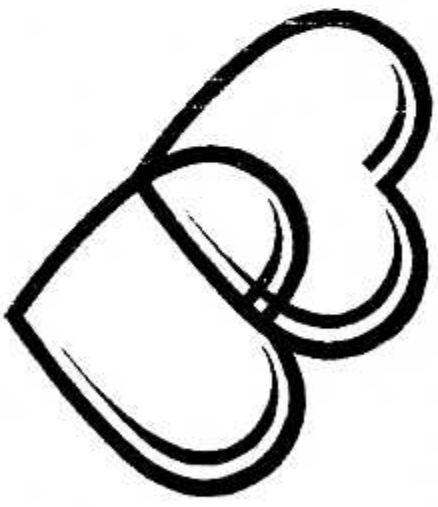


# Heart To Heart



"I am legally blind, hemiplegic, have a speech impediment, and my short and long term memory are hit and miss. All of this for two young boys to have my car to run away in. Each day take a moment to notice a difference in the everyday actions of those you care about, that moment could save so many peoples lives. The day that I was shot, it not only affected me and my children but my friends and family and also my perpetrators and their friends and family—it affected the whole community.

What I am saying is... show that you care, not only through words but through actions as well. People who are loved have the ability to give love. All you need to do is meet those people half way, take that first step and if they feel love they will meet you in the middle."

Peace~ Jackie

I didn't hear the sirens  
That car-jacking day  
I was so far gone  
I couldn't even pray  
Blinding flashes, exploding sound  
You told me to lay down and die  
But it's always darkest just before dawn  
I'm finally facing a brand new morning  
I'm finally facing the fire  
I know I can survive

I didn't know my own strength  
Just how strong I could be  
Then I came face to face  
With someone stronger than me  
And lord I learned to stand tall  
And to carry the weight  
I can't believe that I've come this far  
I didn't know my own strength

Just when I thought I could not take it  
I found the power inside to make it  
I didn't know my own strength  
Just how strong I could be  
Then I came face to face  
With someone stronger than me  
Lord I learned to stand tall  
And to carry the weight

I didn't know my own strength  
Just how strong I can be  
Then I came face to face  
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In your letter you told me now I'd just be  
holding you down  
I prayed let me die but a voice said  
you're needed  
Never in my life have I felt so complete  
Helping others in turn is helping me to  
turn this around

"An eye for an eye and  
soon we're all blind"  
-Matt Bell



Forgiveness does not change the past, but it  
does enlarge the future.



"Jackie Miller has been giving presentations to the young men at *SPRITE* for over two years. On the surface it seems her message is the reality of the senseless suffering that perpetrators cause to their victims. The living proof of how two reckless teenagers can cold-bloodedly execute an innocent woman, Jackie's speech pattern, walking cane, paralysis, and blindness are all visible signs of the suffering she still endures. That message in itself is important and valuable but this is not the soul of Jackie's message. She skillfully shows how perpetrators are not just victimizing others but that they are in a deeper way victimizing themselves.

Jackie portrays how the loss of the connection to our own humanness is what really is the enemy. It is this disconnection that makes crimes like her shooting possible. Jackie is embodiment of the idea that love is what sustains us. In her talk she describes her rigorous rehab and going to the prison to meet her would be assassins. She explains that what she wanted from her perpetrators was not punishment or guilt, but rather a hug and reconciliation. This message is mind blowing to the young offenders at *SPRITE* that have only ever thought in terms of punishment or revenge. Jackie literally trumps that eye for an eye mentality with her larger vision of forgiveness and love.

Although legally blind she talks about seeing with the heart. She talks about how love and forgiveness are the only liberating forces that can overcome selfishness and hate. Everyone who sees her knows what she has lost; yet everyone who hears her knows she possesses a wealth beyond possessions. Jackie has a way of breaking down barriers and getting even hardened offenders to feel and think. When she hugs our teenage offenders after her presentation she makes the connection to the humanness that many of us have lost. Her message is one that awakens our minds and emotions to the language of the heart. Every human being is important and sacred. The silence and awe that exists after she leaves the room is a powerful reassurance that her message has had an impact. We at *SPRITE* are grateful for Jackie's willingness to share with our groups. Her energy and generosity truly enriches our program. Many of the boys we serve are the same age as those who victimized Jackie. Many have stolen vehicles and have routinely carried weapons. Our hope is that through meeting Jackie they will remember their humanness when it is needed most.

In Appreciation,  
Michael Kass and the *SPRITE* staff



"I recently listened to you speak to men in

[Minnesota] Your experiences over the past 10 years are extreme and unbelievably shocking. As I listened to you share the horrors of being shot and the horrors of your family's and friend's suffering, I was moved to tears, outraged, deeply saddened, and moved to tears again. You helped me to see the pain and anguish and outrage that the loved one's of my victims must certainly be experiencing along with my victims. I have been incarcerated since 1989 and have heard you speak twice. I've been moved by your powerful message both times. The message I received from you is to think through all my choices and decisions before I follow through with them; to think about who will be hurt by my actions and to think of the loved ones and friends of others and myself. By doing this, my conscience will speak up and stop me from hurting others. I can always intervene on any hurtful decisions before making them. I have the power to make healthy, life-affirming choices. Thank you for that message. I see you as heroic in your mission today to reach out to people who need to hear your message. I'm grateful to be able to see and listen to you not once, but twice. Thank you."

