



**Thrive For Life
Prison Project**

2019 GRATITUDE REPORT

HOUSING EDUCATION EMPLOYMENT



Wilson (left), one of our residents, is sharing his joy and gratitude the day he moved into Ignacio House.



YOU ARE CHANGING LIVES.

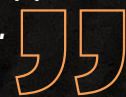
In 2019, with your support and partnership, we brought the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola to seven facilities in New York and New Jersey; offered more than 50 days of retreats; and opened Ignacio House of Studies, a warm, inclusive, and diverse community of hospitality for up to 24 formerly incarcerated individuals, with access to education and employment opportunities.

Thank you for your courage and commitment to transforming people's lives.

“THE THRIVE FOR LIFE COMMUNITY SAVED ME.

Upon my release, I was homeless, and without any resources. Thrive For Life welcomed me with love, compassion and generosity. Being part of this community has changed my life, giving me the support I needed to become the loving and generous person I was created to be.

A Thrive For Life Program Participant





Dear Thrive For Life family and partners worldwide,

Welcome to our 2019 Annual Gratitude Report!

Last year I announced our transitional supportive housing initiative. We are excited to share that on June 1 of this year we opened the doors to Ignacio House, where 23 of our brothers reside as they continue their college education and job workforce training with local employers. Together with the *Spiritual Exercises* offered to our brothers and sisters behind the prison walls, Thrive for Life Prison Project is committed to offering a continuity of care through this supportive housing initiative.

Throughout these beautiful pages you will discover inspiring stories of deep quests for spiritual freedom, radical hospitality, intellectual curiosity, and dignified gainful employment. Your generosity animates our mission by making resources and services for thriving possible. In Luke's Gospel, Jesus uses similes to describe the kingdom of God. He says, "It is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough" (Luke 13:21). Yeast seems insignificant when compared to the other ingredients, yet it should be considered as the most essential: before long the whole mixture is leavened.

We thank you for your generosity and pray that you continue to labor in this mission with the yeast of your time, talent, and treasure, mixed with some love, until all is leavened.

In gratitude,

Zachariah Presutti, SJ
Founder/President

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- Contributors**
- Tracey M. Tynan
- Shawna Gallagher Vega
- Editor/Design**
- Axel de Foucauld



Fellowship begins at a retreat behind the walls.

MISSION

Thrive For Life Prison Project creates opportunities for spiritual development and provides educational resources for incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals while partnering with local universities and local employers.

VISION

Thrive For Life Prison Project envisions a world where spiritual and educational services empower incarcerated individuals to thrive for life.

AMBITION

By 2020, Thrive For Life Prison Project will offer spiritual exercises to 1,000 incarcerated and formerly incarcerated individuals; support ten libraries in correctional facilities with educational and spiritual materials; found and support two houses of studies for 10-15 formerly incarcerated individuals, who will receive supportive housing, scholarships to local universities, and workforce experience and training with local employers.

WHAT IF

we created a quiet, reflective environment where inmates and volunteers feel safe to share their inner struggles and journey as a group?

WHAT IF

we provided a time and place for inmates to gather and be themselves without fear?

WHAT IF

we cultivated and nourished bonds of affection and admiration?

WHAT IF

we inspired hope and strength and encouraged long-term goals and dreams?



“
**LOVE SHOWS
ITSELF MORE
IN DEEDS THAN
IN WORDS.**

ST. IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA



BEHIND THE WALLS

WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES?

Every month, Thrive For Life brings the *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola to seven correctional facilities in New York and New Jersey.

According to St. Ignatius of Loyola, the *Spiritual Exercises* are “every way of examining one’s conscience, of meditating, of contemplating, of praying vocally and mentally, and of performing other spiritual actions.”

EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

Through meditation, retreatants are invited to notice the presence of God in their lives and to respond in accordance with such knowledge.

PRAYING WITH THE SCRIPTURES

Retreatants are invited to pray with Scripture in order to obtain a deeper understanding of their interior lives and their relationship with God.

IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

Imaginative prayer rooted in Scripture promotes encounters with the Divine and discourages prayer that is too self-centered.

