

By the grace of G-d

# THE ALEPH INSTITUTE

## *North East Region*

Annual Report  
December 2011



**ALEPH  
INSTITUTE**

No One Alone,  
No One Forgotten.

**THE ALEPH INSTITUTE – *North East Region***

5804 Beacon Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15217

412.421.0111 f: 412.521.5948 e: [info@alephne.org](mailto:info@alephne.org)

Also on the web at: [www.alephne.org](http://www.alephne.org)

## **PROGRAM AREA: PROGRAMS FOR JEWISH INMATES IN PRISON**

### **Prison Visitations**

*Despite the halt in the building of Federal prisons over the last few years, we have seen a significant number of private prisons go online, which are being used by one Federal government agency or another. In Pennsylvania there are currently 53,000 inmates in the system, with hundreds (if not more) being housed in a leased prison in VA, in addition PA is currently under construction of a mega prison for the DOC, which is not believed will cover the overcrowding in the prisons. Ohio at this point, although not as overcrowded as PA, is not discussing the mothballing of any prisons. Aleph is spending a lot of its resources, in addition to the work in the prisons providing to the Jewish inmate - spending a lot of the resources on our various re-entry programs.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- **Allegheny County Jail:** There are four Aleph volunteers who visit the institution at least once a week, Pinchas Naiditch and Mordechai Rosenthal are there alternatively every week, with Fred Landay and Marshal Dayan who were both on call for 2010 and 2011. Allegheny County has 40,000 arrests every year, of which a guestimated 500 hundred Jewish men and women are arrested. For the most part those arrested are released within 14 hours; it is only those with more serious issues that make it to the upper floors for an extended stay.
  - Over this past year we met with seventy five Jewish men and women, assisting many with the home plans when they were released and providing the necessary support and religious in conjunction the chaplain's office at the institution. The holiday programs were well attended and the Rabbis and Volunteers have been well accepted and enjoy a great working relationship with the Jail administration and staff.
  - One significant case this past year was that of a Jewish man from Squirrel Hill who was arrested on Yom Kippur and spent five month in the institution, Joel was released when Aleph intervned with the courts because the case was progressing extremely slowly. Due to the dedication of the visiting Rabbis, this error was identified and the inmate was released shortly after Alephs intervention.

The county jail has a good core staff of volunteers and the inmates are regularly visited. This is especially important given the high turnover of Jewish inmates at the jail and the acute problems that those inmates face. They are usually straight off the street and face greater challenges than the inmates in other facilities. For more information about programs at the Allegheny County Jail, please e-mail [receptionist@alephne.org](mailto:receptionist@alephne.org).

- **Westmoreland County Jail:** We received no word of any Jewish inmates over the past year at the jail.
- **Bedford County Jail:** One Jewish inmate receives services at this institution, hopefully the inmate will be returning to the state prison, where he will serve his sentence, however for the holidays we did provide the necessary holiday meals and religious items.
- **State Prison at Cresson:** This institution continues to receive regular visits from *Rabbi Yossi Stein*, who provides religious counseling and guidance. Over the past year Aleph volunteers visited for the holidays, among them were Richard Goldstein Alephs volunteer coordinator, Dr. Sam Weinberg and Avrohom Geisinsky. There are eight inmates at this high security prison who continue to receive Torah classes, individual counseling and religious materials for study.
- **The Federal Prison in Loretto, PA:** Located 1.5 hours from Pittsburgh, the Aleph Institute has provided counseling and religious services at this institution for over twenty years. Rabbis Stein and Yehoshua Teitelbaum (visited at the beginning of 2011) for the holidays over the year, Richard Goldstein, Dr. Weinberg and Rabbi Geisinsky have provided programs and materials for both English- and Spanish-speaking inmates. Their dedication and commitment to the large Jewish population in the Federal prison is encouraging. The Rabbis are a fighting force for the religious needs of the Jewish inmates and have won the respect of the warden, staff and inmates alike. This facility currently has twelve Jewish inmates in its population. The chaplains at the institution were a tremendous help for our last years Rosh Hashanah services, as four Rabbinical students on the way to the institution, were involved in a bad car accident and ended up spending the holiday in hospital. Rev. Statler did receive an award from Aleph at the Annual Chaplains conference.
- **Prison at Fayette, PA:** Rabbi Stein, Dr. Chaim Oster and Ephraim Riesner visit this prison located one hour from Pittsburgh. The Aleph Institute has provided counseling and religious services at this prison for many years. The Rabbis provide programs and materials for both English- and Spanish-speaking inmates. This institution is a high security institution. Despite the high security concerns, the Jewish inmates at that facility have been able to celebrate the Jewish holidays with the help of Aleph. We thank the Rabbis and the volunteers for their dedication. Aleph is currently helping one of the residents with obtaining a 'get' (religious divorce).
- **SCI Pittsburgh, PA:** Located in the Manchester neighborhood of Pittsburgh, is a high security institution it has been served by the Aleph Institute for over fifteen

