

**Tennessee Community Resource Board  
Riverbend Maximum Security Institute  
May 3, 2019**

**TCRB Representatives:**

Rev. Michael Rickenbaker, Chairman / West TN Representative (P)  
Mario Allen, Member / West TN Representative (P)  
Vinessa J. Brown, Member / West TN Representative (A)  
Paul Hensley, Member / West TN Representative (A)  
Thurston S. Smith, Member / West TN Representative (A)  
J.R. Davis, Member / Middle TN Representative (P)  
Joan Evrist, Secretary / Middle TN Representative (A)  
Tom Hallquist, Treasurer / Middle TN Representative (P)  
Ronda Waters, Member / Middle TN Representative (P)  
Tommy Mathis, Member / Middle TN Representative (A)  
Sean Driscoll, Member / East TN Representative (A)  
Raeanne Hance, Member / East TN Representative (A)  
Lee Ragsdale, Member / East TN Representative (P)  
Brian Bishop, Member / East TN Representative (A)  
Rep. William Lamberth, House Representative (A)

**TDOC Representatives:**

Dr. Eduardo Rocha, Interim Director, Religious & Volunteer Services (P)  
Richard Jennings, Volunteer Assistant Chaplain (P)  
Cindy Sword, Assistant to Religious & Volunteer Services Director (P)  
Ed Welch, Assistant Commissioner of Rehabilitation Services (P)

**Guests:**

Vicki Helgesen, Leaving The Cocoon

**Call To Order (9:12 a.m.) – Ronda Waters**

**Prayer – Chaplain Richard Jennings**

- Luke 7:11-17
- Vision – How do we see people? Jesus saw the widow and had compassion on her. In our roles, whatever they are, do we see people the way that Jesus does? How is our vision?
- Psalm 46:10 – Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!
- Responses
  - Ed Welch – Do we really see them? Not just about numbers. And they see us, so we need to see them as well and reach out to them.
  - Mario Allen – From an ex-offender perspective – the way you see people is so valuable. As Vice Chair of the Board, sometimes I still feel small even though I've been on the Board for 15 years. I want to open our eyes to how people feel when they get out.
  - Lee Ragsdale – Our loyalties should be to the volunteers. We come in to advocate for the department needs and for the volunteers. I believe everyone here does this, but

looking at beyond what those who are incarcerated did – it's not who they are. They are children of God – keep that in focus and help them with that. To serve them, the department, and God.

- Tom Hallquist – This organization is about volunteers. And our concern should be them and the inmates as well.
- Mario Allen – Speaking for the ex-offenders, I hope to provide a sense of how they feel and how they think – as a return citizen and ex-offender.
- J.R. Davis – Mario, help us to change the verbiage. Commissioner Welch has tried to change the culture and language (i.e., ex-offenders – saying men, women instead, for example). Mario, you're a free man. The thing I fight with my guys about is getting rid of that scarlet letter. People like Mario walk the walk and talk the talk. We have to keep that conversation going to help change the verbiage.
- Mario Allen – It makes such a difference when we have people who love and support me. It makes all the difference in how confident people are when coming out of the prison.
- Ed Welch – What J.R. said – we're all brothers and sisters here regardless of working for TCRB or TDOT. We don't regulate or authorize you – we're equal partners in public safety and resource Board. The culture is changing, but we have to start with our language. Mario – I see you and hear you. We all have a right to be seen and heard. Being able to speak how we feel is so important. We are allies. We are challenged to do really important work together. All walking in the same direction. I encourage everyone to share your voice and opinion – you will be heard. I will bring your message to the Commissioner – I need to bring solutions, not problems.

## **Welcome & Introductions** – Michael Rickenbaker

### **Review and Approve Minutes of Previous Meeting**

- Motion made by Mario Allen.
- Seconded motion J.R. Davis.
- All approve.

