



The INSIDE REPORT

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1

BREAKING NEWS FROM BEHIND THE WALLS

OCTOBER 2021

No horsing around Four Mile Wild Horse Inmate Program



Zach Murphy working in WHIP

[Photo courtesy of Four Mile Correctional Facility]

BY ERIC DAVIS
IR Journalist

Winston Churchill once said, "There's something about the outside of a horse that is good for the inside of a man."

Zach Murphy always wanted to be a cowboy. Churchill's words have meant something to him for as long as he can remember. As fate would have it, after taking a wrong turn in life, he found himself serving a 12-year sentence in the Colorado Department of Corrections where he ultimately realized just what those words represent for him. He will be the first to say how this stretch in prison allowed him to

find the road back to where it all began: working horses on a ranch in Walden, Colorado. Prison helped him rediscover his love for being a cowboy.

The United States Department of the Interior's Bureau of Land Management (BLM) created The Wild Horse and Burro Program in 1986. The program was established to find long-term, sustainable solutions for the humane management of the wild horses and burros inhabiting public rangelands in the United States. As those populations have increased, they strain the habitats where they roam, exceeding the ability of the land to sustain their

ever-growing numbers. BLM is authorized to collect animals from the range in order to reduce the wild populations, but they must ultimately feed and care for them until they are either adopted or sold. If the animals are not adopted or sold, BLM must continue to provide the cost of care for the length of the animal's lifespan.

This demand is the point at which the CDOC Wild Horse Inmate Program (WHIP) plays a pivotal role in the future of collected horses and burros. The program came to fruition through a partnership between BLM and Colorado Correctional Industries.

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CDOC partakes in virtual classrooms Creating accessibility to learning

BY LUTHER HAMPSON
FCF Contributor

During the pandemic our world figured out creative ways to continue to educate. Virtual classrooms became the norm around the world, including for those who are incarcerated. The nature of this virus forced everyone to adapt. With the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI) off to a tremendous start, the program needed to continue its progress. While the rest of the world was on lockdown, the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) and DU PAI found a reason to try something new. CDOC management and DU staff created their first ever "hybrid" class. Part correspondence, part virtual lecture, it would be a chance for the students to display discipline and engage their time management skills, while at the same time allowing their creativity to flourish in a learning environment that is foreign to many. Those who have participated in what DU PAI offers have come to cherish what the educators bring. The educators display knowledge, energy and passion for their subjects that creates an electric learning environment, and students have come to anticipate incredible experiences.

The premier course was Imagining Worlds: Reading and Writing Plays, and it was a chance to familiarize the students with dramatic literature. The course gave students the option to respond creatively to plays and introduced them to the building blocks of theatre, playwriting and how to critically read and respond to these works.

Instead of sitting in their cells, catatonic, students were able to build upon their experience with independent learning, studying and producing creative works. A "space" was made where they could not only showcase who they are but also learn to direct their energy into something with substance, as shown in the inception of their own short plays. Julie Rada, DU PAI Director of Programming, describes educators' experience when exposed to students' work, "Our facilitators report feeling very moved by the work of participants. They feel like they have an authentic connection to the community inside, creating alongside participants and sharing the love of what they do with students. They report feeling proud of the participants, challenged, engaged, and profoundly changed by this work. They are inspired by people inside!" A resident student in FCF reflects that "Imagining Worlds elevated my thinking, pulling me above the day-to-day of prison life. It helped me think through situations in my own life, also, and make sense out of them."

With the correspondence work, students were shown video lectures on facilities' education channels. Adam Stark, a resident at FCF, says that "The lectures were interesting, the thoughts of the lecturers on the readings and assignments gave us another perspective which those of us taking the program might not have come to." He also states that "The comfort of a private space mixed with private thoughts is a boon to writers,

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BRINGING THE HEAT

Restoring Promise

A movement coming to DOC

BY JONATHAN MARTINEZ TORRES
AVCF Contributor

It's not a program. It's a movement. Restoring Promise, an initiative of the Vera Institute of Justice and the MILPA Collective, whose acronym stands for Motivating Individual Leadership for Public Advancement, is working with prisons and jails across America to transform what incarceration means. The goal is to transform conditions inside prisons and jails for the people who live and work in them. Modeled after successful reform from other countries and the best of youth justice reform in the United States, Restoring Promise transforms existing housing units, beginning with those of young adults aged 18-25. The focus of Restoring Promise is to replace the current punitive-based model of correction with one that prioritizes accountability, dignity, healing, and hope. Staff that work the unit are trained to become agents of change. Young adults participate in meaningful daily activities and enjoy self-expression and family connection. Mentors (other incarcerated people) help guide them. Restoring Promise is not another program, but a movement to radically transform prison in America. The Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) is working to open a Restoring Promise unit within the next year. A

multidisciplinary working group has been formed to work on implementation. In addition to staff from CDOC, Vera Institute of Justice, and MILPA, the working group includes three incarcerated people who reside at Arkansas Valley: Jonathan Martinez Torres, Rhidale Dotson, and Geoffrey Rantz. In Restoring Promise units, people feel much safer, more engaged, more hopeful, and more connected to families. Staff not only feel safer at work and lead healthier lives, they also find greater meaning in supporting young people. Restoring Promise units are designed around respecting the dignity of every person who lives and works in them. Young adults attend school, work, or programs. The daily schedule is designed to reflect life outside of prison as much as possible. Staff go through intensive training in restorative justice, young adult development, and more. They take an active role in the education and daily activities of the young adults. Incarcerated people over the age of 25 and serving longer sentences serve as the mentors to the young adults, offering their support and guidance. Staff and mentors actively take part in family engagement to help strengthen connections between the young adults and their loved ones.

This new partnership is in very early stages at this time. COVID-19 has slowed progress a bit, but things are beginning to get back on course. CDOC has not yet decided which facility will be the best fit for the Restoring Promise unit. This is a decision that will be made by the team as implementation plans move forward. This is a very progressive step for the Colorado Department of Corrections that truly shows a commitment to change. Updates will be forthcoming as news and progress continue.

Restoring Promise units are designed around respecting the dignity of every person who lives and works in them.

Canines inside

CCi's K-9 Companion program at La Vista

BY SARA-ANN BEAUDOIN
LVCF Contributor

Who would have thought to bring dogs into a prison? Well, that is exactly what happened at La Vista Correctional Facility. The CCi K-9 Companion Program has been established for almost two years now at one of Colorado's two female facilities. The beneficial and influential program has been in CDOC facilities at large for almost twenty years, designed to help inmates develop career skills for when they leave prison. Dogs bring innumerable benefits to people in these settings, and many people heal and grow from the program. Little did anyone know that it would change the prisoners, staff, and even the communities around Colorado—though they knew it would change the dogs.

K-9 Companions accepts both privately owned dogs (B.I., or Board-In dogs), and rescued dogs (C.I., or Correctional Industries dogs). As a non-profit organization whose customers are generated by word of mouth, the program goes above and beyond to train dogs to keep or find forever homes. These women and men are dedicated to saving these dogs' lives no matter how much hard work and sweat goes into it. The program is thriving even after years and there is no end in sight.

Some dogs entering this program come from backgrounds of abuse, puppy mills, and living as strays. Witnessing these dogs when they first come for training is tragic. Dogs coming from the shelter are worse off than the ones that already have loving homes. Most of the dogs that are boarded need obedience training to keep their loving homes.

The K-9 program helps participants—the ones who are people—learn to be team players and become self-motivated leaders. Participants learn to communicate in a civilized way

and work together to ensure that dogs will be successful. It is imperative that participants can work and live together, which is not an easy task, but these people are dedicated. Not only do they have to abide by prison rules and policies, but they also abide by the strict rules that govern the program.

Training a dog teaches an individual how to break habits both in the dog and in themselves. A dog and trainer work toward a common goal of understanding each other and developing a relationship, forming a duo that becomes their own little team. Many residents are deprived of the kind of connection this job provides. These teams also provide a direct service to the community around them, bringing healing and hope to some who would otherwise be without. Providing this service to the public is fulfilling in so many ways to everyone involved. Who wouldn't cry to see the transformation in their beloved pet? Who wouldn't be filled with joy to find their forever companion? Who wouldn't be amazed and forever changed by providing obedience training for a dog who will now get or keep their forever home? Above all, participants contribute to the community while changing themselves and their current situations into triumph instead of failures.

K-9 Companions provides a platform for participants to grow, learn, lead, and contribute. This program is unique in that it helps individuals find stability in their work environment outside of prison and impacts the members of the communities that they will enter into. What better way to rehabilitate dogs, humans, families, communities, and prisons? What better way to change the world?

Missing

Where did they go?

BY MARY DOFELMIRE
LVCF Contributor

Encompassing approximately 2.2 million acres in south central Montana, the Crow Reservation is the largest reservation in Montana. It is bordered by Wyoming on the south, and its northwestern boundary is about ten miles from the city of Billings. In January 2020, the body of 16-year-old Crow Tribe citizen, Selena Not Afraid, was found a mile from the Montana rest stop where she had last been seen. Before this discovery, she was a normal teenage girl attending Hardin High School. Several days passed between her being reported missing and when she was found. She had died from hypothermia and exposure. She then became a statistic along with many other missing young women. Her disappearance, along with that of 18-year-old Kaysera Stops Pretty Places, who was found dead in August of 2019, led to an article covered in The New York Times. The coverage at least gave some attention to this largely unknown situation. In 2017, 5,646 Native women were reported missing in the U.S. In Montana, where Selena and Kaysera were from, Native American citizens comprise 6.7 percent of the population, yet between 2016 and 2018 they made up 26 percent of the state's missing person's cases. So why is no one looking for these women?

Native American women living on reservations are murdered at an extremely high rate. In some communities, it is more than ten times the national average according to the Department of Justice. Due to the challenges created by boundaries of state and federal jurisdictions, the cases are very difficult to not only investigate, but also to solve. But not all Native Americans live on reservations. The Urban Indian Health Institute notes that 70 percent of Native Americans in the United States live in urban areas. Attention is biased toward the reservations, yet this is also happening in urban areas. Blame gets shifted from state to federal agencies, then back to the tribe itself as some tribes do not wish to have outside agencies intervene. It isn't a matter of jurisdiction, it is a matter of negligence and disconnect. This is not a problem specific to Native Americans. This is

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Changing Culture Through Dedication

BY TAYLOR DOUCET
SCF Contributor

The world is a crazy place right now, and everyone on the planet is going through something hard and difficult. Our country is becoming more divided every day and that is compounding underlying problems. Anyone who thinks that these issues don't reach the hearts of men and women inside prison does not understand the situation inside. But no matter what is going on, I am constantly reminded of the need to get better, because I



SCF RF² CrossFit members Jonathan Willis, Taylor Doucet, and Brandin Kreuzer
[Photo courtesy of Ms. Elbel]

have examples of people pushing through struggles all around me. Overcoming hardship does not have a quick fix, it requires daily sacrifice. Discipline is a never-ending but necessary campaign. The desire for change needs to be incessant, so that every day I

wake up with a purpose no matter how dark or dismal the future may look right now. The power to succeed or fail is yours and no one can take that away from you. This pandemic may have some people doubting, but we need to look at it as an opportunity. An opportunity

to speed up that change for which we've all been looking and to solidify a community. A community that is stronger now because of the struggles we have been through. A community that can help not only our immediate surroundings but also our families and the society that has doubted in the past. Let's give them a reason to change their minds, something that can't be overlooked or questioned because it is built on sound principles.

Many among us may not know how to capitalize on these opportunities to make the most of our lives and instill value to others in our communities. Examples from some amazing people here at Sterling Correctional Facility may be illuminating. Sterling was one of the first facilities to go on

lock down in March 2020 due to positive cases of COVID-19. The yards were split into cohorts, and regardless of previous job assignments, people were expected to work in the kitchen to meet the facility's needs. It was truly an example of the few feeding the many. The Redemption Road team brainstormed ideas about boosting morale and supporting their community. The team was able to set up weights outside every day and blast music in the background as athletes (of varied skill and experience) hit new personal records. For them it wasn't simply running a program, it was a chance to offer the population a service, a population that was experiencing the weight of the whole pandemic.

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Special Thanks to:
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Printing The Mountain Mail

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Our mission is to provide an intellectually challenging forum for information, entertainment and inspiration, written by and for the people who live and work within the Colorado Department of Corrections. We strive to be good stewards of the truth, while recording history and news that affects us all.

Visit us online at www.insidereportnews.com. Follow: DU Prison Arts Initiative on Facebook and Instagram for the latest issues.

The Inside Report
 P.O. Box 999
 Cañon City, CO. 81215



CORRECTIONS & AMPLIFICATIONS

An Un-Bee-lievable Program...
 The Inside Report editor's note in Volume 1 Issue 3, An Un-Bee-lievable Program in Colorado's Prisons article denoted the contributors as residents from Buena Vista Correctional Facility. The contributors, Curtis Baker, John Bernhardt, Noah Graf and Darin Ninneman are from Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility.

Resources Page
 All materials pertaining to pre-release in Volume 1 Issue 3, Resource page were provided by Remerg.com.

Who are you?

BY ERIC DAVIS
 IR Journalist

Convict. Inmate. Offender. Prisoner. Resident. Zeck. Which one of those are you? Are you actually any of them?

When I entered Colorado's prison system in 1987, there wasn't a debate about the label we wore. It didn't matter what the staff called us. There were two camps as far as the incarcerated population was concerned. We were either convicts or inmates. Those were the two labels that we called ourselves. Although as I look back on those days now, it seems that those calling themselves "convict" were more concerned with labels than those calling themselves "inmates." Although those very same convicts were determined to not allow anyone other than themselves define who they were, I had numerous "old school" convicts explain to me during those early days that my first name was now Davis and my last name was 56674. Very few people used an individual's true first name. Staff referred to all incarcerated individuals by their last name, as did many of the men living around each other, though this came with a caveat. Nearly everyone back then was searching for a nickname or had one given to them. This was also a piece of convict culture. If everyone who was anyone had a nickname used only by the incarcerated population that they controlled and nurtured, this facilitated a separation from staff. This nickname culture went well beyond people. Almost every aspect of incarcerated life had a nickname attached to it. The Territorial facility was "The Walls" or the Fremont facility was "MS." A meal was chow, a cell bunk became a rack, a cell was a cage, prison was the joint, a hidden object became a clavo, and a weapon is a shank. Of course staff were given nicknames as well: screw, turnkey, "the man," and many that were far worse. The point was that there were labels for everyone and everything.

There is a new era emerging

within the Colorado Department of Corrections and in the way incarceration is viewed in the United States as a whole. Reforms are taking place in prison systems across the county. In Colorado's system, this has become known as "The Shift".

Along with "The Shift," there has been quite a bit of discussion concerning the terms used when referring to those incarcerated in Colorado. *The Inside Report* has played a role in this discussion by allowing and encouraging authors who submit work to use the terms they feel to be appropriate. I settled on the word "resident" when describing those of us on this side of the fence, and I insert it into every piece I submit to *The Inside Report*. I was convinced that the word "resident" was a more appropriate term than offender or prisoner, though it has been brought to my attention that there are individuals who aren't fans of the term. Some feel that the word resident confers that we have a choice as to where we "reside," when in fact, most have no say in where they are incarcerated. Of course, I believe I made the choice to live inside of prison when I made the choice to step over the line between living a law-abiding life and pursuing the life of a criminal. Of course, that is an existential discussion that goes way beyond this article.

The purpose of this article is to continue the dialogue taking place between CDOC Headquarters and *The Inside Report* team. CDOC and *The Inside Report* want to ask you, the incarcerated population: what label fits?

Editor's Note:

The columns on this page are part of "Burn Notice." The Inside Report engages readers and writers in critical dialogue. To join this conversation about the labels, contact your facility Liaison or Bureau Chief to submit to *The Inside Report*. Please include in the title of your submission the reference:

"Burn Notice - Labels"

Labels

BY MICHAEL CLARK
 FCF Contributor

A label is a word or phrase used to describe a person or group. What a huge generalization to think that one word can accurately achieve such a description. As humans, we refer to each other and our surroundings in many ways, often in unflattering or caustic terms; maybe we try to take ownership of something and make it our own by creating a label. The prison labels "inmate" and "convict" are just two of the variety of unappealing labels that we use and propagate. Sadly, these two terms accurately describe our physical being (we are physically in prison), but they are grossly and unacceptably inaccurate descriptors of who we are as people. There are many who try to and succeed at fulfilling the notional label of "convict" or "inmate," but I would suggest that these fellow souls are still finding their true identity and may have become mired in the expectations and opinions of others.

In my mind, to label someone, or something, is to lock them into a very particular description. If, for example, someone is consistently referred to as stupid, they will begin to think of themselves as stupid. We have all experienced some form of this. Yes, there are positive labels that might be used to describe character traits, but again, is that all there is to a person? Why do we want to give them that label? Does it make it easier to compartmentalize them so that we don't have to deal with the complexities and differences of others? Inmate and convict are inherently negative, yes? "Resident," while unimaginative and clumsy, is as accurate as the other two. Like its predecessors, resident describes where we are physically, but without the negative connotations. Do I like it? Not at all. However, I do find it to be more palatable as a trend in a positive direction that is similar to using a person's given name. It adds a level of personalization to an interaction, so that a person knows that I see them as human, as opposed to some moniker that does not do them justice. I would challenge us all to think about how we might improve our communities by recognizing the humanity within them.

Words of life:

Replacing preconceptions with literary discussions, IR Senior Editor Trevor Jones and Karen Lausa share a dialogue

BY TREVOR JONES
 IR Senior Editor

IR: What has been your involvement as a volunteer in the Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC)?

