

Adopt an Inmate

Summer 2016



Art by TX inmate RKWilliams



Hey, Boo

This issue marks our fourth quarterly newsletter, which means we are winding up our first full year of articles, resources, artwork, and news from AI.

What a pleasure it has been to prepare and publish this for you, our angel community.

One year ago we were just getting ready to launch our website. We've been quiet about this bit of news – but can share now that soon we'll be re-launching the site, with a whole new look, some added features, and easy ways to get involved. If you haven't already, please sign up [here](#) to receive AI updates, so you won't miss any news or updates.

In this issue you'll find our regular features, articles, and book reviews, and we've added pages, to include more of the beautiful work we've received over the past three months.

Our Wish List has also been updated (see page 8); please do look it over in case you or someone you know might be able to help with any of those needs.

We couldn't be more pleased to welcome our new angel volunteer Debbie, who has been tirelessly

helping with the mail – folding, stuffing, stamping, labeling and logging. Because of her help, we have mailed out over 500 letters and surveys in the month of June alone.

Angels Nancee, Leah, and Katie continue to provide enormous

support behind the scenes, and my heart bursts with deep love and affection for each of you in your dedication to our mission.

Our thanks also go out to our stamp donors, Barb B., Donna, Judy, Jim, Jessica, and Ruth, you rock!

Because mountains of backlogged mail remain unanswered - it's time again for a [stamp drive](#)! Some of our favorite stamps are still available – and there are also some new ones since the last drive: planets, Sarah Vaughn, classic pickup trucks, and ice cream treats ☺. These little splashes of color make a letter even more appreciated. This is an easy way to support the most fundamental part of our work. One book of stamps ensures that forty inmates hear their name at mail call. Please give and share to help us respond to all who continue to await our reply. Order from [USPS.com](#) and enter our mailing address, or drop a book or two in the mail:



Adopt an Inmate
PO Box 1543
Veneta, OR 97487

We are appreciative beyond measure for all of you – family, friends, and advocates of inmates. Our Adopt an Inmate family continues to grow, with a steady stream of new volunteer adopters, and thus a steady stream of once-forgotten inmates, who now have reason to be hopeful – all because they got a letter.

Watch our blog to read some very inspiring stories we'll be sharing in the next weeks from both adopters and adoptees. Also please consider sharing your own stories (email to melissabee@adoptaninmate.org).

As always, much love and peace,

Melissa

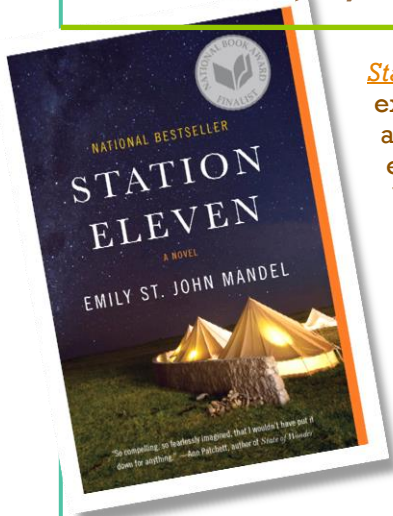
She-EO, Adopt an Inmate
melissabee@adoptaninmate.org



I have seen and met angels wearing the disguise of ordinary people leading ordinary lives. - Tracy Chapman

Books

Most facilities require that books for inmates be sent directly from the bookseller (Amazon is always safe). If you're thinking of sending a book this month, consider one of the following:

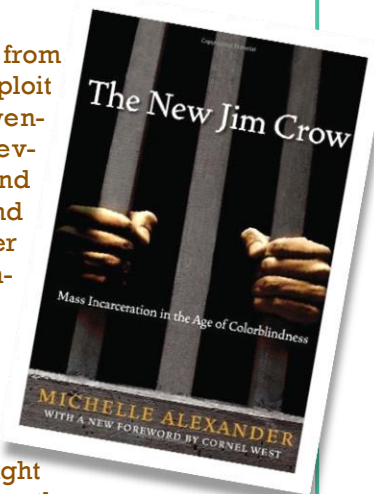


Station Eleven by Emily St. John Mandel is one of those books that is so well-conceived and executed that you are sad when there's no more to read. After reading so many post-apocalyptic novels, many which barely bother to explain what caused society's collapse, I expected another contrived and unimaginative version of *The Hunger Games* or *Divergent*. While I did enjoy both afore-mentioned series', this standalone far surpasses either in both imagination and quality of prose. St. John Mandel draws us into a horrifying and totally plausible world-wide catastrophe and then through ingenious flashbacks and historical reference sews together a tale that is as rich as any great myth. Mandel leaves nothing undone in this novel that needed to be sewn up. Everything has its place, making me hungry for anything else she may have written. Five stars.

