

**Tennessee Community Resource Board  
Riverbend Maximum Security Institute  
October 18, 2019**

**TCRB Representatives:**

Rev. Michael Rickenbaker, Vice Chairman / West TN Representative	(P)
Mario Allen, Member / West TN Representative	(A)
Vinessa J. Brown, Member / West TN Representative	(P)
Paul Hensley, Member / West TN Representative	(P)
Thurston S. Smith, Member / West TN Representative	(P)
J.R. Davis, Chairman / Middle TN Representative	(P)
Joan Evrist, Secretary / Middle TN Representative	(P)
Tom Hallquist, Member / Middle TN Representative	(P)
Ronda Waters, Member / Middle TN Representative	(P)
Tommy Mathis, Member / Middle TN Representative	(P)
Sean Driscoll, Member / East TN Representative	(A)
Raeanne Hance, Member / East TN Representative	(P)
Lee Ragsdale, Member / East TN Representative	(P)
Brian Bishop, Member / East TN Representative	(A)

**TDOC Representatives:**

Vicki Freeman, Director of Re-Entry and Women's Service  
Robert Hill, Director of Volunteer & Religious Services  
Carissa Miniard, Probation Parole Program Director

**Guests:**

Vicki Helgesen, Leaving the Cocoon  
Larry Curtis, Center House

**Call To Order (9:02 a.m.)** – Michael Rickenbaker

**Prayer** – Lee Ragsdale

- Larry Curtis (Center House)
- Sean Driscoll – Prostate cancer
- Vinessa Brown – Grandmother passed away
- Lee Ragsdale – Daughter
- Vicki Freeman – Friend w/cancer
- Vicki Helgesen – Woman who came out of prison and can't get a job

**Welcome & Introductions** – Michael Rickenbaker

TCRB Membership

TDOC

Guests

**TCRB Meeting Locations**

- Michael Rickenbaker – We will be taking the TCRB meeting into different churches in the community.

### **Review and Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- Motion made by Thurston Smith.
- Seconded motion Paul Hensley.
- All approve.

### **Purpose Driven Education – Tom Hallquist**

- Tom Hallquist – Pleasure to be on this board and work with inmates. We developed a purpose driven educational program. We worked with inmates to get their input on what we've been developing, and we have published an academic paper – it will be published as a book likely in November. The purpose driven education curriculum is also being published. There's a narrative of the women and men who have gone through prison. These stories are being read to inmates who have just entered the system who feel alone and isolated. These stories are giving people hope. These stories will likely be published in January. The purpose of this curriculum, book, etc., is to help other people. You can find what's been published at tomhallquist.com or MTSU's website.
- Michael Rickenbaker – We appreciate Tom who has carried this banner of education within the system for many years.

### **Grand Division Reports – East TN / Middle TN/ West TN Grand Divisions**

- East TN
  - Lee Ragsdale – Good work continues to be done all over the east.
  - Raeanne Hence – I have the minutes from the Morgan CRM meeting. They're getting geared up for Christmas. We have a new Chair and Secretary on that board. They're excited about what's coming for the holidays. I spoke to Chaplain Williams from Bledsoe and also getting ready for Christmas as well. We're discussing doing something for the women this year as well. Things are going well.
- Middle TN
  - J.R. Davis – This are going great in middle TN. Last year we changed it to Fellowship Meals instead of Christmas celebration, etc. Wanted to bring to the table because some of the organizations pulled out because of changing it to "Fellowship" instead of "Christmas." We're having a number of meals in all of our units. Our Christmas packages are coming together – seem to be enough to do what we did last year. Our organization has partnered with Prison Fellowship – John Spurgeon is the new state director. We have not had an active director in our state prison for many years – John has hit the ground running, in his fourth month. They have some resources we can capitalize on – programs, etc., inside of our prisons. They're looking at being in every prison in TN.
  - Vicki Helgesen – TPFW just had the Hope event – it was phenomenal. We had so many women excited to be there. Take advantage of a partnership with Prison Fellowship if you are able.
  - J.R. Davis – The Hope event was the event to introduce Prison Fellowship into who they are. There's music, meal, etc. John Spurgeon is very accessible; I'd highly recommend getting in touch with him.

