

The INSIDE REPORT

Our Town performed live



A kaleidoscope of colors illuminate performers at University of Denver's presentation of "Our Town"

[Photo courtesy of John Moore]

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Heroes among us

Sacred time with Bryan Stevenson

BY TREVOR JONES
IR Senior Editor

Heroes are people who use their gifts, talents, and experiences to help others who cannot help themselves. Heroes stand up to bullies, and they give their time, money, and resources to create spaces that provide others a chance to thrive. They inspire hope, that internal disposition that tells us that things can be better tomorrow, that the past is no predictor of the future, and that people can work (hard) to make the future better. Heroes are strong for those who need them most.

In late November of 2021, IR staff, along with Denise Presson, resident of Denver Women's Correctional Facility (DWCF)

and co-host of the "With(in)" podcast, had the opportunity to speak with Bryan Stevenson, a real hero. Also participating in the nearly two-hour conversation were members of the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI), Executive CDCO staff, and staff and participants in the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP). The discussion, titled "The Stone Catcher," can be heard on the DU PAI Podcast "With(in)," and was broadcasted on "Inside Wire: Colorado Prison Radio." Justice is the work and calling of Stevenson's life. Many readers may know his book "Just Mercy: A Story of Justice and Redemption," which was

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A road to success

BY ALEXANDER JASMINE
IR Submissions Manager

Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI) renegotiated their contract with the E-470 Public Highway Authority to grant a substantial wage increase for the residents at Denver Women's Correctional Facility (DWCF) working the toll roads. Part of a larger movement toward

normalcy throughout CDCO, the renegotiation addressed the marginal payment E-470 agents have received in the past. "60% of women within E-470 will now make \$10/hr or more based on their performance rates," CCI Director Jessica Warren said.

The new pay plan went into effect on January 15, 2022, generating unprecedented opportunities for some agents to make up to minimum wage. "E-470 is making it work on their

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No bare cupboard

BY DERRICK MILLER
FMCC Associate Editor

June 17, 2021, an already-hot Thursday morning, workers in the garden at Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF) performed their first harvest of the year for the first donation to My Neighbor's Pantry, a food bank in Penrose, Colorado.

Before this new partnership with the pantry, the garden project at FCF had already donated 16,000 pounds of produce to Loaves and Fishes, a homeless shelter in Cañon City, since 2012. The success of the FCF garden made such an impact that the scope of the project has expanded to include a third community partner: Manna House in Florence.

Originally, the garden project was proposed to augment the supply of fresh produce for FCF's Food Services. Part of the first harvest resulted in fresh lettuce



Byron Gay and Glen Jones harvest from the heart

[Photo courtesy of IR]

and radishes for the scheduled meal of chef's salad. However, due to logistical complications and the size of the garden plots (which total 288 square feet), the project had room to grow.

Thanks to the efforts of staff and administration, outreach began to those in need beyond the prison walls.

According to the USDA, an estimated 35 million Americans experience hunger every year. Some 13 million of these Americans are children. In Colorado, it is estimated that

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Prison radio launch

BY WILLIAM CONEY
IR Senior Editor

Launch of the first statewide prison radio in the U.S., and the first in the world to broadcast to the public, Inside Wire, gives incarcerated voices worldwide reach.

University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI) Creative Producer Ryan Conarro, has brought his broadcast and sound production experience from the Alaskan radio and New York media organizations to Colorado as the General Manager and Program Director of Inside Wire radio station. The

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Denver Women's Correctional Facility residents working 9 to 5

[Photo courtesy of CCI]

Ranges of changes

BY BRANDY POWELL
LVCF Contributor

The prison reform movement is sending shockwaves through the Colorado Department of Corrections.

Reformers inside the system are ushering in new ways of doing time with positive growth, artistic development, social reprogramming, and restorative justice at the core.

They are calling for

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Kids and crafters Collaboration in a purpose-driven partnership

BY WENDY ROSEN
CTCF Programs Supervisor

Harry Truman once said, "I have found the best way to give advice to your children is find out what they want to do, and then advise them to do it." This is the philosophy and practice of Anne Turnpaugh, mother of the bright and ambitious 11-year-old Ashley Scott.

When Ashley was just five years old, she and her mother were

discussing their plans for Christmas. As Anne explains, they had a little extra cash, and she asked her daughter what she would like to spend it on to help celebrate the season. Ashley asked her mother if they could use the money to provide Christmas to those who might not get gifts.

Even at her young age, she was well aware that the people she saw living on the

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Graduate released with two degrees

BY TOREY KUZNICKI
IR Journalist

A week before her release back into the free and unknowable world, Jenifer Wilson departed the Youthful Offender System (YOS) with a powerful and inspirational interview, giving the inside world a glimpse of the epitome of success.

The 24-year-old woman was released in January 2022 after spending five years at



Graduate Jenifer Wilson

[Photo courtesy of Wilson]

YOS. Many leaving prison try to forget about it and close that shameful chapter of their lives. But Wilson nurtured and embraced the true gifts of her imperfections while behind bars and considers prison a saving grace and the

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Healthy living

BY ANTHONY VALDEZ
IR Editor in Chief

Chelsea McBride, CDCO Registered Dietician, offers a nutrition class at Fremont and Centennial Correctional Facilities throughout COVID's waltz of upsurge and deceleration. The class brings valuable knowledge and relevant information to incarcerated people that helps them implement life-changing, healthy living decisions.

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IN BRIEF

Family life

BY WILLIAM CONEY
IR Senior Editor

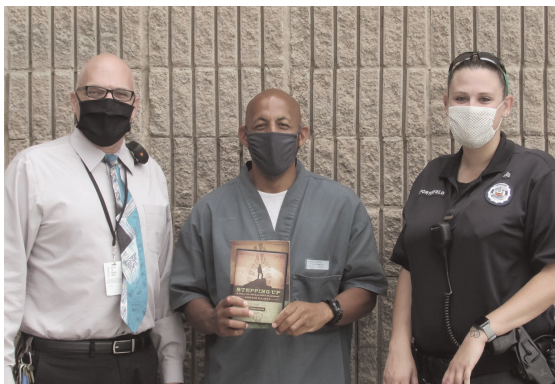
Proactive staff and devoted volunteers set a synchronistic stage for an inmate to bring opportunities and grace to the living unit residents at Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF) during difficult times.

Grace without Borders Ministries brought Chaplain Larry Walker to Colorado to work with the incarcerated. He first brought the message to the

residents at Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility, and it quickly spread to Territorial and Fremont Correctional Facilities. The “Stepping Up” program soon followed.

“Stepping Up” is the creation of Dennis and Barbara Rainey, the founders of FamilyLife. Since 1976, FamilyLife has touched the lives of approximately three million couples around the world with events like “Weekends to Remember” and “Marriage

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Chaplain Larry, Samuel Kase White, and Sgt. Porterfield in front of the Veterans' pod [Photo courtesy of IR]

Korey Wise Innocence Project

A recurring column from a Colorado legal aid organization working to support criminal defense

BY ANN ROAN
KWIP Columnist

FILING A PRO SE CRIM.P. 35(c) PETITION

This article is not intended to offer any legal advice. Rule 35(c) of the Colorado Rules of Criminal Procedure allows for relief after a criminal conviction. To take advantage of it, people must either hire a lawyer to file a petition, or file the petition on their own and ask the court to appoint a lawyer to litigate it for them. This article gives an overview of what a pro se petition needs to include to avoid having the court dismiss it on its face without appointing counsel.

The standard for pro se petitions

Be sure to read all of Rule 35 very, very carefully. The court is unlikely to forgive a petition that doesn't fit within the rule's parameters, even if it is filed by a non-lawyer. A petition must also include all the information in the Supreme Court's Form 4. Filling out that form then attaching any additional information makes it less likely the court will reject it on that ground. There is good law that is worth reminding the court about in a pro se 35(c) petition. The court

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PRESENTACIÓN DE UN PRO DELITOS.P. 35(c) PETICIÓN

Este artículo no pretende ofrecer ningún consejo legal.

La Regla 35(c) de las Reglas de Procedimiento Penal de Colorado permite el alivio después de una condena penal. Este artículo ofrece una descripción general de lo que es un delito pro se. La petición de la página 35(c) debe incluir para reducir las posibilidades de que el tribunal la desestima sin nombrar un abogado.

El estándar para las peticiones pro se

Asegúrese de leer toda la Regla 35 con mucho, mucho cuidado. Es poco probable que el tribunal perdone una petición que no se ajuste a los parámetros de la regla, incluso si la presenta alguien que no es abogado. Una petición también debe incluir toda la información en el Formulario 4 de la Corte Suprema. Llenando ese formulario y adjuntando cualquier información adicional hace que sea menos probable que la corte la rechace por ese motivo.

