

# Bridges to Life helps change future

*David Anthony Caserta, Hutchinson State Jail*

**B**rothers and sisters, my name is David Caserta! I've felt compelled to write this for a while now. My last day in prison has come. In the morning, I'll be released from Hutchins State Jail to go to a halfway house in Ft. Worth. I've been waiting for this day for almost nine months. In March I found out I made my first parole. It's been like a dream I've been waiting to wake up from. You see, I did 13 years my first time down and had to discharge. I was young and did a lot of hard time (over half of it in segregation). I made every mistake you could imagine. I was violent, stayed high and had a deep resentment of authority. That's how I grew up in prison.

Then, at 36, I found myself back in prison with a fresh 20. Man, I was crushed. Following my previous release, I swore to myself I'd never be back. Yet, there I was on four building at Bill Clements in Amarillo. For the second time, a woman I loved left me and took my newborn baby with her. Once again, I had let all my friends and loved ones down. My family told me if I ever came back to prison a second time not to call them, and they meant it. So there I was at the end of the world. It seemed like everyone around me was wiped out. I felt like one of many on the island of misfit toys. Those were some dark days at first. Then I just accepted I was put in Amarillo to do some time.

I decided I wasn't going to give them any reason to set me off. So I started the hard work of turning my ship around. There was a lot of prayer and faith in God involved to make me a new creation. I started out by working hard at my job in the shoe factory and getting my job certificate. I took Cognitive Intervention and

steered clear of all the so-called cool guys. It didn't take long before I started staying in my cell and then my cubicle. Along the way I made mistakes and had to reaffirm my efforts. Fact is, sometimes we have just got to suck it up and go through some suffering. My first time I didn't do that; I did anything to keep my mind off the reality of my situation. I stayed glued to the television and radio, or spent time kicking it with the fellas, telling war stories.

This time I did the exact opposite. Something that had a big impact on my life was Bridges to Life. That program helped me to work through my anger, hurt and pains. Like any course, you only get out what you put in. I repeated it to everyone. But if you're serious about staying out of trouble and changing your life, don't blow your shot. That class is one that is really life-changing. So if you get the chance, take it seriously. As you go about doing the right things, good will come out of it. As you work hard and take classes, you're going find yourself around people doing the same. Stay away from negative people at all costs. Just associating with knuckleheads will cause you problems.

I found the strength to do as I'm suggesting to all of you to do because of a personal relationship with God. But it all comes down to exercising freedom of choice. The right choices today make for a better tomorrow.

My hope is to write in again after I've made a successful integration back into the free world. Right now I'm going to hope that this article will help someone find their way through a minefield that we all have to navigate. Then I hope to get some sleep because tomorrow will be a busy and productive day.