- Joan Evrist – We had our LRCRB meeting and we were getting ready for the Hope event. We're excited about a couple of people on our board opening up women's shelters for the women coming out – all funded by community ministries and churches. Susan Moffett (Jonah's Journey) is very active at TPFW with adoption for children, working with moms and their children. We're busy with the Main and Transitional Center getting ready for Christmas – nearly financed for what we need. We're thankful for all of the volunteer and religious services that provide for the women at TPFW.
- Tom Hallquist – We are so blessed to have volunteers throughout the state making an impact. Regarding education, what I can do is send you an attachment of the academic paper.
- West TN
  - Tommy Matthis – Trousdale Men of Valor we are experiencing repeated lockdowns, but we are moving forward with faith-based programming in the W pod and continue to see growth and interest. We have a volunteer D group that continues to grow – 50-60 men meeting with volunteers from Long Hollow Baptist. I was at a Tri Core event in south central. Grady Perry is transitioned to the warden position there – lots of change going on there.
  - Vinessa Brown – Ladies at Henning will have a job fair soon. We are still working on collaborations in the Memphis area having churches come support and volunteer. Thankful for Director Hill – there is a lot of competition in our area. Our re-entry office has a dorm in the Penna Farm with 80 beds where they will teach classes and technical skills. We are doing some good work but challenging getting everyone to work together. I want to affirm Prison Fellowship and the work they're doing.
  - Paul Hensley – What a difference a support team makes. Spent a lot of time with our new chaplain. Doing a lot of training. Taught recert classes. Updating volunteer files and preparing for volunteer appreciation. I'm in the prison about 2-3 days per week.

### **Volunteers Active in Successful Transitions**

- Michael Rickenbaker – Introduce to everyone Larry Curtis, Director of Center House (transitional house). Larry lost his wife recently, but continues to move forward representing Center House, volunteerism, the church very well. Also want to introduce Vicki Helgesen as well to speak to us. We are honored Vicki is here and has continued her volunteer activity.
- Larry Curtis – Center House is an all-male facility since 2009. As we work with individuals on the outside, we applaud all of the volunteer efforts inside the prisons. It means so much when they leave. Center House is a Christ-centered facility, TDOC approved house. The main focus is building relationships and new beginnings. We work with Project Return as well. They do an excellent job. The men are not a number. We build a relationship with them and help them get established as much as we can when they come to us. We respect them as men. They left being a convict on the other side of the door when they come in. We're getting them involved in things that are bigger than they are. We want them to have restoration with their family. We appreciate the RHB program through TDOC – it's a good beginning point for them because they can participate in that program and helps them pay for their first 60 days at our facility. We need partnerships to see what we do be successful. Center House came as a springboard of First Church's prison ministry. I go with a team to TPFW 2x a month and we have a team that goes to CCA and we have services there. We have a host of volunteers going inside. We're looking to increase our bed capacity at Center House. The attitudes and passion of the

volunteers that go in makes a big difference. The Lord is helping us and I give all the credit to Him.

- J.R. Davis – How many residents? And what are the criteria?
- Larry Curtis – 8 residents (we have 8 beds) – work only with application, we evaluate and go from there. Cost is \$135 / week. I will work with the individual depending on the individual. We're able to work with them financially.
- J.R. Davis – I'm excited to hear about Center House and would love to talk more.
- Raeanne Hance – How long is the program?
- Larry Curtis – 90-day program, but we don't ask anyone to leave. We don't release them before they are ready.
- Michael Rickenbakre – There is a plan for expansion. This is a Christ-centered transitional house. This eliminates a lot of confusion or conflict up front. Another thing that is very impressive about Center House is that it's not an income driven process – it's a mission-driven house. Are you receiving grants?
- Larry Curtis – We have not every received a grant or financing.
- Michael Rickenbaker – That's impressive and honorable. I also think it's important that without any outside influence, the goals they started were not just religious, but also relational, clinical, and religious – it was balanced.
- Thurston Smith – Impressive and great program. A question – what are the credentials and background of your full-time employees and volunteers, and/or what the pre-requisites for working in the program?
- Larry Curtis – Love and compassion for the lost and a passion to do what God has called. It's a volunteer-run ministry. What got me started was my wife and I teaching Celebrate Recovery in the prison. We did that for five years. I do not have a history of drugs or alcohol or crime, but this is where God has placed me. We have volunteers who have a past they are not proud of, but this is redeeming their story.
- Tom Hallquist – Why couldn't Center House be a part of the TDOC?
- Lee Ragsdale – It has to be community run – I like “new way houses” versus “halfway houses”. Knoxville has a good supply of houses available. The passion, money, etc. needs to be driven on the local level.
- Vicki Helgesen – We don't have many women's houses – we need more. We have some good houses, but they are not board approved.
  - Vicki Freeman – Our director of housing, Michelle Singleton, can look into any houses that are not operating with integrity.
  - Vicki Helgesen – I've been in prison ministry since 2000 and I traveled with a group that went into the prison. In 2007, Richard Dixon and Jim Cosby in TDOC asked us to come on board as the official mentoring for the Transitional Center (Annex). We brought our women volunteers and started mentoring the women while incarcerated. That makes a difference – spending time mentoring women over time. If you make that relationship, that's what sticks. We have less than 10% go back to prison within a 3-year time period. Our mentors are phenomenal – they love the Lord. We are faith-based – you have to believe Jesus is the way, but we welcome all denominations. But we will mentor anyone who wants to be mentored. Our mentors meet with the girls 2x a month. Our desire is that everyone has a chance to make it. When they get out we still support them. I have two girls at Healing Housing (Williamson Co.) – United Methodist Church. The girls are respected. I am stepping down from the executive position I've had with LTC (Rochelle

