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*Updated January 6, 2011*

**Child Referral**

Amachi-Break the Cycle seeks to link children of incarcerated parents with a caring adult mentor (age 18+) willing to support, to guide, and to be a friend to a child (age 6-16) of an incarcerated parent. The role of an adult mentor is not to replace the parent’s role, but to spend quality time with a child of an incarcerated parent. A positive mentoring relationship can result in improved school performance, self-confidence, and greater hope for the future.

According to Public & Private Ventures of Philadelphia, children of prisoners are six times more likely than other children to be incarcerated at some point in their lives. America’s most isolated and at-risk children are the estimated 7.3 million children who have one or both parents under some form of state or federal supervision and as many as 70% of these children are likely follow their parent’s path into jail or prison. Mentoring relationships are valuable especially for children of incarcerated parents as they face higher risks of ending up in the criminal justice system. It is our hope that our efforts will break the generational cycle of incarceration.

Amachi-Break the Cycle develops sustainable partnerships and collaborates with many local faith-based and secular organizations to better serve the children of incarcerated parents. Amachi-Break the Cycle in Middlesex County is a collaborative effort between the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) of Middlesex County and Catholic Charities Diocese of Metuchen. Our partnership with Catholic Charities allows us to enroll children of incarcerated parents between the ages of 6 - 16. Children can stay in our programs until they turn 18.

Both the child and volunteer mentor are asked to make an 18 month commitment to the match, and commit to seeing each other for two hours a week. Matches are made to bring together the needs of the child and the skills, abilities and interests of the adult. Mentors are carefully screened as all undergo a criminal background check and child abuse history clearance.

The process from referral to the enrollment of the child to an actual match depends on the pool of available mentors and the child’s age. Once a referral has been made, we will then contact the child’s legal guardian to set up an interview to make the best mentoring match as possible. Please note that a child cannot be enrolled into our program unless the child’s legal guardian signs a consent form. To refer a child, simply fill out the child referral form and send it back to the appropriate contact listed above.

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