

CAMPAIGN FOR  
YOUTH JUSTICE

## Holiday Event Toolkit

December, 2008

Dear Friends,

The holidays can be times of great stress for anyone. Having worked with youth and their families, we know this time of year is especially hard for those involved in the life of a youth prosecuted as an adult. Whether a family member is locked up far from home or just down the road, the holidays bring with them a particular grief, a deep void, for the one that is missing. Family members of incarcerated children often feel responsible for this loss and isolated in their sadness and pain.

The holiday season provides us with a unique opportunity to reach out and make meaningful connections with youth who are detained or incarcerated in adult jails and correctional facilities across the country. Spending the holidays away from family can be hard, but being locked away and too far away to receive visits is especially painful for both the children and their families. It means so much to these youth when someone remembers them, even with the simplest gift, card, or event. It gives these youth hope to know that someone cares, someone thinks about them, and someone is working for them throughout the year.

This toolkit includes a few ideas about holiday projects that you can put together to reach out to incarcerated youth. Besides making a difference to these most affected populations, holiday outreach is an amazing opportunity to connect with, inform, and empower community groups. Outreach will enhance your organization's visibility in the community and strengthen its partnerships in the field.

Together, we can be creative and make a difference in the lives of our nation's youth.

Sincerely,



Liz Ryan  
President  
Campaign for Youth Justice

# Contents

## Party or Special Event at the Facility

- Sample steps
- Proposal letter for facility
- Invitation letter for cosponsoring organization
- Proposal letter for corporate sponsorship
- Thank you letter

## Holiday Gift-Giving Event

- Sample steps
- Cosponsor letter of invitation
- Invitation to donate
- Thank you letter

## Facility Visit for State and Local Legislators

- Sample steps
- Proposal letter for facility
- Elected official invitation
- Press advisory
- Thank you letters to official, facility, organization

## Holiday Card Campaign

- Sample steps
- Sample language for holiday card interior for incarcerated youth
- Sample language for holiday card interior for families and friend of incarcerated youth

## Appendix

- Electronic invitation to Holiday Party and Gift-Giving Event 2008
- Media advisory for Holiday Party and Gift-Giving Event 2008
- Postcard to accompany youth gift bags 2008

# 1. Party or Special Event at the Facility

There are lots of fun ways you can make the holidays brighter for incarcerated youth and at the same time, engage a number of partner organizations in a joint project. Since jails and prisons are strict about visitation and outside items permitted, the first thing you will need to do is make contact with the facility to determine what kind of project is possible.

## Sample Steps

---

### BRAINSTORMING AND PRE-PLANNING

*Make contact with your local facility* to find out what type of interaction with the outside they allow. Is there a space to hold an event? Are outside food and drink allowed? Will you and your volunteers be able to interact directly with the youth?

*Consider the resources you have* as you're thinking about what sort of project you want to do. Do you know or are you connected to someone who would be an uplifting and interesting visitor for the incarcerated youth? Do you know of any individuals or organizations in the area that have arts and crafts expertise that might be interested in an outreach project? Try to tailor your project to the strengths and resources of those you want to bring on board.

Here are a few ideas for possible projects:

- A movie screening of a favorite holiday film, complete with popcorn
- A party featuring catered food and music
- A reading of a book or poetry, followed by an opportunity for youth to write and/or share their own: combine with a gift of a journal or composition book to each youth
- A gingerbread or sugar cookie decorating – youth can make some to eat and some to package and send to their loved ones
- Another art or craft activity to make or make and send as a gift: ornaments, picture frames, etc.
- Unstructured art time with a variety of paint, clay, beads, etc.
- A visit by a legislator, celebrity, or another special guest
- A makeover for female inmates done by a Mary Kay salesperson
- A magic show or hypnotist
- A motivational speaker
- A concert by local musicians
- Karaoke
- Games tournament such as jeopardy/trivia, Pictionary, chess, or bingo

---

### GETTING THE BALL ROLLING

*Identify a facility for your project and make a formal proposal*, (see sample proposal letter) making sure to keep in mind how many youth are housed at each facility and the gender breakdown of the youth.

**Contact the facility to obtain rules about permitted outside items.** Even though you've already done some research about what's allowed (i.e. what gifts, supplies, or outside food are permissible, how they should be packaged, etc.), it's important to keep following up as your plan evolves. You might even want to include a list of items you want to bring to the facility in your proposal letter.

