



# Thrive For Life Prison Project

Healing. Reconciliation. Empowerment.



GRATITUDE  
REPORT  
2017-2018

# Dear friends,



“If you ain’t got gratitude, you have nothin.” These are the words of our very own Javier on the day of his release from prison — no wiser words have been said to me. He didn’t just talk about gratitude, he embodied it! He was smiling from ear to ear as he embraced me with a tight vice grip. He was free at last from a life sentence — free from the isolation of his cell, and the chill of the chains, and bars. The fruit of this new-found freedom was understandably and unequivocally Gratitude. Gratitude is what grounded his efforts to find housing and a stable job. Gratitude is the root of the joy he shares each and every day.

For St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, Gratitude is at the heart of our relationship with God and with our neighbor. It is in this same spirit of deep Gratitude that I invite you to read the first Gratitude Report for Thrive For Life Prison Project.

Within these pages you will read about the zeal, enthusiasm, and commitment at Thrive For Life Prison Project. It takes the entire community at Thrive For Life to live our mission — as St. Paul writes, “There is one body, but it has many parts. But all its many parts make up one body” (1 Corinthians 12:12).

Our executive board, leadership team, devoted volunteers, retreat alumni, and community partners are all committed to creating a loving community that extends beyond the walls of jails and prisons. These beautiful pages are full of vivid stories and images which testify to the impact of spiritual and educational resources for so many incarcerated

people. Through the efforts of so many, these men have been empowered to thrive.

It is with your continued support and care for the mission of Thrive For Life Prison Project that we are able to continue to offer spiritual exercises to our brothers within the jail and prison systems and beyond.

We look forward to offering that continuity of care with the opening of Ignacio House where our brothers will come to live in supportive community. They will also have the opportunity to receive scholarships to local colleges and job workforce training with local employers.

This wholistic approach to re-entry is centered on our commitment to the relationships that we form behind the walls of prison. We cannot live this mission without you. We need each other. Together we thrive for life. God Bless You!

In gratitude,

**ZACHARIAH PRESUTTI, SJ.**  
**FOUNDER**



## **MISSION**

Thrive For Life Prison Project creates opportunities for spiritual development and provides educational resources for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals while partnering with local universities and local employers.

## **VISION**

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

## **AMBITION**

By 2020, Thrive for Life Prison Project will offer 1,000 incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals spiritual exercises, support ten libraries in correctional facilities with educational and spiritual materials, found and support two houses of studies for 10-15 formerly incarcerated individuals who will receive supportive housing, scholarships to local universities for studies, and work force experience and training with local employers.







# THRIVE FOR LIFE COMMUNITY

Since 2016, Thrive For Life Prison Project has grown into a vibrant, flourishing community. Our retreatants behind the walls, our participants outside the walls, our volunteers, our partners and supporters, and our staff have all found a living example of contemplation and action in Thrive For Life's work and mission.



**RETREATANTS**



**FAMILIES & FRIENDS**



**RETREAT ALUMNI**



**LEADERSHIP & VOLUNTEERS**



**COMMUNITY PARTNERS**



# THE YEAR IN REVIEW



**Thrive For Life Volunteer Meeting**  
September 2017



**Javier in his new apartment**  
April 2018



**Italo in his new apartment**  
May 2018



**ConBody @ Xavier with Coss Marte**  
December 2017



**Otisville retreat volunteers chatting before going in.** April 2018



**AIDS Walk NYC 2018**  
May 2018

## SUNDAY SUPPER



Our Sunday Suppers are monthly gatherings where our entire community comes together to share a meal and catch up.

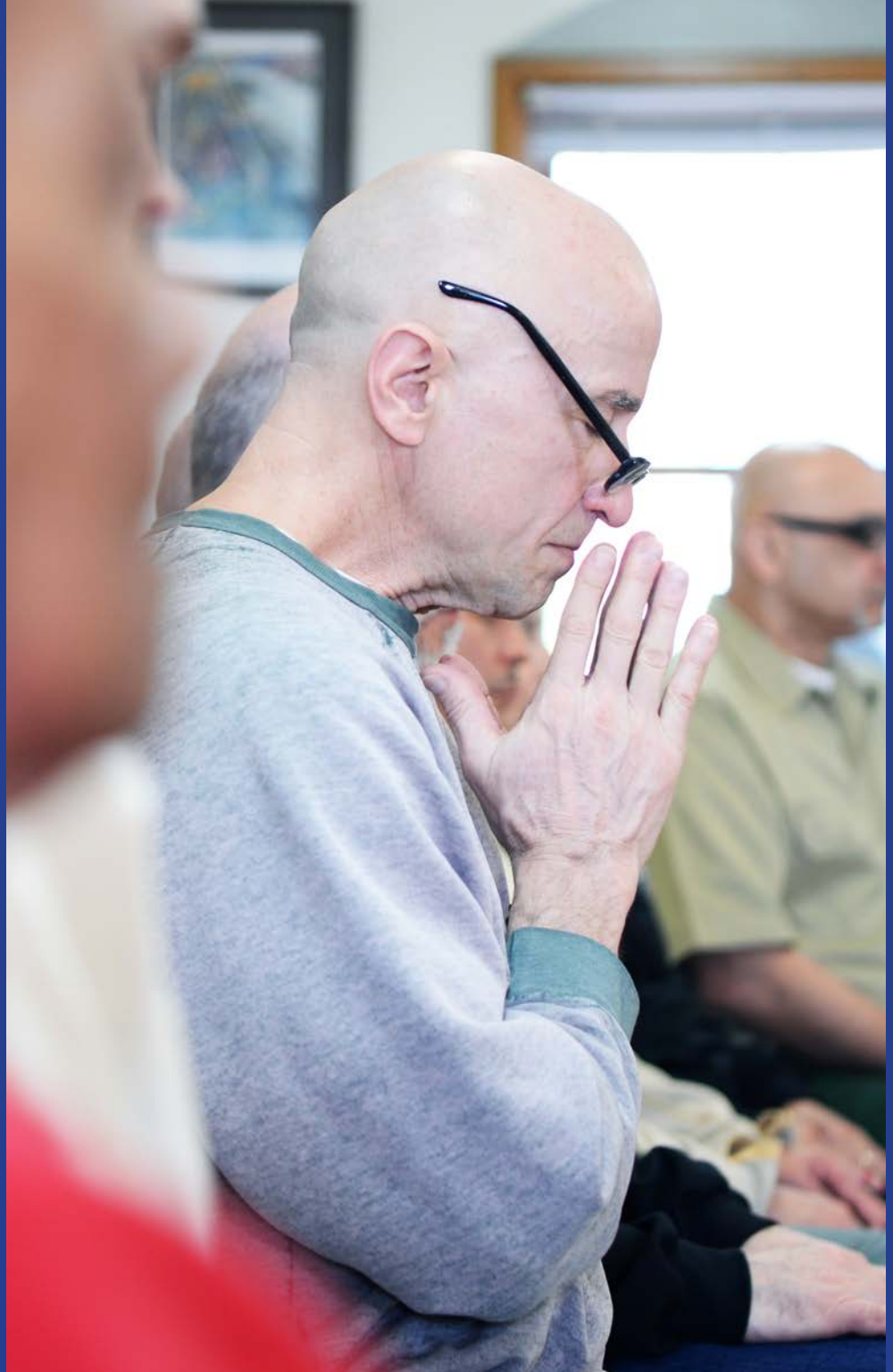
**Sunday Supper at Xavier High School, NY**  
June 2018





