



“Prayers Go Up, Blessings Come Down”

Child Abuse Prevention Month 2011

This painting was designed and painted by inmates at SCI-Muncy as part of Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance’s annual observance of Child Abuse Prevention Month.

A group of 15 incarcerated women worked with PFSA and Heart to Art, an arts education organization, to depict their struggles and hopes as mothers in the 4’ by 8’ mural. On the left side of the painting, they show the darkness they experience while incarcerated and, as the eye travels toward the center of the painting, the light and joy of reunification with their children and families. Between the darkness and light is the work they have done – mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually – while in prison. They wanted to filter their experiences through a dream-catcher; broken hearts emerge healed and whole. Finally, the women depicted the experiences they have missed – graduations, time spent playing with children – and added an expression of gratitude to the people who have cared for their children while they are gone (the family at the right hand side).

The title of the work was suggested by one inmate when asked how she approaches her day-to-day life away from her children. “I just know that we are all blessed,” she said. “I send the prayers up, and the blessings come down.” Later, when she sent her children a photo of the completed painting, they said they knew right away that their mom was part of it. “They know I always say that!” she remarked.

It currently hangs in the Parenting Department at the institution, where it serves as a reminder to those entering the facility that, as one participant said, “It’s not just us who do time. So do our kids.”