



## In This Issue

- A Message From the Executive Director
- My Dad's Journey Home: Amanda Acevedo
- New Hour Celebrates Holidays By Spreading Joy (and Cookies)
- New Hour Site Visit to Bedford Hills with Suffolk Sheriff (By Bob Keeler)
- Volunteer Spotlights: Angela Mislowack, Daniel Baroncelli, and Susan Karbiner
- Upcoming Events

## New Hour Support Services

- Support services for families and children of incarcerated women
- Advocacy at every stage of re-entry
- Safe spaces and events, including summer camp to support children of incarcerated parents
- Domestic violence and chemical-dependency referrals
- Leadership training for formerly incarcerated women
- Monthly member support group and higher education support

## Message from the Executive Director



Last year was marked by several firsts for New Hour. We brought Suffolk County Sheriff Toulon to visit the maximum-security state prison for women, Bedford Hills Correctional Facility. There, we visited Hour Children's center, filled with activities for mothers and children, including board games, crafts, and birthday cake celebrations. Most importantly, it offers children a chance to create meaningful memories instead of sitting across a table from their mother, where they can only hug her at the beginning and end of a visit.

We also visited the prison nursery, where mothers learn parenting skills and give infants needed bonding, which promotes a baby's lifetime of health, research shows. It's our hope that the children's visiting center model will be replicated to support children visiting parents in Long Island's jails. Read more about this visit in this issue written by New Hour Advisory Board Member Bob Keeler.

More recently, we joined Sheriff Toulon for the ribbon-cutting of a newly created women's housing unit in Yaphank, one we have long advocated for. The unit will have more gender-informed programming, including our own, for women and mothers behind bars, who deserve to have discharge planning and pre-release mental health support.

In addition to running programs in the jails, we have been building the capacity of our members to do well when they return home. EMERGE, our new leadership and advocacy 10-week training for women in re-entry, funded by the Long Island Unitarian Universalist Fund at the Long Island Community Foundation, has begun its second class series. Women from the first graduating class received certificates of completion and shared how empowered they felt by the program.

During the holidays, with help from over 45 volunteers, we gave away hundreds of toys donated to us and Prison Families Anonymous to brighten the often-traumatic encounters children have when visiting a jail. At our holiday Cheers for Children event, we were able to offer children gifts, food, and a visit from Santa. Your support has made all of this possible. Thank you for continuing to care and for making a tremendous difference to women and children from our community.

Gratefully,

Serena Liguori  
Executive Director  
New Hour for Women and Children - LI

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## My Dad's Journey Home: Amanda Acevedo



*"I quickly remembered the birthday card he had sent me: This will be your last birthday without Daddy, princess."*

*Amanda Acevedo, excerpted from **All I Ever Wanted: "Papi in the Bronx"***

As the daughter of a formerly incarcerated man, I know first-hand the impact that an incarcerated parent's absence has on a child and the challenges that arise as a result. My father was incarcerated for eight years. I was fortunate during that time to have a mother who was always present and provided for my sister and I, as well as supportive family members who made it possible for my sister and I to maintain a relationship with my father throughout the long years.

Every aspect of my father's sentence was difficult; however, some years were more difficult than others, such as years when my father was placed in solitary confinement and we weren't able to visit him. Then there were the years when he was placed in a maximum-security prison when we did get to see him; there was a fence-like barrier between us with a small hole that only allowed us to pass food back and forth. These devastating memories of my father's sentence are most vivid in my memory.

As my father's release drew near, we discussed what our relationship outside of prison would be like. We made plans to go places and to do things, to make up for lost time. However, we never anticipated that those plans would take years to achieve, or that they might not come to fruition at all. Today, I understand that nothing prepares a parent and a child for the parent's release. Both mistakenly believe that things will be "smooth sailing" after they have overcome the hurdle that is incarceration, not realizing that there is an even greater obstacle: *re-entry*.

Re-entry for a formerly incarcerated man or woman entails so much: housing, employment, mental health. For formerly incarcerated parents, re-entry also means reunification with their children. In order for a parent to have a healthy and meaningful relationship with their child, all of their other re-entry needs must be addressed.

As the child of a formerly incarcerated parent, I acknowledge the significance of re-entry and how important it is for those returning home to have access to services, advocacy and support. Often, we hear that an entire family is affected by one family member's incarceration. The same can be said about re-entry, as it impacts the entire family. It took my father over a decade to find stability in many aspects of his life after his release.

Without the right support system, the years following release have the potential to exacerbate the struggles and trauma conceived by the initial incarceration. Pre- and post-release services for the formerly incarcerated are imperative. Without them, recidivism rates increase and cycles of broken families and parentless children perpetuate. It is because of my own family's experiences that I have insight into the issues surrounding release and re-entry—and I am committed to alleviating the burden that our members at New Hour are met with regularly.

## New Hour Celebrates Holidays By Spreading Joy (and Cookies)

New Hour for Women and Children-LI held several events in December to help children in need during the holiday season. This included a toy drive, cookie baking, and a visit from Santa!