# An invitation to find God in all things.

Rooted in the Ignatian call to be “contemplative in action,” our volunteers and programs help cultivate spiritual and psychological self-awareness, and then help participants transform that awareness into meaningful and rewarding lives.



## Thrive For Life **behind** the walls

Thrive For Life Prison Project offers spiritual formation and retreats to women and men serving time in correctional facilities throughout New York, including Otisville State, Otisville Federal, Sing Sing, Wallkill, Manhattan Detention Complex, and Rikers Island. We’ve also committed to two new facilities: New Jersey State Prison and Taconic women’s prison.

The retreats are facilitated by staff and 15+ volunteers trained in Ignatian Spirituality to accompany participants in prayer, meditation, and discernment.

Our retreats are open to everyone, regardless of personal beliefs. Though every individual’s faith background is different, we’ve consistently heard that the opportunity to connect with oneself and with something deeper is valuable and consoling in the hostile, dehumanizing, and traumatizing environment of prison.

***SOMETIMES I FEEL ALONE HERE, AND FIND MYSELF LOOKING FOR GOD’S PRESENCE. THIS WEEKEND, I FELT REAL FELLOWSHIP AND HIS PRESENCE IN THE BUILDING.***

Daniel, Otisville

**5**

Thrive For Life made an ongoing commitment to 5 correctional facilities within the New York region.

**50**

50 out of the 54 New York State Correctional Facilities have inmates who have participated in a Thrive For Life program.

**700+**

Since 2016, Thrive For Life has brought spiritual exercises to more than 700 retreatants.