Existe una buena ley que vale la pena recordarle al tribunal en una petición 35(c) pro se. El tribunal debe realizar un pro se alegato con “estándares menos estrictos que los alegatos formales redactados por abogados[.]” Haines v. Kerner, 404 US 519, 520 (1972). Eso significa que el tribunal debe “aplicar la ley aplicable, independientemente de si el litigante pro se la ha mencionado por su nombre[.]” Dluhos v. Strasberg, 321 F.3d 365, 369 (3rd Cir. 2003). Ambos casos fueron citados con la aprobación de la Corte Suprema de Colorado en People v. Bergerud, 223 P.3d 686, 696-97 (Colo. 2010). Cualquier desafío que tenga el litigante pro se, incluida la falta de educación formal; discapacidades intelectuales, psicológicas, físicas o del desarrollo; la falta de acceso a los archivos del caso del abogado anterior, el descubrimiento y los recursos legales, puede ser importante para describir en la petición.

Y una petición 35(c) no tiene que incluir todas las pruebas que respaldan sus afirmaciones. La regla por defecto es que se debe llevar a cabo una audiencia probatoria a menos que quede claro en el expediente judicial y las transcripciones que se deben denegar los reclamos. Ardolino v. Pueblo, 69 P.3d 73, 77 (Colo. 2003). Una petición que se refiere a hechos fuera del expediente del tribunal y las transcripciones tiene muchas más posibilidades de que se nombre un abogado y se conceda una audiencia probatoria que una petición que no incluye tales hechos o plantea solo una cuestión legal.

El tono de una petición pro se es importante. Una persona que ha sido condenada y encarcelada inconstitucionalmente está, por

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Who's the GOAT now

BY ERIC DAVIS
DUPAI Journalist

It was 6am on July 10, 2021. Things were different on that warm summer morning, but eerily the same. The clang of metal on metal as gates and security doors opened and slammed shut, then locked again. The constant, wary eyes of staff as they scanned the newly-arriving throng of volunteers and visitors streaming into the Denver Women's Correctional Facility (DWCF). There was a buzz in the crowd as they filed into the gymnasium. “Is he really here?” “No way.” “Yeah, I swear, they said he's doing an interview inside.” Who was all the whispering about?

Inside one of the anterooms, a camera focused on the greatest, most recognizable figure in the entire CrossFit community:

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From left to right, Erik Jensen, Trevor Jones, Jon Willis, Mat Fraser, Michael Chard, and Mike Lind

[Photo courtesy of RF2]

In honor of these men

BY FRED BARKER
CSP Bureau Chief

COLD... That is what comes to mind as I sit quietly at a table listening to the rattling and tumbling of a plastic soda bottle passing through a coin-operated pop machine. I am waiting to conduct an exclusive interview with Steve Lee, an Incentive Unit (I-Pod) resident at Colorado State Penitentiary (CSP). The CSP I-Pod houses 126 prisoners who hold themselves to a high standard of pro-social behavior, and they are recognized by the facility administration for their positive character. There has been an infamously negative stigma about CSP for a long time, and understandably so. CSP was built to house inmates for punitive purposes, for those who continue to resist personal accountability, transformation,

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Steve Lee, one of the leaders at CSP changing the culture

[Photo courtesy of Lee]

RF2 2.0 Redemption Road CrossFit

BY TAYLOR DOUCET
SCF Journalist

Redemption is an endless pursuit, and when you are lying in the ashes of your failure, it becomes the forge of your destiny. We have one purpose, one reason to exist. I believe we exist to create new life, which we achieve by giving someone a path to walk, a purpose, a passion, and by giving someone a family. CrossFit is the pursuit of excellence in every area of my life, as well as the other CrossFit athletes. We do not achieve excellence, we pursue it. Redemption Road Fitness Foundation (RF2) is a CrossFit program using barbells as a catalyst to make change not only in the lives of individuals, but also the community.

Change is necessary for growth. Whether we are obtaining our driver's licenses, caring for children as new parents, or in prison and making decisions that determine the rest of our lives, change is inevitable. Understanding this concept as a program, RF2 saw areas in which they could improve the effectiveness of their goal of becoming world-changing leaders. RF2 also understands that people who leave prison are at a disadvantage

when entering the career field, and overcoming this disadvantage is part of the vision. The second edition of this vision is called RF2 2.0.

While we were on COVID lockdown, the founder of the program, Brandin Kreuzer, had the idea that this mission could be elevated to a higher level. RF2 2.0 is a more focused way of making this program welcome everyone. The change is a culmination of five years of program growth, including a demanding core syllabus, partnerships and sponsorships with many other companies and brands with similar missions, and more frequent communication among branches and sponsors. RF2 2.0 also provides stakeholders a clear picture of roles and goals, and, like any other business, it includes models for scaling expansion.

RF2 2.0 is the call to those people with that fire inside, the inferno that wants to consume greatness, and a hard-work mentality that prison often creates. We all have room to grow, and the hours will be many, the responsibility burdensome, and the outcome will cost much. But, at the end of the day we will build a larger

stage from which to speak into someone's life. A coach is a leader of the heart through a person's suffering, whether it be barbells or a person's life.

RF2 participants range from new members to those who have been doing this for a while. Initially, RF2 requires very little from a member except the absence of negativity and the presence of positivity. It is ground zero for creating culture. For those who are satisfied with these requirements, RF2 encourages and welcomes their presence. Those who are hungrier, might consider the coaching track.

The coaching track progressions, above the regular participant level, are not meant to be easy. Participants need to be active in the program for a minimum of 180 days to be considered for a coaching track. This track is meant to light a fire of purpose inside the person, give them the tools for vocational excellence, and provide equal opportunity to anyone willing to work hard. For the most tenacious, the program offers a demanding climb, and for those lacking

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To our readers and future contributors,

Welcome to *The Inside Report*. We, the editorial team, hope you enjoy reading the paper as much as we enjoy producing it. With each issue we strive to bring you news, entertainment, and valuable information. As you make your way through our pages, you may notice a high number of pieces authored by Fremont residents. We note this because we recognize that Fremont's residents comprise a mere 10% of CDOC's population. It is important to this editorial staff to cultivate *The Inside Report* as a statewide paper. *The Inside Report* is meant to represent the whole of CDOC and beyond. Creating something original leads to unforeseen challenges, and one of these challenges has been drawing contributions from all of Colorado's prisons. We look to acquire and publish content for each issue from the other 90% of CDOC residents as much as possible. This will help to ensure that *The Inside Report* better reflects all of our voices. Many of you reading this, or perhaps someone you know, could contribute meaningful, newsworthy works to speak not only to CDOC residents but also to the wider *Inside Report* community, which includes the families, friends, and advocates of residents across Colorado's facilities. This newspaper reaches thousands of readers, and your ideas could make an impact! We encourage you to write, draw, and contribute. We look forward to hearing from you. Thank you for your support, your contributions, and your voices. Enjoy!

Respectfully,
Anthony Ray Valdez
Editor in Chief

Beloved

The Inside Report would like to honor the people of CDOC who have died since the publication of our last issue. This obituary is an homage to just one of those people

BY **ROBERT P. FRY**
CTCF Contributor

On Thanksgiving morning, November 25, 2021, our beloved friend and devout Christian Brother, Michael Peters, went home to be with the Lord. He will be sorely missed by many.

Peters was just 59 years old. He was a man of true faith in his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He never complained about health or heart problems of any kind. He felt healthy enough to enter the first ever Thanksgiving 5K "Turkey Trot" run/walk at Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF). Peters started the event walking but was so moved by the energy of the crowd of runners that he chose to run with them.

After several laps, Peters fell to the ground. Tragically,

CTCF staff's many valiant attempts to resuscitate Peters were unsuccessful. He was pronounced dead after E.M.S. transported him to the hospital. "Therefore, if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Peters served 33 years of a 96-year term of incarceration.

Before the Lord's angels could carry Peters home, he turned down a Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI) job so he could do what he felt called to do, the Lord's Work, as a chaplain's clerk. He worked diligently with Chaplain Matt Overholt. Peters' legacy will forever live on with the countless inmates he ministered to and in his contributions to restoring integrity to the CTCF chapel. In his final days Peters was fervently praying for a vaccinated chaplain who could be permitted behind the walls to open and operate the chapel.

Through the CTCF community's grieving process,

Programs Coordinators Captain Wendy Rosen and Lieutenant Benjamin Thiel set an example of extraordinary leadership with professionalism and human compassion. Captain Rosen asked many times how our community was handling Peters' passing. She was genuinely concerned. Within a few hours after Peters' passing, Lieutenant Thiel had the chapel doors open to comfort our small church family and hold a memorial service in Peters' honor. Thiel didn't just lead as an agent of CDOC. He led a group of mourning men in prayer and song. This simple act of human compassion was much more than dynamic security in action – it was a necessary element to the healing process of a community.

