings Party never ends without a group game, and one person from each table was decorated as a human angel. It is amazing how everyone is given the same materials, and yet each angel is so unique and beautiful. Laughter and fun was shared by all.

Jim and Lisa Harmon, the Wings webmaster and photographer extraordinaire, took professional family photos of each family. What a lasting gift that will be for the residents and their loved ones. We closed with a huge circle prayer, with everyone holding hands. Everyone is welcome, treated as a Child of God, and no one is ever left out of our closing prayer. One teenage girl came up to me after it was all over and tears were streaming down her cheeks through her smile. She hugged me and said, "Now I know I'm not all alone!" I teared up too, for I knew that we had really helped her.

Special thanks to the South Suburban Christian Church for the use of their van to get volunteers from the Denver area to the party. Special thanks to all our donors, who helped with pizza costs, a Wings volunteer who made Biscochitos – the official "cookie" of the State of New Mexico for our Colorado friends, for the Hobby Lobby in Albuquerque, who specifically gave us cards and stickers for this party, and for all the cookie bakers in many cities who gave us their home-baked goodies to share with all the residents.

It was a wonderful party and I thank everyone who made it happen. Duplicate comments were not recorded.

I came to the Wings Party because:

- ✦ Picked from the head structure.
- ✦ I wanted these folks to celebrate Christmas as a family.
- ✦ I am part of the choir at CMRC but like the fellowship.
- ✦ I wanted to bring joy to other residents and their families.
- ✦ My son wanted me to spend that time with him.
- ✦ My brother is here at CMRC, it's my parent's 33rd anniversary, my 28th birthday, and close to Christmas. We haven't celebrated anything together as a WHOLE family since my brother went away 2 years ago.
- ✦ I was invited by my son and we were happy to spend this day with him and the group.
- ✦ I wanted to be with my family. I haven't spent Christmas with my family in 2 years.
- ✦ Singing in the choir.
- ✦ I am a member of the choir here at CMRC.
- ✦ Part of the choir.
- ✦ To fulfill the corporal mercy of visiting the imprisoned.
- ✦ To see my mother and visit for Christmas.
- ✦ My son invited me.
- ✦ My wife volunteered me.
- ✦ Husband is here.
- ✦ To see my dad and spend time with him. Also to do some holiday things we did do.
- ✦ I was invited. Thank God.
- ✦ Ann did a presentation at our church and God spoke to us that this was the place we needed to be.
- ✦ Warden Estep suggested it.
- ✦ My husband asked me to be a part of the event and I really wanted to experience something new.
- ✦ I was in visitation and was asked to attend.
- ✦ I was asked to attend. I am glad I came.
- ✦ Great learning experience and family.
- ✦ They had more space so they let us to come.
- ✦ It's the right thing to do-being able to share God's love. Whenever love is shared, everyone is a winner.
- ✦ I wanted to share the love of Christ with others who don't get the chance to experience it often.
- ✦ I was invited and I need to be around the ones I love.
- ✦ I was invited and I wanted to share in the joy of the Christmas spirit.
- ✦ To help other inmates.
- ✦ My husband is incarcerated at CMRC and we were asked to come here out of a regular Saturday visit.
- ✦ They offered.
- ✦ With my mom.
- ✦ I love prison ministry.
- ✦ Love to sing to the Lord and other people.
- ✦ Choir member. I worship (Jesus Christ).
- ✦ I am a Christian.

- ✦ I was chosen by CMRC.
- ✦ Because I was told I earned it.
- ✦ My son.
- ✦ Praise God and enjoy this special event for me and my wife and my daughter. J
- ✦ Anton invited me.
- ✦ I was invited by my future husband.
- ✦ I was invited by Lawrence at CMRC.
- ✦ I believe in this ministry.
- ✦ My husband invited me and it was wonderful opportunity to do something for the holiday season with him.
- ✦ I came here today to be with my dad.
- ✦ To be with dad.
- ✦ I wanted to see my dad.
- ✦ Of my son to support him and his goal in life.
- ✦ To congratulate my brother.
- ✦ I wanted to share this day with my family.
- ✦ To have fun with the whole family.
- ✦ I wanted to be with my family on a special occasion.
- ✦ To support my husband and share his accomplishments.
- ✦ Rich Blanco suggested it.
- ✦ I wanted to share God's love with everyone.
- ✦ My family.
- ✦ I wanted to spend time with my son and enjoy the Christmas spirit with others.
- ✦ We were invited to attend.
- ✦ My dad was coming.
- ✦ My son invited me.
- ✦ I was asked to assist with security searches and to make sure the event was conducted under proficient security.
- ✦ Choir.
- ✦ Invited by IBS.
- ✦ I was invited.
- ✦ Choir.
- ✦ I'm on structure. I am POD coordinator in my unit. Was asked to come to party.
- ✦ The Creator blessed me.

