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*Breaking the cycle of crime—jail—more crime—more jail: This is what AWE is all about.*

### ***Phil: Living for the Thrill***

"Going for the thrill is what I live for!" That was Phil's philosophy of life. "Going for the thrill" put him into juvenile detention when he was 16 and into an adult prison a few years later. Released at age 20, Phil and a pal pulled off a drug deal that netted, in his words, "a sweet profit." He had little time to savor the thrill: within weeks he headed back to prison. Eventually Phil and another pal managed to escape—from a very secure site. "A definite thrill," he quipped, but that, too, was short-lived. Captured soon after, he received an even longer sentence. Phil was a career criminal.

Fast forward to 2005. Phil had been in prison almost 35 years. He knew he was getting too old to escape again or even to pull off another crime without spending the rest of his life behind bars. "And I'm tired," he said. "Tired of hurting those I love, tired of hurting myself. My mom's stayed in my corner all these years. I owe her something, and I want to get to know my grandson—but not from behind bars."

Phil completed AWE's courses during his last year in prison. When his out-date drew near, we offered help. He accepted it—bus passes for job interviews, new clothes, links to a support group, regular phone calls, and meeting for lunch. "I consider AWE like my family," he said recently. "You're there whenever I need you—and I won't always be asking for help. I'll give back. I promise that."

Phil's mother provided invaluable help—a safe haven for getting back on his feet, something few ex-offenders have. Aware that he had demonstrated many skills—and good ones too—while locked up, Phil knew he could work. A family friend hired him to do filing and other office tasks. Today, he still works at the same company, having been promoted three times. He also gives back to the community by coaching adults with special needs at their sports events. "Now," he says, "they 'thrill' when they see me coming onto the field. I can't tell you what that means."

Phil's five-year old grandson occupies most of his free time. "Establishing this relationship means everything to me. I want another chance—to do right for somebody else. Putting my energy into this 'thrill' is worth everything I've got. Being there for my mom, that's what I want to do too. Only a mother would stand by her son all those years and keep believing in him."

What a thrill for us at AWE!

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