



St. Patrick's Day Family Day

**Central NM Correctional Facility – Level 2
Los Lunas, NM
3-15-25**



Family Connections Ministry (FCM) held a St. Patrick's Day theme Family Day at the Level 2 facility in Los Lunas on Saturday, March 15, 2025. There were 92 guests including children and adult family members, 53 inmates, 13 volunteers, and 8 Correctional staff who were registered to attend. The volunteers came from Albuquerque and Grants.

On Saturday we arrived at the prison and quickly brought all the supplies into the prison. There were inmate helpers who worked with the volunteers to set up the cookies, crafts, and cups, plates, napkins, etc. for the meal. Everyone did a great job of helping with the set-up for the Family Day.

The families started arriving and Ann led the group in mixers. People got to know one another, and shared things they were looking forward to at the Family Day. We also found out where people came from, those who enjoyed music, arts and crafts, reading and theater, and cooking. Everyone enjoyed getting this chance to interact with one another.

Once most of the families and inmates arrived, Ann Edenfield Sweet opened the Family Connections Family Day in prayer. She invited volunteers from the group, including many children, to join her in leading some songs. Ann started with the song, "Praise Ye the Lord". Each side stood up to sing and sat down when not singing. Next "Shake a Neighbor's Hand" and "Jesus is a Friend, He's the Friend Next To You", got everyone in the mood to have a great time and realize that this was FUN and that everyone was going to have a great time. Other songs included "When the Saints Go Marching In," "Lord I Lift Your Name on High", and "Jesus Loves Me." Everyone enjoyed the singing and the music.

The Bible story was The Prodigal Son. One of the inmate Chaplains was "The Prodigal Son", his own father was "The Father", another inmate was the "Older Son", and children and volunteers were card players, dancers, and pigs in the pig field. One of the dogs being trained in the prison was the "fatted calf" and "The Father" had real tears in his eyes when he ran to his "Prodigal Son" and hugged him and welcomed him back home in the story. What a touching and memorable time that was!

Ann reflected on this parable, and many could identify with both the "Prodigal Son" and the "Older Son". Later, quite a few people shared that this parable now had much more meaning to them after seeing it acted out and being part of it.

Next, the men went with their children to do crafts. Volunteers were there to assist as needed, and everyone loved making cards and bookmarkers with St. Patrick's Day stickers and markers, beautiful unique butterflies out of the "worthless" newspaper, and fun and tasty necklaces out of fruit loops and pretzels. It's amazing how beautiful those necklaces were!

Ann invited the adults and the inmates without children to join her group. She tied the Bible story into her personal story and shared that Family Connections is designed to share Christ's love with all families of prisoners and returning citizens and connect family members in meaningful ways.

The Chaplain talked about all the religious programming that takes place on a weekly basis. A returning citizen is now a FCM volunteer, and he shared about his personal journey behind bars, and why he feels called to be a prison volunteer today. We heard from other ministry leaders and volunteers, an inmate talked about the educational programming in the prison, and lastly, we all heard encouragement from a caring correctional officer.

We gathered the groups back together and sat at tables with 10 people at each table. We ate pizza, enjoyed delicious homemade cookies, and talked and shared around the table. It was a special time as usually families can't talk to one another and the informal atmosphere was welcomed by everyone.

Then the favorite part of each Family Connections Family Day arrived. We always play a "table game" at the end and yesterday we played a "Get to Know You BINGO" game. It was great fun and the laughter and joy around each table was contagious.

Lastly, we put all the chairs and tables away, and then everyone joined hands in a huge circle where the Chaplain closed us in prayer. We always close this way because we don't want anyone to feel left out, and we want everyone to be reminded that Christ died for each one of us. It was a special, uplifting day, where grateful hearts joined together for great fun and fellowship.

So many people came up to thank us. We'll never know the impact we had on the families, but I know from the comments that they were deeply touched and grateful to be together with their loved ones. The volunteers were grateful to be back in the prisons again too!

