BAYLOR INSTITUTE FOR STUDIES OF RELIGION CASE STUDY

RIDGE The Ridge Project

Building a Legacy of Strong Families

Stronger Families, Stronger Society: An Analysis of The RIDGE Project, Inc.

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PROGRAM ON PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOR

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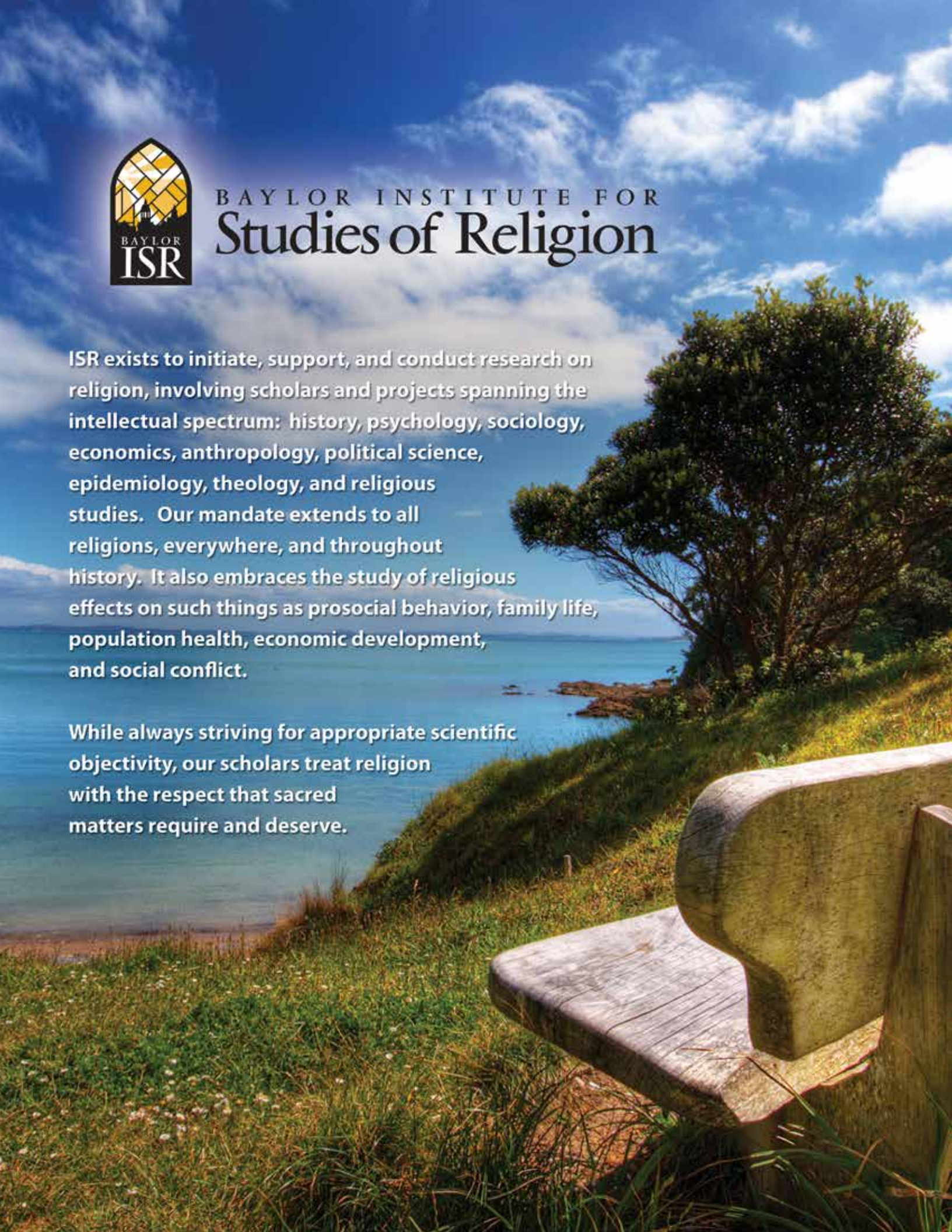
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RIDGE The Ridge Project

Building a Legacy of Strong Families

A FIRM FOUNDATION

"Most people don't realize how much their families mean to them and how much they mean to their families until they lose them. Incarceration puts an incredible burden on the family unit, causing extreme grief and hardship. We are working to build a legacy of stronger families to ultimately support a stronger society. In essence, we work to help families establish a firm foundation to impact generations to come."

Ron Tijerina, Executive Director and Co-founder, The RIDGE Project

Families are often referred to as a central unit or foundational building block for society. Families play a vital role in building positive and prosocial traits, including morals, character, values, and ethics; all of which are subsequently transmitted to other individuals as well as local communities. Whether family structures differ based on size, ethnic origin, and member makeup, it is clear that families support and encourage many of the most important components of an individual's health and well-being. Simply stated, strong families help produce and sustain strong communities. Few would argue with the notion that strong families help to undergird and strengthen society.

What Makes a Strong Family?

Researchers at the University of Nebraska - Lincoln have spent over 35 years trying to effectively answer the question, "What makes a strong family?" With data collected from over 24,000 family members in all 50 U.S. states and 34 countries around the world, these researchers have concluded that family strength is framed along six key characteristics:

(1) appreciation and affection;
(2) commitment;
(3) positive communication;
(4) enjoyable time together;
(5) spiritual well-being; and
(6) successful management of stress and crisis.[1]

These characteristics are not always easy to model or teach; however, common sense suggests, and good research confirms, the many positive outcomes that a strong family foundation can afford its members.[2] A strong family unit can extend its family members intimacy and trust. A strong family can be a source of inspiration and growth. Strong families can promote socialization, independence, and spiritual development. And although a stable family unit can help its members endure and thrive in the midst of life's trials and tribulations, it is also the case that an unstable and/or dysfunctional family can yield significant deleterious outcomes that have the potential to seriously limit or harm the development of its members. The relational well-being of families is critical in affecting a family's physical and mental health, the readiness and success of children in school, the engagement of youth in positive and prosocial activities, and ultimately, economic success. In sum, the strength of family bonds is crucial to a family's capacity to support, cultivate, and care for its members.

[1] DeFrain, J. & Asay, S.M. (2007). Strong Families Around the World: Strengths-Based Research and Perspectives. New York & London: Hayworth Press/Taylor & Francis.
[2] Encouraging Strong Family Relationships: A Series of Policy Briefs from the Policy Matters Project, Brief No. 6. Center for the Study of Social Policy.

SOCIAL OUTCOMES OF INCARCERATION

A key challenge that contributes to the disintegration of many families is incarceration. When a father or a mother is put in prison, the family unit can become volatile. The incapacitation of a family member, of course, means s/he is unable to commit another crime while incarcerated,[3] but it is important to consider that there are many positive social functions the inmate is also unable to perform while detained.[4]

Income potential becomes constrained as the inmate might otherwise have held a job that would contribute to the family. The day-to-day responsibilities related to maintaining a household either shifts to another family member or becomes neglected entirely. Perhaps, most importantly, the responsibility of raising children rests on the shoulders of a spouse, significant other, family member, or even the government. The incarcerated bear the burden of their prison sentence, but inmates' children and families may pay an even greater price when a parent is turned over to the prison system.

