

Compassion Story of the Month – Month 2

With Brattleboro voting overwhelmingly to become part of the international Charter for Compassion, the Reformer and The Commons have agreed to publish a “compassion story of the month.” This is the second. See submission information below.

Giving and Receiving Compassion: Christmas Singing at a Prison

The Hallowell Singers, Brattleboro

Sometimes we never get to know the difference we may make to someone. But this past Christmas, it seems that a group of us did make a difference - and we received it right back, multiplied. Our Hallowell Singers - better known for our hospice singing for the Brattleboro community, led Christmas singing at the Southern State Correctional Facility in Springfield Vermont. The response among the inmates was enthusiastic and contagious - we rose to the level of their excitement and sense of welcome.

On the way home in the car, our group reflected on the blessings of our practice, how every bit of what we offer together comes right back to us; how much we share a common humanity and spirit with others in the world regardless of circumstance; and how acts of kindness and intent radiate out in ways much greater than we imagine.

We also spoke of the freedom of walking out of the prison afterwards, into the cool air and open spaces towards a fabulous sunset, beyond the multiple locked doors. The feeling was palpable. So much to be grateful for.

And then there was more. Here is a letter received from one of the inmates. It knocked our socks off.

Glory hallelujah and thank you for the gift of song. Can't begin to tell you how good it makes me feel to revive my ancient Cathological and apostolic roots in the presence of so many kind hearts and smiling faces. The true spirit of sisterhood and brotherhood could have raised the Pentagon and certainly SSCF.

Thanks to you both and all the singers and helpers who came together and helped lift the spirits of all the boys in blue. The brownies hit the spot, and I hope you could feel the love rolling back in your direction.

Yes, beauty is not easy to find in here, but, when we do try, it is abundantly clear there is so much goodness and truth in our individual and collective humanity, a deep, fulfillingly real beauty which can't ever be denied. Thanks again to everyone there, in body and in spirit.

Much love and thanks

Talk about compassion. This was compassion directed our way. We are simply blown away by the ripples of what's so humanly possible.

Submissions, from Brattleboro area residents, for future publication, not to exceed 650 words, should be emailed to: compassionstory@gmail.com or mailed to: Compassion Story of the Month, c/o Robert Oeser, PO Box 6001, Brattleboro, VT 05302. Please include your name, address, phone number and email address. Earlier submitted stories will automatically be considered in subsequent months.