The following comments came from those in attendance and their words describe how meaningful the Family Day was for everyone. Duplicate comments were not repeated.

I came to the Family Connections Family Day today because:

1. I got to see the love of my life.
2. To see my family.
3. I wanted to see my son.
4. It's a special time for everyone.
5. First visit with my loved ones.
6. Spend time with my fiancé.
7. I love seeing Christ. He's one of my oldest friends. He has been my support and my rock through many hard times and good times.
8. I wanted to visit with family.
9. Exciting time to be with my family doing things together.
10. To volunteer and be a part of Christ's family.
11. I didn't have any family come from my hometown but my brother is in prison with me so we came together.
12. I wanted to visit my nephew.
13. I hadn't seen my nephew for 15 years. It was great to spend time with him!
14. To visit with my family.
15. I love visiting and seeing my brother.
16. Visit my boyfriend/children's father.
17. I wanted to see my son.
18. I came to see my grandson.
19. I came to see my son.
20. Ann needed help.
21. Dad.

22. I wanted to see my grandson.
23. I wanted to take the opportunity to see my family.
24. Visit with my Godson.
25. I wanted to see and visit with my son.
26. My son invited me.
27. To see my dad with the dog.
28. To see my husband and the dog.
29. I wanted to volunteer.
30. To visit my son.
31. My nephew is here.
32. Love.
33. I have participated in prison ministry at MDC and when I heard about this program I wanted to join.
34. To see my dad and hug him.
35. My son is in the prison here.
36. My brother is my best friend.
37. I wanted to have a visit with my family.
38. I wanted to see my Tyb.
39. To help others and be an example of Jesus Christ.
40. I wanted to.
41. I wanted to see my son in person.
42. To volunteer.
43. To spend time with my family.
44. So I can spend time with my grandson and have a good time.
45. I wanted to let the guys know God loves them.
46. My pimp dad.
47. Pizza.
48. I wanted to have a fun experience.
49. To be able to worship with my son.
50. I wanted to see and touch my son.
51. To connect with my family.
52. I wanted to see my brother and spend some quality time with him.
53. We get to see our family.
54. To have fun with my son.
55. To have fun.
56. To see mom and eat.
57. I wanted to see my loved ones and enjoy the blessed day.
58. I needed to spend time with my family/grandmother, etc.
59. To get closer and build a stronger relationship with my father.
60. I haven't seen my son since Oct. I came to see him.
61. Blayne.
62. My love.
63. To see my uncle.
64. To be with my family.
65. It is what I love to do!
66. I wanted to visit with my family and see what it is all about.
67. Visit brother.
68. I enjoyed it the last time I came to one.
69. We wanted to enjoy a family day with our dad.

70. To see my dad because it has been a long time since I have seen him.
71. That way my boyfriend knows I care, and I had the day off.
72. It changes the lives of the inmates, the family, and me.
73. To visit my brother.
74. To spend time with my girlfriend and hear the Word.
75. Because I care about inmates and their loved ones, and I want to strengthen those relationships.

The highlights of the Family Day for me were:

1. Watching everyone have such a good time.
2. The pizza and the delicious homemade cookies!
3. Hugging and spending time with my grandparents.
4. Seeing my son and hearing about some of the programs.
5. Table time.
6. Fellowship and sharing with everyone and getting to know the people.
7. Spending time with fiancé and family.
8. It brings up morals and gives the inmates something to look forward to.
9. Having FUN!
10. The smiles in all those in attendance including the volunteers.
11. How everyone was involved.
12. Activities and seeing happy families and inmates.
13. Hearing the testimonies.
14. Visiting and playing the Prodigal Son.
15. To see inmates loving the Lord.
16. Our children getting to see their father and getting to have an in-person visit.
17. My son seeing his daughters.
18. Seeing my grandson with the baby.
19. The stories shared by other families.
20. Seeing kids get time with their dads who clearly love them.
21. Dog.
22. Seeing my grandson.
23. Seeing my family member's smile.
24. Spending time with my Godson.
25. It gives inmates some good family time and time to introduce family to others.
26. Unity of family.
27. My husband and the dog.
28. Speakers.
29. Praying and seeing my son with his kids.
30. It helps keep the relationships strong.
31. Visiting with my family.
32. Singing and lunch.
33. Eating pizza.
34. My granddaughter spending time with her dad.
35. Dancing and praising God.
36. Pizza.
37. To watch my sister see her dad.

