

The Blueprint

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The Stephenson County Jail

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Master Builder Jail Ministries

Changing The World One
Inmate At A Time

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Fatherhood Initiative Begins With Malachi Dads

On July 16, twelve Stephenson County Jail inmates graduated from a new program established by Master Builder in partnership with Stephenson County.

"I began thinking about my Dad who was absent when I was growing up and about my son and how different his life has been because I was always there," said Chaplain Michael Sowell, director of the program. "What if we give a father who would be absent the skills and focus to be the kind of father God wants in every family? That's the purpose of Malachi Dads and our overall fatherhood initiative."

The program is named for a passage in the fourth chapter of Malachi: "And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers." The curriculum is based on a proven method first developed at Louisiana's notorious Angola Prison by the Awana organization. Local volunteers focus on five areas of training—fathering, spiritual, educational, moral and vocational—to help detainees prepare to build a stronger family after they are released. The program also has a proven track record in Rockford, where Chaplain Sowell graduated 200 inmates in two years.

Studies show the children of inmates are seven times more

likely to be incarcerated than their peer group, but programs like Malachi Dads are designed to reduce that rate and the recidivism rate of fathers.

Previously, eight men had graduated from the class on April 16. Two of the graduates spoke with the Freeport Journal-Standard about their experience.

Cody Saxby, a father of two, spoke about the way the curriculum helped him address grief and anger over the loss of two of his other children and "express [those feelings] constructively." "The program was very moving," he told the Journal-Standard. "It opened my eyes to a lot of new perspectives in the way a person should be handling their role as a father and husband."

Cordarrell Wright agreed: "I got a lot out of the class. It really helped me to understand how to become a better dad and a better person."

Other certificate programs for inmates—including a GED program—will be launched in the near future. These inmate programs are part of a broader fatherhood initiative for the Freeport area being carried out by Master Builder and Faith Center Freeport.

"We want to change our community one inmate and family at a time," Chaplain Sowell said.

Local Grocery Store Glick's Triangle to Reopen as Joseph's Training Center and Train Ex-Offenders

Glick's Triangle was a fixture of Freeport's Piety Hill neighborhood for decades, serving not just as a local store but as a local landmark.

Sadly, the passing of its owner and proprietor caused the family to consider other options for the property. Fortunately, this gave Faith Center Freeport an opportunity to purchase the Triangle, and, in partnership with Master Builder Ministries, convert it for vital neighborhood ministry.

"We greatly appreciate the Glick family's kindness and willingness to work with us closely on this project," said Master Builder Executive Director Michael Sowell. "We know this will have a positive impact on the community because our plan is to use ministry models that have worked before."

The Glick's facility has been renamed Joseph's Training Center. Planned programs include addiction recovery for men, job and fatherhood training and mentoring. Case management for ex-inmates will also be available. All services are free of charge to any person in need and are part of a process designed to deliver "a hand up, not a hand out."

Job training and job search assistance for former inmates will be



Volunteers pose during a renovation workday at Glick's Triangle in Freeport's Piety Hill neighborhood

strongly emphasized. "It's been said the best social program is a job," Sowell said. "Ex-inmates sometimes lack the skills to get a good, family-supporting job even if the employer is willing to look past their conviction. We'll mentor them so they can develop their God-given abilities, find good work and put the mistakes of the past behind them."

In addition to Joseph's Training Center, the building will feature rental apartments which will provide a revenue stream for the ministry.

Faith Center Freeport volunteers assisted by ex-inmates have readied the building for a full renovation over several dedicated workdays. Funds are being raised for the next stage of work.

Master Builder Banquet to feature Murph the Surf

How does a jewel thief and murderer become an ordained minister, evangelist and crusader for prison reform? Only the power of Jesus Christ can explain such a change.

Jack "Murph the Surf" Murphy (so called because of his surfing championships) was involved in what was then known as "The Jewel Heist of the Century" when he stole The Star of India and other jewels worth over \$2 million from the J.P. Morgan collection in the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. Murphy was eventually sentenced to life in prison in Florida for a murder, and it was as an inmate that he faced the cold reality that his life needed to change. He gave his life to Christ and has spent the years since ministering to prisoners, first on the inside and then (after being paroled) as a speaker for prison ministries.

Murphy will share his fascinating life history and the work of God in prisons as our guest at the 1st Annual Master Builder Banquet on November 30th in Freeport. The banquet will raise funds for new inmate and ex-offender programs being launched in Stephenson County. For further information, call 815-978-0715 or visit masterbuilderjailministries.com



Rebuild Lives With A Donation to Master Builder

Changing the life of a single inmate can change a family, a neighborhood or even whole communities for eternity. Please support this vital work with a financial donation today.

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☐ I wish to sponsor textbooks for the Malachi Dads program (\$20/book) \$_____

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