### **TCRB Overview** – Michael Rickenbaker, Tom Hallquist

- Michael Rickenbaker – This Board is an advisory board. Names have been changed through generations, but we are still an advisory board. We have seen a change in terminology but have not seen change in our role. I'd like to ask Tom Hallquist to greet us and talk with us a bit about his vision for TCRB.
- Tom Hallquist – This is a hectic time of year for people in education with finals, graduation, etc., and change is hard. We have to come up with concepts on how to better represent this Board to TDOC, inmates, etc. What is our role? What is our function? What is the purpose of this organization? When it comes down to time for a retreat, we can reflect more on our role so we don't reinvent the wheel – assisting organizations (like TDOC) the way we are meant to. There are so many things that have potential for change as an advisory board. Where do we see ourselves in the future?
- J.R. Davis – I would like for us not just meet every quarter, but at the end of the year talk about tangible changes we've seen and see making in the coming year. For example, having Asst. Commissioner Welch and Chaplain Rocha as advocates to tell us what we can do and can't do –

for example, our state wide badges (how long they took). Dr. Rocha and the Rev. broke through what was needed to get badges done. If they're not here, we have limitations. I believe that the TDOC appreciates volunteers, but the breakdown is at individual prisons – there are inconsistencies from prison to prison. Part of this Board is to bring these issues up. But, also to recommend solutions to the TDOC. I believe that's where we should spend our time. After a year, we should be able to look back to see what has been accomplished. Our purpose is the same – we want these men and women to come out of prison as productive parts of society. This Board was put together to do just that.

- Tom Hallquist – We see what's happening as those who go into the prison so I agree with reporting back to the TDOC and offering solutions.
- Vicki Helgesen – I think a part of the problem is retaliation (having badges removed) – I don't know why this is.
- Michael Rickenbaker – As we deal with the TCRB overview, our goal is to assist, our goal is to help. That must be done in a fashion where communication is open and regular and there are defined channels through which we work. One of the challenges I've seen is the constant change that we see within the recent years. For example, the contact person from TDOC to the TCRB. By the time we have that person and are becoming familiar with them, things change again. I value the great service that TDOC provides to the inmates, the public and to the Board. We want you to help us help you. I think if we could be more communicative with one another, that will greatly help. If we could have a liaison in different areas of TDOC, perhaps that would help. What lies at the heart of this for me is the fact that I know when an inmate's heart and mind is changed, their behavior changes. Whether it's education or a religious service – we want to help that happen. For that to happen, we need the people in this room who are our trained volunteers across TN who have been incredible in successful reintegration of inmates into society in their respective fields. That's the goal. Most of them are coming in through our churches. For example, with Take One, that was the goal – to solicit churches who would partner with the inmate to disciple them so that they don't come back into the system. Case in point for that one goal (Take One), what I have tried to accomplish and what I think has been very important since Take One was introduced, is that this Board has resources (i.e., Men of Valor, Leaving the Cocoon, mentoring, books, resources, etc.). If we are going to do successful Take One matching, then let's give the mentors the tools they need to make it a successful partnership. If we can train the churches and the mentors/mentees, we will see more successful outcomes.
- Lee Ragsdale – As someone who has sat on both sides of the table. We've had this same conversation for a long time. Who are we and why are we here – to assist volunteers, TDOC, incarcerated and released. How do we do that? What are the major functions that we're supposed to do? We are advocates for the people in prison, and those who have been released, and the volunteers. We have made some improvements in that regard mainly because of the people at TDOC. We need an education function – to educate TDOC about the needs we see and hear about what the TDOC sees. Allowing them to tell us what they see would be a help. Innovation Development and Implementation function – if we come into agreement on the types of programming that needs to be done, then we need to be able to do that as a group. Finally, because every program you put in place needs to be evaluated, we need to know if programming is working. For example, in the East, when the church comes on for Take One, we do an education program with them. We also have them go and meet with their mentee. To do all of this, we need people broken down into specialties – training on the ideals and the

practicalities. How we organize to do that is the next step. We had talked about (years ago) the LCRBs meeting and have a TCRB member being a part of that to bring things to the TCRB meeting. So that work is being done in between the meetings. This TCRB did the first faith and corrections conference. It was difficult, so we tried to do regional faith and corrections conferences. We can take these points from our vision to assist – what our functions are and how we implement them.

