

FOREWORD

The roots of The Labyrinth Program at Hampshire County Jail and House of Correction in Northampton, Mass. can be traced back over the last five years. The idea was sparked one evening at a place called Genesis Spiritual Life Center in Westfield, Mass. I was drawn there to attend a labyrinth walking presentation offered by a woman named Lorry Villemaire. For both Lorry and me this was to be a life-changing event.

Lorry gave an educational talk and we walked the portable Labyrinth she had set up at Genesis. I loved the experience. Afterward I asked Lorry if she would consider bringing her labyrinth to the jail where I was working. Her answer was an immediate. "Yes".

With the approval and support of Sheriff Robert Garvey Lorry and I tried a one time pilot program for a group of incarcerated men. The feedback on our evaluation forms was extremely positive. Lorry then developed this six-week curriculum we continue to use today.

We were then given permission by Sheriff Garvey to take a group of minimum security men on a visit to an outdoor labyrinth located at Mont Marie in Holyoke, Mass. The sheriff joined us and walked the labyrinth along with the men. He was surprised and impressed with this experience.

During one of our presentations with the men we talked about the possibility of actually building an outdoor Labyrinth in the jail yard. The Hampshire County House of Correction is situated atop gently rolling hills with beautiful vistas of the surrounding countryside. The perfect place for a Labyrinth. When approached with the idea of constructing a labyrinth on the grounds of the jail the sheriff gave his approval for this extensive project.

Through a unique collaboration with Hampshire Sheriffs Office, University of Massachusetts at Amherst and a very generous donation from a private donor we were able to obtain funding to build an 80-foot green labyrinth. Construction began under the direction of landscape architect student Patrick McGeough in the summer of 2011. The volunteer work crew of incarcerated men put in countless hours of manual labor. On October 20, 2011 we held a celebration to mark the blessing and dedication of our newly constructed jail labyrinth.

We have been filming the project since the first shovel of dirt was turned over. Northampton Cable TV filmmaker Gary Rivest has graciously undertaken the process of creating a documentary for us. It is our hope we will be able offer this work as a model for other jails across the country and around the world.

Lorry was the catalyst and creator of this remarkable program. As I look back on the night we first met it seems surreal. We have come so far and accomplished so much. I know some things are just meant to be and this is one of them. Thanks to Lorry, we now have our own Field of Dreams. Who knows what the future will hold?

Cathy Rigali

January 2012