**Choose the date for the event.**

**Identify local leader(s), organizations, and individuals who can help with the project,** including organizations that already do volunteer work in the jail

---

## ENGAGING SUPPORT

**Build a team.** Contact other groups/individuals/organizations who could support and help to organize efforts. These may be local schools, community groups, or other advocate groups. Our parent organizer has found that religious groups can be especially good allies. They are often willing to engage in discussions about the issue, are helpful in getting into facilities, especially around the holidays, and they may even be willing to start their own project with some support.

**Identify any materials** that may be needed for the event.

**Identify and contact donors.** Find local organizations or corporations that may be willing to donate gifts or funds to the event (i.e. pizzas for a meal, notebooks for a class visit, or gifts for a gift drive).

**Bring the facility on board** for your project. Whenever possible, engage with the facility; build a relationship with the warden or corrections officials. Ask your contact at the facility for his or her thoughts and opinions on the project. Worst-case scenario: you are certain about the rules and regulations for every step of your project. Best case scenario: you've just made a brand new advocate for the youth inside the system.

---

## PREPARATION OF MATERIALS

**Gather any materials** needed for the event (gifts, etc.).

**Contact facility to discuss details** about the visit such as time, venue space in the facility, etc. Determine how and when gifts or food can be delivered and ask for any additional specific instructions, including dress code.

---

## FINAL PREPARATIONS

**Check in with the facility** a final time to ensure that all is in place and ready to go.

**Pick up last-minute materials** the day before the event, and ensure logistics are in place for anything arriving the day of the event (i.e. food and/or gifts).

**Take your photo ID** and be sure not to bring any potentially hazardous or dangerous materials/objects the day of the event.

*Bring a camera* and take pictures during the event if it's allowed. Use the pictures in newsletters and communications about your finished project, advertisements for next year's project, and thank you cards.

---

## FOLLOW-UP

*Send thank you notes* to individuals and organizations who contributed and/or helped make the gift drive a success, including the elected official who participated in the event (see sample thank you notes).

*Debrief with your contact at the facility.* Make sure no problems arose after the event or resulting from any gifts left with the youth. Get feedback on how the event could have run more smoothly for next year.

## Sample Proposal Letter to Submit to the Facility Party or Special Event at the Facility

[Date]

[Name, Title  
Facility name  
Facility address]

Dear [Title Name]:

Thank you for speaking with me about hosting an event with the youth at your facility. I am writing to officially request access to [facility name] on [date and time] to host an event.

The event will consist of [insert description of the event]. The following individuals will be attending the event [insert names of participants and titles].

Please let me know if you need any additional materials or if you have any additional questions. Thank you!

Sincerely,

[Name  
Organization]

## Sample Proposal Letter to Cosponsoring Organization Party or Special Event at the Facility

Dear [Title Name]:

This year, [organization] is sponsoring a [name of event] for incarcerated youth in [city]. We are hoping you will cosponsor with us in order to make this event a success!

The event will consist of [insert description of the event].

Here's what we're asking of you as a cosponsor: [be as specific as possible, asking based on the strengths of each organization]

- Help us plan and attend the event, including gathering materials!
- If someone at your organization has a corporate connection, appeal for corporate sponsorship or item donations
- Attend the event!
- Participate in event day set-up and clean-up

We hope that you will be able to help us make to holiday brighter for youth who will spend the season away from their families. We're looking forward to hearing from you.

Please let me know if you need any additional materials or if you have any additional questions. I can be reached at [contact info.]. Thank you!

Sincerely,

[Name]  
[Organization]

## Proposal for Corporate Sponsorship Party or Special Event at the Facility

[Date]

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This holiday season, while most of us are celebrating with family and friends, thousands of youth in correctional facilities across the country will be away from their families. Research shows that the best outcomes for public safety and for youth themselves come about when family and other supporters are involved with these youth. [Org. name] and its partners want to let these youth know they are not alone and provide them with hope and holiday cheer.

In order to fill this need, [organization], along with its co-sponsors, [org. names], is holding an event [describe event] at [facility] on [date] to benefit the incarcerated youth of [facility names]. We are asking for your sponsorship so that we can give gift packages to these youth. We are seeking donations of the following items:

[list items]

Monetary donations are also encouraged. You can donate to our event at [web address].

We will be in touch with your office in the next week or two. In the meantime, we can be reached for more information at [contact info.] We are able to pick up item donations any time before [date], or items can be sent to [address].

