

▶2017 Annual Report Lifers' Group Inc.

Published by the Lifers' Group Inc. Board of Directors

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2017 Annual Report

Lifers' Group Inc.

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Dedication

Our first Annual Report is dedicated to four supporters who have worked throughout the year – and for years to assist in improving prisons and the outside for all prisoners, especially lifers.

Louis Ahrens

Lois is the founder and Executive Director of Real Cost of Prisons Project in Northampton, Massachusetts. Lois has worked tirelessly to address problems both in county jails and state prison. Lois spearheaded the successful effort to include in the new crime bill the right to contact visits in corrections institutions. Lois also has been so generous for years in posting our reports on the Real Cost of Prisons website.

Lloyd Fillion

Lloyd has been working with the Lifers' Group Inc. and the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition for over a decade. Lloyd co-authored a well-received report: Life-Without-Parole: A Reconsideration and a subsequent update. The writings stimulated the ongoing effort to enact legislation to eliminate Life-Without-Parole sentences in favor of a parole hearing after serving twenty-five years.

Nat Harrison

Nat has been working with Lloyd Fillion and a group under the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition to end lifewithout-parole sentences. Nat has been compiling hundreds of petitions regarding the need to end life-withoutparole sentences. Nat is also working on potential statutory language to be introduced in the future.

Lyn Levy

Lyn has worked for decades assisting lifers and long-termers as they prepare for parole hearings. Lyn, through Span Inc., has supported prisoner families while loved ones are incarcerated. Lyn served as Executive Director of Span Inc. until funds were withheld by the Baker administration. Even though the funding has been terminated, Lyn continues to work with prisoners, especially those who are trying to adjust to reentering society.

The Lifers' Group Inc. extends our thanks with our deepest appreciation to these four stalwart supporters of all prisoners.

All members of our Board of Directors contributed to the production of our first Annual Report. Special recognition goes to: Neal Parham, our Historian; Russell Regan, our 2017 Secretary; and Vice Chairmen Dirk Greineder and James Keown.

Chairman's Welcome

This Annual Report is the first published by the Lifers' Group Inc. There is an old adage which I will tweak a bit: If a group does not tell its story, who will? As is noted in this report, the Lifers' Group Inc. has been operating as a Massachusetts corporation since 1974. So, it is long past time for the Lifers' Group Inc. to begin to tell its story. We plan to publish an Annual Report on our activities each year into the future.

The Lifers' Group Inc. conducts general membership meetings with our members at MCI-Norfolk on the first and third Tuesday nights of each month. In 2017, we held only twenty such meetings due to four cancellations by the administration due to "operational needs." Still, our total attendance for those twenty meetings was 2,177 or an average of 109 attendees at each meeting.

The Lifers' Group Inc. hopes that every reader of this report finds it instructive and interesting.

Gordon Haas Chairman

Lifers' Group Inc.

MCI-Norfolk

About Lifers' Group Inc.



The Lifers' Group Inc. is a prison based corporation at MCI-Norfolk in Norfolk, Massachusetts. We have operated continuously for over forty years. Our Board of Directors is elected by our membership. Directors serve three year terms and can be re-elected as long as members vote to do so. Our membership is open to all prisoners, but mainly includes men serving life or long-term sentences (fifteen years or more) at MCI-Norfolk. We have outside volunteers who work in conjunction with the Board of Directors.

As stated in our Articles of Organization and By-Laws, the purpose of the Lifers' Group Inc. is to promote, within the criminal justice system, educational and training opportunities, rehabilitation and re-entry programs,

penal and parole reform, family and community relations, and legislation and activism in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. We join with other groups and individuals both inside and outside MCI-Norfolk, in their efforts to effect meaningful and positive change for all prisoners. We are seeking to reintroduce rehabilitation as the central purpose of the criminal justice system as opposed to the present emphasis on retribution. To that end, we urge that the governor return the Department of Correction to being under the direction of the Department of Health and Human Services.

