



# IPM NEWS



*Dedicated to His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada*

**March/April 2013**

**Changing Lives from the Inside Out!**

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[www.iskconprisonministry.org](http://www.iskconprisonministry.org)

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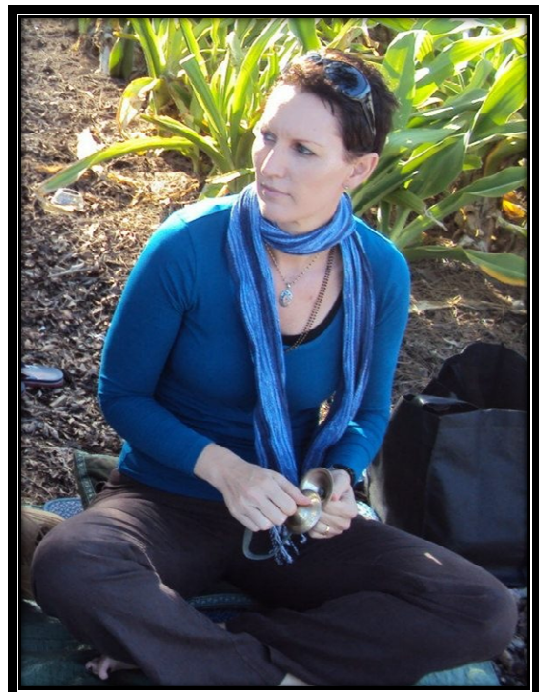
352-575-0458

## **PLANTING THE SEEDS IN AUSTRALIAN PRISONS**

by Radha dasi

By the mercy of His Divine Grace Srila Prabhupada and my Guru Maharaja, I received the inspiration to serve the ISKCON Prison Ministry.

On Vyasa-puja day, while chanting my japa, the inspiration came to me to serve in the prison ministry. Interestingly enough, at that time I didn't even know the prison ministry existed. I researched the internet, saw on the web site a request from IPM for volunteer pen pals. I thought this was an easy service, one I would enjoy and could do from the comfort of my home and in my own time. I contacted Bhakti-lata mataji and expressed my interest. Unfortunately, as I live in Australia, it was not possible to correspond with prisoners in the US as they couldn't afford the overseas stamps. She suggested that I start up the prison ministry here in Australia.



Radha dasi

At first I was excited and enthusiastic, but then became a bit overwhelmed by the task. Bhakti-lata suggested beginning by taking some small steps, one at a time. I followed her advice and with her blessings began the endeavor.

I contacted prison Chaplains, explaining I was from ISKCON Prison Ministry, and asking if I could send some books on Hinduism. The Chaplains I spoke to were Christian and all of their chapel books were Christian; I was not getting a positive response and decided to take another approach.

I contacted the prison librarians and education departments, explaining I was from *Gold Coast Bhakti Yoga* (as we do have a Bhakti Centre here on the Gold Coast) and that I had books on Yoga, Meditation, Karma and Eastern Philosophy that we'd like to donate to the prison library. Immediately I had an overwhelmingly positive response, and it was as if the prison doors opened to welcome and receive Prabhupada's books!

In Australia if you mention religion people tend to run a mile, but if you say *Yoga, Meditation* and *Karma* people are favorable and accepting.

I sent out small sets of 8 books, which include Bhagavad Gita, to the prison libraries. I opened a P.O. Box and stamped all the books with our address and, with Bhakti-lata's advice, our prison ministry's name: *Gold Coast Bhakti Yoga*.

I needed to set a goal, so by the end of 2013 we hope to have Srila Prabhupada's books in 50 prisons across Australia, if this is Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya's desire; I am merely an instrument in Their service. From there- who knows, but at least the seeds of Prabhupada's books will be planted behind prison walls in Australia.

I have now contacted most of the Correctional Centers in Queensland and decided to move on to the next state, New South Wales. I was finding it a bit tough at first and was not having much success or positive outcomes. Most of the prisons are operated by a government department and will not accept books directly in the prison libraries.

