

Miss America 2012 Receives Overcomer Award From Prison Ministry

Laura Kaeppler has overcome some difficult obstacles on the way to becoming Miss America 2012, including the challenges of being the child of a prison inmate.

Prison Fellowship, the nation's largest outreach to prisoners, ex-prisoners and their families—including Kaeppler's family while her father was incarcerated—is presenting its inaugural Angel Tree Star of Victory award to Kaeppler on June 27 in recognition of her achievements.

The award, to be given annually, honors the child of a prisoner or ex-prisoner whose achievements give hope and encouragement to other children of prisoners. Kaeppler has long advocated for mentoring children with an incarcerated parent and has made the issue part of her platform during her year as Miss America 2012.

"Since its founding in 1982, Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program has become the largest national outreach to prisoners' children, the forgotten victims of crime," says Miss America 2003 Erika Harold, member of the Prison Fellowship board of directors, who will present the Angel Tree Star of Victory award to Kaeppler.

"We are privileged to present Laura Kaeppler, the child of a formerly incarcerated parent, with the first Angel Tree Star of Victory award in recognition of her achievements despite the challenges of having an incarcerated parent. She is an inspiration to the 1.7 million children with a parent in prison in America today and the 10 million young people in the U.S. who have had a mother or father—or both—spend time behind prison walls."

Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program is the only nationwide, year-round effort that reaches out exclusively to children who have a parent in prison. The year-round effort includes Christmas gifts provided on behalf of the incarcerated parent, summer camping and mentoring. Since a mentoring component was established in 2004, more than 5,000 children have been mentored through Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program.

"Prison Fellowship's Angel Tree program helps the children of incarcerated parents know that they are not forgotten and provides them an encouraging mentor to help them be all God wants them to be," says Kaeppler. "These kids desperately need to know their circumstances don't define them, and Angel Tree did that for my younger sisters while our father was incarcerated."