Peters was well loved and respected by staff and inmates alike. He had a loving relationship with his surviving brother and sister. He will be sorely missed.

Being the change we want to see

BY **DERRICK MILLER**
FMCC Associate Editor

What does it mean to change a culture? This is the question many residents in CDOC have been asking since 2018, when CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams first talked about a concept called "normalization." The entire premise of normalization is to change the culture of prison to help build better neighbors instead of better prisoners. The model for how normalization could work was, and is, Norway's maximum security prison, Halden.

Inspired by the possibilities of normalization, a group of men in Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF) are seeking to define what prison culture can be. Participants in the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP) and the Veteran's Program are collaborating to create an environment that helps the intent behind both programs. Both entities are housed in FCF's Cell House 2, and, until recently, the members of each group resided in separate housing pods. Thanks in part to the statewide lockdown due to the pandemic, the men of these two programs had time to brainstorm among themselves and imagine what a change of prison culture could look and feel like.

Well aware of the many security restrictions at FCF, which present significant differences from the conditions at Halden Prison, the two groups decided to abandon the pursuit of precisely replicating any of

Norway's normalized freedoms and comforts. Instead, these men shifted their focus to what was actually available and what would avoid creating concerns for security. After defining their limitations, they determined that their focus of control was their immediate culture as it existed in the housing pods. Their decision was to make changes in their pods that would help them communally progress as mature and intelligent adults while isolated by lockdown.

In the JCAP pod, men approached communal progress by using the legislative intent behind JCAP as their springboard. Signed into law in 2016, Senate Bill 16-180 created JCAP: it set forth a mandate to train and accustom qualified juveniles convicted as adults in independent living skills, as preparation for the possibility of early parole. After much internal debate, the men in JCAP agreed that this meant finding a way to deprogram their own experience of twenty-plus years of institutionalization in the prison system. They recognized that their path forward had to be a grass-roots endeavor, beginning with the internal community. Through shared meals, meaningful conversations, and many card games, they rebuilt a sense of what one member describes as "neighborliness." The next step was to consider how the pod could engage other residents beyond JCAP participants. With no assigned housekeeping porters, JCAP began an

informal volunteer rotation to clean their living area. They worked to ensure that the basic needs of other residents in their pod were met. They supported each other's progressive goals, including preparing for class final exams, developing creative expressions, or learning other languages. One such example was when JCAP participant Mike Montoya decided to learn American Sign Language (ASL). ASL quickly became a small group project that evolved into something much larger: it became a shared new language among many members of the JCAP community.

Meanwhile, the Veteran's Program at FCF underwent a similar evolution. Having started with the ability to self-program, the vets focused on finding meaningful materials and directions to provide options for their fellow participants. The materials ranged from victim's impact information to motivational self-help Spanish classes. The group used these materials to guide discussions during a group forum. In addition, the vets also maintained their own housekeeping, volunteered to help within the cell house, and began writing numerous proposals on what could be done post-COVID. Members of the Vets pod also began talking with JCAP participants in greater detail, reflecting on how the two groups could collaborate toward realizing Executive Director Dean Williams' goal of

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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
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Voting rights

BY EVAN LAWLOR
IR Associate Editor

On April 8th, *The Inside Report* had the privilege of sitting in on a Zoom interview with Andrew Rodriguez R. Calderón and Alexandra Arriaga, journalists from The Marshall Project. The interview was conducted by Anthony Quintana and Herbert Alexander of “Inside Wire,” CDOC’s radio station.

The Marshall Project is a nonprofit newsroom that covers criminal justice as well as immigration. Founded in 2006 and based in New York City, it aims to expand its offices to other cities across the country with high incarceration rates.

The interview came about because of an article that Calderón and Arriaga co-wrote with fellow journalists Ilica Mahajan and Weihua Li, in conjunction with The Colorado Sun, about paroled offenders from Colorado being able to vote.

The article covers House Bill 1266, passed in 2019, which restores the right to vote to those on parole. The problem was that this information was never updated on the Voter Registration Choice Form [in some counties], which directly conflicted with the Colorado Secretary of State’s website. The confusion led Teri Quintana, mother of recently-paroled Anthony Kent, to start asking questions and ultimately reach out to The Marshall Project and The Colorado Sun.

When asked to elaborate on what happens to a bill after it has been signed by the governor and passed on to the relevant agency, Calderón responded, “In most cases the expectation is that once a bill is signed into law, any of the entities that are responsible for executing that law are supposed to kick into action, develop a system, create the forms, et cetera. And in this case, it seems like what happened was that a very crucial form, which is the Voter Registration Choice Form (NVRA), which comes in the packet that you typically get when you’re on parole that gives you a lot of other information, like information about food and medical assistance programs, had not been updated.” Arriaga added, “They [Colorado Secretary of State’s office] were in the process of getting everyone they interact with in order. To get these sites updated and the correct forms updated. They were in that process.”

This is just one of many examples for how a lack of updated information can pose problems for offenders being released from prison. It is a clear reminder that not everything is as it might seem. You may have more available to you than you thought.

A very special thanks goes out to the folks at The Marshall Project for volunteering their time for the interview. We also thank them for their tireless devotion to the fight for criminal justice reform. Articles like the one referenced about parolees’ voting rights and many more can be found at www.themarshallproject.org.

New JYACAP

Colorado’s 2021 House Bill 1209 (HB 1209)

BY MATTHEW MOUNTS
FCF Contributor

Over the past nine months, there has been some confusion about Colorado’s 2021 House Bill 1209 (HB 1209). This bill, already signed into law, affects people who were imprisoned for crimes which were committed when they were under 21 years of age. If you feel it could possibly impact you, seek legal counsel for clarification. There are many qualifications, both positive and negative, in this bill.

When this bill was first introduced, it encompassed people “under 25 at the time of the offense.” The enacted version is “under 21.” This may change in the future, but as of now, it is only “under 21.” Family and loved ones may contact their local Colorado representative or senator to help show support for expanding this bill to include older age groups.

Much of the confusion is from how the bill was first introduced to what was actually put into law. The version that passed did modify the Session Laws of Colorado from 2016. It explains that the U.S. Supreme Court, relying on expert testimony, found that emotional aspects such as “impulse control” or “maturity” do not fully develop until “mid to late 20s.” (See HB 1209 as enacted for full text.) That implies an older cut off age, but the legislature set the current guide at under 21.

The act specifically modified three of the Colorado Revised Statutes (CRS). These are:

CRS 17-34-101 Juveniles and Young Adults convicted as Adults – eligibility – definitions

CRS 17-34-102 Specialized program for juveniles and young adults convicted as adults

CRS 17-22.5-403.7 Parole eligibility – youthful offender – juvenile offender convicted as an adult – definition

CDOC’s interpretation of the changes can be found in Administrative Regulation (AR) 650 – 08, effective Dec. 1, 2021. If you believe you are or may be eligible, this AR explains the process for applying for the Juvenile and Young Adults Convicted as Adults Program (JYACAP) program. If you are not eligible yet, if, say, the case happened on your 21st birthday or later, there are still a couple of things to look into:

1) There are a few “exceptions,” both for and against eligibility (please refer to the HB 1209 as enacted or AR 650 – 08 for these).

2) Possible law changes in the future. However, if you do jump the gun and are denied, CDOC can make you wait three years before you can apply again, even if the law changes. (See AR 650 – 08, IV Procedures. B, 10.)

Use caution and always consult legal professionals for questions and/or legal advice on all legal issues.

Culture

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normalization.

As the pandemic continued, “cohorting” began. Residents of each cell house could interact with others in the same living unit. The lack of available staff-facilitated programs and the established relationship between the JCAP and Veterans Program enabled the two groups to work together constructively. The result was a collaboration of people from both groups learning Spanish, ASL, and participating in discussion groups. Members of both groups were able to organize a friendly, impromptu debate session as a team competition. Members proposed to their staff liaison a coffee social, in order to further develop the health of their community. In every case, FCF housing staff was willing to work with the

two groups. Not every request was approved. The requests which were well thought out and had a clear objective received approval. When FCF residents asked housing Sergeant E. Porterfield why she supports the communal efforts between groups, she replied, “This was my first positive interaction with offenders. My experience before was that interactions start off on the wrong foot and go from there. When the JCAP and Veteran offenders bring a suggestion, their attitude is helpful and makes helping easier.”