The impact of incarceration significantly affects the family unit throughout the detention period; however, incarceration also has lasting effects well beyond the conclusion of a prison sentence. Reintegration into society and into the family can be a multi-tiered challenge

Former prisoners may have difficulty finding post-incarceration employment opportunities. Those released from prison may suffer from the enduring stigma of their sentence, limiting their ability and willingness to become involved in community activities and meaningful relationships. Even for those with good intentions and strong motivation, incarceration can lead to mounting disadvantage and poverty.[5]

Incarceration also interrupts many positive social outcomes specifically related to the father-child relationship. Father-child contact encourages stronger socio-emotional and academic functioning.[6] High levels of father involvement can also yield stronger social abilities, confidence, and self-control among his children.[7] Conversely, children who come from homes where fathers have been absent for an extended period of time are more likely to suffer from abuse or neglect.[8] Fatherless children have a greater risk of becoming involved with drugs and alcohol,[9] increased sexual activity and teenage pregnancy,[10] and/or increased involvement in criminal activity,[11] and incarceration.[12] In sum, incarceration directly challenges the well-being of the offender's family.

U.S. PRISONS: A POPULATION ON THE RISE

The United States prison population has seen significant growth over the past 40 years. Prison population growth of over 700 percent since the 1970's has strained the resources and capacities of individual prisons, has created an increasing challenge for policy makers, and is becoming an increasing liability for U.S. taxpayers.[13] Although many practitioners and scholars argue that prisons provide the most efficient solution to our nation's crime problem, there is also evi-

[3] Zimring, F. E., & Hawkins, G. (1995). Incapacitation: Penal confinement and the restraint of crime. New York: Oxford University Press.
[4] Western, B., & McClanahan, S. (2000). Fathers behind bars: The impact of incarceration on family formation (pp. 309-24). Princeton University
[5] Sampson, Robert J. and John H. Laub. 1993. Crime in the Making: Pathways and Turning Points through Life. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
[6] Howard, K. S., Burke Lefever, J. E., Borkowski, J.G., & Whitman , T. L. (2006). Fathers' influence in the lives of children with adolescent mothers. Journal of Family Psychology, 20, 468- 476.
[7] Anthes, E. (2010, May/June). Family guy. Scientific American Mind
[8] "CPS Involvement in Families with Social Fathers." Fragile Families Research Brief No.46. Princeton, NJ and New York, NY: Bendheim-Thomas Center for Research on Child Wellbeing and Social Indicators Survey Center, 2010. See also P. R. Amato and J. G. Gilbreth, "Nonresident Fathers and Children's Well-Being: A Meta-Analysis," Journal of Marriage and Family 61 (1999): 557-573; Robert Bauserman, "Child Adjustment in Joint-Custody Versus Sole-Custody Arrangements: A Meta-Analytic Review," Journal of Family Psychology 16 (2002): 91-102.
[9] National Fatherhood Initiative. "Family Structure, Father Closeness, & Drug Abuse." Gaithersburg, MD: National Fatherhood Initiative, 2004: 20-22.
[10] Burn, V. E. (2008). Living without a strong father figure: A context for teen mothers' experience of having become sexually active. Issues in Mental Health Nursing, 29, 279–297.
[11] Harper, Cynthia C. and Sara S. McLanahan. "Father Absence and Youth Incarceration." Journal of Research on Adolescence 14 (September 2004): 369-397.
[12] Johnson, B. R. (2014). Mentoring Children of Prisoners: A Randomized Controlled Trial Study of Amachi Texas. Program on Prosocial Behavior, Special Report, Baylor Institute for Studies of Religion.
[13] Wildeman, C. (2014). Parental incarceration, child homelessness, and the invisible consequences of mass imprisonment. The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 651(1), 74-96; Wildeman, C., Andersen, S. H., Lee, H., & Karlson, K. B. (2014). Parental Incarceration and Child Mortality in Denmark. American Journal of Public Health, (0), e1-e6

dence that confirms a prison sentence may actually promote a cyclical pattern of incarceration, creating a series of additional long-term consequences that are harmful for inmates and their families.[14]

Prisoners are often ill-equipped to achieve and maintain a crime-free lifestyle during or after incarceration. Without opportunities, resources, and accountability, many ex-offenders will end up back in the same communities and relationships that promoted their deviant behavior in the first place. Prison, therefore, may only serve as a temporary escape from the reality of an individual's destructive tendencies and environments.

Studies that come closest to providing a "national" recidivism rate estimate that three-in-five, or 60% of former prisoners will recidivate within three years of release.[15] If these statistics are accurate, then what has often been deemed an effective solution to criminal activity, is only successful about 40% of the time. When one considers the financial obligation of the U.S. prison system each year totals approximately $50 billion, it is clear that we need to rethink how we approach incarceration as well as prisoner reentry.

The U.S. prison system must work to more effectively leverage its resources to prevent future victimization. People and organizations that work to systematically help transform prisoners and promote long-term lifestyle changes must be encouraged and supported. Indeed, equipping individual organizations with the resources needed to create sustainable change may be the first step in finding a solution to address many of the key issues that face inmates, ex-offenders, and their families.

A SOLUTION FROM WITHIN: RON AND CATHERINE TIJERINA

> *"The Tijerina family has successfully taken their experiences in the criminal justice system and turned them into a positive for society. Ron and Catherine's dedication to their own family coupled with a genuine desire to help others is what has made their work so successful."*
>
> *Lynn Wachtmann,*
> *Ohio State Representative, House District 75*

For some, a general understanding of the value of developing strong families is enough to drive action. For Ron and Catherine Tijerina, personal experience provides a whole different context for this important work.

Wrongful Incarceration

In September 1991, the Tijerina family was upended: Ron was convicted of a crime that he did not commit. With the reality of a 14-25 year sentence hanging over their heads, the Tijerinas rapidly shifted from a young family hopeful of a bright future to a family torn apart by incarceration. And though the sentence ultimately landed Ron behind bars, the impact on Ron's family was equally devastating.

As Catherine remembers:

> *"I walked out of the courtroom and the weight of Ron's incarceration hit me – how am I going to explain what just happened to our two sons? How will our family endure 14-25 years without a father or husband in our day-to-day lives? I was devastated, and the pain, shame, and isolation we all experienced were overwhelming."*

[14] Turney, K., & Wildeman, C. (2013). Redefining Relationships Explaining the Countervailing Consequences of Paternal Incarceration for Parenting. American Sociological Review, 78(6), 949-979.
[15] Allen J. Beck and Bernard Shipley (1989). Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1983. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Recidivism of Released Prisoners Series, NCJ 116261, http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1135. Patrick Langan and David Levin (2002). Recidivism of Prisoners Released in 1994. Bureau of Justice Statistics. Recidivism of Released Prisoners Series, NCJ 193427, http://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=1134.

As expected, Ron's time in prison did create many obstacles for the Tijerina family. Living on welfare and enduring extreme financial hardship, the Tijerinas experienced the prejudices and severe societal pressures that are hung on the wife and children of an incarcerated man. Separation from Ron created a new family dynamic for the Tijerinas, as communication with Ron was limited to the confines of a prison visiting room only a few times each month. Living without a husband and father can tear a family apart; but imprisonment actually brought the Tijerina family closer together.

