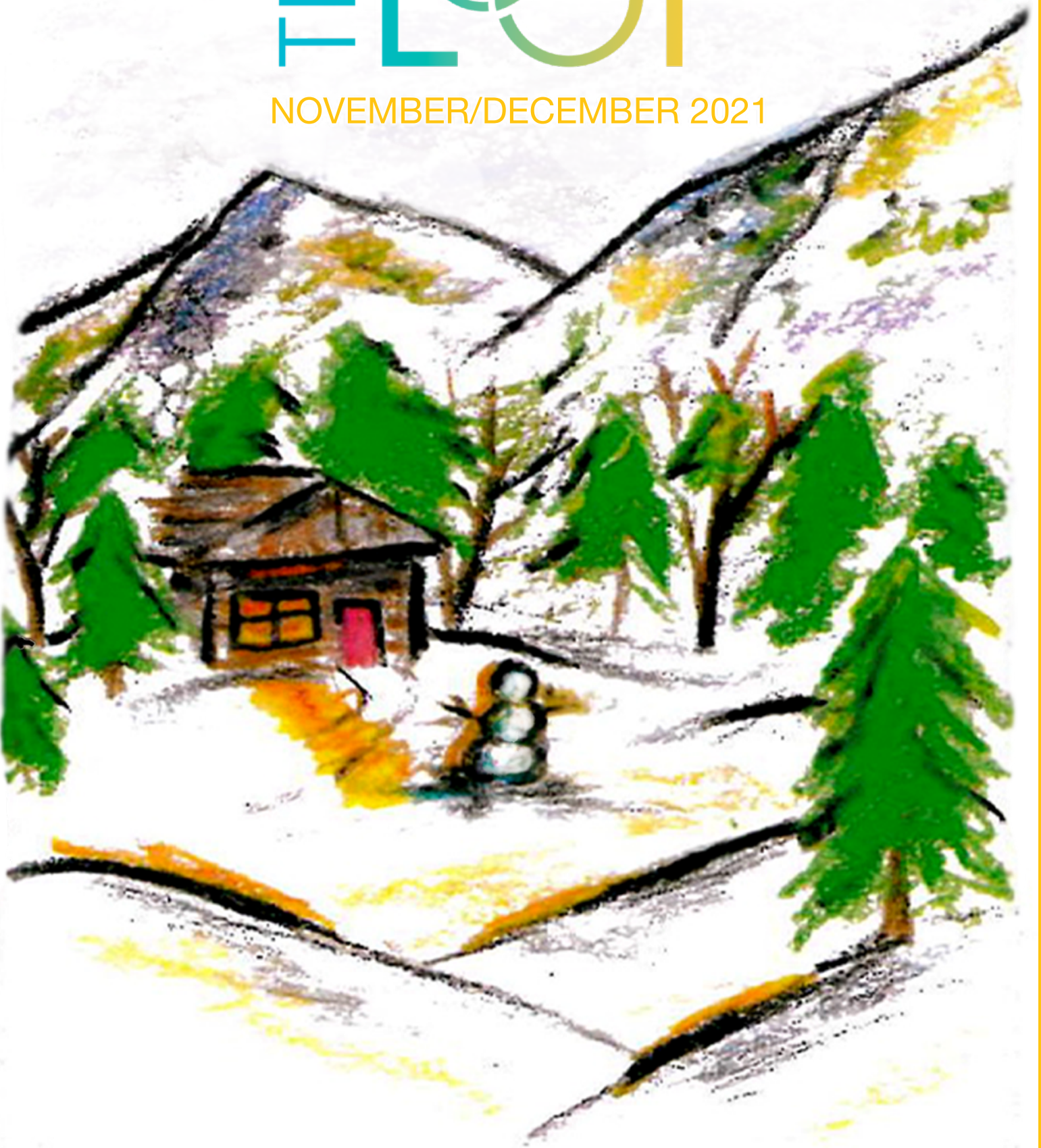


shininglight

THE LOOP

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2021



TO: YOU
FROM: JEFF

We are doing well overall, despite recent flare-ups of Covid-19 raising anxiety levels a bit. We hope you and those around you are also finding ways to cope with the lingering pandemic challenges without too much difficulty! Our entire staff has been busy getting this special edition of The Loop together. Read about the SL Academies underway and exciting plans for 2022 inside!

We are thinking of you during the holidays because we know they are difficult in prison. Lots of reflections and activities on a variety of Character Strengths are included in this edition. Work your way through each page and find how it might help you. Try to find someone, or a group, to do it with you because hope is stronger together! Your loved ones can find it on our website: www.shining-light.com/theloop.

Living in hope by sensing and believing we have purpose and meaning is critical every day of our lives. It is a part of being human that we all share. The Character Strength of **SPIRITUALITY** is defined as, *"I feel spiritual and believe in a sense of purpose or meaning in my life; and I see my place in the grand scheme of the universe and find meaning in everyday life."* This really does affect every decision we make. We often need someone to remind us that regardless of our circumstances or situation each one of us is a valuable person with purpose. **So if nobody has told you lately, let us remind you today - your life has meaning and a purpose. YOUR life matters!**



**FOUNDER &
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Through this season, we encourage you to remind yourself every day that "your life matters" and find a way to live that out. Read about gratefulness, kindness, and community on the following pages and try some of the suggestions. We have seen great examples of what happens in prison when someone takes a step to integrate those into their lives.


Thank you to everyone who contributed to this edition and for all your submissions and letters throughout the year. We read them all!

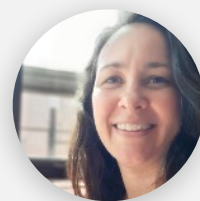


***Stay warm, enjoy the rest of The Loop,
and send us your input for the 1st edition of 2022!***



..... **WELCOME, READERS!**

We know that for some this is the most wonderful time of the year, while others just want it to be over. That's why we're addressing the season head-on, with the same honest, constructive outlook you've come to expect from us. As usual, we're using the VIA Character Strengths as our guide, though instead of just one, you should find at least 9 mentioned throughout. So whether you relate more to Cindy Lou Who or The Grinch, we hope you find something meaningful for you! If you do, would you let us know? Not only are we eager to share your reflections in the next issue, but they also help us inspire our generous donors to continue supporting The Loop. Please keep an eye out for the  for specific ways to engage and contribute to the January issue, and/or feel free to write something general to share how this is making a difference in your life.