As a result of the communal efforts of both JCAP and the Veteran’s Programs, volunteer residents from other areas of FCF fill housing needs such as grounds maintenance and sorting of canteen. The JCAP and Vets groups help ensure that sufficient volunteer library workers are available to run the various positions that are necessary during the

scheduled movement for Cell House 2. Since cohorting has expanded from the East Side units to West Side units, the JCAP/Veteran ASL learning group has reached out to the deaf residents at FCF to invite them into their community.

The next question these men are asking is where to go from here. In what way can an inclusive community be brought to other pods in their cell house?

With the lifting of COVID restrictions, the FCF management team is working at the administrative level to bring the facility back online and to begin programming once more. As their efforts are underway, the residents of at least one cell house are working to establish a foundational culture that can support progress. Whether or not this culture will spread to other living units throughout the facility, it makes a positive difference in Cell House 2.

Courteous gender identifiers

BY ANTHONY VALDEZ
IR Editor in Chief

The advancement of non-binary gender identifiers is common in workplace communications like emails and office memorandums. The identifiers are located next to a person’s signature at the end of a communication.

Although it’s a fairly new practice, as companies have begun to recognize their employee’s identifiers in the past decade, gender identifiers are not a new concept.

The increasing importance of using gender identifiers is expanding to other environments, too. They can

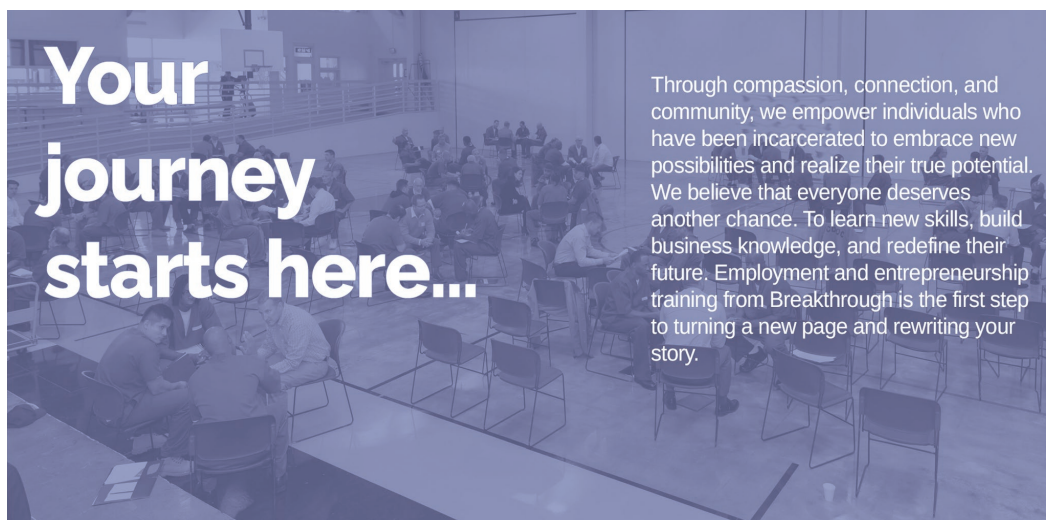
be found at the X-Games, in article by-lines, and in non-professional email signature lines. He/him, She/her, and They/them are general pronouns commonly used as identifiers, but there are many other acronyms to indicate how one identifies. The signature line of an email could read, Jane Doe (she/her) AMAB, which clarifies how this person prefers to be identified.

Yet gender identifiers might be a surprise to the “been down for a minute” incarcerated population. Many reintegration topics such as resumes, business letters, or educational material for GED

testing are antiquated. Often, prison staff members bring the newest business trends to share, such as these new social norms of using gender identifiers.

As with any cultural change, people not accustomed to or belonging to the culture shift can be overwhelmed by the newness. Those who are not familiar with a new social norm may respond with ill-manners.

Although these changes may seem incomprehensible to some, the practice to clearly identify a person’s pronouns is as common as saying their name.



Through compassion, connection, and community, we empower individuals who have been incarcerated to embrace new possibilities and realize their true potential. We believe that everyone deserves another chance. To learn new skills, build business knowledge, and redefine their future. Employment and entrepreneurship training from Breakthrough is the first step to turning a new page and rewriting your story.



Breakthrough currently serves the men and women of AVCF, CSP, and LVCF. Our program is open to all humans, of all case types, of all sentence lengths. To learn more about Breakthrough, write us.

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Stevenson

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made into a movie starring Michael B. Jordan. Stevenson founded the Equal Justice Initiative (EJI), which fights endlessly and tirelessly against injustices concerning race, capital punishment, poverty, and innocence. Stevenson has also won landmark rulings in the Supreme Court of the United States (SCOTUS) that provide protections for the rights of juveniles.

On June 10, 2016, Stevenson's work directly impacted Colorado when former Governor John Hickenlooper signed into law two bills advanced by the Colorado General Assembly. These bills provide relief for juveniles in the State of Colorado who had been sentenced to life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) and virtual life sentences (sentences wherein the earliest parole eligibility date is beyond the reasonable life expectancy of the condemned). Since that time, the Colorado Parole Board and Governor Jared Polis have applied these laws to release over a dozen eligible people, with more to come. These changes are the result of the work of Stevenson and the EJI, especially their judicial victories and the public awareness they generated around such cases. These triumphs give new life and hope to thousands of people across the country.

The power and importance of the legal system and education became forcefully clear to Stevenson early in his life. He was raised in "colored" schools in a community that had no high schools for Black kids. He watched lawyers force the community to do what they would otherwise be completely unwilling to do if left to themselves. The lawyers came to enforce and protect the rights pronounced in the Supreme Court decision *Brown v. the Board of Education*. Stevenson was able to get an education and go to college because of the work of attorneys, family, and grassroots social advocates. He now serves as a true example of a giant whose shoulders carry others striving to improve their own lives.

Much of Stevenson's work concerns the "narratives," or social stories we tell ourselves, that in turn influence public perceptions and policies.

Stevenson notes that it is a sad reality of our system that people tend to be treated better if they are rich and guilty than if they are poor and innocent. The "tough on crime" talk and the "war on drugs" have not worked to create a safer, healthier society. Rather, the fear and anger motif behind much of the mass incarceration project in America has done significant harm to families, addicts, and, in Stevenson's view, the whole society. He works on behalf of all Americans because the way we punish and condemn affects all of us. That mass incarceration and "lock 'em up and throw away the key" mentalities do not reflect a healthy culture or reasoned policies.

Stevenson's own life narrative shows the power of redemption and the possibility of justice. However, he knows that as a country we have not sufficiently addressed our own narratives to combat obvious sources of injustice. Some of our stories say that certain people are not actually people — whether because they are minorities, poor, or children — or that some people deserve rights and protections that "others" are somehow not worthy to receive. There are also many stories of men and women who have come through the system and excelled in life, demonstrating the dignity and humanity of all people. Their stories tell of the power to change and heal, and their stories contribute to the larger concept of justice in America. Stories communicate very powerful messages, and whether good or bad, awareness of them can motivate better decisions and policies for everyone.

Stevenson is committed to the work of criminal justice even as a victim of crime. Stevenson and his loved ones know the pain of loss and victimization from a brutal crime perpetrated by juveniles who killed his grandfather while trying to rob him of an old TV. But he is committed to the idea that being fair, just and compassionate — at all times — is part of the path to a healthy and safe future for our society. "Just mercy" is the proper response to crime and punishment. Justice requires that we understand that a person is more than that bad thing they may have done. People are made up of so much more, and these other elements must be considered to make whole and proper judgments about them.

No one is beyond redemption and "each of us is more than the worst thing we've done." To encourage those still struggling, Stevenson reminds everyone that he and many, many others will continue to fight to create a better, more truly just, system.

Dr. Ashley Hamilton, Executive Director of DU PAI, asked Stevenson about adult life without parole sentences (LWOP). She asked this question in response to the attention that juvenile life and capital punishment have received, and on the behalf of so many who are under LWOP sentences in CDOC. Stevenson encouraged holding on to hope. He said that there is no justice in systems, or individuals, that tell a person that they are beyond hope, redemption and recovery. What we know about individual dignity and the remarkable capacity for people to change and rectify their lives renders most sentences of life without the possibility of parole, or virtual life sentences, a true injustice and wasteful for the whole country. He said, "A just society should yearn to see recovery in every human being and should be eager to watch someone get to the place where we have the confidence needed that they should be free."

Stevenson sees the successes in juvenile sentence reform as evidence that other sentencing law changes can happen, and happen quickly. One of Stevenson's clients told him that he was not sure that he could endure his life sentence, which was reduced from a death sentence. Stevenson told him that "we have to believe you are not going to die in prison—we have to. I don't know the pathway that is going to get us there, but we have to hold on to that. I don't think you should die in prison; I don't think that is just... I think we have to keep pushing." Many years later that same young man was released from prison, after years of never giving up. Stevenson insists that there is real reason to hold on to the hope that excessive sentences can be amended. Colorado's recent restructuring of the sentencing guidelines for the felony murder statute may be another sign that ineffective legal policies and sentences can be corrected.

