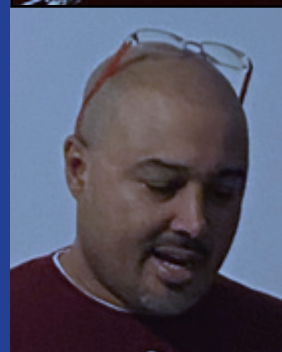


Thrive For Life
Prison Project



THRIVING TOGETHER THROUGH CHALLENGING TIMES



Gratitude Report 2020





Being a part of Thrive for Life Prison Project and Ignacio House means nobody fights their battles alone.

**– Mychal
Ignacio House Resident**

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Thank you to the spiritual mentors who give their time for retreats behind the walls and to the academic coaches, career coaches, and partners providing support beyond the walls.

Annual Report designed by Andre Canta



Dear Thrive for Life Community,

Our global community is in need of inspiration and hope. Look no further than the faces of the men and women in this gratitude report that we are honored to accompany behind and beyond the U.S. prison walls.

As you peruse these pages, I invite you to not only revel in the carefully crafted wording and visually pleasing photography, but acquaint yourself with the numerous lives transformed by the power of your generous contribution to the mission at Thrive for Life Prison Project.

It is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic hit our most vulnerable community members the hardest with illness, job losses, and increased financial hardship. Those behind the prison walls suffered an even larger burden as they are isolated and unable to receive visits from family and friends. Despite this distance, we still communicate via newsletter and receive letters daily. And, we have continued to receive new residents in the past few months.

The trust our residents have put in Thrive for Life's community as they entered Ignacio House of Studies in the midst of a pandemic is an honor we do not take lightly and their courage and resilience is a daily inspiration.

Our Gratitude Report is our gift of thanksgiving to you for all your collaboration, partnership, and financial support. These challenging days have been our opportunity for creativity and innovation because of your trust, care, and concern for our mission.

Together we empower our brothers and sisters to thrive for life!

