

New Start Ministries

Connecting adjudicated youth with a local faith-based ministry for mentoring, faith enrichment and a new start in life

New Start Ministries was incorporated November 13th, 2003 as a 501(c)(3) non-profit. The purpose of NSM is to provide Christian mentoring to DYS youth who volunteer to participate in the activities NSM provides. The first Pen-pal connections made were with 12 youth from the Chalkville Campus on May 7, 2004.

It has been my privilege to continue serving DYS youth in this capacity after retiring from DYS in June 2003. I am thankful that Walter Wood caught the vision for NSM, for his endorsement of the support we provide to DYS youth, and his letters of recommendation to facility directors. I will never forget Walter's statement when we first discussed the idea of NSM serving DYS youth, *"This is exactly what we need to connect DYS youth with the faith-based community."*

NSM recruits ladies from Christian churches, qualifies them through a background check, and then trains them how to pray, encourage, and be supportive to DYS youth. This training is based on my 25 years of experience in working for DYS in several capacities from dorm supervision, case management, counseling, and administrative supervision of the cottages at the Chalkville Campus, as well as incorporating policies and guidelines from facility directors.

What follows is just a glimpse of what has been accomplished in the past ten years of ministering to DYS youth through hundreds of volunteers serving as Pen-pals to DYS youth. I am looking forward to maintaining favorable partnerships with DYS and Alabama Churches as we endeavor to assist released youth and their families to locate and become a part of a local church in their home communities.

Sincerely,

Rev. Walt Valentine
Founder and President



New Start Ministries, Inc.

Connecting adjudicated youth with a local faith-based ministry for mentoring, faith enrichment, and a new start in life.

Rev. Walter G. (Walt) Valentine
Founder and President

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STATE OF ALABAMA
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES

ROBERT BENTLEY
GOVERNOR

Post Office Box 66
Mt. Meigs, ALABAMA 36057

J. WALTER WOOD, JR.
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

February 6, 2012

Mr. Walt Valentine
P.O. Box 36
Clay, Alabama 35048

Dear Walt,

Thank you for all your efforts on behalf of our former Chalkville students. It appears that Chalkville's service as a traditional girl's institution has come to an end due to the recent tornado damage. I appreciate your willingness to continue to maintain contact with the girls who were transferred and your interest in providing support to other DYS girls in the various programs around the state.

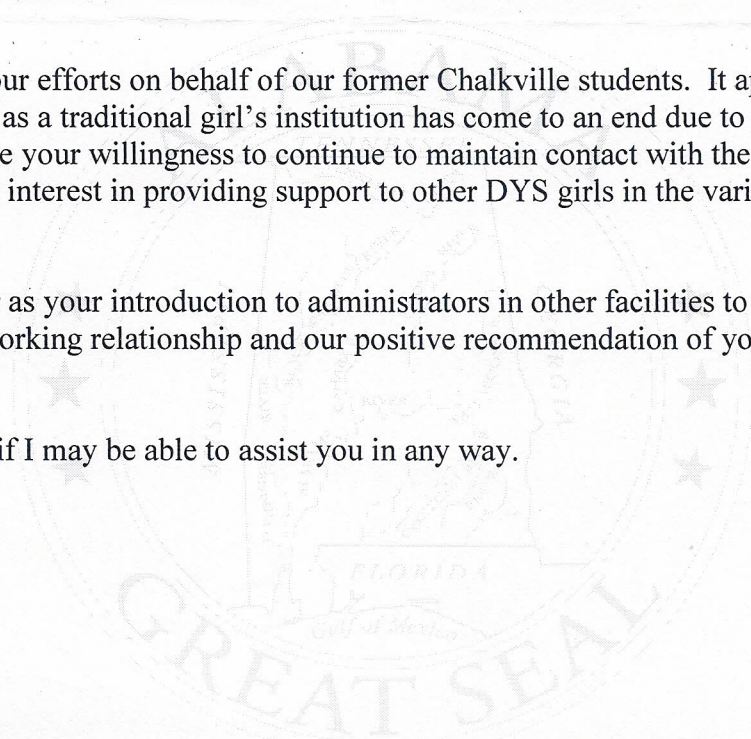
Please use this letter as your introduction to administrators in other facilities to confirm our previous, positive working relationship and our positive recommendation of your ministry's work.