Annie Skinner, CDOC Public Information Officer, asked Stevenson what CDOC staff can focus on while trying to bring change to the system.

He responded that "Everybody working in the system has the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of people who have been excluded, cast out, and disfavored, and I think we should be excited about that. When you can actually help somebody, when you can make a difference in someone's life, you get something for that, something that is immeasurable, priceless." Sometimes it is advice, encouragement, protection, or helping people see what they're not seeing but what they really need to see. Opportunities like these apply not just to staff and inmates, but to their colleagues as well.

He also states the need that "everyone insists on something that is fairer and more just." He regularly experiences corrections staff expressing the circumstances of punishment and correction are wrong. He believes that platforms need to be created for such views to be safely expressed and imparted into the larger efforts for systemic reform. Stevenson laments that the conditions of confinement in many places in our country are inhumane, both for the incarcerated and those who are hired to work in them. They are not healthy environments for anyone, and they can destroy the lives of those who do the necessary work of staffing them. "We have denied too many people working in the corrections spaces the opportunity to know and feel that they are making a positive difference and are actually helping people," says Stevenson. Prisons, and what takes place daily in them, tend to create despair, hopelessness, disempowerment, and isolation. To work toward change is to create better spaces for true development, healing and restoration and redemption for all people involved.

CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams also shared some moving reflections during this conversation. Williams and his executive team are committed to cleaning and restructuring correctional systems and environments for the improvement of all parties. He is working to break down those things in prison that reinforce traumas, rather than redress them, and provide ways of recovery. They are making a shift away from the devastation that crime and prison produces toward better spaces that promote

change, health, productivity, and dignity. Commenting on the interview, Williams said, "There are moments of time that I have been in this job here in Colorado where I go 'yeah, it's all worth it... for everything we're going through.' Right now, this last hour has been one of those moments that make it worth it — that we put another stake in the ground because we had Mr. Stevenson with us. We are a department that is on an agenda of restoration and redemption." He acknowledges that the whole system needs correction, and that there are a lot of people who know this and are working toward something better. "Mercy and redemption have to be held out as the final goal," said Williams, and though "in our country we have lost sight of that," good people are on a mission, making a real difference.

Stevenson acknowledges that he himself has been sustained by the love of others, and that the love and sacrifice of others enabled him to pursue his dreams and bring real force into advocacy efforts to improve seriously broken systems. His life and experiences have taught him the power of love displayed in proximity. Getting near to distressed people — sometimes a very uncomfortable exercise — is the best and only real way to create change. Problems cannot be adequately solved from a position of distance. Only by being proximate, and by the extremely hard work of loving others, can we create a more equal, fair, and just society.

Stevenson is a hero, and real heroes are present to everyone, every day. Stevenson proves how "everyone has the opportunity to change the lives of those who are in a lesser position." Included in this "everyone" are prison staff and officials who work to not only protect society but also to communicate humanity and dignity to those under their charge. It includes families and friends and the giants of our pasts who opened doors for our benefit. It includes prisoners who address the needs of their peers, and who try to engage in restorative justice measures. Heroes are volunteers and teachers who put their own needs second to the needs and interests of others. Heroes are those who do justice and love mercy, and who do it humbly and consistently.



Senate Bill 050

BY ALEXANDER JASMINE
IR Submissions Manager

On March 30, 2022, Governor Jared Polis signed Senate Bill 050 (SB-050) into law. SB-050 pertains to work opportunities for incarcerated residents. This legislation provides for the restructuring and modernization of the Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI) system.

CCI recently encountered difficulty remaining lucrative as a business, leading to downsizing and program closures. SB-050

eliminates the requirement for CCI to generate profit and instead allows CDOC to facilitate work opportunities focused on reintegration. "We are moving away from being profit-oriented and towards re-entry and rehabilitation," CCI Executive Director Jessica Warren said. "That has received overwhelming support politically by legislators on both sides of the aisle."

CCI will revamp CDOC's Take Two (Transitional Work Opportunity) program to enhance occupational opportunities for residents. Take Two recruits private companies to operate within CDOC and requires

residents to be paid at least a minimum wage. "We are trying to make the walls much more permeable with Take Two," Warren said. "It forces us as a department to be much more transparent with what we're doing."

The incorporation of Take Two and CCI programs will foster beneficial work opportunities, post-release job prospects, and sufficient re-entry support, and it does not use tax dollars to increase inmate wages. "Colorado has one of the highest recidivism rates and SB-050 will help prevent inmates from reoffending by allowing them to build savings to help pay for rent, food,

and other necessities post-release," Colorado Representative Matt Soper (R-District 54) said. "A job and stability at home is the most effective means to reduce crime."

SB-050 guarantees that Take Two and CCI function under the same division, allowing CDOC to generate work programs with opportunities encompassing skilled training, more responsibility, and higher payment. "This statutory change is one more step in the direction of better serving the re-entry needs of men and women returning to our communities," CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams said.

Honor

Continued from page 2

and the meaningful programs available within CDOC. I-Pod (Incentive) residents have been challenging that negative narrative about prisons in recent years, and I find it refreshing.

The Incentive Pod is unique among the other five housing units of the facility. Same building, but polar opposite functions, treatments, and overall “vibes.” This positive characterization of CSP is most likely revelatory for anyone who has not had the privilege to physically walk its halls. For example, two years ago the CSP Chaplain, Don Brightwell and his wife Mrs. Judy, hosted a Communion Meal with eight of his faithful Saturday night service attendants. Chaplain Brightwell affectionately refers to this group of men as the diakonoi (GK), or deacons. As they were communing, Mrs. Brightwell asked the deacons, “How can Don and I help you guys serve here at CSP? What do you guys want to do?” In one accord, the deacons said, “We want to help people!” A year later, an invitation was posted in the I-Pod for a special “Saturday Night Worship Service,” hosted by the deacons. Deacon Joseph Nieto suggested taking an offering for two ministries involved in missionary work. They settled on Village Ministries International and Voice of the Martyrs. 32 men showed up for the service and they raised over \$400 among them from their prisoner bank accounts.

It is that kind of culture, which has been cultivated and nurtured by facility administration since the I-Pod opened in February 2012, which allows me a silent space to imagine the temperature of soda bottles without interruption. I am in a prison hallway with my back to vending machine traffic, my guard down, exposed, and yet

safe in prison.

I hear token-coins and I ponder how Steve’s deposits into the culture at CSP have touched lives beyond prison walls. I see a gentle-mannered man approaching. Steve, quizzically squinting from behind his state-issued PPE cloth mask, joyfully says to me, “I know Brotha’ Fred wouldn’t call me out here if it weren’t important.”

Steve Lee spearheaded a fundraising campaign that raised \$744 from 37 incarcerated men at CSP’s I-Pod for Loaves & Fishes Ministries of Fremont County (Loaves & Fishes). Since 1984, Loaves & Fishes have been serving people who are experiencing homelessness and poverty by providing essential services and life changing programs. They use a holistic approach to address the spiritual, physical, relational, and economic brokenness of those they serve.

If you do not find Steve’s cause important, consider what DeeDee Clement, Executive Director of Loaves & Fishes, shared with the Cañon City Daily Record on February 8, 2021, upon receipt of this donation. “We are grateful for the generosity of the men at CSP. These men gave generously from the little they have, they are trusting Jesus. Knowing that He will continue to provide for them and that their donation will multiply to meet the need. Their example should humble us all.”

These sentiments were compelling enough that on February 26, 2022, Loaves & Fishes received an anonymous letter and matching gift. The author of this letter writes, “The generosity of the 37 men at the Colorado State Penitentiary motivated me to let them know their donation has, through God’s graces, multiplied. I consider it an honor to match these men’s donation. Please find enclosed, a donation in honor of these men, in the amount of \$744.”

The entirety of this letter was posted throughout all CSP housing units, not just the I-Pod. Even if you do not find these things important, you cannot ignore that giving can be contagious.

Steve is calm and completely oblivious about the topic of our discussion until the words “Loaves & Fishes” fall from my mouth. He grows visibly emotional, his eyes welling up with tears as the bridge of his nose scrunches. I am touched as I begin to feel some of what this donation means to Steve as his slightly sun-tanned face flushes. He is genuinely moved. After he takes a minute to collect himself, I ask Deacon Steve a few questions.

Fred Barker: You could have picked any organization in the country or world to give to. How did you go about choosing Loaves & Fishes?