To achieve our stated purpose and objectives, the Lifers' Group Inc. publishes several reports and position papers annually, conducts educational discussion groups, offers presentations on criminal justice developments, promotes legislative change, and encourages guests to address our membership at our meetings held on the first and third Tuesday nights of each month. Our LGI reports and position papers can be viewed and downloaded at www.RealCostofPrisons.org/writing.

The Lifers' Group Inc., in conjunction with Prisoner Legal Services (PLS), publishes a Parole and Commutation Manual which is available to all Massachusetts prisoners upon request from PLS. The manual is designed to aid anyone seeking a parole or commutation. The Lifers' Group Inc. also assists any interested prisoner at MCI-Norfolk to construct parole packages and to prepare for parole hearings. In addition, the Lifers' Group Inc. publishes a Prisoner Resource Guide.

The Lifers' Group Inc. welcomes the support and seeks to work with any person and/or group advocating reform to the Massachusetts criminal justice system. Anyone wishing to join with us or whom we can assist by providing any information we have, need only contact:

Chairman Lifers' Group Inc. MCI-Norfolk PO Box 43 Norfolk, MA 02056

The Lifers' Group Inc. believes all voices need to be heard, including ours. To that end, we seek to provide input on a par with other stakeholders who work to reform the criminal justice system in Massachusetts. The voices of prisoners need not be the only ones, but we should be in the mix on an equal footing with all others. The Lifers' Group Inc. looks forward to being a significant part of the solution, not being viewed as part of the problem.



Accomplishments

Each year, the Lifers' Group Inc. sets aside one general meeting to work with the membership on setting goals and objectives for the new year. The suggestions made by the membership help the Board of Directors determine how best to use the group's limited resources. In 2017, Lifers' Group Inc. succeeded in accomplishing many goals put forth by the membership. Highlights of our accomplishments are listed below. Additional details on many of these items will be found later in this Annual Report.

Life Without Parole Abolition – Ongoing

Lifers' Group Inc. believes a life without parole sentence is a de facto death sentence — death by incarceration. For that reason, our group continued its ongoing push to identify and work with stakeholders committed to ending all terminal sentences. Lifers' Group Inc. believes that all people deserve a second chance.

Education Discussion Groups - Ongoing

Lifers' Group Inc. continued to champion the transformative power of education in 2017 through its successful Education Discussion Groups (EDG). The program grew from two sessions a month to two sessions each week. And EDG is poised for further growth in 2018.

Establish a Lifers' Group Volunteer – Accomplished

For several years, the Lifers' Group Inc. has tried to work with the DOC to recruit a volunteer for the group. Previous attempts had been met with frustrations. In 2017, Boston attorney Peter Elikann would not be deterred. He navigated bureaucratic paperwork and unexplainable delays until he received his official volunteer status. He now regularly joins the group for general membership meetings and helps keep the Board informed on legislative developments.

Support Outside Organizations - Accomplished

Lifers' Group Inc. members helped raise money in 2017 to support both Project Bread through the "Walk for Hunger" and the Louis D. Brown Peace Initiative through a one-night fund drive.

Establish a Facebook Page - Accomplished

Lifers' Group Inc. was asked by its membership to create a Facebook page that would allow the group to communicate directly with the public. In 2017, Timothy Muise helped the group establish a page. Lifers' Group Inc. is now working to recruit outside support to help manage the site and other outside communication.

Advocate for the Return of Tutors - Accomplished

Our members asked us to work with the MCI-Norfolk Education Department to advocate for the return of lifers and long-termers serving as tutors in the school. For many years, Norfolk had a successful tutoring program that was shuttered following a staff change several years back. This year, LGI, working in partnership with the Norfolk Inmate Council's Education Committee, was successful in re-starting the tutoring program.

Increase Access to the Gym for Older Prisoners – Accomplished

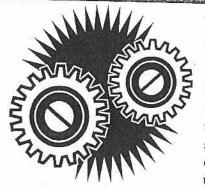
Lifers' Group Inc. members asked the Board to pursue a dedicated time slot when older prisoners could use the prison's gym. LGI Treasurer Milton Rice developed a plan with gym staff and prison administrators that now provides at least one time slot a week that more than 150 older prisoners (50+) can use to access the gym.