Please let me know if I may be able to assist you in any way.

Sincerely,



J. Walter Wood, Jr.
Executive Director



NSM Pen-pals have been recruited from the following churches & organizations:

1st Assembly of God, Pleasant Grove
23rd Street Baptist, S. Birmingham
46th Street Baptist Church
Bethel AME Church Rising, W. Bham.
Bethel Baptist Church, N. Birmingham
Bethel Baptist Church of Pleasant Grove
Calvary Baptist Church, Concord
Canaan Baptist Church, Bessemer
Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Leeds
Christian Valley Baptist, N. Birmingham
Church of the Highlands (small groups)
Clay Christian Fellowship
Clay Ridge Baptist
Clearview Baptist Church
Cornerstone Church of Helena
Deerfoot Community Bible Church
Faith United Methodist Church, Pinson
Family Christian Stores
Family Life Center Church
Faircrest Drive Church of God
First Baptist Center Point
First Baptist Woodlawn
Garywood Assembly of God, Hueytown
Green Valley Baptist Church, Hoover
Guiding Light Church
Harmony Street Bapt. Church, N. Bham.
Hopewell Baptist Church, W. Bham.
In Step Community Church
Irondale United Methodist Church
Living Church Ministries
Living Word Church
Meadow Brook Baptist
North Valley Church, Odenville
Palmerdale United Methodist Church
Parkway Christian Fellowship
Pleasant Hill UMC, Springville
Providence UMC, Morris
Remlap United Methodist Church
Revival Central for the Nations Church
Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Center Point
Rocky Ridge Cumberland Pres. Church
Shades Mountain Independent Church
St. John United Methodist Church
The Gathering Place Church
The Healing Place Church
Warrior Independent Church of God
Zion Hill Baptist, W. Birmingham

New Start Ministries Additional Ministry Statistics

- From May 7, 2004 to April 11, 2014 NSM has connected 789 youth with Pen-pals for Christian mentoring
- We tried a pilot project with 39 boys at the VACCA Campus, but it was unsuccessful. Neither the boys nor the men were good at writing.
- 2012 was our year of expansion from one program, at the Chalkville Campus, to 6 programs, connecting 125 girls with Pen-pals and giving each girl a Bible
- 2013 was our first year to give every DYS girl sent to the 6 programs we visit with an opportunity to have a Pen-pal and a Bible, with 226 girls out of 238 girls volunteering to participate (95%)
- In 2014 we have connected 46 DYS girls & 10/11 HIT girls with Pen-pals and given each girl a Bible. Only 1 girl has not volunteered to participate thus far this year (98.25% volunteer participation rate)
- Population of the girls changes weekly with new intakes and releases
- In any given week there have been 35 to 68 girls connected with Pen-pals
- 257 men and women have been trained to be Pen-pals
- 78 women are currently active as Pen-pals
- 47 churches and 5 ladies prayer groups have supplied ladies to be Pen-pals
- 18 churches have ladies that are currently active in being Pen-pals
- 16 churches have given a one-time gift to the ministry
- 4 churches support NSM with monthly donations
- 12 individuals/families support NSM with monthly donations
- Our long term goal is to develop a network of volunteer liaisons in each county to follow-up with the girls and their families to help them become involved in a church in the local community

New Start Ministries Pen-pal Ministry to Alabama Dept. of Youth Services Girls

Staff Testimonies:

From a Clinical Director:

To whom it may concern:

The services provided by Mr. Valentine are unique to meet the needs of our unique population. Our population is teenage girls in the juvenile justice system. Our girls are involuntary clients and many perceive them as resistant. Yet they willingly respond to Mr. Valentine and the Pen-pal ministry. This ministry allows the girls freedom to choose to communicate. We recognize that emotional needs require an emotional response and spiritual needs require a spiritual response. The girls request prayer to face their fears and are confident that they can ask their Pen-pals questions about their beliefs. They often include encouragement and responses from their Pen-pals in discussion about staying on track when they leave the program. In addition, the letters from Pen-pals are often included as coping skills that the girls request when they are upset. In general, as girls exit the program, they will throw away paper and clutter. However, the letters that provide comfort and hope are carefully stored away.

Thanks for providing this ministry that fights hopelessness and expresses unconditional love; two elements that impact healing and treatment.

Sincerely,
Mrs. P.

From Program Directors:

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my perspective that the Pen Pal Program operated by Reverend Walt Valentine is very beneficial to our residents at Troy University Girls Group Home. Our residents benefit from having someone else outside of the facility that they can talk to. When the girls are angry, writing their Pen Pals is used as a stress reduction method because they're expressing their feelings on paper and in turn the Pen Pal writes them back and addresses their issues in the most positive way. In addition some residents have no family members write them at all. Once upon a time these particular residents witnessed others receive mail and it made them feel horrible, but having a Pen Pal assures them that they will receive letters in the mail as well. Pen Pals usually send positive words of encouragement and scriptures that may relate to what they're going through and this too is a tremendous aid in our residents getting to where they need to be to be productive, successful citizens of society. Reverend Valentine has had and continues to have an impeccable impact with his testimonies, optimism, and most of all prayers.

Sincerely,
S.M.

Good Afternoon Mr. Valentine:

I just wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and all of your wonderful sponsors that find it in their hearts to support our girls via the Pen-pal program. We are truly blessed to have been selected and the girls are most appreciative of the letters, cards, stamps and personal items that are mailed to them during their stay. I have witnessed firsthand the positive impact receiving mail from the Pen-pals has meant to our girls. Mr. Valentine there are girls in our program that have no support system and without the Pen-pal program these residents would not receive any mail. I also feel that the efforts of the Pen-pal program has a positive impact on behavior and attitude because writing provides an outlet to express emotions and feelings in a constructive manner. Some of our girls have reported wanting to continue communication with Pen-pals post graduation from the program. It is with deepest sincerity that I am honored to convey this message to you and please forward our gratitude to the Pen-pal program and advise them we are grateful that God has used them as a vessel to exhibit his greatest command of love by blessing his children.

Sincerely,
Mrs. C.

From a Case Manager:

Dear Mr. Valentine and the members of New Start Ministries;

I have been so privileged to witness first-hand the moments when my clients' faces light up after receiving a letter from their pen-pal. So many of these children are not as fortunate to have as many positive supporters in their lives as we all would like for them to have. Your pen-pal program provides one more uplifting influence in their lives that helps them get motivated to do better and reach for their higher potential. I have seen myself on some weeks where the only mail they receive is from their pen-pal and it is so helpful to them to know that there is always someone there to uplift them and can be consistent in their lives. In the process of recovery support from others including reaching out to your higher power is essential. The pen-pals are able to offer support and remind these girls of their higher power giving them strength to make it through their times of weakness. We are so thankful for Mr. Valentine and the volunteers that offer their support to the kids, it really makes a difference.

Sincerely,
S.B.

From a staff:

Rev. Valentine,

The Pen Pal Ministry you provide for the girls at Troy Group Home is an absolute blessing. Each and everyday the girls look forward to the mailman's arrival. They truly enjoy receiving letters from their pen pals because of the encouragement and friendship the girls receive from them. Some of these girls would not receive any mail at all if not for their pen pals. The positive influence I've witnessed this program has had on the girls is remarkable. For example, our maintenance man, Mr. Kelly's mother passed away this past week. Our girls made his family a sympathy card with spiritual scripture they each looked up in The Bible for comfort. Their sympathies were so pure and sincere and I attribute your program as the main reason these girls were able to express themselves. They share their letters with each other and also encourage each other just as the pen pals encourage them.