years. Rabbi Eli Seidman visits that institution regularly, and for the holidays he was joined by Rabbi Eisen. We thank Rabbis Siedman and Eisen for all their tireless efforts on behalf of the Jewish inmates and their families.

- **The State prison at Somerset PA:** Located 1.5 hours from Pittsburgh, the Aleph Institute has provided counseling and religious services at this prison for six years. Rabbi Moshe Barber provides regular programs and materials for both English- and Spanish-speaking inmates. Brian Cynamon is dedicated volunteer who visits that institution regularly many times with his wife Barbara Cynamon, we thank them both for their time and efforts. In addition for the holidays Rabbi Boruch Hyman provided programs at that institution.
- **SCI Laurel Highlands, PA:** Located one hour away from Pittsburgh, the institution is visited by Rabbi Moshe Barber. This institution is a geriatric facility catering to the needs of the elder prison population. Their needs differ dramatically from the needs of the other institutions. We thank Rabbi Barber for his dedication and commitment to ensuring that these inmates under difficult circumstance are cared for. Once again unfortunately, this year Aleph was called to organize the burial of an inmate at this institution. The Aleph Institute in cooperation with the Hebrew Burial Society was able to ensure a respectable burial for Jewish inmates who pass away in the prison system.
- **SCI Greene, PA:** Located one hour from Pittsburgh, this is a high level security institution with which Aleph has worked with the administration and the contract Rabbi for many years. In addition, Aleph's volunteer Rabbi Mendel Markel visits this institution on a regular basis. We thank Rabbi Markel for his dedication and commitment to working with the institution and for his patience in ensuring all the paperwork was done and not losing hope. The institution includes the housing facility for states death row inmates. This facility has specific needs; unfortunately, there are two Jewish inmates who are currently being housed at the institution with death sentences.
- **SCI Greensburg, PA:** Located one hour from Pittsburgh, this is a medium level security institution with which Aleph has worked with the administration and the contract Rabbi (Rabbi Sarah Perman) for many years. Mr. William (Zev) Rudolph and Rabbi Roitman visited this institution for Purim.
- **SCI Albion, PA:** Located one and a half hours from Pittsburgh, this is a medium level security institution with which Aleph has worked with the administration and found a contract Rabbi for the institution when it opened. Holiday foods and religious needs for that institution are provided throughout the year as in all institution.