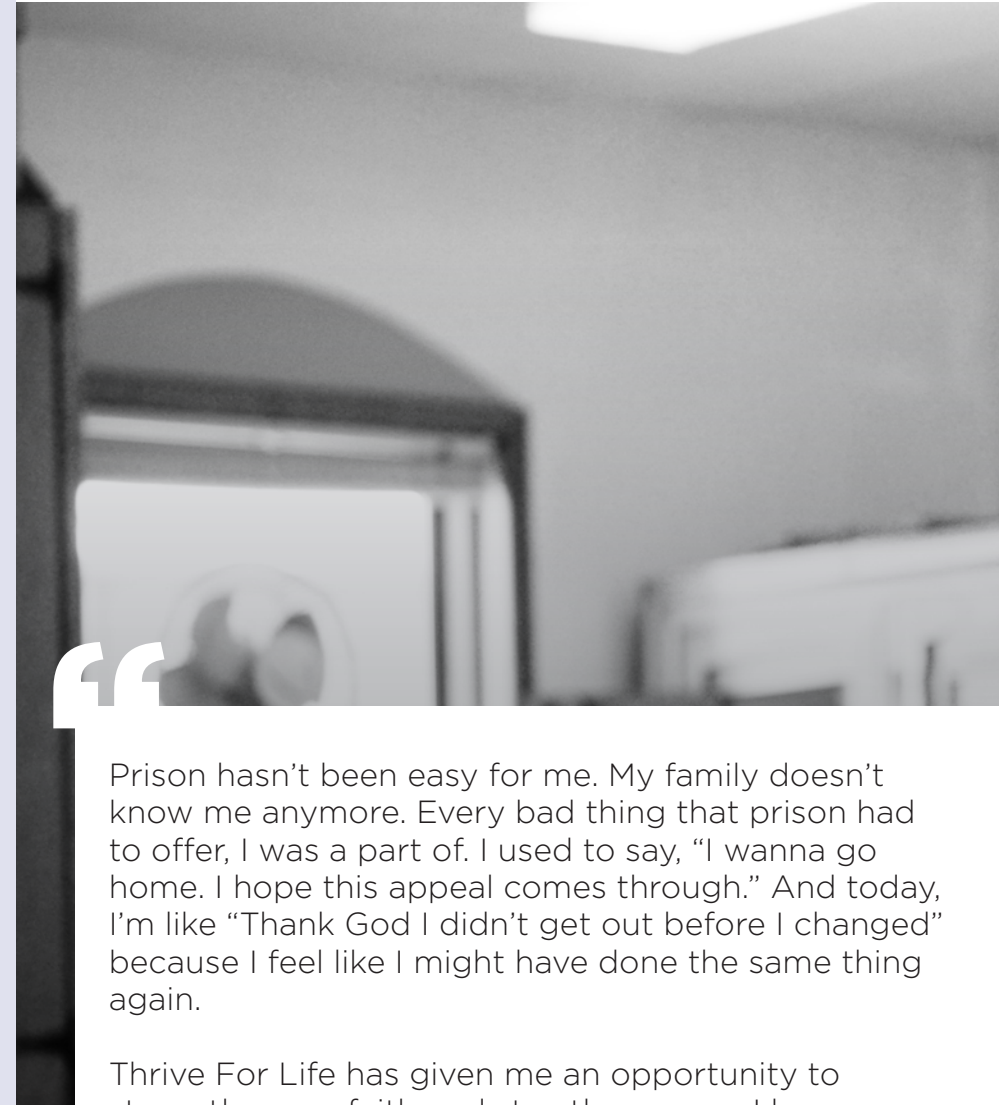
# JASMINE

SPIRITUAL MENTOR

“

There are different ways to support the incarcerated. I've met volunteers who use music, gardening and even yoga. Using spirituality is different because the connection with the divine is deepened and interpersonal relationships are strengthened.

Our community approach and the exercises we use foster a loving environment in an all-too-often unloving place. To be part of the Thrive For Life community is to be part of an ever-extending family. It grows with the addition of new sponsors, new volunteers and new participants. What makes us family is that we see the importance of doing this work and we do it together.”



“

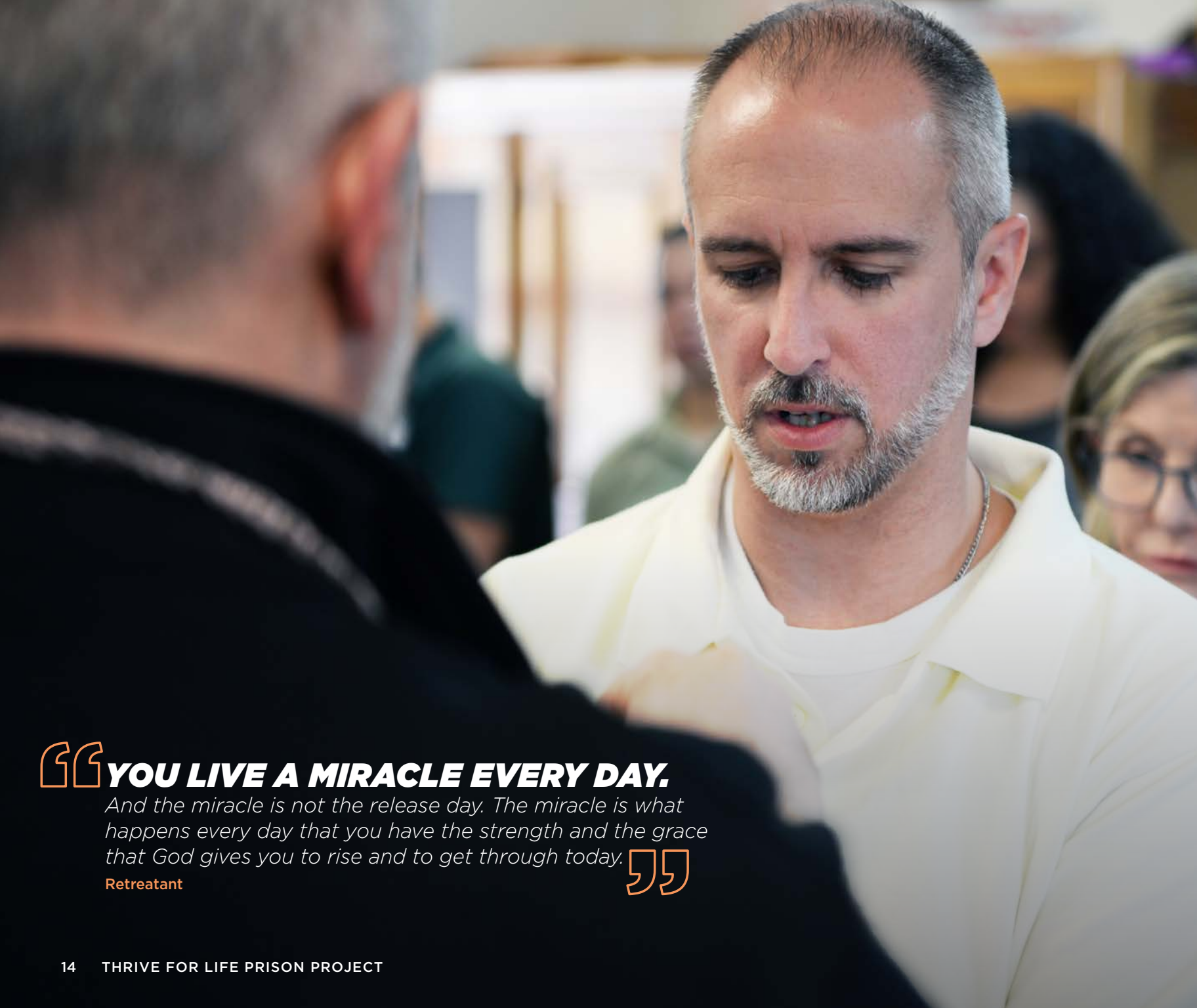
Prison hasn't been easy for me. My family doesn't know me anymore. Every bad thing that prison had to offer, I was a part of. I used to say, "I wanna go home. I hope this appeal comes through." And today, I'm like "Thank God I didn't get out before I changed" because I feel like I might have done the same thing again.