Sincerely,

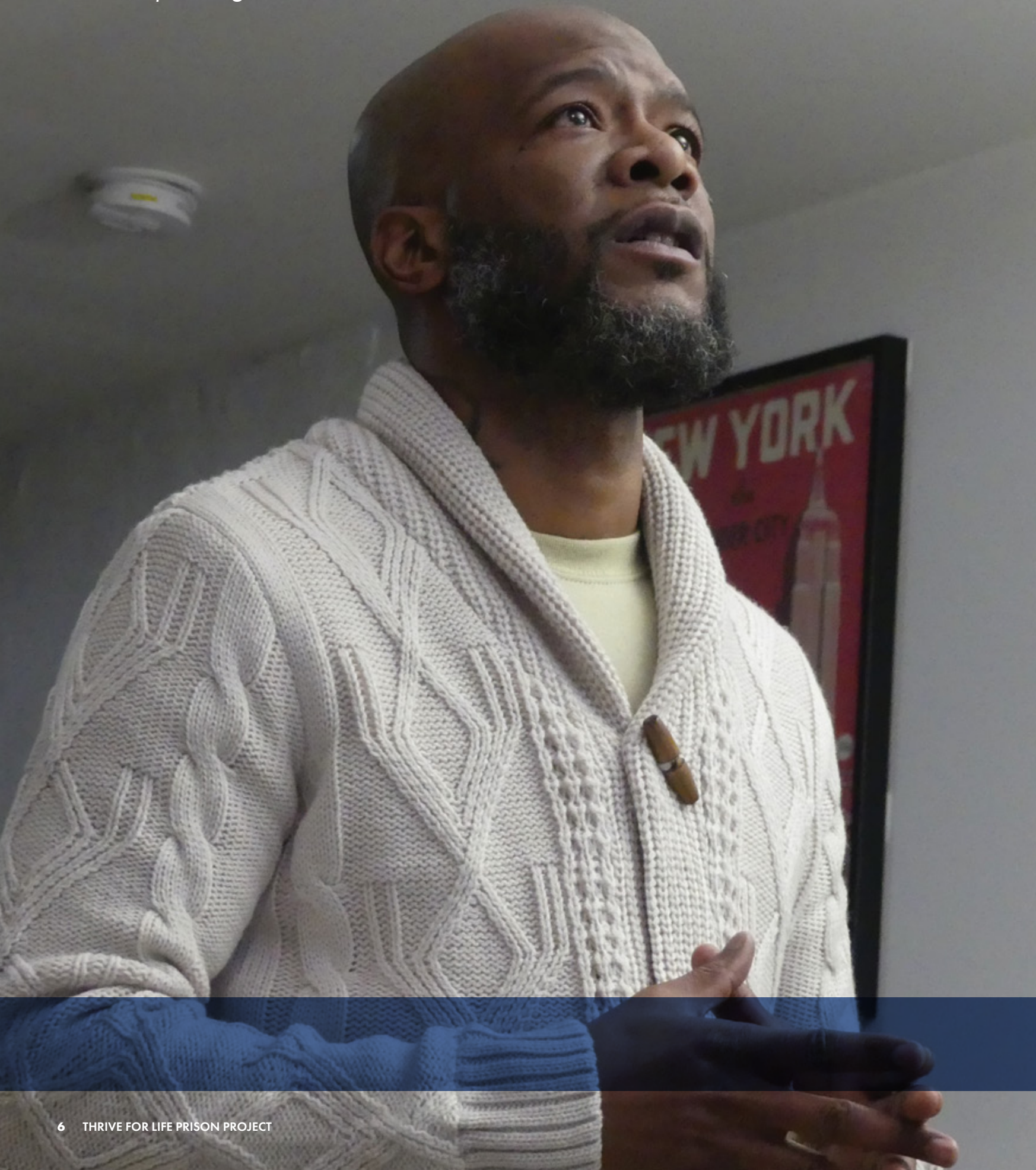
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Zachariah F. Presutti".

Rev. Mr. Zachariah Presutti, SJ
Founder/President

“Together we empower
our brothers and sisters
to thrive for life!

– Zachariah Presutti, SJ

Quintin, Speaking on a Virtual Panel



Transforming Lives Behind and Beyond U.S. Prison Walls





CONTEMPLATION

Behind the Prison Walls

Retreats
Reflection & Meditation



**Students are Referred
from Our Retreat
Programming and
University Partners
Behind the Walls**



IGNACIO HOUSE

Beyond the Prison Walls

Transitional Supportive
House of Studies



**Residents are Linked
to Permanent
Affordable Housing
Upon Completion of
Programming and
Securing Quality
Employment**



In the U.S., over 2 million people are incarcerated. Of that 2 million, over 120,000 are students. Research has shown that the higher the education, the lower the recidivism rate.

These driven students, however, are not immune to the stumbling blocks that are faced by other formerly incarcerated people. Too often, our recently released brothers and sisters must resort to couch surfing or living at shelters while juggling unstable or non-existent employment. Without support, these challenges are trying, if not insurmountable, for even the most ambitious student.

Our response is to provide spiritual and emotional support behind the walls and holistic services to our scholars beyond the walls through transitional to permanent housing support, access to reflective and meditative resources, academic support, and job skills training.

MISSION

Transforming lives behind and beyond U.S. prison walls.

VISION

Thrive For Life Prison Project envisions a world where spiritual and educational services empower incarcerated students to thrive for life.

AMBITION

In three years Thrive for Life Prison Project will have four houses of studies in six states.





There was an absolute hunger for information and the level of questioning was impressive. They put a lot of thought to their craft and made the challenges of the virtual format easy to overcome.

—Nancy, Creative Writing Course Instructor



OUR PARTNERS



Universities



Faith Communities



Career & Education Coaches



Spiritual & Wellness Mentors

Nancy and John Booth

John Booth and his wife Nancy Méndez-Booth were at a crossroads in life. They were both looking for something more meaningful.