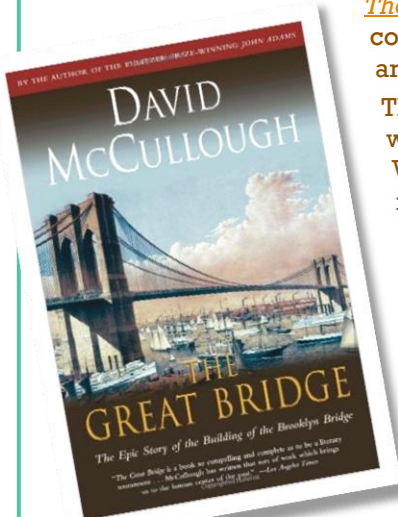
See the [full review](#) by Rick Fisk, TDCJ, Dalhart, TX, on our May 6th blog post.

Michelle Alexander, a civil rights attorney and law professor at Ohio State University, starts from the beginning by illustrating the political and economic motivations by those in power to exploit and subjugate blacks and poor people from seventeenth century North American slavery to twenty-first century mass incarceration. She makes this provocative case by providing compelling evidence through a social and historical narrative that is driven by greed, political power, and economic advantage. If I were a skeptic, her book would at the very least cause me to pause and reconsider my position. Alexander argues her stance as though she were a seasoned lawyer (which she is) presenting her case to a biased jury that she knew would not see it her way unless she presented a masterful argument to win them over -- and she does.

I found *The New Jim Crow* to be both incredibly insightful yet profoundly disheartening. It bears the naked ugly truth of America's ongoing struggle to accept and treat groups of people as equal participants in our diverse society. This book forces its readers to view an insidious, corrupt system -- which is driven by politics and money -- that confines, disenfranchises, and discriminates against millions of its citizens through a more cynical lens; one that we thought we had moved on from since 1865. For anyone who is affected by or interested in understanding the many tenets that have shaped our system of mass incarceration, I strongly encourage you to read this book -- then give it to ten friends to read!



See the [full review](#) by Martin Lockett, OSCI, Salem, OR, on our July 1st blog post.



The Great Bridge is an extraordinary book. It tells the tale of how the Brooklyn Bridge was conceived and built. As is the case with other McCullough works, it is superbly crafted and reads as well as any great work of fiction.

The main focus of the book is the bridge, but it is about the fascinating human beings who made the bridge possible. Designed originally by John A. Roebling, it was his son Washington who completed it, along with his incredible wife Emily -- as unlikely a story in the Victorian era as one might encounter.

One of the reasons I found the book so fascinating was the great love and respect Washington and Emily showed each other, culminating in Emily's selfless dedication to Washington after he suffered physical catastrophe during the bridge's construction. Besides the Roeblings, the cast of characters involved with the bridge contains a who's who of New York's political and industrial giants, including A.C. Barnes (whom you might associate with today's Barnes & Noble), Seth Low (two-term mayor of Brooklyn, and one-term mayor of New York), and William Marcy Tweed (the infamous "Boss" Tweed of Tammany Hall). Tangentially even Henry Ward Beecher had a part to play.

See the [full review](#) by Rick Fisk, TDCJ, Dalhart, TX, on our June 30th blog post