GROUP SHARING

Retreatants and volunteers are encouraged to share with the group something that resonated during such prayer. In sharing, all begin to realize a common interior struggle that transcends incarceration.

A spiritual mentor leads inmate retreat participants in the Sign of the Cross Dance during a retreat behind the walls.

“**YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH YOUR HUMANITY.** The retreats have this effect on you! When you walk in the doors, you feel the love immediately. And when the day comes to an end, you walk out with memories of healthy conversations and a strong spiritual enlightenment.”
Retreatant

Ignacio House of Studies,
Bronx, New York



**BREAKING
THE CYCLE OF
POVERTY AND
RECIDIVISM**



HOW DOES ONE THRIVE FOR LIFE?

Thriving is growing through all the vicissitudes of life.

Martin Seligman, an internationally esteemed psychologist, claims that to thrive in life an individual must have the core essentials of positive emotions, engagement, good relationships, meaning and purpose in life, and accomplishment.

The three pillars of Ignacio House – **Housing, Education and Employment** – offer the resources to cultivate these essentials to not only thrive *in* life, but *for* life.

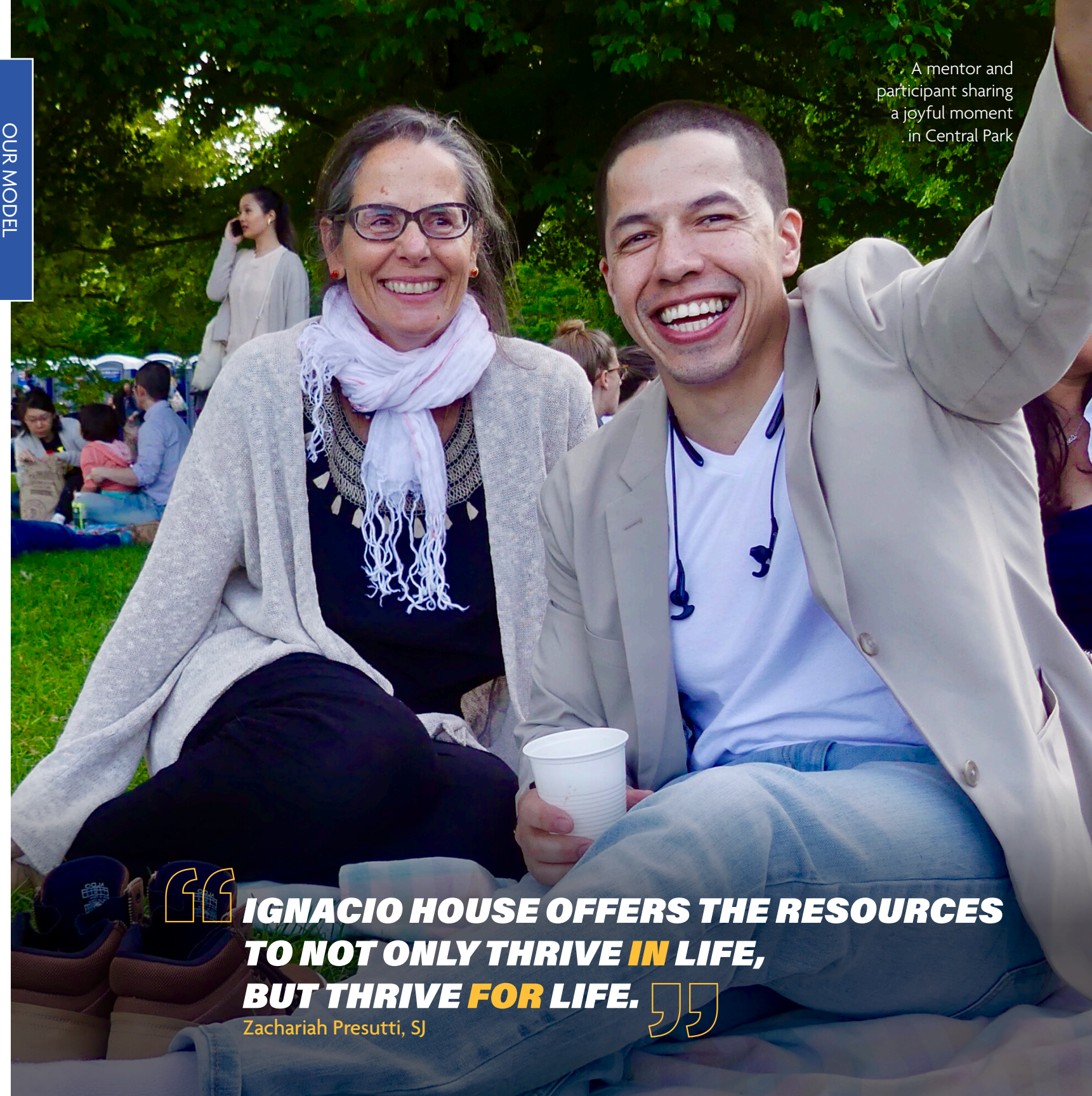
OUR MODEL

	HOUSING	EDUCATION	EMPLOYMENT
FACTS	<p>20% of people released from city jails each year are homeless.</p>	<p>96% of the New York prison population is without access to college education.</p>	<p>81% of individuals reentering New York City are unable to secure employment.</p>
OUR RESPONSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A safe and stable environment with private bedrooms • Access to medical and health care • Case management • Spiritual mentoring • Access to permanent housing 	<p>Qualified residents are eligible for scholarships with our Academic Partners (New York University, St. Francis College, Columbia University and Manhattan College)</p>	<p>Our Community and Employment Partners provide workforce training and job opportunities</p>

OUR CONTINUITY OF CARE



A mentor and participant sharing a joyful moment in Central Park



“IGNACIO HOUSE OFFERS THE RESOURCES TO NOT ONLY THRIVE *IN* LIFE, BUT THRIVE *FOR* LIFE.”

Zachariah Presutti, SJ



HOUSING

BECOMING A “PRESENT” FATHER

“The love I receive from my daughter helps me to forgive myself and move forward with my life.”