In 2014, John had just completed his Masters in Spiritual Direction and was completing 15 years as a public defender. Nancy was feeling burnt out from a “soul sucking” corporate career and looking into pursuing creative writing. They both eventually found what they were looking for when they were introduced to Thrive for Life.

John started his journey ‘behind the prison walls’ as a spiritual mentor at Thrive for Life retreats. He spent the past five years going to Sing Sing, Otisville, and other facilities where

he would meet with incarcerated people in small groups to share stories, meditate, and be there to support the retreat participants.

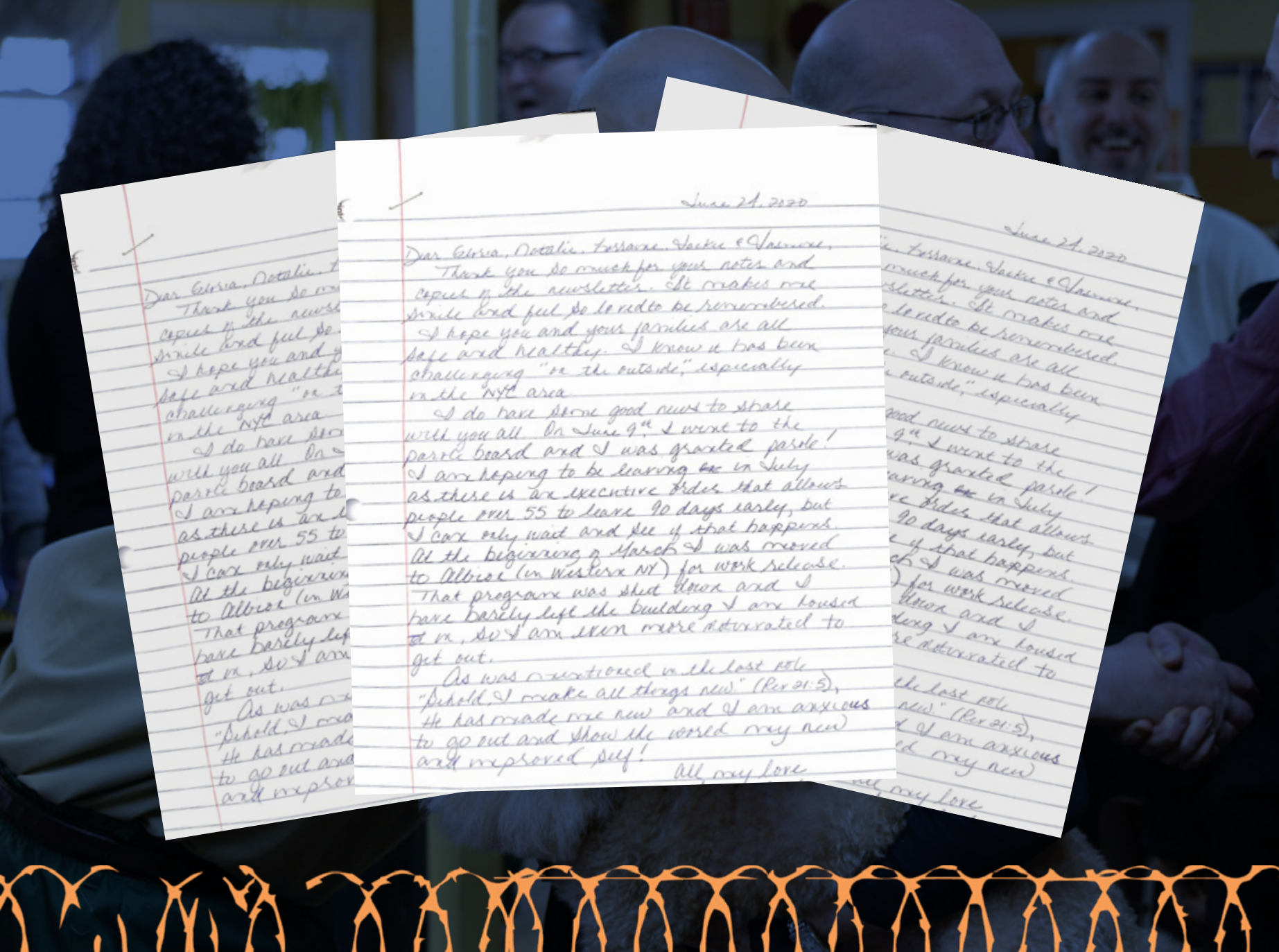
“You could say the people that attend the retreats behind the prison walls are really the ‘cream of the crop’. They want to be there and they want to do better and be better versions of themselves. They care about us volunteers as much as we care about them.”—John