The highlights of the party for me were:

- ✦ The company and kids.
- ✦ The songs. Watching the families with their children enjoying each other.
- ✦ Watching kids spend time with their dads.
- ✦ The family that came. It was a blessing to see the smiling faces.
- ✦ The live nativity and the singing.

- ✦ The smiles.
- ✦ All of it!! Being able to be with my family and make new friends.
- ✦ Seeing my niece sing and play with the instruments; the smiles on everybody's faces; meeting new people.
- ✦ Singing. See reactions.
- ✦ The fellowship/family.
- ✦ Talking with the residents at the table.
- ✦ Seeing my mother.
- ✦ The choir.
- ✦ Seeing the residents interact with their families.
- ✦ Singing. Family bonding. Not feeling alone.
- ✦ Spending time with my dad.
- ✦ Being with God's people and having fun.
- ✦ Living nativity.
- ✦ Cooking decorating and the meal.
- ✦ The singing and family participation.
- ✦ Interacting with other families and loved one incarcerated.
- ✦ The Baby Jesus story.
- ✦ All of it (spending time with family).
- ✦ When they did Mary and Joseph. When my husband was Joseph, I was Mary, and my son was Jesus.
- ✦ The magic. It relates everyone and let's the joy circulate amongst everyone.
- ✦ Watching the families connect and fellowship and smile and laugh and hug.
- ✦ When my son was Baby Jesus and my wife was Mary.
- ✦ The singing; the feeling of acceptance even though my family could not attend.
- ✦ The play and the singing.
- ✦ Talking with Bonnie from the Wings Ministry.
- ✦ Cookie making.
- ✦ Eating pizza.
- ✦ Singing, the play, being able to talk with the inmates and the families.
- ✦ The questions at the table.
- ✦ Praise and worship.
- ✦ Making cookies.
- ✦ Just being treated as just a man with a family.
- ✦ The singing and family interaction-photos-dinner.
- ✦ Nativity scene.
- ✦ God's presence.
- ✦ Seeing all the beautiful smiling faces.
- ✦ Seeing the children have a great time with their families.
- ✦ Everything has been great!
- ✦ Making cookies was the funniest part of the day.

- ✚ Meet new people.
- ✚ My husband, a handsome wise man, my daughter the head angel, and myself as a lovely angel.
- ✚ Rejoicing with Jesus and family.
- ✚ Watching my niece make cookies.
- ✚ Being with my family.
- ✚ Serving and seeing families interact-kids cuddling with dads and brothers.
- ✚ The kids making cookies-seeing families together.
- ✚ The quality time.
- ✚ The reenactment of Jesus' birth.
- ✚ The children making cookies and cards.
- ✚ The crowd participation; getting to visit with all the incarcerated citizens.
- ✚ I am a case manager. I am accustomed to seeing "the look." It's the look on a guy's face when I tell him he is paroled and going home. Everyone in the room had "the look" today.
- ✚ The story of the birth of Jesus.
- ✚ The choir.
- ✚ Enjoying a meal with the volunteers and singing with the entire group.
- ✚ Families united.
- ✚ Songs, plays, being with my husband, having some kind of Christmas together.
- ✚ Everything. It was one of the best times I had in prison.
- ✚ The company and the kids.
- ✚ Making cookies with my daughter.

