

Bikes at the center of Montrose Jail Ministry

By RICHARD REEDER

DAILY PRESS NEWS EDITOR

Montrose Jail Ministries is a partnership of churches, business owners and others in ministry in Montrose committed to helping men and women who have run afoul of the law.

Montrose real estate agent Jim Renfrow is one of the board members and he said the goal is to help people come out of the jail with a new lease on life and a better outlook of their situation.

"We have seen the impact we can have on people, many of them want to change their lives but don't know how, so we help them find their path and a relationship with God," he said. "There are a dozen churches who work with the ministry and 50 volunteers. The board of directors is made up of people with varying backgrounds and experiences."

Board members are Deacon Scott McIntosh, a retired attorney; Rev. Ben Garate of Calvary Chapel Montrose; Chris Hauck, retired CEO of Sunflower Electric; Tom Cheney, retired attorney; and Judy Ayers, retired accountant.

"The backgrounds of the board rally helps guide us because they have so much to offer and have resources they can share with the men and women leaving jail," Renfrow said. "We all feel a call from God to do this work, so we work well together because that is our focus."

One way of helping inmates when they leave jail is transportation if they need it. They started the "Bikes for Jesus" program.

"We are going to start a GED program that will help many people. The needs are so great, and we are working towards meeting as many as we can."

*Jim Renfrow
Board Member*

The ministry received a large number of bikes from the Montrose Police that had been abandoned. Thomas Hicks is working on repairing the bikes and distributing them to people in need.

"You know a lot of the people in jail have lost their license due to a DUI or not paying support or other reasons, and so they can't drive themselves around when they get out," Renfrow said. "They can take the bus, but you find yourself waiting a lot when you do that. Giving them a bike to get around really helps them get back on their feet."

Hicks said he enjoys the work he does on the bikes because he knows there is a great need for transportation. "The cops have been kind enough to help get us started, and we will always take donations of bikes if people have bikes they need to get rid of," he said. "I got involved because I have known Jim for many years, and he's a great man with a big heart. He inspired me to help."

Hicks, who works as a handyman and repairs bikes for a living, said someone coming out of jail may have more to deal with than their newfound freedom.

"Sometimes they come out, and they can't afford a place to live, so they end up homeless," he said. "They need the transportation to find a job because they often lose their job once they are locked up. This is a serious need and we can use more help."

The transportation issue is only one aspect of what the ministry is doing within the walls of the jail. They conduct services on Monday night in both English and Spanish for men and women. They are also expanding the program to help people find jobs and education.

"The jail is giving us more access, so we can help people fill out job applications



Montrose Police Patrol Commander Gene Lillard shakes hand with Thomas Hicks of Jesus Bikes, along with John and Jeremiah Renfrow of Montrose Jail Ministries after the police donated abandoned bikes to the ministry's program. (Submitted photo)

and teach them interviewing techniques," Renfrow said. "We are going to start a GED program that will help many people. The needs are so great, and we are working towards meeting as many as we can."

The ministry sponsored an Angel Tree at Christmas that helped provide gifts for the inmates' children. Renfrow said they had to be sure the children could receive the gifts, and then delivered them or mailed them if the children were not in Montrose.

"We did that because the inmates can't get out and shop, but they wanted to be sure their children had a good Christmas," he said. "We are teaching them about God's love and mercy and the things they can take to the outside with them. That is very rewarding for all of us involved in the ministry."

If you have an interest in serving with the ministry or have a bike you would like to donate, call Renfrow, (970) 209-5001 or Hicks at (970) 596-6689.



Free Bibles

These Bibles are distributed to inmates attending services from the Montrose Jail Ministries. The Bibles are in English and Spanish and the New Kings James version.

Food box items

- Ramen soup
- Oatmeal
- Pop tarts
- Pretzels and crackers
- Peanut butter
- Canned soup
- Tuna fish
- Candy and snacks



Food in a box

Christ's Kitchen prepares food boxes that Montrose Jail Ministries hands out to homeless people. They help the inmates when they get out of jail and may not have money. Ministry board member Jim Renfrow said he carries them with him and when he sees someone standing on the road with a sign asking for help he will stop and talk to them.

"I will ask them do they want food or do they want money," he said. "If they say money I will drive off and not give them any. It makes me doubt how serious their need is."