Install a Defibrillator in the Gym – Accomplished

Lifers' Group Inc. has long championed causes related to prisoner health and safety. In 2017, our members asked us to push for an Automated Electronic Defibrillator (AED) to be placed in the gym to reduce the chances of death from a heart attack. After lobbying both prison officials and lawmakers, a new AED was installed in the gym



Our Work



Life Without Parole

Lifers' Group Inc. continued expanding its push to abolish life without parole in Massachusetts. In 2017, LGI worked with an outside consortium led by Lloyd Fillion and Nat Harrison that seeks to end Massachusetts' de facto death penalty. LGI distributed hundreds of support petitions to its members, which they in turn sent to their family and friends in an effort to garner support for the initiative. Lifers' Group Inc. also helped to collect the stories of first degree lifers who have turned their lives around in prison even though they currently have no meaningful chance of release.

Criminal Justice Reform Bill

Lifers' Group Inc. worked closely with legislators and advocates to help craft language for a new criminal justice reform bill. LGI hosted lawmakers so they could hear from prisoners about what reforms are needed to improve rehabilitation and prison conditions. Several ideas proposed by Lifers' Group Inc. members were added to the omnibus bill created by the legislature. The LGI Board also provided regular updates to the membership on the bill as it progressed through Beacon Hill.

Family Surveys

Led by LGI Board Member Lonnie Watkins and Vice Chairman Dirk Greineder, Lifers' Group Inc. administered a series of surveys to help members connect their family members with state representatives and senators. Watkins and Greineder also used the surveys to create detailed handouts about the pending criminal justice reform legislation.

Education Discussion Group

In 2015, Lifers' Group Inc. launched its first Education Discussion Group, or EDG, to help members learn about Financial Literacy. Since then, thanks to the success of the program and the desire of members to participate, EDG continues to expand. In 2017, working in partnership with the Norfolk Education Department, Lifers' Group Inc. began utilizing classroom space in the school building to conduct EDG sessions. LGI provided courses on Financial Literacy, The Bill of Rights, and Critical Thinking: Introduction to Debate. In addition to the work being done in the classroom, Lifers' Group Inc. is also creating detailed curriculum modules that will both allow other prison groups around the state and country to replicate Lifers' Group EDG's and/or allow prisoners with limited access to educational opportunities to learn through self-study. As 2017 came to a close, the EDG team was preparing to further expand the educational offering of the Lifers' Group by developing new EDG's on Writing, College Prep, Spanish, and Math.

Board of Directors Reorganization

In 2017, the Lifers' Group Inc. Board took the next step in a multi-year process to review how the organization conducts its work. The Board added a second Vice Chairman position allowing one Vice Chair to oversee external issues and the other to oversee internal issues. The Board also aligned Board positions to connect directly with the work LGI is focused on accomplishing.

Peter Elikann

Boston attorney Peter Elikann joined Lifers' Group Inc. as its community volunteer in 2017. Mr. Elikann helps keep the Board apprised of legal and legislative changes that affect lifers and long-termers. In 2017, Mr. Elikann testified before the Massachusetts Legislature on a proposed series of criminal justice reform bills. He also gave several presentations to the Lifers' Group membership during the organization's monthly meetings.

Walk for Hunger

Once again this year, Lifers' Group Inc. supported Project Bread's Walk for Hunger. Members walked MCI-Norfolk's track to raise money to help combat hunger throughout Massachusetts. Generous supporters on the outside sponsored the walkers by donating money for every mile completed.

Louis D. Brown Peace Institute

Representatives from the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, including Lyn Levy, Milton Jones, and Shahid Smart, visited the Lifers' Group in 2017. LGI members donated \$250 in one night to support the Peace Institute and their work to help survivors of violent crime.