KL: My involvement in CDOC has included my role as Literary Arts Facilitator and Coordinator for the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI). I transitioned to this position after eight years as a volunteer, running Words Beyond Bars, the nonprofit book discussion program introduced into seven prison facilities around the state (Limon, Sterling, Territorial, CCC, La Vista, DWCF, Buena Vista). I was the founder and the executive director and created



Karen Lausa, literary advocate
 [Photo courtesy of Karen Lausa]

the program as a way to combine my 20 years as a public reference librarian with my growing interest in criminal justice reform. It started as a germ of an idea until Warden Angel Medina invited me to pilot my idea at LCF, and it took off from there. I was told not to expect much, but the group was reading "Les Misérables," by Victor Hugo, unabridged, a few months later.

IR: You mentioned being cautioned

about low expectations for resident buy-in and depth with Words Beyond Bars. Did you have any expectations?

KL: It's just life—the nonbelievers are often willing to change when they observe a change. The men and women who are successfully participating in rigorous curricula show and model to DOC what their potential really is.

I'd like to add that this "doubting attitude" seems to be more of a thing of the past. For the most part, CDOC has embraced the possibilities and potential of the residents. There is so much more support for success today than a decade ago! The dedication of the staff is a game-changer!

IR: Where did your interest in such volunteer work begin?

KL: My interest in mass incarceration was first inspired by my work as a Court Appointed Special Advocate in Jefferson County. There, I was trained to be the voice of abused and neglected children caught up in the foster care system. Along with their social worker and guardian ad litem, I would appear

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Wild Horse Inmate Program

Training at Four Mile Correctional Facility invites inmates to work with cowboys as ranch hands



Jersey cows at the Juniper Valley Dairy formerly shared the acreage with WHIP in the East Cañon Complex

[Photo courtesy of Four Mile Correctional Facility]

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BLM considers WHIP a short-term holding facility, utilizing it to care for, house, freeze-brand, and geld young horses and burros. Additionally, WHIP classifies horses newly collected from the range and also has the capacity to foal out pregnant mares. WHIP is unique among holding facilities because it includes a training program for the horses and burros. WHIP and BLM have contracted compensation per head, per day, with the capacity to maintain as many as 3,750 animals in the southwestern corner of the East Cañon Complex outside of Cañon City, Colorado.

Ten to fifteen inmates work at WHIP on an average day, with three specific crews: a feeding crew, a trimming crew, and a training crew. Each crew has different tasks and responsibilities. The inmates working these crews are all residents of the Four Mile Correctional Center, which is also located in the East Cañon Complex. When fully ramped up, as many as 60 inmates are assigned to WHIP. Cowboys employed by CCI oversee the workers and facilitate the

program. These cowboys work with the inmates managing every aspect of WHIP. Once the inmates step onto the grounds of WHIP, they become working ranch hands. They have an opportunity to learn as many skills and as much training as the animals they work with.

The feeding crew is responsible for feeding and watering all WHIP animals. They also clean and maintain the tanks, auto-watering system, and pens. Two operators of the loader split duties that include loading feed trucks, unloading hay trucks, and scraping pens to clear manure. On the feed trucks, one man drives, another opens gates, and a third flakes off the hay. Every day they feed each animal approximately two percent of their body weight, or about 20 pounds of alfalfa.

The trimming crew is responsible for moving horses or burros to holding pens near one of the four trimming chutes on the property. The process begins as they direct an animal into one of the chutes. These chutes apply pressure on the animal to prevent dangerous movement that could injure the animal or handlers. The animal is laid on its side in the chute. A trimmer then trims a horse

or burro's excessive hoof to maintain healthy feet and proper mobility. While in the chute, they are also vaccinated and de-wormed if necessary. Once the trimmers have finished, the animals are returned to their holding pen and the next batch is run through.

During the process of green-breaking mustang colts, the cowboys oversee the training crew—Zach's crew. Green-breaking is a method of training that tames horses in preparation to work under saddle. This training allows horses to be utilized in a multitude of ways. Once they've been properly trained they can be ridden by both cowboys and inmates as they train other horses at WHIP. The United States Border patrol acquires and rides many as well. Lastly and maybe most importantly, civilians have the chance to adopt them for everyday use.

Horses under the age of four are initially halter trained. In this process, the horses are taught to be loaded into trailers for transport and to stand still for grooming which includes allowing their feet to be lifted and held for trimming. In addition, they are taught other exercises that assist in safe



Some halter trained horses are ready to be under saddle in as few as three days.

[Photo courtesy of Four Mile Correctional Facility]



A view of Shadow Mountain across the former dairy

[Photo courtesy of Four Mile Correctional Facility]

The program was established to find long-term, sustainable solutions for the humane management of the wild horses and burros inhabiting public rangelands in the United States.



East Cañon Complex agricultural area
[Photo courtesy of Four Mile Correctional Facility]

handling. Often, the horses are ready to be under saddle in as few as three days after initial contact. This process begins with trainers riding horses, teaching them to carry a person and respond to rider-given signals or cues. Once a horse has been trained to stand still for mounting, they learn to walk, trot, lope, stop, and turn on command. At this point, they are considered green-broke and are ready for adoption.

Adoptions take place once a month. Pre-approved adopters come to WHIP to inspect the horses the inmate-trainers are showing. Adopters are encouraged to ride horses they are interested in to assess compatibility and level of training. Once a horse has been adopted, an inmate begins the process with another horse. According to Zach, he makes every effort to provide a horse the opportunity to live and enjoy a life in the public realm.

Zach has worked for WHIP for the past ten months (as of the time of this writing). During that time, there has been a mountain of moments reminding him of the ranching life of his youth. He expresses how working with horses every day provides him with the skills required to work as a cowboy in the future, which encourages him to view life in a somewhat different light. He's come to realize that people and horses are very similar. They're all individuals with unique temperaments that sometimes need encouragement to develop integrity and character. As he

and his wife have discussed their future and the possibility of starting a family, he has come to understand that many of the principles he's acquired while working horses will enhance his ability to raise children. The horses have taught him compassion, patience, determination, and fairness in a way not so easily recognized prior to his experience at WHIP. As much as anything, he's learned to pay attention to his intuition and to be more flexible in his thinking. This growth and maturity have carried over inside the fences of Four Mile as well. He actively participates in 7 Habits on the Inside, in which he is now a core-group member and helps other men as they develop their own character and integrity.

As the day approaches for Zach to return to the community, he has spoken of how he'll miss many aspects of his time spent within these confines, especially working with his favorite horse, Tito. Once he returns to Walden, he hopes to continue the farrier training he began here. The lone farrier working in Jackson County, Colorado, is getting up in years. Zach looks forward to the day when he can offer something of value to his community—to his home—as he returns to rebuild his life there. Until that day comes, he will continue to work diligently every day at WHIP and in life, determined to build a better future for himself, his family, and the horses he has come to love.



Zach, a participant in the Wild Horse Inmate Program
[Photo courtesy of Four Mile Correctional Facility]

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The First JCAP Parolees pictured here are: Vincent Rodriguez, Cullin Barnes, Robby Valenzuela, Jerry Martinez, Leroy Gardenhire, and Alan Sudduth. These men served an accumulation of 165 years in the joint [Photo courtesy of Anita Montoya]

First Sight of a New Life

BY ANTHONY VALDEZ
JR Editor in Chief

To many in the Colorado Department of Corrections, March 8, 2021 was an ordinary day. The natural cycle of daily life progressed for the majority of the men and women involved with incarceration. Shift changes, chow pulls, and work assignments went on schedule at Four Mile Correctional Center without hindrance. The complexity of daily

life followed the rigorous grind for everyone, except for eight men. For eight men, March 8, 2021 was extraordinary. This was the day that the potential of the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP) was fully realized.

Eric Davis (33 years served), Jerry Martinez (25 years served), Cullin Barnes (26 years served), Robby Valenzuela (30 years served), Vincent Rodriguez (29 years served), Alan Sudduth (26

years served), Nathan Lucero (26 years served), and Leroy Gardenhire (29 years served), are the first eight members to be released through the completion of the JCAP program.

This extraordinary day affected not only the graduating class but also current JCAP participants and their families. Anita Montoya, the mother of Mike Montoya, a current member of JCAP, was so moved that she went to the East

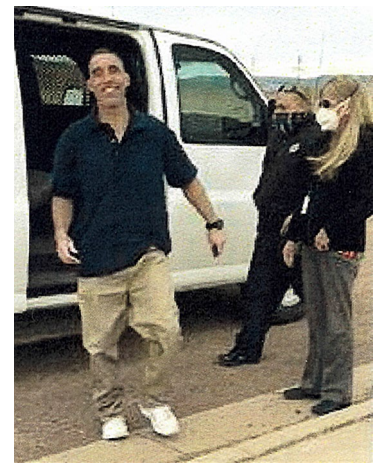
Cañon Complex Visiting Center to see the graduating participants being released on parole. Of the experience, Ms. Montoya said, “I feel like I’ve done time with my son Mike. Seeing these guys get out makes me believe in the chance of Mike getting out. It went from maybe/can be to actually seeing these guys leave.”

In June of 2016, Senate Bill 16-181 was signed into law creating a special program, properly titled Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program, for those who committed their crimes as juveniles, yet charged, tried, and convicted as adults and given life or virtual-life sentences. The purpose of JCAP is to help prepare participants to successfully re-enter society after having served more than two decades in prison. After the program’s completion, and after a minimum of three years of demonstrating the skills and character developed throughout their tenure and learned from JCAP, the graduates are given the opportunity to request early parole.

The continuation of life in prison rolls on with its most unorthodox manners of uncertainty and structure, new members are being vetted and added to the JCAP program. New legislative trends seem to lean toward placing more emphasis on rehabilitative efforts and ending the cycle of returning to prison that has been a struggle

for so many. However, life remains inside, new life began on this day for many who were involved with these eight men and the program as a whole.

Ms. Montoya said, “I feel like I’ve done time with my son Mike. Seeing these guys get out makes me believe in the chance of Mike getting out. It went from maybe/can be to actually seeing these guys leave.”



Eric Davis, after 33 years of incarceration, begins his new path in life [Photo courtesy Anita Montoya]

JCAP and second chances

BY MARY DOFELMIRE
LVCF Contributor

In 2017, nine male inmates and two female inmates were chosen to start the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP). Three years later, they went up for parole and all of them were granted a second chance at life. They now have the opportunity to re-enter society after serving 20-plus years in prison. One of those female inmates chosen for the program is Cheryl Armstrong.

In 1995, at the age of 16, Armstrong was sentenced to 96 years in prison for her role as a getaway driver in a double homicide. She served 26 years in prison, yet she has accomplished things that are remarkable, inspiring and motivating.

Anyone who meets Armstrong for the first time will tell you that she is one of the most dedicated and hardworking people on the yard. She approaches her life with the mindset to strive to be better and learn new things. Not only has she completed numerous programs and classes, but she also invested countless hours into helping those around her. Claire Welsh, who has known Armstrong for over 20 years, said, “Armstrong has always been one to embrace challenges with a high personal standard for success. She honors all commitments whether academic, extracurricular, or social. She is



Cheryl Armstrong at La Vista Correctional Facility before her release [Photo courtesy of Mary Dofelmire]

proactive, diligent and dedicated to her practice of vulnerability as a form of strength.”

While incarcerated, Armstrong has obtained her B.A. in sociology as well as her master’s degree in humanities. For someone in prison, this accomplishment is a huge success. Further, she was the K-9 para-pro and master handler near the end of her time. She is now a JCAP graduate and parolee.

“The person I met in 1999 was quite young, informed with boisterous tendencies,” Claire Welsh recalled. “Ever creative and articulate, Armstrong transformed the most when she began collegiate studies while at Cañon Women’s Correctional Facility. This was our point of connection and friendship, as I encourage everyone furthering their knowledge and cognitive skills. Over time, she matured into a woman of vision and emotional resilience, a leader among peers.”

In October 2020, amid the COVID-19 pandemic, everything had halted, including large elements of JCAP programming. Fortunately for Armstrong and the others in the program, some amazing people fought to enable them to finish the program. Re-entry officer Sarah Stucke is one such champion of this group. She stepped in to help Armstrong cook in a real-world kitchen with utensils and selected food choices as part of her JCAP requirements. Prior to this experience, Armstrong had been cooking in a microwave.

“I haven’t touched real meat in 26 years!” Armstrong exclaimed, as she began to cut up chicken for a chicken alfredo recipe. “All I used to cook as a teenager was scrambled eggs and cheeseburgers.” It was obvious to her peers that this experience was a phenomenal educational and enjoyable opportunity for Armstrong. What

is usually a small and simple task for most people had become a unique, even foreign, event for someone who spent over 26 years in prison. Officer Stucke guided Armstrong through the process in a very authentic, dignifying and humanizing fashion. For those around, that short time felt as if they were not in a prison setting. They felt hope, progress and a giant step forward, not just for Armstrong, but for corrections altogether.

“It is so exciting to watch her” said Office Stucke. “She is very excited about all of this and her attitude and energy is so positive.” When asked about how JCAP and the cooking class had impacted her, Armstrong said, “I feel it is beneficial to me. I have never really had to make any choices around food or a lot of other things as prison makes most of them for you. I’m still trying to process everything because it is so different. I am happy with things, and I get more comfortable as I go along.”

Throughout Armstrong’s last day, several staff members came by to encourage Armstrong and ask how she was doing. Through the windows of the classroom came the occasional knock on the glass followed by a thumbs up from her peers. It was a day of synergy, a sense of shared space and a community seeking mutual success.

On February 26th, 2021, after four months of waiting on the answer to their requests for early parole, Armstrong and the eight

male JCAP participants met with various parole and CDCO staff members. After a moment of silence for their victims, they were told by Ms. Hilkey, the Chairman of the Parole Board, “I’m happy to announce that you are all going home.” The wait was over. They all made parole.

“My first thought was ‘Oh my God it is finally over! I’m finally going home!’” Armstrong said when asked about her initial feelings about making parole. “It was so powerful and I completely lost it. The tears were just streaming down my face, and in that moment I felt reborn.” No price can be put on someone’s freedom—a reality understood especially well by the incarcerated. “I feel so blessed and grateful,” Armstrong said, adding, “I also feel a deep sense of responsibility to make the JCAP program a success. I wish to pave the way for the people who come after us.” As for her plans for her future, Armstrong expressed her hopes to use her journey to help other people. “This journey has shaped my entire life,” she said. “Everything I am doing now is to build off of the mistake I made. I want to focus on building a business and brand, get two books published, and balance that with time with my family. I also wish to find ways to give back to my community.” She said she wants “to learn to live in a world I don’t recognize.” She concluded, “I will never take another moment for granted. I believe the little things are the big things, and I don’t ever want to lose sight of that.”

Where did they go?

Continued from page 2

a fundamentally human problem.

Witnesses can easily testify to the unjust ways Native Americans have been treated, especially on reservations. Is this treatment due to a lack of resources, or to a lack of accountability and motivation? Is it self-caused injustice? When sovereign people have been oppressed for numerous generations, the idea is ingrained in them that how they live is all they get in this life. But when they are not afforded the same opportunities and resources as any other American, it becomes problematic.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, about 22 percent of our country's 5.2 million Native Americans live on tribal lands. Living conditions on the reservations have been compared to that of third world countries. Many households are very overcrowded and earn only disability or social security income. The scarcity of jobs and lack of economic opportunity means that, depending on the reservation, eight out of ten adults are unemployed. Often, heads of households are forced to leave the reservation to find work and grandparents or other family members take on the role of raising children. In order to survive, extended families pool their meager resources as a way to meet their basic needs for food, water and shelter.

Despite the Indian Housing Authority's (IHA) recent efforts, there are still 90,000 homeless or under-housed Native American

families; further, 30 percent of IHA housing is overcrowded, and less than 50 percent of homes are connected to public sewers. The waiting list for tribal housing is often three or more years, and overcrowding is inevitable. Most families will not turn away family members, or anyone else, who need a place to stay. It is not uncommon for three or four generations to live in a two-bedroom home with inadequate plumbing, kitchen facilities, and heating and cooling. While most Americans take running water, telephones, and electricity for granted, many reservation families live without these amenities. On a seriously stretched budget, utilities are viewed as luxuries compared to food and transportation. Overcrowding, substandard housing and the lack of utilities all increase the potential for health risks, especially in remote areas where there is a lack of accessible healthcare. These factors put native American citizens at a higher risk than most in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic. How can someone wash their hands for twenty seconds when they don't even have running water? How can they socially distance themselves when they live in an overcrowded home?

With all of this happening on a daily basis, it is easy to see that violence, addiction, and poverty play into the stigmas attached to Native American culture. There is a highly misconstrued idea that Native American people are all prone to addiction or alcoholism. It is a severe problem plaguing many reservations, but what people fail to see or take notice of is the beauty that resides inside of these people. If you have never

been to a pow-wow or taken the time to see how these people embrace their culture, you are truly missing out.

How many Native American women have gone missing or been murdered in any given state, city, or reservation? It sounds like a very simple question for any police department. When researchers asked 71 cities across the United States for an answer, they found more silence and frustration than answers. Nearly 60 percent of police departments

women—four percent of Canada's female population—made up 25 percent of its female homicide victims in 2012.