I wish to thank you and your ministry for all you do.

Warmest Regards,
C.B.

Youth Testimonies:

"I was cleaning my room out and started reading all the letters you wrote me. It really touched me because I just started crying and couldn't understand why. Then the reason hit me and that was because when I was reading your letters, I started thinking about how blessed and lucky I am to have such motivation & support from a complete stranger. It really makes me feel good when I get letters from you. I say that because I know you all don't get paid to talk to us and go out of yall's way for us kids you don't even know, to actually sit down and take time out of you all's day just to write. Love you so very much." Signed: JJ

How are you doing? I'm doing real good, been wrapping things up here at the group home. I was just sitting here reading the Bible, Psalms actually. I just wanna say He is very good to me; He's lifted my depression and my urges, and most of all He is good for giving me a friend like you! ☺

You were such a great Pen-pal; you've encouraged me through these tough times. You've helped me to build a relationship with God? I want to thank you for that. Signed: RS

(She) has been a comfort to me because she give me powerful words and send me prayers and it really motivates me and encourages me to stay strong and keep me moving. (She) has sent me a bible and I like that. Signed: MH

My Pen-pal always brightens my week with her letters. I am truly blessed to correspond with such a wonderful person. It also helps when I don't get any mail; she never fails to send a letter. Most of my peers look forward to getting mail from their Pen-pals as well, especially the ones who don't get any mail from home. It lets us know someone cares. Signed "AS"

"She makes me smile which I don't do often due to my situation. I always get a reply and she sends me Bible scriptures which means alot to me & also sent me a NLT so I could understand better." Signed: R.S.

"My Pen-Pal has been the biggest support that I ever had. She writes me the most motivated letters ever. She has sent me a journal and awesome Bible scriptures. I really enjoy talking to her. I never had anyone to support me like she does and I love her." Signed: JJ

Pen-pal Testimony:

I consider being a pen pal for New Start Ministries an honor. I am reminded in reading letters from the girls how tough this stage of life is. Some of the girls are starting out with the cards stacked against them based on their home life and the things they are exposed to at an early age. They have no way of knowing those things are not normal. I speak from experience. As a teenager and young adult I walked a fine line that should have led me down the road these girls are on. But, Jesus protected me and after many difficult years I answered the Lord's call and accepted him as my Savior.

I think of 2 Corinthians 1:3-4 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

Again, I am honored to be able to share with these girls what God has done for me and how He can do the same for them. I am blessed through this ministry by being able to pray for and encourage those that I would not otherwise be in contact with.

S. D.

Pen-pal Testimony (and a letter from a parent):

I got the attached letter [typed in italics below from hand written letter] in the mail recently and it caught me by surprise. It is from the mom of my last pen-pal. She was recently released and is adjusting to being back in the home environment (and still struggling

with choices, it seems). Seeing the note from this mother made me realize the letters we're writing to our pen-pals don't affect only that girl. They affect their roommates who see our cheerful greetings and thoughtful words and they affect the parents who see glimpses of change in their daughters.

It may seem some of our letters fall on empty ears and cold hearts. But if you plant seeds every single week, one day a little bit of hope is bound to grow. Sometimes a girl who has lived a hard life needs to hear repeatedly that she has worth, that she matters to someone, that the choices she makes determine the quality of her relationships and her personal and spiritual health, and that God loves her--before she will ever begin to believe those things could possibly be true about herself.

If there is anything I have learned as a pastor's wife, it's that sudden changes of heart and behavior don't always stick, but it's gradual change in a person who develops over time that is lasting. You might be able to appear different on the outside for a little while, but you can't force yourself to be a better person. You need a lot of help and good influences and people to encourage you to never give up.