Kelly
**PROGRAM
DIRECTOR**

Since we started this interactive newsletter, so many have shared that they appreciate the range of thoughts, activities, and creative expressions - and we have readers like you to thank for that! **Special thanks to David (in PA) for the cover art!**

I truly hope that this issue of The Loop brings you the sense of love, peace, and joy we all long for this time of year. May each page somehow shine like a candle in your heart.

CREATIVE CONNECTION

Thanks to everyone who sent words of encouragement for those who may be struggling, especially those experiencing their first holiday season inside. We're sharing Jeremiah's letter below, and others throughout the issue...

I can still remember my first experience of incarceration during the holiday season. It was kind of a duality for me, because I was excited about the holidays and its joyful atmosphere, family gatherings, and home cooking. But I also felt the isolation and loneliness too, and me just trying to find ways to cope with the circumstances. So instead of focusing all my emotions on where I'd rather be during the holiday season and creating new memories with family, I began to be thankful and blessed for my current circumstances and all God has placed in front of me now. Doing this helped me to realize just how many other incarcerated brothers around me were also experiencing the same feelings and emotions during the holidays as well. Now during the holiday seasons I'm very joyful and striving to be that light of joy, hope, and love for others around me to be encouraged. So despite being incarcerated, every year I'm joyfully anticipating the holiday season and so blessed to share God's love right in the midst of my circumstances. Be Blessed!

Jeremiah



“HOLDING HOPE” COLLAGE



A friend of mine, aka Dennis “Freedom” Horton, recently shared a thought about **HOPE** with me. He said that while on the inside, he and his brother had to **hold hope for one another**. When Freedom felt hopeless, Lee held that hope for him, and vice versa. In this season, we can hold the hope for one another. By putting together an entire collage of drawings & words that remind us of good things ahead, we can make sure everyone has something to put on their wall, holding the hope when we need it most. So here's we'd love to do...

IF YOU LIKE TO DRAW: Draw a picture about hope. What does hope make you think of? What images come to mind? Colors? Scenes? People?

IF YOU LIKE TO WRITE: Write a phrase about hope. A word. A short poem. We all know the power of encouraging words, so send us the words that encourage you to hope.

And remember, EVERYTHING BELONGS. There's no such thing as “not good enough.” So send us anything, because we will make it work. With all the entries we receive, we'll combine them into one collage and it will be featured in our next edition of The Loop. Those who have participated before know how powerful it is to have one picture representing so many people's perspectives, so the more the merrier!



JENNY
CREATIVE SERVICES

See an example on p.6 of a collage we did for “kindness” with 15 different contributions!

Real Talk

Inside, I was always happy to see the holidays go, because I would've rather been with people I loved & who loved me. And that's okay - you don't have to pretend everything is great. In light of that, I still tried to participate...help decorate the tree, sing in the choir.

I also know there are some character strengths that helped me, even when I didn't recognize it at the time...



Naomi

PROGRAM CONSULTANT
COMMUTED LIFER
COMMUTATION SPECIALIST

GRATITUDE: Even when you're in prison, there's so much to be thankful for. Since I've been out, I've seen so many people out here suffering in the cold. No heat. No three meals a day. No bed. I know where you sleep is not the mattress you want, but if you're real with yourself, there's a lot to be grateful for.

HUMOR: I just love to laugh, period. Prison is such a crazy place, that I had to laugh about something. I would use humor in talking to people who were having problems...adding humor would help them get out of the funk. And I know a lot of times, to keep from crying, we laugh. And there's a time for both. But it made me feel good to make others laugh and help people take away the negativity around them.

KINDNESS: Just giving to others makes you feel good. You know who doesn't have a soup to eat. You know who doesn't have support. Finding ways to give something small to someone is an easy way to bless others. You never know what an act of kindness can do during this season.



YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

How did you stay positive about the time you lost in prison? I knew I left my son in good hands, so that was a big part of it. And I wanted him to be proud of me, so I tried to do programming and stay positive, because positivity is good for the body. And now I'm living my best life, because looking back now, I realize prison actually saved me. If I hadn't gone to prison, I'd have been dead and buried a long time ago.

How do you recover from your past? I just believe that things are the way that things were meant to be. And I don't mean I was meant to shoot dope or become an alcoholic, but you just have to know that the past is the past. I can't get back yesterday and tomorrow might not come. So I either stay stuck or move on. And I choose to move on.

How did you survive "doing time" before being commuted? I got myself involved in programming, work, learning new things. I did things with my time, so that the time didn't do me. And you have to have something or someone to tell your problems to...mine was faith-based, and I think you can almost think things into existence if you really believe it.

Do you really believe deep down in your heart that people can change? I believe 1000% that people can change. I am one of those persons. And I've seen it. So trust me. Aging helps, too 😊

Did you learn how to make music before you got incarcerated or did you learn while you were in? I was doing music way before I had even known how to spell "prison" lol 😂. When I was just a little girl, my parents had a glass piano on their coffee table. It didn't make any sound. And I would just pretend to play it. So my parents decided to surprise me with a real piano on my 8th birthday. And the rest is history!

ASK ANYTHING

In my 37 years on the inside, I'm pretty sure I've seen it all! So bring your issues or questions to me, and if I can't offer any advice, I'll ask someone who can. And then without using your name - we will keep it confidential - we'll post your question and my response so other people going through something similar can maybe get some help, too. Feel free to keep your questions about legal processes or re-entry coming, too. We're not lawyers or social workers, but we'll answer them as best we can!

**Please note that while we will maintain a professional level of confidentiality, we are legally required to report any information that involves a serious threat or existence of harm to yourself or others.*



CAGED HOLIDAYS

Freedom and Lee are celebrating their first holiday season in 28 years as free men. Below they take a moment to share a heartfelt conversation on what got them through year after year.....



Lee



Freedom

PROGRAM FACILITATORS
CERTIFIED WRAP®
SPECIALISTS

All of us can remember the first holiday season we spent in prison. For us it was 1994. Our family came to visit us. Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years they were there. Those visits gave us hope. But as the years passed those holidays became symbols of what we lost...

LEE: For a long time I hated the holidays in prison. We got arrested on Memorial Day. We were victims of an injustice, so like Fredrick Douglass, what did the Fourth of July have to do with us? Thanksgiving and Christmas were torture and every New Year brought more pain.

