

SUPERMAX SUBSCRIPTIONS

A Project of Tamms Year Ten, Sarah Ross, and Temporary Services

Dear Temporary Services,

Hope you's have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

Am writing about possibly getting a newspaper subscription. The last one you's got me ran out.

I've been in segregation for the past 22+ years and in Tamms the past 13 1/2+ years. I have no one to help me out in the free world.

If at all possible, I would love a subscription to the USA Today newspaper, OR the Bellefonte News Democrat. Reason being they both have great news and sport sections. OR the St. Louis Post Dispatch. I'm originally from Granite City, Illinois which is close to both Belleville, Ill. and St. Louis, Mo.

I'd really appreciate any help you can give me. If not I'll understand.

And thank you's for all you's do for us. It really means alot.

Dear Friends

7-13-08

I write you this note in hopes you can add my name to the Supermax Subscription request.

I have been held captive here at Tamms since 1998 and to receive a magazine subscription would truly be a blessing.

Cordially Yours
Ted

Magazine Selections: 1) Time
2) Sporting News
3) The Wall Street Journal

Wishing there were a special way to say "Thank You" that's as special as the nice things you always find to do.

I received my first issue of DETAILS, its a may issue, thank you...

I did not receive no ESSENCE magazine, so you certainly need to double check in effort to find out they delay...

Thank you for your hard work & consideration. I been incarcerated (18) years straight & held inside Tamms over (10) years. Its good to know somebody actually care's.

THIS CORRESPONDENCE IS FROM
AN INMATE OF THE ILLINOIS
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS



049JB2045726

\$00.440
02/15/2011

Mailed From 62988
US POSTAGE

Att: Coordinator
Temporary Services 4 Prs.
P.O. Box 121012
Chicago, IL 60612

YOUR NOTES TO US ARE (and feel free to use the back):

I do not want a substitution. —
I'd rather have a Newspaper subscription e.g. Tribune, buttime, USA Today etc. because that would give me a steady diet of current events in all aspects of the world....

YOUR NOTES TO US ARE (and feel free to use the back):

FIRST OFF I would like to thank you for your relentless effort, time and consideration. Thank you so very much, if possible could you please try and find me magazines by HERITAGE OR BLACK ENTREPRENEUR.
THANKING YOU AGAIN.

3/17/08

Greetings My Friends,

First and foremost I would like to commend you on a Project well-put together. It is a work of Art and not only an expression of creative ingenuity but even Higher yet, a gesture of sincere Humanity.

Let there be no doubt that more than a mind amongst many will be unlocked through the "Super Max Subscription Project," which I am very interested to be placed on your recipient's list. You have my permission to use my name and number to facilitate this process. I understand that there is not a promise being made on your behalf but simply an effort providing the opportunity to initiate the process. Nonetheless "Thank You" for your time. Any effort made on your behalf will be Truly Appreciated.
"Bless Your Hearts!"

Respectfully,
Jesse Williams

I've also noticed your titles and from my court there's only (1) one Black magazine. Not to make this a race-issue but I believe the titles that I include will interest African-Americans here at Tamms.
my Preference from your list will include:
1. Newsweek - 2. GQ - 3. ESPN the magazine
4. Sporting News or 5. mens VOGUE.

The following are magazine titles that should be including in your supermax subscriptions which will be Priority over your list:

1. King - 2. Vibe - 3. Sister 2 Sister - 4. Ebony -
5. Chicago - 6. Bids - 7. JET - 8. Dubs -
9. Honey - 10. Scratch - 11. Vibe Vixen -
12. Maxim - 13. STUFF - 14. Blender - 15. Rolling stones

please take into consideration these magazine titles.

Thank you kindly for your time and services.

Sincerely,
J. S. Ross

SUPERMAX SUBSCRIPTIONS

Number of airline miles donated: **160,800**
Number of subscriptions: **169**
Number of issues sent: **8281**

Background:

Tamms Year Ten and Tamms Poetry Committee

Tamms supermax is a prison in southern Illinois designed to deprive people of human contact and subject them to sensory deprivation. Every man at Tamms is held in indefinite solitary confinement. There are no communal activities. Food is pushed through a slot in the cell door. Men only leave their cell to shower or exercise in a concrete pen, alone. Visits are non-contact, through plexiglass with voice-activated speakers. Suicide attempts, self-mutilation, psychosis and serious mental disorders are common at Tamms, and are an expected consequence of long-term isolation.