Thank you in advance for your generosity. Happy holidays!

Sincerely,

[name,  
organization name]

## Gift Drive Thank You Party or Other Special Event at Facility

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

On behalf of [organizations], we would like to express our sincere thanks for your support of our holiday [event]. We successfully [describe project]. Thank you so much for helping ensure that these youth were not forgotten during the holidays.

With Gratitude, [organization names]

## 2. Holiday Gift-Giving Event

The Campaign for Youth Justice and its local partner, Justice for DC Youth (JDCY) are now in our fourth year organizing a holiday gift-giving event. The project has expanded every year and has been a terrific success.

We give gift bags that include several toiletry items. It struck us that although we are giving “gifts” to the youth, the items they can receive in jail are really not gifts at all, but things the rest of us take for granted. We hope that by including the list of items in our donation invitations, we raise awareness in our partner organizations and donors that keeping kids incarcerated and separated from their families is a very sad thing with serious long-term consequences.

### Sample Steps

---

#### INITIAL PREPARATIONS

***Make contact with the facilities*** as early as possible. One suggestion is to call the chaplain at the jail or the facility director. Find out the number of youth at each facility (girls and boys) and what “gifts” they are allowed to receive. Decide which detention facilities to include.

***Decide what gifts to give***, such as:

- Lotion
- Bars of soap
- White socks
- Small combs
- Marble composition books
- Other non-spiral-bound journals
- Puzzle books such as Sudoku
- Blank note cards or sets of greeting cards kids can send out
- Deodorant
- toothpaste

---

#### INVITING PARTICIPANTS AND DONORS

***Design an invitation*** to invite legislators, organizations, and friends to contribute to the gift drive. The invite should include sponsoring organizations, logos, contact information, how to contribute, and a contribution deadline. Send out invitations as early as possible. (See sample invitation located in toolkit appendix.)

***Make it easy to donate.*** We suggest accepting cash, check, or credit monetary donations either by mail or online. If online donation is available through your organization’s website, consider putting a special message on the website explaining the project and encouraging donations. Figure out the approximate cost for each youth’s gift bag, and ask donors to sponsor a youth for \$15, or whatever the amount is.

**Write a letter requesting corporate sponsorships.** Many corporations and local businesses are interested in serving the local community. You can ask for monetary contributions to the drive or for the items themselves. Send out the request letter as early as possible to allow time for the request to process and for items to ship. It is common for stores and businesses to have their own forms for formal donation requests. Some phone calls and on-the-ground research can produce significantly more yields.

**Involve the community.** Invite local activist groups, churches, or school groups to hold a collection drive for a certain item. For instance, you could have a local elementary school collect tubes of toothpaste, and a nearby church could collect marble notebooks. Make contact early and often, and be specific about your needs and your deadlines.

**Engage officials at the facility.** As with another type of special event, take special care to involve people at the facility as much as possible. Aim to make the chaplain, warden, or corrections officers a part of your team, asking them for opinions and insights about logistics and gift ideas, as well as rules and regulations. At the very least, you will ensure that things go smoothly for your gift drive.

---

## GATHERING THE GIFTS

**Order gift bags.** Gifts will probably be assembled into gift bags or Ziploc bags, not wrapped, to be delivered to the facilities. Buy in person or order large gift bags online. Oriental Trading Company ([www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com)) is a good option. Ensure that the bags are delivered to you in time to package and deliver gifts.

**Order holiday cards** to include in the gift bags. Vista Print ([www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com)) is a good option. Order enough for each gift bag and any others you want to send out and ensure that they are delivered to you by a specific date. Write language for the cards and be sure to include who it is from with logos. Do not seal the cards because they may have to go through security before delivery.

**Shop around.** It may not be possible to get all items donated by local groups or businesses. Plan on ordering some items online and doing some in-person shopping. Compare prices!

**Set up in-person bulk purchasing.** In order to do in-person bulk purchasing, it is a good idea to contact a store like Target or Costco beforehand to find out the details of buying in large quantities. Costco typically has enough stock on the floor, but it's best to make a phone call rather than assuming that the quantity you need will be available when you need it. You may need to allow a week or more for the items to come in. Additionally, ask the corporate office if they are able to give a discount and be sure to file paperwork for non-profit status and tax-exemption.