FREEDOM: Tell me about it. How did we get through those holidays in prison?

LEE: Memories. Pre-prison holidays were great. The family get-togethers, food, laughter, seeing everybody was the best in the world. Those memories at times kept us going.

FREEDOM: I know. I'd lay in the bunk, eyes closed, and memories of yesteryears flooded my mind. The sounds and smells of Holidays took over my senses. And for a few moments I was there. Mom was at the stove, grand mom was at the table talking and everything felt ok.

LEE: The music is what got me through. Those Christmas songs took me back when daddy played them over and over. I hated it back then. But in prison they gave me hope.

FREEDOM: That's why it was hard when I opened my eyes. It all faded and I was back in that tiny cell. It was like stepping out of a dream into a nightmare.

LEE: It was a nightmare. I have no holiday memories with my children from that time that weren't in a prison visiting room. It got to the point where I blocked the holidays out of my mind and focused on what was in front of me. Chasing freedom. So many prison holidays are a blur.

FREEDOM: Our memories symbolized freedom for us. It hurt and felt good at the same time. Those memories helped us persevere through the darkness of prison to see the light of better days. We know they existed because we could remember.

LEE: What made it better also was the men around us who became family.

FREEDOM: I think holidays in prison were easier to stomach when we realized that it wasn't just us feeling bad. Most of the guys around us felt the same way.

LEE: And although the food was terrible most of the time, we found a way to turn the holiday meals into rituals: walking to chow and eating together, talking about what was good grew our hope and helped us to see that light at the end of the tunnel.

FREEDOM: Holiday meals were the best meal of the year. The guys, even us, were waiting for those holiday meals and the feeling of togetherness that came with it.

LEE: I never thought I would say this but I am thankful for those holidays and the men who helped me get through them. This year, however, it's all about my family.

FREEDOM: I miss the guys but not the food! Anyway, Daddy's going to stay with me for Thanksgiving and I can't wait for him to start playing those old songs over and over. I am going to sit back and reflect on those holiday memories of mom. Rest in Peace.

LEE: Me too.

What were some things that gave the Hortons the PERSEVERANCE they needed to endure this difficult season? What helps (or might help) you persevere?

**Note: This is the theme for our next issue of The Loop, so we'd love to hear from you on this!*



Last issue we looked at the Community Code: “Be Open. Be Curious.” This is a helpful motto for creative thinking but also for approaching social situations. Rather than jumping to conclusions, it is good to be open to a new perspective, or to ask questions to find out more information before making a judgement.

*This is a great way to increase **SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE**, which is very useful especially this time of year!*



NEW: LISTEN & LEARN BEFORE OFFERING ADVICE

- Listening to someone in their struggle is more important than giving opinions & solutions.
- If you have a word of advice, ask for permission.



No doubt, successfully navigating everyday life in prison requires the ability to read body language and develop an awareness of others’ emotions. These are some of the unspoken essentials of social intelligence for personal safety and well-being. This new Community Code looks at the other side of the coin - using those abilities to respectfully care for others. So much of this constructive use of social intelligence is already happening in prisons all over. Formally we see this in certified peer support specialists, hospital workers, GED mentors, and other peer facilitator roles. (See Michael E’s tribute to these unsung heroes on page 16!) But it’s also in neighbors simply caring for neighbors.

Using your strength of social intelligence, whenever you see someone who shows signs of loneliness, despair, frustration, etc - or when someone comes to you with a burden - patiently approach a conversation with the willingness to first listen to their story. Sometimes, that’s all they need! There’s a good chance you’ve earned their trust by showing that you care more about them than yourself, because you took the time to listen and learn what was really going on. And then if you ask to share your thoughts on the matter, they might be more open to hearing them.

How have you used social intelligence to care for others? We’d love to share an example or two next time so we can all get better at loving each other this way!!





I am opening up to my peers and working on myself. I am working towards bettering my life in a positive way by keeping busy and doing more than I want to do. I Am also excited to do my restorative justice course along with the completion of various bible study courses. -D

CALLS FOR CELEBRATION

As a community we want to celebrate what's going right! So tell us...

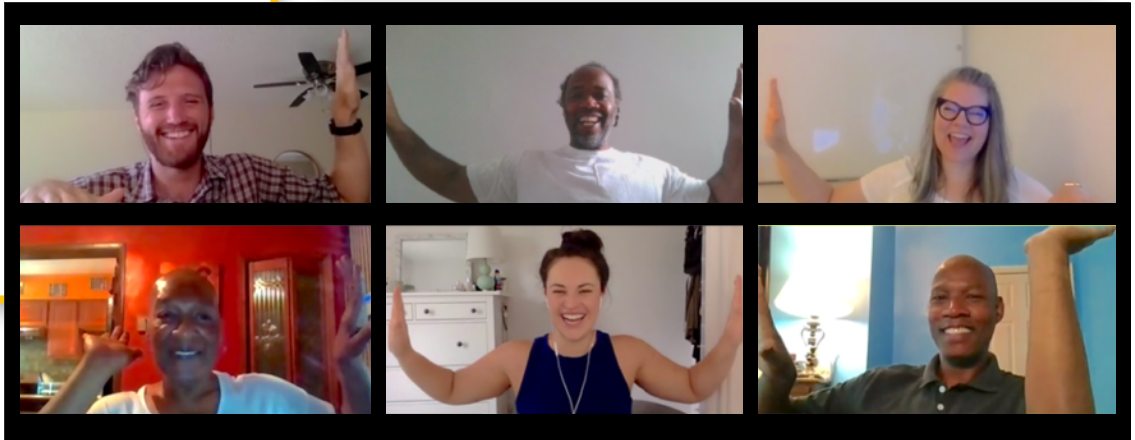
- What accomplishments are you proud of?
- What good news are you excited about?
- Are you or someone you know coming up on your release date?
- _____

Two groups completed the SL Academy at James River Correctional Facility in North Dakota! Here are some of their take-aways...