Nancy was always a self-described “plus one” with John at Thrive for Life events beyond the prison walls. It was during the Covid-19 pandemic that Nancy took the next step, bringing her talents and experience in writing to Ignacio House residents through

a virtual seven week continuing education course entitled Creative Writing.

“A large focus of my writing classes is to teach my students to go into those vulnerable places within themselves in order to write honestly and write stories that define who you are as an author.”

It is natural for people to draw upon traumatic experiences and use writing as a way to process the past. My hope is always to have each person involved to see themselves as a writer and to embrace that identity and to value what they have to say.”—Nancy



A LETTER FROM BEHIND THE PRISON WALLS

Dear Gloria, Natalie, Lorraine, Jackie & Jasmine,

Thank you so much for your notes and copies of the newsletter. It makes me smile and feel so loved to be remembered. I hope you and your families are all safe and healthy. I know it has been challenging "on the outside," especially in the NYC area.

I do have some good news to share with you all. On June 9th, I went to the parole board and I was granted parole! I am hoping to be leaving in July as there is an executive order that allows people over 55 to leave 90 days early, but I can only wait and see if that happens. At the beginning of March, I was moving to Albion (in Western NY) for work release. That program was shut down. I have barely left the building I am housed in, so I am even more motivated to get out.

As was mentioned in the last note "Behold, I make all things new." (Rev 21:5), He has made me new, and I am anxious to go out and show the world my new and improved self!