Steve Lee: I was walking the yard last September, in conversation with the Holy Spirit, and I had a spontaneous idea: Do a hygiene drive for the homeless. I thought of the work done through Loaves & Fishes because Mrs. Brightwell mentioned their relationship with parolees. I knew they would use the money as requested. It was like the Holy Spirit was nudging me saying, “Give to the homeless through Loaves & Fishes.”

FB: You mentioned your idea started as a hygiene drive, how did it turn into a financial gift?

SL: I ran my ideas past Lt. Boyd [the Facility Volunteer Coordinator] and submitted a proposal. He said, “Whatever you want to do I’ll help you see it through. It’s your thing, I want to support you in making it happen.” The fastest way from our side was to give money and Lt. Boyd would get it where it needed to go.

FB: Logistically, what did that look like among the men inside?

SL: I thought to myself, “Guys might have some extra finances

and feel more compelled to give because of the stimulus checks,” but they didn’t arrive in the mail in time for the collections. Once the proposal was approved, I partially filled out a stack of Miscellaneous Withdrawal Slips, “Donations for the Homeless.” [Withdrawal Slips give CDOC permission to access a prisoner’s bank account]

FB: Most prisoners technically live off “donations” from friends and family or the roughly \$15.00 a month from their prison jobs. Did you have concerns you wouldn’t raise a sizable amount?

SL: Due to COVID-19, we haven’t had any services or our regular social functions. There haven’t been normal opportunities in these conditions to organize, that was my biggest concern. But when the slips started coming in, to see guys put others before themselves...in these already trying times, it brought joy to my heart!

To see how quickly the deacons jumped in ... and then, when all the slips were finally collected, it amazed me. God is good! You know, there were times in the past where I’d give to a church, nonprofit, or charitable organization, and I didn’t recognize a personal connection. This thing with Loaves & Fishes was different.

FB: What do you think about the anonymous gift matching your collection?

SL: Never in a million years would I have thought it got this type of ripple effect. But, I want all the glory to go to Jesus Christ! The matching donation, the anonymous letter, I feel so humble to be a part of it all. Before submitting my withdrawal slip, I thought about the widow in Mark 12 who gave all she had. She was poor but the scripture says of her, “this poor widow hath cast more in than all they which have cast into the treasury: for all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of

her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.” If she gave all she had, I said to myself, “Okay, I can too.” And I put in all I had at that time.

FB: This kind of motivation, from just wanting to serve and try to help someone, is, in my opinion, how movements get started. What fruit do you hope to see in the future here at CSP?

SL: I hope that this can be a yearly thing for the deacons and everybody interested. And for other causes too, signs and wonders! I’m so thankful all the deacons came together to support me.

Steve warmly tells me that he hasn’t been able to find the words to share with the deacons how much their support has meant to him. He has bowed his head several times during our conversation; he does not want credit for all that has happened. I do not get a hint of pride during our time together. He admits that his early years of incarceration “were not about Jesus.” He is blunt about owning his “stuff” and makes no disclaimers while taking accountability for the violent crimes that led him to prison. He is 17 years into a 48-year sentence.

The word cold can be used to describe temperature, hearts, actions, environments, or a plastic vending machine soda bottle. Surely, cold would be how the majority of prisoners experience the callousness of criminal life and the consequences that follow. Incarceration severs connections with the outside world, and that’s cold. However, cold also describes the world of living through the misfortunes of homelessness on the streets. Giving builds bridges.

The selfless giving of the residents of CSP’s I-Pod has the power to affect positive outcomes. It can also move one person to act with the fire of 37. For some of us, this begs the question, “What am I willing to sacrifice to warm the lives of others?”

Progress of JYACAP

BY CATHERINE PRITT
JYACAP Administrator

Last November, three more participants in the Juveniles and Young Adults Convicted as Adults Program (JYACAP) were released, making a total of 12 people who have benefitted from this specialized program. Raymond Johnson, Marcus Clouatre, and Gregory Romero joined the ranks of JYACAP parolees by completing a minimum three-year specialized program designed to prepare them for possible early release after being incarcerated for over twenty-five years.

The JYACAP program prepares qualified participants who are granted early release by the State Parole Board and Governor for re-entering their communities. In 2016, the Colorado General Assembly passed Senate Bill 16-180, which states that “Colorado recognizes that children have not yet reached developmental maturity before the age of eighteen years.” Five years later, House Bill 21-1209

added that research about brain development demonstrates that the brain functioning that guides and aids rational decision-making does not fully develop until a person is in his or her mid-to-late twenties, which indicates that a young adult does not often possess the developmental maturity and decision-making skills of a mature adult.” The original bill, SB16-180, created the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program for juveniles under the age of 18 who were convicted as adults. The most recent bill, HB21-1209, raised the age for the program to include young adults who were convicted for serious crimes under the age of 21. The new age limit has brought an influx of applications and the program continues to expand. Six new applicants have recently joined the JYACAP program: Matthew Mounts, Don Smith, Daniel Reyes, Torriano Davis, Lindell Renaud, and Jennifer Tombs. Several more applications are being reviewed for eligibility.

JYACAP participants literally grew up in prison. Accordingly, the JYACAP program targets identified needs in the areas of life skills,

career development, financial literacy, healthy living, and technology to reduce or eliminate any gaps in the participant’s knowledge and skills. Career assessments and practical employment skills prepare JYACAP participants for obtaining a job upon release so they can be as self-reliant as possible. The program utilizes a tailored curriculum for re-entry skills, as well as virtual reality technology for participants to practice “real life” scenarios like resolving conflict, scanning items at a self-check-out, declining drugs on a street corner, de-escalating conflict with an angry customer, or customizing a job interview, among many others.

Feedback from program participants out on parole range from “I can’t sleep; it’s too quiet,” to “I got a job as a liaison with the district attorney’s office!” Many of the program graduates keep in close touch with each other, going to ball games, restaurants, and backyard barbecues together. The decades-long relationships that started in childhood have evolved into a brotherhood of men navigating a world filled with heretofore unknown challenges.

A note on scripting

BY DAVID CARRILLO
TCF Contributor

Scripts are copies of the text for plays or movies that define an individual character’s role. In “The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People,” Dr. Stephen Covey writes that we “live with many scripts that have been handed to us.” However, unlike movie scripts, life roles are not always so clearly defined. That is, we on the inside have been scripted to believe that “this is the way it is” or “that is just how things are done around here,” and my personal favorite, “this is prison.” Our imaginations and beliefs begin to fill in the blank spaces with those ambiguous scripts, and this leads to confusion, frustration, misunderstandings, and, eventually, negative results.

As such, I define “scripting” as an individual’s cultural paradigm, belief or expectations for the responsibilities that exist for a particular role. For example, if I believe that collective society believes that prison is supposed to be hard and dangerous, then my role must be of a hardened and dangerous

man. As I begin to believe that this is what is expected and play this role out, I begin to do what hardened and dangerous men do. Eventually, people, and I, get hurt. Likewise, if a correctional officer (CO) believes that his or her coworkers believe that prison is a hard and dangerous place, that CO believes his or her role is to be hardened and to treat prisoners as if they are all hardened and dangerous. The CO then becomes abusive and oppressive, helping to ensure that prison becomes, and stays, a hard and dangerous place.

The good news is that those roles are not set in stone. In “The 7 Habits,” Covey teaches that we can rescript those roles. We do not have to be defined by some twisted script that someone else wrote years ago. New expectations for a role’s responsibilities can and must be rewritten — re-scripted. As a prisoner, I have the opportunity and the capability for becoming the best of anything I choose to use my additional free time for. A prisoner can be the greatest athlete; a prisoner can be the greatest philosopher; a prisoner can be the greatest legal mind - the script is limited only by our imaginations.

E-470

Continued from page 1

end so it costs the taxpayers nothing to make this tenfold increase in pay,” Warren said. E-470 agents now earn enough to pay taxes themselves.

Agents now making minimum wage are also able to contribute to their families at home. Hacking down restitution costs, financing academic endeavors, or saving money for the future have become achievable avenues for 33 employed residents. “Working on this contract has helped me send money home to pay for my daughter’s braces,” DWCF resident LeAndra Bumpas said. “That has made me feel like a mom, even though I am incarcerated.”

Agents decipher different views of a vehicle’s license plate from their computer and verify the snapshot for accuracy. A second queue of agents process the images for final verification to ensure the correct driver is charged. No longer is pay a flat fee, the workforce strives to maintain a 98.5% accuracy rate. “This program has created a lot of opportunities for the agents with relevant work experience and an opportunity to help the community they will most likely return to,” DWCF Print Shop Supervisor Robert Jaramillo said.

