

# The Three R's Project: Reading Reduces Recidivism

Whereas at least one quarter of the 27 state prison libraries are closed altogether for lack of a librarian and the remaining libraries are in a state of deterioration with no budget for books and magazines,

Whereas research has shown a strong connection between any kind of educational program in penal institutions and reduction in recidivism;

The Three R's project seeks to create political pressure on the State of Illinois to provide the means to keep prison libraries open and supplied with current materials.

We seek also to improve the situation by means of chapters of community volunteers near the state prisons that can facilitate the access to reading materials and other educational tools/programs.

\*Currently, the organizations in this young project are Urbana-Champaign Books to Prisoners, the Interfaith Alliance of Champaign-Urbana, First Mennonite Church, McKinley Social Action Committee, the Urbana-Champaign Friends' Meeting, the Volunteer Illini Project, "Stateville Speaks" (the prison newspaper), and Youth Advocate Programs, Adult Division, Chicago, and the Champaign-Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice.

Requests of IYM June Meeting:

- 1) Request for IYM endorsement of the Three R's. This would entail distribution of materials to membership and communication with your Meetings' own State Representatives and Illinois State Senators to achieve funding to maintain circulation libraries at every state prison
  
- 2) Encouragement of Meetings to explore the possibilities of working with your nearest prison, or even a county jail, to channel donations for needed materials - books/dictionaries, magazine subscriptions, seeds for community gardens, videos for Story Book Project - to that one institution. This lets inmates know that they are not forgotten, but are still part of the community. U-C Books to Prisoners can serve as a resource to help you get a small group started and to involve support from IDOC where needed.

\* \* \* \* \*

For supporting materials, see the Prison Library Survey and map of prison locations throughout Illinois (in session notebooks and online).