taking my place – she’s been out since 2006 and is a badged volunteer), but I will still be working with LTC. We are non-profit, so we do take donations.

- Tom Hallquist – Just to add onto the success of it – I had one of Vicki’s girls in my class at Belmont and she’s graduating from Belmont at 53 years old.
- Lee Ragsdale – Partnerships are so important.
- Vicki Helgesen – We have another house coming up that is board approved called Oak Shelter. We need more women’s housing. Some of the good houses out there need to be board approved. Since January we have had 20 women graduate LTC and been released. We keep in touch with them.
- Joan Evrist – Do you work with the BEST Program as well?
- Vicki Helgesen – Yes, we are continuing to work on that, as well as working on getting into the Main. We’ve taken some of our women back into TPFW to talk to the women on the inside, share their story and tell what they did while they were incarcerated to make a better lifestyle.
- J.R. Davis – I love the idea about bringing a panel of women who were previously incarcerated into the prison. Was there a challenge with doing that?
- Vicki Freeman – It was a collaborative effort with me, Vicki H. and the warden, etc.

## **TDOC Presentations**

### **Address to TCRB – New Director of Volunteer Services**

- Michael Rickenbaker – I’d like to introduce our new Director of Volunteer & Religious Services, Mr. Robert Hill.
- Robert Hill – I’m honored to be here today. I’d like to recognize Vicki Freeman and the work she’s done behind the scenes. I’ve served in religious and political organizations for the majority of my life. There’s a lot of work and structures that need to take place. We are in a day and age where there is such division within those who say they are of faith. This division will keep us from serving those who need it the most. We need to be about the business of helping people. I’m grateful for the opportunity to serve and am praying for all of you in the serious work you are doing. We need to learn how to be unified now because we are all going to be one when we are in heaven. Pray for me and thank you for allowing me to serve.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I respond with a hardy amen and we are thrilled to hear your vision. You will be in our prayers.

### **Mentorship/Take One Update and Discussion**

- Vicki Freeman – We have plenty of people coming into the prison doing services, but we are lacking people to help and continue mentoring once they are out. We have to ensure the safety of our volunteers doing mentoring when they are going into the prison. We need more Take One churches. They’re falling by the wayside. We need new brochures; we need to bolster up the Take One program.
- Michael Rickenbaker – We were advised in the last meeting that with the change at the top there was discussion of potentially changing the name of Take One. I did receive a call from someone in North Carolina working in a county jurisdiction and he was very encouraged by the info in the Take One brochure. I have been able to reach out to him and help him. There

are those out there wanting to follow the Take One initiative. But we weren't clear on what our direction should be in continuing to call it Take One.