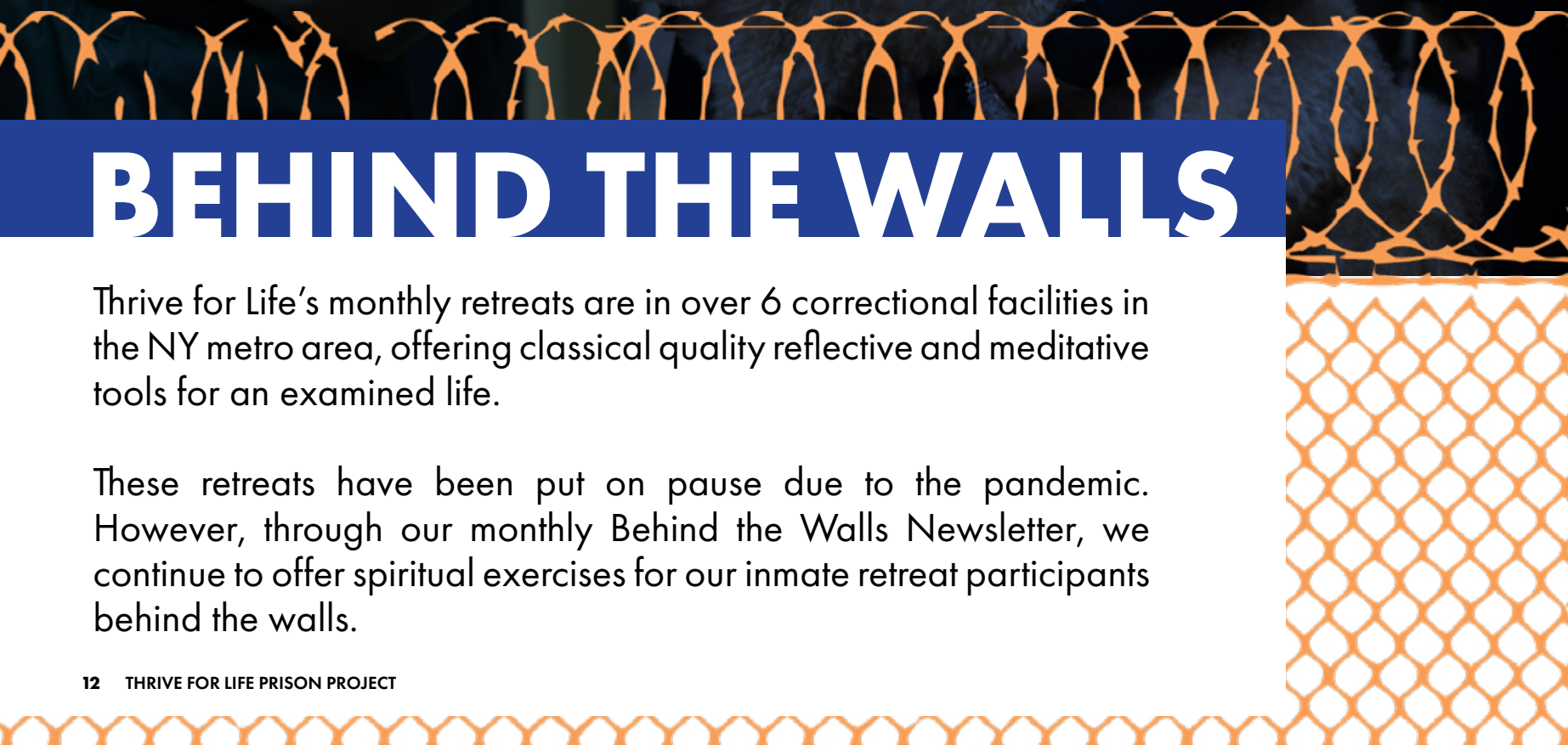
All my love,

Billie

BEHIND THE WALLS

Thrive for Life's monthly retreats are in over 6 correctional facilities in the NY metro area, offering classical quality reflective and meditative tools for an examined life.

These retreats have been put on pause due to the pandemic. However, through our monthly Behind the Walls Newsletter, we continue to offer spiritual exercises for our inmate retreat participants behind the walls.



FITNESS CENTER



COMMUNITY GARDEN



LEARNING CENTER



LAUNDRY ROOM



Our scholars transformed our three basements and backyard during the pandemic.

BEYOND THE WALLS

At Ignacio House of Studies, formerly incarcerated students find a home, continue their education through scholarships to local universities, get job workforce training, and access meditative resources for an examined life. When they finish their degree and secure quality employment, we then help with the transition to low-cost, permanent housing.

At Ignacio House, we are committed to supporting our scholars as they finish their education and ultimately transform their lives.



IGNACIO HOUSE OF STUDIES



QUINTIN



ENTERING IGNACIO HOUSE OF STUDIES IN THE MIDST OF A PANDEMIC

I went straight from prison to a shelter in Schenectady, NY. Within a week of getting out, I was stuck in that shelter because of the COVID quarantine. I was there for about six months and I was trying to continue my studies online but, as anyone can tell you, trying to do work in a shelter is difficult. It's a chaotic environment.

Eventually, NYU told me they would have a place when quarantine restrictions lifted. I joined Ignacio House on September 4th.

The process to enter Ignacio House was thorough. I interviewed with multiple people via Zoom and even interviewed with the other residents. They asked me about who I was, what my goals were, and told me about the community I would be joining.