### **Purpose Driven Education – Tom Hallquist**

- Tom Hallquist – Let's ask – what is the purpose of having GED programs in the prison system?
- Ed Welch – Education changes peoples' lives.
- Tom Hallquist – What else? Some people say, so they can get a job. The whole essence of my presentation in January in Washington was changing the mindset of the public to accept inmates, to change the mindset of the politicians to get something done, and changing the mindset of the inmates. My number one message to Washington was don't act too fast just for public relations – make sure it's done right. What is education? Continuous learning. The difficulty I'm having is that change takes so much time. Several years ago, I went to Eric Qualls with a practical purpose driven education plan – to give them education, but give them hope, give them goals. The role of education is to prepare, but what we have to do is change the mindset that change can be done if we offer solutions and not just problems – this is where I'm trying to get to with the purpose driven education program. I got help from Belmont and MTSU professors. We're writing a book: "Girls Night In: Lessons from Life for Outsiders from the Inside" – giving women value, self-worth – they can make a difference. I'm not giving up on purpose driven education. The next phase of 2<sup>nd</sup> chance is seeing changing of the mindset in the prison system – with inmates, guards, etc. We're working on the mindsets.
- J.R. Davis – Can you explain your program?
- Tom Hallquist – I go into jails, I have a class – I teach them value, purpose. It's a curriculum that I use to help educate them. A primary goal is to see that their kids don't end up in the prison system. It's a 6-week course.
- J.R. Davis – I'm glad to hear about it and would like to see it. It is a help to us. The Board could come together to look at it and offer it as a solution. That's a tangible thing we can do.
- Tom Hallquist – It gives the inmate a purpose as to why they should be educated. This is a concept I think the Board could look at to implement. I could even run through a program at the retreat to train how to teach it.
- Dr. Rocha – Has this been done in TPFW?
- Tom Hallquist – No, in Williamson Co. jail. I put it through to TDOC, but it wasn't approved.
- J.R. Davis – A lot of us our faith-based going in. Again, I think this is a program that we should distribute and look at to approve to recommend to TDOC. I also think we need to meet as sub-committees, make some recommendations, talk with TDOC and when we come together as TCRB there has been action in between quarterly meetings.
- Tom Hallquist – The whole concept for years has been penance. There needs to be penance, but there needs to be rehabilitation. How can we incorporate this concept of rehabilitation – value, practical driven purpose, continuous learning. If you don't have continuous learning, you stagnate. I wanted the TDOC involved in this. But it was turned down, so I found other places to implement. I will give the curriculum to the TCRB – we are redesigning it currently. We're going to have to be risk takers and non-traditional thinkers.

## Grand Division Reports – East TN / Middle TN/ West TN Grand Divisions

- Michael Rickenbaker – Thank you to Asst. Commissioner Welch for his presentation from our last meeting.
- West TN
  - Mario Allen – 2019 TDOC education spring conference. Bringing all of the teachers together from the department and talk about the different components of the prison. I'll be on the panel to talk about how it has affected return systems, etc. Also, we have a Memphis Christian pastors network – they work with the department on training people on jobs. Please be praying – we had a returned citizen who is on a life support; another returned citizen whose daughter died; another returned citizen with a death in the family.
  - Michael Rickenbaker– I wanted to share a few things – we've made effort in the direction of training materials, I worked with local officers to help catch some kids before they get into the systems with community service type of correction. We all see conflict between local law enforcement, juvenile court offices, judges, etc., that don't want to be seen as being soft on crime. But it's a message I'm trying to get out there – I've hired four or five of those kids that have done some community service type work. I also went to TX for the national Christian Prison Fellowship Conference. I made three presentations – to incoming volunteers and to para-professional chaplains (mentoring processes). When I came back, I hired a former felon in trying to provide employment and beyond that – one-on-one mentoring. Tomorrow I'll be at TPFW to be a part of a revival service, and then working tomorrow night with inmates who want to be baptized. A question I have is about Core Civic in regard to the TDOC and TCRB.
- Middle TN
  - Ronda Waters – Joan Evrist isn't here, but she sent a report to me to share. At TPFW we have had 309 new admissions since the beginning of the year. We recently collected from our church, New Song, and other organizations several cards, Bibles, stamps, shower shoes, reading glasses, etc., to give to the women. We had a great Sunrise Easter service with 270 participating. And this past week we gave out 300 gift bags to the officers for officer appreciation. Just want to note that Dawn Harrington and Free Hearts Ministry, led by formerly incarcerated women, were able to get a bill passed to provide alternatives to incarceration for primary care givers for their children. Also, Jonah's Journey continues to do an amazing work with placing incarcerated women's children in Christian foster care.
  - J.R. Davis – The chaplains had four revival services here at RMSI (one every month) – the one I went to was well received, they honored volunteers and some of our folks who are active – this goes a long way. Special Needs has a new chaplain – trying to establish another Board there – just had our first meeting last month, so looking for more people to get involved there.
- East TN
  - Lee Ragsdale – I'm the chairperson of the East TN Collaborative – runs parallel to what we are doing here. We have spent the most time on Take One – providing education to churches, their volunteer training, etc. We have some groups doing individual work – mindfulness circles, etc., working with folks who have applied to Take One, but rather than let them just sit and wait and wonder in the prison – we're helping to develop that sense of empowerment and worth – preparedness to go out. We have had celebrations

