



## What did you do for Volunteer Week?

June 2007 saw POPS pull out all the stops for National Volunteers' week. We are proud to announce that we held a number of volunteer initiatives; from persuading Governors at HMP Risley to volunteer for POPS to organising a Volunteers day out. We have dedicated this edition of our Newsletter to Volunteers and National Volunteers' Week. We hope you enjoy!



## Governors do time at POPS

**Bob McColm #1 Governor at HMP Risley Volunteers for Partners of Prisoners**

June commenced with organisations across the UK showing their appreciation and celebrating the contribution made by their volunteers.

Volunteers' Week (1<sup>st</sup> - 8<sup>th</sup> June) is an opportunity to raise awareness of the work that volunteers do and to find new recruits and Partners of Prisoners and Family Support Group (POPS) saw no limits! Even Prison governors at HMP Risley were invited to become volunteers for the day! In addition to Bob McColm (Governor, HMP Risley), Governors Louise Spencer and Phil Riley gave their time towards booking in visitors, serving on the tea bar and answering visitors' queries. The events proved to be beneficial for all participants, as families gained contact with senior prison management staff and governors interacted with families in a relaxed, informal environment. Prison staff gained an increased understanding of the value of family services in prisons and helped to promote the value of volunteering to all.

POPS is a registered charity that was set up in 1988 by families who were



HMP Risley's #1 Governor pouring a cup of tea for one of the families visiting an offender in prison



POPS Volunteer Derrick Harlock (left) shows Governor Phil Riley (right) the way around the POPS HMP Risley Visitor Centre.

supporting someone in custody. They formed a support structure for each other at a time when there was nothing else available. POPS has grown as an organisation and today employs over sixty-five full-time and part-time staff, delivering a range of services to families at various stages of the criminal justice process. In addition we have over 20 volunteers who provide frontline support via POPS visitor centres and the Prisoners' Families Helpline (0808 808 2003).

POPS advocate the need to support offenders' families experiencing stigma, isolation, economic hardship, poor health and loss and separation issues. They suffer from a lack of information about the criminal justice system and yet many of them still manage to offer vital support to their loved ones in custody. It is evident that support from offenders' families can assist in the reduction of re-offending.

**Bob McColm stated, "...offenders are ordinary people in extraordinary circumstances... POPS staff build relationships with their visitors and interact with them. It makes the world of difference and I appreciate the work volunteers do."**

*Natasha Martin – Communication and Information Officer*

## The volunteer's day out...



POPS' Volunteers Day out started bright and early for some (and not so early for others). The coach picked up staff at Forest Bank, Risley and finally Liverpool for the drive to Llangollen in North Wales.

We arrived at about 11am and everyone was given their packed lunches, which Natalie Morgan (Tea Bar Operative, HMP Liverpool) had worked hard to put together. We then split off into groups for our free time in Llangollen, with instructions to meet at the Llangollen Wharf at 1.30pm. During this time some groups went shopping, others had a walk and a picnic by the river – and of course, one or two went to the pub!

Everyone duly arrived at the wharf in good time and it was there that we met Stan – the gorgeous horse that was to pull our barge. It was all aboard at 2pm and Stan took us at a leisurely pace down a scenic route of the canal for about 45 minutes, stopping at a Hotel for a half-hour break, when (yes, you guessed it!) we went to the bar!

Stan gave us our alarm call (a very loud neigh) when it was time to drink up and climb aboard for the 45-minute cruise back to the wharf.

We arrived back at the wharf at 4pm and began the short walk back to the coach for the return journey. Unfortunately there was no singing on the way back because everyone was so tired! First drop off was Liverpool, then Risley and finally Forest Bank.

I am a member of the Visitors Forum based at HMP Risley Visitor Centre. On the 7th June I, along with volunteers and staff from POPS, were invited out on a day trip to Llangollen, in North Wales.

I would like to say a big thank you to everyone who organised the outing, we all enjoyed ourselves and looking forward to the next trip.

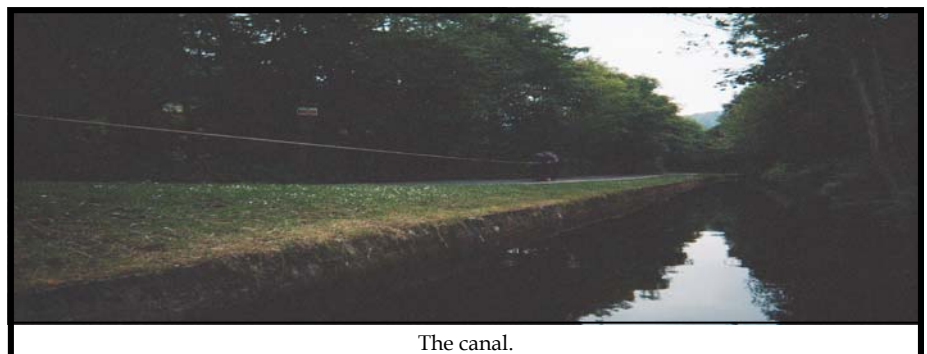
Step back in time for an unforgettable journey, enjoying peace and tranquillity on the Llangollen Canal.' This was the promise POPS made to it's volunteers during National Volunteers Week 2007... and POPS really pulled out all the stops!

