STAYING TOGETHER

A NEWSLETTER BY
THE WOMEN, CHILDREN
AND STAFF OF AID
TO INCARCERATED MOTHERS

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AIM NETWORKING AT NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Jean Fox, AIM's coordinator of volunteers and transportation, recently returned from a national conference feeling confident that she was able to show people "that a volunteer parenting center can work." From November 3-6, she attended the meeting of the "National Association for the Education of Young Children" in Atlanta, Georgia.

During the conference,Jean co-lead a very successful workshop called "My real prison is...being separated from my children" with Louise Rosenkrantz of the "Prison Match" program in Oakland, California, and Sister Elaine Roulet of the Children's Center at the Bedford-Hills Prison for Women in New York. Their purpose was to help early childhood teachers become sensitive to the hidden feelings and needs of children of incarcerated parents. 40 people from 13 states attended the workshop, including school teachers, early childhood educators, faculty from the Georgia School of Social Work, Department of Corrections workers, and staff from battered women's shelters. Jean reported that the group was enthusiastic and eager for information. Many people came up to her during the next few days and commented, "I never really thought about that before. What can we do in our program?"

In addition, Jean attended numerous workshops which covered topics ranging from "children's fears" and "separation anxiety" to "the 3 P's: people, power, and policy." She thought that the policy workshop would be particularly helpful for her work with the Governor's Advisory Committee on Women's Issues.

After the conference, Jean stayed on in Atlanta for an extra two days of networking with local groups. Her activities included: visiting Hardwick Prison in Medville, Georgia, for an

overview of programs and facilities and to meet with the women inmates; running a parenting room workshop for the Hardwick staff; and consulting with the leader of their mothers' group. Jean also met with the director of volunteer services and residents at an Atlanta pre-release center, consulted with the State Supervisor of Female Offender Services for Georgia, and shared information about volunteer transportation with the staff of "Women Outside for Women Inside", a community-based program in Atlanta.

In general, Jean felt that her time in Atlanta was valuable for the connections she made with the other prison groups and the insights and information she was able to share with people. She said, "I felt reassured that all along I've been doing the right thing."