Thrive For Life has given me an opportunity to strengthen my faith and stay the course. I hear the guys talk more personal and go deeper into themselves. I just get more courageous when Thrive is here. Even if it's just for a small moment to get in touch with our humanity. We walk out of here with healthy conversations.”

# FELIX

RETREATANT

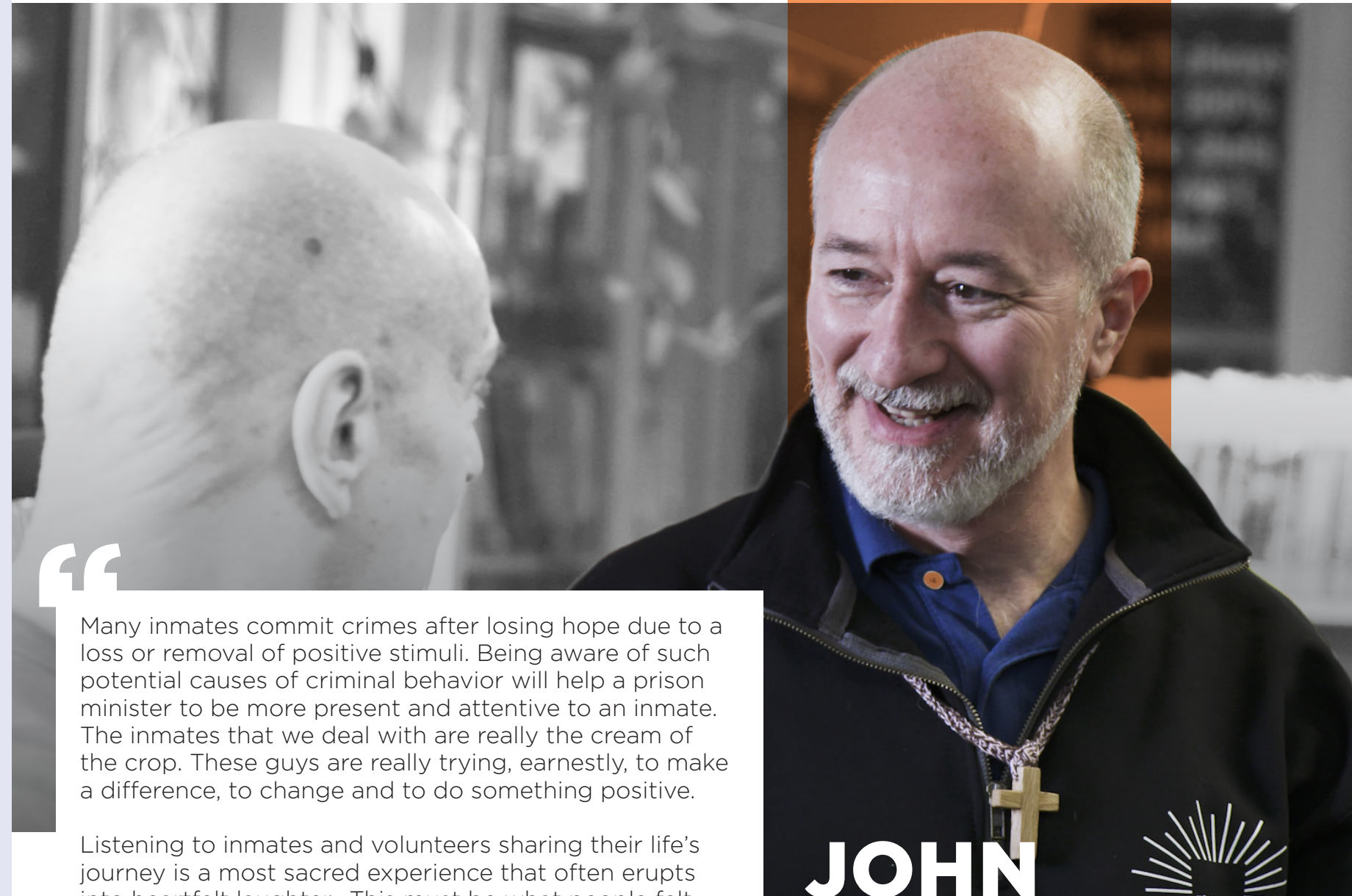




**“YOU LIVE A MIRACLE EVERY DAY.**

*And the miracle is not the release day. The miracle is what happens every day that you have the strength and the grace that God gives you to rise and to get through today.*

Retreatant



Many inmates commit crimes after losing hope due to a loss or removal of positive stimuli. Being aware of such potential causes of criminal behavior will help a prison minister to be more present and attentive to an inmate. The inmates that we deal with are really the cream of the crop. These guys are really trying, earnestly, to make a difference, to change and to do something positive.

Listening to inmates and volunteers sharing their life's journey is a most sacred experience that often erupts into heartfelt laughter. This must be what people felt like while spending time with Jesus ages ago. It is how I feel with Jesus today at Thrive For Life: affirmed, authentic and alive.

**JOHN**  
SPIRITUAL MENTOR





# Continuity of Care.

Thrive For Life builds relationships with individuals while they are incarcerated and then continues nurturing those connections on the outside, providing housing, education and employment assistance.



## Thrive For Life **outside** the walls

### **HOUSING**

Through community partners, we've facilitated permanent housing for Thrive For Life participants and retreat alumni. These housing opportunities have kept men and women out of city shelters and in their own homes where they can begin to rebuild their lives.