Lifer Tutors

After several years being away, lifers and long-termers returned to the classrooms of MCI-Norfolk in fall of 2017 to assist tutors. Lifers' Group Inc. has long encouraged prison officials to utilize the vast experience of lifers and long-termers to help provide educational and rehabilitative programming. Tutors participated in a training program facilitated by Norfolk's Head Teacher and Tutor Trainers from the Petey Greene Program. Petey Greene was started by Washington, DC broadcaster and former prisoner Petey Greene to encourage college students to tutor inside prisons. Each semester about a dozen Petey Greene tutors help out in the classrooms at MCI-Norfolk. And now, lifers and long-termers work with these tutors to help the men of Norfolk pursue their educational goals.

Learning Center / Computer Lab

Lifers' Group Inc. was proud to be asked to help support a new Learning Center and Computer Writing Lab in the school building of MCI-Norfolk. Both spaces opened in October 2017 and are designed to help students better participate in classes. The Learning Center provides students with a quiet place to study, meet with tutors, and utilize school resources to complete class projects. In the Computer Writing Lab, students can work on papers for classes, learn typing skills, or explore a collection of video lectures on topics

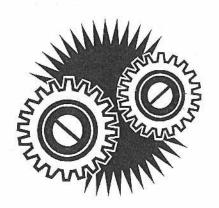
ranging from basic grammar to advanced science.

Elder Gym Access

In 2017, Lifers' Group Inc. through the hard work and dedication of LGI Treasurer Milton Rice, was able to secure time in the MCI-Norfolk gym reserved for those 50 years old and older. Like many prisons around the country, MCI-Norfolk has an ever increasing elderly population. Older prisoners at MCI-Norfolk often find it difficult to utilize the gym either because they work or because of the large number of younger men who regularly use the gym. Lifers' Group Inc. believes access to regular physical activity is an important part of living a healthy lifestyle. Mr. Rice worked with the administration and gym staff to identify time when older residents could use the gym without taking time away from the rest of the population. The program has proved a success, and Lifers' Group Inc. hopes to expand access in 2018.

AED in the Gym

Following the sudden death of a Lifers' Group member from a heart attack on a handball court, Lifers' Group Inc. began lobbying for the inclusion of Automated Electronic Defibrillators (AED) in the gym. The initiative was led by LGI Treasurer Milton Rice. And in 2017, after working with state legislators and prison officials, the first AED was placed in the gym. Lifers' Group Inc. hopes the AED never has to be used, but is comforted that it is now in place-just in case.



The Lifers' Group Inc. is always honored to welcome outside guests to our regular monthly meetings on the First and Third Tuesdays of each month and to our weekly Board meetings on Saturday mornings. In 2017, a number of people joined us at MCI-Norfolk, including:

Governor Michael Dukakis

Governor Dukakis met with the Board of Directors on a Saturday morning to discuss the history and future of criminal justice reform in Massachusetts. Governor Dukakis, who now teaches Public Policy at Northeastern - where he



oversees the Michael and Kitty Dukakis Institute on Public Policy – committed to work with the Lifers' Group Inc. to help advance the group's reform initiatives.

Senator William Brownsberger

Senator Brownsberger chairs the Massachusetts Legislature's Joint Committee on the Judiciary which handles all pending legislation on crime, courts, jails, and prisons. Senator Brownsberger spoke to the Lifers' Group Inc. general membership twice in 2017 to address the Criminal Justice Reinvestment Plan the Commonwealth was working to advance following a multi-year study conducted by the Pew Charitable Trust and the Center on State Governments.

Nat Harrison and Lloyd Fillion

Mr. Fillion and Mr. Harrison are working in conjunction with the Criminal Justice Policy Coalition to pull together individuals and organizations seeking to abolish life without parole in Massachusetts. Lifers' Group Inc. Chairman Gordon Haas and Mr. Fillion have worked together for over ten years on issues related to lifers. Mr. Harrision and Mr. Fillion spoke with the general membership before meeting the Board of Directors to provide an update on the push to end Massachusetts' de facto death sentence.