Home time came and we reluctantly climbed back on the coach.. Whereas on the outward journey we were all full of chatter., tiredness crept over us, as we are not used to a day of fresh, unpolluted air!

Thank you to everyone that organised the trip, it was a great success.

Valerie Weiher  
Volunteer at HMPYOI Forest Bank Visitor Centre

POPS believe that a good day was had by all. We are hoping that this event will be an annual occurrence and perhaps next year will be organised by the volunteers themselves.



# All we want is to be listened to and understood...

## A Family Member gives an account of the benefits of having a Visitors' Forums

Being a close relative or even the friend of a prisoner can be very stressful. Where do you go for advice? What are the procedures? Visiting someone in prison can be very daunting. How many times have you thought "am I being judged for visiting someone in prison?"

Sylvia Curtis (POPS Visitor Centre Coordinator) and Eileen Fenety-Lyons (HMPS Risley) thought that creating a Visitors' Forum would help the prison experience become easier and more pleasant for families.

The forum consists of visitor representatives, POPS staff and various members of the prison staff. Ideas can be exchanged both from an 'insiders' perspective (prison staff) and from the outside (visitor representatives). The aim of the Visitors' Forum is to work in close partnership with visitors and support the solution of any issues and uncertainties. It is thought that this forum will allow families to be involved in the reduction of re-offending by improving community support for the offender.

The very first meeting was held in March next to the visitors centre. The forum encouraged a variety of views to be voiced, including a presentation from Governor Bob McColm (HMP Risley). During this meeting it was highlighted that the lack of knowledge and understanding on prison procedures caused uncertainty and misunderstanding amongst visitors and made a big impact on the visiting experience as a whole. Issues raised included: -

- Child-friendly visits (cushioned table corners etc.)
- Consideration for religious sensitivity
- Face-to-face bookings
- Creating a more relaxed and comfortable environment
- Consider placing phones in cells

The second meeting took place in May and a wider variety of prison staff attended. We found that the issues raised in the first meeting had been thoroughly considered and some initiatives had not only been implemented but completed. We now have a redecorated visiting hall and special family day visits.

In this second meeting we decided to show a very moving film called 'Homeward Bound' (Produced by Action for Prisoners' Families), showing the difficulties a family encounters when someone goes to prison. This allowed members to understand the impact of imprisonment on children, partners, family members, employment, accommodation and the break-up of everyday life following completion of the sentence. It is not solely the prisoner that has problems upon release... the video showed how families suffer too.

Understandably, not all concerns and issues raised have been resolved. Making important adjustments can be a long and complicated process. The crucial factor is that the forum has provided an opportunity for these issues to be raised. It is also encouraging to see members of the prison staff (including the #1 Governor) recognising families and their experiences and opinions and understanding their importance in the successful rehabilitation of offenders.

This speaks volumes and has a positive impact on our friends and family members in prison, because we feel that HMP Risley cares about us and our friends and relatives.

*Hameera Munir – Family Member – POPS' HMP Risley Visitors' Forum*

# Volunteer Strategic Development

As you know, the last two editions of POPS' Newsletter have been dedicated to our volunteers, which highlights just how important volunteers are to our organisation. With this in mind, one of POPS' priorities for the next few months is to take a more strategic approach to the way we recruit, train and support our very valuable volunteers.

Over the next few weeks I am going to be working on our policies and procedures for Volunteers, which will involve looking at how we can effectively work with our volunteers to provide the 'added value' to the work we do.

This will involve:

- Identifying key areas in which our volunteers can be involved
- Writing job descriptions and person specifications for various roles
- Launching dedicated 'recruitment drives' at key times throughout the year, which ensure that we attract a diverse range of volunteers to POPS
- Developing a structured Induction and Training programme for volunteers
- Developing structures to ensure that our volunteers receive the support they need to carry out their role
- Ensuring that our volunteers are fully integrated into our organisation



Grace Kay  
Outreach Development  
Manager

I hope that we will be in a position to launch our first recruitment campaign in September. In the meantime if you have any ideas or would like to be involved please let me know.

*Grace Kay – Outreach Services Development Manager*

## [www.partnersofprisoners.org.uk](http://www.partnersofprisoners.org.uk)



POPS' new website - home page.

POPS is proud to announce our newly designed website. We have new and exciting functions like: -

- Join our mailing list
  - Make a donation
  - Find our more 'About POPS'
  - Keep up-to-date with our current events and news
- ...and much, much more!

## ...And the Winners are: HMP Risley Visitor Centre for the most creative Display Board in Volunteers' Week



Please feel free to send any suggestions for the next issue to Natasha Martin (Communication and Information Officer) at POPS Head Office, Valentine House, 1079 Rochdale Road, Blackley, Manchester, M9 8AJ. Tel: 0161 702 1000  
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