**Host a party to encourage donations.** Invite cosponsors, organizations, and friends to attend and bring their donation with them. At the party, set up an attractive visual representing your goal for donations. For instance, we set up a holiday tree with an ornament to represent each youth to be sponsored for holiday gifts. Donors could take an ornament home as a keepsake of the youth they sponsored.

---

## GIFT BAG ASSEMBLY

*Assemble the bags.* This works best if the bags for each facility are filled individually according to the list of approved items. Be sure to label which bags are for girls and which are for boys. Additionally, put the bags for each facility into some sort of container for easy carrying and label it with the facility and “youth” on it. This is important because all gifts have to be examined by security and are liable to be mixed in with others unless they are properly labeled.

---

## GIFT DELIVERY

*Set up and verify date and time of gift delivery* with contacts at each of the facilities. Be sure to ask for any special instructions. When you go, have a photo ID and be sure not to bring any potentially hazardous or dangerous materials/objects with you.

---

## FOLLOW-UP

*Send out thank you cards* to individuals and organizations that contributed to the gift drive as well as others who helped make it a success. (See included sample language for thank you cards.)

## Cosponsor Letter of Invitation Holiday Gift-Giving Event

Dear Friends,

**[Organizations]** are sponsoring an annual holiday gift-giving event for incarcerated youth in **[city]**. This year we are hoping you will cosponsor with us in order to expand the reach of the gift drive.

We are collecting monetary donations from various organizations and individuals in order to put together a gift package for up to **[number]** youth at **[facility]**. Since the facility limits what youth can receive, we plan on sending care packages to each youth that include a pair of socks, a stick of deodorant, a tube of toothpaste, a small bottle of lotion, a bar of soap, a marble composition book, a puzzle book such as Sudoku, and a set of greeting cards.

Here's what we're asking of you as a cosponsor:

- Donate to the event!
- Advertise the event to your listserv, and encourage your contacts to donate (we'll provide invitation materials)
- Post a link on your website to our donation page
- If someone at your organization has a corporate connection, appeal for corporate sponsorship or item donations
- Participate in gift-wrapping and delivery of the packages, if possible.

We hope that you will be able to help us make to holiday brighter for **[city]** youth who will spend the season away from their families. Please feel free to contact us with questions. We can be reached at **[contact]**. We're looking forward to hearing from you!

Sincerely,  
**[organization names]**

## Proposal for Corporate Sponsorship Holiday Gift-Giving Event

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

This holiday season, while most of us are celebrating with family and friends, thousands of youth in correctional facilities across the country will be away from their families. [Org. name] and its partners have recognized that there is a considerable need in these facilities for holiday cheer as well as for personal items. A holiday gift provides these necessities and also affirms to the youth that they are not alone; rather, they are a part of a community that acknowledges their humanity and their potential.

In order to fill this need, [organization], along with its co-sponsors, [org. names], invites you to donate to our holiday gift-giving event to benefit the incarcerated youth of [facility names]. We are asking for your sponsorship so that we can give gift packages to these youth. We are seeking donations of [number] of each of the following items:

- white socks
- deodorant
- toothpaste
- lotion
- soap
- marble composition books
- puzzle books, such as Sudoku or crosswords
- pocket-size combs
- sets of blank notecards

Monetary donations are also encouraged. You can donate to our holiday gift-giving event at [web address].

If you are able to make a contribution, please contact [name] at [contact info.] We are able to pick up the gifts from the warehouse any time before [date], or gifts can be sent to [address].

Thank you in advance for your generosity. Happy holidays!

Sincerely,

[name,  
organization name]

## Invitation to Donate Holiday Gift-Giving Event

This holiday season, while most of us are celebrating with family and friends, thousands of youth in correctional facilities across the country will be away from their families. **[Organization name, cosponsor organization names]** invite you to donate to our holiday gift-giving event to benefit the incarcerated youth of **[facilities]**.

We are asking for your support so that we can give gift bags to incarcerated kids who will spend the holidays apart from their families. Just **[\$ amount]** will sponsor one child for a gift bag that includes:

- A pair of socks
- A pocket comb
- A stick of deodorant
- A tube of toothpaste
- A small bottle of lotion
- A bar of soap
- A marble composition book
- A puzzle book
- A set of notecards

Monetary donations for the holiday gift-giving event will be accepted through our website, **[site]**. We encourage donations before **[date]**.

Thank you for your generosity.  
Happy Holidays!

Contact **[name]** at **[organization]** at **[contact]** for more information.