The U.N. Committee Against Torture considers such conditions to be cruel, inhuman and degrading, and when the isolation is indefinite – as at Tamms – to be a form of torture. Last year, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture Juan E. Méndez called for a global ban on solitary confinement in excess of 15 days. Because solitary confinement produces such anguish and hopelessness, and there has been little judicial or legislative relief, people in isolation in Illinois, Ohio, Virginia, California, Georgia and Michigan have protested their conditions by going on hunger strikes.

Tamms Year Ten (TY10) is the all-volunteer grassroots campaign formed to bring the harm of long-term isolation at the Tamms to the attention of Illinois legislators and the governor. The campaign was launched in 2008, at which point one-third of the men had been in isolation the entire decade. TY10 programmed a series of cultural events, held hearings, introduced reform legislation and worked with state legislators to negotiate with the Department of Corrections. In 2009, the governor appointed a new prison chief to review the supermax. He proposed a reform plan that has not been fully implemented.

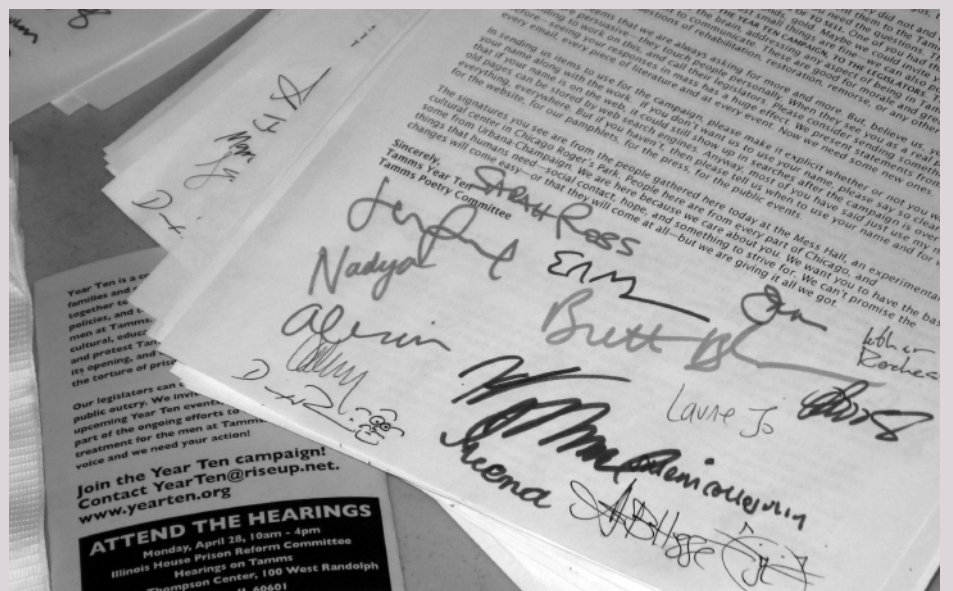
TY10 originated from the Tamms Poetry Committee, a group that sent letters and poetry to every man in Tamms to provide them with some social contact. The legislative campaign emerged when men wrote back and urged the group to undertake concrete political action.

Initial Call to Action

“Supermax Subscriptions seeks to connect the surplus of well-traveled citizens to a population that never goes anywhere: prisoners in American supermax prisons.

As most of you know, frequent flyer miles often expire before it is possible to save enough of them for a free airline ticket, seating upgrade, or other costly prize. Supermax Subscriptions asks people with these surplus miles to exchange small quantities of unused miles for magazine subscriptions to supermax prisoners. For as few as 400 miles, you can give the gift of a yearly magazine subscription to a prisoner with little or no reading material.

Men in Tamms C-Max are in their cells 23-24 hours a day in permanent solitary confinement. The men have been there for years on end – many for more than a decade. They have no communal activity, no phone calls, no programs, no education, no work, no librarian, and virtually no reading materials. A magazine subscription is one way to give these men your support. Your gift will not be taken for granted.”