- **SCI Houtzdale:** A state Institution which is 3 hours from Pittsburgh. It is served by Rabbi Yossi Stein. This institution has a larger Jewish population and the Rabbi has been effective in creating a great working relationship with the administration.
- **Moshanan Valley Correctional Center, PA:** Located in Phillipsburg, Pa, it is a three hour drive from Pittsburgh. It is a private prison which houses non US citizens who are to be deported. This institution houses over fifteen Jewish inmates and is visited regularly by Aleph volunteer Professor Mitch Small and Rabbi Yossi Stein. The needs of the inmates who are facing deportation are great and we thank Professor Small for the many hours of dedication together with Rabbi Stein for their dedicated work filling the needs of those inmates.
- **SCI Mercer, PA:** Located one hour from Pittsburgh, the Aleph Institute has provided counseling and religious services at this prison for close to fifteen years. Rabbi Barber and Abby Mendelsohn visit the institution regularly and provide the inmates and staff with dedication and commitment.
- **PA State Hospital in Warren:** *Rabbis Yonasan Sanford and Dovber Marcus* have regularly visited the Jewish inmates at this institution. There was unfortunately a 200% increase in the Jewish population at that institution. The Rabbis provided them with programs for the holidays. The Rabbis visited the local county jails on more than one occasion and counseling Jewish men who were at the time incarcerated. Given the remote location and no Jewish community in close proximity, the institution was very grateful for the dedication and time the Rabbis offered their Jewish men in prison. More on the state hospitals below.
- **Federal Prison at McKean County in Bradford, PA:** With a large Jewish community at this prison, the visits are very necessary. Rabbi Zalman Thaler inspects the food service at the institution and provides programs for the continuing Jewish education for inmates seeking continued study. It is now over twenty years that Aleph Institute has been providing services and programs in this facility.
- **Federal Prison in Elkton, Oh:** Located 1.5 hours from Pittsburgh, this institution is visited regularly by Rabbi Mordechai Rosenthal. His dedication and commitment to serving the Jewish men and women incarcerated is exemplary and is a source of encouragement to all. The Rabbi continues to visit the institution, providing Jewish inmates with rabbinical counseling and guidance. He inspects and watches to ensure that kashrus at the facility common fare room is maintained for the many Jewish inmates who eat kosher food. Rabbi Rosenthal enjoys clearance privileges which permits him entry unescorted to the institutions, an achievement expressing the trust the authorities have in the Rabbis services.

- **Federal Prison at Morgantown, WV:** Located 1.5 hour drive from Pittsburgh, it is visited regularly by Rabbi Zalman Gurevitz. He visits weekly to encourage, teach, and guide the many Jewish inmates at that facility. The Rabbi's dedication and concern for the inmates is warming. He spends many hours traveling, despite weather that is sometimes not so hospitable. Over the last year, Aleph Institute in conjunction with the Pittsburgh office conducted a week long 'yeshiva in prison' program, in which ten Rabbinical students sent their days studying, talking and counseling the Jewish inmates at that institution. The Rabbinical students at a program at the Aleph Institute in Pittsburgh were addressed by Rabbi AJ Twerski, who conveyed the importance of the patients Aleph councils to understand that each and every individual we meet are diamonds, some need more polishing than others the Rabbi explained.
  
- **Belmont Correctional Institution, Ohio:** Now visited by Dr. Michael Steinberg and Mr. Sam Posin have been serving the group of Jewish inmates. Dr. Steinberg has now been visiting the institution for many years and we thank him for his dedication, concern and support of the Jewish inmates there, he has spent many hours after a hard days work caring for these young men and their families.
  
- **SCI Cooks Forest, PA:** A new institution near Marionville PA is now being served by Rabbi Barber, Dr. Avrohom and his son Shmuel Huebner visited there for Purim. Their dedication and commitment to take care of the Jewish population at that institution is exemplary. Unfortunately during the last major holiday the Jewish inmates were not able to receive the holiday foods as required, we do look forward to the authorities being able to correct that problem at the next holiday.
  
- **SCI Smithfield, PA:** An institution which is located 3.5 hours from Pittsburgh. Rabbi Yossi Stein visits that institution on a regular basis, and provides for the needs of the Jewish inmates there. The institution has six Jewish inmates, some with a life sentence, requiring the special expertise of Rabbi Stein in dealing with that population.
  