Lyn Levy, Milton Jones, and Shahid Smart

Longtime Lifers' Group Inc. supporter Lyn Levy joined Milton Jones and Shahid Smart from the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute at a 2017 Lifers' Group general membership meeting. Lyn spoke emotionally about the transition of her work following the termination of her state funding. Mr. Jones and Mr. Smart updated the membership on the Institute's work. Lifers' Group Inc. members took up a collection for the organization raising \$250 in one night.

Harvard PLAP

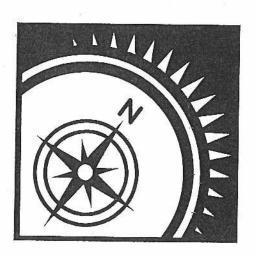
Lifers' Group Inc. has worked with Harvard University's Prisoner Legal Assistance Program for many years. In 2017, students from Harvard PLAP spoke at a Lifers' Group Inc. general meeting about the organization's services. The student attorneys also took several questions from the membership. Members of Harvard PLAP met with the Board of Directors at a Saturday meeting to discuss the larger issues related to sentencing and prison reform.

Dr. Lee Perlman and students from MIT

In the 1980's, MIT philosophy professor Dr. Lee Perlman worked with the Lifers' Group at MCI-Norfolk. In 2017, that relationship was rekindled as Dr. Perlman brought students from MIT to visit a Lifers' Group Inc. general membership meeting. Dr. Perlman has also worked with Lifers' Group members who serve on Norfolk's competitive debate team – the Norfolk Debating Society.

CPCS

Attorneys from the Committee for Public Council Services visited a Lifers' Group Inc. general meeting in 2017. CPCS attorneys spoke about the services they offer and about current trends in prisoner-related litigation. The attorneys fielded questions from the membership and met for an hour after the meeting with the LGI Board of Directors.



Meeling resentations



Throughout the year, the Lifers' Group Inc. prepared several educational presentations for general membership meetings. In addition, LGI Board Members facilitated a number of seminars which looked deeper into subjects the membership found important. In 2017, our presentations and seminars included:

Legal Developments

Vice Chairman Dirk Greineder led a series of presentations focused on developing case law and new policies to help members better understand how legal changes might impact them. In 2017, LGI discussed courtroom

closures, juvenile life without parole, and the DOC's move to overhaul the department's operational guidelines (CMRs).

Legislation

2017 was a busy year for sentencing and prison legislation as lawmakers developed several bills related to the state's push to enact recommendations related to the Criminal Justice Reinvestment initiative. Lifers' Group inc. provided members with regular updates on pending legislation and analyses on how the bills might impact lifers and long-termers. In addition, LGI worked to connect each member with the state representative and state senator that represented the members' family. LGI also developed surveys and sample postcards to help with this work.

Candidate Debates

Lifers' Group Inc. utilized time at general meetings to host debates for candidates running for the Chairmen positions on the Norfolk Inmate Council.

Parole Decisions for 2016

For the tenth year, Lifers' Group Inc. led a research study that analyzed the parole process 2nd degree adult lifers and Ist and 2nd degree juvenile lifers. LGI Chairman Haas presented the group's findings to the general membership.

DOC Expenditure and Staffing

Lifers' Group Inc. used public records requests to investigate how the Massachusetts DOC used its budget. The Expenditure and Staffing presentation shed light on the department's shifting priorities.

DOC Institutional Fact Cards

Twice a year, the DOC releases its Institutional Fact Cards that provides population data from each the institutions operated by the department. LGI analyzed the department's data and presented the group's findings to the membership.

Norfolk Z-1 Account

The Norfolk Inmate Benefit Fund, or Z-I Account, is funded through commissions earned on canteen and property sales. The fund was established to help cover expenditures that benefit the prisoner population. Each year, Lifers' Group Inc., in conjunction with the Norfolk Inmate Council Store & Finance Committee, conducts a review of the Z-1 account. The group's review report was presented to the membership at a general meeting.

