



CALIFORNIA LAWYERS for the ARTS and the WILLIAM JAMES ASSOCIATION SHARE ARTS IN CORRECTIONS EVALUATION

One-year prison art study reveals useful benefits to reduce recidivism and restore dignity.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA, USA, April 16, 2014 /EINPresswire.com/ -- I truly believe that this class and its teacher have changed me for the better and nurtured an artist in me I never knew existed.

– San Quentin Art Program Participant

--- A one-year study of inmates in four California correctional institutions revealed that arts programs improve prisoners' behavior and their attitudes about themselves. A significant majority of inmates attribute their greater confidence, self-discipline, and pursuit of other academic and vocational opportunities to their participation in arts programs. These benefits signal a pathway for overall personal growth.

The [evaluation](#), which was completed by Dr. Lawrence Brewster of the University of San Francisco, was a central component of a demonstration project organized by the William James Association and [California Lawyers for the Arts](#). Through this project, which was funded by several foundations as well as the California Arts Council and the National Endowment for the Arts, artists representing several artistic disciplines provided arts classes for periods ranging from 8 to 12 weeks.

The evaluation was conducted through pre and post surveys that were completed by 110 inmates. Participating artists were placed by Marin Shakespeare Theatre at San Quentin; Actor's Gang at Norco; the Sacramento Metropolitan Arts Commission at New Folsom and the William James Association at Soledad, San Quentin and the San Francisco County Jail.

Among the findings:

- Inmates with previous arts education and practice, including former Arts in Corrections participants (N=79), were statistically more likely to be intellectually flexible, self-confident, motivated, in control of their emotions, socially competent, and better managers of their time than inmates who had never studied or practiced art (N=31).
- A comparison of the pretest-posttest survey results for the 31 inmates who had no previous arts education or practice showed a positive and statistically significant correlation between their participation in the theater, writing and visual arts classes and improved time management, achievement motivation, intellectual flexibility, active initiative, and self-confidence.
- Participants who had previously studied or practiced art were statistically more likely to pursue other educational and/or vocational programs than were those without arts education.

- A significant majority of participants reported that the art programs helped them to relieve stress, feel happier, and gain valuable insights. Over half (58%) said their art brought them closer to family; enriching their conversations and nurturing a new identity as artist, rather than convict.

The fact that former AIC inmates who had participated two or more years in the arts program showed statistically significant improvement in social competence and emotional control suggests the importance of long-term exposure to arts education and practice.

Dr. Brewster previously completed a cost-benefit analysis in 1983 that showed that arts programs are cost effective and help to reduce disciplinary incidents. In addition to the 2013 quantitative study, Dr. Brewster has been interviewing formerly and currently incarcerated men and women to learn the impact of prison fine arts programs on their lives. The interview data are reported in the book: Paths of Discovery: Art Practice and Its Impact in California Prisons.

California's stellar arts-in-corrections program, which previously offered services in all 33 state prisons, was largely eliminated between 2003, when the California Arts Council lost significant funding for community programs, and 2010, when the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation stopped funding arts facilitators in its prison system.

In the new study, inmates were tested on changes in behavior and attitudes, which are key indicators of their growth in self-management and community life skills. In the wake of realignment, with many inmates being released to local community control in order to reduce prison overcrowding, Brewster concludes that these skills are essential to reducing recidivism.

It is a good time to look at how the arts can make a meaningful contribution to reducing recidivism, according to Laurie Brooks, Executive Director of the William James Association. "We are in tremendous need of imaginative solutions for a correctional system that is way out of balance," she said.

For more information, please contact:

[Alma Robinson](#) Laurie Brooks
Executive Director Executive Director
California Lawyers for the Arts WJA Prison Arts Project
alma.robinson@calawyersforthearts.org laurie@williamjamesassociation.org
(415) 796-7692 (831) 246-0561

For press information, please contact:

Mike Mena
mike@ileanainternational.com
(310) 316-0612

###

Mike Mena
Ileana International Inc
310-316-0612
email us here

This press release can be viewed online at: <http://www.einpresswire.com>

Disclaimer: If you have any questions regarding information in this press release please contact the company listed in the press release. Please do not contact EIN Presswire. We will be unable to assist you with your inquiry. EIN Presswire disclaims any content contained in these releases.

© 1995-2016 IPD Group, Inc. All Right Reserved.