This girl is trying, but she's still making mistakes and learning hard lessons. Aren't we all?

I think that's why being a pen-pal is important to me.

L.H.

Dear Mrs. H.,

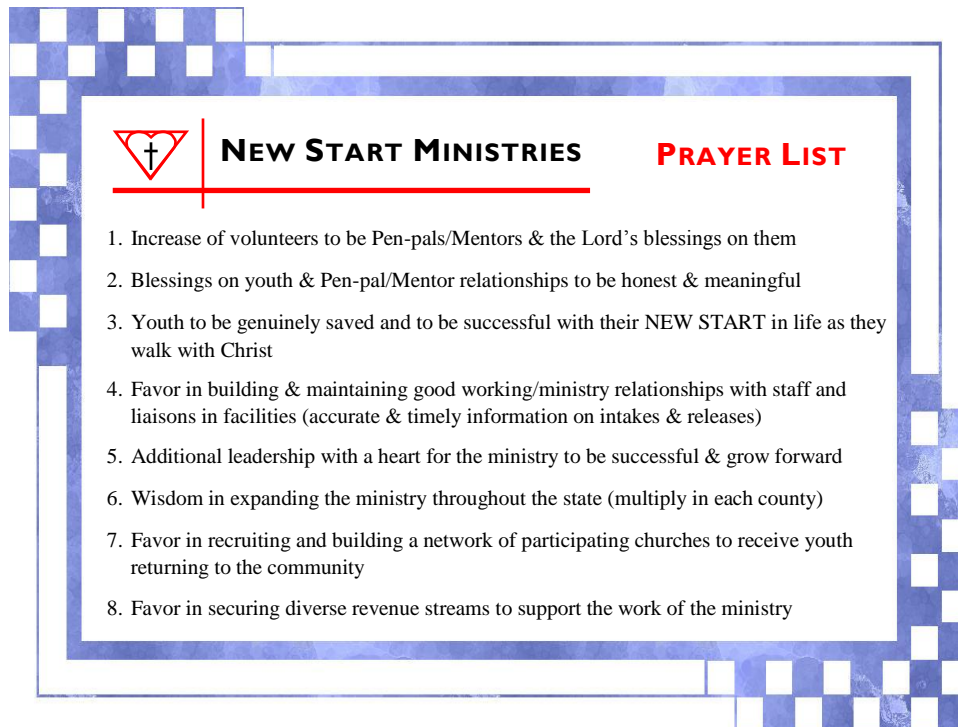
Hello, my name is KD. I just want to tell you thank you for being "A's" Pen-pal while she was away from home. It makes me feel better knowing she had someone she could write to besides just family. Things have gotten a little rough here in the past few days, but we will work through it. "A" is awesome. She's trying so hard to do better but she's still making not good choices. I just want her to learn from them and not do it again. I'll leave you alone now. Thank you again.


Sincerely,

KD

P.S. If you'd like to continue writing "A" please do so.

Your prayers for the success of NSM serving DYS youth will be greatly appreciated, as well as any support the Lord may incline to put on your heart. NSM is currently funded only through the donations of churches and individuals. All Donations are tax deductible to the donor as NSM is a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt nonprofit organization.



 **NEW START MINISTRIES** **PRAYER LIST**

1. Increase of volunteers to be Pen-pals/Mentors & the Lord's blessings on them
2. Blessings on youth & Pen-pal/Mentor relationships to be honest & meaningful
3. Youth to be genuinely saved and to be successful with their NEW START in life as they walk with Christ
4. Favor in building & maintaining good working/ministry relationships with staff and liaisons in facilities (accurate & timely information on intakes & releases)
5. Additional leadership with a heart for the ministry to be successful & grow forward
6. Wisdom in expanding the ministry throughout the state (multiply in each county)
7. Favor in recruiting and building a network of participating churches to receive youth returning to the community
8. Favor in securing diverse revenue streams to support the work of the ministry