- Vicki Freeman – The name is still Take One. Names and processes can change, but the goal is the same – mentoring previously incarcerated citizens.
- Lee Ragsdale – Is there a way to have a connection between local TREC and LCRB? If there's a way to make connections to Take One – who does the training, who do we connect with, etc.?
- Vicki Freeman – That's helpful because you all know your communities – so utilizing those in local communities to help.
- Joan Evrist – Yes, because it's felt so separate. But around this table there are lots of mentoring programs we have available. How do we integrate it?
- Tommy Mathis – The concept of Take One is great. But the reality of boots on the ground and actually having it succeed, there's a clear disconnect.
- Vicki Freeman – We are needing to streamline the process of badging, so it doesn't take the length of time it's been taking.
- Tommy Mathis – LCRB – is there a listing of who spearheads each of these?
- Reanne Hance – It's the Chaplain in every prison.
- Tommy Mathis – The reason I'm asking is I can travel as a representative of TCRB to each LCRB to find out what they are doing and bring back to this board.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I'd like to ask if we can get a listing of the LCRB Chairpersons from each prison from the TDOC. Also, over time what we have discovered is that churches and religious organizations are the ones who are mission minded. If the church feels like they are making a difference in the community. What we have seen is successful is when something is started from the ground up, not top down. Some way we have to bring Take One and the governors mentoring initiative to our local churches/organizations in a way that it is not about a program, but about being mission minded.
- Tom Hallquist – The problem with Take One is that it was a state initiative from the top down and that doesn't work.
- Michael Rickenbaker – If we as churches, pastors, etc., are hearing success stories and realizing we can make a difference in the community, it's going to have a great impact on our communities and churches.
- Robert Hill – I'm prayerful over the next 30 days to find out what grant services are available so that churches will be aware of what's available to help churches take ownership of Take One.
- Lee Ragsdale – When we started with Take One, we did bring in local worship leaders from all across the state. The idea was the TDOC would support the program, but that the steering committee would be the boots on the ground to run the program across the state. We've gotten away from the goal of Take One over time. The goal was for one church to take one person and support, help, give them a way to successfully integrate into society.
- J.R. Davis – If there is a steering committee or if TDOC is revamping Take One, I'd recommend that TDOC have members of TCRB on that steering committee. Problem number one that I have been voicing for the past year is the issues with trying to get badged. The online process is not working. I've had to tell my people to go back on and try again. Orientations are too few and far between. I want to submit something to TDOC. There needs to be an easier way to get people badged.

- Larry Curtis – From the outside looking in, as you revise the Take One program. Have we considered a notification to all of our board approved halfway houses? I can say that most of the halfway houses are not aware of TDOC.
- Vinessa Brown – The re-entry programs don't know either. When you have a re-entry program, they should be a Take One. The men and women who are in re-entry program are valuable to be able to go back in and talk with the men and women inside.
- Vicki Freeman – The whole program needs to be looked at and streamlined.
- Tom Hallquist – Would Faith in Corrections conference be part of finding the solution? Getting churches together to see how we can ban together to help.
- Michael Rickenbaker – In hindsight as we look back, one of the accomplishments of this board in the 90's is this board became a 501c3. Prior to my coming back on as Chairman, that 501c3 went away. This board determined that we would not do what we would need to do to maintain the 501c3, which has made us more dependent on TDOC. Prior to our 501c3 we also did what we called an annual board retreat which became an annual meeting in the fall – this is when elections are held, spend extensive time addressing these kinds of subjects.

#### **Community Corrections – Field Services – Re-Entry – Day Reporting Centers**

- Paul Hensley – Mr. Divante in Jackson Day Reporting Center is doing a fine job.
- Tommy Matthis – Board of Probation Parole – a lot of turn over. The best of the best in those roles promote quickly so there's a lot of turn over. It's hard to find good people to fill slots. We don't want people in those BOPP spots who don't have a heart for what we are talking about with mentoring, those coming out, etc.
- Raeanne Hance – A question for TDOC – is it for each local prison to clear those or is it just one person in central office? What's a reasonable amount of time?
- Robert Hill – It's multi-layered. I'd say at least 30-45 days.
- J.R. Davis – There have been positive moves forward in the last six months. At Riverbend, they have one person there doing background checks instead of someone downtown doing it. The problem hasn't been solved, though. It can be solved – it's possible to have the process be streamlined and expedited.

#### **TDOC Offenders' Tax Assistance Update**

- Vicki Freeman – We are going to need assistance during that time to provide tax assistance in the transition centers only.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I'd like to entertain a motion to appoint a sub-committee with Mr. Smith being the chairman of that committee.
  - Motion made by Raeanne Hance.
  - Motion seconded by Tom Hallquist.
  - All approved.
- Michael Rickenbaker – If you are willing to help Mr. Smith with the tax information and getting it out, please make yourself available. Ms. Freeman will provide the information needed for that subcommittee.