### **EMPLOYMENT**

In order to help individuals secure self-sustaining and meaningful work, Thrive For Life provides employment mentorship and support, including job search training, resume writing and guidance, interviewing skills, clothing, supplies, and transportation. Through our partnerships with local employers, we've also provided successful job referrals and opportunities to individuals in our community.

### **EDUCATION**

To support our participants as they pursue either a GED, an undergraduate degree, a graduate degree, or vocational training, Thrive For Life provides scholarships, academic mentoring, and administrative support. Thrive For Life has also supported libraries within the Manhattan Detention Complex, Otisville State Correctional Facility, and Rikers Island, with more than 2,000 books donated.

Finally, we've formed partnerships with Manhattan College, NYU, the CUNY system, and the New York Public Library to facilitate scholarships and referrals, to share knowledge and expertise, and to apply a holistic approach to education for those who are currently and formerly incarcerated.

**20**

20% of people released from city jails each year are homeless or their housing arrangements are unstable.

**81**

81% of individuals reentering New York City are unable to secure employment.

**96**

96% of the New York prison's population are without access to college education.





# JAVIER

THRIVE ALUMNUS



Brother Zach showed up one Saturday for a retreat a little while before I was getting out. He said, “Listen, we’re going to help you. You don’t have to worry about anything.”

Thrive For Life gave me love, friendship, and a lot of support. I don’t think I would be the person I am today without them. They spend time with people who need love, who need strength, who need to hear the Gospel. They find you a place to live. They find you programs. They treat you like a human being. That’s what Thrive does.”

## JAVIER’S JOURNEY

by Christopher Alt, SJ  
Coordinator of Spiritual Care

We first met Javier R. aka “Zoom-Zoom”, aka “The Flame” during one of our retreats in an upstate NY facility. With his own brand of passion and intensity, he shared with the group the latest ups-and-downs, gifts and challenges of life and how God was working in it. Over many months, we got to know him and created a special bond. And one day, we got the good news: Javier was being released, after 27 years of incarceration.

As we drove back into the city that morning after picking him up, we had to stop every 45 minutes because he was getting motion sickness. No wonder, he hadn’t been in a car for close to 30 years! His body was literally unprepared for life outside.

Later that day, we accompanied him to the shelter he was

released to. We remember how crestfallen he looked when he walked into that shelter and saw a space vaguely reminiscent of the prison he had just left: men lined up in a crowded central entrance, placing their bags through an x-ray scanning machine, metal detectors, and guards on watch. He turned around and asked incredulously,

*Being with Javier taught me firsthand why Thrive For Life places community and continuity of care at the heart of its mission. It’s a gospel demand and a joyful duty.*

“This is the shelter?” We felt heartsore to answer affirmatively and for having to leave him there. Unfortunately, that queasy car ride and shocking shelter experience was just a foretaste of the other challenges Javier would face in the work of reorienting.

In the following weeks and

months, we shopped with him for clothes, taught him the latest smartphone technology, how to use the Metrocard (no, the subway isn’t \$0.90 and it doesn’t take quarters anymore!) and waited on line at the HRA offices for hours.

There were so many obstacles that Javier had to navigate – physical, emotional, psychological, social, and spiritual – and this for someone who was highly motivated. And he did it beautifully.

A few weeks after his release, Thrive For Life secured permanent housing for Javier, taking him out of the shelter and giving him a chance to thrive.

Today, Javier works full-time, and continues to be part of our community. His enthusiasm and energy are a gift to our community and an example of joyful exuberance and hope for anyone following his footsteps.





# The Next Step.

The growth of our organization, volunteers, programming, and partners has enabled us to develop the next stage of Thrive For Life's journey: Ignacio House.

Ignacio House will represent the physical manifestation of our community and the services we provide.

Over the last year, we've refined the programming model, created a 5-year plan for the project including the financial strategy and eventual expansion, and explored intermediate and long-term options for adapting the program as needed.



**“ I WISH IGNACIO HOUSE WAS AROUND LAST YEAR WHEN I WAS OUT, I WOULD NOT HAVE GONE BACK TO THAT CORNER AGAIN. ”**

**Victor A.,** Wallkill Correctional Facility



# IGNACIO HOUSE

Located in the Bronx, Ignacio House will provide supportive, program-based housing for up to 24 formerly incarcerated individuals who are pursuing a higher education degree or job certification.

Our programming model has three tiers and will be executed by a mix of staff, volunteers and partners. This model is aligned with our commitment to cura personalis—individual care for the whole person, with a focus on their particular needs and challenges. This programming approach will also allow us to control administrative and overhead costs by utilizing our engaged community in an effective and efficient way.”

## IGNACIO HOUSE PROGRAMMING

- **ACADEMIC MENTORS** help participants excel in their studies through study skills, time management, research support, and student life
- **WELLNESS MENTORS** guide participants through the ins and outs of re-entry, including administrative steps like HRA, DMV, and parole, to life skills and finance management
- **SPIRITUAL MENTORS** look after our participants' emotional well-being by providing spiritual direction, therapy, or coaching.





# CHRISTOPHER

**COORDINATOR OF SPIRITUAL CARE**  
VISITING JESUIT, SPRING 2018

“

As I reflect on my work as a wellness mentor, I learned that part of the literal definition of wellness means wholeness, reaching for the better, abundance. I got to see Javier R. want and choose what led to a deeper, more abundant life for himself. He inspires me to see the world with fresh eyes and to venture boldly and generously into the unknown.