Many U.S. police departments have stated that they did not have the ability to search for Native American, Alaskan Native, or American Indian victims within their databases. For instance, the Fargo police department in North Dakota told researchers that if a victim's race is not identified, the city's record system "defaults to white." Other cities

that the missing and murdered indigenous women's crisis is about patterns and a refusal by state and federal governments to do what is necessary to stop them. These patterns include violent people and extractive industries tearing through lands they do not own, taking or ruining innocent lives. Patterns include the instances of tribal leaders being completely undermined, and jurisdictional borders being violated, except in the cases when they are truly needed. Patterns of detectives and police departments dismissing concerned family members with the excuse that "runaways will always come home eventually." Patterns of medical examiners avoiding proper autopsies and paperwork and putting "other" next to the line titled "race." Even in death their humanity is stripped away from them because someone in a trusted position does not want to put in the work.

There is a great need to bring awareness to the missing and murdered indigenous women crisis. Creating that awareness requires a substantial change in how politicians understand tribal nations and their right to govern their own lands. It also demands a great number of systemic changes, such as allowing tribal agencies to prosecute noncitizens, the dissolution of pipeline and oil projects and their work camps that create a source of danger to Native women and better federal funding. America has the ability to address these issues but there are powerful people and agencies standing in the way.

Many U.S. police departments have stated that they did not have the ability to search for Native American, Alaskan Native, or American Indian victims within their databases.

either did not respond to their requests or returned compromised data. Some cities reported an inability to identify Native American victims. Attempting to search news and media outlets to possibly fill the gaps, the researchers found that, of the disappearances and murders they were able to document, the majority of them were never covered by a news outlet. As a result, the missing and murdered indigenous women have disappeared. Missing women shown on the news rarely seem to be of a woman of color.

No federal agency seems to have any comprehensive data on how many indigenous women are missing or have been murdered. This issue is not just limited to the United States. Canada is currently investigating the number of indigenous women missing and murdered after discovering that police were underreporting and not investigating cases properly. A preliminary study by Canadian police found that indigenous

returned data showing that if an indigenous victim's surname was "Smith" or "Garcia" they would be classified as either white or Hispanic. Because police departments do not appropriately track tribal affiliations, tribal members often do not even find out their members are victims of crimes. If someone who was a resident of Germany were to go missing or be murdered, U.S. authorities would most definitely notify that country. Why are we not notifying citizens of a sovereign nation within the United States? There appears to be a huge breakdown in communication between many different parties, but who is responsible?

This is America, a country claimed to be designed to offer equal opportunities to everyone, yet the nation is failing that mandate. Divisions of politics, racism, sexism, and nihilistic thinking pervade the society. After reading enough about this injustice, the realization occurs

Answering the call

BY ERIC DAVIS
IR Journalist

The life of every person who has become entangled in Colorado's criminal justice system in the last 30 years has been affected by the efforts of Dianne Tramutola-Lawson, even if they were unaware of who she is.

Tramutola-Lawson grew up in Denver, Colorado, graduating from St. Mary's Academy in 1960. After graduating, she taught in Denver public schools for 31 years. She became passionate about criminal justice reform while teaching French at JFK High School in Denver. As a teacher, she recognized the disparities in treatment for certain students. When a federal court ruling mandated bussing of low-income students into higher-income school districts, she witnessed first-hand how students from different racial and socioeconomic backgrounds were treated within the same school. This experience played a significant role in shaping her outlook on the world. In those early days as a teacher—at the suggestion of the principal—she

began working with at-risk students on a more personal level. She taught English and Social Studies to them in the mornings and visited their homes, courts and Gilliam Juvenile Hall in the afternoons. She was involved in dropout-prevention programs as well. In 1992, she was honored as teacher of the year by Denver Public Schools.

As Tramutola-Lawson's interest in the criminal justice system grew, she became involved with Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE). Founded in 1972, the mission of CURE is to further rehabilitative efforts for incarcerated individuals while implementing progressive reforms in prisons across the United States.

These initial forays into criminal justice convinced her to establish the Colorado CURE chapter in 1990, along with five other founders who cared about someone incarcerated in Colorado prisons. Colorado-CURE is a non-profit organization staffed by volunteers. They work tirelessly as a criminal justice advocacy organization, providing relevant information to Colorado's prisoners via their bi-annual newsletter. Much of this information includes the efforts of CURE to implement positive reforms in every aspect of the

criminal justice system at the state, national and international levels. Efforts are focused on issues such as the right to vote for everyone who is incarcerated, lowering costs of phone calls and abolition of the death penalty. Here in Colorado, the death penalty was eliminated this year, and those on parole are now allowed to vote. Join Colorado-CURE at <https://coloradocure.org> or write them at: Colorado-CURE, 3470 S. Poplar #406 Denver, Colorado 80224. If an individual joins Colorado-CURE, they are automatically a member of the National/International-CURE and receive their newsletters.

This profile would be incomplete if it did not mention Tramutola-Lawson's husband of 34 years, Curtis Haybert "Habe" Lawson. Many of Tramutola-Lawson's efforts were directed toward gaining his release from the Colorado Department of Corrections. After being sentenced to life in 1973, he ultimately served 31 years on that final stint. All told, he spent 50 of his 78 years inside. While incarcerated, Lawson worked tirelessly to change the negative aspects of the system he was experiencing first-hand. He was a founder and mentor of the Long-Term Offender Program (L-TOP),

a program designed to help long-term offenders prepare for and transition to the community. All but two of the individuals released through L-TOP remain free to this day. After being released in 2004, Lawson continued to engage with the growing community of people and organizations, like CURE, that are resolute in their efforts to positively impact the system and the lives of those it ensnarls. Lawson passed away in March of 2016.

Tramutola-Lawson also served as a member of the Governor's Executive Clemency Board from 2015-2019. She encourages everyone serving lengthy sentences in Colorado to apply for commutation or clemency when the opportunity presents itself. Recently, Governor Polis appointed Hassan Latif—the first former prisoner to hold the position—to this board.

In addition to these efforts, Tramutola-Lawson's involvement in other aspects of the criminal justice system is storied and well-rounded. These efforts include chairing the National and International-CURE Board of Directors, sitting on boards for Denver Community Corrections and Remerg, and sitting on a number

of committees for the American Correctional Association, among others.

Tramutola-Lawson has had frequent discussions with CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams concerning the future of Colorado's prison system. She is encouraged by his progressive approach toward corrections and wanted to relay to readers that Director Williams has invited CURE, along with numerous organizations and individuals, to share with him suggestions and ideas regarding CDOC's future. Tramutola-Lawson said, "It took many years to work in tandem with the CDOC Management Team and Executive Directors, but that has changed to a partnership for some years now." She is optimistic about Director Williams' willingness to listen and engage and she believes that his path toward "normalization" will be positive.

Tramutola-Lawson wanted to pass along a piece of advice to all incarcerated individuals: take advantage of every available class, program and job-experience opportunity. She also wanted to leave us all with a quote that she feels is timely: "If you're going through hell, keep going!"—Winston Churchill

Too many cages

BY ERIC DAVIS
IR Journalist

“Coloradoans from many different experiences and perspectives are joining together to end the era of mass incarceration, racial disparity and a failed drug war. Through a new vision and an aggressive agenda, we’re advancing a broader debate and design of public health, safety and funding strategies through collective action. We are also here to help people. The last four decades of over-criminalization and missed opportunities for real crime prevention has done significant damage to individuals, families and communities and repairing that harm, to the greatest extent possible, is essential to us.”

The Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition was initially founded in 1999 as the Colorado Prison Moratorium Coalition. CCJRC’s first foray into the criminal justice system was in support of legislation calling for a three-year moratorium on prison construction in Colorado. This bill—the first of its kind in the country—gathered people in the community in an effort

to end mass incarceration in Colorado. Unfortunately, that initial legislation quickly died. But that did not deter the efforts of those who had come together to create CCJRC. Members of CCJRC identify themselves on the website as a strong and thoughtful community: “We are people convicted of crime, survivors of crime, and the families and allies of both. We advocate and organize for public safety strategies that are more holistic, effective and just.”

By 2002, the Colorado Prison Moratorium Coalition had officially become Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition and incorporated as a non-profit organization a year later. During the 2002 legislative session, CCJRC achieved its first major legislative victory with the passage of asset forfeiture reform. In 2003, CCJRC helped with the passage of a parole reform bill. Expanding upon these successes, the overall mission of the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition was reimagined in 2015. Following a year-long strategic planning process, the Coalition states, “we realized that our founding mission of ending mass incarceration was not broad enough and that any desire for a civil and just society requires the end of the overuse of the entire criminal justice system—not just the overuse of incarceration.” At that juncture, the CCJRC Board of Directors designated a new

“We realized that our founding mission of ending mass incarceration was not broad enough and that any desire for a civil and just society requires the end of the overuse of the entire criminal justice system—not just the overuse of incarceration.”

mission for CCJRC: “Eliminating the overuse of the criminal justice system and advancing community health and safety.” Today, CCJRC regularly reaches into Colorado’s prisons with a guiding hand for incarcerated individuals determined to change their circumstances and move beyond the label of convicted felon.

CCJRC is presently in the process of compiling the 6th Edition of the “Go Guide—Getting On After Getting Out: A Re-Entry Guide for Colorado.” This book is available for free in every prison in the state of Colorado. The Go Guide is an essential resource for anyone who is preparing to re-enter the community, in the community on parole or probation, serving community corrections time, or presently incarcerated in a prison or a county jail. The Go Guide covers every aspect of parole an individual will face as they are released to the community, along with presenting useful strategies enabling them to pursue a successful path while on parole. The information contained in the Go Guide can also be enormously advantageous to those who are

just doing time in general. It outlines many of the obstacles an individual newly-arrived to prison will face, providing helpful hints in matters ranging from establishing constructive communication with a case manager to filing an appeal for a Code of Penal Discipline infraction.

The foundations of the Go Guide were built on the shared experiences of those who have walked these paths in prison and on parole. As one makes their way through the book, it becomes obvious that the majority of the contributors had or presently has a number and understands the pitfalls ahead for those reading the book. These contributors also present tried and true ways to overcome or avoid the negative thoughts that will almost certainly try to creep into the lives of convicted felons, whether they are inside or outside of prisons.

In addition to the Go Guide, CCJRC publishes a newsletter that informs its readers of the most up to date legislative activity in the state of Colorado, along with other pertinent information directly affecting those inside of Colorado prisons and their families, friends

and supporters.

In these trying and turbulent times—with the upheaval and division in the United States following the tragic deaths of unarmed civilians at the hands of police in cities such as Aurora, Minneapolis, and Atlanta—the team at CCJRC is well-positioned to take a leading role to effect change. One thing is certain. Every day, the members of CCJRC are diligently striving to mend divisions and lend a hand. Every day, CCJRC members advocate for a better future for those who have stumbled into the maze of the criminal justice system in Colorado, because it is those very same people who emerge from that maze the better for it.

To reach out to CCJRC or to subscribe to their newsletter, write to:

CCJRC
1212 Mariposa St., #6
Denver, CO 80204

All quotations in this article were taken from the CCJRC website at www.ccjrc.org.



The Inside Report is looking for journalists that follow the four R's

Reflection:

Ponder an issue and determine whether there is in fact a conflict or problem requiring focus, investigation, and resolution.

Reporting:

Getting the who, what, when, where, and why of the story. A good lede will often contain this information.

Reconstruction:

Arrange your material into logical, coherent, and attention grabbing form readers can understand.

Revision:

Eliminate the extraneous or repetitious material, checking your facts and double checking your sources.



In the Interrogation Room

Chaplain Woodhull: Insight to the dynamics of Buddhism

BY DANA WALTERS
LVCF Contributor

Chaplain Woodhull is the Buddhist chaplain at La Vista Correctional Facility (LVCF). She is an ordained minister in the Shambhala tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. “Wood” is a full-time Buddhism teacher in Colorado Springs and recently received a doctorate in religious studies from the University of Cape Town. She grew up in Cape Town, South Africa.

Dana Walters: What made you interested in prison ministry?

Jennifer Woodhull: I was always drawn to it. Every time I looked into it, I heard about Dharma teachings in men’s prisons. But I wanted to bring it to the women’s facility. When I asked a long-time Dharma teacher (a Tibetan nun) in male prisons about this, she said, “We go where we’re invited and



Chaplain Jennifer Woodhull

[Photo courtesy of La Vista Correctional Facility]

the women don’t seem interested. They seem more fixated on their families and children.” That doesn’t make sense. It has been my experience that women are definitely interested.

DW: What was your biggest fear coming into this environment?

JW: No fears. Let me revise that. My biggest fear was running afoul of bureaucracy. I never had any fear about the inmates.

DW: What’s it like to be the only non-Christian chaplain at LVCF?

JW: Well, because of when class is, I’m isolated anyway. I seldom run into the other chaplains. I feel...it feels like a responsibility, not a burdensome one at all, but I’m all the more committed to bringing these tools to the present system because I’ve seen how helpful it can be to those with no other access to these teachings and practices.

I’m working on becoming a state-wide chaplain. As far as I know, I’m the only Buddhist chaplain state-wide. I’ve had positive responses from other volunteer coordinators in the state system.

DW: How has Buddhism or religion affected your perspective on a person’s capacity for change?

JW: Wow. Well, just going by my personal experience, I know radical change is possible. I know the power of the meditative tools that I offer on the philosophy of Buddhism in that it starts from the assumption that we are all basically good and sane. Working from this perspective, what we are doing

is relaxing habitual patterns that obscure our experience of our basic goodness instead of overlaying “self-improvement” strategies on some assumed fundamental problem. This seems to work very well in supporting positive change.

I’ve also done work at El Paso County Jail, and both there and here [at LVCF], I’ve seen positive change in those inmates that commit themselves to meditation practice. You don’t have to be a Buddhist to meditate. My goal in doing this work is not to convert anyone to Buddhism, but to offer the tools that have been so helpful to me in this tradition.

DW: What advice would you give those who are struggling and suffering in this environment?

JW: Slow down. Cultivate the practice of pausing before you commit to any action. Don’t believe everything you think. Ask yourself frequently, “Given the fact that I am suffering, what is the kindest thing I can do for myself right now?”

Words of Life

Continued from page 3

in court hearings to explain what I knew about the situation. There were many tragic cases, and I learned to speak to the family judges boldly, honestly, and with conviction on behalf of children who desperately needed support. I often had the opportunity to work with older kids who had “fallen through the cracks” of a broken system, and who were drawn into the school-to-prison pipeline because of cycles of maltreatment and poverty. These cycles often led them to criminal acts, poor choices, and inadequate representation before entering either the welfare, juvenile, or prison adult system. In 2008, I was hired by the Rocky Mountain Children’s Law Center to cover public policy and research around possible legislation to improve the child welfare system. This was an opportunity to work at the Capitol with Governor Bill Ritter’s Child Welfare Action Committee, which created the first Child Welfare Ombudsman office in 2010, to become a watchdog over an overwhelmed Human Services Department. Children were dying and being maltreated, and improvements to an ailing system were overdue. One day, Mary Ellen Johnson from the Pendulum Foundation; and I met at the Capitol. We shared a two-hour lunch at Racine’s in which I heard about the “juvies” she was trying to help. I hung on her every word. My first visit to a prison was with her, and I knew that was where I could make an impact. To be clear, I never intended to “save” anyone or rock the system, but wanted to share something I loved and believed in and suspected could heal, challenge, and delight.

IR: What is “Words Beyond Bars” and why did you start this program?

KL: What could have been more enticing to me than bringing my love of literature into prison and re-engaging the participants in something meaningful, transformative and built to create lasting takeaways? Books, discussion, community building; those became my tools for change. However, it was 2011, and things inside were very different than they are today! Words Beyond Bars was born, and I never looked back. I had no idea how to run a business and learned step by step, making lots of mistakes, often being frustrated by the complexities of volunteering for CDOC. However, I was determined, and every time the book discussion groups met, I realized I’d never give up. I cast aside so many stereotypes and preconceptions as I got to know many wonderful people—who happened to be residents inside of prison. I wrestled with many tough challenges but came out all the better (and wiser) for it.

IR: You obviously had faith that the practice of “books, discussion, community building” would work. Why these tools? What is so powerful or effective about them? Why do they work?

KL: The author Jonathan Franzen once said, “The first thing that reading teaches is how to be alone.” Prison is often a lonely place. I use books to connect people and to let them know that their voice matters.

IR: How did you connect with the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative?

KL: Early in 2019, the guys at Sterling kept asking me if I’d met Ashley Hamilton. I had not, but they knew me well, and everyone in the book discussion program encouraged me to reach out to her. I didn’t know at the time that they were telling her the same things. By the time we met for coffee for the first time, both wearing black, talking fast and with huge enthusiasm for

our work, I knew the men had been right. I was stretched pretty thin at that point, running Words Beyond Bars, training facilitators, raising money, and taking care of a myriad of administrative tasks, and I entertained the idea of merging with DU PAI. Talk about a dream come true. By the time I talked to the Words Beyond Bars board, got their approval to pitch my idea, and carefully (and with some trepidation) approached Ashley, she was inviting me to join her own dream and add literature to the multidisciplinary arts menu DU PAI is bringing into Colorado prisons. Here was a chance to do what I love best, while learning more about the arts (theatre, dance, etc.) and working among a team of seriously talented, inspiring, and dedicated teachers.

IR: What has been your role with *The Inside Report* newspaper, and what do you believe is the value of such a publication?

KL: With *The Inside Report* newspaper, I played a support role as we all (DU PAI and the Fremont crew in partnership with CDOC) create something that has never been done before in our state. I see value in the connection, communication, fostering of a sense of validation and belonging. Hopefully, the newspaper will strengthen, inform, and “normalize.”

