

October 13, 2009

Dear Friends of PEP,

With great sadness, I submitted my resignation from the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP).

I would prefer to keep the reasons for my resignation private, but in the interest of PEP and putting all of this behind us, I believe that full disclosure will serve us best. As many of you know, this past year has been the most difficult of my life—equally filled with great steps of growth and with significant mistakes that I deeply regret. These mistakes have had an adverse impact on PEP, and in that sense, hamper the work to which I've given so much of myself over the last nearly six years.

The mistakes in my personal life involved inappropriately close relationships with four free men who were also PEP graduates. Although these mistakes were not illegal, I was recently banned by the Texas prison system from re-entering prison and volunteering with released men on parole supervision. This verdict, along with the consideration of my mistakes, led PEP's Board of Directors and me to deeply struggle as we evaluated the next steps that would best serve the organization. Although we regretted the prison system's decision, we respect it. A very difficult and painful conclusion was reached that PEP will be better served by new leadership, and therefore I am voluntarily stepping down.

As the founder, I will be a lifelong friend to PEP, and will not leave the organization uncared for. I am working closely with the Board and staff to effect a smooth transition, during which I will serve as a full-time consultant to PEP. I will assist the Board in recruiting its new leadership. When possible, I will continue to publicly represent PEP and work with donors. I will help develop leaders who will continue the PEP culture and teachings inside prison.

PEP has been phenomenally successful—even beyond my ambitious dreams. We are nationally recognized for our success; we have helped transform the lives of more than 500 former drug dealers and gang members; we marvel at a recidivism rate of less than 10%, employment rate north of 90%, and the inception of more than 60 entrepreneurial businesses. We have served several thousand children and family members of our graduates in just five years. PEP has saved taxpayers and citizens millions of dollars and produced safer communities. We have equipped murderers to become philanthropists ... dead-beat dads to become loving fathers ... tax consumers to become tax payers ... menaces to society to become thriving entrepreneurs. And for these things, I am humbly thankful.

In my years of advocacy on behalf of convicted felons, one of my questions to audiences has been, "How would you feel if you were known for the worst thing you've ever done?" PEP was built as a vessel of healing and reconciliation—and empowering people to move forward in their lives. My prayer is that this organization will not be defined by my mistakes, but rather by our aspirations and impact. I hope that you will join me in this prayer for PEP.

My costly departure from my spiritual values led me to take a deep look inside. While I experienced the darkest period of my life, resulting from my divorce in December 2008, I withdrew from my community of support and accountability. I found myself incapable of leading, and took a sabbatical from PEP. I took

emotional comfort in released graduates—the easiest people for me to relate to through my failures—which led to inappropriately close relationships.

When I returned to work in February 2009, I committed to complete change. Recognizing my issues, I took it upon myself to establish professional boundaries with graduates, and have been held accountable to them since by advisors and staff. I've also pursued daily accountability in all areas of life from wise advisors and loving friends who are walking with me as I learn to live my new life.

I changed my behaviors, but remained burdened by shame and guilt. I began confessing my mistakes to my advisors, but until one month ago, feared coming clean with PEP's Board of Directors. Separately from my confession to the Board, one of my inappropriately close relationships was discovered and ultimately made known to TDCJ. Although the discovery of only one mistake led to the ultimate outcome of my resignation, with you, our stakeholders, I am providing full disclosure.

Dealing with my past, and current reality, is intimidating to me, but I'm mustering up the courage on a daily basis. I am on a gut-wrenching personal journey in integrity that has resulted in peace, self-forgiveness, and self-acceptance. Today, I have a far richer understanding of grace and love, and I believe I am becoming a more compassionate person and leader.

I realize that I have destroyed much of the credibility that I worked so hard to earn with you. I am so remorseful for my poor choices and the negative consequences of my actions. While serving PEP wholeheartedly as a consultant, I hope to have the opportunity to earn back your confidence.

In closing, I have been inspired by the way that you, our contributors, have so generously and even sacrificially invested your efforts in partnering with PEP in allowing people to believe in themselves again. Just as I have an unwavering belief in our mission, I hope you will stay devoted to the PEP family, and even consider increasing your level of ownership of our mission. We need you now, more than ever.

With gratitude, deep affection and hope, mixed with significant personal regret and sadness,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Catherine F. Rohr". The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light blue rectangular background.

Catherine F. Rohr