Serving him and others like him was one of the greatest blessings during my time at Thrive For Life. Each man and woman has a unique story to tell, and the tales that speak of moving from fear to freedom, from inside to outside, are worth lifting up. ”



# JERRY

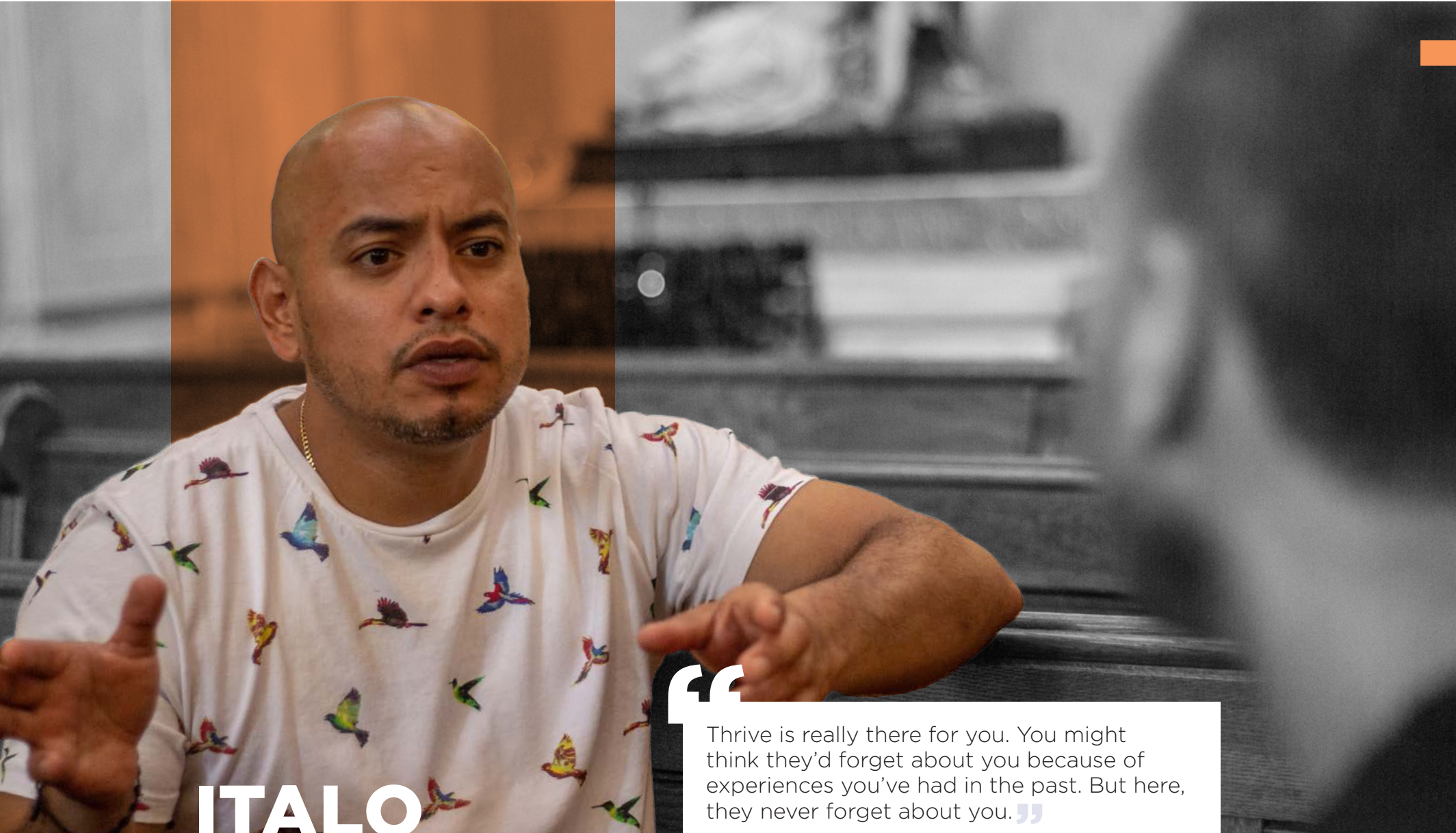
**ACADEMIC MENTOR**

“

As an academic mentor, I accompany a formerly incarcerated student by offering friendly encouragement and practical information.

We've explored his institution's library together, talked about how he can meet his ambitious goals, and shared some good laughs over lunch. Seeing him succeed inspires me, and I feel privileged to be a part of his life. ”





**ITALO**  
THRIVE ALUMNUS

“Thrive is really there for you. You might think they’d forget about you because of experiences you’ve had in the past. But here, they never forget about you.”

## “I AM HOME”

### How did you first hear about Thrive For Life?

While serving my time, I was going to church every Sunday religiously. My friend told me about the Thrive retreats and I signed up for it. When I went there, it was the best thing that happened to me.

### What did you like about the retreat?

My first time, they asked me to write out all the events of my life that I could remember. I realized that all my memories were from my time behind bars. I didn’t have any good memories. I have been in and out of the system since my youth. We talked about reality; we talked about what we were going through. It’s the first time I was able to be me.

### What was most surprising to you about that retreat?

Everything was up to date. Everything was realistic. You could think about what’s going

on in your life now. You could breathe, you could meditate. It was good, it wasn’t boring. It caught my attention.

### How did you get in contact with Thrive For Life after your release?

About a year after I got out, I was sitting in a restaurant and somebody tapped me on the shoulder. When I turned around, it was Brother Zach... I was so excited! I showed him the rosary on my wrist and said, “You put this on my hand. You blessed me.” After that, I started coming to the Sunday Suppers, and all the other events they organize.

### What kept you connected to Thrive For Life?

It was a sign from God. When things started going down, I felt that Thrive could help me out because there are people I could talk to. If I didn’t have this, I don’t know if I would still be out. Thrive helped me out by giving me support. It’s a network of

people I can reach out to. They don’t forget about you.