I finally got an e-mail address for the lady in charge of the government library department and contacted her. Within a few days I received a reply and she gave her OK to send the books. Even better, I just have to send them to one address where they get security-checked and then sent out to the individual prisons, allowing me to box them up and save a fortune on postage!

Here's another inspiring story- I called one prison and spoke to the man in charge of education and learning, explaining that I wanted to send some books on Yoga, Meditation and Eastern Philosophy.

He says, "Oh, are they for prisoners so and so," mentioning 2 specific inmate names.

I say, "No, I don't know anyone from the prison; I'm just sending these books to all prisons across Australia."

He says, "Oh, just last week a few of the guys were asking for some info on Yoga and I was trying to print some pages from the Internet for them."

I said, "These books must be for them then."

Then he gave me the address and we chatted some more. I wanted to know where Junee is, as I'd never heard of it. It turned out to be very remote, somewhere inland from *Canberra* and North of Wagga Wagga. If you know Australia, it's a very vast country and some places are extremely remote. Imagine Prabhupada's books going to this prison and inmates waiting to read them! Lord Caitanya's mercy knows no limits- in every town and village - even Junee! ☺

I sincerely thank Bhakti-lata mataji for her help, her guidance and her enthusiasm which has enthused and inspired me to serve the IPM in some small way here in Australia. I pray to all the devotees for their mercy and guidance that I may continue this service to please Srila Prabhupada- for He gave so much for us. Hare Krishna!

Radha dasi lives with her husband in Queensland, Australia

If you want to give Radha your support, you can contact her at: [radharani\\_das@msn.com](mailto:radharani_das@msn.com)

## Texas Chaplain becomes a Devotee before Passing Away

by Bhakti-lata dasi

In May 2012, a Chaplain from El-Paso, Texas, Steven Cottingham, emailed me in the hope of getting some books for the inmates he served. He said,

*"My name is Steven. I serve in 5 jails, 3 federal prisons, and 2 state prisons and there are people asking for books in each of these institutions. What I do is place books in each institution's Religious Services library, so it is cost-effective that way. Do you have books we could have?"*

Of course I was very happy to help him out and this was the beginning of a wonderful cooperation. I sent him books a few times over the next months. One day, as we talked on the phone, he told me he had been reading Prabhupada's books and he was really interested himself. I gave him his personal copy of the Bhagavad-gita.

On January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013, a fellow chaplain, Michael St.James, replied to the last email I had sent to Steven:

*"Steven is no longer with the Bureau. He began to read the items your group sent, and, from what I understand, began to practice your faith. As he was hired as a Christian Chaplain (he was/is an Episcopalian Priest) his employment was terminated.*

*Steven is in a very bad spot right now. Having lost his job, he and his wife are finding it difficult to live on just her salary. I know they will make it through this.*

*The Bureau's decision to fire him is one that has left us all reeling. Some of us will be going to court on his behalf. You must understand that Steven, for years, fought for many faiths-- including the Hare Krishna one-- to be recognized by the Bureau. In doing that, and his wanting to support those of different faiths, he has made a few enemies here."*

At the beginning of February, Chaplain Steven went to court and won his case, the judge agreeing that Steven had been wrongly fired because of discrimination. In addition, Warden Smith, who had fired Chaplain Steven, lost his job due to his treatment him.

On February 7, Chaplain Michael St-James emailed me again:

*"There is a bit of stress here. Seems there are a few people that didn't want Steven back. You must understand, Steven will fight to correct a wrong. And he has helped inmates that have been wronged by both the system, and the staff."*

And on February 10:

*"I have just left my last meeting for the day, and will soon clock out. Have a couple of questions for you. These particular questions concern Chaplain Cottingham, and his advancement here at work.*

*Steven has become a Hare Krishna. He zealously practices his faith, and seems to have found a higher level of peace. I have done research, and have discovered that within your faith movement one must be installed as a member.*

*The head of our national chaplaincy department would like for Steven to become certified as a Hare Krishna member. We have a few questions.*

*There are, in addition to our director, several individuals within our chaplaincy program who would love for Steven to progress within this movement. So, if you could get back to me at your earliest."*

This was exciting news, indeed! I put Chaplain St-James in contact with Mukhya, our temple president here in Alachua. But, as with any plans, everything depends on Krsna, and as Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati used to say, "Krsna willing."