When I arrived at Ignacio House of Studies, everyone was so warm and welcoming... It felt too good to be true!

Ignacio House of Studies provides continuing education classes and career coaching for residents as they prepare for the next step in their journey.



MYCHAL

IGNACIO HOUSE RESIDENT & NYU STUDENT

What our mind dreams, our will builds.

Once upon a time fear overpowered my life. Even now, being fresh out of prison, in the spring of my new beginning, I feel its fangs piercing deep into my spirit. It could cripple me, as it often did, as it often does. But in these moments of weakness, I learned that I am responsible for who I am and how I live my life.

What this means is: if the quality of my living is on me to create, if the degree to which I am successful in fulfilling my dreams—as a student, leader, writer—rests on my shoulders, and my shoulders alone, why shouldn't I be bold in my approach to life. Bold enough to not allow fear or doubt to reduce the fullness of my being; sensible enough to not allow stigmas to control who or what I can be.



JERREL

IGNACIO HOUSE RESIDENT, NYU STUDENT, BLINK FITNESS CLUB MANAGER

Once you do all of this work you can then use it to pay it forward for someone else. To use your negatives as a positive, and to actually help others that are in similar situations and hope for a brighter day.

When I became Club Manager at Blink and was put in charge of hiring, I decided to look first at an Ignacio House resident because I remember being on work release

looking for a job and being denied because of my record. The stigma behind the formerly incarcerated makes it that much harder to move on and change your life for the better.

I knew that if I was ever in a position where I could help others going through similar situations then I would. Omar is a great guy and any company would be at a loss to deny him just because of his past. Same as for me!

Ignacio House of Studies provides quality services that support the human growth and development of each resident scholar. When they complete their studies and secure employment, the Thrive for Life team ensures a safe transition to permanent, affordable housing.



MICHAEL

IGNACIO HOUSE RESIDENT & NYU STUDENT

Thrive for Life gave me a place to live that is much better than a shelter. I feel safe, and I am able to focus and concentrate on what I need to do

I do community outreach, speak at the mosque I attend, and I've spoken to a few classes at NYU about prison and the effect

it has on people. I'm also in a few groups that deal with policing and criminalization and the situation inside of prison during the Covid 19 pandemic.

I'm going for my Associate degree in Liberal Arts now. My ultimate goal is to do social work to give back.

THOMAS

FITNESS INSTRUCTOR AND FORMER IGNACIO HOUSE RESIDENT

I was incarcerated when I was 16 years old and was inside for 27 years. When I got out it was tough. I was living in a decrepit room in Washington Heights.

I moved into Thrive for Life's Ignacio House of Studies in September 2019 while I was studying to get certified as a physical fitness trainer. It was such a better situation. It was

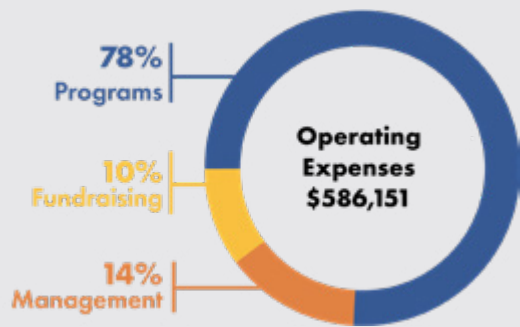
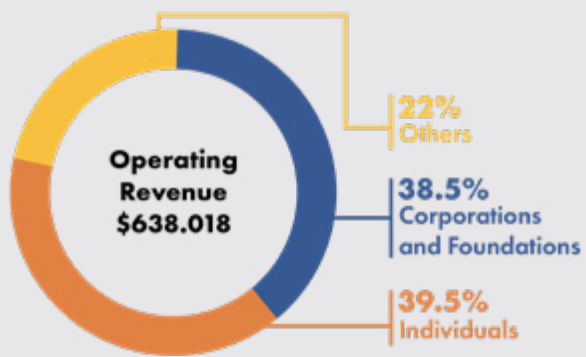
clean, a safe space, and a great, supportive environment. I moved out of Ignacio House this past September to my own apartment in Crown Heights.