## New Hour Site Visit to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility with Suffolk Sheriff

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By Bob Keeler

Searching for ways to better serve our members and their children, we made a pilgrimage to Bedford Hills Correctional Facility to learn about their services for women prisoners with infants. What made the visit especially meaningful was that Suffolk County Sheriff Errol Toulon Jr. and members of his staff also made the trip.

At the start of the October 12 visit, Superintendent Amy Lamanna greeted us—New Hour executive director Serena Liguori, board member Jane Devine, the sheriff, and his four staff members— and spoke about the broad outlines of the program.

“They tell us it’s the longest-running in the country, and they tell us it’s the best in the country,” Lamanna said. “You really can’t run a program like this without folks like New Hour and Hour Children.” That became obvious as we toured the facility and met people who run programs there for Hour Children, the organization started by Sister Tesa Fitzgerald, who inspired us.

In the day care center, inmates who don’t have babies with them in prison work as caregivers for the children of mothers who are at work or in programs. The caregiver jobs are much in demand. Liz Hamilton, who runs the center, tells the caregivers: ‘This is your chance to be your best self.’ There’s no swearing. There’s no arguing. They take some pride in that.” In a room adjoining the day care center, inmates can attend parenting classes and prenatal classes.

After the day care center, we met with Jane Silfen, Hour Children’s director at Bedford Hills. In the nursery, she said, “the babies live in the cells with their mothers. That’s the model that we follow.” Sheriff Toulon asked: “Are the females locked in?” Silfen said no. But the mothers do have to be in their rooms during the prison’s required counts.

For families who live far upstate, Hour Children provides transportation four times a month, so children can visit their mothers. Local families host these children in their homes. “People here are very generous,” Silfen said. “They look at the women who live here as their neighbors.”

Later, after meeting with Silfen, we visited with Sharon Ricketts, manager of the nursery, a completely self-contained unit, where mothers and their babies are separated from the general population. “If we get them for a year, we feel we can have a strong impact,” Ricketts said. Silfen added: “I can never guarantee that a mother is not going to return here, but after a year with us, a baby is thriving.”

Bedford Hills is a prison, with a lot less turnover than in the jails in Riverhead and Yaphank. So, it remains to be seen how much of what we saw will be transferable to Suffolk. But Jane Devine said: “You can take some of the components of it and apply them to our situation.”

Whatever the outcome, this was an historic visit. “People come from all over the world to see what we do” Silfen said. “People have come from other states, but not from other counties. You’re the first that’s come to see us.” That’s a reason to be proud, for the sheriff and for New Hour.

*Bob Keeler is an advisory board member, Pulitzer prize winner, and retired Newsday editorial board writer.*

**Read more about New Hour in *Newsday* at <http://tiny.cc/NewHour>.**

## Upcoming Events

Friday, February 22, 2019

12-2 pm

Kids & Moms Valentine's Brick Oven  
Pizza Making at Sisters of St. Joseph's  
Garden Ministry Farm  
1725 Brentwood Rd.  
Brentwood, NY 11717

Sunday, March 10, 2019

Join us at the 9<sup>th</sup> Beyond the Bars  
Conference: Until She's Free  
Columbia University's Center for  
Justice Annual Conference  
Register at:  
[centerforjustice.columbia.edu](http://centerforjustice.columbia.edu)

For more information, contact  
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## Contact Us

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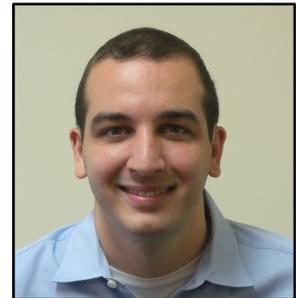
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and in-kind donations to the address  
above or visit [newhourli.org/donate](http://newhourli.org/donate).

With approximately 450 incarcerated  
women serviced—of whom 120  
participate in our weekly jail  
programming and over 70 mothers,  
caregivers, and children receiving  
wraparound services in the  
community—your generous ongoing  
support is greatly welcomed and  
appreciated.

## Volunteer Spotlights: Angela Mislowack, Daniel Baroncelli, and Susan Karbiner

We couldn't do our work without volunteers. This year, three of them have made all the difference. Angela Mislowack (below left) provides weekly administrative support to us and often provides ongoing help to our New Hour members. Just this month, she accompanied a New Hour member to receive emergency services so she and her children could be stable. Susan Karbiner (below middle) volunteers to transport our New Hour moms and children to our support groups and activities (they wouldn't be able to come without her help). Finally, Daniel Baroncelli (below right), a Sisters of St. Joseph's staffer, has provided countless volunteer hours of technical support, single-handedly repairing printers, as well as fixing and networking our computers for the past year.

We are so very thankful for each of our volunteers who make our work possible!



To send your donation today, mail check or credit card info to:  
New Hour for Women & Children – LI, PO Box 213, Brentwood, NY 11717  
or visit us online at [newhourli.org/donate](http://newhourli.org/donate)

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