"One thing that all of humanity shares in common is that we each look to our peers for counsel. This is universally true. Even as kids: 6 months of parental advice can hardly compete with a 6 second comment on the schoolyard. It's just the way we're wired. SL Academy seeks to educate and empower the schoolyard." - Jeremy

"After carefully listening to my mentors who have been incarcerated, I pivoted my thoughts to constantly think in creative ways. I ask the right questions in group settings instead of just giving solutions. I am learning that by asking the right questions to others, it forces the mind to think solution-based and it has a tremendous impact to get others to think in creative ways. I am mindful to encourage others in what they do well. I do this on a constant basis and it has given opportunities back that I once believed were not possible.."
- \$ixty

"I WAS SURPRISED HOW MUCH I ENJOYED THE PARTS I INITIALLY FEARED. I NOW FULLY BELIEVE THIS PROGRAM CAN HELP ANYONE IN ONE WAY OR ANOTHER. (I LEARNED TOOLS AND SKILLS THAT ALLOW ME THE) ABILITY TO SEE GOOD IN OTHERS, THE ABILITY TO SEE GOOD IN MYSELF, AND FIND THE GOOD THINGS HAPPENING INSTEAD OF FOCUSING ON THE NEGATIVE." - DAVID



High fives to our Academy graduates from our amazing facilitators!

Q: what would you say to someone experiencing incarceration through the holidays for the first time?

A: This is your first time locked up for the holidays. So you're away from your loved ones. Take time to reflect on them. You're not there but I'm willing to bet that they are making it known to you that they love & miss you. Sometimes when we are there we don't share that feeling with our loved one because we lose our way. Sometimes God does things to show us what we are missing.

-Rabbit

We had to take several weeks off of the Academy due to a sudden resurgence of Covid cases. I myself was out for a week slowly getting back to a normal-ish state...

For those that may be going through rough times yourself, hang in there and know that there are people all the way up in North Dakota that know what you are going through. We all pray for your well being. Best wishes to everyone through this holiday season and all year round.

Your friend
Adam



FROM THE BELL HARLEM FAMILY TO YOU I wish all happy holidays and a happy New Years. You guys are not forgotten about at all. We are thinking of you and working diligently around the clock to change conversations. My favorite memories is of me dressing up as Santa for many years for the kids and seeing their smiles or sometimes some crying out of fear of Santa but that was okay too. Many prayers and well wishes for you all.

(Tamika began her life sentence at age 15, serving 24 years until her commutation on January 31, 2019. Her story is featured in the Sept/Oct issue of The Loop.)



TAMIKA &
BELLA



Are you sitting on a creative idea or piece that you wish you could develop further with professional support? This winter we're inviting you to participate in a creative mentorship opportunity to explore, refine and polish a creative piece of your choosing. After three months of back-and-forth with a trained professional, you will receive a certificate, letter, and invitation to submit your piece to Shining Light for possible publication in The Loop or our next "Creations of a Caged Bird" collection. Whether you're an experienced creator or just dabbling, this mentorship is for anyone who wants to further explore their creative voice!

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM US

- To be paired with a professional mentor specific to your creative work.
- Three communications from your mentor with feedback and suggestions to refine your piece.
- A certificate of completion and letter from your mentor outlining your participation.

WHAT WE EXPECT FROM YOU:

- A willingness to be open and curious, and to know that any creative process is just that... a process!
- An initial starting point for a creative piece you are interested in refining - anything from a description of an idea to a full draft.
- A commitment to developing your piece alongside your mentor and responding in a timely manner.

Please keep in mind: You do not need a finished piece to start! Maybe you just have the first page of something, or simply an idea you need help getting off the ground... Any place is the right place to start for this mentorship!

YOU MAY USE EITHER OF THE FOLLOWING COMMUNICATION METHODS:

JPay: Send a JPay email request to staff@shining-light.com - once your invitation is accepted, you can submit your initial draft/idea.

Mail: If you don't have access to JPay, please send a copy of your submission to P.O. Box 267, Annville, PA 17003 Note: Some originals may not be able to be sent back to you.

This is a new venture for us and we can't guarantee how this will go! We want to do what we can to support whatever creative endeavor you are interested in, but please understand that artwork that is beyond the bounds of writing may present some limitations we're not able to overcome at this time.

Thematically, you are welcome to submit anything that supports the values of the Shining Light community, as represented in The Loop/submission guidelines. **To be considered for the "Creations of a Caged Bird" video, submissions should reflect the theme: "Rising Above."** Although this may suggest a dramatic piece, we would encourage you to submit humorous pieces as well!

TIMELINE

Initial submission/1st draft: January 15

Feedback & Revisions: February-April

Final Letter & Certificate: May

Submissions for The Loop or "Creations of a Caged Bird" due May 15

We hope you'll take advantage of this opportunity to unlock your CREATIVITY and connect with a professional mentor through the long winter months. Let's see what happens!

Over the next few pages you will be challenged to think of ways to put different character strengths into practice over the coming months. If you haven't done so yet, we encourage you to consider what your top character strengths are. Surveys have found that two thirds of people are unaware of their strengths (Linley, 2008). So if this is new or feels a little odd, know you are not alone! You should've received our Welcome Packet when you subscribed to The Loop, which includes a full list of the 24 character strengths. (The list can also be found on page 13.)

And don't forget about strength spotting! This is taking the time to recognize when someone else uses one of the character strengths, and it's one of the core tenants of the SL Academy. When Jeremy graduated, he said that getting on board with strength spotting was one of the biggest challenges for him. Just wanting to see the good in some people was a struggle initially; pointing it out to them was even harder. But by the end, it was one of the most significant life-altering tools of the whole experience for him:

"I like the idea of trying to make it a habit of spotting character strengths to people around us. It really states not just how we view people but how we engage with people, and how we perceive the landscape of people around us, right? If you make a habit to identify strengths, then that's what your mindset's gonna dwell on more than if you just make it a habit of pointing out flaws and noticing shortcomings and then you just get in this negative loop... I've always believed that everyone has something to offer - you just have to be willing to look for it." - Jeremy (JRCC)

A helpful way to go about strengths spotting is the SEA model, outlined below:

S – Spot/label the strength

(Example: Shawn spots Alex using Self-Regulation.)

E – Explain by giving a short rationale of the behavior you observed

(Example: Shawn saw this when he noticed Alex step away from a tense interaction.)

A – Appreciate or verbally recognize the value of the person for their strengths use

(Example: Shawn tells Alex about his observation and adds that he appreciates Alex's ability to know when to walk away, because it helps diffuse situations and keep the whole environment under control.)

