



3rd Wings Family Day

Grafton Reintegration Center

Grafton, OH

06-17-17

The 3rd Wings Family Day at the Grafton Reintegration Center in Grafton, OH was held on June 17, 2017. There were 37 children, 28 adult family members, 22 inmates, and 10 volunteers who attended the Family Day. The volunteers came from the Columbus area, Cleveland area, Elyria, and Albuquerque, NM.

Ann Edenfield Sweet, the Wings For LIFE International founder and Executive Director, held a training for the inmates who would be attending early in the morning. She shared her story and explained what the men could expect and why the Family Day does the programming the way it does. The volunteers did a great job of helping set-up for the Family Day. Cookie platters, grocery bags holding paper supplies for the mealtime were organized, craft tables were prepared, and soon everything was ready for the Family Day.

As the families arrived, Ann led the group in mixers. People got to know one another, found out favorite hobbies, and where people were from, and discovered fun things to do in their hometowns. Everyone enjoyed getting this chance to interact with one another and before the inmates arrived, all the families had already had a good time.

Chaplain Joseph Horton opened the Wings Family Day in prayer. The inmates, volunteers, children, and family members helped Ann lead the song, "Praise Ye the Lord". Each side stood up to sing and sat down when not singing. Next "Shake a Neighbor's Hand and Jesus is a Friend, He's the Friend Next To You", got everyone in the mood to have a great time and realize that this WAS fun and that everyone WAS going to have a great time.

The children helped Ann lead the motions for "Lord I Lift Your Name on High" and "Jesus Loves Me".

The Bible story was The Prodigal Son, as we were celebrating FATHER'S Day. The *father*, (Chaplain Horton), the *older son*, and *younger son* were outfitted in *lovely costumes*. "Dancing women", children as "pigs", and "card dealers" were also dressed in costume. The audience was divided with half supporting the younger son – "Hi Dad", and the other half supported the older son – "What about me?" Everyone was part of the story and at the end, after the laughter and fun, the Chaplain reflected about the story. He reminded us that our FATHER will always come running to us, and always welcome us home, no matter how far we have strayed. It was a very meaningful Bible drama.

Ann tied the Bible story into her personal story and how Wings was created. She shared that Wings For LIFE International is designed to share Christ's love with all families of prisoners and returning citizens.

Some of the volunteers shared about their ministries/programs, including Lynn Novak, Grafton staff, and Prison Fellowship Ohio State Director Kevin Hairston. Kevin talked about Angel Tree, and all the Prison Fellowship programs that they offer at Grafton and across the state of Ohio.

During this time the men were busy making Father's Day cards and bookmarkers with their children and grandchildren. They also made cheerio/pretzel necklaces and butterflies out of

newspaper and recycled paper. It's always wonderful to see the beautiful crafts that everyone creates and makes for loved ones.

Dinner was pizza, cookies, and punch. Lively discussion was held at each table.

Then the favorite part of each Wings Family Day arrived. A bag of "junk" was used to decorate the men in the room. (Napkins, paper bags, newspaper, paper plates, and curling ribbon.) Each table decorated the man at their table. The new "outfits" were hilarious and great fun was had by all and laughter filled the room.

The Family Day ended in a huge circle prayer around the room with everyone holding hands, bowing in prayer, and being reminded that Christ died for each and every one of us. It was a special, uplifting day, where grateful hearts joined together for great fun and fellowship.

The following comments came from those in attendance and their words describe how meaningful the Family Day was for everyone. Duplicate comments were not repeated.

I came to the Wings Father's Day Family Day today because:

1. I volunteered because these events are important for a family's emotional health.
2. I want to spend time with my family.
3. Because I wanted to see daddy.
4. To spend time together as a family.
5. To spend time with my family.
6. I love being treated like a human.
7. To visit my dad and have fun.
8. I want to see my dad for Father's day.
9. To spend time with my family, and learn something about God.
10. I came to see my girls. I haven't seen them since January,
11. To see my dad.
12. To see my husband.
13. To see my dad, because I haven't seen him since January.
14. To see my son and have his children here to see him.
15. My father asked.
16. To celebrate Father's Day with my father.
17. Because of my son.
18. To support our son and allow time for his girls to be with him.
19. I wanted to visit my brother.
20. I wanted to see my dad.
21. I came to support my dad.

The highlights of the Family Day for me were:

1. I volunteered because these events are important for a family's emotional health.
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Prison officials should continue hosting Wings Family Days because:

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**I appreciate Prison Fellowship, 1687 Foundation Books, the Guideposts Magazines, Operation Starting Line collaborators' gifts and books, donated cookies and pizza, and want to tell all the sponsors thanks and:
Miles driven one way to come to the Family Day:**

1. Please continue to do this.
2. God bless, for being so giving for everyone to enjoy.
3. Please keep it going for families in the future.
4. I appreciate it.
5. I appreciate everything.
6. Have a nice night, I appreciate it.
7. We hope it continues.
8. I will never forget this.
9. Thank you for bringing me to my father.
10. Thank you for letting me see my husband.
11. I can't wait for the next one.
12. Please continue to do this.
13. This was such a great idea.
14. It was the best time to see my dad.
15. Thanks for the love they shared with us.
16. I am truly appreciative of being able to be part of this with my sister and nieces support.
17. Nice job.
18. Thank you for everything.

Additional comments:

1. Thank you so much may God bless you all and please do this more.
2. Better than a normal visit, spend time together; family vacation, camping, picnic and activities.
3. It was normal and had good food, big celebration, my family.

I drove _____ miles one way to come to the Family Day.

25, 28, 30, 40, 45, 28, 56, 60, 70, 2 hours, flew in from Albuquerque.