

Re-Entry and the Rising Sun

(TOKYO, Japan) Feb.1, 2007 – In the early 1990s, the Eisenhower Foundation looked to Japan when developing the Koban – Youth Safe Haven model. Now Japan is looking to the Foundation for help reintegrating prisoners into society.

Jennie Amison, Director of Replications for Previously Incarcerated Persons at the Eisenhower Foundation and Executive Director of Gemeinschaft Home spent two days lecturing and speaking with officials in Japan about the successes of the reentry program she runs in Harrisonburg, VA.

The Eisenhower Foundation work in replicating re-entry programs for previously incarcerated persons is part of it's effort to find multiple solutions to the multiple problems facing at-risk communities throughout the country. The Gemeinschaft Home is one of those solutions.

Amison was invited to Tokyo, Japan at the request of the Rehabilitation Bureau Ministry of Justice. Her visit coincided with the tenth anniversary of Japan's Offender Rehabilitative Services of Halfway Houses.

The first day of the trip, Amison visited the Probation and Parole Department where she met with key officials that explained how the Japanese system operates. She received a tour of a Halfway House and met with staff to exchange ideas and talk about programs that take place in there facility.

The highlight of the trip came on day two when Amison gave a presentation to over 200 people who operate 100 halfway home run in Tokyo. She presented on The Therapeutic Community Model of Treatment and the Gemeinschaft Home Program.

“The presentation was well received,” Jamison says and they held a reception afterwards so she could further answer questions.

Amison also went to The United Nations Asia and Far East Institute for the prevention of Crime and Treatment Of Offenders in Fuchu, Japan. There she lectured to 30 students from the Insitute on “Reentry of Offenders and the Second Chance Act.”

“The most interesting part from the two lectures was the audience's interest in the structure, accountability and rules of our program,” says Jamison. “In Japan it is a part of their system to provide housing for everyone that needs it.” However, the lack of rules and guidelines for re-entry programs limits their effectiveness. Amison provided rules and information on the Gemeinschaft model, which will be translated it into Japanese.

There are future plans to send a delegation from Japan to come to Harrisonburg and to see Gemeinschaft in June.

Amison did spend a little time as a tourist while in Japan. She saw the oldest Buddhist Temple in the country and went shopping and sightseeing in Tokyo.