

FFUMC REACHES OUT TO SERVE

A Perspective From Jo Springer

With more than 404 beds in one facility, a medical unit, and about 900 meals served per day, the operation of the Fayette County Jail is equivalent to that of a small town. Jo Springer has been part of a ministry serving the Fayette County Jail.

Scheduled for Wednesdays from 2-3 p.m., Jo Springer and Fran McElwaney have visited women in the J Pod twice a month for several years. Some men from our church also visit in the men's pods.

To get started, volunteers must complete required training every year in order to receive a badge for entry. Our church provides the location for training each January and Chaplain Mike Helton, from the Sheriff's office, is in charge of the program.

Jo shares that the inmates give up an hour of their free time in order to speak with members of the team. Sometimes they have several people, sometimes two or three, sometimes one, and sometimes no one comes in.

"It has been a very rewarding experience for me personally and has surprised me that the ladies are very appreciative of our being there. We let the ladies tell us what they would like, whether it is scripture reading, a lesson, life skills, encouragement, or just listening to them. Many in that population have never had anyone sit and listen to them and offer words of encouragement. We always pray with them and for them when we leave. We listen, we laugh, and sometimes we cry with them. Each is unique in her situation, but many have a common thread. Drugs are usually somewhere within their background, but almost every one of them wants a better situation.



Jo Springer and Fran McElwaney visit the Fayette County Jail to spread encouragement and hope.

"More volunteers are welcome and time slots are available. We have been grateful to receive money from the Christmas Market Place, which we used to purchase Bibles to be placed in the pods for their use. Most of the ladies we see have their Bibles with them when they come in to visit with us. Friends have also given us soft covered books to be distributed to the library carts which each pod has. The chaplain vets these before they are placed on the carts for use.

"Fran and I always say, 'If we say only one thing to one lady that helps her, then we have done our job.'"

Jo adds that Danny Beck is really the man in charge for those interested in learning more, but she has happily presented information to her UMW Circle and the Family Class. To know more, to ask for a representative to speak to your group, or to get involved, contact Rev. Michael Phillips at mphillips@fayettevillefirst.com and he will direct you to the best contact person for your inquiry.