On February 23, Steven was killed in a car crash. He left a wife and young baby. At the present moment, I am awaiting a response from his wife, Jan. Hopefully the devotees can provide her support for her continuing Krsna consciousness.

Please pray for Chaplain Steven and the family he is leaving behind. Krsna was so kind to allow him to surrender in the last months of his life and to embrace the holy name with such enthusiasm and conviction!

I keep in regular contact with Chaplain St-James; the books will keep being circulated. He also appreciates the devotees very much. Last January he wrote me:

*“Yes, we serve ten prisons. Total population is 14,951-- as of this morning.*

*Total number of inmates who have listed their religion as either Hindu, or Hindu-Hare Krishna is 3,416-- as of this morning.*

*The Hare Krishna numbers have grown. Yours is a very peaceful religion. I wouldn't mind having the whole prison population become Hare Krishna; in a recent riot in the prison, none of the Hare Krishna inmates have participated; they all remained peaceful.”*

## Inmate Letter Excerpts

8-9-12

“Haribol!!! Vaisnava Pranama! Jaya Jaya Prabhupada!!!

Me and Bhakta Brad are joyously fasting for Janmastami today, in transcendental ecstasy! This morning we (Bhakta Brad, Jon, and me) chanted rounds and read from the Bhagavad Gita. This afternoon we made a new bhakta, Bhakta Jon and gave him his mala and the 3 of us took turns reading from the Krsna book about His birth. This evening we will be going back to the chapel for Kirtan and watching Prabhupada DVDs! Jaya!

Hope you are having a fantastic Janmastami and have a wonderful Prabhupada appearance day tomorrow!  
Your most humble servant,

**Bhakta Richard C.  
Petersburg, Virginia**

6-21-12

“Hare Krsna! I got my release for July 5<sup>th</sup>. I am so very grateful for your service and generosity. I will never forget you. The other day I was outside with my japa bag and beads, trying to share the Gita with a friend. A guy from India saw me with the japa beads and got very excited. He's from Bangladesh. We talk of Krsna often.”

**Luke S.  
Rockwell City, Iowa**

5-22-12

“I am very much enjoying the book, “*Chanting Hare Krsna*”. Thank you so very much for the opportunity to associate with Srila Prabhupada. When I read it, it is like Prabhupada is talking with me and bringing new and fresh realizations, letting the sun shine bright within my heart, with transcendental knowledge. Hare Krsna.”

**Brandon B.  
Mayo, Florida**





4-18-12

"The devotees are the prisoners' connection to the world of Krsna. I cannot explain how much letters and material from you all mean. It serves as a constant reminder to stay steadfast! So again, thank you."

**Bhakta Brian B.**

**Somerset, Pennsylvania**

2-12-12

"I used a piece of cloth as a japa mala by tying knots in the cloth; 108 knots. It took me 6 hours to make it, and the inner seam of my pants-but it beats counting on your fingers."

**William B.**

**Wiwahitchka, Florida**



8-25-2011

"I just wanted to take a moment to write and thank you for the issue of Back to Godhead. The first article I read was exactly something I needed to read. I find myself seriously lost and disturbed if I am not constantly reading, thinking about Vaishnava subjects. Lately I've been going through some mental battles, things getting to me. I am so grateful to have all the books I have acquired from you all in ISKCON IPM. It is my medicine in this diseased environment. Hare Krishna! I enclosed 2 stamps. I know it's not much but maybe it will help when you mail someone else some "meaning" for this life! Lord Krsna bless you all! Forever grateful,"

