AIM Updates

It has been a while since our last newsletter so there is a lot of catching up to do!

Staff and Steering Committee

Virginia Monroe, came on as a part time staffperson with the Volunteer and Transportation Program in February. Virginia has been very dedicated to AIM since our beginning, and most recently was a volunteer through the Community Service Program. Virginia has been implementing new van runs to MCI Lancaster for the extended visiting program, and has provided workshops at Charlotte House and for fathers at MCI Norfolk.

Lila Austin (Lee) left AIM in August, and is currently working part time at the Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation. Lila is working on a new project Community Services for Women, which will be a great resource for mothers post-release, as well as for organizations such as AIM.

Julie Kelly is the new fundraiser for AIM. Julie has spent the last 8 years working on women's health issues and violence against women. Most recently she was fundraiser for the Rape Crisis Project of the Women's Center, New Bedford.

Greer Toney and Lisa O'Dell, long standing members of the Steering Committee recently moved to MCI Lancaster. With Tina Williams, another AIM mother, they have been able to identify some of the needs of mothers at Lancaster, particularly for transportation to this remote part of the State.

Community Advisory Board

The housing committee is in full swing this Fall, with plans for a revolving security deposit fund for mothers seeking housing for themselves and their children. Finding suitable space that is affordable is hard enough, without the additional problem of raising the security deposit. The policies regarding the fund, fundraising for the fund, and its administration, are areas that are being discussed by committee members: Lynn Foster, Arthur Bergeron, Ellie Shea, Lila Austin and Sheila Ralston.

New Program for AIM's Kids!

AIM has expanded this Fall, to include special support services and recreational activities for children! By providing a support group for older children and recreational programs out in the community, AIM hopes to increase the children's involvement and give them more of the support they need.

On Sunday October 6, 1985, the "AIM Older Kids" had their first meeting at the Boston Children's Museum. The group was begun to meet the needs of the older children in the AIM program and has decided to plan activities for themselves and for the younger children. Jeri Robinson, from the Museum was instrumental in allowing us to meet and explore the museum at our leisure, and Gail Williams is to be commended on some mighty fine driving. Twelve youth sat down to discuss such topics as goals for the group, meeting times, activity times, and some basic membership rules as well. Cynthia Walker was elected President, her friend Tina was elected Vice President, and LaDawn Calhoun was elected Phone Committee Chairperson. Some of the ideas for this comming year are: a talent show at Framingham, rollarskating, swimming, "adopting" little brothers and sisters in the AIM program, and visits to the library and science museums. Meetings will alternate with activities every two weeks and new ideas, kids, and volunteers are always welcome. The next scheduled program is October 27th - a visit to the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus at the Boston Garden.

Volunteer News

AIM is proud of the active participation of the volunteers in the training aspect of the program. Laverne Saunders has increased morale with "reality therapy" training. This program was excellent for staff and volunteers. Ellen Harvey from Project PACT (Parents and Children Together) provided a workshop on her work with mothers and babies at MCI Framingham, and was instrumental in helping us as volunteers, to be more effective in our role. Thanks Laverne and Ellen!

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

AIM is always looking for new volunteers. There is always so much to do!! Currently we need drivers to help with van runs to Framingham, Lancaster, and for children's activities on the weekends. We can always use help with our newsletter and with special mailings, and folks who are interested in fund raising for AIM, are most welcome and appreciated. If you only have a few hours, or have many, please give us a call!

Other Volunteer Notes

Since the last newsletter, AIM has acquired new volunteers! We welcome Sue Beetham, Elizabeth Conway, Tona Zenakis, Sister Joan Casey R.S.N. (Rhode Island), Sister Marie Horoho, Karen Gravina, Sam Langley (New Hampshire), Dianne Mann, Terri Senoff, Joanne Trice, Jenny Sands, and Joanne Zarkadas to the AIM family and continue to encourage anyone interested in dedicating a few hours a week to do so. Instrumental to the volunteer program are meetings designed to aid participation in the program. The last meeting was a Saturday reality training session led by LaVerne Saunders. This was not only educational and fun, but it provided a time for all volunteers to get together, meet each other, and provide support for the activities in which everyone is involved.

Tree of Hope

AIM is planning a fundraising event for the upcomining holiday season. We will be placing a "tree of hope" outside the walls of MCI Framingham. For every $10.00 that is donated to AIM, a light will be placed on the tree. When the children visit their mothers over the holidays, there should be a dazzling tree to meet their eyes as they arrive— a symbol of hope for their future reunification.

We would love to have your help with this project. Is there anyone who could donate a large evergreen to be the "tree of hope"? Could you help us with publicity for this event, by sharing it with your church group, civic group, colleagues, friends or family? Can you make a donation yourself?

If the answer is "yes" to any of the above, please call Julie or Virginia at the AIM office. Both the tree and the donation will be a gift to the mothers in prison and their children.