Project Launch

In conjunction with the Tamms Year Ten campaign, we kicked off the Supermax Subscriptions project at Mess Hall on March 8, 2008: the day of the ten-year anniversary of the opening of the supermax. Attendees signed letters to each man in Tamms, and each handwritten signature showed them that someone on the outside knew and cared about their situation. The mailing also included a poem and a form that allowed them to request a magazine. Almost immediately, we began receiving replies with magazine preferences and began filling those requests with donated miles.

Intentions

Our hope was to flood the prison with publications: physical objects to remind the prisoners (and staff) that people on the outside are paying attention to their plight. We wanted the men to know that they are not forgotten and that there were people on the outside who wanted to provide them with printed materials that would break the monotony and torture of incarceration without human contact.

The magazine selections in these frequent flyer programs are limited. Not surprisingly, many men wrote asking for alternate titles that we would have to purchase. A handful of titles were purchased using personal funds, but since the project has no budget, we mostly stuck with whatever was available through the Magazines for Miles program or choose the best alternative.

Challenges and Results

We quickly learned that finding mile donors wasn't hard but ensuring that the Magazines for Miles service would fulfill the subscriptions was nearly impossible. The online forms do not leave a space to include the inmate number, so we had to get creative to squeeze everything into the address form. There were subscriptions that ended prematurely for no clear reason, and it was impossible to get anyone on the phone to find out why. We also learned that you can buy someone a gift subscription with miles, but some services won't let you get the same magazine twice, so you can't get that same person a renewal. Still, many magazines and newspapers did get through and we received joyful letters confirming this. We also received irritated letters from men who had been told that their subscription was ordered, but it never arrived. Most of the guys took it all in stride, however, and were grateful for the thought, if not always thrilled with the efficacy of Supermax Subscriptions.

Tamms Supermax Today

In February of 2012, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn announced his intention to close the supermax, citing the fiscal crisis and the fact that the supermax is half-empty. Closing this notorious prison would be a symbol to the nation that the days of supermax prisons are numbered. It would allow the state to redirect \$26 million per year and send a message that prisons must not be a jobs program. And for family members, shuttering the supermax would bring their loved-ones back into the human community. Men at Tamms have not touched or hugged their children, parents or spouses in years, sometimes more than a decade.

There are powerful forces trying to keep Tamms open – the downstate legislators and especially the guard's union AFSCME. The union has orchestrated a media campaign of scare tactics, filed a lawsuit against the state and vowed to stop the closures with further legislative action. To help support the closure, please contact Tamms Year Ten at tammsyearten@gmail.com.

Some Outstanding Requests

Sports Illustrated, The Sporting News, ESPN, National Review, The New Republic, Wall Street Journal, Time, Newsweek, Esquire, Sun Times, Chicago Tribune, Chicago Magazine, Readers Digest, USA Today, car magazines, Penthouse or Playboy, Rolling Stone, Daily Variety, GQ, People en Español, Business Week, Robb Report, Sea Magazine, Atlantic Monthly, Details, Essence, Latina, Black Men, Black Enterprise, Chess Life, Jet, Forbes, The Ring or other boxing magazines, Ebony, Motor Trend, Rolling Stone, Men's Vogue, Low Rider, Giant, Shape, Africa Today, artist's magazines, American Indian Art Magazine, Art & Auction, Logic Lovers Logic Problems, Baseball Digest, National Wildlife, Caribbean Travel and Life, Cartoon Network Action Pack, Cruising World, Fine Cooking / Food Network Magazine, Flash Tattoo, Florida Travel and Life, SPA Jeweler's Circular Keystone, Jewelry Artist, Globe / National Examiner, Vocation, Sister to Sister, Black Enterprise, Belleville News Democrat, St. Louis Dispatch, the book Walking with the Comrades by Arundhati Roy, back issues of Black Beauties Magazine, and a current issue of National Enquirer or the Sun because of the Sheila Woods pen pal ads.

If you would like to participate in Supermax Subscriptions, please contact supermax@temporarieservices.org. Let us know the air carrier and amount of miles you wish to donate to the cause, and we will match you with a request.