Felix, Ignacio House Resident

For the past few years, Felix was a faithful retreat participant behind the walls at an upstate facility. The Thrive For Life Spiritual Mentors who interacted with him were impressed by his remorse for the hurt he caused, and by his perseverance to keep spirituality in his life and trouble out of it.

Now a resident of Ignacio House (and thanks to the support of the community), he was able to achieve a few additional certifications in construction management while preparing for the next step: college!

One of his biggest pleasures is his 4-year-old daughter, Annabelle. His journey to being an actively involved, loving father has been a life lesson, and every day Felix continues to discover new feelings. Annabelle is teaching Felix the importance of “living for another.”

Felix is an example of resilience, dedication, and hope for the Thrive For Life community.

Felix and his daughter, Annabelle, sharing a laugh and a moment of love in New York.

SUCCEEDING WITH EDUCATION

“Through education, you can lift barriers that society places on people that are incarcerated.”

Omar, Ignacio House Resident

Omar attended our spiritual retreats while in a state facility where NYU taught college classes. In 2017, his friends who attended these classes were graduating. Inspired by their stories and their willingness to change their lives, Omar applied to the program. After writing an emotional essay about his relationship with his estranged daughter and being interviewed by NYU professors, he was accepted. During the last two years of his incarceration, despite the surrounding distractions, Omar focused on his studies.

This October, a few days after his release, Omar graduated with a liberal arts associate’s degree and a 3.9 GPA, and he joined our program at Ignacio House. Now in a stable and safe environment, Omar will continue his studies at NYU, working towards a BS in Political Science. After completing his degree, Omar plans to work in social activism, raising awareness of civil rights issues and criminal justice reform. Presently, Omar is spending time with his family and is committed to living his life as God directs him.



EDUCATION

Omar, a resident at Ignacio House and recent graduate of NYU.



EMPLOYMENT

THRIVING ON THIS SIDE OF THE WALLS

“Thrive For Life is giving me the tools I need to become independent and a contributing member of society.”