Hope and a Vision

The day Ron went to prison represented a significant turning point for the Tijerina family. Struggling to understand and process the reality of an extended prison sentence, Ron committed to becoming a stronger husband and father from the confines of his prison cell.

Just two months later, Ron and Catherine shared another significant moment from a prison visiting room. The Tijerinas experienced a new sense of hope that would allow them to partner together in a whole new journey.

Ron recalls this day:

> *"I remember celebrating with Catherine as we prayed together in the prison visiting room. We knew our family had a long road ahead of us, but we knew that we would overcome the difficulties of my incarceration and the separation of our family. Our prayer became, 'Lord, send us where no one else will go. Use this time in prison to bring glory to Your name.'"*

The Tijerinas had no idea just how transformative this prayer would be as their calling began to unfold in the coming years.

As Ron was transferred between seven different penitentiaries, the Tijerinas failed to find programs or support groups to aid families and children with incarcerated parents. Their family had to find new ways to deal with Ron's time in prison, and it became clear that there were others struggling with the same issues. It was in this struggle that Ron and Catherine saw an opportunity for outreach designed to aid families, provide a safe haven to encourage youth to make positive lifestyle choices, and to support those who have made mistakes to effectively build a new life.

The Tijerinas witnessed many families falling victim to extreme suffering without a parent/spouse in the picture. Of course, Ron had a unique perspective as an inmate, as did Catherine as an inmate's wife. This led to an opportunity for the Tijerinas to endeavor in outreach beyond their own family.

Thinking Forward

> *"[The Tijerinas] focus on the future. So many people fail to think forward. Ron and Cathy do that and they do it in an incredible way."*
>
> *Gary Mohr*
> *Director, Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections*

In 1993, while Ron was inside the walls of the penitentiary, he and Catherine developed a program called Keeping FAITH (Keeping Families and Inmates Together in Harmony), now referred to as the TYRO Program. The program began without grant funding, with Ron mentoring other men in prison and Catherine providing encouragement and support to inmates families outside the prison. These outreach efforts to inmates and their families continued to grow during Ron's incarceration, and significantly expanded after Ron's release in 2006, through a Promoting Responsible Fatherhood federal grant. Beginning only two years into Ron's sentence, this dual-pronged approach (support for the inmate and support for his family) was a unique and much-needed service for offenders and their families. Together, the Tijerinas began building a program and curriculum to provide transforma-

tional opportunities for offenders and their families to combat the root issues inherent to incarceration. Little did the Tijerinas know, Keeping FAITH would also serve as the foundation for The RIDGE Project which was founded only seven years later in December 2000. In 2002, The RIDGE Project was awarded its first state grant, funding a nine county youth-serving collaborative. Since 2002, The RIDGE Project has received numerous state and federal grants to provide highly effective services to tens of thousands of youth, fathers, and families.

Ron was released from prison in September 2006 after serving 15 years of his 14-25 year sentence. Within two weeks of his release, the Tijerinas were awarded a grant from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to continue their work with incarcerated fathers and their families. Serving as co-directors of RIDGE, Ron oversaw the prison ministry and Catherine continued to lead the youth division.

THE RIDGE PROJECT: BUILDING A LEGACY OF STRONG FAMILIES

"What began as an effort in survival for our family became a pathway of healing for others."

Ron Tijerina

Officially founded in 2000 by Ron and Catherine Tijerina, The RIDGE Project, Inc. is a nationally-recognized, Christian 501(c)(3) non-profit organization based in McClure, Ohio. The RIDGE Project exists to "establish a path of honor, discipline, and integrity; by way of education, motivation, and inspiration; in order to lead families into a future defined by hope, peace, and righteousness for generations to come."

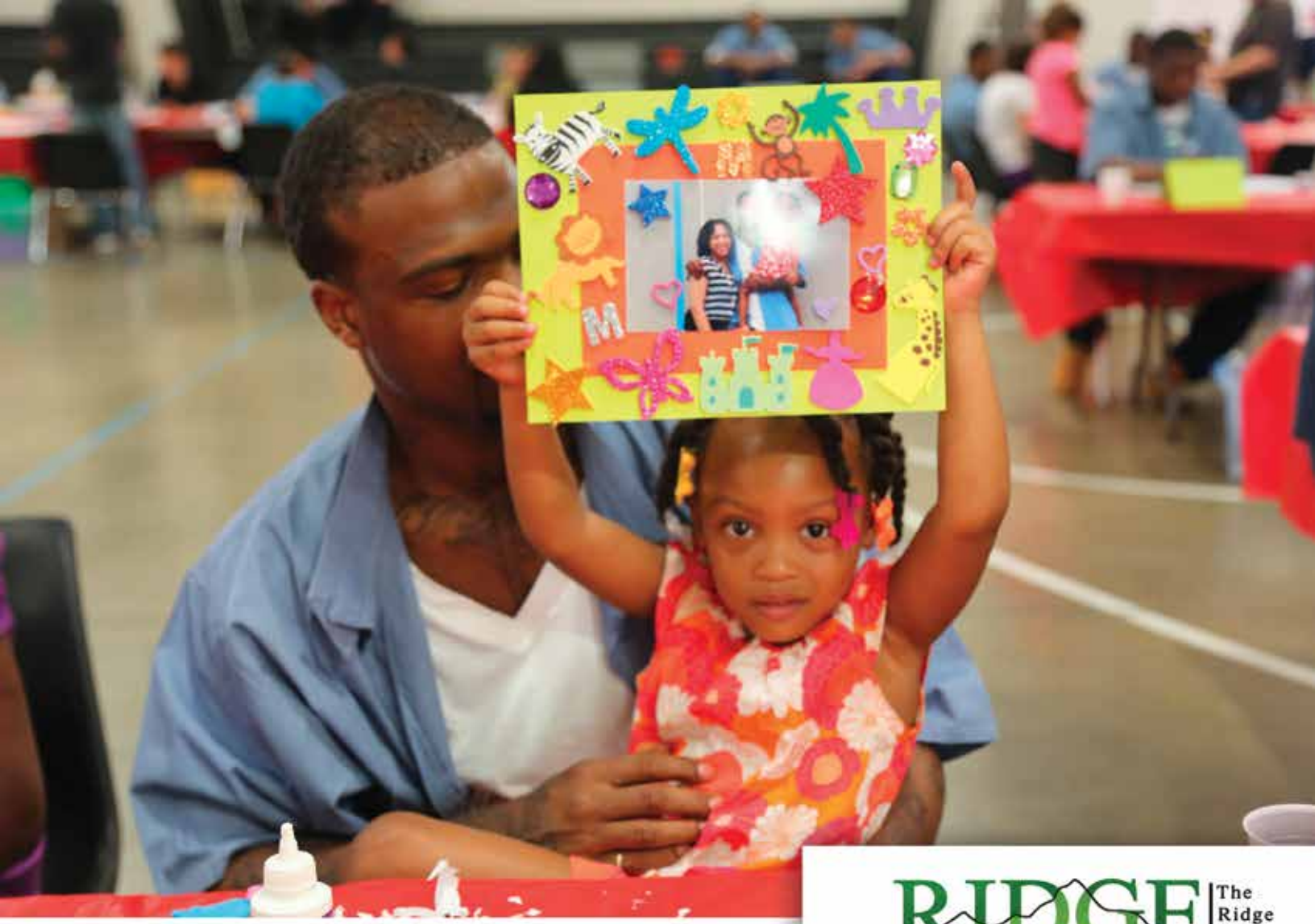
The RIDGE Project is an innovative organization that is meeting an increasingly important unmet need for those who currently suffer or are at-risk of suffering the effects of incarceration. The Tijerinas' personal experience with the prison system and the lack of support available for family units before, during, and after imprisonment makes the work of The RIDGE Project especially relevant and influential. As the Tijerina family discovered, both inmates and inmates' families need help to successfully overcome many of the peripheral consequences of incarceration. And more than providing a "band aid" to address these issues, The RIDGE Project works to provide a long-term solution for the entire family unit.