Ripples

by Leah Patterson

Hello Fellow Angels,

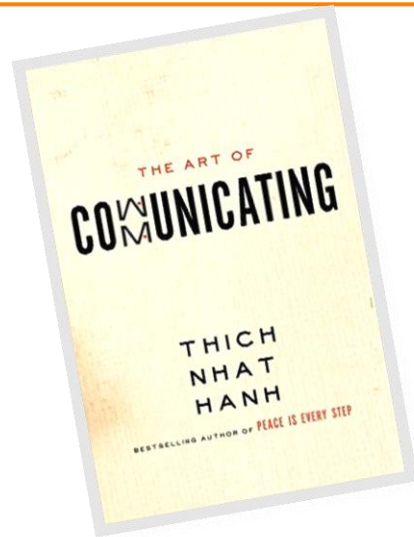
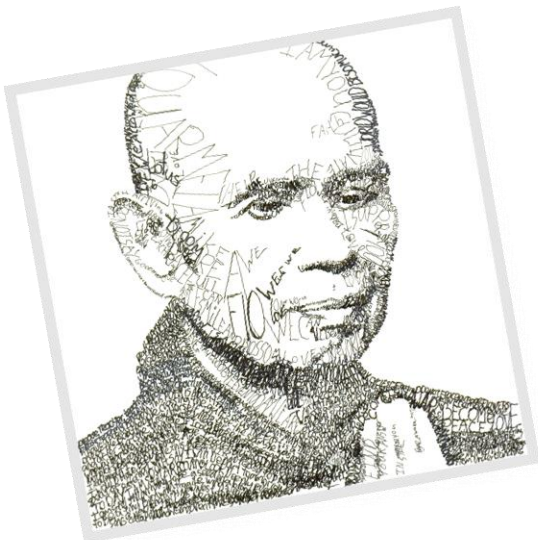
I don't know about you, but quite often I am composing letters to my friends in my head. I read something, or see a quote on FaceBook or something happens that I want to tell them about. I hope I'm not the only one!

I just started reading [The Art of Communicating](#) by Thich Nhat Hanh.

I stopped at the beginning of the first section because it moved me so much and I automatically wanted to share about it. He writes:

Nothing can survive without food. Everything we consume acts either to heal us or to poison us. We tend to think of nourishment only as what we take in through our mouths, but what we consume with our eyes, our ears, our noses, our tongues and our bodies is also food. The conversations going on around us, and those we participate in, are also food. Are we consuming and creating the kind of food that is healthy for us and helps us grow?

When we say something that nourishes us and uplifts the people around us, we are feeding love and compassion. When we speak and act in a way that causes tension and anger, we are nourishing violence and suffering. [...]



What you read and write can help you heal, so be thoughtful about what you consume. When you write an email or a letter that is full of understanding and compassion, you are nourishing yourself during the time you write that letter. Even if it's just a short note, everything you're writing down can nourish you and the person to whom you are writing.

This really got me thinking about the letters I write. I've always worked to keep my letters positive, compassionate, non-judgmental and loving in the hopes that I am helping the person I am writing to, even if only to bring a little bit of light to the cell that they currently have to call home. What I didn't think about is that by doing so, I was also bringing healing, or nourishment, to myself.

In sharing this wonderful thought with you, it is my hope that you can bring healing to your loved ones and yourself in your conversations and correspondence.

Love & Light!

Leah



Art in Prison

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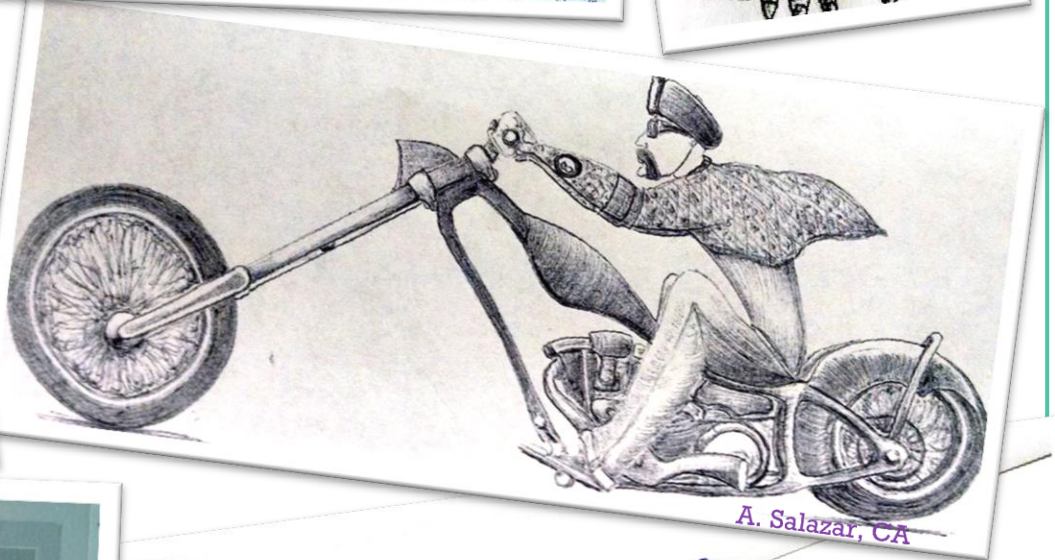
I'm convinced that every molecule in the universe is an affirmation from God; ART is one way we as inmates can use to express that notion
- Multi-media artist, Ben Ballard, CA