IR: Why make writers, journalists, publishers, editors, etc. of convicts?

KL: Because “convicts” are evolving, curious, and deep-thinking human beings. Isolating them in a sequestered world only makes re-entry a greater challenge. Their perspectives and observations, creative endeavors, and personal belief systems matter.

IR: If you had a magic wand and could bring any innovation to CDOC, what would it be?

KL: Education, education,

education. Ideally, preparation for release should begin as soon as possible, in tandem with treatment and training, and the punitive measures should be reconsidered. The majority of individuals I engage with have served brutally long sentences already and are not remotely the people they were when they committed their crimes. We need more opportunity for treatment, counseling, education, and an overhaul of the purpose of parole.

IR: You are obviously very educated, and work and live in the world of education; do you have any continuing educational goals for yourself at this time?

KL: I have been wanting to participate in the CDOC Seven Habits course for ten years!

IR: What are your favorite books, personally?

KL: “Crossing to Safety,” by Wallace Stegner, “Great Expectations,” by Charles Dickens, “One Hundred Years of Solitude” by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and “The Grapes of Wrath” by John Steinbeck. Although it’s not my “favorite,” as a librarian, I am endlessly appreciative of the impact of the Harry Potter series, because it changed the act of reading and created a love of books for masses of youth and adults who might otherwise not have found that joy.

IR: What hobbies do you enjoy?

KL: I enjoy my yoga practice. I’ve been swimming my whole life and love open-water, long distance challenges. Oh, and I thrive in the garden. I dislike cooking but my husband makes the best meals. I have two dogs from the Colorado K-9 prison program and they are a great source of comfort and family love. A favorite retreat is a good book and a soft chair, golden light, and a cup of tea!

IR: What has been your best day

in the joint?

KL: Any day where I feel that I’ve connected with the men or women I’m engaged with. Through conversation, empathy, vulnerability, and connection, I feel that I am immensely fortunate to be able to be a part of DU PAI. As the first class of my current session came to a close the other day, a new participant came up to me and said, “I’m just ecstatic to be in this class.” I thought my heart would burst!

IR: Do you believe you’ve been effective in achieving/advancing what you’ve hoped to achieve in your volunteer work?

KL: Absolutely. I have watched hundreds (literally) of participants in book discussions (which inevitably evolve into life discussions) open their hearts and minds, shift their thinking, consider breaking apart racial barriers, and rediscover their voice. Through DU PAI and their offering of arts based programs, there is no limit to how our participants can transform.

IR: What would you say to someone considering starting/attending programs in prisons in Colorado?

KL: To anyone who is considering starting programs in prison: You’d better be passionate, driven and determined, because it’s not easy. Rewarding, though. The best!

EDITOR’S NOTE: This interview was conducted in January 2020. In June of 2020, Karen left DU PAI and is working as a freelance writer, continuing to share her passions for bringing voice to the incarcerated and sharing with the public the humanity and complexity of people inside prison. As of 2021, Karen is exploring launching a version of her “Words Beyond Bars” program for folks on parole and re-entering society.

Learning

Continued from page 1

like Stephen King says: “Write in private, edit in public.” Each week was something significantly different from the week before, giving students the chance to broaden their understanding of dramatic literature. P. Mike Montoya shares that “Every project had a different type of response for me so having the ability to choose how I wanted to share my interpretation made *Imagining Worlds* unique.” Another benefit of this program was the opportunity for students to engage their peers in conversation concerning their work and gain for themselves knowledge that comes from someone else’s intelligence.

During the course, students learned of the possibility of an anthology, giving them another reason to put forth their best effort in creating something special. For someone who has never been published, being chosen to have their work in the anthology would be rewarding on many levels. Not only could it validate someone as a writer but it could give them an incredible amount of inspiration to continue to work on developing their skills. It shows students, like the worlds they

A “space” was made where they could not only showcase who they are but also learn to direct their energy into something with substance.

created in a few short pages, that anything is possible. Derrick Miller, FCF, says about the publication, “It is really fulfilling to see my words in an actual book. It is a great feeling to know someone was moved enough by something I had written.” DU PAI teaching artist and play-writing enthusiast Joanna Rotkin states that “My breath was taken, many times, reading these plays.”

Imagining Worlds was a success, and the groundwork was laid for the participants to have another opportunity to flex their artistic muscles. “Tell It Slant: Reading and Writing Creative Nonfiction” would be the next offering from the University of Denver. A clinic in flash nonfiction, students were given prompts that allowed them to search the catacombs of their minds and pull out latent memories to bring experiences of their lives to life through story. At the end of the course, students were asked to pick one piece to edit and revise, which would be reviewed for publication in another anthology.

Derrick Miller recalls, “The difference

between DU PAI literature classes and every other type of learning I have experienced is the solid encouragement for and joyous celebration of creative expression. Here you are pushed to explore, to take chances, to make mistakes. While the end product is important, there is a distinct feeling that the journey is just as important, if not more so. In short, it is gratifyingly liberating.” With “Tell it Slant” came the news that students would have the option to earn Continuing Education Units (CEUs). Though not quite the same as college credits, CEUs are offered in hopes that they will accumulate towards a professional certificate signed by the Dean of University College at the University of Denver. With each course completed, students will receive three CEUs on an official transcript from the University of Denver. This type of program is intended to help students generate new skills, and revive current ones, in order to advance their career. “A lot of what we teach, while arts-based, is rooted in transferable life skills. The ability

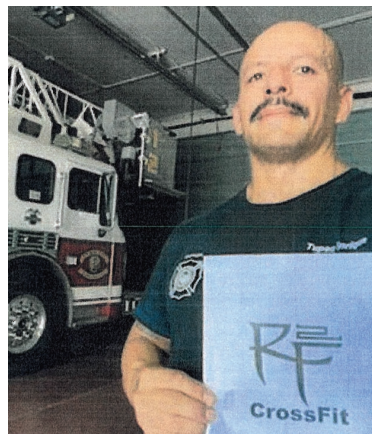
to speak and express your thoughts in a group, giving and receiving feedback, writing and reading reflectively, taking an idea and turning it into a reality, time management—all of these and others will help people in life, professionally and personally,” says Rada. The University of Denver is committed to making learning accessible to everyone, as shown by this collaboration with University College at the University of Denver. Trevor Jones, FMCC, says of DUs commitment to creating accessibility to learning, “DU PAI is one of the best collaborations CDOC has engaged in. I speak from twenty-five years of experience in DOC and have seen other amazing projects (Redemption Road CrossFit, Seven Habits, etc.) and DU PAI is one of the finest, most professional programs I’ve seen.” The collaboration between DU PAI and CDOC speaks of the wonderful willingness to create environments where minds can thrive even in times when health and security are of the utmost importance. Another testimony to the excellence that these programs bring comes from P. Mike Montoya, “I have had the privilege to work with DU PAI for a while on numerous projects. Thank you for the opportunity.”

HOT SHOTS 2020

BY EVAN LAWLOR
IR Associate Editor

It's not too often these days that DOC residents are afforded the opportunity to do a lot for themselves much less do anything for anybody else. That limitation was powerfully overcome late June 2020. Over the span of a few days, several facility residents and free citizens (also known in the community as OTS partners, which stands for "on the streets") engaged in the Hero WOD (Workout of the Day) "Hotshots 19."

Hero WODs are workouts in the CrossFit community that are designed to help athletes honor and remember those who



Captain Tupac Enrique of Salt River Fire Department

[Photo courtesy of Kodi Kuahtli]

sacrificed themselves for the greater good. These honorific challenges typically represent military personnel, but Hero WODs also extend to first responders and others who have died in service of their country. June's Hero WOD honored the 19

members of the Granite Mountain Hotshots Firefighting team who lost their lives June 30, 2013, while fighting a fire in Yarnell, Arizona. For reference, the movie *Only the Brave* (starring Josh Brolin, Jeff Bridges, and Miles Teller) commemorated the tragedy.

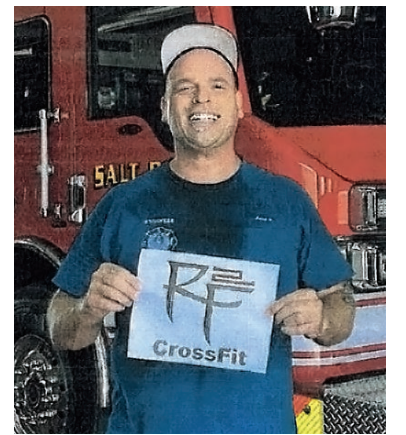
CrossFitters are generally always down to do Hero WODs but the idea to do this one came from resident Kodi Kuahtli of Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF). When asked what inspired him to choose this WOD in particular he stated, "It was the perfect WOD to do at the time. It coincided with my pop's birthday and it was a workout that we could do together. He's also a firefighter in Arizona so it just kind of made sense."

But why stop at just a workout for father and son? CrossFit is a community and with community in mind, Axan Kuahtli, Kodi's

father and an engineer with the Salt River Fire Department, recruited members of his firehouse, most of which are also avid CrossFitters, to partake in the WOD. Meanwhile, Kodi was recruiting at Fremont. He coordinated with the CrossFit-Level 1's at the facility to organize an event to coincide with that of the community on the streets. With that, a joint "Hotshots 19" between residents of FCF and the Salt River Reservation Fire Department was born. The collaboration didn't end there. Kodi's uncle, Captain Tupac Enrique of the Phoenix Fire Department, also joined the effort once he heard about the event.

Due to COVID-19 related restrictions within the facility, the event had to be split up over a few days to ensure that everyone who wanted to participate and pay their respects had the chance to do so. At "3-2-1-Go!" all participants started what was sure to be a tall task. The workout consisted of six rounds completed as fast as possible (i.e. "for time") of 30 Air Squats, 19 Power Cleans at 135 lbs., 7 strict Pull-Ups, and a 400m run. Each day, a facility photographer was present to capture all of the grueling moments as the athletes pushed themselves to the brink. After finishing, and between heavy breaths, one resident remarked, "That was...one of...the hardest things...I've ever done."

There's a serious sense of competition when it comes to CrossFit, but not when it came to this particular event. "Hotshots 19" brought out the community aspect that CrossFit constantly strives to promote. Even more so because it unified separate communities for one cause—to honor fallen heroes who gave their lives to protect the lives of others. Participants and spectators regarded the events as something truly special.



Salt River Reservation Firefighter

[Photo courtesy of Kodi Kuahtli]



Salt River Reservation Firefighter

[Photo courtesy of Kodi Kuahtli]



Box 999 RF² members Glen Worley, Leroy Gatrell, Michael Clark, Evan Lawlor, Samuel White, Brian Dingman, Michael Bebee, Kodi Kuahtli, Trevor Jones, and David Welch

[Photo courtesy of Evan Lawlor]

The "Hot Shots 19" WOD was in honor of:

- Andrew Ashcraft, 29
- Anthony Rose, 23
- Christopher McKenzie, 30
- Clayton Whitted, 28
- Dustin Deford, 24
- Eric Marsh, 43
- Garret Zuppiger, 27
- Grant McKee, 21
- Jesse Steed, 36
- Joe Thurston, 32
- John Percin, 24
- Kevin Woyjeck, 21
- Robert Caldwell, 23
- Scott Norris, 28
- Sean Misner, 26
- Travis Carter, 31
- Travis Turbyfill, 27
- Wade Parker, 22
- William Warneke, 25

Incarceration from a mental health perspective

"The biggest thing is having resources in facilities to help raise the awareness [of each individual]."

BY SYDNEY WHITE
LVCF Bureau Chief

In a recent interview, Mr. Adam Jeffrey, a Mental Health Clinician at La Vista Correctional Facility, described his position with the Department of Corrections (DOC). He said, "I am a Social Worker, Counselor three, which means that I am a licensed professional counselor. I have been with the Department for nine years as of April Fools' Day this year [referring to 2020 at the time]." Mr. Jeffrey has been a dedicated staff member concerned with the well-being of all individuals. When asked about his overall experience working in the DOC, he described it as being "very diverse." He expands: "I started as a Corrections Officer I in 2011. I joined the Cañon City Crisis Negotiation Team

(CNT). I learned that I was good at de-escalating people. I went back to school and got a degree in clinical mental health counseling from Adam State University. I started to promote the mental health side of operations through my work. I spearheaded the mental health team and served as the associate mental health leader for the entire team. My job is to make sure negotiations are going well."

When asked for his views on incarceration and prison reform, he said, "I view incarceration as an opportunity. Events leading up to incarceration are clearly unfortunate. But my view on doing time is you can be a victim or a victor. I think one can use the time to not play a victim. If you look inward, there are great opportunities to grow from. As

far as reform, in ten years I've seen a lot less confinement-type situations, and a lot more understanding of how isolation is not mentally healthy. I've seen the Department remedy that." Jeffrey's views on mental illness are equally thoughtful. He said that "Mental illness can be disabling just the same as a physical illness. But its appearance is different because often we can't see it like we see someone who is physically ill. And despite mental illness being disabling, the good news is that recovery is absolutely possible." Jeffrey believes that mental illness plays a role in the number of folks who are incarcerated. He explained, "When a person becomes psychotic, there is a stigma is around that. It doesn't mean they are trying to go after

people or hurt people, it means they've lost touch with some piece of reality. So if a person makes a decision under paranoia, hallucinations, etc.... If they're mentally disabled, they're not grounded in reality. Sometimes I feel like in the court system, mental illness is not represented well."

When asked what actions could be taken to reduce recidivism and help those who are incarcerated and suffering from mental illness, Jeffrey proposed two approaches currently in place, "Stabilization and continuity of care." He explained that "the biggest thing is having resources in facilities to help raise the awareness [of each individual]." Jeffrey's goal as a licensed therapist and employee of DOC is to, "advocate for this

population as much as they are willing to advocate for themselves. Individuals are trying and willing to feel better and grow and put the effort into treatment. I want to match that effort." Jeffrey explained that from his time working in this field, he has learned that, "people can change if they truly desire to change. When they get tired of feeling discontent and stuck they can change if they choose." Jeffrey wanted to leave readers with one last thought: "If a person wants to get better and improve themselves and their lives, they've got to step out of their comfort zones. When they're willing to step out of their comfort zones, that's where the stage for growth is set."

Culinary Normalcy

What's cooking at Sterling's Culinary Arts Program

BY MATTHEW LABONTE
SCF Reverberations Editor



Staff Members Ms. Cass and Mr. Revord at SCF Culinary
[Photo courtesy of Sterling Correctional Facility]

"What's the special today?" Captain Cris Clare hollers across the dining room as he steps off the prison yard and through the front door of Sterling Correctional Facility's (SCF) Culinary Arts Program.

From behind the counter a young man in a uniform universally recognized as kitchen whites calls back, "Personal pan pizzas..." He could be any guy working any restaurant anywhere in the world, not just an inmate in Colorado's correctional system.

Sterling's Culinary Arts Program has been operating on the East Side of the facility (minimum & minimum restricted security) since 2000. Ms. Codi Cass has been there since the beginning. "It'll be 20 years in July 2020..." she tells me. However, this program is more than just vocational education. "This is a working kitchen," she says, "This is a real job."

All of the training is accredited, and college credits are awarded

through Pueblo Community College. "The first two and a half to three months they're in class. We have four books we go through, the majority of it before they start to work," Cass shares a laugh with a few of her students as she discusses the program. The books the chefs-in-training work through in the classroom are extensive: Serve-Safe (nationally recognized by the Restaurant Association), Menu Planning, Hospitality, and Professional Cooking. After they complete the classroom work, they are rotated into a position in the kitchen for hands-on training.

Walking through the kitchen a visitor can feel the buzz of preparation as the lunch hour approaches. Before slipping back into their morning routine, Cass and Mr. Ed Revord momentarily pause to speak with me, leaving everyone to do the jobs expected of them. The team moves in concert, working like a well-oiled machine. The phone rings, and a man who

goes by "Big Paul" answers it, "Culinary, this is Paul," He tells the caller about the lunch special, takes the order, and lets them know it will be ready for pick-up in about 20 minutes.

Omar, who has been in the program for a little over two years, takes a break from chopping onions to tell me briefly about his culinary journey. "I've worked as an OCA [Offender Care Assistant], a porter, and in the kitchen... This is the best job I've had in DOC." He works in meat preparation as part of the apprenticeship program. With obvious pride he shares with me a typical day for him, relating that "We get here at 6:30 in the morning, I check with all the guys, see what they need. If they need salad, green or red chilies—whatever, I get everything prepped. You learn a lot of stuff you didn't know, and eat good too."

One of the less obvious benefits of programs geared towards service industries are the soft skills they teach. Cass has a particular expectation in this area. She expressed "You've have to remember these skills and attitudes when you're working on the streets. It is good to think about how you would treat your grandma or your child, and treat the customer the way you would them. The way you speak to them, the language you use, is very important. These things are a big deal."

Normalization is not new. The Culinary Arts Program has been ahead of this movement for quite some time now. "Working in culinary is more relational across race, you know. You're not afraid to talk to the officers." Omar tells me, "You get to see everybody's the same. We're all human."

"The whole normalize or humanize thing, it's something we've done for a long time, since this place opened," said Revord, a graduate of the Johnson and Wales

culinary school, who has worked with the Culinary Arts Program at SCF for about 11 years. "We feel it works really well. We don't have guys not show up, we don't have guy's no-show. We treat people that way and it reciprocates. They respond well to the level of understanding that we have and the level of responsibility that they have and the work they produce they're putting out shows it."