### How has your life changed since you moved to your new apartment?

I feel well-rested. I have my freedom. I feel good. Before the new apartment, I lived far from my work. I wouldn’t get home until 4AM. Instead of going straight home, I would go to the bar and get a drink. I would go to different places in Manhattan to sleep. Now, when I go home, I’m really home. I feel at ease.

### How is Thrive For Life different?

The people are genuine. It’s real love here. Thrive is really there for you. You might think that they’ll forget about you because of experiences you’ve had in the past. But here, they never forget about you. They’ll always email you, text you, and invite you to events. They are always there for you.



# SUNDAY SUPPER



**Thrive For Life's inaugural Sunday Supper, November 2017**



**The community enjoying dinner May, 2018**



**Wishing Zach well at his last Sunday Supper before moving to California, August 2018**

We believe that an essential part of re-entry is having a community of support on the outside. To foster that community, our staff, volunteers, and alumni gather regularly for community events and socials.

The best example is our monthly Sunday Suppers, where we welcome our community and loved ones for a relaxed evening of conversation, camaraderie and updates. These dinners have grown to become an essential part of our organization and are a tangible display of our deep relationships with one another.



“

Accompanying incarcerated and formerly incarcerated men has changed the way I read the Scriptures. When you pay attention, the Bible has a lot to say about freedom and about oppression. Praying and sharing with some of the guys behind the walls I have realized that they often have more inner freedom and spiritual maturity than many people I meet on the outside.”

**SABINA**

**SPIRITUAL MENTOR**





# SERVIC



**TRACEY**  
SPIRITUAL MENTOR

Participating in our retreats with the incarcerated is a privilege and a deeply moving experience. I have witnessed God's love surround men who had previously emotionally shut down. Knowing that Jesus is always available renews their spirit and gives them strength. ”

## GET INVOLVED

### 1. Donate

Visit: [thriveforlife.org/donate](http://thriveforlife.org/donate)  
Email: [info@thriveforlife.org](mailto:info@thriveforlife.org)  
Call: (212) 337-7544  
Mail: Thrive For Life Prison Project, Inc  
30 W 16th Street  
New York, NY 10011

### 2. Become an Academic, Spiritual, or Wellness Mentor

If you're interested in volunteering, we're currently recruiting new Academic, Spiritual, and Wellness mentors. While experience assisting individuals in their studies, their spiritual lives, or with administrative support is a plus, we're open to people of all different backgrounds and levels of expertise.

### 3. Help out at Ignacio House

Once Ignacio House opens, we'll be looking for volunteers to help cook for weekly dinners, garden in the backyard, help with building maintenance and cleaning, and spend time with the men. We also welcome suggestions on other ways you might be able to assist our community!

### 4. Attend an Event

Sign up for our event e-mail list by e-mailing [info@thriveforlife.org](mailto:info@thriveforlife.org) and come to one of our monthly Sunday Suppers or join us for another event in the community

### 5. Care Packages and Welcome Home Backpacks

*Care Packages:* Offer currently incarcerated individuals essential toiletries and modest comfort items that are unavailable or difficult to acquire on the inside.

*Welcome Home Backpacks:* Provide formerly incarcerated individuals with items that will help them transition smoothly back into the community.

For more details on specific items, please visit our website's Donate section or contact the office.

### 6. Shop online with Amazon Smile

Every time you buy something from Amazon, make sure you type in [smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com). Select Thrive For Life Prison Project and each time you shop from that domain, the AmazonSmile Foundation will donate 0.5% of the price of the purchase to Thrive For Life.

### 7. Leave a Legacy

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 on how to do this, please feel free to contact the office.

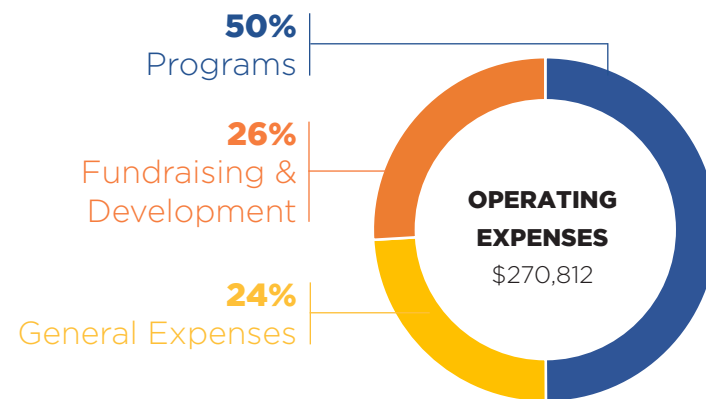
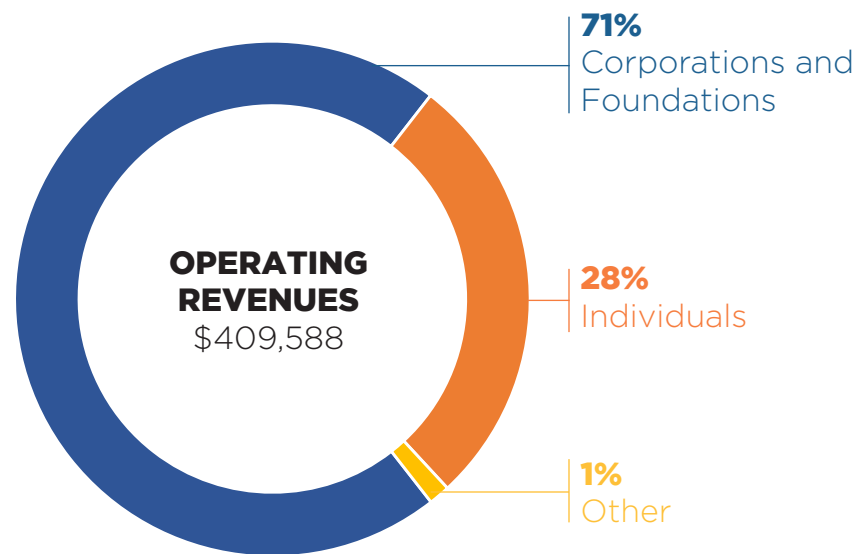


# FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

## OVERVIEW

We are pleased to present this financial summary for our 2017-2018 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018).

