

## Donor of the Day

# Donor of the Day: A Good Reason to Go to Prison

## The Petey Greene Program Sends College Students Into Prisons to Tutor Young Inmates

By

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The life of an undergraduate often flows between dorm room, classroom and elsewhere on campus.

Rarely does it involve regular time inside a correctional facility.



Charles W. Puttkammer

The Petey Greene Program, an innovative initiative based in Princeton, N.J., bridges town, gown and beyond by sending college students into local prisons to tutor young inmates. The goal: to provide social contact and improved education to incarcerated youth.

The program, founded at Princeton University in 2008, now operates in a handful of New Jersey colleges and prisons, with a satellite program connecting Yale University students with a Connecticut prison. Participants—around 300 in all—are tutors, not counselors, who help inmates to pass the high-school-equivalency test.

Charles W. Puttkammer, a 1958 graduate of Princeton whose career has spanned everything from innkeeping to importing Indian-made furniture, helped to found the Petey Greene Program with former classmates. Recently, he committed \$200,000 to the organization for overall operational costs.

An additional gift of \$200,000 by Mr. Puttkammer has enabled the initiative to hire four recent Princeton graduates who will help seed new programs in New York, Washington, D.C., Pennsylvania and Massachusetts.

The goal now is to expand the program in more states through new funders.

Mr. Puttkammer named the program after his friend, Ralph "Petey" Greene, an activist and Washington television and radio talk-show host who began his disc-jockey career while serving time for robbery. Mr. Greene died of cancer in 1984.

"Seldom have I met anyone of his intelligence and sense of humor," recalled Mr. Puttkammer, 78 years old. "He was a wonderful guy."

The idea for the prison-tutoring program goes back to Mr. Puttkammer's days as a graduate student at Harvard University. He participated in a project where he spent one-on-one time, weekly, with a person with a mental disability.

He saw then that students and patients alike benefited from the regular interaction, he said. "Over the years, my thinking evolved on how this could be applied to inmates."

Mr. Puttkammer, who lives on Mackinac Island, Mich., said he believes the treatment of younger prisoners needs a great deal of improvement. Outsiders and peer-to-peer programs can play a role, he said, and a person's life and their patterns can be changed.

But, he said, the Petey Greene Program is only doing on a small scale what the country should be doing on a larger one.

The goal should be to take advantage of the temporary incarceration of younger people, said Mr. Puttkammer, and "to do good with them ... while you have the opportunity."

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