Italo, Ignacio House Resident

A member of Thrive For Life since its inception, Italo was a loyal participant of our retreats at Otisville State, and, upon his release, an original resident of our Pilot Program. Now a resident at our Ignacio House of Studies, Italo is a dynamic community member, always available for other participants. Italo pitches in with cooking, participates in the weekly community nights and attends monthly extracurricular activities.

Family is a priority for Italo; he maintains a close relationship with his mother and is a very involved uncle. Also a committed union member, Italo works in residential demolition and construction, rehabbing apartments in all areas of New York City.

Presently working and supporting himself, Italo hopes to learn more about design and eventually own his own home.

Italo, a resident at Ignacio House.

A HOME OF MY OWN

“Since Thrive For Life assisted me with securing a home, I found stability, confidence and peace of mind – along with a great sense of accomplishment!”

Lature, Thrive For Life Program Participant

For almost two years, Lature was a retreatant every Friday night at the Manhattan Detention Complex. When he was released last year, Lature had limited resources. Most of his family lives out of state and he wanted to avoid the negative influences that surrounded him prior to his incarceration. Thrive For Life was there to accompany him during his reentry into the community. He worked and studied for months to become a certified personal trainer. Lature’s dedication and passion to build a life where he can support himself and live independently was nurtured by the group, and several months ago, Thrive For Life found him permanent housing through our community partners.

Today, Lature is successfully employed by a New York health club franchise, enjoying his own home and living a life dedicated to physical, mental and spiritual health.



PERMANENT HOUSING

Lature, leaving his apartment for a day of work.



Thrive For Life outing
to hear the New
York Philharmonic in
Central Park

OUR COMMUNITY

JOIN OUR COMMUNITY

1. Make a Donation

- Visit us at: www.thriveforlife.org/donate
- Email us at: info@thriveforlife.org
- Call us at (212) 337-7544

2. Shop with Amazon Smile

Add Thrive For Life Prison Project as your chosen charity. There is no extra cost to you, and we'll receive 0.5% of your total purchase. Visit smile.amazon.com.

3. Consider Legacy Giving

With the help of an advisor, consider including Thrive For Life in your will or trust by specifying a gift be made as part of your estate plan. For help or direction, please call us at (212) 337-7544.

4. Collect Items for Care Packages and Welcome Home Backpacks

Offer currently incarcerated individuals essential toiletries and modest comfort items that are unavailable or difficult to acquire. For more details, please visit thriveforlife.org/donate.

5. Make an In-Kind Donation

Gifts of books, goods, and your time meet a great need among the participants we serve each year. Please call us at (212) 337-7544 or send email us at info@thriveforlife.org

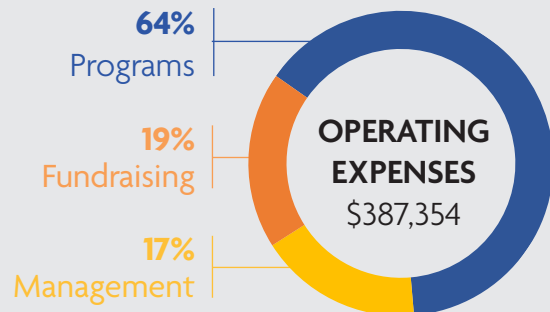
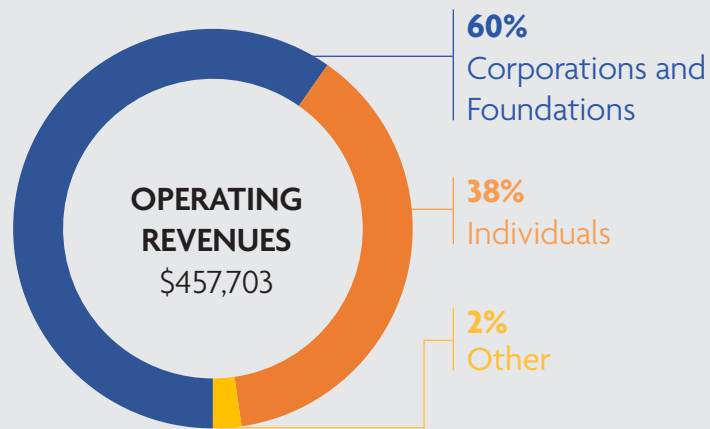
6. Follow Us

Visit www.thriveforlife.org and sign-up for our monthly Partner Newsletter. Follow us on social media @ThriveForLifeNY.

FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

We are pleased to present this financial summary for our 2019 Fiscal Year (July 1, 2018 - June 30, 2019).

Thrive For Life is most grateful for the generosity of individuals, foundations, corporations and for event-driven donations; and we feel confident moving into the next phase of our growth, thanks to our community of support.



THANK YOU

From long standing partner institutions to members of the Ignatian family, some of Thrive For Life Prison Project's strongest support comes from New York City corporations and foundations. We're proud and very grateful to our benefactors who supported our brothers and sisters currently and formerly incarcerated from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019.

\$75,000+

Anonymous Foundation
Autonomous Research Foundation US

\$25,000 to \$74,999

Fidinam International Charity Foundation
USA Northeast Province of
The Society of Jesus

\$10,000 to \$24,999

America House Jesuit Community
Mary C. Casey
Fordham University Jesuit Community
Maldari Foundation
Mickael Ohana
Regis High School
Sommers Brothers Charitable Fund

\$1,000 to \$9,999

Anonymous
Fairfield Jesuit Community
Robert Ferrara
Henry E. Niles Foundation
Jason & Hyewon Miller Family Fund
Chris Lowney
Gabrielle Lurie
Lush Company
Michael McGonigle
Patricia & Steven Presutti

Salvatore LaSpada-
Ronald D'Amico Fund
St. Francis Xavier Church
Xavier High School
Xavier Jesuit Community

Up to \$999

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John Albanese
Edward Alt
Marie Bannister
Maryanne Barry
Brian Berkopoc
Roseann Bonadia
Eugene Bormann
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Colleen Vitali
Thomas Volpicella
Patricia A. White
Timothy Wohlstadter-Rocha
David E. Woolwine
Paul Yannolo
Cristina Zaccarini

OUR IMPACT

4,000+

Newsletters sent behind the walls

150+

Care packages sent to inmates

100+

Retreatants served on a monthly basis

23

Residents at Ignacio House of Studies



Drawing by Robert R. who depicts himself with St. Ignatius of Loyola and Jesus the Good Shepherd.

I read the life of St. Ignatius and was inspired by his courage and trust in the Lord.

I remember the day I met Br. Zach. His hands grasped mine through the cold steel bars. We prayed and prayed and prayed. I felt like it was the first time I prayed. I knew we were surrounded by angels, saints, and the Blessed Mother Mary. That day we truly shared holy communion in solitary confinement.”
- Robert, an inmate serving a life sentence

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Robert R. is currently serving a life sentence in prison. For the past six years, Zach Presutti, SJ has accompanied him in the *Spiritual Exercises* over the phone and through letter-writing. Robert expresses his prayer experiences in art. Through pastels and other mediums, he produced over 25 images depicting the life of St. Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus. These images prominently adorn the Thrive For Life Prison Project headquarters in New York City.



Zach Presutti, SJ and Jerrel spent time in quiet prayer together after a night of *Spiritual Exercises* behind the walls.

TO ALL OF OUR MENTORS

Community stability is at the heart of our mission. Our spiritual, academic, and wellness mentors are the bedrock of the support we offer our sisters and brothers behind the walls.

Words cannot express the depth of their contributions and the gratitude we feel. The meaningful and measurable impact of their service is demonstrated in the selfless accompaniment extended to those most in need behind and beyond the prison walls.

I felt consoled to know that, at a time when I felt most alone, God was there with me through the mentors at Thrive For Life.

Jerrel, a retreat alumnus and resident of Ignacio House



**Thrive For Life Prison Project
builds bridges of trust,
healing and reconciliation
between incarcerated
and formerly incarcerated
individuals and the
community through education
and Ignatian spirituality.**



**Thrive For Life
Prison Project**

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