- where we have brought in Take One mentors and mentees and grieved some losses as well. We are still waiting for LCRBs in Middle East TN. There's been talk about in Knoxville making the ETREC group the LCRB, but we haven't had approval for that. Somehow we need to encourage the Community Supervision Division to establish LCRB.
- Ed Welch – Rehab Services has taken over TRECs to give it form and function and direction, so I can put you in touch with Sarah Hodges (Correctional Admin for East TN). I'll connect you with her since she facilitates those TREC meetings.
    - Correctional Admins:
      - Sarah Hodges (East)
      - Shawndra Davis (Middle)
      - April Buckner (West)
  - Lee Ragsdale – Steve Humphreys of Focus – he took all the volunteer info that the TDOC had, blended it with Take One, blended it with dos/don'ts for volunteers. I can send it to the Board. It's all about empowering the returning citizens, not doing things for them but guiding them.
    - He'll send to Ronda – Ronda send to TCRB & Vicki as well

### **TDOC Presentations**

- Address to TCRB – Ed Welch, Asst. Commissioner of Rehab Services
  - We're all staff officers here. I view my job as delivering solutions to my chief – the Commissioner. He doesn't want piece-meal – he wants an entire package so that he can approve or disapprove. He doesn't want or need all of the details. As staff officers we have to talk with one another, and we have to talk multiple times. Everyone should know about what's going on. We call it skill-based education, but I like the term meaningful-based education from Tom Hallquist. If you want to change the culture, you have to change the way you talk about it. These are people, number one. We should get to the point where we refer to them as people, first and foremost. Formerly incarcerated, currently incarcerated, but they are people. We are giving raises – we don't want to have to scrape the bottom of the barrel for corrections officers. For the most part, we have good people, but we need to resource them. Returning citizens have a re-entry plan – every single one. Ask the corrections officer for this plan. Re-entry begins at adjudication. Particularly with the swearing in of Governor Lee we (at TDOC) are hopeful because he talks about education, rehabilitation, etc. What can we do to facilitate the needs (education, badging, etc.)? As a staff officer, I have to present a whole plan that can be addressed at every facility. We have to identify what our priorities are at TDOC and present a comprehensive strategy to the Commissioner moving forward.
  - Changing the culture – we've started internally – Core Civic and CBHC training. We are training them to see these people as human beings. Let's talk to people first to deescalate situations before we lay hands on them. Training empathy, respect and human dignity. Treat people with respect – understanding that they rely on you for everything. The warden sets the tone. If we're going to do this job as TCRB and TDOC, it's up to all of us to contribute. When you see behavior within the prison, say something, report it back to me.