The RIDGE Project takes a holistic approach to building strong families to overcome the challenges of incarceration. In fact, The RIDGE Project operates under the mantra Building a Legacy of Stronger Families. With programs that address generational cycles of welfare dependency, fatherlessness, and imprisonment, The RIDGE Project provides youth and families with the resources and skills to become healthy, contributing members of society. Taking a holistic approach to supporting the entire family unit provides a number of important outcomes for families, including promoting a greater likelihood that inmates will effectively reintegrate into society upon release.

TRANSFORMATIVE PROGRAMMING

"[The RIDGE Project] is the first resource that genuinely cares for the lives of [the men they serve], and both [the men] and their women know it. It is working with the entire family, allowing these men to actually do tasks with their kids so they can build relationships. The women are changing, along with the incarcerated men, so that when they come home there is a completely different dynamic then when they left. That is the key to their success."

Kelly Kollen,
Unit Manager, Toledo Correctional Institution



RIDGE | The Ridge Project

Building a Legacy of Strong Families

Built from the outreach Ron and Catherine originally provided from within the prison system, The RIDGE Project currently operates through three divisions: an Adult Division, a Workforce Development Division, and a Youth Division. These divisions work in tandem to provide unique programming that systematically serves incarcerated men, families of incarcerated men, and at-risk youth.

The majority of the services The RIDGE Adult Division provides begin inside the walls for people already in prison, although courses are offered for those who are low income parents, those who have recently been released from prison, and those who want to improve their personal and family lives, as well. Eligibility is dependent primarily on parental status and the age of the children. Fathers with children under age 22 who are either within six months from being released or up to six months after incarceration are admitted under a Re-entry Grant, and low-income fathers with children age 18 or under (ex-offenders and non-ex-offenders) are admitted through a Pathways Grant.

The RIDGE Project currently offers programming to incarcerated fathers in 17-out-of-28 Ohio Department of Rehabilitation institutions (over 60%), five community-based corrections facilities, and two county jails. It also provides programming to formerly incarcerated fathers in 10 community locations throughout Ohio. Altogether, RIDGE provides approximately 75 individual class sessions each week.

TYRO Program

The TYRO Program is the cornerstone of The RIDGE Project's work. "TYRO" (Latin in origin) means "an apprentice, novice, or young warrior" or "someone learning something new." Framed around supporting the incarcerated father and his partner, this program promotes key qualities of healthy individuals and a healthy relationship.

Unlike traditional couples-related programming, the TYRO Program works from the "inside-out" – both literally and figuratively – to strengthen and support families. Literally speaking, coursework is administered to the inmate (inside) and his family (outside). Figuratively speaking, coursework is designed to fortify the character and skills of the individual (inside) to produce responsible, healthy fathers, families, and citizens (outside).

The RIDGE Project recognizes the key obstacles that fathers and families will face post-incarceration. The TYRO Program 36-hour curriculum includes a series of courses over a 9-18-week period that addresses these key issues, including courses to promote healthy marriages, responsible parenting, and economic stability.

After being accepted into RIDGE programming, the first course fathers are exposed to is the TYRO Dads course. These men learn important lessons through the curriculum, and are encouraged to begin taking responsibility for their actions and to act with honor and integrity. Simply put, the TYRO Dads coursework provides imprisoned men with a healthy model for becoming a responsible father and husband. The men that graduate from the TYRO Dads course earn the title of "TYRO," as they now stand "as warriors for their families; defending their children and their legacies and embracing their role as father as the highest call on their life." Graduates also have the ability to join a TYRO Fraternity, a mentoring network that promotes accountability and brotherhood within the prison and as they reintegrate back into their families and society.

The TYRO Dads course is foundational to all other courses and programs offered by The RIDGE Project. By molding fathers into men of honor and integrity, the course instills in them the attitudes and character qualities that are required for successful relationships with their families and that are necessary for success in the workplace.

"The TYRO Dads program has been an amazing experience for me. TYRO Dads has helped me gain confidence in myself, and I truly believe my dreams will come true. I have learned what it means to be a man of honor, integrity, and promise… I know everything won't be easy, but I know in my heart that I am ready to be a better father and a husband… I am a TYRO and I will not quit!"

RIDGE Participant

Following the TYRO Dads coursework, the men may join with their spouse/significant other for the eight-hour Couples Communication I course. The Tijerinas recognized the importance of communication in a healthy relationship - and also that many inmates and families lack the skills necessary to be effective communicators. This introductory, basic communication course teaches the importance of collaboration and communication, and provides couples with a framework to incorporate strong communication-related habits into their relationships. Coursework is concluded with Couples Communication II, an advanced communication class that promotes conflict resolution, anger management, and relationship stability. The TYRO/Keeping FAITH Program has been implemented in 17 Ohio prisons and has served over 8,500 individuals (i.e. inmates and families). Pre- and post-survey results show important outcomes, as well, for participants (See Exhibit 1).

Workforce Strengthening

Complementing the TYRO Program, The RIDGE Project offers specific workforce strengthening services to those who have completed TYRO Dads, to help prepare them for employment and open doors to economic stability for their families.

EXHIBIT 1 A COMPARISON OF BEFORE-PROGRAM AND AFTER-PROGRAM SURVEY RESPONSES FROM OCTOBER 2012 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 2013 REVEALS THAT:

98.9% of TYRO Dads participants and 97.5% of Couples Communication participants improved in at least one responsible parenting or healthy marriage category
66% of TYRO Dads participants improved their parenting knowledge/skills
65% of TYRO Dads participants increased the amount of contact they have with their children
64% of TYRO Dads participants reported increased commitment to family financial responsibility
55% of TYRO Dads participants and 50% of Couples Communication participants improved the quality of their relationship with their spouse/partner
97% of TYRO Dads participants reported a strong to very strong commitment to fatherhood
90% of TYRO Dads participants and 89% of Couples Communication participants reported a strong to very strong feeling of hopefulness for the future
86% of Couples Communication participants who were married reported a strong or very strong commitment to marriage
78% of Couples Communication participants who were unmarried reported a strong or very strong commitment to the stability of their relationship with their unmarried partner
79% of all Couples Communication participants reported a positive or very positive attitude toward marriage

Some of the specific workforce-related services offered include:

Job Ethics Training
This 16-hour course teaches TYROs how to be successful at work and provides crossover skills designed to make TYROs valuable employees.