The dining room alone serves about 1000 staff a month. Mrs. Steib, a teacher at SCF for about a decade now, has lunch from culinary just about every day. It goes beyond the mere convenience. She assures me the food is greater than restaurant quality. Beyond the dining room and takeout service, Culinary provides catering for a variety of events from graduations to retirements and everything in between. The work they produce can even make it out into the community through state entities and non-profit organizations who use their catering services. These cakes have been quietly gathering accolades for some years now.

"I was super-mad when they paroled my cake guy!" jokes Steib, "I hear he's doing really well though, has a job doing cakes now, so... For my son's second birthday, I got a cake in the shape of the numeral two with all these Sesame Street textures. It was really cool."

Cade, a clerk in the program, is in charge of coming up with the daily specials. "I used to work for Yellowstone Lodge, but it was nothing like this. That was like a simple set menu. I have more responsibility and freedom here." He shows me this month's calendar of specials varying from 10oz. sirloin steaks and Gyros to Lobster bisque. My mind and taste buds boggle at the true level of culinary expertise on display in this simple schedule. These meals are not your typical prison fare. Asked how he

comes up with his menu, and he responds, "I ask the guys, 'what do we like, what do we want to eat?'"

"The Culinary Arts program within the CDOC allows students and apprentices an opportunity to interact with a broad spectrum of customers while focusing energy serving the hungry masses," says Troy, who has been in the program for a few years now, and is one of eight apprentices. The apprenticeship program gives an even higher level of responsibility and autonomy. It requires 6000 contact hours, and takes about 5 years to complete. "Long hours and bustling business aren't for everyone but the atmosphere, and rewarding nature of creating consumable products, cannot escape notice. The earned time and college credits offered may initially attract participants, but the food and positive social interactions with customers and co-workers hold us constantly in place. Family like bonds exist in our kitchen as in so many other gastronomic oases. The curriculum challenges students socially, scholastically, and physically at various times."

At first, Omar's family joked with him about being in the culinary program. But, he says, "Even if you don't work out there on the streets, it will be good for your family, you can cook for them." These are benefits beyond vocational training. "Now, even my mom sends me recipes to try. My brother always asks me how I cook pork."

Colorado Springs Headquarters is currently working on an app-based program to help coordinate job placement after release, another innovation a select number of vocational programs across the state have always taken (Buena Vista's heavy machinery and several welding programs just to name a couple). This development would allow potential employers and inmates to be in contact, securing employment before their release. Creating this network has been a hot button issue for CDOC's Executive Director Dean Williams since he took the position. Cass and Revord say that a lot of their students, after getting out, check back with success stories of jobs they've been able to get because of their time in Culinary Arts. Many of them are in management positions.

The Culinary Arts program is a unique synthesis—a group of men who have found opportunity, blended it with determination, and seized their moment. "You take people for their work ethic and for their skills and they run with it," affirms Revord.

Editor's Note:

Since the writing of this article, some changes have been made to the culinary program, in an effort to increase the educational opportunities and the chances of releasing inmates having the necessary skills and training to be hired on the outside.



Culinary Arts offers participants education, skill and training that are put to practical use within the dining room at Sterling Correctional Facility
[Photo courtesy of Sterling Correctional Facility]

Success through adversity

BY JACKIE SMITH
FCF Contributor

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and the recent movement for social justice, there are some people who still manage to succeed. Imagine getting released from prison—homeless with no one around to help out, no family, no support—then enduring the many stressful situations that our world is enduring. Take Ms. Mechille Wright as an example, who, in January 2020, reached the Mandatory Release Date (MRD) of her sentence and was released. She was homeless and faced extreme difficulties in her journey of freedom and success.

Originally a native of Louisville, Kentucky, Wright came to Colorado in early 2016 with her husband to help with a drug habit that tore down her family, and that eventually led to her and her husband's incarceration. Ms. Wright is the mother of eight children, one of whom she lost. The remaining children are all in the system in Kentucky. They were taken by the state in response to the lifestyles and problems associated with their parents' drug addictions. Wright is well acquainted with adversity.

"Upon being released, I had a plan, but nothing went according to my plan. So I had to humble myself and adjust," says Wright. While serving her four-year sentence at Denver Women's Correctional Facility, Mechille participated in the Therapeutic Community and Residential Treatment Program. "I learned a lot from these two programs to help me along my way like Relapse Prevention, I learned how to cope with my deep-rooted

anger issues, and that I have to let go of my past, and learn from it, to succeed in my future. The difference is, I took all these programs extremely seriously, using everything I was shown and taught. If you're not serious about your rehabilitation, you will fail," reflects Wright.

Wright's MRD came up and she was forced to reside at the Colorado Springs Rescue Mission homeless shelter for several weeks, until an old friend, who lives in Fountain, Colorado, let her stay with them. "The shelter was terrible...there were so many drugs, right in my face, immediately." If this wasn't enough facing Wright, the COVID-19 pandemic hit. "I'm not from here, my mom is in Kentucky with cancer, and my husband is incarcerated. My husband is a disabled veteran, and I was able to receive his apportionment from his Veterans Affairs benefits. My husband was my only support and, even though he's in prison, he was blessed with a Colorado Correctional Industries job, and about every six weeks, I would receive a check in the mail from him."

Eventually, for Wright, the unthinkable happened: "There was no public transportation in Fountain I could utilize to get around. Parole was able to get me into the Ready to Work program. I was a candidate for the program, they got me into sober living, they helped with bus passes, and interview clothes." She landed her first job at a Kentucky Fried Chicken, but then got sick and tested positive for COVID-19.

When asked what her mindset was when she realized she caught

COVID-19, Wright answered, "I thought my life was over! I was like, 'Wow! I let this drug destroy my life, and get my kids taken away, I have all these beautiful kids, and now I have this virus.'" Due to testing positive for COVID-19, Wright claims she was forced to leave the sober living house. Thankfully, Wright started receiving her husband's VA benefits, two days prior testing positive.

Wright was forced to live in a hotel for three months while she recovered from COVID. "God was on my side. I cried out to him while I was in that hotel, and he answered me." It took Wright five weeks to recover from the COVID-19 virus. "All the money that I initially received from the VA I had to use to live. I was paying over \$400 a week just to have a place to lay my head."

"I met a woman who is management at The Gateway Program in Colorado Springs, and she helped me. She allowed me to stay in The Gateway sober living home; she believed in me when the world doubted me. All you need is someone to believe in you. When that person has faith in you, you don't want to let them down."

Being a minority from Louisville, Kentucky, when asked how the Breonna Taylor incident and Black Lives Matter movement affected her during her transition from DOC to the streets, Wright replied, "It was heart breaking and extremely emotional. All my children are in Louisville, and they were terrified! I encouraged my children to keep striving and they could be whatever they wanted to be in life. But to use this systematic

racism ignorance as motivation..." Wright said, adding, "My husband knows the Taylor family."

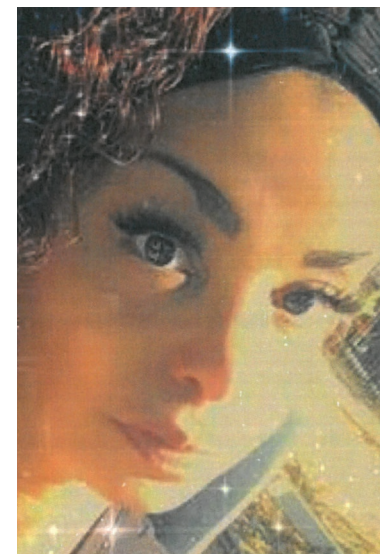
Overcoming extreme obstacles, maintaining sobriety and completing a year-long parole in seven months, Wright stated, "People in my situation who get out of DOC who think they've lost everything, they really haven't... because you have your life, and all you have to do is build around that. You have to cut off people, places, and activities [from your former life]. Being in prison was terrible. I asked myself, 'Do I wanna keep doing this? Do I wanna wake up next to a toilet every day for the rest of my life? Do I wanna miss more birthdays and holidays? Do I wanna keep spending my sick mother's money on canteen and phone time?' Even though I cannot get them back, I didn't wanna miss seeing my kids grow up."

"This experience going to DOC has given me a different outlook and perception on life. It's allowed me to appreciate every second of freedom. I don't ever wanna commit a crime again." When asked about her contributions to her community since her release, Wright explained that she plans to apply for a job at the Colorado DOC after her time bar expires. She also plans on making and handing out sack lunches for the Thanksgiving holiday to the homeless with her newly-found family at the Gateway Sober living home. "I can't stress enough how much the staff at Gateway have helped me. Gateway is a loving, caring program."

Due to the damage COVID-19 did on Wright's lungs, she was diagnosed with walking pneumonia in July 2020. "This COVID is serious...people take it lightly, but it's really killing and

affecting everything and everyone. My husband lost his grandmother to COVID-19 in April. It's slowed everything down. Appointments and job interviews have become almost entirely virtual or over the phone. I've never seen the world like this. I was caught up in a protest in downtown Colorado Springs, and I feared for my life. People were so angry, they were throwing fireworks, rocks, and debris. I was terrified, I've never been through anything like this."

Wright had this final thought, "The most important thing to me is my relationship with my children. I strive every day to be better for them, they are my motivation, and the main inspiration for my success." Wright brings awareness to the important parts of a life before incarceration such as health, positive ambition, and family, and is a living reminder to let go of the negative that interferes with those ideals. Wright demonstrates a true testament of character; she embodies strength built through adversity.



Mechille Wright

[Photo courtesy of Mechille Wright]

Pre-pandemic Programming All is bright



BY PHILLIP MICHAEL MONTOYA
IR Associate Editor

In December of 2019, Limon Correctional Facility hosted a program conducted by the God Behind Bars association. God Behind Bars is an outreach of Flatirons Church that functions within prisons in Colorado. The event that night brought families together in a way that was unprecedented, especially for those who have been incarcerated for years.

The event was called All Is Bright. It was a Christmas celebration that exceeded every and all expectations for programs. Many generous donations were given by the gracious members of the Flatirons Church. Those donations were then chosen by residents to be given as gifts. Volunteers from Flatirons spent

numerous hours wrapping the gifts for the children who came to Limon to share this event with their parents.

The evening began with an introduction of the families and residents. The ceremony that attended these introductions is what one might expect for the guest of honor at a ball or gala. A chaperone accompanied each family through each segment of the evening. Fun was had with a gingerbread house building contest, an inflated bouncy castle and other games in the far end of the gym. Kids of all ages were invited to participate. A photo booth helped capture the magical moments. A resident photographer provided intimate images by moving around the event taking candid photos

of residents with their families. Included was a buffet line that was longer than some rap sheets, and it offered a delectable selection of mouthwatering holiday items to choose from, leaving no belly empty.

What made this evening particularly special was that All Is Bright allowed grandfathers, fathers, uncles, brothers and sons the ability to be a family—even though they are incarcerated. There

was not an overwhelming presence of DOC staff reminding residents or families that the evening was being spent on the inside. Instead, the gym was transformed into a beautifully-decorated dining hall. Pipes and drapes, along with Christmas trees and lights helped eliminate any features that might remind attendees that they were in an institution. The evening ended with all of the children opening the gifts that their loved ones picked

out for them. Tears of joy were shed from one side of the gym to the other.

Every man that evening left that gym with a memory more special than any other that they had in years. After the event, Limon residents expressed thanks to all of the volunteers from Flatirons Church, to all the staff members at Limon, to Dean Williams and anyone else who made that magical evening possible.



Limon Correctional Facility's gym held All Is Bright program for the families to enjoy Christmas together

[Photo courtesy of Phillip Mike Montoya]

Leadership in uncertain times

Utilizing tools to guide and assist

BY JUSTIN BOX
AVCF Contributor

2020 proved to be an unprecedented year. We have seen the world live under quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We have witnessed national protests over racial inequality and police brutality that have been mirrored and supported around the world. We have become further separated by the ever-increasing polarization of our political institutions. And the list goes on.

It seems as if global unrest as expressed through various mediums, as well as a whole, is at a historical inflection point... possibly a tipping point. In these tumultuous times, it is easy to be overwhelmed as well as dismayed by the conflicting messages and actions of our leaders. What is not easy is discerning the way forward.

Whether you are a leader (formally or informally) or looking for the right leader to follow, these times require recognizable markers that distinguish qualified leaders. Leadership has been, is, and will continue to be one of the most widely documented, studied,

and practiced human endeavors. It is also highly subjective. Leadership is an art, not a science: everyone must develop their own style. Luckily, there are fundamental aspects that good leaders exemplify and that signify their level of ability. We will briefly touch on three competencies and one quality in leaders that are essential for our future.

First, quality leaders excel in casting a clear vision of where they are headed. They can articulate their goals in a manner that paints an image in the mind. A leader's vision is the first thing you need to look for, not only to determine if they know where they are going, but also to see if that is where you want to go, too.

After clear vision, a leader must have a solid strategy or plan that, when followed, will accomplish the vision. Vision without strategy is simply wishful thinking. Leaders must know how to achieve the goal and lay it out for their people.

Even the best laid plans mean nothing without the ability to execute. Leaders have to effectively execute their plans, knowing what

structure to put in place, where to put people, and how to orchestrate everyone's efforts. A plan without execution is simply theory.

With these three competencies, a leader can enact change. However, leaders with an additional quality become capable of truly dynamic results. This quality is being a unifier. A leader must be the kind of person who draws people together, who can unite people. They must be able to connect with people and overcome interpersonal conflict. As John Maxwell says, "A leader with no followers is just someone going for a walk."

As the world continues to spin out of control, it is up to each of us as individuals to demand more of our leaders. And leaders must demand more of themselves. We all must require clear vision, solid strategy, effective execution, and unification. And finally, as this brief article barely scratches the surface, we must dig deeper and study. Look within and without, and research for yourself so you know what you need. Let no one lead you without the credibility to do so.



Sanctvm Redemption Road CrossFit Members
[Photo courtesy of Ms. Elbel]

Dedication

Continued from page 2

Strict Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE) guidelines meant extreme precautions had to be taken to ensure that everyone was safe, and that the facilitators were doing their part to cut down the virus. We saw people coming together no matter what and stepping up to make a change. The sight of everyone doing burpees completely out of breath but pushing past what they can normally do while judges counted reps loudly through a mask was astonishing and encouraging to those who experienced it. It was

frequently said by many people that the only thing keeping them sane and with a smile on their face was the WOD (Workout of the Day) that they were able to do before work. Others spoke of this as being the breaking point, the final straw before they snapped; but then the trainers showed them that the last thruster, that they thought was impossible, really was within their abilities. As a matter of fact, they were strengthened when told, "you have already pushed through harder things this week!" When the trainers said "we need, one more rep," that push was used as motivation for people to make it through one more day, and become stronger and better for it.

The message of working to get

stronger in every aspect of what it means to be human is the exact message that Redemption Road is trying to get out there. It says "Yes, we have some roadblocks ahead of us and it isn't easy, but this opposition, and these struggles, won't stop us from making change and strengthening our community. We won't let this time in history go down as a breaking point, but rather, a point when we came together. In the act of standing up and fighting on, we will become, and we will remain, unbroken. It starts with every one of us, because we all should know one thing: true power and true perseverance does not come from without, it comes from within."

Canteen

BY ERIC DAVIS
IR Journalist

One of the most important goals of the Colorado Department of Corrections' Canteen Services is to provide high quality, fairly-priced merchandise and services to the resident population in an efficient and profitable manner. Unfortunately, as the COVID-19 pandemic took hold of the entire world, it also had an enormous impact on Canteen Services' ability to achieve many of the goals included in their Mission Statement.

As 2020 began, there were nearly 18,000 CDOC residents in 22 state and privately-run facilities. Canteen Services—which is overseen by Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI)—affords CDOC residents a selection of more than 1,100 retail items including ready-to-eat foods, snacks, hygiene products, cosmetics and clothing, as well as hobby and religious supplies. Orders were filled weekly and monthly via deliveries from distribution centers operated at the Arrowhead Correctional Center (ACC) in Cañon City and the Denver Women's Correctional Facility (DWCF) in Denver. Nearly 100 CDOC residents were employed at these centers, processing more than 70,000 orders per month.

Then, the trials of COVID-19 arrived, ushering in unprecedented challenges for Canteen Services and CDOC in general. COVID-19 presented unforeseen obstacles, revealed unexpected opportunities and required major adjustments to Canteen Services' operations as a whole. One of the most notable adjustments/opportunities arose from Central Canteen in Cañon City drawing a portion of its workforce from a facility other than ACC—the first time this ever occurred. ACC entering Phase III of the CDOC COVID protocol in August prohibited Central Canteen from pulling their usual ACC work crew to accomplish weekly and monthly order fulfillment. Instead, Central Canteen and CCI began utilizing members of State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) from Skyline Correctional Center (SCC) to initially work shifts. Then, a crew from Four Mile Correctional Center (FMCC) was established. This crew included members of the Wild Horse Inmate Program (WHIP) and the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP). The eight men of JCAP were all juveniles when they initially committed their crimes, and have all spent at least twenty years in prison, with at least two having more than thirty years in confinement. In addition to these new crews, various staff members from multiple Cañon City facilities volunteered as both workers and supervisors, supporting Canteen Services' effort to maintain consistent service. As ACC returned online, the FMCC crew moved permanently to swing shift.

In the midst of this tumult, Canteen Services moved their Northern Canteen-DWCF operation to Cañon City in October, completing a pre-planned consolidation of their operations. The complicated process of moving Northern Canteen, intergrading their stock into the existing stock at Central Canteen—while ensuring an accurate count—was accomplished with seamless cooperation between the two operations' work crews without any direct communication. Canteen Services' staff utilized and relied on the adept skills and knowledge of both resident work crews.