R. Winson, CA



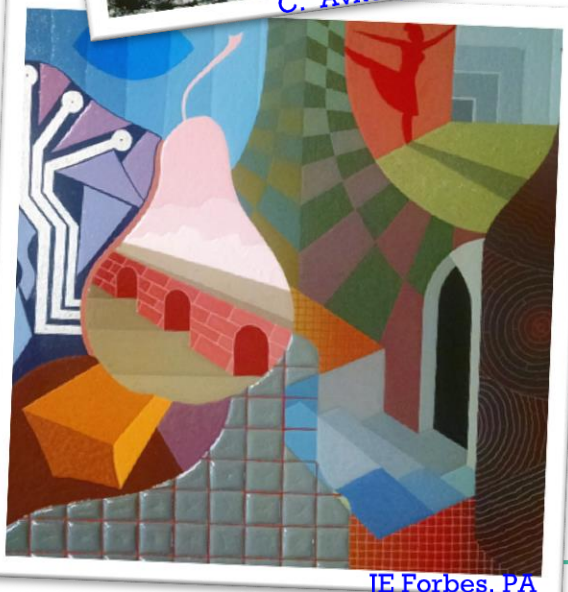
O. Ayala, CA



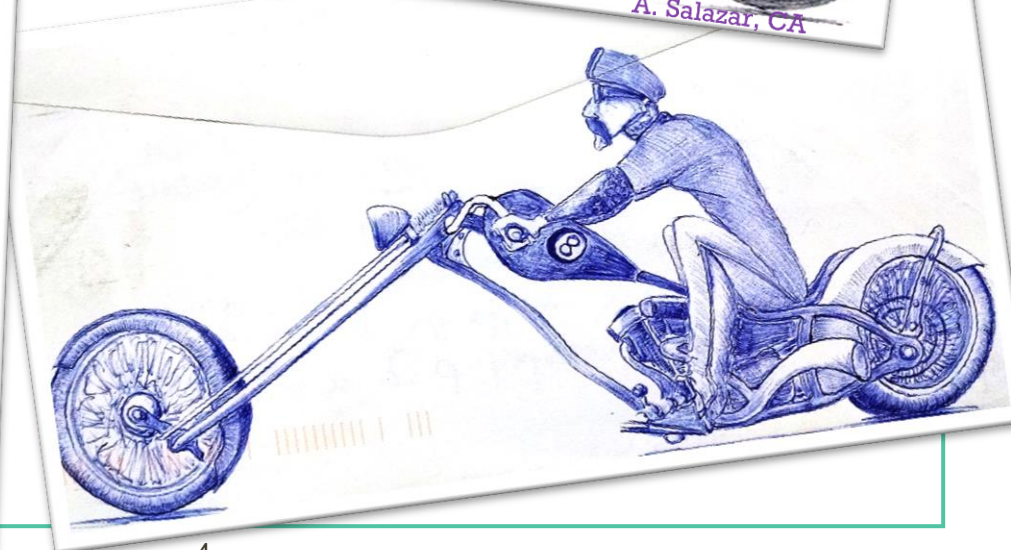
A. Salazar, CA



C. Avitea, CA



JE Forbes, PA



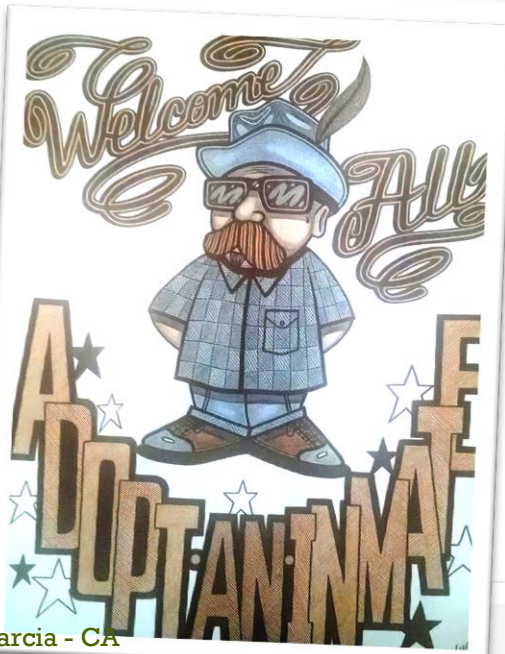
Art in Prison



C. Miles, CA



M Garcia - CA



WL Casey - VA



B. Ballard, CA



T. Maher, GA

Spiritual & Educational Resources for Inmates

The Correspondence Course & Self-Study Course for prisoners is sponsored and administered by the Buddhist Association of the United States (Chuang Yen Monastery). Both Courses cover the same material and differ only in the manner in which the student takes them.

The Courses consist of a series of reading assignments and practice in Buddhist meditation and mindfulness training. Written questions are asked on the material covered in each assignment that will test not only the student's understanding of the material, but also their thoughts on how the material may be applicable to their life. Contact info below.

For inmates:

Buddhist Correspondence Course
c/o Rev. Richard Baksa, 2020 Route 301, Carmel, NY 10512

For advocates and supporters on the outside:

rbaksa@mac.com



For TDCJ Inmates: Malas are one item that Buddhist prisoners are allowed to receive. But the TDCJ rules for them are very specific. Malas must be 108 bead malas (not the short 29-bead ones), they must be made of black beads no wider than 3/8 of an inch (9.4 mm in diameter) and must be strung on cotton thread. Contact the unit chaplain to find out about sending a mala to an inmate.

Inside Dharma

PO Box 220721, Kirkwood MO 63122

Inmates can request subscription to Inside Dharma newsletter; group also has pen pal program.

The Insight Prison Project

PO Box 151642

San Rafael, CA 94915

IPP is based out of the Spirit Rock Meditation Center and its volunteers are happy to correspond with prisoners and discuss Buddhist issues as pen pals.

Also through IPP, For San Quentin Inmates: **The Work**

This is a cognitive restructuring class wherein students learn to employ critical thinking to become aware of "self-talk" and to re-frame thinking errors that impact one's emotional well-being and behavior. Based on the work of Bryon Katie and the notion that much of one's thinking if left unexamined can be distorted or faulty, and what causes anger, upset or depression is most often how a person views and interprets circumstances.