## Gift Drive Thank You Holiday Gift-Giving Event

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

On behalf of **[organizations]**, we would like to express our sincere thanks for your support of our holiday gift drive. We delivered gift bags of **[toiletries, candy, puzzle books, journals, holiday cards, and socks]** to **[number]** youth at **[facilities]**. Thank you so much for helping ensure that these youth were not forgotten during the holidays.

With Gratitude,  
**[organization names]**

### 3. Facility Visit for State and Local Legislators

An especially important outreach project involves educating local policy-makers about the issue of youth transfer. One way this can be done is by organizing events for state and local legislators to visit youth housed at adult jails. These visits will raise policymakers' awareness of youth who spend their holidays in adult facilities and encourage them to take action to help protect these youth through becoming leaders in reforming the juvenile justice system.

This project can be done very simply by arranging a tour of the facility with the legislator and the facility. Ideally, the visit will bring holiday cheer to youth in facilities, whether through a special meal, a gift drive, completion of a craft/activity, or having a special guest attend one of their classes.

#### Sample Steps

---

##### PREPLANNING

*Identify and contact local organizations and individuals* for the project who can coordinate efforts, including organizations that already do volunteer work in the jail.

*Identify and contact a nearby adult jail* that would host a project (see sample proposal letter), making sure to keep in mind how many youth are housed at each facility and the number of boys and girls.

*Identify your area's legislators and staff* who would be interested in participating in the event and make initial contact with each office's schedulers.

*Consider holding a party or other event along with the visit.* See toolkit section on special events at the facility. Contact the facility for information on space available and outside items.

---

##### GETTING THE BALL ROLLING

*Choose the date for the event.*

*Identify and contact other groups/individuals/organizations* who could support and help to organize efforts.

*Send a formal invitation* to the legislator's scheduler (see sample invitation letter). The earlier in the year you send the invitation, the more likely you are to get a yes. Keep the time commitment short on the part of the official to make the invitation an attractive one for a busy official.

*Confirm with the legislator* that media may be invited.

*Identify any materials* that may be needed for the event.

---

## GATHERING MATERIALS

*Identify and contact local organizations or corporations* that may be willing to donate gifts or funds to the event (i.e. pizzas for a meal, notebooks for a class visit, gifts for a gift drive).

*Gather any materials* needed for the event (gifts, etc.).

*Contact facility to discuss details* about the visit such as time, venue space in the facility, etc. Determine how and when gifts or food can be delivered and ask for any additional specific instructions, including dress code. Ask whether media can attend and whether photos can be taken.

*Prepare the elected official for the visit*, providing background on the issue if necessary and some talking points for media interviewers. Arrange a meeting or a lunch date with the legislator and/or his or her key staff contact if possible to discuss the event.

---

## FINAL PREPARATIONS

*Finalize the media notice and press release (e.g., 2 weeks out)*

*Create specific agenda for the event* for who will speak when, when the elected official is arriving and who is meeting him/her.

*Send out the press advisory (see sample press advisory) (e.g., 1 week out)*

*Check in with the facility* a final time to ensure that all is in place and ready to go.

*Call local media to remind* them about the event and to inquire whether they will cover the event (e.g., the day before the event). If you have a friendly reporter, feed him or her some of the “right” questions to ask.

*Pick up any last-minute materials* and ensure logistics are in place for anything arriving the day of the event (i.e. food and/or gifts).

---

## THE EVENT

*Send out press release* (see sample press release) immediately following the event.

*Take your photo ID* and do not bring any potentially hazardous or dangerous materials/objects.

*Bring a camera* if it’s allowed (be sure to check first) and take pictures at the event.

---

## FOLLOW-UP

*Send thank you notes* to individuals and organizations who contributed and/or helped make the gift drive a success, including the elected official who participated in the event. (See sample thank you notes). If possible, include photos taken at the event.

## Sample Proposal Letter to Submit to the Facility Facility Visit for State, and Local Legislators

[Date]

[Name, Title  
Facility name  
Facility address]

Dear [Title Name]:

Thank you for speaking with me about hosting an event with the youth at your facility. I am writing to officially request access to [facility name] on [date and time] to host an event.

The event will consist of [insert description of the event]. The following individuals will be attending the event [insert names of participants and titles].

Please let me know if you need any additional materials or if you have any additional questions. Thank you!