- **SCI Huntington:** An institution which is 3.5 hours from Pittsburgh. It is one of the state's highest security institutions and was without any outside visits for many years. Thanks to Rabbi Stein, the Jewish community gets a visit regularly. It is a very tough institution to work with but the Rabbi has been very successful with achieving wonders.
  
- **Coal Township:** Visited regularly by Rabbi Tzvi Perelman, it is another institution which was not visited for years, but is now regularly visited and the needs of the Jewish inmates are being met. The Rabbi's dedication and professionalism has won applause from prison officials and inmates alike, we commend the Rabbi for his excellent work.

- **NECCI:** A new private prison in North East Ohio which provides bed space for the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and immigration cases. The institution is visited regularly by Rabbi Avi Cohen, the ever changing population and the difficult conditions of that institution make it a tough challenge for the Rabbi, we thank him for his hard work and dedication. We thank Rabbi Oppenhiemer for visiting there during Purim and reading the Megillah to the Jewish inmates.
  
- **Hazelton Federal Prison:** Located in Hazelton, West Virginia, this institutions holds many Jewish men and women, visited and cared for regularly by Rabbi Stein, this institution proves to be a most challenging position. In addition to the regular visits the Rabbi makes we thank the volunteers Mr. Richard Goldstein, Ms. Libby Foreman and Reesa Rosenthal who to have visited the Jewish women there.
  
- **SCI Muncy:** A women's facility in the center of the state, which is visited regularly by Rabbi Tzvi Perelman of the Aleph Institute. Close to the Williamsport PA, this institution is one of two of the state prisons for women, helping this special population thru their difficult prison sentence and in working with the women as they re-enter society, is a challenging one, and we thank Rabbi Perelman for his had work.
  
- **SCI Cambridge Springs:** A women's facility which has a long time contract Rabbi who works with the Aleph Institute and receives materials and religious items from us. In addition, Mrs. Sharon Saul, Mrs. Taibke Hyman, Mrs. Amy Schwartz, and Mrs. Barber all visit this institution. The needs of the Jewish inmates at this facility are sometimes more challenging in a women's facility than a men's facility. We appreciate the many hours of dedication these women invest in making sure that the Jewish inmates at that facility are cared for.
  
- **SCI Chester:** This institution continues to be served by one of the Aleph Rabbis, *Rabbi E. D. Strasbourg*. He provides regular religious services to the Jewish inmates residing at that facility and has been overseeing the correspondence course for those inmates taking it.
  
- **SCI Waymart:** Located close to Scranton and is visited regularly by Rabbi Leibel Itkin, who has been visiting on a regular basis for over ten years now thanks to the work of Aleph.
  
- **SCI Retreat:** Located close to Harrisburg this institution is visited regularly by Rabbi Tzvi Perelman, the Rabbi has been visiting this institution for close to a year, the clients he served have written to Aleph expressing their thanks and appreciation

for the wonderful direction, spiritual guidance and support of their Rabbi, prison ministry is no easy task and we thank the Rabbi for his commitment.

- **SCI Pine Grove:** This institution is new to the Aleph Rabbis, located close to Pittsburgh it has not had a Rabbi for many years, Rabbi Mendy Schapiro has now began visiting that institution and will be visiting this institution on a regular basis. Mr. Estner will begin visiting that institution as a volunteer for Aleph, he has been through our training system and now that all is moving along smoothly, he is expected to begin in the near future.
- **CI Grafton:** Not to far from Cleveland Ohio, this institution is visited regularly by the Aleph volunteer our of Cleveland Mr. S. Eisenbach, this institution has twelve Jewish inmates with a big transient in the population, we thank Mr. Eisenbach for his hard work and dedication.
- **CI Marion:** Not to far from Columbus Ohio, this institution is visited regularly by the Mr. Arthur Feldman, this institution has many Jewish inmates, and the services, food and religious materials are arranged by Mr. Feldman, in addition Rabbi Levy Kazarnovsky visits the institution on a regular basis
- **CI NCCI:** Not far from Cleveland Ohio, this institution is visited regularly by the Mr. Feldman, this institution boast the Horizon Program which offers a kosher kitchen and many accommodation to help those seeking religious values to grow with.
- **CI Richland:** Not to far from Columbus Ohio, this institution is visited regularly by the Mr. Arthur Feldman, this institution has many Jewish inmates, and the services, food and religious materials are arranged by Mr. Feldman, in addition Rabbi Levy Kazarnovsky visits the institution on a regular basis
- **CI Mansfield:** Not to far from Columbus Ohio, this institution is visited regularly by the Mr. Arthur Feldman also, this institution has a few Jewish inmates, and the services, food and religious materials are arranged by Mr. Feldman.