As Canteen Services in Cañon City began processing orders for all of CDOC, even greater challenges developed. SCC was officially decommissioned by CDOC, and the resident population there was dispersed to other facilities and also released on parole. Not long after that closing, COVID-19 reared its ugly head as it swept through the Cañon Minimum Centers—ACC and FMCC. The result was a complete lack of resident-workers being available to fulfill canteen orders for all of CDOC. Canteen Services was initially able to cover these orders by drawing CDOC staff volunteers from the area, but that was an unsustainable path forward. Canteen Services was unable to fill any orders for at least one week in December, ultimately reducing the ordering limits significantly. This reduction allowed Canteen Services to continue to provide at least basic necessities to the CDOC resident population with a mere skeleton crew.

Unfortunately, the monthly catalog orders, which include items such as clothing and appliances, had to be put on hold until resident work crews could be pulled. By late December 2020, crews from both ACC and FMCC were returning to work and the order limits increased, ultimately returning to normal by February.

Moving forward, Canteen Services is now better prepared to take on the challenges of COVID-19, while learning lessons to apply in the future when unexpected obstacles arise.

A Glimmer of Hope for Those Wrongfully / Disproportionately Convicted or Sentenced in Jefferson and Gilpin Counties

BY TREVOR JONES
IR Senior Editor

CDOC closed-circuit channels have recently posted a message informing the population of the newly created Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) of the First Judicial District Attorney's Office representing Jefferson and Gilpin Counties. The office seeks to identify cases of "actual innocence" and to seek relief when wrongful convictions are discovered. Sentences that are disproportionate, inequitable or otherwise not aligned with the District Attorney's pursuit of justice are also sought for review, with potential efforts for relief.

The Inside Report was granted an interview with Jennifer Kilpatrick, the Director of Conviction Integrity & Equity at the First Judicial District Attorney's Office, in which she expounded on the work and purpose of the CIU. Ms. Kilpatrick is an experienced trial attorney and advocate for criminal justice reform. *The Inside Report* would like to thank Ms. Kilpatrick for her time and work.

IR: When did the Correction Integrity Unit begin?

JK: The Conviction Integrity Unit was created when Alexis King took office on January 12, 2021. The CIU officially launched on March 1, 2021 to accept applications for claims of actual innocence and review claims of excessive and inequitable sentencing.

IR: Is the First Judicial District Attorney's Office CIU unique in the state of Colorado?

JK: We are the first fully-staffed CIU in Colorado that has a broad mandate to address claims of actual innocence and review disproportionate sentences. District

Attorney Michael Dougherty created a CIU for Boulder County and George Brauchler created a Conviction Review Unit in the 18th Judicial District (Arapahoe, Douglas, Elbert, and Lincoln) within the last few years. These units look at cases of actual innocence and utilize volunteer advisory boards to review cases. Both of these units accept applications that can be located on their websites.

IR: Who designed the CIU and what was the motivation behind its creation?

JK: Alexis King, the elected District Attorney, envisioned an office that not only ethically prosecutes crime but makes every effort to correct past miscarriages of justice. The CIU was modeled after the Innocence Project's best practices guide and in consultation with several national conviction integrity organizations. The unit is led by a former criminal defense attorney.

IR: Where does funding for the CIU come from?

JK: The CIU is solely funded by the District Attorney's office within their existing budget. The allocation of a full-time attorney, part-time investigator, and intern to this program demonstrates DA King's commitment to ensuring this work is done effectively and efficiently.

IR: What collaborations are in place for the CIU to accomplish its mission (e.g. Governor's Office, the Attorney General, the Public Defender's Office, etc.)?

JK: The CIU sought input from various criminal justice stakeholders prior to its creation. In addition, the CIU has a policy to collaborate with defense attorneys and innocence organizations on individual cases

when appropriate. Finally, the CIU has an advisory board made up of victim witness specialists, former judicial officers, a law enforcement officer, defense attorneys, and other stakeholders that reviews the CIU's work.

IR: What is the CIU's understanding of success and how does it measure that success?

JK: The best measure of success is if we have earned the trust of our community and stakeholders in the criminal justice system by demonstrating that we will thoroughly investigate each claim, determine if relief is warranted, and do the right thing for our community.

IR: Does the CIU have statistics on relief of sentences obtained through its efforts? How many people have been helped and to what extent have they been helped?

JK: The CIU retains data on the number of applications and referrals received. We publish an annual report at the end of each year that will be available to the public. The CIU has been in existence for two months and we have received three claims of actual innocence that are under review. We have supported two clemency petitions and agreed to an equitable sentence reduction of 12 years in court.

IR: The CIU is committed to safeguarding the interests of victims. Does the opposition of victims to sentence relief warrant an automatic dismissal of review by the CIU?

JK: The needs and well-being of victims are of utmost concern and addressing them must be a collective effort within the Office of the First Judicial

District Attorney throughout the entire post-conviction process. The CIU will ensure that victims are treated with fairness, respect, and dignity. That being said, if it is the right decision to seek relief, a victim's opposition does not create an automatic dismissal. We will always consider the victim's position in reaching a decision and continue to support their road to healing.

Services are offered to pro se applicants, as well as to those who have formal legal representation. Applications are available in English and Spanish on the District Attorney's website. Applications may be submitted to ciu@jeffco.us. Eligibility for review includes at minimum one of the following criteria:

- The applicant is serving a sentence for felony murder
- The applicant has served over ten years and is over the age of 50
- The applicant has served over fifteen years and is over the age of 35
- The applicant is serving a sentence on a non-crime of violence habitual counts (non-COV habitual count)
- The applicant has a documented serious medical condition or is terminally ill

and if one of the following conditions exists:

- the applicant has demonstrated significant rehabilitation and does not pose a community safety risk; or
- The applicant was convicted of a crime that is no longer legally cognizable or has substantially reduced penalties because of changes in the law.

The CIU only reviews cases prosecuted and sentenced in Jefferson and Gilpin counties. It does not review cases involving sex offenses, active prosecutions or recently closed cases.

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Request a media packet for our companion publication, Reverberations, an art and literary magazine published by DU PAI and LUXLIT Press

Carol Peeples: Founder of a social cause

BY BRANDON MOSS
FCF Journalist

In 2015, Carol Peeples founded a social cause company called Remerg. Soon after receiving a grant from the National Science Foundation and Small Business Innovation Research, the company launched the website Remerg.com in 2016. Now a non-profit, whose Board of Directors is co-chaired by Jhil Marquante—a man who served 26 years in Colorado prisons, Remerg uses its website to publicize the organizations that are a part of the re-entry process. This network includes resources for everything from food and clothing, to career planning, finding healthcare, and much more. "In the future, I hope Remerg is able to develop other programs that help people succeed after release from

prison or jail. Our mission will always be focused on reducing recidivism," says Peeples about the future plans for Remerg.

The website benefits users not only with its listed resources, but also because it links to Google Maps, which allows users to locate a specific area. Videos are also available to provide a better sense of what the specific programs offer. Peeples says of the videos, "I always like to see the people in a place, so a video is the perfect way to show people about a place." Remerg.com has a lot of connections to community partners and helps to link people to places where they can get the specific help they need. The re-entry help section alone lists 45 organizations across the state. Along with that, there is a long list of agencies that help with job preparation and searches in the work sector. There are over 1,200 different resources on Remerg.com, and the website is free to

The re-entry help section alone lists 45 organizations across the state.

use. Family members, friends, and even case managers are urged to look into the website's capabilities. "I want people getting out of the [Colorado] Department of Corrections to know they need to take full advantage of the resources their parole office has when they're released, especially the community re-entry specialists. This is the first person you should be talking to because they are so connected to resources," says Peeples.

Peeples can also relate a little to the incarceration side from her experience in 2000 as a teacher in Buena Vista for the boot camp program. When asked about what

inspired her to start Remerg, she responds that it is the "people inside our prisons, some of whom I got to know as students, not inmates. People. In class. With potential." She also received motivation from becoming Project Manager and the author of the first two editions of *Getting On After Getting Out: A Reentry Guide for Colorado*, published by the Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition. During the research portion for each edition, both of which took two years, Carol noticed many issues with people trying to re-enter society. "This research...opened my eyes to the many barriers that people face when they get out. I remember thinking at the time, no wonder so many people come back! Since then I've wanted to do what I can to reduce those barriers and help more people succeed."

Peeples is so confident in herself and her sacrifices that she believes

that if she and her company were not making a difference, she would shut it down. When asked about the "new normal," she said, "during this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, all of the organizations are working hard to figure out how they can provide their services. It's really important to check websites and to call for current information. That's why we also provide that information on Remerg.com." Although there are not statistics on the return rates of incarcerated folks who use Remerg.com, as of 2021 Google analytics shows that over 3,000 people had used the site in the previous 30 days. Peeples comments, "I wanted to build something that people could use to get in and get what they needed, no class involved, no meeting across town. I'm hoping that is the case for most of those 1,400 website users." It is a number of which Peeples is proud.

The playwright as storyteller

DU PAI teaching artists and playwriting enthusiasts Joanna Rotkin and Dee Covington sat down (virtually) to discuss the vital role of the playwright as storyteller. Both were a part of the Imagining Worlds theatre-based curriculum process, serving as readers and guides through the world of plays and playwriting. In this exchange they share what they learned, what they hoped the writers learned, and how necessary it is to use your imagination as a tool for expression and liberation.

Dee: Joanna, what were some of your initial thoughts when you were asked to help facilitate a playwriting class on-line through DU PAI?

Joanna: I was nervous. I'm a people person and I like to meet face to face with my students, so I wasn't sure how this was going to work. I also tend to be pretty improvisational in my teaching -- listening for what is called for as each moment arises -- so I didn't know if there would be space for that in an on-line class.

That being said, I was so excited to reconnect with the students I knew from Sterling, and the new students I was assigned to work with at Four Mile, that I pretty much put all of those worries aside once I got the roster of whose work I would be responding to.

Joanna: What about you?

Dee: I absolutely know what you mean when you say you like to be in the room and teaching to what is thematically and energetically emerging in the group. Group consciousness as a way to elevate everyone's understanding of the creative process is one of my very favorite things. And I confess, I did miss that element in this experience.

But. There was also a new passion I gained through the virtual world, and that was the fact that each time I responded to someone's work it felt very one-on-one. Very personal. It was as though I was having these very intense and specific conversations with each person. We were walking their road together. I think there is a vulnerability in that kind of exchange that leads to honest and heartfelt work. At least that was my experience.

I was able to teach a few playwriting classes at DRDC before COVID shut us all down. And I will say that little bit of knowledge of the artists (who they were,

their sense of style and humor) was really helpful in giving feedback. I trusted I could say really direct or even really silly things and the writer would know where I was coming from. I hoped with La Vista that even though we hadn't ever met (yet), that they could feel my heart as I engaged in dialogue with them.

Dee: Speaking of dialogue, what do you think is so special about studying playwriting and students even writing their own plays?

Joanna: I love all kinds of writing, as both a writer and a reader, but the playwriting -- I don't know, that's something completely different, and I'm not exactly sure why. Maybe because it takes the imagination to a whole new realm of possibility that other writing forms don't have the space for, what with the costumes, lights, set, and action. I feel playwriting engages the entire body of both the writer and the reader. All of the senses are awake and vibrating, reaching out to the world.

Joanna: What about you? And also, what surprised you most about reading the plays that our students wrote?

Dee: Isn't it interesting that writing is such a solitary process but does indeed vibrate and reach out into the world? I think that especially in playwriting I am periodically needing to check in and ask, does the audience have all the information they need to go on this journey? Are they being taken care of in the land of storytelling? It doesn't mean our characters can't deceive the audience or manipulate the truth. Wicked characters as antagonists are essential to playwriting; but, the audience as witnesses must be a factor in the collaborative equation. I suppose it could be said that the audience exists to keep the playwright on track, to hold them accountable to the essential humanness of the characters and the truth of the play. Playwrights make a contract with the audience at the beginning of the play and that contract must be fulfilled by play's end. So the audience is making sure the contract gets fulfilled. We all want what we were promised, right? The love, the hope, the freedom, the forgiveness...

While I love the play's relationship with the audience, I also love the theatre's ability to tilt the universe of the play by the use of

imagination. There is so much permission in playwriting to go wherever your imagination can carry you. You can set an entire play on the edge of a cloud and we as the audience will not think twice about it. Again, as long as the rules of that universe are clear and the audience is taken care of, for better or worse, we will get on that cloud. A good play is a good adventure. Sitting in a dark theatre we all go somewhere else together. That's magic.

I'm still digesting what surprised me about the plays the writers created. I was given so much to consider. We all write what is driving us, what is rattling around in our guts and bones. I suppose, just like in all plays, there was a lot of heartbreak. But in these plays, I found the need for redemption, the utterance of the words 'I love you' for the first time, the expression of growth and understanding particularly moving.

And, of course, there are those lines of dialogue that ring in your ears long after the play is over. I have many of those lines still echoing in me. Such amazing playwriting happened here.

Dee: What surprised or delighted you? And, if you could do this all over again is there anything you would do differently the second time around?

Joanna: Hmmmm...I love that, Dee. So beautifully said. I don't know if I have anything else to add, except: YES YES YES!

Oh wait, I do have something to add:

What I saw during our time together, over and over again, was a clear and pristine following of the imagination. A vivacious imagination that emerged from the bodies, hearts, and minds of each individual who participated in this process with us and found its way into the world in the form of a play.

I was delighted by that.

There was something so beautifully true about each play, whether it was based on someone's personal life story, or if it was a wildly fantastic work that took place in a house where it rained inside. The tenderness of some of the work had me melted onto the floor. The humor had me laughing out loud, and the heartbreak had my own heart breaking. My breath was taken, many times, reading these plays.

The last thing I'll say is about curiosity. Curiosity is the bread and butter of art making. When I stop being curious about

the world around me, my imagination, creativity, and also my heart -- they get smaller. So curiosity is key: in the people I am surrounded by, the world that I walk through, and in my own being. As you said, what is rattling around in these guts and bones of mine? That feels like our bedrock, as artists: to be guided by curiosity and wonderment, rather than judgement, as best as we can, and no matter the circumstance. What I witnessed in this process with everyone was the coming back to curiosity, inquisitiveness, and wonderment, over and over again. Once curiosity is turned on and ignited, the unknown, which the creative process is steeped in, can become a little less daunting. So yeah, that was a delight to see, for sure.

And if I were to do it over? Hmm... I think I would say less and listen more.

Joanna: What about you? What would you do differently?

Dee: I just love how you described curiosity as bread and butter for artists. We need bread. We need roses. Art is as essential to our survival as food. And surrounding ourselves with wildly imaginative and engaged people gives us permission to be more wildly imaginative and engaged. It's just one of the things I appreciate about DU PAI. The nature of the program gives us all permission to be the most liberated version of ourselves. Together we grow each other forward.

And, oh, if I had it to do all over again, I would better ride the horse of time. As in, I would be more timely in my responses so that playwrights could better incorporate feedback, if they were so inclined. I need to learn to match my rhythm to the digital/virtual world. But, this is also another example of how we all grow each other forward. I've learned a lot from working in this way. I am changed and grateful and ready to keep riding. And, Joanna, I'm glad we're on this adventure together.

Joanna: So true! To have a community of people who are willing to drop down with you and swim in the river of imagination -- it makes all the difference in the world, doesn't it? And what an exquisite way to say it.

Dee: "Together we grow each other forward." I love that. I'm glad we are on this adventure together, too.

V.O.I.C.E.S.

Vigilant Offenders Initiating Changing and Enhancing Solutions

The V.O.I.C.E.S. group, held in the Denver complex (Denver Women's Correctional Facility and Denver Reception & Diagnostic Center), contributes considerate and well-articulated input for various policies currently under review. The Colorado Department of Corrections (CDOC) hopes to utilize this group in the future to train other incarcerated individuals in CDOC to effectively solicit input, review policy and make recommendations. These trainings will culminate in a process that provides regular opportunities for incarcerated individuals to contribute to policies in each facility and Department.

"Our mission is to provide an opportunity for all to thrive in an environment driven by a team of staff and residents that will strive for excellence, fluid communication, positive behavior, and productive policy." -- V.O.I.C.E.S. of DWCF

The DWCF V.O.I.C.E.S. team was instrumental in making changes over the past year. For example, their efforts have resulted in the issuance of bar soap to assist with hygiene during the current health crisis, and, as of October 1st, 2020, the AR 700-05, Optometry Scope of Service has changed to allow prescription glasses to be sent through the mail room. This

is an important shift as it allows residents more equitable access to vision and its health benefits.

Before V.O.I.C.E.S. contributed to this policy, AR 700-05, section IV, stated the following procedures in:

Subsection B:

3. An offender may not purchase personal prescription eyeglasses from an outside source or have them sent in from the community.

AR 700-05, section IV now states the following procedures:

A. Offenders may have personal prescription eyeglasses sent into the facility through the mailroom. Personal eyeglasses will be evaluated and inspected for

security concerns.

1) Only plastic or thin metal/wire frames will be allowed into the facility. Thick metal or decorative frames will not be allowed.

B. After the eyeglasses are inspected and approved, they will be sent to Clinical Services for distribution to the offender within five days.

The V.O.I.C.E.S. team hopes the change in accessing vision care will impact many across the state system.