**Bhakta Clayton S.**

**Milton, Florida**

9-20-11

"I have been able to share my books with others; some show more sincerity than others. I'm pretty simple minded but I am trying to cultivate that sincerity and share the desire to chant. I just filed a request to allow us to have a weekly program in the prison chapel and have been filing a lot of grievance on our diet and how it is handled. I'm hoping to get something we can offer the Lord. Hare Krsna! If Krsna decides to give it to us, these people will be powerless to deny it. I'm hoping a devotee from New-Vrndavan might be willing to come from the temple and lead us in a chant and give us some nice instruction if possible. We'll see. It's hard for me to talk to the other guys very much because when I talk or think hard about the Lord, I get all teary eyed. What a tender and loving God Lord Krsna is. I don't want these guys to think I'm flaky and lose how important the message is, you know?"

**Bhakta Thomas L.**

**Moundsville, WV**

### **Chaplain Letter**

"Yes, the materials arrived and we have been playing the DVDs on the inmate television station. Thank-you very, very much for them. All inmates can listen to the inmate television station [it plays throughout the prison], unless they are in segregation [solitary]. They are greatly appreciated. Blessings, "

**Chaplain Rader**

**The Ohio State Penitentiary**

**Youngstown, Ohio**

## INMATE DEATHS

**10-2012:** Bhakta Ricky Jones died of cancer in prison. He was due for release 2-2013. Bhakta Ricky was very serious about his Krsna consciousness and had been practicing for a few years. He was corresponding with Nandini Radha dasi and Srutadeva dasa.

**1-25-13:** Allen Brink died in prison. I don't know yet how. He had been receiving the Back to Godhead magazine for a few years and was corresponding with devotees.



## INMATE RELEASES

### 2012

In July 2012 Bhakta Dan G. e-mailed me:

“I received your email and it was good to hear from you. I have been on the 'outside' for almost a year now. I have not forgotten the roots of what got me through my time in prison.

I went and bought murtis and built an altar where I offer incense as often as I can and chant the holy names.

Bhakta Paul H. has been released and are still practicing Krsna consciousness. They are in regular contact. Bhakta Paul lives near a temple and attends the programs there whenever he can. He is developing friendship with devotees and is giving Krsna to friends and others he meet. He says people remark on how different he has become.

Also in 2012, Bhakta Eddie G. has been released. He lives far from a temple, but is in regular phone contact with Sarva-drik prabhu, who encourages him to have Krsna conscious programs at his home.

Bhakta Luke T. was released also. He calls me regularly. He is in a half-way house till June 2013. He says that it takes more discipline to practice Krsna consciousness outside of prison because he is not so supervised all the time, but nonetheless, he gets up at 12 AM, and does his sadhana till 7 AM! He chants 20 rounds every day, offer prayers, and reads Prabhupada's books assiduously. He knows that when he has a full time job he won't be able to have such a lengthy sadhana, but is enjoying it while he can.

### **9-14-12**

Bhakta Brandon B. has been released. He is in contact with devotees and still chanting.

**10-2012:** Bhakta Luke S. was released and contacted me.



## **2013**

- ❖ **1-2-13: Bhakta Vincent R.** has been released. In January and February he wrote me (I combined the two e-mails he wrote me):

“Thank you for your support while I was incarcerated. I will continue on the path I have been really busy - re-establishing my ID, driver's license, food money, medical, etc. and adjusting to life in society. I also have a 19 year old son and I spent time with him. He was born when I was incarcerated.

The signs are clear, I need to work on my Krsna Consciousness a lot more. Yesterday when driving through town I saw two devotees and realized this week I need to visit the temple.

I do have my Bhagavad-gita and yes my japa beads. Now the freedom newsletter too, by email.

Being a vegetarian is so simple out here I love it - tofu, soy burgers, salad; choices are great - even paneer.

I will write to Ratheem dasa today - all this is new - email etc. In 28 years a lot has changed. Being 58 and not used to all the sensory input is not easy either.

My first 6 weeks have been very disorganized. I have at times felt very lost and I am only now getting back into an in-depth practice of daily chanting. Not something I am proud to admit. I do plan on continuing chanting and attending services.