*Aleph is dearly indebted to the achievements and accomplishments of our volunteer coordinator, who in spends an average of over forty hours a week overseeing the over ninety volunteers visiting the Federal, state and local prisons. Beginning with the interviewing of the volunteer thru training and eventually providing the support for the volunteer, Richard has proven a tremendous asset to the Aleph Institute.*

*The expansion and success of this program is thru a generous grant by the Stuanton Farms Foundation, to whom Aleph is very indebted.*



*If you are interested in volunteering and becoming a mentor for so many or know of someone who is interested, please call Richard, he can be reached at 412.421.0111 x115 or at [rgoldstein@alephne.org](mailto:rgoldstein@alephne.org).*

### **Torah Studies Program – Correspondence Course**

*Torah study programs are available to inmates with the help of staff chaplains or the education department at the respective prison. This program is conducted via mail and currently has over five hundred students listed.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- *Stephanie*, a staff member at Aleph Institute, has assumed the position as "Torah Studies Program coordinator" and oversees the many student requests, grading and general running of this program, together with a dedicated group of volunteers, primarily Ms. Phyllis Timins, who spends many hours a week volunteering at the Aleph Institute grading the work of the inmates. We are deeply indebted to her and thank her for her dedication and commitment to the programs and services. You may contact Torah Studies department at [receptionist@alephne.org](mailto:receptionist@alephne.org) or at extension 103.
  
- The Aleph Institute now offers eight courses with over 450 Jewish inmates who benefit from this program. Due to the lack of internet access for inmates – as the internet is considered a security concern – this program operates via the US mail. Participants receive books, making the program the more effective although costlier.
  
- Through the past year, the program saw an increase of courses available. These courses were written especially for this program by Rabbi Yossi Schulman. The dedication, effort, and commitment to Jewish education is admirable.
  
- Aleph constantly sees an increase of the participants in this program. Inmates in isolated prisons are studying and using otherwise dead time productively, absorbing tools and guides toward becoming productive members of society.

*This program has received letters of approval and support from state correctional agencies, is lauded by the Rabbis that visit institutions across the region, and has proven to be a very popular and needed program. The costs to run this program are substantial, and we at Aleph Institute are always looking for sponsors for this program. If you would like to dedicate a course after a loved one or would like to honor someone, please contact Rabbi Vogel [rabbivogel@alephne.org](mailto:rabbivogel@alephne.org).*

## **Chesed – Mentoring Program**

*Based on programs offered by religious organizations throughout the US, this program matches inmates with individual mentors who work with them to modify attitudes and prepare them for reentering society. The mentors, or sponsors, continue to work with ex-inmates providing moral support and assistance with their transition into society, ensuring they receive and retain employment and become productive members of the community.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- This program continues to offer one-on-one mentoring, providing solid mentors as sponsors for the inmates. Dedicated volunteers from across the region are currently involved with this program. Training for this program is provided and a support system for the mentor is in place. For more information, or to volunteer, please contact Aleph.

## **Books and Religious Articles**

*This program offers inmates and prisons religious books and ritual items i.e.: Tallis, Tefillin etc., at no cost to the institution or the inmate when no funds exist.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- This program provides religious items at no cost to destitute inmates. For the most part these items are donated by local synagogues and individuals. They are then distributed to the institutions and inmates who in turn are able to pray in a more meaningful way.