When I entered Ignacio House I was going into a community, and I knew they were going to support me in any way they could. I came out a better person because of it.

Financial Highlights

We are pleased to present this financial summary for our 2019–2020 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2019–June 30, 2020).

Thrive For Life is most grateful for the generosity from individuals, foundations, corporations and event-driven donations. We feel confident moving into the next phase of our growth thanks to our community of support.



THANK YOU

\$100,000+

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\$500 to 999

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From long standing partner institutions to members of the Ignatian family, some of Thrive For Life Prison Project's strongest support comes from corporations and foundations. We are proud and very grateful to our benefactors who supported our brothers and sisters currently and formerly incarcerated from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.

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Valamontes, Dimitra
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Yannolo, Paul
Young, Eric
Zaccarini, Cristina
Zega, Michael E.

OUR IMPACT in 3 short years

6,000+
Retreat participants
behind the walls

24
Residents enrolled
in college

14%
Residents linked to
permanent housing

100%
Residents trained
and employed



Stigmas of the Caged

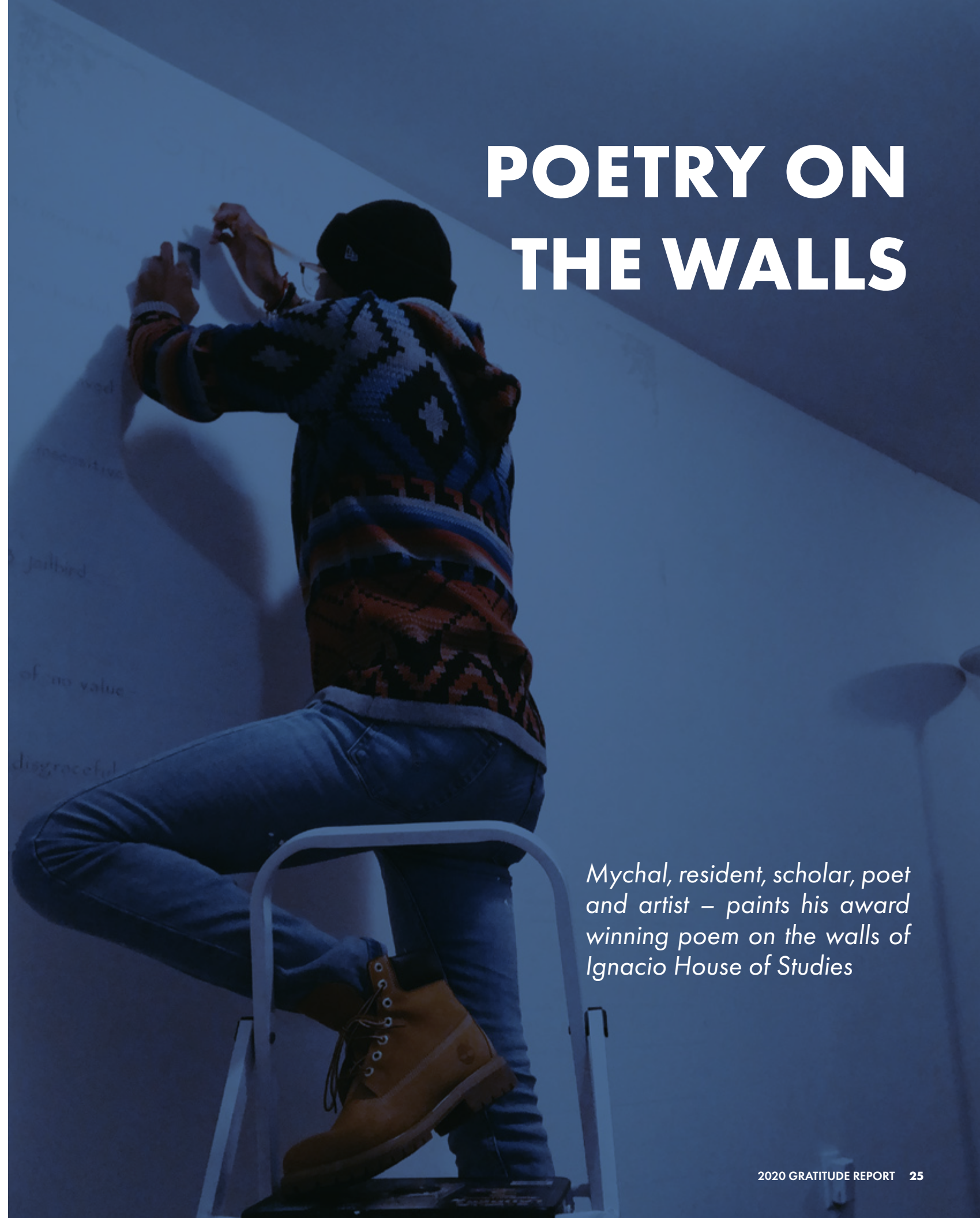
Mychal, Ignacio House Resident shares his award winning poem about how incarceration has made him feel.

