

## **CONNECTIONS THAT MATTER: VISITING AMANDA**

### **Section 8: A Budding Friendship**

As the end of our visit neared, Amanda walked me through the plot of Jimmy Buffett's book "A Salty Piece of Land," which includes characters like Johnny Red Dust, Cleopatra, and Tully Mars. An absolute trip, Amanda had me laughing so hard that time flew by like it was nothing. We took a group photo, Chris, Amanda, and I, and sat down one last time before parting ways. I told Amanda about Portland, Maine, and eventually, when she gets out, I want her to come visit. The coast of Maine would suit Amanda, whose first act of freedom, when released in November 2028, will be to dive into the ocean. She plans to get a job on a fishing boat so she can be close to the water every day for the rest of her life.

After the accident, Amanda told her father that "Something good has to come from this," and hence, the Family Justice Support Alliance was born. I learned recently that flowers called Black-eyed Susans are known as pioneer plants, because they're amongst the first to sprout from the ashes following a wildfire. They're symbolic of Amanda's journey within the Criminal Justice System, as she's proof that good can grow and prevail in the face of tragedy.

The final piece of advice I'll leave you from my wise friend Amanda Boals: "Prison sucks. Just do good."