*We are always looking for used but useful Tallisim, Tefillin, Siddurim, Chumashim and other Jewish books we can distribute. If you or someone you know has any gently used books or religious articles, please contact Aleph.*

## **Grape Juice and Matzo Program**

*This program ensures that grape juice and matzo are available for Jewish inmates to celebrate Shabbos and Jewish holidays in Prison.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- Volunteers oversee and ensure that the participating prisons receive grape juice and matzo delivered in a timely and organized fashion. The program brings a sense of warmth and connection to the inmates at the many federal, state and local jails participating, especially when the Rabbi cannot be there due to Shabbos or holiday observance.

## **Lending Library**

*This program ensures that Jewish men and women incarcerated in the western PA area are able to borrow and use Jewish books – covering all topics and areas of interest – allowing them to make positive use out of their time incarcerated. Institutions can and will only have a small number of Jewish books, due to the size of the Jewish population, with this lending library the inmates have access to over five hundred volumes of Jewish related books.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- The visiting Rabbis / volunteers receive on a regular bases an updated catalog of books available for borrowing, the inmates review the list with the Aleph representative and upon the next visit take those books in, the books are left for two weeks and returned back to the library.

## **Reference Library**

*With the renovation of our new facility, we now offer the Aleph volunteers a reference library with a computer which has internet access for them to be able to use in preparation for their visit. The library has manuals and instructions for ministering to the men and women in prison, Federal, state and local prison policies as well as counseling books and volunteer help books. Both Libraries are overseen by Zalman Goldwasser who spends many hours a week organizing and preparing materials for the Rabbi to take in.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- As Aleph Institute is open every evening of the week from 6:00 – 9:00 PM, the Rabbis can and do come in to make use of the extensive library.
- The library offers book as well as a video library for the Rabbis to use and show to the inmates during their visit. These videos are a valuable resource for the education of the inmates allowing them to attend classes otherwise not available to them.

## **PROGRAM AREA: AFTERCARE**

### **Individual Career Services**

*Volunteers counsel and assist newly released inmates seeking to re-enter the job market. Career counselors offer career assessment, counseling, job search assistance and help with writing and distributing resumes. A job bank with participating local businesses offers individuals jobs to help with re-entrance into society.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- The staff also instructs those returning to the work force in resume writing tools, and basic computer training. The dedicated computer in the lobby is used for that

training and allows those re-entering society to be able to search jobs, post resumes, establish an e-mail address and do other legal and miscellaneous research.

- Aleph continues to rely on the help of the many local businesses – specifically Fred Landay of the Appliance Warehouse and Boruch Hyman of Crown Antiques – to provide employment for those returning to society.
  
- Beginning in late summer, we plan on providing career counseling courses for those returning to society, which will include resume writing, basic introductions to computers and other computer programs.

*Our “Career Development Department” is always seeking businesses willing to hire individuals who are re-entering society, and volunteers to provide program training. If you or someone you know is in a position to help, please contact Rabbi Vogel in the office or at [rabbivogel@alephne.org](mailto:rabbivogel@alephne.org).*

### **Re-entry**

Kathleen Belskey (the administrative assistant / receptionist) at Aleph has compiled a resource book for re-entry, so many people who leave prison or are ready to leave prison are bewildered by what the next step is, and need direction on where to go, this resource book and having someone knowledgeable there to help and guide is a valuable resource for those beginning life anew, Kathleen can be reached at [receptionist@alephne.org](mailto:receptionist@alephne.org).

- Aleph is working with other groups, with a grant from the Falk Foundation to have the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny county and hopefully very soon the state sign ‘ban the box’ legislation, that would remove from the first page of a job application the question if the individuals has ever been convicted of a felony, that question should be asked once the individual has been interviewed or is being seriously considered. So many are being denied jobs for crimes that were committed sometimes decades earlier ([read more](#)).