DOC Central Inmate Accounts

In addition to the Z-I Account, Lifers' Group Inc. reviews the department's three central inmate accounts. Our 2017 report uncovered more than \$2.5 million left in these three accounts. \$1.9 million was in the department's Central Library Fund alone. The fund was originally established to finance a long completed upgrade to all of the DOC's law libraries. A presentation on the review was made to the group's membership.

Public Records Requests

Lifers' Group Inc. conducted a seminar on how to use the Commonwealth's updated public records law. The seminar was designed to help prisoners understand how public records requests can help them accomplish their goals. The seminar also pointed out the pitfalls and limitations of public records requests.

Emancipation Initiative

The Emancipation Initiative is a sentencing and prison reform movement started by Derrick Washington, a man serving time at MCI-Norfolk and a member of the Lifers' Group. Mr. Washington and other men at Norfolk working with him shared the work El was accomplishing with partners outside the walls. Mr. Washington encouraged LGI members to reach out to their family members to attend Emancipation Initiative events around Massachusetts.

Published Reports

Each year, Lifers' Group Inc. develops a number of original reports that are published in hard copies and online. Full versions of all LGI reports are available for download at www.realcostofprisons.org/writing. In 2017, the Lifers' Group published the following reports:

- Parole Decisions for Lifers 2016
- > Department of Correction Expenditures & Staffing Levels
- > Department of Correction Institutional Fact Cards
- > Department of Correction Central Inmate Accounts
- > "Life" Is a Death Sentence
- > Parole and Recidivism
- > The Still Ongoing Suicide Crisis in MADOC
- Recidivism of Second Degree Lifers



Published Articles

Several Lifers' Group Inc. Board Members are regular contributors to publications around the country. In 2017, the following articles were published by our Board Members:

- Fear Factor: published in Cure: LifeLong newsletter and MO Cure newsletter
- * Parole Board Tomfoolery: published in Cure: LifeLong newsletter and MO Cure newsletter
- Penny Wise, Pound Foolish: published in Mass Dissent
- Questions & Answers: published in Cure: LifeLong newsletter and Unveiled magazine
- Mass(achusetts) Incarceration of the Elderly: published in Mass Dissent and Journal for Prisoners

Guides and Manuals

In 2017, Lifers' Group Inc. began the process of updating its popular Parole and Commutation Manual. The publication, made available to all Massachusetts prisoners through Prisoner Legal Services, helps those preparing to go before the Parole Board. Lifers' Group Inc. also began developing a Prisoner Resource Guide. The guide, which will be available in 2018, is designed to serve as a quick reference for prisoners to connect with many of the organizations Lifers' Group Inc. has worked with through the years.

Outside Communications

In 2017, our members asked the Board to work to communicate with lifers and long-termers in other states. To help with this work, Board member Dan Holland oversaw an outreach campaign that placed notices in the following publications:

- Cure: LifeLong
- Prison Action News
- The Student Insurgent
- News & Letters
- CURE-ARM
- The Fortune Society
- Pennsylvania Prison Society
- Prison Activist Resource Center
- Mass Prison Voice
- Graterfriends
- Solitary Watch
- MIMS
- Bread & Water
- Coalition for Prisoners' Rights
- Merry Anderson Newsletter

In Memoriam

The following fifteen lifers passed away in 2017 while incarcerated:

2017 In Memoriam

Seth Cofield

Fran Damiano

William "Billy" Doucette

Philip Gagliardi

Donald "Pops" Ghee

Aaron Hernandez

Rocky Hogan

William Horton

William Khoury

Thomas LaCara

Thomas Maimoni

Kenneth Robinson

Luis Torres

Philip Walker

George Whitham

Each person was remembered with a moment of silence at a Lifers' Group General Meeting. On the last general meeting of 2017, the names of all lifers known to the Lifers' Group who have died in prison were read as our membership stood in silence. The list totaled 292 lifers.

For more information about anything listed in this Annual Report, contact:

Chairman Lifers' Group Inc. PO Box 43 Norfolk, MA 02056

To view and download full versions of all Lifers' Group Inc. reports, visit:

www.realcostofprisons.org/writing

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