Prison-Based Commercial Driver License (CDL) Training
The RIDGE Project has partnered with two prisons in Ohio, the Ohio State Highway Patrol, a CDL training company, and PI&I Motor Express, a truck driving company, to provide CDL training for TYROs while they are still incarcerated. After being released from prison, TYROs who have completed this program are offered employment by PI&I Motor Express. This innovative

partnership not only provides TYROs with opportunities for good-paying truck driving jobs to support their families, but also serves as a collaborative model that can be replicated throughout the nation.

Prison-Based Welding Training

A second program that the The RIDGE Project offers to TYROs while they are still incarcerated is a 3-course welding training program. This program is available due to a partnership between The RIDGE Project, a prison in Ohio and an Ohio college. TYROs who complete this program are prepared for high-demand welding jobs upon release from prison.

Farm-to-Plate/Culinary Arts Program

TYROs in this program learn everything needed to take a seed, grow it into a plant, and turn it into a gourmet meal. This one-of-a-kind training gives TYROs opportunities for employment in high demand jobs in the food service industry and sustainable agriculture.

Collaboration with One Stop Employment Centers

The RIDGE Project's case managers help TYROs connect to local One Stop Employment Centers to obtain important job seeking skills, including resume and cover letter development, interviewing skills, and online job searching. These case managers also assist TYROs with pursuing Workforce Investment Act funds, through the One Stops, for job skills training programs in CDL, welding, etc. and education.

Staffing Services

The RIDGE Project also operates a staffing company that helps connect TYROs (and non-TYROs) to employment opportunities. These services specialize in placing temporary workers in production, industrial and clerical environments and recruiting candidates for specific hard-to-fill positions at all levels. The staffing company works with employers to fill temporary and permanent positions with qualified applicants, and also arranges temp-to-permanent hires, while limiting the employers' cost and risk in the hiring process.

Participants in The RIDGE Project's workforce strengthening programs are providing important outcomes for employers, including improved profits and stronger retention rates. All of the profits that The RIDGE generates through its staffing services help to self-fund its workforce and additional youth programming (see Exhibit 2).

EXHIBIT 2

Employment Information
Total % of TYRO Dads completers reached who were employed at the time they were called (via follow-up survey) between 10/1/2012-9/30/2013 and who began their employment after completing TYRO Dads – 58% (98 of 169)
Total % of these TYRO Dads that obtained their employment within 90 days of completing TYRO Dads (if they completed the program after release) or within 90 days of release (if they completed the program prior to release) 24% (24 of 98)
Wage Information
Hourly pay rate range -- $7.75-$25.00
Median hourly wage rate -- $11.00
Mean hourly wage rate -- $13.14
Job Retention
30-day follow-up: Percentage of TYRO Dads contacted – 54% (53 of 98) Percentage of TYRO Dads contacted that were still employed – 94% (50 of 53)
60-day follow-up: Percentage of TYRO Dads contacted – 39% (38 of 98) Percentage of TYRO Dads contacted that were still employed – 89% (34 of 38)
90-day follow-up: Percentage of TYRO Dads contacted – 27% (26 of 98) Percentage of TYRO Dads contacted that were still employed – 92% (24 of 26)

**The numbers for each of the categories above were generated only for TYRO Dads completers who were incarcerated within 3 years prior to application to the TYRO Dads program, and were either Outside applicants or Inside applicants who have since been Released.*

RIDGE The Ridge Project

Building a Legacy of Strong Families

Youth Development

To help today's youth combat negative societal influences and pressures, The RIDGE Project also provides programmatic outreach for youth ages 13–19. The RIDGE Project serves as the fiscal lead agent for the Ohio Adolescent Health Centers collaborative, which is comprised of 18 organizations working together to provide programs designed to build students' prosocial and healthy relationship skills, as well as encourage them to make healthy choices.

These programs are currently provided in over 400 schools, community-based locations, and juvenile detention centers throughout Ohio. The RIDGE Project itself provides a nationally recognized Rites of Passage youth program in seven schools and one juvenile detention center in Northwest Ohio. During the 2012-2013 school year, 531 students participated in the Rites of Passage program, which focuses on leadership development, mentoring, the benefits of sexual abstinence, and promoting healthy lifestyles. Youth-focused programming works proactively to help teens achieve a higher standard of living, and addresses issues related to fatherlessness, welfare dependency, drug and alcohol abuse, and premarital sexual activity. Rather than just telling them what not to do, The RIDGE project helps teens develop confidence and knowledge that will help them to desire a healthier, more productive future for themselves.

RIDGE'S ECONOMIC AND SOCIETAL IMPACT – AN ROI ANALYSIS

For many non-profit organizations, quantifying the impact of their services is an onerous task. The metric most commonly employed to convey value is the number of "touches" the organization made; that is, how many clients or participants it "served" in a given year. For the casual observer, the figures reported may seem impressive: 1,500 families provided with free health care, or 10,000 tons of food given through the food bank. Neglecting the opportunity to consider a measure of economic and societal impact, though, can undercut an organization's true value among its constituents and within the communities it serves.

An economic Return on Investment (ROI) model can help organizations begin to quantify their economic and societal impact. In light of the opportunity to minimize costs and maximize the impact of resources invested in the criminal justice system, the economic ROI of RIDGE's TYRO Dads program is an important measure that helps stakeholders, constituents, and other observers understand the true value of the time and money invested in the organization.

The economic ROI analysis provided here captures a particular sub-set of the TYRO Dads completers. The reason for selecting this sub-set is based on three factors:

1. There are still many TYRO Dads completers that have not yet been released from prison. One of the key requirements for conducting an outcomes-based ROI analysis is for the completers to demonstrate changes in behavior (i.e., through employment, child support, etc.) as a result of their training. We therefore limited our focus to those TYRO Dads completers that were released from prison;

2. A number of TYRO Dads completers are in non-ODRC[20] (i.e., non-state) prison facilities, and we were not able to obtain release and recidivism data for these TYRO Dads completers in time for this study; and

[20] Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Corrections

3. ODRC reports only 3-year recidivism rates. In order to capture a comparable rate among TYRO Dads completers, we had to limit our calculation to TYRO Dads completers that were released between 2008 and 2010 to allow for the 3 years needed for calculating the recidivism rate.

This analysis projects the economic ROI for the 107 TYRO Dads completers released in 2012, and assumes the same recidivism rate as for those TYRO Dads completers released between 2008 and 2010.

Capturing the Investment of TYRO Dads (The "I" of ROI)

We estimated the costs for this subset of TYRO Dads completers based on the average cost/completer multiplied by the 107 TYRO Dads released in 2012. The cost/completer is calculated by taking the total TYRO training costs and dividing it by the total number of completers. Using the cost/completer, as opposed to the cost/trainee, reflects the outcomes-focused approach of this analysis, which is focused on results (i.e., completion), not process (i.e., training). We estimated the average cost/completer at $1,673 which, multiplied by the 107 TRYO Dads completers released in 2012, comes to an estimated cost of $178,968 (see Exhibit 3).

