

FALL NEWSLETTER

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Pacific Youth Correctional Ministry

I wanted to have Casey Diaz speak in Orange County ever since I saw him on the Eric Metaxas Show five years ago. When I spoke to him about it at the CMCA Conference in May, he said, "Let's do it!"

The outreach was approved to occur in JH and YLA but then gang tension began to build over the summer in JH and the decision was made to limit attendance. Only the youth in the top phases would be given the opportunity to attend. There were 25-30 eligible youth, but I never know who will choose to go until they walk in the door.

Being able to hold the activity inside of YLA so more youth would attend took a special meeting to work out. I knew that Unit T (which houses serious offenders) wouldn't combine their youth with the other units so the supervisor agreed to hold a separate program for all eighteen of his youth.

Two of my volunteers urged me to serve dipping dots and churros to boost attendance. They were willing to cover the cost and deliver them to the facilities. Posters with a picture of the snacks we would be serving were created and placed all over the facilities.



Highlight of the Year

Above is the team who joined me on Monday, August 12th for the Casey Diaz Outreach. Two Christian therapists and one probation staff came on their own time because they wanted to meet Casey.

I arrived at Juvenile Hall at 1:00 pm and met with the assistant director and found out there was a staffing problem for the evening shift. I then met with the duty officer who said, "I'm surprised the medical unit approved the snacks you are serving." He had gotten a list of attendees from most of the units but one unit was still not sure who they could send.

Gwen went to two Walmarts and bought all of their dipping dots and then hauled them to two freezers on the afternoon of the outreach. Christee found out that the only store in Orange County that makes fresh churros is the Northgate Market in Costa Mesa. She arranged to have them made on the day of the outreach and managed to get them to the facilities while they were still hot!

Casey arrived at 4:00 pm and was given a quick tour of the facilities. I began to feel better about the outreach until a fight broke out in one of the Juvenile Hall units fifteen minutes before our first presentation in the Youth Leadership Academy.



We arrived in YLA just before our 5:00 pm start time and all but one youth chose to attend. The assistant director stayed late to be at the outreach and make sure all went well. It was the first time both sides of the building were allowed to sit in view of each other for an activity in years.

Three copies of Casey's book *"The Shot Caller"* were given as prizes to the youth who could answer a bible question and then I introduced Casey. As I took my seat, I noticed three supervisors from other units who had stopped in to hear Casey speak.

The presentation turned out great and one of the more stricter staff looked at me and said, "That was an excellent program."

Chaplain Tim rushed Casey over to Unit T who had arranged their schedule to have him speak from 6:15 -7:00 pm. We asked to have the guys seated in a circle and all but one of them chose to participate. This was Casey's favorite group because it was more relaxed and he was asked some excellent questions.

Snacks were served in YLA as the youth were dismissed and then we hauled the sound system back to the gym in the MRC. The rest of my volunteers and the guest rapper were waiting there. Gabriel had been in Juvenile Hall many years ago and has served with me several times.

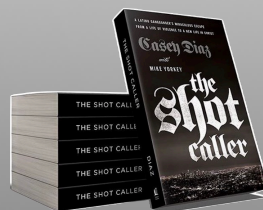
The fight had occurred in Unit A but the staff didn't shut down the unit for an investigation and brought as many youth as they could. Groups from Units A, G, H, M, and Q began entering the gym at 6:45 pm. The assistant director said she would feel comfortable if only thirty youth attended but we ended up with thirty-two and everyone behaved very well.

Gabriel did a great job opening the program in the gym and as I was giving away the books, Casey made it over from Unit T just in time to be introduced for his third presentation. At that point I relaxed and realized that the Lord had truly blessed the outreach. Seventy-five youth were able to meet a person who gave up the gang mentality for his faith in the Lord and was willing to suffer for it. A few comments from the youth are highlighted below.



"My thoughts about Monday was that it was amazing! The talk Casey did really touched me and made me want to do better for my daughter."

"I learned that you don't need to be a Christian to have God's love with you."



"I want to thank Casey for sharing the Word of God and appreciate how he opened our eyes a little more. You are the hope that we can change for the better."

"I learned that God forgives anyone even for the mistakes you think he won't."