Next, on February 25th, 2021, the DWCF V.O.I.C.E.S. team met with the Denver Complex

management team in order to make recommendations to the following Administrative Regulations: 200-11 "Canteen Services," 650-03 "Restricted Housing," 850-11 "Offender Bedding and Dress Code," and 1500-1 "Staff Training." The recommendations were vetted by the management team and sent to Department Executive staff for review and implementation.

The V.O.I.C.E.S. team has also expanded to DRDC and is making plans to further expand into more facilities in the near future. Stay tuned for more updates.

An honor restored

U.S. incarcerated veterans

BY ROBERT LANDRUM
LCF Contributor

We the People, as a collective, know very little about United States military veterans. Americans hear and see only pieces of the good things done by U.S. veterans. They are men and women who served with honor, many witnessing the loss of their brothers and sisters in service. However, when surveyed about general knowledge of military matters, many Americans are unable to give accurate responses. Almost no one can tell you of the pain, loss, anger and loneliness that some veterans live and deal with every day after leaving the service.

Currently over 200,000 U.S. veterans are incarcerated in U.S. prisons, and every day some take their own lives because of their harsh experiences and inability to cope or receive treatment. To face these problems in prison, a veteran's specific program is working to restore the health, respect and honor of those who have served but are now incarcerated. In Limon Correctional Facility that program is "Restoring Honor Veteran's Group." It is a group of people trying to find the honor they once held, but which has been lost. The honor was conferred upon us when we took our oath of loyalty to this country, its citizens and its founding documents. Many have sensed a loss of this honor in the failures and mistakes made since their time in service.

Restoring Honor Veteran's Group works toward this restoration by holding discussion groups. These groups help the participants to discover the history and role of drug and alcohol use and how self-medicating turns to addiction. They also help them express and work through the mental and physical pains experienced in service, as well as upon returning home. Some veterans are at a loss as to how to acclimate to their worlds at home. This program helps people learn to live with P.T.S.D., survivor's guilt, and to finally regain the feelings of self-worth while in the service.

Currently Limon Correctional Facility houses around 37 veterans. Restoring Honor Veteran's groups began in September of 2019 to help reach these residents, and any other former service members who may find their way into the Limon group. It gives a place to discuss problems to which only veterans can understand and relate. The ability to discuss problems with someone who can connect to them is a tremendous help and relief. Meetings are every week at 7:00 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. and are funded by money contributed by the participants. The program's main volunteer, Carla, is a Captain in the U.S. Air Force Reserve, and attends the meetings on a bi-monthly basis. She participates in Redemption Road CrossFit across several facilities and is a tremendous help and intermediary for our program and our resources in free society.

In the program, the veterans strive to restore their honor and to show the community that they can be given a second chance at life outside of prison. Alternative programs are implemented for incarcerated veterans to meet the needs specific to their stations. Networking created through the program also assist veterans who have been released to stay free, safe and successful. These programs are part of a larger effort to keep veterans out of prison, both here in Colorado, and across the country.

Active soldiers and U.S. veterans serve their county and give so much, and it is the hope of many of these men and women that the country will respond to that contribution, and in response strive to help them make their lives the best possible. Restoring Honor Veteran's Group is an example of how society can see their continued worth.

Honor Guard of Old Glory



The veterans group in Limon performing Color Guard
[Photo courtesy of LCF]



The veterans group in Limon Correctional Facility
[Photo courtesy of LCF]

BY MICHAEL BACKUS
LCF Contributor

The veteran's group in Limon Correctional Facility (LCF), known as Restoring Honor, conducts the LCF Color Guard daily duties. As veterans of the United States military we are honored to have the opportunity to show our continued patriotism, even under difficult

circumstances. We have been entrusted with the daily raising and lowering of our treasured American and Colorado flags, along with the POW/MIA flag, which is flown on appropriate days. Not only do the veterans share this awesome duty, but other patriotic men who love their country share in this honored tradition. Restoring

Honor is very proud of our great American heritage and hopes that veterans in other facilities can take up the torch of patriotism. We are still proud Americans who love our country and the citizenship with which we are blessed. God bless America and the men and women who gave their lives for our freedoms!

Lost in the Folds

BY WILLIAM CONEY
IR Editorial Team

The Thirteen Folds Ceremony, the customary way of folding a United States flag, represents many things. First and foremost, it is a tribute, through pageantry, honoring those lost. It is also a celebration of the burden of sacrifice that gave birth to the nation, and it is also the realization of our forefather's ideals from their original thirteen colonies to a star-spangled beacon of freedom.

Forefathers and freedom may not have been on the minds of all veterans at the Fremont Correctional Facility this Fourth of July. They had lost one of their own. Brock Butson, a cold war era Air Force veteran, had reported to the Territorial Correctional Facility hospital. He was alone and losing a war of attrition with cancer. Back at FCF, Butson was in everyone's prayers during the Missing Man Honors Ceremony observed on Memorial Day. Later that month, Anthony Valdez (U. S. Army) received a letter from "Jo-Jo," an OCA volunteering to assist Butson with correspondence. The letter dated June 10th was read to the veteran's pod. "He is no longer in pain and suffers no more," he stated, with the fitting salutation of Numbers 23:10. When the Thirteen Folds Ceremony was observed, he was in hearts and memories of the veterans. As the flag was folded the 8th time, it reached



The Veterans of Fremont program members observing Memorial Day
[Photo courtesy of Lt. Archuleta]

Jeremy Ralph, the youngest Air Force veteran. Upon his salute they honored those who have entered the valley of the shadow of death. The next fold went to Joel Market, an Army veteran that cofounded the program. This fold, the 9th, represents "Motherhood," causing many to momentarily break ranks with a quick glance to the nearby garden, searching for signs of a hummingbird.

The hummingbird is a symbol that was once shared between Butson and his mother as a final farewell from the other side. This fact was well known to the

brotherhood as his contribution to the "Tell It Slant" anthology had been playing as part of a reading of selections which was aired on the CDOC education channel throughout that week. It was Diana Dresser of DU PAI who read Butson's piece about the hummingbird, who had flown in on the air waves to give watchers his final farewell with eloquence and sweet sorrow. This realization came quickly, so composure and military bearing was only betrayed by the eyes.



The LU2 Veterans of Fremont and JCAP participants observing the 13 Folds ceremony
[Photo courtesy of Lt. Archuleta]

Introducing the KWIP Legal Column

BY ANN ENGLAND
Faculty Director of the Korey Wise Innocence Project at Colorado Law

We are excited to introduce a special ongoing section of *The Inside Report*. The Korey Wise Innocence Project (KWIP) has partnered with the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI), to offer a column discussing the legal system as a service to the readers of this paper. Here, we aim to explore legal questions and concerns that impact folks living in Colorado's prisons. For this issue, we would like to share a bit about us and what we do.

It is the mission of the Korey Wise Innocence Project to free people who are innocent and have been convicted of crimes they did not commit in Colorado. Our namesake Korey Wise, is a wrongfully convicted man who served 13 years in prison in New York before he was exonerated and freed from prison. He was part of what was called the Central Park 5. Our project is housed at the University of Colorado, School of Law. Most of the work that we do is on individual cases, where we believe that the person is innocent and we look to find new evidence to prove it. We are also involved in policy and education, where we strive to bring the lessons learned about the failings of the justice system to the larger public and legislature to try and prevent more

wrongful convictions.

The Korey Wise Innocence Project only helps people who are innocent and are in prison. Innocent means people who did not do the crime for which they were convicted. For example, if someone was convicted of a robbery or a murder that they did not do instead someone else did, we will work with them to help get their conviction overturned. We do not represent people who have been wrongfully convicted. Wrongfully convicted means that a person did do the crime but there were things about their conviction that was unfair. For example, they were convicted because their defense attorney did not help them enough, or the police acted illegally in arresting them, the prosecutor introduced evidence at their trial that was unfair, and that led to their conviction.

People can apply to our project for review of their case once they have finished their first appeal by writing us a letter briefly explaining why they are innocent. If a person says that they are innocent when they write us, we will send them an application. Once a person's application comes back to us, since we only carry about twelve cases at a time, it can be a long time until we get to their case.

People who feel that they were wrongfully convicted should raise these issues in either their 1st appeal through their appellate attorney or ask the Court to appoint an attorney for them in their post-conviction appeal (35(c)).

We are looking forward to adding our legal column to your paper. In our column, we will try to answer some legal questions, but we cannot give legal advice. This means we can't answer questions about your specific case. We hope the KWIP column will be interesting and informative!

Introduccion de KWIP Columna Legal

Estamos emocionados de presentarles una sección especial que se lanzará continuamente en *The Inside Report*. El Proyecto Inocencia Korey Wise (KWIP) se ha asociado con la Universidad de Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI), para ofrecerles una columna legal como un servicio para los lectores de este periódico. Nuestro objetivo es explorar preguntas legales y asuntos que impactan a las personas que viven en las prisiones de Colorado. En esta edición les compartiamos un poco de nosotros y lo que hacemos.

La misión del Proyecto Inocencia Korey Wise es liberar a personas que son inocentes y que han sido condenados por delitos que no cometieron en Colorado. El nombre de nuestro proyecto Korey Wise, proviene de un hombre que fue condenado erróneamente y estuvo encarcelado por 13 años antes de ser exonerado y liberado de prisión. Él fue parte de Los Cinco de Central Park (Central Park 5). Nuestro proyecto esta localizado en la facultad de derecho en la Universidad de Colorado. La mayoría del trabajo que hacemos son casos individuales, en los cuales creemos que la persona es inocente y trabajamos para desarrollar nuevas pruebas para probarlo. También estamos involucrados con la educación y la política. Luchamos por compartir las lecciones aprendidas sobre los defectos del sistema de justicia al público y la asamblea legislatura para tratar de evitar más condenas injustas.

El Proyecto Inocencia Korey Wise solo

ayuda a individuos que son inocentes y están en prisión. Inocente significa que la persona no cometió el delito por el cual fue condenado. Por ejemplo, si alguien fue condenado por robo o asesinato que no cometieron y fue otra persona, nosotros trabajaríamos con la persona para intentar de anular la condena. No representamos a personas que han sido condenadas erróneamente. Una condena errónea significa que la persona cometió el delito, pero hubo cosas sobre la condena que fueron injustas. Por ejemplo, una persona fue condenada porque su abogado de defensa no le ayudo lo suficiente o la policía actuó ilegalmente durante el arresto, el abogado del estado presento pruebas durante el juicio que fueron injustas y resultaron en la condena.

Individuos pueden aplicar para que nuestra organización analice su caso ya que hayan terminado la primera apelación. Después de la primera apelación nos tienen que escribir una carta explicando brevemente porque son inocentes. Si una persona expresa que es inocente, nosotros le mandaremos una solicitud. Cuando recibimos la solicitud de una persona puede ser mucho tiempo antes de que podamos analizar el caso porque solo podemos trabajar en doce casos a la vez.

Las personas que sientan que fueron condenados erróneamente deben plantear estos asuntos ya sea en su primera apelación a través de su abogado de apelación o pedirle a la corte que les asigne un abogado para su apelación de reparación poscondenatoria (35(c)).

Estamos entusiasmados de contribuir nuestra columna legal a su periódico. En nuestra columna, intentaremos contestar algunas de sus preguntas legales, pero no podemos darles consejos legales. Esto significa que no podemos contestar preguntas específicas sobre su caso. ¡Esperamos que la columna de KWIP sea interesante e informativa!

Inside / Outside Scoop

BY JAMIYLAH NELSON
IR Columnist

Jamiylah,

You were released in July of 2020 and I can't imagine what it has been like for you after being given a life without parole sentence, and then being released 14 years later. I'm curious to know what your experience has been like thus far. What tips could you give a person being released that thought prison was their "last stop" and is suddenly released like you?

Robert Ray

Robert,

My experiences have varied for sure. In the beginning, I was able to laugh at some of the things that I noticed about myself in regards to being institutionalized. For instance, I'd bought some fluffy pink house shoes. I kept getting into the shower with them. The other thing I did a lot was throw my dishes and silverware away into the trash; I'd been so accustomed to just tossing my trays down the shoot in the chow hall. Those are just two of the many silly forms of institutionalized things that I did when I got out. My first tip would be to laugh at yourself in those moments.

Later, there were more serious things that I noticed about myself that began to bother me. I'd learned to coexist with people that I had disagreements with or just wasn't fond

of on the inside. Well, when you move into anyone's space, which in my case was my parents, you're bound to have disagreements. I found myself shutting them out and just coexisting in their space after a rough patch. I think it's very important for a person to recognize their coping mechanisms while inside so that, when released, they can be rapidly identified in stressful situations. My advice is to be vulnerable, communicate, listen to the feelings of others, give yourself grace, be aware of yourself and push yourself to grow and learn in those moments.

My first meeting with parole was a highly stressful day. It was hard to hear all that I couldn't do when I'd had this sense of freedom. Then there was just a lot of prying questions being asked by multiple people. Inside, you choose who you talk to and deal with and, for sure, there is an unspoken rule that you don't question a person about their business, especially after reading their energy and concluding that it's probably not a good idea unless you're about that life and determine in your mind that you want what comes with crossing certain boundaries, politics, and unspoken rules. Parole has a job to do and can care less about your state of mind. My advice for those who've been down for some time is to have someone there to support you through the process and to just take the day in stride. It's all you can really do.

Being released during COVID has been a challenge. Things that would have gotten done in a shorter period of time prior to

COVID now takes time that you don't feel you have. Tasks that you feel you need to handle here and now are prolonged by having to make appointments... lots of them. Social distancing in businesses in order to keep the population safe has also slowed things down. I encourage anyone to hit the ground running upon release. However, patience is needed in this instance.

As of late, I've discovered a frustration about everyone telling me what they think I should do with my life. I'm not sure if this is just a thing people who are released after doing a long time endure, but I have it coming from everyone. Although I feel like I don't know up from down out here and that people are coming from a good place, it's a lot to take in. There is this sense of obligation to take heed to the words of the people who tried to steer me right prior to incarceration and those who stayed by me during my incarceration. I have no tips for this one... I'm still trying to find a healthy balance between taking advice and listening to my own voice inside.

I really enjoyed answering this question. There is so much that I didn't touch on. It was hard choosing between experiences, but I hope what I shared, shed some light on some of what one can endure seven months into their release.

Sincerely,
Jamiylah Nelson

Do you have a talent for cartooning



Submit your artwork to The Inside Report through your Bureau Chief or Facility Liaison



RESOURCES

The Inside Report offers resources for Re-Entry and Reintegration from the pages of Remerg.com

CDOC does not endorse any individual company or entity within these pages, as they are solely utilized as general information for our residents.

For any clarification or additional information on items listed within these pages, contact your facility pre-release specialist.