Capturing the Return of TYRO Dads (The "R" of ROI)

This study considers two key categories of return (or impact): Economic Savings and Economic Gains. Quantifying specific outcomes, such as the additional federal and state tax revenue generated by TYRO Dads completers, savings in incarceration costs from reduced recidivism, and reduced dependency on public assistance, among others, a tangible return on the resources invested in and through TYRO Dads begins to take shape. Assessing these categories of impact alongside RIDGE's total projected expenditures for these 107 TYRO Dads completers reveals an estimated yield for each dollar invested in the program. In Exhibit 4 we provide the details of our ROI analysis. The summarized findings of the ROI are presented in Exhibit 3. As can be seen, the total estimated economic gain from the 107 TYRO Dads completers released from ODRC in 2012 is $178,968. Additionally, the total estimated economic savings from these completers is $372,291. The total estimated economic impact (Gains + Savings) for these 107 TYRO Dads released from ODRC in 2012 is $557,991. There-

EXHIBIT 3 TYRO DADS ROI OUTCOMES FOR 2012 TYRO DADS COMPLETERS

Economic Gains:	
• *Estimated additional federal income and state sales taxes generated by TYRO Dads completers from higher employment*	$101,648
• *Estimated child support payments by more employed TYRO Dads completers*	$84,052
Estimated Economic Gains from TYRO Dads:	$185,700
Economic Savings:1	
• *Estimated savings in incarceration costs to state from reduced recidivism*	$310,963
• *Estimated savings in public assistance costs attributed to TYRO Dads completers from higher projected employment*	$61,329
Estimated Economic Savings from TYRO Dads:	$372,291
PEP ROI Impact:	
Estimated Economic Impact (Gains/Savings) from TYRO Dads:	$557,991
Projected TYRO Dads Training Costs:	$178,968
Total Estimated Annual Savings from 107 TYRO Dads completers released from ODRC in 2012:	$379,023
Estimated Economic Impact Per TYRO Dads completer:	$5,215
Comprehensive One Year ROI:	312%
Total Estimated Economic ROI Per $1 Invested in TYRO Dads in Year 1:	$3.12
Total Estimated Economic ROI Per $1 Invested in TYRO Dads in Year 3:	$9.35
Total Estimated Economic ROI Per $1 Invested in TYRO Dads in Year 5:	$15.59

fore, the total estimated economic impact per TYRO Dads completer for 2012 is $5,215. Thus, the one-year comprehensive ROI is 312 percent. This means the total estimated economic impact per $1 invested in The RIDGE's TYRO Dads program is $3.12. Over time, the ROI would be expected to increase, as both the benefits of increased tax revenues and child support payments from higher projected employment rates and the savings from reduced recidivism and public assistance continue, without any additional costs. This would increase the projected ROI to $9.35 per $1 invested over three years, and $15.59 over five years.

We estimate that TYRO Dads' one-year ROI is 312% - that is, for every $1 invested in TYRO Dads, the economy sees a $3.12 return in year one. After three years, the initial $1 invested multiplies into a ROI of $9.35. After five years, the economic impact of the initial investment yields approximately $15.59 in economic impact – a 1,559% ROI. Though it is obviously helpful to begin to quantify TYRO Dads' overall impact, it is equally important to emphasize this figure is based on a subset of TYRO Dads' completers, and does not include each and every potential economic gain and savings related to the TYRO Dads program. For example, our ROI analysis does not consider the cost savings associated with reduced crime victimization as a result of the crimes averted due to the TYRO Dads' intervention. As stated earlier in this study, it was estimated that the annual cost associated with crime victimizations totaled $450 billion in 1993. Clearly, that figure would be higher today. In sum, more than just the quantification of 107 TYRO Dads released from prison in 2012, it is clear that many TYRO Dads completers generate significant economic returns for the local, state, and federal economy.

Initiatives like TYRO Dads are our best chance to achieve scalable solutions in addressing the prisoner reentry crisis in Ohio – and elsewhere. These volunteer coalitions have the potential to bring together a "coalition of the willing" able to coordinate job placement, housing, life-skills, and most importantly, match prisoners (before they leave prison) with mentors who can hold them accountable on the outside while providing the social and spiritual support they need to live crime-free lives and be productive citizens. This combination of accountability and assistance is essential for any effort to effectively change the lives of offenders and lower recidivism, thereby, creating safer communities, fewer victims, and less cost to taxpayers. (See Exhibit 4 - ROI)

LOOKING AHEAD – THE FUTURE OF THE RIDGE PROJECT

As an entrepreneurial organization, The RIDGE Project is looking to strengthen its sustainability through a number of social enterprises in order to assure ongoing services to fragile families as well as to expand its pool of job placement and business ownership opportunities for its graduates. Continuous improvement is extremely important to Co-Directors, Ron and Cathy Tijerina so The RIDGE Project consistently seeks out best practices to meet the ever-changing needs of their funders, clients, and staff. They have identified technological innovations that will revolutionize service delivery and tracking through Mobile Digital Engagement.

Mobile Digital Engagement is the use of mobile technology (e.g. smartphones and tablets) to further engage participants by delivering services digitally in between classroom sessions. The RIDGE Project is currently implementing a Mobile Digital Engagement strategy by integrating their program into a mobile technology platform that will allow for significantly deeper and more regular interactions with clients by filling the gap between class sessions with activities that reinforce their learning. The technology will also allow for streamlining and rapid expansion and replication of The RIDGE Project's service model and programs, as well as enhanced data collection, staff training, facilitator training, and increased facilitator to client engagement.