[Click here for more information about The Work at San Quentin.](#)

The Aleph Institute (Judaism)

9540 Collins Avenue, Surfside FL 33154

Spark of Light Prison program provides Torahs as well as other books and items to Jewish prisoners. Also provides materials to chaplains to help inmates observe holidays.

The Lionheart Foundation

PO Box 170115, Boston, MA 02117

National Emotional Literacy Project for Prisoners provides free copies (in English and Spanish) of *Houses of Healing: A Prisoner's Guide to Inner Power and Freedom* to libraries, prison staff, and chaplains, as well as to prisoners who cannot afford a copy; also trains staff to run the program. The project helps prisoners evaluate their life experiences and decision-making patterns.

Prisoner Express

127 Anabel Taylor Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca NY 14853

Provides books and supports a themed writing project, correspondence courses in history and math.

California Coalition for Women Prisoners

1540 Market St., Suite 490, San Francisco, CA 94102

Offers newsletter *The Fire Inside* for female inmates.

The Graduate Group

PO Box 370351, West Hartford CT 06137-0351

Commercial publisher that prints prisoner self-help books about preparing for life after prison and building self-esteem.

KJV Bible Study Correspondence Course

5311 Windridge Lane, Lockhart, FL 32810

Each lesson contains a summary of the subject, scripture verses to research, an average of 20 questions, a true/false section, and scripture memorization.

Who Am I?

I am greatness that at times appears as failure...

I am remarkable strength that is sometimes masked by traces of weakness...

I am powerful beyond measure even though I often see with eyes too focused on limitation...

I am the possibility of awareness and enlightenment, striving to love and to forgive myself and others.

I aspire to be the peace I seek, and to live in a place of gratitude.

I am the energy of my thoughts, actions, and deeds...