38. To be part of my family in Christ and to feel loved by Christ.
39. Seeing my family.
40. Being able to spend quality time with my family.
41. The play. (The Prodigal Son.)
42. Family reconciliation and seeing families.
43. The role-playing with my dad.
44. Being in the play with my son. (The Prodigal Son.)
45. Talking with people and my grandson.
46. Meeting the residents, some of the family visitors, and volunteers.
47. Visiting with my son.
48. It's fun.
49. Hanging out with friends and family.
50. The play. I really enjoyed it.
51. Sitting as a family.
52. The songs and the interactions.
53. The dog being named the "fatted calf" and eating with everyone around the table.
54. Hanging with my mom and sister.
55. To be with my son.
56. To do good.
57. Food.
58. All the fun activities.
59. Seeing everyone happy.
60. Getting a better visit with our father.
61. Fellowship and my son.
62. My queen.
63. Seeing my uncle.
64. Just seeing my brother and watching everyone smile and interacting with one another.
65. Seeing my family.
66. Fellowship with family.
67. Visiting with my brother and participating.
68. Cookies!
69. Meeting new family members.
70. The joy of happiness, peace, love, and kindness.
71. Getting to see and visit with my loved ones.
72. The singing, and the children participating in the little drama.
73. Seeing my loved ones.
74. Visit time in a different environment.

Prison officials should continue hosting Family Connections Family Days because:

1. It's a good opportunity to see the others in a caring environment.
2. It helps keep everyone organized.
3. It changes lives. Inmates have to behave to come.
4. It helps inmates to think about when he gets home and how to stay out.
5. This allows us to spend time with our loved ones in a meaningful way.
6. It really brings families together.

7. Good for inmates.
8. They bring family together and get to eat.
9. It creates a family atmosphere.
10. To bond with family.
11. To have fun and bond with my family.
12. It's important for family and inmates to spend time together.
13. The right thing to do.
14. Brings people together and shows love to our inmates.
15. It helps make families closer.
16. It gives us more hope.
17. Love, joy, and peace is a big part of connecting with loved ones.
18. Family is so important.
19. To have fun.
20. To be with my son. I haven't seen him for 6 months. Thank you.
21. To get quality time with my family.
22. It is awesome to see a loved one whom I have not seen in a while.
23. To help prepare for reintegration into society.
24. It keeps us close.
25. It brings the family together.
26. It helps prisoners.
27. It's chill.
28. It's fun.
29. Much appreciated!
30. They help families maintain good relationships.
31. So we can spend time with family.
32. It helps build bonds with other family members.
33. It can help build friendships.
34. So family can reconnect with their loved ones in the prison.
35. It interacts with everybody.
36. Good for morale
37. I like it.
38. Quality time to spend with family.
39. It's so much fun.
40. It makes the families happy.
41. Connects family.
42. It allows visitation time to be quality time.
43. It meant a lot to us!
44. I get to hug my family member and visit in person.
45. So much love is shared in a short time.
46. Family orientation.
47. It helps keep the relationships strong.
48. It's very good for the inmates and their families.
49. It strengthens families.
50. It helps them know that their family is behind them to be there when they get out.
51. It is important for the prisoners to see their families.
52. Unity of family.