EXHIBIT 4: THE RIDGE PROJECT - ROI ANALYSIS

Economic Savings: Recidivism			
Annual cost of incarcerating a man in Ohio	A	$ 24,893	Source: Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction 2013 Annual Report
Average prosecution cost per crime committed	B	$ 570	Source: An Ounce of Prevention: Taxpayer Costs Avoided through Preventing Crime
Average public defender cost per crime committed	C	$ 322	Source: An Ounce of Prevention (see above)
Average jury or court trial cost per crime committed	D	$ 5,565	Source: An Ounce of Prevention (see above)
Average total court expenses per crime committed	E	$ 6,458	Formula: B + C + D [Average total court expense per crime committed by recidivating offender]
Average total cost per recidivating offender	F	$ 31,351	Formula: A + E (Annual costs of incarceration plus total court expenses per crime committed)
Number of TYRO Dads completers released in 2012	G	107	Source: ODRC Release Data
Ohio 3-year recidivism rate for male offenders for re-committing a crime	H	25.6%	Source: Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction 2008-2010 Annual Recidivism Report
Expected number of comparison group to return to prison within three years	I	27	Formula: G * H [Projected number of recidivists from non-TYRO Dads comparison group
Total cost of recidivating offenders from non-TYRO Dads comparison group	J	$ 859,424	Formula: F * I [Projected number of recidivists from non-TYRO Dads comparison group times total incarceration costs per recidivating offender]
TYRO Dads actual 3-year recidivism for re-committing a crime	K	16.4%	Source: ODRC Recidivism Data for TYRO Dads completers from 2008 to 2010
Expected number of TYRO Dads completers who will return to prison within three years	L	17	Formula: G * K [Projected number of recidivists from among TYRO Dads completers]
Estimated cost of incarcerating these men a second time	M	$ 548,461	Formula: F * L [Projected number of TYRO Dads recidivists times total incarceration costs per recidivating offender]
Estimated annual savings in incarceration costs to state from reduced recidivism	**N**	**$ 310,963**	**Formula: J - M [Difference in total incarceration costs for recidivating offenders between non-TYRO Dads comparison group and TYRO Dads completers]**
Economic Gains: Tax Revenue			
Number of TYRO Dads completers released in 2012	G	107	Source: ODRC Release Data
Ohio 3-year recidivism rate for male offenders for re-committing a crime	H	25.6%	Source: Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction 2008-2010 Annual Recidivism Reports
Expected number from non-TYRO Dads comparison group to return to prison within three years	I	27	Formula: G * H [Projected number of recidivists based on non-TYRO Dads comparison group recidivism rate]
Estimated number of non-TYRO Dads comparison group employable (i.e., non-recidivating) ex-offenders	O	80	Formula: G - I [TYRO Dads completers minus projected recidivists from non-TYRO Dads comparison group]
TYRO Dads actual 3-year recidivism rate for re-commiting a crime	K	16.4%	Source: ODRC Recidivism Data for TYRO Dads completers from 2008-2010
Expected number of TYRO Dads completers who will return to prison within three years	L	17	Formula: G * K [Projected number of recidivists from among TYRO Dads completers]
Estimated number of employable (i.e., non-recidivating) TYRO Dads completers	P	94	Formula: G - L [TYRO Dads completers less projected number of recidivists]
Employment rate (full- or part-time) for the 107 TYRO Dads completers released in 2012 at the time of incarceration.	Q	56%	TYRO Dads Intake Data for 2012 ODRC Releases
Estimated reduction in employment due to incarceration after release	R	-12%	Ex-Offenders and the Labor Market (p.37); John Shmitt and Kris Warner; Center for Economic and Policy Research; November 2010
Projected employment rate for Ex-offenders without TYRO Dads training	S	44%	Formula: Q + R [Employment rate of TYRO Dads completers prior to incarceration less projected post-release employment rate
Projected employment Rate of TYRO Dads completers after release	T	58%	The RIDGE Project conducted a follow-up survey of the 441 participants who began TYRO Dads from 10/1/2012 to 9/30/2013. Of those, RIDGE was able to reach 169 participants, of which 98 (58%) indicated they obtained employment after completing TYRO Dads
Additional number of ex-offenders employed as a result of TYRO Dads	U	17	Formula: (T * P) - (S * O) [Non-recidivating TYRO Dads completers times projected employment rate for TYRO Dads completers less NON-TYRO Dads recidivating ex-offenders times projected employment rates after release]
Average annual salary of TYRO Dads completers	V	$ 24,178	Source: TYRO Dads Employment and Earnings Data based on follow-up surveys (mean hourly wages of $13.14 times estimated 1840 working hours a year.
Average combined tax rate for Ohio residents	W	24.9%	Source: "Who Pays America's Tax Burden, and Who Gets the Most Government Spending?" Taxpayer Foundation (March 2007) - State Tax Rate of 9.9% plus federal tax rate of 15%
Average estimated taxes paid per year by TYRO Dads completers	X	$ 6,020	Formula: V * W [Annual salary times average combined tax rate for Ohio residents
Estimated additional annual federal income and state sales tax generated by TYRO Dads completers over ex-offenders otherwise employed	**Y**	**$101,648**	**Formula: U * X [Additional TYRO Dads completers employed times average annual estimated taxes]**

EXHIBIT 4: THE RIDGE PROJECT - ROI ANALYSIS

Economic Gains: Child Support Payments			
Number of TYRO Dads completers released in 2012	G	107	Source: ODRC Release Data
TYRO Dads actual 3-year recidivism for re-comitting a crime	K	16.4%	Source: ODRC Recidivism Data for TYRO Dads completers from 2008 to 2010
Expected number of TYRO Dads completers who will return to prison within three years	L	17	Formula: G * K [Projected number of recidivists from among TYRO Dads completers]
Estimated number of employable (i.e., non-recidivating) TYRO Dads completers	P	90	Formula: G - L [TYRO Dads completers less projected number of recidivists]
Projected employment Rate of TYRO Dads completers after release	T	58%	The RIDGE Project conducted a follow-up survey of the 441 participants who began TYRO Dads from 10/1/2012 to 9/30/2013. Of those, RIDGE was able to reach 169 participants, of which 98 (58%) indicated they obtained employment after completing TYRO Dads
Additional number of ex-offenders employed as a result of TYRO Dads	Z	51.9	Formula: P * T [Estimated number of employable (i.e., non-recidivating) TYRO Dads completers times the projected employment rate for TYRO Dads completers after release.
Estimated percentage of employed TYRO Dads completers with child support responsibilities	AA	50%	Source: Based on a sample survey of the 14 TYRO Dads completers with child support obligations employed through a particular business, for which 7 participants had their wages garnished for child support.
Estimated number of employed TYRO Dads completers with child support responsibilities	BB	26	Formula: Z * AA [Employed 2012 TYRO Dads completers times estimated percentage with child support payment obligations]
Estimated annual payments towards child support	CC	$ 3,239	Source: Based on the average monthly child support payments from the seven TYRO Dads completers at the same business times 12 months.
Estimated annual child support payments resulting from employed TYRO Dads completers	**DD**	**$ 84,052**	**Formula: BB * CC [Estimated number of TYRO Dads employees with child support obligations times average estimated monthly wage garnishment]**
Economic Savings: Government Assistance			
Number of TYRO Dads completers released in 2012	G	107	Source: ODRC Release Data
TYRO Dads actual 3-year recidivism rate for re-committing a crime	K	16.4%	Source: ODRC Recidivism Data for TYRO Dads completers from 2008 to 2010
Expected number of TYRO Dads completers who will return to prison within three years	L	17	Formula: G * K [Projected number of recidivists from among TYRO Dads completers]
Estimated number of employable (i.e., non-recidivating) TYRO Dads completers	P	90	Formula: G - L [TYRO Dads completers less projected number of recidivists]
Estimated percentage of pre-TYRO Dads ex-offenders on food stamps	EE	53.5%	Source: Of 168 phone questionnaire respondents, 81 indicated that they received food stamps within 12 months prior to taking TYRO Dads.
Percentage of TYRO Dads completers with earnings above $15,000	FF	80%	Source: Based on follow-up data of TYRO Dads completers indicating that 65 of 80 were earning in excess of $15,171, which is income level for eligibility for food stamps (http://www.benefits.gov/benesits/benesit-details/15888) and thus assumed to no longer be eligible for food stamps
Number of participants no longer requiring food stamps	GG	38	Formula: EE * P * FF [Projected number of TYRO Dads completers receiving food stamps times the projected percentage of TYRO Dads completers with estimated earnings above $15,000 and thus no longer eligible for food stamps.]
Average annual benefits from food stamps per individual	HH	$ 1,601	Source: "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Participation and Costs." USDA Food and Nutrition Service (http://www.fns.usda.gov/pd/SNAPsummary.htm). Based on an individual's projected food stamp costs.
Estimated annual savings in public assistance costs for individuals completing TYRO Dads only from avoided recidivism and improved employment outcomes.	**II**	**$ 61,329**	**Formula: GG * HH [# of TYRO Dads completers that would otherwise be on public assistance times sum of estimated annual food stamp costs]**
Totals: RIDGE Impact/Expenses			
Number of TYRO Dads completers released in 2012	G	107	Source: ODRC Release Data
Estimated economic gains from TYRO Dads programs	JJ	$ 185,700	Formula: Y + DD [Estimated incremental tax revenue gains and child support payments]
Estimated economic savings from TYRO Dads programs	KK	$ 372,291	Formula: N + II [Taxpayer savings in decreased public assistance and decreased incarceration costs]
Estimated economic impact from TYRO Dads Programs	LL	557,991	Formula: JJ + KK [Estimated economic gains plus estimated economic savings]
Estimated economic savings from TYRO Dads programs	MM	$ 178,968	Source: Based on a weighted average of Coast/Completer for Original responsible Fatherhood Grant, Pathways and Re-entry based on the number of graduates from each program that were released from ODRC in 2012
Actual TYRO Dads cost per released graduate	NN	$1,673	Formula: MM / G [Projected allocation of training costs divided by the 107 TYRO Dads completers released in 2012]
Estimated economic impact per graduate of TYRO Dads Programs	**OO**	**$5,215**	**Formula: LL / G [Estimated economic impact (benefits) divided by the 107 TYRO Dads completers released in 2012]**
Totals: ROI			
Comprehensive 1 Year ROI		**312%**	**Formula: LL/MM [(Estimated economic impact from TYTRO Dads program / (Projected allocation of costs for the training of the 107 TYRO Dads completers)**
Total Estimated Economic Impact per $1 Invested in TYRO Dads in Year 1		**$ 3.12**	**Formula: (TYRO Dads financial impact per graduate) / (TYRO Dads cost per graduate)**
Total Estimated Economic Impact per $1 Invested in TYRO Dads in Year 3		**$ 9.35**	**Formula: (TYRO Dads financial impact per graduate) / (TYRO Dads cost per graduate)] *[3 yrs]**
Total Estimated Economic Impact per $1 Invested in TYRO Dads in Year 5		**$ 15.59**	**Formula: (TYRO Dads financial impact per graduate) / (TYRO Dads cost per graduate)] *[5 yrs]**

