

**Changing Lives Through Literature**  
c/o Department of English  
University of Massachusetts Dartmouth  
285 Old Westport Road  
North Dartmouth, MA 02747  
508-999-8752  
[ctl@umassd.edu](mailto:ctl@umassd.edu)  
<http://ctl.umassd.edu>

## **Changing Lives Through Literature**

### **FACT SHEET**

#### **The CLTL Program**

Founded by Professor Robert Waxler and Judge Robert Kane in 1991, *Changing Lives Through Literature* (CLTL) is an alternative sentencing program that utilizes literature as a way of reaching criminal offenders on probation. Literature seminars give probationers an opportunity to build self-esteem, learn social skills and behaviors, and rehabilitate through attending class discussions about literature as a condition of their probation.

#### **Premise of CLTL**

One of the major premises of CLTL is that literature has the power to transform. Studying literature gives students (who are criminal offenders) a chance to reflect on their own lives, gain insight into their behavior and the effects of it on those around them, and to take the first step towards self-responsibility.

In reading and discussing literature, students look deeper at the characters and themes of literary works and relate them to the relationships in their lives. They learn to express their own opinions and acquire listening skills and tolerance.

CLTL helps probationers integrate into society and provides them the chance to change their lives.

#### **Scope**

The program, founded in New Bedford, MA, now exists in more than twenty district courts in Massachusetts. It also operates in Rhode Island, Connecticut, New York, Maine, Texas, Arkansas, and Kansas. A similar program exists in the United Kingdom.

**[Fact Sheet, page 2]**

## **Participants**

Over 3,500 offenders have participated in the program. The impact on these individuals and their families has been dramatic. Some recover from addiction, some continue their education, and others reunite with their families. All students are empowered to improve their lives.

Independent studies indicate a reduction in recidivism rates and decreased violent behavior with CLTL. Jarjoura and Krumholz's statistical study shows "a reconviction rate of 18.75% in [a CLTL student] study group, compared with 45% in [a] comparison group" (*Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, Vol. 28 (1/2), 1998).

Although CLTL began with segregated programs for both male and female participants, increasingly, we offer co-educational classes. Demographically, we serve probationers from all walks of life who have been involved in a variety of criminal behaviors, both violent and non-violent.

## **Economic Benefits**

CLTL costs less than \$500 per offender for one series of seminars. By contrast, the Federal Bureau of Prisons estimates an annual incarceration cost of \$21,600 per inmate.

## **Awards and Recognition**

In 2003, CLTL was awarded an Exemplary Education Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities in order to create a new web site

In 2004, CLTL received a Higher Education Excellence Award for Program Achievement from the New England Board of Higher Education