I was very fortunate to have a great spiritual, devotee teacher. Although I have only come to Krsna Consciousness in the last three years.

- ❖ **2-25-13: Arjuna dasa** has been released.

“Dear Bhakti-lata dd prabhu, Hare Krsna. Please accept my humble obeisances and all glories to Srila Prabhupada!

Prabhu, How are you? I pray this finds you well in health and blissful in Krsna consciousness. I am pleased and happy to inform you that I am no longer incarcerated. Also, I am immeasurably and eternally grateful for your support and the support of IPM during my incarceration. I look forward to your continued association. Continued health and success to you and all of the dedicated IPM volunteers. Hare krsna! In your and Lord Krsnas service, humble regards, Arjuna dasa”



## **IPM Volunteer: update**

1-17-13

Dandavat Pranam Bhakti-lata Mataji Jaya Srila Prabhupada!

I would like to update you of my activities regarding IPM activities over the past couple of months.

The meditation teacher whose classes Bhakta Ricky Jones (now deceased) used to attend and whose classes I had attended 2/3 times as a guest/volunteer - helped to schedule fortnightly Sunday morning classes at the Estelle Prison Unit. This is about 3 hours' drive from my residence.

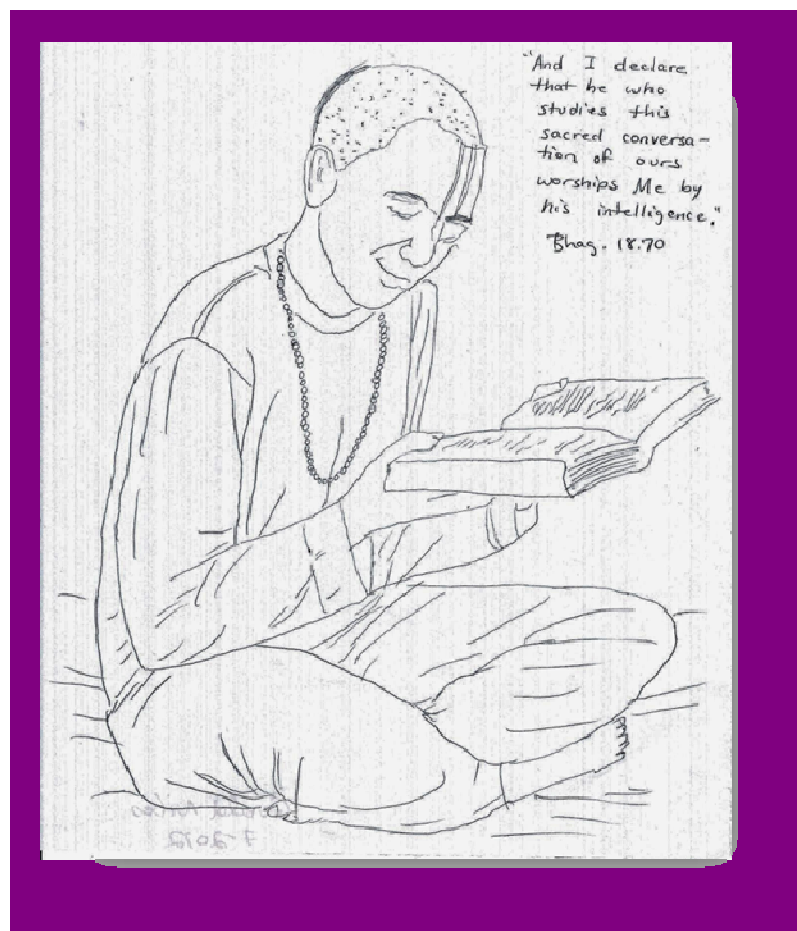
Last week I was calling around to the chaplains of other prison units that are within 3 hour driving distance for me and out of about 15 units that I called - one chaplain immediately accepted my offer to come and start weekly classes at his unit under the newly formed "Eastern Religions" category. Last Sunday I visited the unit and had my first discussion. There were 7 guys and 1 left after he realized that I was a Hare Krishna.