Sincerely,  
Robert—Minnesota



"If you suffer your people to be ill-educated and their manners corrupted from infancy and then punish them for those crimes to which their first education disposed them, what else is to be concluded but that you first make thieves and then punish them."



"The Victim Impact Program (VIP) of Lincoln Hills School has repeatedly benefited from the candid and powerful message that Ms. Jackie Millar conveys during her impactful, emotion-laden presentations.

Jackie's message symbolizes the hope and potential of "new life" that VIP is trying to instill in it's participants. She is a living example, a survivor, who has and continues to struggle in overcoming the daily challenges caused by her victimization. Jackie's dedicated efforts to make the lengthy trip from Madison to Lincoln Hills School is a further illustration of her commitment to make a difference for others.

Reactions from young offenders during Jackie's presentation demonstrate that they are experiencing an eye-opening awareness of how they have victimized others. Frequently, they can be heard making statements such as "I never realized the harm I could have done, if I would have used the gun I was carrying," or in amazement of her strength and courage, "You are unbelievable! You can forgive those who shot you?" Participants have also verbalized commitments to change, "I know I can not keep doing things that I did to get here."

The successes of VIP are the results of caring people like Jackie. For more times than can be recollected, Jackie has made noticeable difference for individual participants that we, as facilitators, have really struggled with. This is a crucial observation when you realize that the youth placed at Lincoln Hills School have created many victims; on average 25 victims for each crime. Jackie is acutely aware of the need to help young offenders and we are grateful that she has the compassion and courage to share life-altering experiences with the VIP participants.

We cheerfully sing praises about Jackie's participation in VIP to make better citizens and to prevent further victims."

Respectfully,

The Lincoln Hills School Victim Impact Program



"I am the person that shot Jackie Millar when I was 16 years old. Though I've grown older and matured in many ways, I still feel as though I'm 16 going on 17 most days...I'm just speaking from my heart and what is on my mind. As my mind tends to wander please bare with me. In the seven years since I have been incarcerated I have noticed a growing and disturbing trend. More and more I see babies walking through these prison gates..14, 15, 16 years old being thrown into an uncaring and mind twisting "ADULT" environment. I see in the news arguments over why children are committing these crimes. Is it the violence on TV? Video games? Is it the music? The arguments usually die down after a couple of weeks...the argument will eventually be taken up again when another baby shoots up a school or a whole pack of children beat a man to death. An endless cycle, yet nothing results from it.

Now I'm not a psychologist, a police officer, or anyone else that may be important in life....What I am is an individual that is looking to become a "man" in every sense of the word and I hold the dubious distinction of being a child offender. This topic hits home with me with unparalleled force because I know what it is like to be a child that makes a horrendous mistake and then is thrown to the wolves.

I wake up everyday reliving the fact that I shot Jackie at the age of 16 and will be in prison for over 20 years. Understand me when I say I am not belittling my crime and know that I deserve to be punished. Yet how can anyone sentence a child to do twenty years in prison? All of these children coming into prison have some pretty hefty sentences. It appears to me the way in which the decision makers in society have indeed come to a conclusion as to what to do with child offenders—Throw them into prison and forget about them. Some conclusion! Today's trend in society toward our fellow man is sickening beyond belief! Most people would throw their fellow man into prison to not rather than rehabilitate them. While there is an attempt to rehabilitate people in here, the attempt is half hearted. I could speak about non-rehabilitation for days but that isn't my message to you. My message is this: I know that one of you in the audience is a parent, maybe not to a troubled kid, but a parent all the same. Now I ask you, when is the last time you had a family meal? Showed interest in your child's life? Or the last time you sat your child down and let them know from the heart that you truly loved them? I know when I was growing up I was second to work and boozing around when it came to my Mother and Father. Other than superficially I never heard either parent tell me they loved me. Now and then they'd buy me material things as a gesture of love, but material things do not equate to love, they equate to material things. If you want your child to know that you love them TELL THEM YOU LOVE THEM!!! Show them through your actions that you love them, shower them with your love.

The last thing I'd like to say to you should speak more to you than anything I can say. Over my years in prison, out of curiosity, I've asked hundreds of inmates what their family life was like, did they feel loved and would that love had made a difference if given. Almost every inmate that I asked told me that there was no family life, no family values to speak of and there was little to no expression of affection let alone love. Most of the inmates told me what I will tell you. My personal answer to that question is: I can't guarantee that it would change everything about me but I guarantee that if I had felt love from anyone, expressed to me openly and plainly as love is best expressed I WOULD NOT HAVE SHOT JACKIE! 100% guarantee. If we teach our children love and to love others in return and instill in them family values and a sound set of morals our future will be bright indeed.

We may not stop all children from committing a crime, some children will grow up and commit crimes as adults, most will not. It starts with one small step, one act of love. If one of us steps forward others will follow. That is the intention of my letter. I put my heart and love out there in hopes that you'll do the same.

Thank You for your time. Craig



