

Hello awesome Fair Shake donors ~

Happy season of gratitude and love!

So much has happened since last year's update. We have all 'pivoted', expanded our ideas about what is possible, and felt pain from our loss of physical connection...to people, events, travel and traditions. Many suffer much more than we do, so we are trying to learn how to reach them by expanding our ability to offer care and support virtually.



Fair Shake, and I, are no different. I have many struggles, but I'm also learning to use new tools, reach out more widely, and persevere when I feel stuck or down.

It's true. Even I can get the blues.



But not today. Today - like most days - I am hopeful, and deeply grateful to you all for allowing me to continue to do what I do in the way that I'm doing it. I am honored, and fortunate, to be able to serve humanity in my small way during this challenging time.

Although I have not stepped into a prison since February, Fair Shake's reach continues to grow....steadily and exponentially:

- Formerly incarcerated people are connecting after prison for information, community-building and sharing valuable contributions.
- Newsletter readership (all incarcerated) has grown from 2600 readers in January to 4500+ readers today! The readers are in state and federal prisons around the country. They are allowed only 30 contacts and choose to include FS in their list.
- Large Employers; State, Federal and even Private Corrections Staff, Families and Friends, and other reentry-support organizations are increasingly turning to Fair Shake for support and information.
- Software interest has grown! This year's edition will be configured for tablets in addition to stand-alone computers.

The pandemic has greatly increased my workload. For those of you who know me personally, you know I am more than happy to expand my capabilities to meet the challenge! I have the will, the creativity, the tenacity and the listening skills to grow Fair Shake's breadth and depth, but my workshop would be quiet and dark without your support. Thank you so much for believing in me.

This summer I was asked to contribute an article describing my unique approach to a periodical published by the State University of New York (SUNY) called [All About Mentoring](#). The magazine was released last week and I've attached my article to this email. If you would care to see the full issue, you will find it [here](#).

As many of you know, I received my master's degree in Adult Education last year. This year I am starting to build a Free School based on areas we do not study – but which are crucial for creating a satisfying life – such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, citizenship (as opposed to 'civics') and a study area that I call [Swellness](#). These are tools for self-determination, lifelong learning, critical thinking and community-building. I will keep you posted as I create this free learning portal, and I invite you to share your reflections and contributions!

Last week, a new reentry organization contacted me and asked me what I “think about (my) effectiveness”. I thought I would share my response, and leave it to you to judge:

*The resource directory is only as ‘effective’ as a phone book or a smorgasbord. If people find what they are looking for, it is effective. Although it is [huge](#) - and I just added a separate page for the [Reentry Guides](#) - I believe the other areas of Fair Shake are what make it special:*

*~ the [member tools](#): more than 2000 members have storage accounts and personal web-pages*

*~ the [newsletter](#)-as-a-conversation: 4500+ subscribers who share reflections with me so I can share them with our entire group*

*~ Fair Shake’s exclusive [multi-stakeholder](#) approach: the BOP, DOC’s, private prisons, very large employers, reentry organizations, family members, tablet-makers, and more who contact me for information, support, software and guidance*

*~ the extensive assortment of information to address diverse individual needs: including [personal development](#), [publishing](#), [compassionate release](#), a ‘how to’ for [using computers](#), and one for navigating [Corrlinks](#) (a monitored, plain text email service), [employment preparation](#), [job searches](#), and [starting a business](#); and even learning about [our biases](#)!*

*~ the [reentry packet](#) and the information flyers that are utilized by untold numbers of people around the country, and even used in creating reentry classes – by both staff and incarcerated folks*

*~ the fact that all these things are available in the software, used inside prisons, where there is no internet connection; and on the website, where it is free for everyone to access*

*~ but the most important thing of all is building authentic community – where we can hear others and share our reflections and ideas*

Simply stated, Fair Shake offers free tools for all; to increase our individual and group capacity and creativity so that we can contribute our unique gifts as we build our future together.

I consider myself an “Agent of Agency”. Thanks so much for your empowering support!

In July, two videographers created this terrific video to help us understand [The ‘Surreal’ Moment After Release From Prison](#).

(7.7.2020 NY Times 11 min.) “For these former inmates in Texas, the rush of emotions that accompany freedom play out at a Greyhound bus station.”

I will close with some quotes from the newsletter subscribers. This first one is from Marvin Beauchamp, incarcerated in WI. The rest can be found below my signature:

“Loved people love people. Love someone, so they can love someone.”

[Ubuntu](#), in a nutshell!

Thank you again, amazing donors. I will continue to attack the wicked problem of creating reentry success to the best of my abilities!

I hope you and yours are faring well through this difficult time.

Happy Holidays!  
Ubuntu and deep gratitude, ~ sue

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If you would like to continue to support this work financially, feel free to send a check or donate by credit card: Fair Shake PO Box 63 Westby, WI 54667 or [donate by credit card here](#) (Fair Shake is a 501(c)(3) non-profit; your donations are tax deductible.)

*Some recent responses from newsletter subscribers:*

“You make so much sense. It's the most important and needed message of this day and age. I feel stronger and much more fortunate after reading your email.”

“I took an immediate liking to ALL of your emails. I enjoy your energy and consistent positivity!”

“I REALLY enjoy all that you send; it has me thinking and pondering a lot!”

“By the way, when we showed the administration your email they immediately got us (IRS) forms. It was amazing to see their reaction to how we even received this information. Thanks.”

“Thank-you for believing in us.”

“Alright, Sue, you take care. We're all thinking about you and the support you give us.”

“Your emails are like a hand up out of the mire.”

“I consider what you do invaluable.”

“Your news be so enlightening that I can't help but set your props out”

“My friend's mother is older. I know she loves her son, and any opportunity to communicate with him, especially during this time, is important. This would not have been possible without "you!!!!" Thank you so much.

“You kind of intimidate me in a good way.”

“I'm thankful to God for once again allowing me to meet and be reached by one of His Angels': you.”

“I am forever grateful for your efforts on OUR behalf.”

“It is refreshing to know that there are people like yourself that still exist in this ever so troubled world.”

\*\* Fair Shake has always been, and will always be, free from tracking, monitoring, and 'nudging'; it is also free from selling, sharing or storing visitor information. The software, which is used in more than 100 prisons around the country with building interest this year, is also completely free. **Thanks to you!**