*Niemiec, 2019

These steps can happen in any order. Spotting & Explaining can increase our awareness of the strengths around us and help us think of new ways to use strengths in our own lives. Appreciating can give a boost to your neighbor and improve your connection with them.

Challenge yourself to spot a strength in at least one person every day for a week and let us know what you learn about yourself or experience in the interaction!

Now, let's look at kindness!

*<https://www.viacharacter.org/topics/articles/10-ways-to-celebrate-strengths-in-the-workplace>

Linley, A. (2008). *Average to A+: Realising strengths in yourself and others*. Coventry, UK: CAPP Press.



VIA DEFINITION: KINDNESS

“Simply put, kindness is being nice to others. As you examine kindness further, a number of important dimensions begin to unfold. Kindness is being generous with others, giving your time, money, and talent to support those who are in need. Kindness is being compassionate, which means to really be there for someone, listening intently to their suffering or just sitting with them and silently supporting them. Such compassion involves a deep concern for the welfare of others. Kindness is also being nurturing and caring to others — to enjoy doing favors for them, to take care of them, and to perform good deeds.

Kind individuals believe that others are worthy of attention and affirmation for their own sake as human beings, not out of a sense of duty or principle. There are three traits of altruistic personalities: Empathy/ sympathy | Moral reasoning | Social responsibility.”

VIA Institute On Character. (n.d.). <https://www.viacharacter.org/character-strengths/kindness>

CONSIDER...

What does kindness look like inside?

What are examples where someone was kind to you?

What are examples of when you were kind to someone else?

Is it hard to be kind without expecting something in return or as a sense of duty or principle?



Travis
PROGRAM DEVELOPER

The abstract below looks at an interesting study that may challenge some of our assumptions about well-being. It shows the importance of kindness and how it can have an impact on our mood and overall well-being, more than simply looking out for ourselves.



*Do the findings surprise you?
What do you do to boost your mood?
How might kindness play a role in this?*



ABSTRACT “When it comes to the pursuit of happiness, popular culture encourages a focus on oneself. By contrast, substantial evidence suggests that what consistently makes people happy is focusing prosocially on others. In the current study, we contrasted the mood- and well-being-boosting effects of prosocial behavior (i.e., doing acts of kindness for others or for the world) and self-oriented behavior (i.e., doing acts of kindness for oneself) in a 6-week longitudinal experiment. Across a diverse sample of participants (N 473), we found that the 2 types of prosocial behavior led to greater increases in psychological flourishing than did self-focused and neutral behavior. In addition, we provide evidence for mechanisms explaining the relative improvements in flourishing among those prompted to do acts of kindness— namely, increases in positive emotions and decreases in negative emotions. Those assigned to engage in self-focused behavior did not report improved psychological flourishing, positive emotions, or negative emotions relative to controls. The results of this study contribute to a growing literature supporting the benefits of prosocial behavior and challenge the popular perception that focusing on oneself is an optimal strategy to boost one’s mood. People striving for happiness may be tempted to treat themselves. Our results, however, suggest that they may be more successful if they opt to treat someone else instead.”

Nelson, S. K., Layous, K., Cole, S. W., & Lyubomirsky, S. (2016). Do unto others or treat yourself? The effects of prosocial and self-focused behavior on psychological flourishing. *Emotion, 16*(6), 850.



GIFT OF TIME The holiday season often makes us think of physical gifts, but what about the gift of time? As a way to boost kindness, try the steps below to give the gift of time to important people in your life.

1. Choose at least 3 people you would like to connect with more meaningfully during the coming weeks or months. (Consider at least one who is outside of your normal points of connection.)
2. Give the gift of your time in whatever way is accessible to you and them. Try to help them, talk with them, or do an activity with them.
3. Before you spend time with each of these individuals, consider your top strengths and how you could use them to make the time more meaningful. If you are creative, suggest something creative together. If you are funny, make a joke. If you love learning, ask them to show or teach you something that interests them.

(Niemiec, 2018)

Sometimes time is all we have, but the good news is there is an opportunity in that. Give these steps a try in whatever way is possible for you during these next few weeks and months. And as always, please feel free to share how it goes! We would love to hear your experience!

Niemiec, R. M. (2018). Character strengths interventions: A field-guide for practitioners. Boston, MA: Hogrefe.



KURT, TAMMY & SPOOKY

FROM THE DANYSH FAMILY TO YOU I wish you all a Happy Holiday Season (if you celebrate), and a safe and joyous New Year. Rest assured that there are individuals, organizations, and lawmakers fighting hard for you out here. You are not forgotten. You are unique. And you have the potential to increase hope in those around you. My favorite memories from inside surround the Mystery Santa we did on the blocks. I hope the tradition lives on.

(Kurt was released from prison on July 15, 2020, after being incarcerated for 24 1/2 years, from age 18 until 43. His story is featured in the July/August issue of The Loop.)

HOLIDAYS/SPECIAL EVENTS COMING UP:

CHRISTMAS
DEC 25

KWANZAA
DEC 26 - 31

HANUKKAH
NOV 29 - DEC 6

**NEW YEARS EVE/
WATCH NIGHT**
DEC 31

The tradition of Watch Night, also called Freedom's Eve, may be traced to the early 18th century in Moravian churches, but it was given new significance on December 31, 1862, when, according to tradition, soon-to-be-free African American slaves in the Confederate states gathered in churches & private homes, staying awake all night to watch the night turn into a new dawn, while waiting for news that the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued, thus making all the slaves legally free - <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Watch-Night>.

MLK DAY
JAN 17

**WORLD
CANCER DAY**
FEB 4

SUPERBOWL
FEB 6



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Every year, the most popular New Year's Resolutions are about physical health - specifically diet & exercise. Maybe you can relate! As a way to prepare for New Year's resolutions we thought it may be helpful to take a step back and challenge you to think through a simple plan for getting a bit more active during this season. The shorter, colder days of winter can make it hard to find the motivation, so we encourage you to find something that works for you! Maybe you already have a rigorous exercise routine - is there something you could add to improve your flexibility or balance? Do you want to get back into an exercise routine you were enjoying over the summer? Maybe it has been a while, and starting with walking or something small would be helpful to get going again.

STEP ONE

Identify a physical activity that you enjoy and can do during the winter months. Here are some examples:

Balance: yoga, tai chi

Cardiovascular: running, walking, exercise bike, aerobics

Strength-building: lifting weights, pilates, push-ups, sit-ups, wall sits

Sports: handball, basketball, soccer

Burpees: These get their own category, how many can you do?