I appreciate the Bibles, Guidepost Magazines and sweaters, and Focus on the Family gifts. I want to tell them:

- ✚ How much they are appreciated and really helps families.
- ✚ Come back again.
- ✚ I enjoyed the party and I appreciate all the work that was put into getting everyone together.
- ✚ May God bless all involved.
- ✚ Merry Christmas.
- ✚ May the Lord bless their lives.
- ✚ Keep up the good work.
- ✚ They should do this every year.
- ✚ Keep doing what you are doing. It means a lot!
- ✚ I really appreciate everything.
- ✚ Everything is appreciated and it will be well used. God bless you!
- ✚ Thanks for a good time for me and my family.
- ✚ This is a wonderful program. I really enjoyed it.
- ✚ I will be praying for more funding. This allows families to reconcile and also the kids would have something other to remember Dad at.
- ✚ Offer up prayers.
- ✚ Good job!

- ✦ You guys are truly a blessing; keep serving God.
- ✦ I appreciate all the hard work that everyone put in.
- ✦ Merry Christmas!
- ✦ I love them.
- ✦ God bless. Happy holidays. May you be blessed richly in 2009.
- ✦ Happy holidays and God bless you all.
- ✦ I love them and may God bless them.
- ✦ We appreciate everything they have done.
- ✦ I hope you continue to bring joy and happiness to families all around the country. We appreciate what you guys stand for.
- ✦ Keep up the good work.
- ✦ **Thank you! Thank you! From someone who has seen a lot of broken hearts, long faces and shattered hopes, you are highly appreciated.**
- ✦ God bless all beyond understanding
- ✦ **That I have never experienced something as wonderful as today.**
- ✦ God bless the continued work of your hands.
- ✦ **Thank you. This made my Christmas spending time with my husband.**
- ✦ I would like to help out in the future when I am released. It is a great thing that Wings is doing this in prisons. Thank you very much.
- ✦ Very unique experience. I enjoyed myself.
- ✦ Fun to make new friends.
- ✦ Nice to see that people care about the incarcerated-other than our families. There is a perception that people in prison are bad and so no one cares about them.

Why should prisons allow more Wings Parties in prison?

- ✦ Brings families together. We have been so disconnected. It felt good for my daughter and her dad to bond.
- ✦ It lets families come together and do some family traditions they might have done before.
- ✦ Helps me get in touch with my feelings and get in touch with my family. Thank you!
- ✦ It is so special and meaningful to all who attend. It is a little bit of home for those who desperately need it!
- ✦ The family bonds are strengthened. It is also a privilege for residents and makes them want to behave.
- ✦ It allows families to be together. It gives us a chance to be normal so to say.
- ✦ Positive impact on inmates and their families. Everyone makes mistakes and this gives them a chance to still be in touch with society.
- ✦ It's fun, educational, family-oriented and it actually gives back to the families that are struggling through tough times of loved ones incarceration.
- ✦ It is a great reward and a chance for everyone to interact on a different level.
- ✦ It's a wonderful thing for families.
- ✦ So I could have a nice Christmas party with my dad and spend time with my dad.
- ✦ So we could meet new people and have a good time.
- ✦ The residents got away from the stress and have fun with their families and you could see the happiness in the children that got to do the activities with their family that is locked up.
- ✦ It gives families a chance to bond and get to know one another.
- ✦ Helps us spend quality time with the kids and spouses.

- ✚ Brings families together to celebrate with other families during this time of grief.
- ✚ Keep the moral up.
- ✚ It is a huge moral booster and everyone enjoyed themselves.
- ✚ Because it lets us share and have some special moments with our family.
- ✚ It is good for my son.
- ✚ Because it makes a comfortable environment for the offenders and their families.
- ✚ It is very positive.
- ✚ It makes a tremendous difference for these families in making them feel loved and accepted which will also make the recovery much more likely.
- ✚ Families and inmates really enjoy it!

What will you tell other residents about the Wings Party?

- ✚ That it was fun.
- ✚ It felt good to act and feel like a little kid again.
- ✚ It was a good experience.
- ✚ It was an enjoyable experience.
- ✚ It was spectacular.

Additional comments:

The Christmas Party at CMRC was a wonderful success!! We got to enjoy our loved ones and watch them interact with their kids in a play, as well as join them in Christmas Caroling. They helped their children decorate cards or Christmas cookies and sit and eat pizza and cookies with them. We enjoyed praying together with the Wings Ministry Volunteers. Everyone was on their very best behavior! I still really can't believe that we were actually allowed to do this! All the incarcerated citizens had the biggest smiles on their faces throughout the 3 hours we were all together. It was a wonderful thing! Tana Poindexter, Colorado CURE Board Member