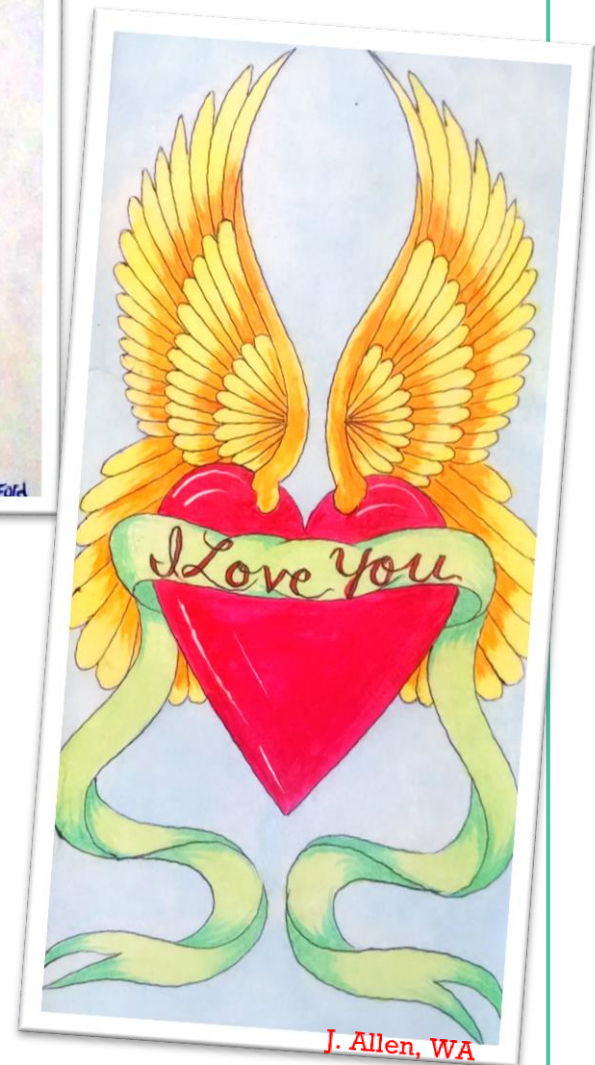
Created in alignment with the spirit of magnificence and perfection.

I am the hope that believes everything is possible...

And so I am.

~Unknown (Submitted by M. Woolford, TX)

M. Alford, OR





My Side of the Wall

by Raven Feather



To our loved ones behind the wall:

You are the first thing we think of in the morning. We eat breakfast together. We drive to work together. We hear you in our thoughts as the sun dances throughout the day. Our mind continually thinks of you.

You are more than a name and a number to us. We listen to people who have poor opinions of you, people that tell us to leave you, people who question why we stay by your side.

The answer is simple. Whether the person behind the wall is your child, sister, brother, mother, father or spouse, he or she is still your friend. They are something to someone. Everybody needs a friend. A true friend does not give up when someone is down, they will look conflict in the face, take the challenge and move on, helping their friend with the load they have to carry.

We fight for you against public opinion, against corrupt government officials turning a deaf ear. We call on organizations that would like to help,

but can't due to lack of funding. We reach out to lawyers that will help but charge a ton of money, so you can make *their* house payment, while we struggle to live - and help you.

We will continue to fight for you, trying to find anyone who will listen. Please know, sometimes its like running into a brick wall over and over again.

You should know we care more than you think. We too have a sentence right along with you. We are scared you will give up on us as well; scared you'll lose hope. Please don't. We are doing all we can for you. You are in all our thoughts, all our hopes, and all our dreams.

We now come home together at the end of this long day to relax. When we lie down at night you are there with us. We remember the good times - before the concrete and steel - the smiles, the laughter. You are the last thing we think of with our tears on the pillow at night, missing you. We will continue to be there with you until you are home. We love you.



AI is looking for help with the following:

- Book reviews from inmates
- Artwork from inmates
- Volunteers from each state to maintain facility and DOC information
- Translating our inmate survey into Spanish (Word format)
- Adopters who speak and write Spanish
- Adopters of all faiths (Jewish, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, etc.)
- Service men and women to write to inmate veterans
- Handmade items by inmates for our online store
- Local (Eugene, OR area) volunteers to help process the mail
- *We always need stamps!*

Send submissions and donations to:

Adopt an Inmate
PO Box 1543
Veneta, OR 97487

Or email: submit@adoptainmate.org