STEP TWO

Make your plan. How many days a week would you like to do the activity? For how much time?

STEP THREE

Track how it goes, once a week.

- Do you need to adjust the frequency or duration of your activity?
- Is this something you want to do and actually see yourself continuing? If not, choose something else! Adjust as necessary!

HEALTH & WELLNESS TIPS FROM OTHERS

Decompress

Ease back

Take a deep breath

Find your resting place

The quiet zone

Relax your mind

Let the stress go

Decompress

Regulate the blood

Allow peace to flow

It's health to the body

Soothing the brain

Life for your soul

Written by:

Larry
(c) 2021



Getting active has been shown to increase the character strength of **ZEST**, which is the strength of approaching life with energy and excitement. How can increasing zest be helpful for doing time?

 Send us any practices you use to keep your mind and body well!

THANK YOU

Today with this POEM you ARE Celebrated.
 yet it SEEMS you ARE OVERlooked AND UNDER Appreciated.
 Taking care OF others is Always good.
 you ARE the true EXAMPLE OF SERVANT hood.
 THE ORANGESUIT is just Clothes you WEAR.
 How you are living it shows how much you CARE.
 THE world yearns for good AND goodness you ENGAGE
 It is Amazing the good a Bird can do living in A Cage.
 I honor All the people FOR BEING TRUE.
 DEEP from my heart I say THANK you.
 you NEVER HEAR the good coming out this place.
 I wish I was in position to salute you FACE to FACE.
 LIFE can be tough sometimes with GREAT commands.
 you dedicated your LIFE to helping hands.
 The Light is shining ON the good deed being done
 Keep up the goodwork, KEEP shining LIKE the Sun.
 THANK you for being A trail blazer AND A Trend Setter
 EVERY where you SERVE you MAKE it BETTER
 FROM one person to ANOTHER continue to do what you DO.
 Today is the day I say thank you.

By: Michael

Michael wanted to express his gratitude for those around him serving their peers inside.

Who are you grateful for this season? Would you consider writing him/her/them a letter?

For an extra meaningful shared experience, consider reading it to them out loud (if that's an option), and feel the power of gratitude at work!

“Let gratitude be the pillow upon which you kneel to say your nightly prayer.” - Maya Angelou

If you’ve been receiving The Loop for a while, you may remember a prayer practice called Examen. It comes from St. Ignatius Loyola - founder of the Jesuit order of the Catholic Church - and provides a structure for prayer or meditation that can translate to any faith tradition. Typically used at the end of the day, it is helpful for cultivating **GRATITUDE** and awareness of the divine in our everyday lives. “Examen” prayer guides have been written for various occasions or life situations, but all follow the same general structure as the one below.

With all of the heightened emotions and mental energy of this season perhaps this can be a helpful tool to keep a sense of peace and perspective through it all. We encourage you to set aside time to try this at least once over the coming months - maybe try it every night for a week - or consider a regular practice like this as you look for a fresh start to the new year! There is no “right way” to do this, so feel free to just start somewhere. Make it your own and see how it impacts your view of yourself, God, and the world around you.

*The following is from Xavier University’s Center for Mission and Identity
<https://www.xavier.edu/jesuitresource/jesuit-a-z/terms-e/daily-examen>*

**BEGIN WITH A PAUSE AND A SLOW, DEEP BREATH OR TWO.
 BECOME AWARE THAT YOU ARE IN THE PRESENCE OF THE HOLY.**

THANKSGIVING

*What am I especially grateful for in the past day...
 The gift of another day...
 The love and support I have received...
 The courage I have mustered...
 An event that took place today...*

PETITION

*I am about to review my day; I ask for the
 light to know God and to know myself as
 God sees me.*

REVIEW

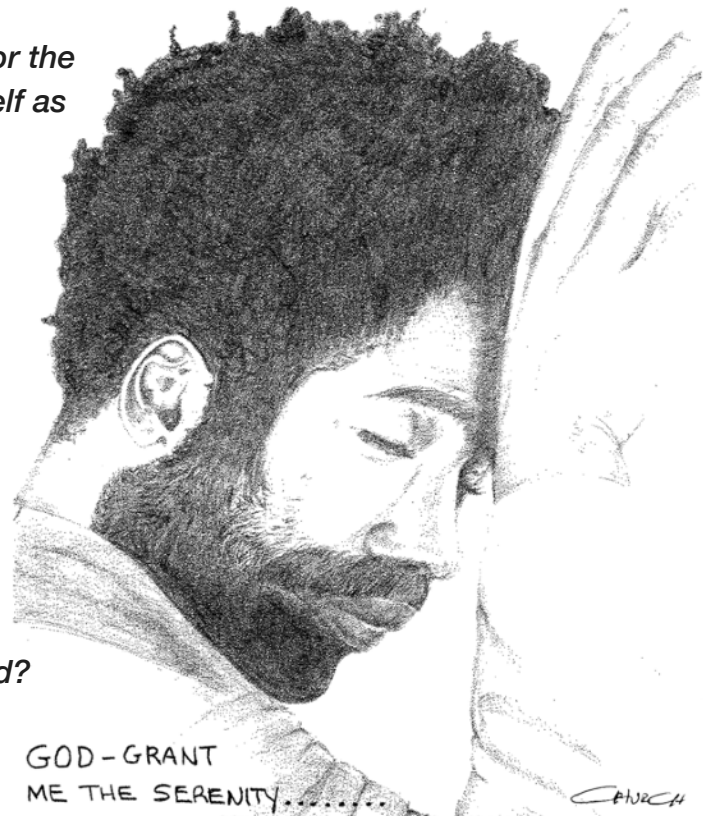
*Where have I felt true joy today?
 What has troubled me today?
 What has challenged me today?
 Where and when did I pause today?
 Have I noticed God's presence in
 any of this?*

RESPONSE

*In light of my review, what is my
 response to the God of my life?*

A LOOK AHEAD

*As I look ahead, what comes to mind?
 With what spirit do I want to enter
 tomorrow?*



GOD - GRANT
 ME THE SERENITY.....

