



## Jeremy Brownell and Margaret Castle Help with FIT Booth

Each year the local Community Coalition on Homelessness and the Veterans Administration sponsor a "Stand Down" for Manatee and Sarasota Counties, FL. Here the homeless can get a meal, clothes, medical and legal help, and information about social services. This year, FIT was invited to have a booth inside the social services tent offering our free courses in life skill development. Present to help were Jeremy Brownell (pictured on left) and Margaret "Margie" Castle (on right). Both are well known to the crowd coming for services because they were once a part of them. Each has been delivered from addictions and now wants to help others. They also help out at House of Hope, an outreach church specifically designed to reach the homeless, addicted, and ex-offenders. Recently, Margie was married at House of Hope.

Jeremy has been a key "Andrew" figure who brings people into the program. He has a kind heart and searches for ways to be helpful to the less fortunate.

Margie benefited from FIT, House of Hope and the visitations she received while in jail. Now she wants to give back. Though a long haul for her, she has plans to start college to become a social worker. Her goal is to be educated and start up her own halfway house for women. Meanwhile, she is preparing to be a FIT facilitator.



## FOUR NEW FACILITATORS TRAINED IN BROOKSVILLE

Four new trainees joined the FIT family by completing the leader training session were in Brooksville, FL on November 13. This fine group of talented and dedicated people includes a pastor and representation from many ministries, including Kairos, Hope House Transition Center (Tampa), RN, bilingual and various other church ministries. Pictured from left to right are Rev. Gary Nolan, Alicia Nolan, FIT Trainer Elena Bozzi, Ondina Waldron, and Priscilla Piersma.

## Florida Prison Statistics

Knowing what to do with all the offenders in America is a big problem. The US leads the world in the rate of incarceration. Florida state prisons take in roughly 44,000 new inmates each year but only release 40,000. That means that two new prisons are needed each year just to keep up. One billion dollars could be saved if this could be leveled out. FIT is trying to help by mentoring the 40,000 that get out so they do not come back.

Currently 19 more new prisons are needed in Florida to take care of the current populations, The 67 counties in Florida house even more inmates in jails. Florida has over 100,000 incarcerated in state prisons, even more than that in county jails, and over 130,000 others under community supervision (probation).

This is a big challenge (and opportunity) for our type of ministry. There are many "customers" who have hit bottom and want help. The obstacles to getting help are great, and programs like ours struggle to find volunteers or donations. We need all of that as well as cooperation and invitations from facilities to let us in.

### Become a FIT Volunteer

The FIT program is active in jails, prisons, half-way houses, and community centers throughout Florida and in several states. To see if you could schedule an all-day training in your area, **contact President Don Pratt at (941) 739-1338**. The training fee is \$25 per person and includes a 66-page training manual. Within the state of Florida, our trainers provide for their own travel expenses. All money collected goes toward our program services. Outside Florida, hosts are asked to pay the travel expenses of our trainers.

Benefits of joining the FIT family by completing our training include: recognition and support from our Central Office, eligibility to apply online for beautiful and free completion certificates for each member of your class, FIT's recordkeeping services, connection with our network of facilities and facilitators, and as our limited funds permit, free materials for official FIT classes.

*The training course shows how FIT is structured and how to use it to maximum advantage. Your training manual will give a breakdown of every unit of the 8-course program. Included are the need, our answer, and how it all fits together.*