



A literacy program helping incarcerated parents stay connected with their children

IN THE NEWS

Fall 2023

Vol. 7, No. 2

"Literacy is a bridge from misery to hope." —Kofi Annan

Active in Antrim!

Remain in Touch is excited to announce the launch of its literacy program in Antrim County as of August 2023. The Antrim County Jail is the third correctional facility in Northwest Michigan to partner with Remain in Touch. We are delighted to expand our reach, helping more incarcerated parents connect with their children through literacy.

Five new facilitators are on board to volunteer their time and expertise in the Antrim County Jail. During their visits, they meet with eligible inmates, guide them through book selection, and help them record greetings and readings to send to their children.



Already, the facilitators and inmates are offering positive feedback regarding their experiences at Antrim County Jail:

"Seeing the happiness in the inmates was touching. You can tell they have a special connection with their children and miss them a lot. Having a way to stay connected is appreciated. One of the inmates laughed while he was reading and I thought how wonderful for his son to hear his laugh. He even talked about their dog when a dog was in the book. I hope to stay involved for some time...it's very rewarding." —J. S., Facilitator

"I remember very few instances when I have been received with more gratitude and graciousness. So very rewarding." —M. C., Facilitator

"This really makes a difference for me and for Conner." —an Antrim inmate

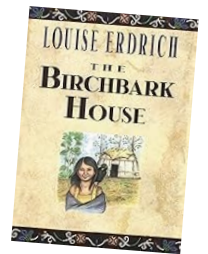
We are grateful for the warm welcome we have received in Antrim County. The jail personnel are supportive, and our facilitators are terrific. We could not have anticipated a smoother launch. **Thank you Antrim County!**

BOOK DONATIONS GALORE

Support of **Remain in Touch** programs is offered in a variety of ways, including volunteering, donating, or simply spreading the word about the positive impact our work has on families affected by incarceration. A major boost for our program has been the donation of books by individuals and partner organizations.

In every newsletter we have featured our partnerships with **Brilliant Books** in Traverse City and **Bay Books** in Suttons Bay. We can't say enough about the impact these bookstores have had on our program. They continue to promote **Remain in Touch** and funnel individual book donations our way. Since March of this year, we have received 101 books collectively, valued at over \$1,175. Thank you to all the donors who responded to these bookstore promotions on our behalf!

The Potter's House School in Grand Rapids, Michigan also donated books including *The Birchbark House*, the first in a series chronicling the life of an Ojibwe family. We are delighted to add this title to our book carts in keeping with our commitment to cover a variety of interests among the diverse population of inmates and families we serve. Part of



The Potter's House School vision is to be "a place to continue fostering deep relationships with all in our community." Even from afar, they are fulfilling their vision and we are grateful.



Brilliant Books and **Bay Books** support Remain in Touch by featuring us periodically and offering a 20% discount on every book purchased for our program. Complete age-appropriate booklists for our **0-12** and **13-18** programs are always available in-store or online at Brilliant Books in Traverse City and in-store at Bay Books in Suttons Bay. We are ever-grateful for these partners!

- Children develop literacy skills long before they read.
- Young children who are read to regularly have a larger vocabulary, a stronger foundation of language awareness, and literacy skills at a younger age.
- Children who are read to regularly by family members experience social-emotional gains and an increased likelihood of overall school success.

Supporting Children Who Have an Incarcerated Parent

In June 2016, the federal government hosted a listening session with youth from across the country who have or have had an incarcerated parent. The listening session brought together 19 youth, ages 15 to 23, with a diverse range of experiences to discuss the challenges they had during their parent's incarceration and their ideas for how the government could better support them and their families. One of the outcomes of the session was a [tip sheet](#) written by the youth. It provides practical advice for service providers for how to help children and youth who have incarcerated parents. **Here are a few things the youth want us to know:**

- We love our parents, even though they have made mistakes. We miss them during:
 - Big events like having the parent there for holidays and graduation
 - Small activities like having the parent there to help with homework and going to our sporting event
 - Everyday opportunities for having a parent as a role model
- We are misjudged by many and negatively judged because of our parent(s) or our parent's actions
- We are not different from other youth in that we are young people, too, with the same needs and wants:
 - To be loved
 - To have support
 - To be successful
 - To have friends

Here is one of the changes the youth would like to see: *More frequent and less expensive opportunities to communicate.* "Services provided to parents while in prison can help children remain connected with their parents and provide parents with the opportunity to interact positively with their children¹." That's what **Remain in Touch** is all about!

You may find the full [tip sheet](#) at this link: https://youth.gov/sites/default/files/COIP-TipSheet-Providers_Final.pdf

¹<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/children-of-incarcerated-parents/services-and-supports-children-and-families>



While we continue to admire the dedication of *all* our volunteer facilitators, we were surprised to learn that not even the temporary need for crutches would keep one of our facilitators away from her scheduled visit to the Benzie County Jail. Now that's commitment!



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Caring Contributors

Remain in Touch is in grateful receipt of these recent gifts:

- **St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, Peace & Justice Committee**, Beulah—\$275
- **Suttons Bay Congregational Church**—\$1,000
- **Rotary Club of Traverse Bay Sunrise**—\$1,000
- **Grand Traverse Regional Community Foundation Diversity, Equity, Inclusion Fund**—\$1500
- **Matching funds** generated by individual contributors through **Suttons Bay-Leelanau County Rotary Club, Blackbaud Giving Fund, and Network for Good**
- **All the individual donors** who generously contribute to the **Remain in Touch** literacy program

Thank You!

Thank you, [Bellaire Public Library](#) for hosting a community awareness program introducing members of the Antrim community to **Remain in Touch** and our newly offered programs in their local jail.

Visit our [website](#) for:

- a complete list of our partners & supporters
- the latest news about Remain in Touch
- a description of our program
- numerous ways that you can help
- secure online donation via PayPal
- a link to our complete booklists for ages 0-12 and 13-18 at Brilliant Books

Donate

Your generous support provides hope for incarcerated parents and their children! Please invest in a better future by donating online at :

www.remainintouch.org

or make your check payable to *Remain in Touch* and mail it to:

Remain in Touch
P.O. Box 553
Suttons Bay, MI 49682
Ph: 231-499-0606

Email:
contactus@remainintouch.org



Thank you!

