

Valley State Prison Hosts Historic Walkathon, Showcasing Rehabilitation and Redemption Behind Bars

Valley State Prison's Walkathon Unites 700+ in Service and Redemption, Raising Funds for Shriners Children's Hospital and Highlighting LWOP Resilience.

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-- Valley State Prison (VSP) made history with the 2C2S LWOP Walk For Life Walkathon, an event that aligned with the California Model, a rehabilitative framework championed by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR)

that emphasizes personal transformation, accountability, and community service, brought together over 700 participants in a powerful demonstration of service. Organized to benefit [Shriners Children's Hospital](#), the walkathon became the second-largest single-day event in the prison's history, highlighting VSP's commitment to the model and the positive contributions of



2C2S LWOP Walk For Life Walkathon w/ Shriners Children's Hospital

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This is a population of men who are making a difference that we usually would not expect a difference to be made from. It's nothing like I thought it would be, its better....exponentially better!”

Joe Wilson/ Shriners Children's Hospital

those serving Life Without The Possibility of Parole (LWOP), proving that redemption is possible, even behind bars.

The Walk For Life Walkathon began with [Norman Williams Jr.](#), an incarcerated man serving an LWOP sentence.

Norman's \$10 donations to Shriners Children's Hospital inspired him to mobilize his peers for a greater cause. With support from Dr. Sheri Rossi, sponsor of the [2nd Chance 2 Society \(2C2S\) LWOP Wellness Group](#), and a nine-person planning committee, he turned that vision into reality. With approval from the Acting Warden, the initiative became a historic event. More than just a fundraiser, the walkathon was a celebration of dignity and second chances. The Dawny Reb Band and VSP's Blackstar Band provided live

music, creating an atmosphere of hope and connection. Participants socialized with outside

guests, staff, and fellow incarcerated individuals, reinforcing the idea that incarcerated people remain part of the larger community. In addition to fundraising, the event provided reentry resources, equipping those preparing for release with tools for successful societal reintegration. The event drew key sponsors and supporters, including: Kelly Savage (former LWOP), Frank Silva (California State Senate office representative), Geri Silva (F.U.E.L./DROPLWOP), Jamilia Land (Anti-Violence Safety and Accountability Project/ASAP), Jesse Delgado (Storyline Media Group, LLC.), Michael Baldwin (Legacy Alliance Outreach) and Joe Wilson (Shriners Children's Hospital). Organizations such as DROP LWOP Coalition, The Ella Baker Center, Fair Chance Project, Made New Foundation, Root and Rebound, Merced College, Prison From The Inside Out (PFTIO), The Ricky Godfrey Foundation, and The National Coalition To End Felony Murder also participated, reinforcing broad community support.

For Norman, the walkathon represents his lifelong commitment to change. A childhood survivor of gun violence, Norman understands firsthand the power of resilience. Though serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole, he refuses to be defined by his past, instead dedicating himself to rehabilitation advocacy. A contributing writer for the Vanguard Carceral Journalism Guild (VCJG), Norman amplifies the voices of those incarcerated, exposing the realities of living with a death by incarceration sentence in California's prison system. He also played a key role in the production of the documentary "Valley State Prison 2C2S LWOP Walk For Life" which captures the emotional and transformative impact of the walkathon. Produced by A.S.A.P./Storyline Media Group, LLC., the documentary challenges societal perceptions of those serving LWOP sentences. (Full documentary to be screened in April 2025 at the 2C2S LWOP National Second Chance Awareness Month Celebration at VSP which will bring together incarcerated individuals, educators, and community leaders to recognize the power of transformation and redemption.)

Reflecting on the success of the Walk For Life Walkathon, Norman cites David Viscott: "If you have the courage to begin, you have the courage to succeed." What began as a small act of giving has become a powerful movement, one that demands recognition for the value, purpose, and contributions of those serving LWOP sentences. Though serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole, Norman remains committed to ensuring that others see incarcerated individuals as human beings, uphold their dignity, and acknowledge their positive contributions to society. His advocacy and storytelling continue to bridge the gap between incarcerated voices and the outside world, fostering understanding, empathy, and systemic reform.

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