Sincerely,

[Name]  
[Organization]

## Sample Elected Official Invitation Facility Visit for State, and Local Legislators

[Date]

The Honorable [Name]  
[Position]  
[Address]

Dear [Title Name]:

I am writing to thank you for your continued commitment to our community's youth and to invite you to attend an event taking place on [date] at [facility name].

Many confined youth are non-violent offenders who will eventually be released into the community, where it is critical that they receive support to become law-abiding, productive citizens. The upcoming months are a difficult time for many youth across the country as they spend the holidays away from their families. Research shows that the best outcomes for public safety and for youth themselves come about when family and other supporters are involved with these youth. Therefore, we are putting this event together to provide support for these youth while they are detained or confined as well as raise awareness of the youth in the facility.

The event will consist of [insert event description here]. We would welcome your involvement by having you visit the facility and [put the specific request here, i.e. distribute gifts, eat a meal, participate in a class].

Please let me know if you need any additional materials or if you have any additional questions. I can be reached at [contact info.]

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to working with you to arrange a successful visit with these youth.

Sincerely,

[Name]  
[Organization]

## Sample Press Advisory Facility Visit for State, and Local Legislators

### [Elected Official's Name] Visits Local Youth in [Facility Name]

[City, State] - On [date of event], [Title and name of elected official] will be visiting youth housed at [facility name]. The purpose of this visit is to [insert event description].

[Elected official] will be joined by the following community members and juvenile justice experts: [name other participants].

[Elected official] will be available to speak with the media directly following the event.

WHEN:     [Date]  
              [Time]

WHERE:    [Facility name]  
              [Address]

For additional information on this event, please contact [organization name and contact information].

## Sample Thank You Letters Facility Visit for State and Local Elected Officials

### ELECTED OFFICIAL

Dear [Title Name],

On behalf of [organization name], we would like to express our sincere thanks for your recent visit to youth in [facility name]. We deeply appreciate you taking time out of your busy schedule to make a difference in the lives of these youth. Thank you so much for helping ensure that these youth were remembered during the holidays. We look forward to working with you to continue to support these youth throughout the year.

With Gratitude,  
[Name  
Organization name]

### FACILITY

Dear [Title Name],

On behalf of [organization name], we would like to express our sincere thanks for your help in organizing the recent visit of [elected official]. This event would not have been possible without your support, so thank you for working with us to make a successful event. We look forward to working with you on other events with youth in your facility. Again, thank you very much.

With Gratitude,  
[Name  
Organization name]

### CONTRIBUTORS/PARTNERS

Dear [Name and title],

On behalf of [organization name], we would like to express our sincere thanks for your help in organizing the recent visit of [elected official]. Thanks to your support, we were able to [put list of accomplishments here, i.e. facilitated a classroom visit and pizza with 30 youth and the elected official, delivered gift bags of toiletries, candy, puzzle books, journals, holiday cards, socks, and underwear to 150 youth]. Thank you so much for helping ensure that these youth were remembered during the holidays.

With Gratitude,  
[Name  
Organization name]

## 4. Holiday Card Campaign

It doesn't have to take much to let kids know they are remembered around the holidays. With a small budget and only a few hours of planning, you can organize a holiday card campaign for youth in your local detention or correctional facilities.

CFYJ sends a holiday card to each incarcerated person with whom we correspond throughout the year, as well as to the parents and formerly incarcerated men and women to whom we do outreach. We order holiday cards from [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com), which offers a nice selection of cards. We also send cards to the youth detained locally at the D.C. Jail.

### Sample Steps

---

#### PREPLANNING

*Decide who will be receiving the cards.* Determine how many cards will be needed. Will you include youth at the local facility? Will you send cards to parents and formerly incarcerated youth in your network?

*Set a date for the mailing.*

---

#### PREPARING THE CARD

*Choose a design and message for the card.* You can choose designs and messages at a site such as [www.vistaprint.com](http://www.vistaprint.com). Or, you and your contacts can design it yourself. In the past, CFYJ has had a youth fellow with experience in the adult criminal justice system who has written the message for the inside of the card. Another idea is to have a youth design the outside of the card.

*Bring cards to a party* you're throwing for the staff at your organization and coalition organizations. Have party guests personalize the messages to youth, letting them know someone remembers them in this difficult time. Offer a few sample messages.

