

THE DIOCESE OF BELLEVILLE

December 7, 2018

Dear Priests, Deacons, Parish Life Coordinators:

I write to you today requesting support for one of our critical ministries: 'SOARING: Inmates Helping Inmates' of Poverty Services of Catholic Charities of Southern Illinois.

Reading impairment is a root cause of poverty as it impedes gainful employment. Nearly 70% of Illinois prison inmates are reading impaired. Studies confirm that if inmates do not address their reading impairment while incarcerated, nearly 80% will repeat offend, thus continuing their cycle of poverty and imprisonment. If inmates are taught reading skills, then less than 13% will repeat offend when they are released.

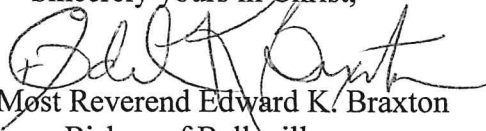
Our 'SOARING' program has helped 97% of inmates advance their reading skills in the Centralia Correctional Center. This is the #1 program in the United States to advance inmate literacy skills. Our unique success is attributed to the "peer-to-peer" design of the program (which accelerates the reading advancement to some 5 grades per year, and keeps program costs down). We also keep costs down by encouraging Volunteer Literacy Aides (with education backgrounds) one or two days a month to assist in inmate testing and monitoring. The education of inmates will reduce total costs to the Correctional Centers, law enforcement, and the court, as well as greatly reduce harm to the general public.

The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) endorses and financially supports 'SOARING' advancement into all 26 of its correctional centers. 'SOARING' needs to raise \$10,000 per year in the Diocese of Belleville to cover its costs of operation which includes managing the literacy program, inmate tutor training, managing volunteers, cost of materials, and mileage reimbursement for volunteers.

To raise these funds we endeavor to have a very simple "email RAFFLE" (which has successfully been used in the past in the Diocese of Belleville for other fund-raising). 'SOARING' representative, Mr. Michael Schuette, will be in contact with each parish to assist with the details.

I wish to thank everyone for your support of this very important life-changing ministry in our Diocese.

Sincerely yours in Christ,


The Most Reverend Edward K. Braxton
Bishop of Belleville

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