CHURCH



Think of it like stocking up for winter

Below is a list of the 24 Character Strengths with space to jot down an idea for how you might use each strength in the coming months to improve your own well-being, a relationship, or the community around you. We've included some examples but feel free to come up with your own!:

APPRECIATION OF BEAUTY & EXCELLENCE	<i>Marveling at the skill of a professional athlete</i>
BRAVERY	
CREATIVITY	<i>Think of a new story to tell your child or friend</i>
CURIOSITY	
FAIRNESS	
FORGIVENESS	
GRATITUDE	<i>What are three things that went right today and why?</i>
HONESTY	<i>Am I identifying and caring for my own needs?</i>
HOPE	
HUMILITY	
HUMOR	
JUDGEMENT	
KINDNESS	<i>Give the gift of time to someone meaningful in your life that you haven't in a while</i>
LEADERSHIP	
LOVE	<i>Listen closely to someone who is sharing something bad that happened to them</i>
LOVE OF LEARNING	
PERSEVERANCE	
PERSPECTIVE	
PRUDENCE	<i>Consider if a commitment or relationship will move me toward the future I desire.</i>
SELF-REGULATION	
SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE	
SPIRITUALITY	
TEAMWORK	
ZEST	<i>Carry out a new physical activity plan</i>

CELEBRATE & LOOK AHEAD



VICTORIES OF 2021

- **The Loop community grew 300%**
 - Jan/Feb issue: 231 subscribers, 21 facilities, 3 states
 - Nov/Dec issue: 841 subscribers, 54 facilities, 9 states
- **We had 85 different subscribers contribute to The Loop this year.** *(Special Shout-out to Larry S. in PA, who sent contributions for all 6 of this year's issues!)*
- **Nearly 60,000 people are now able to interact with "The Loop" on their tablets in North Dakota, Ohio, South Carolina and NYC/Rikers Island.**

GOALS FOR 2022

- **Continue to build the reputation of The Loop as a positive, creative, useful, collaborative resource that stands out from the rest.**
 - We need those with talents in the visual arts to submit work for the cover, so non-subscribers are drawn in. *(Artwork of any level is appreciated for the inside!)*
 - The Loop is meant to be a continuous conversation among all of us, with input from both sides of the walls. Your responses to questions, activities and creative prompts help keep the conversation going!
- **Continue to expand our reach with The Loop.**
 - We plan to add new partnering facilities who will make bulk copies available with sign-up sheets. Please keep an eye out for this and encourage peers to sign up. You can also pass out subscription cards or take names/IDs and send us a list of your own.
 - Thanks to our subscribers in Maine, a new partnership with Edovo should enable approx 250,000 more people to access The Loop on tablets early next year!

UPDATED FOR 2022: SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

You are always welcome to write to us and share whatever's on your mind.

If you would like to contribute to The Loop specifically, there are a few things to keep in mind:

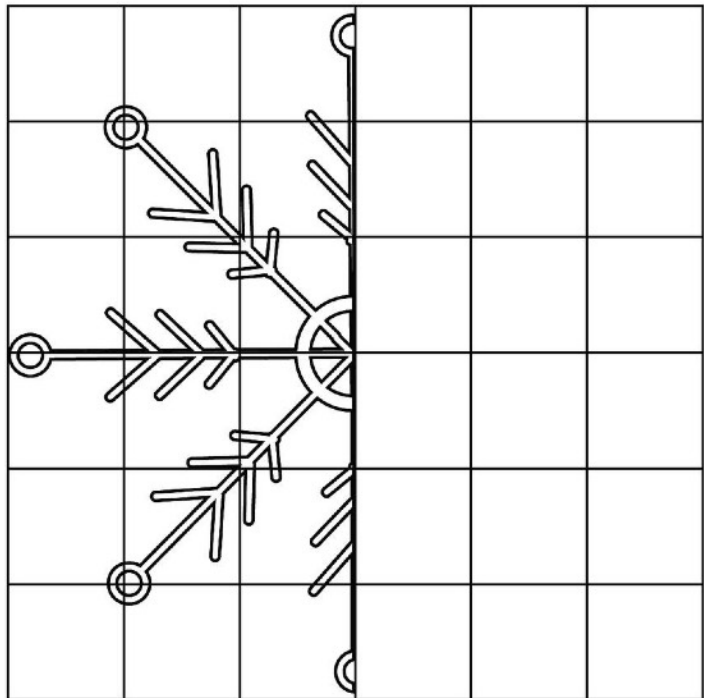
- We plan to credit future contributions with First & Last Name, Facility, State. *(If you would prefer less information be shared, please indicate that clearly with your submission.)*
 - If you write anything in a letter that you do NOT want to be shared in The Loop, please note that clearly.
 - Content:
 - Submissions should have a positive intention, which may include creative expression, encouraging words, or a constructive release of negative emotion.
 - Remember to be inclusive of people of all ages, faiths and backgrounds.
 - Avoid details of your case or criticism of the institution/DOC.
 - Formatting:
 - Write as legibly as possible (or type) so we can all read what you wrote!
 - If possible, submit artwork and writings on blank paper
 - Be concise. Featured writings must fit legibly on 1 page. Responses to activities, questions, prompts, etc should be limited to a short paragraph or two so we can include more people!
- *We reserve the right to edit your contribution as we see fit.*

