

# Human Kindness Foundation

route 1, box 201-n durham nc 27705

(919) 942-2138

Christmas 1993

Dear Non-prisoner Family,

When I wrote you this past summer about the creation of Kindness House -- a 13-acre estate provided to us by an anonymous donor -- I mentioned that we would offer more details in this Christmas newsletter. As you can see, there's nary a mention of it, so I wanted to explain why -- as well as to assure you Kindness House is definitely on "Go."

After an intensive weekend meeting in early November, attended by seventy-five of you from all over the world, we saw it was premature to announce Kindness House to our prisoner mailing list, especially since we can't receive anyone until at least late spring. Also, the November meeting was so productive, we need to spend the winter reflecting on some of the insights it gave us, and refining our ideas before we put them down in print. So, please forgive us and be patient; I assure you we're working very hard to open up this new dimension of our work with a strong, clear focus. I hope our spring newsletter can provide more details, but I won't promise again! One of our concerns is simply that we're not prepared to handle thousands of letters from prisoners who may want to come to Kindness House. The house is already slated to be pretty full when it opens, just from people who have found out about it through some of you. We have a lot of thinking to do about how to present it to our 20,000-prisoner mailing list without being overwhelmed and incapacitated in the process.

However, I'll try to give you a brief sense of our meeting about not only Kindness House, but the restructuring of our whole organization. It was a very committed group who paid their own expenses to come here from as far away as Holland, Toronto, Maui, and all over the mainland U.S. Sita and I are honored to have provided the setting for these participants to meet each other and share their ideas and concerns about our work. One thing that was agreed upon was that Sita and I must allow other people to start pitching in. We wrote job descriptions for a Human Kindness Foundation administrator, a Prison-Ashram Project manager, and Kindness House resident manager. In other words, besides Sita and myself, it will take at least three full-time people (and plenty of volunteers) to run this new organization. Right now we have virtually no funds for those three new salaries, so we're exploring temporary ways of splitting up some of the functions among volunteers (we already have a full-time Kindness House manager lined up, willing to work for room & board until we get rolling). Some duties can't really be given to volunteers, so Sita and I will continue to fill in while we're looking at longer-term solutions.

Assuming the staff does grow by mid-'94 and we can afford to build the new HKF office at Kindness House, here are some of the additions to our work: 1) I would be doing more writing -- books, stories, etc., and Sita & I would be doing more frequent lecture/workshop tours; 2) More personal correspondence between P-AP staff and prisoners, and more ways of helping prisoners find other important resources; 3) A toll-free number for prisoners (and others) to request our books or to simply talk with a spiritual friend once in a while; 4) A stronger focus on helping create local "Prison/Community Alliances" all over the world and helping them network with each other; 5) improving our ability to produce & distribute books & tapes through our catalog; and 6) Initiating a serious effort to destroy the brutal "Convict Code" which perpetuates the violence and despair of prison life.

A number of people at the meeting were concerned about our plans to create large businesses as part of Kindness House. They worried that we would get swept away in the busy-ness and weaken our spiritual focus. We respect their views and are taking a very honest second look at those plans. The feeling at the meeting was that it would be great if Kindness House residents could experience *non-business* work like community programs, running the Prison-Ashram Project, serving at hospices, hospitals, youth groups, etc. In other words, if a person is only going to be at Kindness House for a few months, it would be nice if they could spend it solely around *direct* human service, instead of doing restaurant & construction jobs to support those services. This makes a lot of sense; but it requires us to find other means of financial support.

Speaking of support, some of you suggested we report on the results of our August 30th "Inform & Invite" fundraising letter, in which we mentioned that we could use as much as \$1 million over the next year and a half. As of this date, we've received about \$20,000 since that mailing. Times are a little lean for many people. But we're not about to get dramatic about "needing" any certain amount. Whatever level of funding we receive, that's what we'll gratefully use to the best of our abilities; I don't pretend to know the Master Plan. What I know and trust is that you and we are all involved with a wonderful area of service in a world which can certainly use it, and we'll all do what we can.

Doing Our Best, with Love & Respect,