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



Surplus operating revenue will be carried over to FY19 for supportive living services, scholarships to local universities, and job workforce training for the residents of Ignacio House.

Operating revenue described above excludes existing restricted endowment funds.

Audited Financials.



## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Zachariah Presutti, SJ**  
*Founder*

**Mickael Ohana**  
*Board Chair*  
CEO, SAS E-Learning  
Co-Founder, CrossKnowledge Group

**Mary Casey**  
*Secretary*  
Managing Director, JP Morgan Chase

**Dr. Lorraine Capuano**  
Principal, The Organization Effectiveness Group LLC

**Rev. Jim Croghan, SJ**  
Provincial Assistant for International Ministries,  
U.S. Northeast Province of the Society of Jesus

**Coss Marte**  
Owner / Founder, ConBody and Coss Athletics

**Rev. Philip Judge, SJ**  
Provincial Assistant for Strategic Planning, USA  
Northeast Province of the Society of Jesus

**Rev. Joseph Parkes, SJ**  
Provincial Assistant for Secondary & Pre-  
Secondary Education, Maryland & USA Northeast  
Provinces of the Society of Jesus

**Gov. Jim McGreevey**  
52nd Governor of New Jersey  
Executive Director, Jersey City Employment  
Training Program

## LEADERSHIP

**Joe Van Brussel**  
**Axel de Foucauld**  
**Rev. Jack Mattimore, SJ**  
**Thomas Colicchio, CPA**

**Duvan Gutierrez**  
*Office Manager*



# OUR SUPPORTERS

## THANK YOU

Thank you to all of the following individuals, foundations and corporations for their generous and ongoing support to the Thrive For Life community from July 1 2017 to June 30 2018. We remain deeply grateful to our benefactors who allow us to support men and women currently and formerly incarcerated.

### \$50,000+

Anonymous  
USA Northeast Province Of The Society Of Jesus

### \$25,000 to \$49,999

Raskob Foundation For Catholic Activities  
Sommers Brothers Charitable Fund

### \$10,000 to \$24,999

Achelis And Bodman Foundation  
Autonomous Research Foundation US  
Maldari Foundation  
Mickael Ohana  
Salus Charity Foundation  
Spellman Hall Jesuit Community

### \$5,000 to \$9,999

Rose H. Kenny  
Robert E. McCarthy  
McDade Family Foundation  
Saint Joseph's University  
Church of St. Ignatius Loyola

### \$1,000 to \$4,999

NYC Jesuit Residence  
Anonymous  
Mary C. Casey  
Church Of St Francis Xavier  
Fairfield Jesuit Community  
John J. Gallagher  
Alicia Kubersky  
Gabrielle Lurie  
Kevin McCoy  
Lorraine M. Sheehan  
Slate Path Capital  
St. Ignatius Loyola Jesuit Residence  
Xavier Jesuit Community

### \$100 to \$999

Amazon Smile Foundation  
Barbara Baluta  
Marie Bannister  
Roseann Bonadia  
Patrice Bouteiller  
Brian S. Berkopoc  
William Burke  
Francisco Bustillo

James Carroll  
Church Of St. Francis De Sales  
Belinda Conway  
Lynn Corwin  
Gloria Di Napoli Peropat  
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Kenneth Forton  
Barry Gilman  
David Greenspan  
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Jeran Family Fund  
Murray Weigel Jesuit Residence  
Ursula Juarez  
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Felix Lopez  
Laurie Maglathlin  
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Tania Mesta  
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Nancy Ruconich  
Joanne Russo  
Sharon M. Russo  
SEI Giving Fund  
Monica Serra  
Ethelyn Smyley  
Erik Tozzi  
Jane Van Brussel  
Patricia A. White  
Timothy Wohlstadter-Rocha  
Michael E. Zega

### Up to \$99

Anne Abbott  
Elisabeth Amor  
Sabela Avion  
Patrick Brewis  
Timothy Brown  
William Bulger  
Robert Calamai  
Coleen Calamari  
Valerie Ceva  
Ashley Cisneros  
Andrea Clark  
Mary Crippen  
Kevin Curley

Mark Danis  
Iavora Daraktchieva  
Geoffrey Elliott  
Judith Falci  
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Lewis J. Greenwald  
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Alan Presutti  
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Lina Romasanta  
Brigid Scott  
Boreta Singleton  
Lisa Teague  
Tracey Tynan  
David E. Woolwine

“**TO FOSTER  
A HEALTHY,  
THRIVING  
COMMUNITY,  
THERE'S NO  
GREATER  
ACT THAN TO  
REAFFIRM THE  
HUMANITY OF  
OTHERS.**”

Martin, Thrive for Life Participant





**Photography**

Mike Benigno  
José Dueño, SJ  
Angelo Jesus Canta  
Axel de Foucauld

**Design**

Axel de Foucauld  
Angelo Jesus Canta

**Editor**

Joe Van Brussel

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please contact the Thrive for Life Leadership Team.

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Thrive For Life Prison Project builds bridges of trust, healing and reconciliation between incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals and the community through education and Ignatian spirituality.

30 W 16th Street  
New York, NY, 10011  
212.337.7544



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