#### **TCRB Retreat / Faith in Corrections Conference / Committee Report**

- Michael Rickenbaker – Mario Allen is not here today to give a report on where we are with putting together a Faith in Corrections Conference.

- Tom Hallquist – Can I propose that instead of our January meeting that we take all day on a Saturday at Montgomery Bell to have the time to work through some of what we are talking about today. It's important to realize that faith is the lead factor in Take One and these other approaches we have heard about. And from there plan a retreat in fall.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I also want to speak to the financial responsibility of coming together at Montgomery Bell would need to be approved by TDOC. Let's contact Mario to see where we are with moving forward with this subcommittee. From there, we can assess if we need to appoint a new committee Chair, then we can ... retreat... and conference...
- Thurston Smith – Regarding the retreat, to avoid any costs of having the retreat, we can have the retreat on the day that we would have the board meeting. I'd recommend having a 2-day retreat. The agenda for the retreat should have some of the same information that was referenced earlier – administration, ethics, training, etc.

#### **Public Affairs Committee Report – Thurston Smith**

- Thurston Smith – The initial recommendations that I was asked to draft earlier this year, we wanted input from TDOC but we did not get a response. One of those issues was using the public mechanism of a Facebook page.
- Vicki Freeman – We have a new director of communications. Could I get a copy of the report that Mr. Smith developed?
- Thurston Smith – Yes, I will get that to you.
- Michael Rickenbaker – We have sought out TDOC but there was not a response from TDOC. The whole goal was to promote the incredible resources provided by the TDOC.

#### **Old Business – Other Business – Status of By-Laws**

- Michael Rickenbaker – In July 2016 we submitted by-laws that we had adopted as a board that were in keeping with some directives that TDOC was trying to implement. The board came together and revised the by-laws trying to accommodate the TDOC recommendations, but also honoring the directives of the legislature. We are still waiting from TDOC and give us the actual approval of these by-laws.
- Vicki Freeman – Did Cindy Sword receive an electronic copy of the by-laws?
- Ronda Waters – Yes, she did.

#### **TCRB Membership Positions & Officers**

- Robert Hill – Reinstatements of positions for Brian Bishop, Michael Rickenbaker and Paul Hensley.
  - Motion made to accept letter of reinstatement by Lee Ragsdale.
  - Seconded by Tommy Matthis.
  - All approved.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I want to acknowledge and thank Joan Evrist and Ronda Waters for the secretarial work they have done. This October meeting has historically been the annual time when we appoint officers. As your Chairman, I hereby step down. I have been fortunate to serve with you for many years, and I would appreciate the opportunity to continue to serve on this board. What this will necessitate is the election of a new Chairman of this board. I am wholeheartedly supportive the mission of this board, but as a Senior Pastor of a growing church and a grandfather and other roles I have, I know there will be another who can carry the torch of Chairman. I have not announced this prior to the meeting. I encourage TDOC to be



responsive to your Chairman whenever a Chairman asks for meetings, calls be returned, etc., that it be honored. I am thrilled to have served as Chairman, and am happy to continue to serve, just not of Chairman. We probably need to appoint a Vice Chair along with a Chairman. I don't believe Mario would want to continue – he was willing to take it for a short time. Vice Chairs work on the front end or back end of the Chairmanship, but at the election of this board. When we appoint a Chairman it's critical that you have someone that doesn't push their own agenda. I would encourage you to make sure that who you elect here today that it's someone who has a broad enough mission that it doesn't all stop in their garden.

- Tom Hallquist – I want to personally thank Michael for how he has led and what's in his heart.
- Paul Hensley – I'd make a motion to nominate Thurston Smith for Chairperson.
  - Thurston Smith – I respectfully decline.
- Tom Hallquist – I'd make a motion to nominate J.R. Davis for Chairperson.
  - J.R. Davis – I'd be honored to serve. I love working with TDOC and this board.
  - Seconded by Lee Ragsdale.
  - All approved.
- J.R. Davis – Thank you for this opportunity. I'm honored and looking forward to working together.
- Tom Hallquist – I'd make a motion to nominate Michael Rickenbaker for Vice Chair.
  - Seconded by Lee Ragsdale.
  - All approved.

**Meeting Adjourned (12:20 p.m.) – Michael Rickenbaker**

**Next Meeting: TBD**