53. It gives inmates some good family time and time to introduce family to others.
54. It's something good. It breaks up the everyday routine.
55. Fun with Dad.
56. It brings hope!
57. Allows inmates to have something to look forward to.
58. It helps the families to come together.
59. It's good for both the inmates and the family.
60. It gives home. It gives them something for their day to look forward to.
61. The Word needs to be spread and all need to know that God is good. All the time God is great.
62. It's important to connect with my family and allow Jesus to restore.
63. It is a great way to connect to the real world.
64. They keep families connected in a fun way.
65. It helps the family and the inmates remember why we should do good so we remember what we are getting out to.
66. To keep the fellowship of inmates, volunteers, and officers.
67. This is beneficial to all the families to learn about service and what God can do to people's lives changing hearts.
68. It's good for people to get close to their family.
69. It brings up morals and gives the inmates something to look forward to.
70. It encourages family connection and unity!
71. Getting to know one another with fun and games.
72. It is a place for everyone and helps develop communication.
73. Family is the way home.
74. It's a chance for positive fellowship.
75. It helps connect us with our families more.
76. It brings families together in a fun way.
77. It brings HOPE!

I appreciate the delicious homemade cookies, food, and want to tell all the sponsors *thanks* and:

1. It was delicious!
2. Have a safe drive home.
3. Everything tasted so good!
4. Much appreciated.
5. Thank you so much!
6. Please come again and travel safe.
7. A huge "Thank You"! They were delicious!
8. Thank you for the peanut butter cookies. They were yummy!
9. I pray for the high blessings for all who were involved.
10. God bless you. This was appreciated.
11. Thank you for taking your time to be with us today.
12. They are delicious!
13. You are appreciated!
14. Jesus loves you.
15. Without all the volunteers we wouldn't have been here today.

16. Continue doing what you do.
17. Thank you, Family Connections Day, for everything!
18. I'm grateful for everyone who helped with this event today.
19. This changes lives.
20. I appreciate you all taking the time out of your weekend to come to prison.
21. Thanks for your hospitality.
22. I was not expecting lunch or a meal. Thank you very much.
23. Keep up the Lord's work.
24. I appreciated all the food.
25. We appreciate them for hosting this Family Day.
26. God bless.
27. Very appreciated.
28. We appreciate you coming.
29. Thank you!
30. I appreciate it.
31. It meant a lot to us.
32. Delish!
33. We loved the cookies!
34. I love that you guys are doing this.
35. Thank you so much!
36. Good food. Thank you.
37. The cookies were the best!
38. Thank you for the food.
39. I hope for more Family Days in the future.
40. I hope for more Family Days because they are so much fun.
41. The cookies were so delicious.
42. More games, less singing, so families can visit more.
43. Yum. I enjoyed the talking.
44. More pizza.
45. I appreciate the blessings.
46. That's what's up. Body built like Joe Biden.
47. This was amazing.
48. You are doing God's work.
49. I hope for another Family Day.
50. I am very grateful for the thoughtfulness that was put into making the homemade cookies.
51. Thank you for the cookies. I loved them.
52. Good, good, good, good – start over.
53. Thank you. God bless!
54. God bless! I love you as my family of God.
55. God bless them
56. God bless everyone who helped.
57. Prayers sent your way.
58. We appreciate your service.
59. I appreciate you and all your work!
60. We appreciate your service.
61. Thank you and we really appreciate everything.
62. God bless you.
63. They are delicious.
64. We thank you for the inmates.

65. God bless you all for everything.
66. They did an awesome job and you all did this with love.
67. Thanks, cookie bakers!
68. God bless the volunteers. It was very considerate of them.
69. May God bless you. The Lord instructs us to remember those in prison and minister to them. The Lord's work is being done here.
70. I really appreciated everything.
71. Good job 😊

How many miles did you drive one way to come to the Family Day?

3, 10, 25, 30, 35, 40, 45, 50, 52, 54, 60, 80, 120, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210, 240, 250, 300, 305, 800

180 miles to see my beautiful family.

I flew 2,000 miles from Florida.

We drove for 8 hours.

We drove 300 miles from Phoenix, AZ to Alamogordo, NM. (8 hours) Then we drove 3 hours to Los Lunas.