GAMES & ACTIVITIES



Angelina

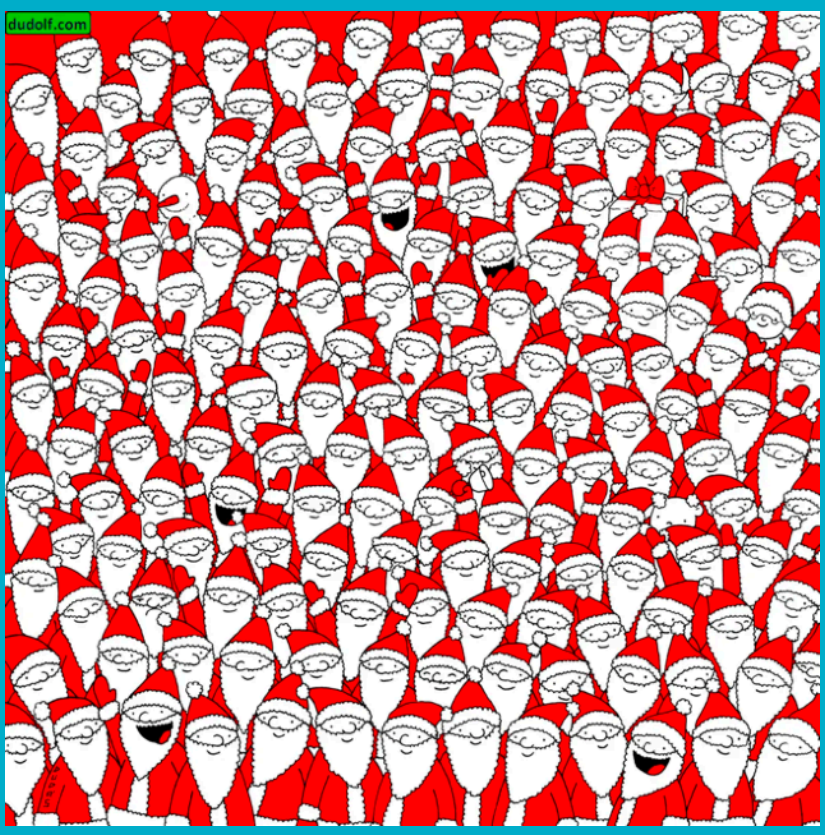
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR



COMPLETE THIS PICTURE



And keep your submissions coming - song & book recommendations, recipes & puzzles!



FIND THE HIDDEN THINGS IN THIS PICTURE

- 1. MRS. CLAUS
- 2. A GRUMPY SANTA
- 3. A SNOWMAN
- 4. A BELL
- 5. A POLAR BEAR
- 6. AN ELF
- 7. AN APPLE
- 8. A GIFT

For a friendly competition, time yourself & others to see who can find them the fastest!

SANTA FUN FACT: Before Coca-Cola decided to use his image for advertising, Santa's looks tended more spooky than jolly. Then, in 1931, the beverage company hired an illustrator named Haddon Sundblom to depict the jolly old elf for magazine ads. Now, kids see visions of sugarplums instead of having Santa-themed nightmares.

CORNY CORNER

WE KNOW YOU CAN'T HELP YOURSELVES

If you get cold, you can go stand over in that corner... I heard it's about 90 degrees.

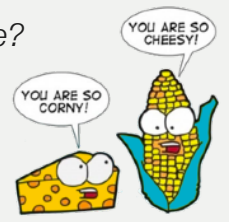
How can a snowman tell his lady is mad at him? She gives him the cold shoulder

How much did Santa pay for his sleigh? Nothin'. It was on the house.

What was Frosty doing in the grocery store? Picking his nose!

How does a penguin build its house? Igloos it together!

What do you call an old snowman? Water.



MAD LIBS | HOLIDAY EDITION

Grab a friend and play this madlib style game with them! Go through the poem and ask them for a word to fill each blank and write their answers in. Once you have the whole poem filled in, read it back to them to hear your unique, silly creation! For an added challenge, when you see a blank in a different color, try to make those words rhyme!

T'WAS THE **BLANK** BEFORE CHRISTMAS

VERY LOOSELY INSPIRED BY CLEMENT CLARKE MOORE

'Twas the night before Christmas, when all through the _____ not a creature was stirring, not even a _____; The stockings were hung by the _____ with care, in hopes that _____ soon would be there; The _____ were nestled all snug in their beds, while visions of _____ danced in their heads; And mamma in her _____, and I in my cap, had just settled our brains for a _____ winter's nap, when out on the _____ there arose such a clatter, I _____ from my bed to see what was the matter. Away to the window I _____ like a flash, tore open the shutters and _____ the sash. The moon on the _____ of the new-fallen snow, gave a lustre of _____ to objects below, when what to my wondering _____ did appear, but a miniature _____ and eight tiny rein-deer, with a little old driver so lively and _____, I knew in a moment he must be _____. More rapid than _____ his coursers they came, and he whistled, and _____, and called them by name: "Now, _____! now, _____! now _____ and _____! On, _____! on, _____! on, _____ and _____! To the top of the porch! to the top of the _____! Now dash away! dash away! dash away _____!" As leaves that before the wild _____ fly, when they meet with an obstacle, _____ to the sky; So up to the _____ the coursers they flew with the sleigh full of _____, and _____ too— But I heard him exclaim, ere he _____ out of sight —

"Happy Christmas to _____, and to _____ a good night!"

GROUP OF PEOPLE REPEAT GROUP OF PEOPLE

FOR THE NEXT ISSUE



OPPORTUNITIES TO CONTRIBUTE

(Try to submit on blank paper if possible)

“Holding Hope” Collage - p.3
 Ask Anything - p.4
 Community Code - p.6
 Positive News - p.7

Winter Arts CoLab - p.9
 Kindness in Practice - p.12
 Strengths for the Season - p.13
 Health & Wellness - p.15

Games & Activities - p.18
 MadLibs - p.19

SEND IN COVER ART FOR “THE LOOP” FOR A CHANCE TO BE FEATURED!

NEXT ISSUE’S THEME: PERSEVERANCE

What does perseverance look like for you during this season?

SUBMISSIONS DUE BY JAN 15

See p. 17 for guidelines

Remember: We will credit full name, facility & state unless you tell us otherwise!

shininglight

THE LOOP INTERACTIVE NEWSLETTER
 SUBSCRIPTION CARD

NAME / #: _____

FACILITY: _____

ADDRESS: _____

Send us this card to subscribe today!

Shining Light
 P.O. Box 267 | Annville, PA 17003



SPECIAL THANKS TO THIS ISSUE’S CONTRIBUTORS

COVER ART:

David L (PA)

FEATURED WRITING:

Michael E (SC)

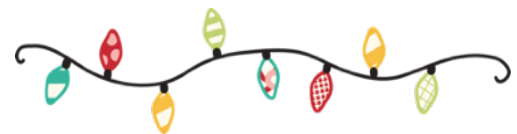
OTHER CONTRIBUTIONS:

Jeremiah (PA); Jeremy, David, Sixty (ND);
 Andrea “D” (PA), Rabbit (PA), Adam (ND),
 Larry (PA), Church (PA)

SL ALUMNI:

Tamika Bell Harlem (PA)
 Kurt Danysh (PA)

*Various Christmas Art Contributions
 From Participants Across Pennsylvania*



We look forward to hearing from you soon with
 new artwork & messages, encouraging comments and stories!

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