HOUSING	HOUSING	HOUSING	APPRENTICESHIP	APPRENTICESHIP	APPRENTICESHIP	
<p>FAMILY TREE-HOUSE OF HOPE, GOALS, & HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM</p> <p>Family Tree’s Housing and Family Stabilization Services provides House of Hope, GOALS, and a homelessness program. Family Tree is located in Wheat Ridge, as is their homelessness program. Call 303-467-2604 for help with their homelessness program. House of Hope, for women with children who are experiencing homelessness, is located in Englewood. Call 303-762-9525 to reach House of Hope. The GOALS program helps stabilize families experiencing homelessness. Their number is 303-693-1241. Call the number listed for general questions. The website provides more information about each of these programs.</p> <p>Phone: 303-422-2133 Website: http://www.thefamilytree.org/ Address: 3805 Marshall Street, Wheat Ridge CO 80033</p>		<p>THE DON’T LOOK BACK CENTER’S HOUSE OF REHAB</p> <p>The Don’t Look Back Center’s House of Rahab is a shared living program where women and transwomen may find a safe haven together. The house provides life skills, cooking, HIV education/prevention, art therapy, naloxone classes, and a 12 step program. It costs \$600 per month with a \$125 administrative fee. The Don’t Look Back Center also provides a number of different programs for disadvantaged women, including therapy for addiction and trauma, care management for client wellness and autonomy, a transgender outreach program T.O.P. specifically for transwomen, CCAR certified recovery coaches, acu-detox treatments, and DUI education and therapy. Women and transwomen who’ve been in the justice system as well as self-referrals are very welcome. Call to find out more about any of their services and the House of Rahab.</p> <p>720-638-8397 thedontlookbackcenter.org Office Hours: M-Th: 9am-4pm, F: 9am-1pm, House Hours: M-F: 8:30am-4:30pm 14211 E. 4th Avenue Aurora, CO 80011 The Center is located in Building 3, Suite 305. The address above is the business address; house address available upon working with the Center</p>		<p>WOMEN’S BEAN PROJECT (PRE-APPRENTICESHIP)</p> <p>Women’s Bean Project operates a food manufacturing business, while providing support as you move forward on your new path towards self-sufficiency. Our goal is to provide you with the necessary job readiness and life skills needed to set you on a pathway for long-term success. They hire women who come from all walks of life and different backgrounds who are struggling to get or keep a job. If you are in a similar situation, they urge you to apply to work in their 7-month transitional employment program. You must be at least 21 years of age and have a history of unemployment to qualify. Here’s what you can expect during your time at Women’s Bean Project: Full-time paid employment as a Production Assistant, working Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM over the course of 7 months. Program classes such as computer training, budgeting, adult education, resume writing, interview skills, conflict resolution, healthy relationships & self-improvement. Assistance with navigating basic needs resources for child care, housing, transportation, food, medical and dental services. Personalized job coaching and group sessions to provide you with professional skills and support as you move into your next chapter.</p> <p>How to Apply: They hire MONTHLY. APPLY IN-PERSON MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY</p> <p>8:00 AM – 4:30 PM at Women’s Bean Project, 3201 Curtis Street Denver, CO 80205</p> <p>303-292-1919, 888-292-3001</p> <p>www.womensbeanproject.com/program-overview</p> <p>Hours: M-F: 8am-4:30pm 3201 Curtis St, Denver CO 80205</p>		<p>WORK OPTIONS (PRE-APPRENTICESHIP)</p> <p>Work Options provides a free culinary job training program for all gender identities. They offer students the opportunity to learn from professional chefs as well as life skills development, case management and job readiness activities, including mock interviewing and job placement. Their program helps people gain the skills necessary to build confidence, maintain employment, and the opportunity to earn up to four certificates, including the nationally recognized American Culinary Federation Prep Cook Certificate. Work Options’ mobile culinary classroom (MCC) is a 23-day culinary job training specifically designed for persons impacted by the criminal justice system. The Work Options Training Center is located in the Denver Human Services Castro Building (1200 Federal Blvd). Please contact Kristi Hornick at 970.290.1572 or kristi@workoptions.org to learn more and register.</p> <p>720-944-3393 workoptions.org M-F: 8am-3pm 1200 Federal Boulevard, Denver, CO 80204</p>
<p>SUNRISE SERENITY</p> <p>Sunrise Serenity--Pine House provides safe and sober shared housing for men in a good location. Rooms are shared or private for \$500 month. The house requires 12 step meetings, household duties and meetings, and has a zero tolerance policy. Services provided include job coaching. Write to the address for their Resident Intake Form to apply. It is possible to have a bed reserved prior to release. You may also call the number listed for information. There is a scholarship through Hornbuckle Foundation for clients who demonstrate a commitment to the program. Individuals must have their case managers or parole/probation officers call to begin the process with a three-party telephone orientation.</p> <p>616 N. Pine Street, Colorado Springs, CO 80905</p>	<p>A FUTURE AND A HOPE</p> <p>A Future and a Hope provides private and shared rooms in separate locations for men and women. The housing is not for couples or families. The housing is a privately run faith-based program with reasonable rent. You must be on parole to be eligible. You may call the number listed or write for more information.</p> <p>PO Box 2922 Littleton, CO 80161</p>	<p>APPRENTICESHIP</p>				
<p>SARA’S HOME</p> <p>Sarah’s Home provides healing, restoration, and reintegration for girls ages 12 to 18 rescued from the forced commercial sex trade. Services include education through an accredited school on the property, life skills, medical care, counseling, and more. Single rooms are fully furnished in a home located in a safe rural location. The cost is based on your income. Call the number listed for more information, or you may write to the address.</p> <p>https://www.sarahshome.us/</p> <p>PO Box 29, Peyton, CO 80831</p>	<p>CATHOLIC CHARITIES—THE MISSION SHELTER 120-DAY PROGRAM</p> <p>The Mission Shelter of Fort Collins provides a 120-day Levels Program for men, women, and families. Residents commit to goals that will help them obtain stable income and housing, attend employment and life skills classes, money management classes, deposit job earnings into a supervised fund, and more. You must be willing to stay drug and alcohol free and address whatever is causing the condition of homelessness for you. They can’t accept anyone with a sex offense conviction. You must call to get an appointment.</p> <p>970-484-5010 ccdenver.org/larimer-county-services/the-mission-in-fort-collins/ 460 Linden Center Drive Fort Collins, CO 80524</p>	<p>LEADERQUEST (IT TRAINING)</p> <p>LeaderQuest provides 5 to 10 day courses and 3 to 6 week programs that combine traditional instruction and hands-on labs to prepare you for IT certification exams. All courses are taught by a live instructor and LeaderQuest covers the cost of one certification attempt per class. When your training is complete, their Career Services team will help you get hired. The classes aren’t free, but Workforce Centers and VA programs can sometimes help with the cost. Call for more information.</p> <p>303-832-4665 Website: http://www.leaderquestonline.com/ M-F: 8am-10pm 6855 South Havana St., Suite 230 Englewood, CO 80112</p>		<p>LuxLit, a project of the DU Prison Arts Initiative, is an intentional collaboration inside and out of prisons in the state of Colorado. LuxLit is designed to spark new understandings for people anywhere, through the publication of original materials created by people who are incarcerated. It is our mission to cultivate relationships with authors and artists, creating spaces for education and dialogue thereby doing more than just crafting outstanding art, but seeing, supporting and strengthening every artist we come into contact with. LuxLit is publishing a wide variety of genres on a call-for-submission basis. This provides opportunities to produce strong literary pieces, as well as to discover previously untapped resources within the incarcerated community.</p>		
<p>SHARE THE WEALTH</p> <p>Do you know of any housing or employment opportunities for men and women re-entering the community? Please share that information through <i>The Inside Report</i> Find out how to submit the information through your Bureau Chief or facility liaison.</p>						

APPRENTICESHIP APPRENTICESHIP ORGANIZATIONS ORGANIZATIONS ORGANIZATIONS ORGANIZATIONS

COLORADO HOMEBUILDING ACADEMY (PRE-APPRENTICESHIP)
 Colorado Homebuilding Academy provides construction skills boot camps that you can complete in one month (four days a week) or in two months (two nights a week). The training is free if you are committed to getting a career in construction. Most of the training is hands-on in the learning lab, and they provide connections to a career in the construction field after you finish the boot camp. CHA also has a two-week concrete training boot camp, AND a one-year construction management course where you can earn credits from Community College of Aurora. Click on the Get Started button on their website to learn about information sessions. You can also sign up for their reminders about classes. COVID-19 UPDATE: Services are by phone with no walk-ins. Virtual classes are held on Tuesdays.

303-997-0463
<https://cohomebuildingacademy.org/>
 M-Th: 9am-6:30pm
 445 W. 53rd Place
 Denver, CO 80216

JOBS OF HOPE
 Jobs of Hope, Inc. was founded in 2013 for the purpose of providing support for men seeking to reenter the community and obtain a better quality of life. They write: "We are a faith-based non-profit focused on working to help gentlemen coming out of incarceration and/or gang-involvement leave behind years of legal problems. We believe that through Jesus' love, case management, life skills training, assistance with employment and education we can be a bridge for our participant to reconnect with their families and community and vice-versa, to help our community engage with our participants and share our vision of seeing their potential to become positive and productive members of society." Call the number below or email info@jobsofhope.org and ask for an appointment to get started. If you don't have a phone or computer, you can also drop in and make an appointment for a later date. Phone:

Phone: 970-451-5007
 Website: <https://www.jobsofhope.org/>
 Hours: M-Th: 9am-4:30pm
 Address: 1324 10th Avenue, Greeley, CO 80631

DENVER INDIAN CENTER, INC.
 The Denver Indian Center Inc. (DICI) is an urban cultural gathering center for the American Indian/ Alaska Native community of the Denver Metro area, but it is also a community center for everyone. All are welcome. DICI provides programs that support the Native youth and community, including the justice-involved, with a food bank, a fantastic Workforce Program, Fatherhood Program, COVID-19 resources, and more. DICI has partnered with Metro Volunteer Lawyers in the past to deliver monthly free legal clinics and hopes to also provide those again soon.

Phone: 303-936-2688
 by appointment only at this time, please call ahead
 Website: <https://www.denverindiancenter.org>
 Hours: M-F 8am-12pm, 1-5pm
 Address: 4407 Morrison Road, Denver CO 80219

THE RIGHT WAY FOUNDATION HVAC ACADEMY & MAINTENANCE TRAINING
 Looking for a career in heating and cooling? The Right Way Foundation offers a 96-day program held on Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday from 6-9pm. If you pass the ESCO EPA test in all section, you will receive a universal license. For graduates, job placement services are provided throughout Colorado, Louisiana, and Texas. You can also take their general maintenance training course to get certificate in CPO certification programs. This training course lasts 30 days. Click on the website link to learn more and send an email. You can also call the number provided.

303-625-3952
<https://rightwayfoundation5280.com/>
 M-F: 8am-6pm
 1010 South Joliet Street
 Aurora, CO 80012

CONNECTIONS PRISON MINISTRY
 Connections Prison Ministry (CPM) is a faith-based nonprofit ministry with the ultimate purpose of sharing Jesus through relationships with individuals and their families who struggle with incarceration. As relationships are built, CPM offers assistance with resources for employment, transportation, housing, cellphones, clothing, food, basic household supplies, mentorship, counsel and connections to the local church. Incarcerated men and women in most Colorado prisons can request a "Connections Prison Ministry" application through the facility Chaplain's office. Family members and friends can also download and print a copy from the website and mail it to an incarcerated person. Completed applications should be mailed to Connections Prison Ministry, PO Box 441174, Aurora, CO 80044. It's best if Connections is contacted with an application prior to someone's release from prison.

Phone: 720-579-5122
 Website: <https://connectionsprisonministry.org/>

DENVER DREAM CENTER
 Denver Dream Center provides the THRIVE program, which is a re-entry ministry that helps men return to their community. They offer bible studies, and a number of other programs. For their clients, they provide help re-establishing family connections, help getting a job, and connections to health care. They also offer volunteer opportunities, character development classes, and a food, clothing and household item bank called Dream Closet. Their Families in Transition (FIT) program supports single moms.

Phone: 720-510-9113
 Website: <https://www.denverdreamcenter.org/>
 Hours: M-Th: 8:30am-5pm, F: 8:30am-3pm
 Address: 2839 W 44 Avenue, Denver CO 80211

FREEDOM FELLOWSHIP
 Freedom Fellowship has a ministry that's been going into several prisons. They will help people returning to this area. You must leave a message at the number and they'll call you back. Their counselor may be able to help you find resources, and they also offer Sunday afternoon services.

Phone: 970-472-1193
 Website: <http://www.freedom-fellowship.org/>
 Address: PO Box 726, Fort Collins, CO 80522

Do you know of any housing or employment opportunities for men and women re-entering the community?
 Please share that information through **The Inside Report**
 Please contact your Bureau Chief or Facility Liaison



Chess Tactician

BY **RANJIT SAHOTA**
 IR Editorial Assistant

Puzzle 4 ★★★★★

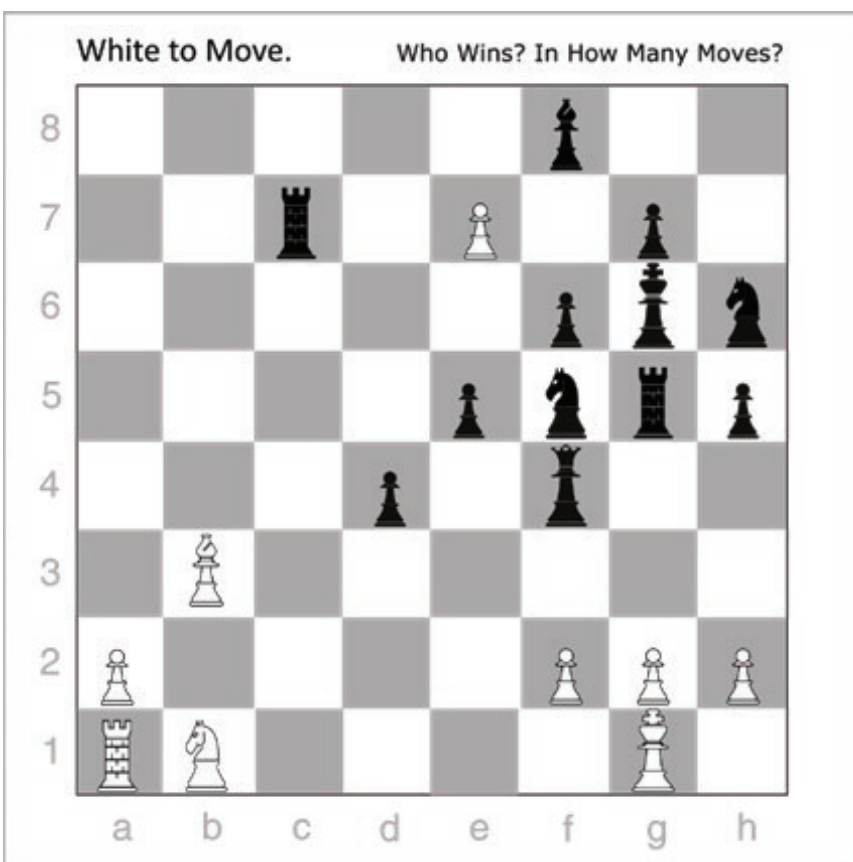
Knowledge of the chess rules is important to better understand positions and to analyze potential moves. This puzzle tests your knowledge of an important rule that every novice should know.

To solve this chess puzzle, use a chessboard and set it up using the puzzle diagram. The goal is to determine who will win the game and how many moves it will take. It is White's turn to move. Black will move next and so on until the game is completed. To solve the puzzle, determine who will win and how many moves it will take.

Solution:

This puzzle checks your understanding of the Pawn promotion rules. It can be advantageous to "under promote" a Pawn to a piece other than the usual Queen. The situation is that White is far behind in material and at first glance looks to be in a hopeless losing position.

Knowledge of the pawn promotion rule provides a winning advantage. White moves the E7 Pawn to F8 (capturing the Black Bishop) and then promotes the Pawn to a **Knight** (instead of a Queen) and Checkmates Black to win the game in **one** move!



Brain Teaser

BY **RANJIT SAHOTA**
 IR Editorial Assistant

Puzzle 1 ★★★★★

Four People on a Rickety Bridge

Four people need to cross a rickety bridge at night. Unfortunately, they have only one flashlight and the bridge is too dangerous to cross without one. The bridge is only strong enough to support two people at a time. Not all people take the same time to cross the bridge. The times for each person are: 1 min, 2 mins, 7 mins and 10 mins. What is the shortest time needed for all four of them to cross the bridge? This is a Google interview question.

Solution:

The common answer is: P1 and P2 cross together. Then P1 comes back. Then P1 and P10 cross. Then P1 comes back and finally P1 and P7 cross for a total time of 21 mins (2 + 1 + 10 + 1 + 7).

The key is to leave P1 on the other side after the first crossing and bring him back later. Sequence is P1 and P2 cross together. Then P2 comes back. P7 and P10 cross together. Then P1 comes back. P1 and P2 cross together. **Total time = 17 mins (2 + 2 + 10 + 1 + 2)**

Serenity at the center

“The art I create is in finding TRUE meaning in my life works and other’s true value.”

Featured Artist Sydney White

BY WILLIAM CONEY
IR Editorial Assistant

“When I paint it’s my whole world, my heart, and my creation. All the serenity I need is going round and round in a color wheel of yellows, blues, reds, fading into violets, greens, oranges and all the colors you could possibly conceive are enough to enliven every fiber of my being. I feel calm. I feel a release of stress, of danger, of hurt.”

Sydney White, a self-taught 27-year-old, artist was inspired to paint at the age of 10 when her grandmother, a breathtaking landscape artist, passed. Her grandfather brought the color back into her life by moving all the landscape paintings into the living room. She still feels her grandmother’s spirit and pride in every project.

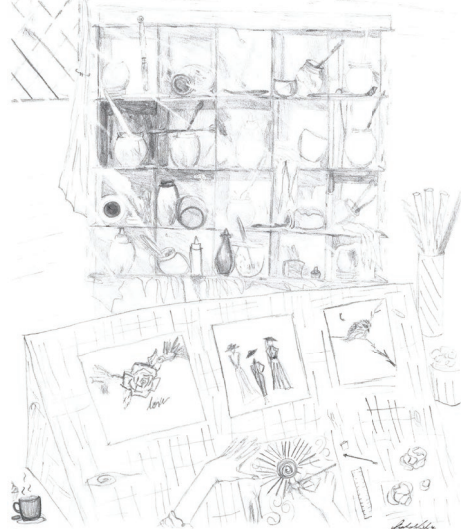
This artist feels the colors in every fiber of her being because she becomes the canvas, especially when working on murals. White can be found working in the hallways with paint stains covering her clothes and skin. Passerby’s will blame her small stature but friends know she loves to embody the art and prefers that fragrance to anything found on canteen. White can actually be seen feeling the texture of the work. She attempts to focus all her senses on the Craft, and replace the noise within, with her own music and color harmony.

When White is not the canvas, other girls may be. She is an accomplished cosmetologist, a senior in the program, she plans on making a career of it and one day owning her own salon. When not in Cosmo, she can be found in one of her college classes, in the gym participating in the newly formed RF² CrossFit or doing her own workouts. Ideally, her place is outside in the sun, working on homework and enjoying the day with her friends.

White exemplifies good character within the incentive unit, proactively collaborating on arts and craft projects for the community. She is also an advocate for the movement created by DU PAI behind these walls. She retains a seat as a group leader and bureau chief for *The Inside Report* at La Vista Correctional Facility. White participates in correspondence courses and a theatre workshop and her passion and driving force in art is about transformation and healing.

“The art I create is in finding TRUE meaning in my life works and other’s true value. Hard work pays off and I’ve found I take recovering from the unimaginable to be transformed and reach for the intangible.”

“When I paint it’s my whole world, my heart, and my creation.”



On the Left: Art renderings of ink and graphite works. On the Right: Murals at La Vista Correction Facility. [Photo courtesy of Sydney White]



Want to be a featured artist?

Artist Bio:

Age? Where were you born? Where did you grow up?
How long have you been creating art?

Artist statement:

What inspired this pieces(s)?
What techniques did you use(d)?
Any tip you’d like to share with our readers?

Profile Questions:

In what ways, if any, is creating art soothing for you?
In what areas would you like to improve as an individual artist?

Please request a media packet for LuxLit Press from your Bureau Chief or facility Liaison