By following the model of traditional employment, the E-470 shop aims to effectively train the agents for work beyond the walls. “The facility and staff have been available to assist me in a wide range of areas pertaining to personal growth, program advancement, re-entry, and leadership skills,” DWCF resident Darlene Spears



Denver Women’s Correctional Facility provides space for agents to work on the E-470 project
[Photo courtesy of CCI]

said. “This opportunity has also enabled me to continue my education and taught me to focus on my strengths instead of my weaknesses.”

CCI Production and Services Supervisor Casey Nutter said, “This job at E-470 is just that – a real job. We treat all of our agents like we would on the outside.” This form of treatment encourages agents to develop adequate work ethics and enhance self-improvement. “E-470 has given me the ability to plan for a future where I can become a productive returning citizen,” DWCF resident Tammy Fritz said.

The E-470 shop shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon as the contract has revamped the business model with dignified wages. “Historically, CCI has paid \$4 to \$6 per day across 30 different industries,” Warren said. “That’s not good enough if we expect people to succeed when they get out.”

The pay raise prompted a massive spike in the number of E-470 shop applications. “It

has become one of the most competitive jobs to get into at DWCF,” Warren said. “We are learning about how this impacts the culture and larger ecosystem outside of E-470. People are leaving other CCI jobs to get in because of the pay.”

The renegotiation of the contract has also impacted the behavior of residents. “All of the agents working in the program are happier and appear to be

more motivated,” Jaramillo said. “Overall, morale is much higher.” Rewarding agents for diligent work centered around performance has improved their capabilities. “We have seen multiple individual agents whose numbers have went up by 20% since the pay adjustment,” Nutter said. E-470’s ample wage increase has inspired agents to put forth more effort.

Operating since May 2018,

the E-470 shop’s renegotiation overcame a great deal of resistance. Two legislators on opposing sides of the bipartisan spectrum, Sen. Dennis Hisey, R-District 2, and Sen. James Coleman, D-District 33, both showed support on the day of the announcement. “It was one of the best days of my job,” Warren said. “What was so beautiful in announcing it was the overwhelming joy and what this meant for women who are often mothers.”

Warren discussed the value of wage increases within the E-470 shop as part of the new mission of CCI, which emphasizes re-entry over profit. “It’s the best [feeling] to have this idea of what you feel is really right and see it embodied and embraced,” Warren said. “I see nothing but overwhelming support.” E-470’s contract renegotiation has also helped address gender-based wage differences in CDOC. “I feel like our work as female residents is valued equitably to male residents, and it feels good that we are no longer left behind,” Bumpas said. The E-470 wage increase has created an empowering horizon for the agents at DWCF.



CCI continues to give the ability to develop adequate work ethics and enhance self-improvement
[Photo courtesy of CCI]

Higher education in prison

BY SYDNEY WHITE
LVCF Bureau Chief Coordinator

Nationwide prison reform has been on an uphill advancement towards normalization. Higher education is a part of that climb. Implementations have been made all over the country to increase access to higher education in prisons. Programs like the Second Chance Pell program have been approved, yet that is only the beginning.

Who supports these programs, and who produces data of a program’s success? The Alliance for Higher Education in Prison (AHEP) is one among many other projects working hard for the benefit of the currently and formally incarcerated. Mary Gould, the director of AHEP, met with *The Inside Report* to discuss the importance of high-quality education for all.

Gould has a passion to provide education to everyone, including the incarcerated. She has spent over fifteen years working with prisons. In 2019, AHEP partnered with CDOC. The intent initially focused on a statewide collaborative effort between agencies. AHEP would facilitate for the Colorado Department of Higher Education, and the

Colorado Department of Labor and Employment. The alliance wanted to know how they all worked together and how CDOC engaged with colleges and universities, primarily in Colorado, but across the country as well. AHEP wanted CDOC to consider how they were streamlining their practices, and their processes for starting new programs. All parties involved wanted to strengthen partnerships centered on higher education and employment for those previously and presently involved with prison.

AHEP advocates for quality education being provided in CDOC. Their three main priorities are quality, equity, and accessibility. A pivotal moment in higher education is the reinstatement of Pell grants. The Department of Education is reinstating another Pell program by July 3, 2023. “We’ll potentially be looking at a higher influx of prison programming more than we are seeing already,” Gould says. Colleges and universities around the country receive access to federal funding, alleviating barriers and roadblocks so that higher education institutions can begin educational programs inside prison walls.

Another concern for AHEP is how infrastructures are put into place for current programming and plans for expansion. AHEP wants the incarcerated students’ voices heard as part of that

conversation, so beginning in 2021, AHEP and CDOC have partnered by meeting biweekly through Zoom. The meetings include the CDOC Director of Education Melissa Smith, Mary Gould and Steven Abundis from AHEP, CDOC staff, and incarcerated students from La Vista, Fremont, Buena Vista, and Youth Offender System Correctional Facilities. AHEP planned to meet with CDOC in person to create a group space for staff and students to share ideas, but the meeting was postponed due to the pandemic.

All the voices are heard and the suggestions and ideas are valued. AHEP uses a Toolkit that encompasses their vision. The focus includes quality programming, who this affects, a review committee, and so much more. They test their ideas. They implemented a review committee, where students are included as committee members.

Committee discussions center on what is in the best interest for students seeking continuing education and opportunities outside of prison. For Gould, the meetings exceed her and AHEP’s expectations. In her years of working with prisons, she has never had the access to students outside of programming she does now.

The data collected through AHEP’s framework shows the impact the Alliance produces. AHEP encourages

CDOC to consider their data collaboration efforts, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Efforts are made to collect data for the student experience as well as interviews with staff. By including everyone in the process, barriers and methods to overcome them become evident. The data is reviewed annually with a lens on equity in terms of factors like race, ethnicity, and gender to ensure that CDOC residents are offered equal opportunity. AHEP also studies completion of degrees, programs credentials, student persistence, and student turnover.

A question raised by people in the community is whether reinstating Pell grants financially affects the non-incarcerated financially. The answer is no. Pell grants are a small part of the budget. AHEP is advocating for growth, though, and the budget is included in their plans. Gould states, “What is the point in a valuable resource if it’s not used on quality education? Options for programming are crucial. When it comes to Pell, it is so important because it’s 12 semesters of funding. A student’s Pell money should be used on something of their choice. It’s vital to invest in something students will use in their future.”

Providing a quality education to the incarcerated can be a concern for some taxpayers.

Gould responds with, “Changing hearts and minds is not easy, on any topic. It does not matter what a person has done. Everyone deserves the right to a high-quality education. Prison isn’t something higher education focuses on. What it does focus on is lifelong learning. Humans thriving, civic engagement and participation in community. Paths should be open in building a life one can be happy and proud of.”

When asked what keeps her up at night, “Worry,” Gould joked. She worries about everyone’s health, safety, and wellbeing. She considers what happens when new programs show up and what incarcerated students truly experience. Technology is a main point of concern because Gould feels it should be used as a tool and not the main mode of engagement. She believes that technology can isolate when the incarcerated may already feel cut off. “Education is transformation for the student, but it’s also for us. Everyone should have access and opportunity.”

The Inside Report looks forward to keeping the discussion open, to see what comes next with the project. Not only is AHEP creating more options for higher education, but also for positive change and transformative justice.

One pell of a second chance

BY TOREY KUZNICKI
IR Journalist

The Colorado Department of Corrections has brought the Second Chance Pell grant (SCP) to its residents. Since the program's birth, over 22,000 inmates across the country have earned roughly 7,000 post-secondary credentials, 3,000 associate degrees, and 540 bachelor's degrees. What started as an experiment in 2015 has shown success across the nation by giving incarcerated men and women a golden opportunity to pursue high quality college education.

In 2020, the program added an additional 67 colleges, including Trinidad State Junior College (TSJC), the first college in Colorado selected for the SCP program. Once SCP selected TSJC, Melissa Smith, Director of Education and Programs in CDOC, began laying the foundation to get the program started across the state. In fall of 2020, the first cohort was born with 14 students in five facilities. These college-bound individuals began their journey pursuing not just one, but two college degrees, with tracks toward both an Associate of Arts and an Associate of Applied Technology. Less than a year after the start of the SCP program in Colorado, it reached 75 students in 12 facilities. Eleven outstanding individuals received at least one degree. According to Smith, 35 new students may enroll each semester. The buzz created by the program has residents asking how they can take advantage of a free education while serving their prison sentence.

Earning an education in prison is no easy task. It is even harder to earn any type of college degree. However, these exceptional men and women began paving the road to success for others by courageously setting a precedent in CDOC.

