



HEART RIVER
BRIDGES OF HOPE

Project Pen Pal

It can be scary to be a teenager in corrections, but it is especially stressful in a time of crisis. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, many youth in the juvenile justice system are feeling added weight of uncertainty, isolation, and fear. They have been cut off from face-to-face visits with family members, volunteers, and our congregation. Financial uncertainty and limited community services has created additional barriers for many of their families. Life has been disrupted for all of us, and it disproportionately impacts those on the margins of society. More than ever, our young people are longing for the promise of a future with hope.

We at Heart River Lutheran Church are encouraging congregations across the state of North Dakota and beyond to send encouraging notes to youth at NDYCC. Youth come to NDYCC from all across the state and sometimes even the nation, and they often return to these communities after completing their time in corrections. This is a ministry that truly belongs to all of us, and we cannot do it without your support.

We would love every young person to receive a note from a loving community member at least once a week. Join us in creating a movement of hope!

PROJECT PEN PAL FAQs:

WHAT SHOULD I WRITE?

Notes don't have to be long! Share a word or two of encouragement and reassurance. Tell youth you are praying for them. Remind them they are not forgotten, that they are loved, or that you believe in them. Share a favorite verse from Scripture, quotes, poems, or song lyrics that are giving you hope right now. Simply say "hello" or tell them a bit about yourself and how you are coping with the stress of these days.

WHAT SHOULDN'T I WRITE?

We ask that you don't offer up too much personal information about yourself. You may share the general region or city where you live, but don't give your home address. Sign notes with your first name or something generic: "your sibling in Christ," "a loving community member," etc. You may share general information about what you do for work or school, but please do not give the specific location/name of your workplace.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I KNOW?

Remember, most youth at NDYCC have experienced significant trauma, and more than anything, they simply need to hear that they are loved and not forgotten. Our youth come from a wide variety of ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds. Our purpose is not to convert to any certain religion or way of thinking, but to simply offer encouragement and hope in a difficult time.

Notes will be screened and removed from the original envelope before being distributed to students.

WHERE SHOULD I SEND NOTES?

Heart River Lutheran Church
attn: Project Pen Pal
701 16th Ave SW
Mandan, ND 58554

WHO CAN I CONTACT FOR MORE INFO?

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