- MLTC – We just started a faith-based program. We have separation of church and state, but we have no separation between God and state. We can talk about God. We want to embrace everyone. Change starts with hope. Having faith is a jump-starter on hope.
  - Michael Rickenbaker – I think faith and God has been one of the greatest challenges to chaplains – they come into a system and if there is a strong faith in God, it’s easy for chaplains to view the facility they serve as “their church.” But what we have to realize is this is God’s church. For that reason, we have to be accommodating to those who have faith in God whatever faith that may be. Sometimes I think if chaplains would recognize that much of their role is not in the ministering to inmates, but facilitating ministry to inmates, there would be some things that may run more smoothly.
  - Ed Welch – When folks come to central office, they have less contact – they are administrators – less day-to-day contact, but they touch thousands by administrating these programs the way that’s needed.
  - Michael Rickenbaker – You’re right – I found that through the years as well. It’s one of the things that makes it happen more effectively.
- Vicki Helgesen – What I see at TPFW is that the chaplain is bogged down with paper work. She needs that administrative volunteer.
- Chaplain Rocha – I want to speak from three different perspectives – ex-offender, ex-resident; also from a volunteer perspective; and a chaplain as well. When a resident wants to speak with someone relating to an issue or situation, they don’t normally talk to the volunteers – they call the chaplain. You do need to have some type of ownership as a chaplain – I’m responsible here specifically for the spiritual welfare of over 800 residents (at RMSI). I take that personally and seriously. I’m here almost everyday between 7-8am and don’t leave until 5-8pm. In most cases a chaplain is taken away from his/her responsibilities because every day there are calls, emails, inmate inquiries, etc. Even though we delegate that, in most cases they do want to just talk with the chaplain. As an ex-offender, I remember that when I wanted to talk with someone, I had two different chaplains I could talk with. We are in conversations about how we can implement to have a volunteer services coordinator who will deal exclusively with the volunteers.
- Ed Welch – What can I do to help facilitate your work? I need the whole package in order to inform my leadership. I consider myself a staff officer as well, so I want to be part of that. I also want to thank Dr. Rocha as the Interim Chaplain – he’s done a great job stepping into this role.
- Michael Rickenbaker – What would be our next step in terms of sitting down to move forward with some of what we’ve talked about? For example, a Take One training manual. Is there a TDOC training manual for Take One?
- Ed Welch – It’s really up to you all to develop what’s needed. But the TDOC manual is public record. Give us feedback about it. We have done a lot of work in the last eight weeks to make sure that the information that we have from the Governor’s office will seamlessly integrate to TDOC policy and training. We took our policy and amended it in such a way that we can implement it right away. We have proposed significant changes to make it more responsive to the Governor’s direction.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I think having one resource that is merged with TDOC so that we are consistent across the board is desirable.

- Ed Welch – We are doing something that is a proposal. I don't make policy, I recommend policy.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I'd recommend a gathering – Michael Rickenbaker, Vicki Helgesen, J.R. Davis, Lee Ragsdale, Dr. Rocha – we will work on a Take One manual and bring a finished product to Asst. Commissioner Ed Welch. I'd like J.R. to head this up. And, Lee and Vicki can send me what they have in digital form.
- Lee Ragsdale – When Take One was originally developed, a separate steering committee was developed that left TCRB out of the development.

### **Core Civic Role in Regard to TDOC/TCRB**

- Ed Welch – We're all in this together trying to do incredible work. I enjoy dealing with higher levels of leadership with Core Civic – I find them responsive, amenable to change, forward thinking, good people. At the execution level, there is need for improvement. I don't know what your role will be with Core Civic.
- J.R. Davis – We are in two Core Civic prisons. I agree – our communication with leadership is right on. But we've been locked out for 3-4 months on the Trousdale side. I would say that it's a matter of developing your contacts above the wardens and chaplains.
- Vicki Helgesen – Rev. Darnell will be over all Core Civic chaplains in the country.