Coming Sunday I will be having 2 engagements - first one at the Estelle Unit @9:30 am - 12:00 Noon and then (on the way back) at the Powledge Unit from 2:00 pm - 4:00 pm.

I pray to Sri Guru, Srila Prabhupada and all Vaisnavas for blessings to be able to do this activity (teaching/preaching) in a humble serving mood - otherwise there is no possibility of anything worthwhile resulting from it.

Your servant  
Sridhara-syama dasa  
Dallas, Texas

**INMATE ART**



Artwork by Bhakta Gerald N., Daytona Beach, FL

Take the time to go see the inmate *artwork* on the website: [www.iskconprisonministry.org](http://www.iskconprisonministry.org)



## FOURTH CONSECUTIVE PROGRAM AT PULA, CROATIA

by Bhaktin Lara

On January 24 2013, we held our fourth consecutive program in Pula Jail. This time, for whatever reason, the security was much stricter. Most probably because of the recent bomb attacks in Zagreb.

We were given a room where similar workshops, lectures or visits take place. Surprisingly, 14 inmates came, more than ever before. Some familiar faces, but most were new. There were the usual 6 of us (Sivanada Sena das, Namacarya das, Misra Purandara das, Nadia Nimai das, Malati Mala dasi and myself, Lara).

Malati Mala sang and played harmonium, Sivanada Sena das gave the lecture. Namacarya brought a mridanga this time. We did bhajans longer than usual, and some of the inmates expressed their concern to hear about our philosophy. They wanted

us to introduce ourselves, and were curious about our spiritual names, and their meaning.



The lecture started with a quote from Bhagavad-Gita, and after reading the purport, Sivanada Sena explained about Vedic mantras; what they are, and why they are so important. After talking about how the mantras were used in ancient times, when people on earth were more virtuous, he said that the people in this Age of Kali are so fallen and sinful that they have no ability to concentrate or the willpower to chant Vedic mantras. But – by the Lord's mercy we were given a special mantra to chant in this age –The Maha Mantra: Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. Everybody can chant this mantra and be benefitted – if only a person can practice being humble and have respect for all others.

The lecture was short as we only had an hour for the entire program. By the end inmates asked many questions, some were about Jesus and Muhammed. Do we believe that God is one or are there many Gods? When Sivanada Sena said that God is one, one bearded man disagreed and said that if we see that in nature everything comes in pairs (man and woman) that must also be of divine origin. Sivanada Sena skillfully answered many of their provocative questions, and even agreed with the old man and said that God who we call Krishna has a feminine counterpart Her name is Srimati Radharani.

He then showed a picture on the cover of the book "Nectarean Ocean of the Holy Name" Croatian edition where Krishna and Radha are depicted dancing. We also left some books for the library (our friend the librarian was also there), and said we'll come again. Sivanada Sena later told us that while leaving he was approached by one inmate who said he has no home to go to when he leaves prison, and is thinking about joining . Every program is different and always full of surprises.

### **\*\*DISCRIMINATION\*\***

We regularly hear about inmates who are discriminated upon for practicing Krsna consciousness. For example, Bhakta Richard C., from Petersburg in Virginia, USA, has been part of a Krsna conscious program for a couple years, in the chapel. Every religious group is allowed to worship there. Recently though, an envious chaplain has made it his mission to impede their worship of which he doesn't approve. He has reduced their worship time and has also forbidden them to wear neck

beads. He is even in the process of denying them their japa beads. These actions are illegal but the inmates are helpless in that situation.

We need a lawyer who would be willing to do some pro-bono work from time to time, to help the inmates retain their religious rights in prison. If you can do this, or know a lawyer who is willing to do this, please contact us as soon as possible at: [iskconprisonministry@gmail.com](mailto:iskconprisonministry@gmail.com)



## THANK YOU!

Thank you to our donors during January, February and March: you make this program possible!!!