* some numbers may vary in the analysis due to rounding

RIDGE

RIDGE The Ridge Project

Building a Legacy of Strong Families

The RIDGE Project is firmly committed to expanding the depth and scope of its services as a direct service provider within the state of Ohio. The RIDGE Project is also committed to helping other states implement the TYRO Programming in order to break generational cycles of incarceration and poverty that are the result of the disintegration of families. There are a number of service providers and agencies in other states that have implemented or are in the process of implementing the program, with the RIDGE Project providing training, curriculum sales, and technical assistance. Building strong families is needed to reverse generational incarceration, and The RIDGE Project has been intentional in creating programs to bring effective, transformational, and sustainable services to the most vulnerable families. This work is impacting individuals today and liberating generations for tomorrow.

CONCLUSION

Citizens across the country are concerned because some 700,000 inmates are now returning to society each year, with approximately 21,000 of those returning to Ohio communities annually.[21] The prisoner reentry crisis is especially bad news for the disadvantaged communities to which most ex-prisoners will return. But the news is even worse for those inmates leaving prison.

Most prisoners are unprepared to leave and are unrealistic about their chances to "make it" outside of prison in society. Generally, ex-prisoners do not have the education, skills, or positive social supports necessary to assist them in returning to society. As a result, many ex-prisoners commit new crimes in the first few weeks or months after release.

Research published in 2007 in the New England Journal of Medicine found that during the period immediately following release from prison, deaths among former prisoners were more than 12 times the average for the general population.[22] Furthermore, the death rate for drug overdose among ex-prisoners was 129 times the death rate for comparable citizens. This is why leading experts uniformly agree that the successful reintegration of former prisoners is one of the most formidable challenges facing society today. Indeed, prisoner reentry is a very dangerous time for ex-prisoners as well as society at large.

Ohio, like most states, does not have enough money to "fix the problem." We need a new series of public-private and secular-sacred partnerships that will enlist thousands of new volunteers to assist correctional authorities in the delivery of much needed educational and vocational programs, not only in prisons, but in the communities to which prisoners will be returning. The RIDGE Project's TYRO Dads Program is the perfect example of such an effort and has been working in Ohio prisons for over a decade to reduce recidivism and the substantial human and social costs resulting from it.

The realities of recidivism open a new window of opportunity for society to do something about the mass release of prisoners back into our communities. Shrinking state budgets are making it necessary to consider new approaches that emphasize cooperation between secular and sacred entities in order to help former prisoners remain crime-free after leaving prison. Innovative approaches like those offered through The RIDGE Project will only be successful if many new volunteers and groups are encouraged to partner with governmental agencies in confronting the prisoner reentry crisis.

[21] ODRC Data from FY 2013
[22] Ingrid A. Binswanger, Marc F. Stern, Richard A. Deyo, Patrick J. Heagerty, Allen Cheadle, Joann G. Elmore, and Thomas D. Koespsell (2007). Release from Prison – A High Risk of Death for Former Inmates," New England Journal of Medicine 365: 157-165.

APPENDIX A: METHODOLOGY FOR CALCULATING RECIDIVISM RATES

Recidivism refers to the first return to an ODRC institution for a new crime within a given follow-up period. We follow the ODRC's methodology and employ a three-year follow-up period. [23] The three-year follow-up period is specific to each offender released and depends on their release date. For instance, an offender released on February 2, 2010 will have a three-year follow-up period until February 1, 2013, whereas an offender released on October 10, 2010 will have a three-year follow-up period until October 9, 2013.[24]

All TYRO release cohorts for whom it was possible to compute a three-year follow-up period were included in the sample. Thus, we included all TYRO completers released in 2008, 2009, and 2010. For each of these TYRO completers, we identified any prison admission date for a new crime that was subsequent to their release date. The first of these admission dates was coded as a return for a new crime on the condition that it fell within the offender's three-year follow-up period. Offenders with multiple admission dates within their three-year follow-up period are only counted once. For comparison, we averaged the ODRC's 2008,[25] 2009,[26] and 2010 [27] new crime recidivism rates for males.

[23] ODRC Recidivism Rates Methodology: < http://www.drc.ohio.gov/web/Reports/Recidivism/Recidivism%20Rates%20Methodology.pdf>.
[24] ODRC Recidivism Rates Methodology.
[25] ODRC Key Recidivism Information CY2008 < http://www.drc.ohio.gov/web/Reports/Recidivism/Key%20Recidivism%20Information%20CY2008.pdf>.
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