---

#### MAILING

*Make a listing of names, prisoner ID numbers, and addresses.* We keep a record of all prison correspondence in an excel spreadsheet, which greatly simplifies this process. Simply copy all records into a new spreadsheet, organize alphabetically by name, and delete additional entries for each inmate. Note: It is important that prisoner ID numbers are included on the cards; otherwise, the cards will not reach the inmates. Alternately, cards can be sent to youth at a facility without addressing them individually. Simply find out the number of youth and send them to the facility.

*Use mail merge to print envelopes.*

## Sample Language for Holiday Card Interior Holiday Card Campaign

### DETAINED OR INCARCERATED YOUTH

[Front:]

Season's Greetings!

[Inside:]

May the peace and hope of the season be with you all year long.

During this holiday season we want you to know that we are thinking about you. There is a bright star out in the sky for you to wish upon each night.

Please contact us if we can be of any further support to you during this time.

Sincerely,  
[Organization]

### FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF YOUTH TRIED AS ADULTS

[Front]:

Happy holidays!

[Inside]:

May the peace and hope of the season be with you all year long.

We wish you all the best in your pursuits of justice for your loved ones. Thank you for all that you do to advocate for youth in the justice system.

In hope,  
The staff of [Organization]

## Appendix:

### Electronic Invitation to Holiday Party and Gift-Giving Event 2008



We invite you to attend our holiday party and gift-giving event to benefit the incarcerated youth of the Correctional Treatment Facility; Oak Hill, the D.C. juvenile corrections facility; and the Youth Services Center, a detention facility for youth from the District of Columbia. This event is sponsored by the Campaign for Youth Justice, Justice for DC Youth, Mentoring Today, Free Minds Book Club, and the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates.

Wednesday, December 3, 2008  
4-7p.m.

Busboys and Poets  
5th and K Sts. NW  
Washington, DC 20001

R.S.V.P. to Shanta Gray at 202.558.3580 ext. 10 or by email at [sgray@cfyj.org](mailto:sgray@cfyj.org) by Nov. 28.

We are asking for your support so that we can give gift bags to 235 incarcerated kids who will spend the holidays apart from their families this year. Just \$15 will sponsor one child for a gift bag that includes:

- A pair of white socks
- A stick of deodorant
- A tube of toothpaste
- A small bottle of lotion
- A pocket comb
- A pair of boxer shorts
- A bar of soap
- A marble composition book
- A puzzle book
- A set of notecards

Monetary donations for the holiday gift drive will also be accepted at <http://campaignforyouthjustice.org/donate.html>. We encourage donations before December 5, 2008.

Thank you for your generosity.  
Happy Holidays!

Contact Kate Figiel at CFYJ at 202.558.3580 ext. 29 or by email at [kfigiel@cfyj.org](mailto:kfigiel@cfyj.org) for more information about the gift drive.

## Media Advisory for Holiday Party and Gift-Giving Event 2008



**For Immediate Release  
November 14, 2008**

**Contact: Eric Solomon  
Campaign for Youth Justice  
(202) 558-3580 (office)  
(202) 253-5557 (cell)**

### **\*\*MEDIA ADVISORY\*\***

#### **Let Us Not Forget About Our Youth Behind Bars This Year! Donors Needed for Fourth Annual Holiday Gift-Giving Event to Benefit D.C. Incarcerated Youth**

**WHAT:** This holiday season, while most of us are celebrating with family and friends, thousands of youth in correctional facilities across the country will be away from their families. The Campaign for Youth Justice and its partners in Washington, D.C. want youth to know they are not forgotten and to bring them hope and holiday cheer. We are once again organizing our annual holiday gift-giving event to benefit the incarcerated youth of the District of Columbia.

The Campaign for Youth Justice, along with its co-sponsors, Justice for D.C. Youth, Free Minds Book Club, Mentoring Today, and D.C. Alliance of Youth Advocates invites you to donate to our fourth annual holiday gift-giving event to benefit the incarcerated youth of the D.C. Jail; Oak Hill, the D.C. juvenile corrections facility; and the Youth Services Center, a detention facility for youth from the District of Columbia. We are seeking sponsors and individual donors, in order to give gift packages to about 210 youth.

**WHO:** Campaign for Youth Justice, Justice for D.C. Youth, Free Minds Book Club, Mentoring Today, and D.C. Alliance of Youth Advocates.

**WHEN:** Now until December 5, 2008

**WHERE:** [www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/donate.html](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/donate.html)

*The Campaign for Youth Justice is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system.*

**For more information, visit: [www.campaignforyouthjustice.org](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org).**

Postcard to Accompany Youth Gift Bags 2008