### **Community Integration**

*Many inmates leave prison broken and in despair. Their previous family has fallen apart, and they are left with emotional issues to address.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- Linda Marino, MSW of the Jewish Children and Family Services works with our ex-inmates, offering them emotional support and assistance in obtaining government support. She works with them upon their release and continues with them as they adjust to their new lives. In addition Linda has lead a workgroup at the Annual conference for chaplains at Aleph, educating the Rabbis of the services and help inmates and their families can and do receive. She continues to be a tremendous resource together with Mr. Aryeh Sherman and the entire staff at JFCS for Aleph
- The Jewish Community Center continues to work with us, providing their services at little or no cost to ex-inmates who are rebuilding their lives.
- The Jewish Family Assistance Fund has worked with us providing assistance for newly released inmates so they can buy the minimum of necessities upon re-entry to society, usually helping with the down payment of an apartment after the release.
- The Hebrew Free Loan Association has provided loans for those exiting the prisons, helping them get re-established in society.
- The Hebrew Free Loan Association once again sponsored the Chanukah Gelt Program providing gifts for the children of Jewish inmates who are themselves not able to take care of such an important task. We thank Rabbi Eli Seidman for his dedication and commitment to making sure this program is organized and runs smoothly. You may contact Rabbi Seidman at [eseidman@alephne.org](mailto:eseidman@alephne.org).

### **Hotline**

*Former inmates in a bind, families with children in trouble, spouses on the edge, all are in a quandary. There is a hotline 24/6.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- The Aleph Institute provides a Hotline for families and individuals in trouble and in need. In the past six months, many emergency calls have been received after office hours. A Rabbi with knowledge of the criminal system monitors this phone line, offering guidance and his extensive knowledge of what is another culture and society. In this way he is able to help and direct an otherwise bewildered family member.

### **Aleph House**

*Aleph House Program provides emergency housing for individuals in the community who are homeless, and transitional housing for those leaving prison.*

**Program Highlights:**

- Over 90 percent of those leaving prison are homeless. The “Aleph House Program” is a short-term resource providing housing for up to ninety days. This allows the individual to get back on his feet. In the past year we have provided housing for five ex-inmates and one family.

**Shabbos and Holiday Programs**

*This program provides for those reentering society to be “adopted” by a family for Shabbos and holiday celebrations in a warm and friendly family environment. It also ensures that services and support will be available to inmates and their families for Shabbos and holidays.*

**Program Highlights:**

- As the majority of inmates are isolated and without family or loved ones to spend time with, this program offers family-style support. Currently this program hosts three individuals.
- For the High Holidays, various prisons that do not receive regular rabbinical visitation were visited and provided with necessities for the holidays.

**PROGRAM AREA: FAMILY SUPPORT**

*Government statistics report that every inmate incarcerated affects nine additional people. Family members are among the most affected. The children are especially hard hit. What do they tell their friends? Their pain and suffering is enormous.*

**Program Highlights:**

- High Holiday needs were distributed to many families of inmates, allowing them the opportunity to observe the holiday despite their hardships and loneliness. The Aleph Institute acknowledges the dire consequences that families of inmates face and works with the spouses and children to help them through their difficult hour.
- Holiday clothes and arrangements for holiday meals were made for the families of inmates.
- Support groups, usually with individual families, are conducted by Aleph Rabbis.

**PROGRAM AREA: IMMIGRATION PROBLEMS**

*Aleph continues to provide assistance for Jewish inmates of foreign descent who, due to their "stateless" classification, have become "lifers" in the prison system. Prior to 9/11 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) released "lifers" who were incarcerated for minor non-violent charges to Aleph custody; this is no longer true. Today Aleph works with the INS to seek a solution to this growing problem.*

**Program Highlights:**

- Hundreds Israeli citizens were arrested once again in the holiday-season crackdown at malls across the North East were re-united with their families in Israel. Aleph worked with authorities to rush their deportations.
- Aleph provides religious, emotional and family support to others who are stateless and whose case is awaiting determination.
- Aleph works with the Federal Immigration and Naturalization Services to help expedite the relocation of ex-inmates to Israel, thus enabling them to be reunited with their families. Without Aleph's efforts, some of these cases would drag on for years.