Shefali Majmudar  
Bhavananda dasa  
Stava Mala dasa  
Jitarati dasa  
Rene Waisvisz  
Dina Sharana dasa  
Ravi Jadhaw  
Yudhisthira dasa  
Mickey Singer

Coral Wheatley  
Ekanatha das (UK)  
Kalindi dasi (Hopping)  
Amala Gaura dasa  
Sri Gadhadhara dasa  
Maya Sudana dasa  
Inmate Joseph Powell

If I have forgotten anyone, please forgive me and let me know so I can make note of it in the next IPM NEWS.



## CAN YOU HELP?

From time to time, the proper management and further development of this volunteer Krsna Conscious preaching program requires making relatively small administrative expenses. If these expenses are not funded separately they will take away from our limited budget to provide transcendental literatures and other paraphernalia to the inmates. It is for some of those expenses that we ask for your help today. As many of you already know, the Prison Ministry service is a loving collaboration between the IPM volunteers who write to and/or visit inmates, the chaplains, whose job is to tend to the inmates' spiritual needs, and the devotees like you who financially support this preaching program. The more collaboration, the more souls we can reach, and the more we hope to please Guru and Krsna. We are most thankful to all of you who make this program possible. By Srila Prabhupada's mercy, together, we are changing the lives of thousands of inmates!

Here a list of the few expenses incurred recently:

### Annual expenses

- Website domain name renewal: **\$57.11**
- Non-profit status annual reports: **\$80.00**

## Recurring expenses

Toner and a drum for the 2 IPM printers (these cartridges typically last about 8 months):

- One printer is used by Bhavananda dasa, in Arkansas. He produces, prints, and mails the Freedom Newsletter to 150 inmates each month. This toner cartridge is **\$110.21** We also purchased a replacement drum he will need in the course of the year: **\$128.99**
- The second printer is in the IPM Alachua office. It is used on a daily basis to print letters and other material we send inmates (lectures transcript, pamphlets, etc). The toner is **\$161.88**

### Books shipping fees:

We need **\$62.00** to cover the shipping cost of acquiring Srila Prabhupada's **Bhagavad-Gita** and **Science of Self-Realization** in Spanish. The books themselves were donated by yet another kind, anonymous donor.

### Office Supplies:

Lastly, the cost for the recent office supplies (paper, envelopes, mailing tape) is: **\$98.08**

Whether you wish to donate a small amount, the entire amount (**\$698.27**), or anywhere in between, please know that every donation is very much appreciated and makes a big difference. And yes, we will be glad to send you a tax-deductible receipt.

### **You have 3 Donation Options:**

- 1) Send check or postal money order to:  
ISKCON Prison Ministry  
PO Box 2676  
Alachua, FL 32616-2676
- 2) Donate through PayPal at: [www.iskconprisonministry.org](http://www.iskconprisonministry.org)
- 3) For automatic, monthly donations, you can also do so on our website (with the PayPal button), or through your bank "Automatic Bill Pay" option, which is free and easy.

We can send you a **tax deductible receipt** at the moment of the donation or at the end of the year, as you wish.

**Here** are a few other ways you can serve the prison ministry:

- become a transcendental pen-pal for one or more inmates  
We always need more devotees to correspond with inmates. To be successful in this endeavor, you need to be motivated, to feel truly inspired by this service, and you need to like/love writing. Of course, you also need to practice Krsna consciousness yourself, so your words have potency.
- give a one-time or monthly donation (we provide tax-deductible receipts).
- donate books and magazines; *new or used* (not too damaged though).
- donate **DVDs** and **music CDs** (kirtans). (These items need to be new, or appearing to be new)
- donate pictures of deities or of Krsna paintings
- in the next few months we will need some extra japa and neck beads, along with bead bags and counter beads.

**Questions? Inquiries? Please contact Mukunda dasa or Bhakti-lata dasi at:**

**ISKCON Prison Ministry**

PO Box 2676, Alachua, FL 32616-2676

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