182. Irreparable

- 182.10 Hateful: An intolerable eyesore, he must be spurned. Let the shadows forever bind his spirit. He must never rise from his carceral abyss.
- 182.11 Depraved: A low-minded villain, who forfeited his right to life, who has no place among the free, among the living.
- 182.12 Insensitive: A heartless beast, with winter in his soul. He must never know warmth of summer. Waste not your light upon one deaf to reason.
- 182.13 Jailbird: A bane to society, capable of the vilest violence. Let him rot in his cage. Let its darkness consume him; let its railings destroy his fight. For as he has sown, so shall he have the fruit of his way.
- 182.14 Of no value: A hopeless wretch, incapable of courage. If he by chance escapes, let the stench of the signs betray him. Let him be clothed with nothing but the meanest garments.
- 182.15 Disgraceful: A shame to humanity, lost to all honor and love. Avoid him as you would the plague.
- 182.16 Not to be trusted: An inveterate liar, dead to all truth. Reserve your faith for those more deserving. For, once treacherous, always treacherous; he is beyond the reach of light. He is irredeemably lost.

what does your precious freedom actually mean?
what can a change really redeem?
could be free from the cage, free to soar to distant shores,
free to nibble on life's sweetest rewards

even still, never free from the shadow that darkens the present,
never free from the images, the blemishes of a soiled past.



POETRY ON THE WALLS

Mychal, resident, scholar, poet and artist – paints his award winning poem on the walls of Ignacio House of Studies



JOIN OUR COMMUNITY

1. Make a Donation

Visit us at: www.thriveforlife.org/donate

Email us at: info@thriveforlife.org

Call us at: (212) 337-7544

2. Shop with Amazon Smile

Add Thrive For Life Prison Project as your chosen charity. There is no extra cost to you, and we'll receive 0.5% of your total purchase. Visit smile.amazon.com

3. Consider Legacy Giving

With the help of an advisor, consider including Thrive For Life in your will or trust by specifying a gift be made as part of your estate plan. For help or direction, please call us at (212) 337-7544

4. Collect Items for Care Packages and Welcome Home Backpacks

Offer currently incarcerated individuals essential toiletries and modest comfort items that are unavailable or difficult to acquire. For more details, please visit thriveforlife.org/donate

5. Make an In-Kind Donation

Gifts of books, goods, and your time meet a great need among the participants we serve each year. Please call us at (212) 337-7544 or send emails to us at info@thriveforlife.org

6. Follow Us

Visit www.thriveforlife.org, sign-up for our monthly Partner Newsletter, and follow us on social media @ThriveForLifeNY



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Prison Project**

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