**PROGRAM AREA: GUARDIANSHIP**

*With the aging of the prison population there will be an increase of aging Jewish inmates who pose no threat to society and who will be released to the Jewish community. Some of these individuals may be able to function independently, while others may need nursing or other similar care.*

**Program Highlights:**

- The current rented "Aleph Houses" provisions are being made to accommodate those individuals who are able to lead a somewhat independent life. This house can accommodate them on a temporary basis until permanent housing is available.
- The Jewish Association of Aging has agreed to work with Aleph to provide services for inmates with terminal illnesses, affording them the respect and care we as a community provide to all our brethren.

## **OTHER NEWS: ADVOCACY**

- The Honorable Dan Frankel and Senator Jay Costa continue to work with the Aleph Institute to encourage the Department of Corrections to provide religious rights to Jewish inmates as it does to members of other faiths. The above individuals were recently successful in securing funding for the many programs we provide the community here at Aleph.
- In response to the increasing number of Jewish inmates and the need for more visits, volunteers and staff have also grown.
- Aleph joined other religious and humanitarian groups at a town hall forum in the capital asking for more cooperation and collaboration in working with the Justice system to offer more and better alternatives to incarceration.

## **PROGRAM AREA: DOROTHY'S FRIENDS**

*With the discovery of a Jewish woman who had spent over seventy years in a state institution without a visit, a program was launched to offer visitation in every state hospital and nursing home where there are Jewish patients. This program is now being organized by Rabbi Eli Seidman and Mrs. Amy Schwartz and we thank her for her time, dedication and commitment to this program.*

### **Program Highlights:**

- After recruiting many dedicated volunteers, this program provides visits for those who otherwise would be forgotten. Beginning with the holiday of Purim volunteers will be traveling to the local state hospital to bring the warmth of the holiday to these forgotten members of the community. Those visiting will have undergone a training exercise as required by the state.
- Preparations are underway for more holiday and visits and supplies to these facilities.

*If you are interested or you know someone who is available to donate time to this important project, please don't hesitate to call the Aleph office or write [rgoldstein@alephne.org](mailto:rgoldstein@alephne.org).*

### **Third Annual Chaplain's Conference**

For the third year we hosted our annual chaplain's conference, at our center in Squirrel Hill. This year over fifty Rabbis and volunteers benefited from this two day program. The attendees heard from government officials, professionals, representatives of local Jewish and non Jewish agencies.



Please read more about this conference in detail on our website at [www.alephne.org/conference](http://www.alephne.org/conference), the conference is a valuable resource for the Rabbis and lay leaders who visit the prisons on a regular basis, it is recognized by the government agencies for its valuable contribution, so much so the Rabbis are reimbursed for the training they receive at the conference by the prisons.

## **SUPPORT PROGRAMS**

*With the hundreds of Jewish men and women being released to the local area from the many prisons, more has to be done to provide the necessary resources so they do not return to prison. One area needed is support groups, both the anonymous series (AA, NA etc.) and the traditional support groups led by professionals. To that point, the center was made available for many of the groups to meet, we do not charge (they pay symbolic fees).*

### **Program Highlights:**

- Rabbi Moishe Mayir Vogel leads the family support groups which meets both regularly and for emergency family counseling, re-entry counseling and coaching.
- Rabbi Chaim Naiditch has been works individually with those returning to society providing religious counseling and direction to the many.
- Rabbi Yitschok Sholomo meets regularly with Jewish men who have returned to the community and learns something from the portion of the week..
- Alcoholics Anonymous, Gamblers Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous are just some of the groups that meet here regularly. We thank Jason Murphy and Kathleen Belskey for their tireless efforts in keeping the doors open.

*Please contact our office for more information about these and other meetings.*