### **Take One / Mentorship Update and Discussion – Chaplain Rocha / J.R. Davis**

- Mentor Training Resource Development Progress
  - J.R. Davis – Our Exec Director has been on the advisory board on prison reform. I've been on a sub-committee going over the TDOC's policies – there are few policies that I would change. The challenges came down to the culture – not of TDOC – but of each individual prison as it comes down to how volunteers are treated.
    - We've been vetted, background checked, badged, in for years, and then some of us are treated as though we are the ones bringing things in (i.e., drugs, etc.). The Governor has a task force working on drugs and corruption in the TDOC. That's not my job when I come here. The vetting that we go through is a cultural change in training of respecting a human being. Men of Valor has not ever had an instance with one of our volunteers, but a volunteer can drive 100 miles and then be treated with disrespect or turned away. The culture shift needs to be – for example, if you want to come in and volunteer, when can we help you make your badge?
    - Dr. Rocha – We are in process – the idea is that each chaplain would have the means and ways to make those badges.
  - J.R. Davis – On the Governor's initiative about mentoring, we told them we would move forward on this initiative. What we're trying to model here is what the Governor has stated – the Governor is saying, we need mentors. What we're proposing to the warden is that we are going to promote it among churches and organizations – if interested in becoming a mentor, we want to talk with you. We'll go to them and talk with them about it. We're waiting for a date for an informational session. More like a meet-n-greet. Then see what organically takes place. It's what we've already been doing, but the Governor is pushing it and so are we. We do want to work with TDOC to make this mentoring initiative happen.

- Vicki Helgesen – There is a group at TPFW that have been mentoring women since 2003. And it's growing. Women are coming to prison faster than men right now.

### **TCRB Retreat / Faith in Corrections Conference / Committee Report**

- Mario Allen – Trying to gather the curriculum for the retreat. We noticed that the staff of TDOC has continued to change – so we have curriculum that came down from beginning, but it's changed. So, we're trying to gather curriculum so it's consistent (with certification, etc., in different areas). We have a lot that needs to be picked up and put back in place. We want to set up training and cross training (like faith in fatherhood, marriage, etc.). We don't have a confirmed date.
- Michael Rickenbaker – We have to get tentative dates on the calendar. It's been six months since we established the committee and we don't have a date. The dates have to be submitted to TDOC. Once the committee determines the date, get that to the TCRB and TDOC.
- J.R. Davis – Also, I think just an overview of the curriculum is what's needed. Something we can walk away being enriched and being able to come back and implement, versus using the time to do complete training.
- Vicki Helgesen – I'd like to suggest to do trauma. I have someone who can help certify.
- Michael Rickenbaker – I like J.R.'s idea about an overview. I'd like to take Ed Welch's suggestions regarding volunteerism to see what we can implement moving forward.
- Lee Ragsdale – This has been an argument for 15 years – are we to come to talk about individual programs? That would take much longer than what we have time for. The job of this Board is to ask TDOC what kind of programming is needed, and what programming are volunteers able to teach in our facilities. Our job is to facilitate the happening of those things – we don't need to be trained in all of those things. Training should be separate from the retreat.
- Mario Allen – Knowing what the Board is trained in will be helpful.
- J.R. Davis – We're here so that TDOC can say, here's what we need. Our job is to say, what can TCRB do that TDOC can't do?
- Mario Allen – At the retreat, it would help for us to know the different strengths of the Board. For example, Chairman Rickenbaker did a grief curriculum. Knowing these strengths can help us to be resourced and consistent.
- J.R. Davis – The TDOC has a program for everything. In my opinion our next step with Ed Welch, how can we help in each of the programs and departments that TDOC has? This Board should help the TDOC with what they have in place.
- Ed Welch – It's really important that we are your advocates as the TCRB and that you are our (TDOC) advocates as well. For example, right now, we need educational mentors – talking to groups of people about education.
- J.R. Davis – The separation of church and state doesn't have anything do to with politicians talking about God – it was written so that the state would not impose religious beliefs.
- Michael Rickenbaker – We have an incredible opportunity to work together with communication that is clean and open to bring about positive change or the benefit of the people around us. We thank you Commissioner Welch and Dr. Rocha for your partnership.

### **TCRB Membership Positions & Officers**

- Michael Rickenbaker – Were the positions we voted on as a Board at last meeting approved?
- Ed Welch – Dr. Rocha did get that to me. I think a memo coming from the Board to the Commissioner signing off on the vote would go a long way.

- Dr. Rocha – There is a vacancy on the East Grand Division. Contact person between TDOC & TCRB is the Director of Religious and Volunteer Services – right now that is me as the Interim Director.

**Meeting Adjourned (11:57 a.m.)** – Michael Rickenbaker

**Next Meeting:** Friday, July 19, 2019 at 9:00 a.m. at Riverbend