This program would not be possible in Colorado without the dedication and support of LiAnn Richardson, Director of SCP at TSJC and longtime instructor at Trinidad Correctional Facility. "If we could provide one student with an education that will change their life for the better, I would say it's a successful program. We sincerely desire to help as many students as possible succeed, and while success looks differently for each individual student, our goal is to provide quality education to students so they can be successful," Richardson said.

Richardson's facility visits strengthened trust in the program amongst the participants. Virtual classrooms are a technological advancement in the prison world, allowing 12 facilities to cohort into one classroom. Richardson called upon her band of colleagues, already eager to provide a quality education to a group of committed life-long learners. The challenging task of teaching to a diverse group of prisoners turned out to be a profound learning experience for instructors as their workload doubled at the start of the Fall 2021 semester. Some classes held only a few students, while others exceeded 40.

Dr. Jean Alger, a Professor of English Composition, Interpersonal Communication, and Literature, taught English 121. "It's been years since I've had a group of students keep me so much on my toes as the students in SCP. The

engagement the students show in class, the time spent in class and in study is meaningful and important to them and their well-being. We [program instructors] all admire the level of dedication that SCP students bring to their studies and it's a real treat to have classes that are all engaged in work and discussion."

Many students have powerful stories of transformation stemming from the opportunity SCP provided for them. Some of the academic victories taking place are more private, but incredibly personal, because the SecondChance program became a real "first" opportunity. One participant, Daniel Sopiwnik, a 38-year-old resident at Fremont Correctional Facility, will become the first member of his family to obtain a college degree. When asked if his thought process changed about his future release, Sopiwnik said, "Oh, my gosh, yes! Before SCP, my plans were basically to mind my P's and Q's, work towards getting out of prison as soon as possible; doing some work that I've always done, like work in restaurants. Not a terrible plan, but now, I feel like my options may be opening up. One of my biggest fears about getting out of prison is the lack of employment opportunities due to my incarceration. I've always felt that education might help my chances at success. Now that I'm working on my degree, my future seems so much more achievable!"

While most of the courses offered through TSJC are general education, they all lead to an Associate of Arts degree. After recognizing that the majority of SCP students have accumulated hundreds of vocational credit hours through various classes offered through CDOC, TSJC went even further. The

school implemented a second degree that combines credits earned while incarcerated into an Associate of Applied Technology. Richardson explained that "The Purpose for creating a second degree is to ensure a student's past academic accomplishments are recognized. Most certificate programs in prison expire over time, however, college degrees never expire."

The SCP was originally designed to measure how high-quality education in prison affects recidivism in our nation. America possesses about 25% of the world's incarcerated population. "Expanding high-quality postsecondary education in prison is a proven strategy that helps to address racial equity, improves safety and expands opportunity in our country," Margaret DiZerga, Director of The Center on Sentencing and Corrections, said. Students involved in the first five years of the SCP program were 48% less likely to return to prison compared to those who did not participate. TSJC also prepares their students to transition into bachelor's degree programs available at other colleges in the state. With federal aid returning in 2023, students will be able to use their Pell funds to transfer to four-year institutions and continue their education.

In December of 2020, lawmakers reinstated federal student aid to everyone, including incarcerated individuals, after they banned aid in 1994 as part of the infamous "Tough on Crime" bill. This makes incarcerated men and women nationwide eligible for federal student aid starting July 1, 2023. Until then, the SCP will continue to change lives in prison and out of prison, as prisoners release back into

society.

Depending on their release dates, most inmates in CDOC are eligible to take postsecondary courses, SCP included. However, a person with a life sentence is not eligible to participate in the program, nor most other prison vocational classes. The State justifies this by rationalizing that the money used to fund prison education programs is best spent on those re-entering society in the near future. This is a frustrating and ongoing topic amongst lifers, because the vast majority of them turn over every rock and stone searching for purpose and redemption in a world of suffering and despair. Unfortunately, some never find that purpose due to the lack of opportunities afforded to them.

A life sentence still involves life and its purpose. Many lifers have found ways to better themselves in spite of obstructionist policies based on funding. It is safe to say that men and women serving a life sentence will be eligible for federal aid in 2023. Those who are never getting out of prison still hold tremendous value to the culture shift taking place in Colorado prisons. Young men and women who are just beginning their sentences often look up to lifers for guidance, and now those men and women will be equipped with the academic capacity to influence and mold the younger generation of incarcerated individuals.

Dr. Alger provided a final inspirational quote for all of the incarcerated residents in CDOC. "I believe that if we are all treated as people of worth, it can heal wounds, and encourage us to help heal others. So my message is this. You all have worth just as you are, no matter your past, present, and future. You all have worth."

Family life

Continued from page 2

Getaways." The relationship between FamilyLife and Grace without Borders Ministries created unity while COVID-19 was creating separation.

This opportunity manifested in Living Unit 2 at Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF). When adding the "Stepping Up" program, Unit 2 housed the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP), and the Fremont Veteran's Program. JCAP and the Vet's Program were located on opposite sides of the building, but hosted similar language, art, cognitive, and faith courses. Since the residents were in the same COVID cohort and shared a similar incentive status, Sgt. Porterfield, the liaison for both programs, recognized this and allowed for the joint enrollment sessions.

Samuel Kase White, Air Force veteran and FCF Veteran's Programs representative, found his calling. In his own words, White is passive and reserved, and he realized he needed to build his communication and relationship skills. White felt his faith being tested and the need to respond in new and

creative ways. After attending his first "Stepping Up" event in 2015, he began co-facilitating the program at FCF in 2019 with the help of Chaplain Larry.

White's integrity, service before self, and commitment to excellence is something he attributes to his time in the Air Force. However, fellow veterans in his Bible study give credit to a higher source. One Army veteran in particular made this connection early on, Chaplain Larry Walker. When all volunteer programs at FCF were halted by COVID, the chaplain recognized something in White and the potential of the Veteran's Program to carry on the message.

The synchronicity was undeniable. It set the stage for "A Courageous Call to Manhood," the objective of "Stepping Up" that White exemplifies. The idea that an incarcerated man could use his leadership skills and faith to assist his brothers in their journey of self-discovery excited Chaplain Larry and inspired him to ask White for even more.

Chaplain Larry and White discussed how the "Stepping Up" program could be presented to men who needed it the most. Fate, and the proactive nature of Lt. Archuleta, had moved JCAP to the Veteran's pod during COVID. "Stepping Up"

specializes in family-oriented issues, which is a subject that many JCAP residents never had a chance to nourish during their decades-long incarcerations since childhood. "Stepping Up" was the perfect program at the perfect time, and White was already a leading light. The ideals of "Stepping Up" fit in perfect for the JCAP residents, who experience aspects of outside life that they were incarcerated before they had a chance to learn on their own. The men in the program lean on each other. White guides them through a workbook and discussion topics that delve into

difficult issues that many of his fellow residents have never had to deal with. The fact that Chaplain Larry handed White the task of being a facilitator is extraordinary. "This may be the first time an outside volunteer program will be facilitated by an inmate leader, due to the generosity of FamilyLife," said Chaplain Larry. With the goal of improving families across the country and making positive changes to each succeeding generation, "Stepping Up", with the guidance of White, is an overwhelming success at FCF. White would like to give

special thanks to FCF's Management Team and volunteer coordinator, Lt. Narva Courtney, for the perseverance, faith, and character she exhibits. White also thanks Chaplain Bill Humphreys for being a mentor and role model who continually demonstrates how to put others ahead of himself. Finally, White thanks the cognitive education teacher, Mrs. Duran, for her encouraging words that helped him relearn the concept that from the head to the heart is the shortest distance that yields the greatest reward.



Samuel Kase White and Chaplain Larry Walker

[Photo courtesy of IR]

Bare

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two in five Coloradans face food insecurity, meaning that they do not know where their next meal will come from. According to Community Food Share, more than 566,000 Colorado citizens, and one of every eight children, have experienced food insecurity since the beginning of 2021.

This is the true motivator for the gardeners at FCF. “[You’re] sharing time, sharing talent, and making an impact on other’s lives,” says Byron Gay, FCF’s lead gardener. “You’re putting food on some family’s table.” The fact that this is happening from inside a prison makes the story more than just an act of kindness. There is a redemptive and rehabilitative quality to this work that has had an unintended, positive impact on the FCF community and beyond.

The program is largely self-sustained. The six garden beds, 48 cubic feet each, use the same soil that was imported into the facility for the original garden in 2012. A 216-cubic-foot plot forms a compost pile. Waste materials such as eggshells, old beans, and grass clippings are added to the compost pile and turned each year, providing the nutrients for next year’s crop. A few wheelbarrows of manure brought into the facility for grounds maintenance round out the soil replenishment.

The cost for this program is minimal. For over 2,000 pounds of annual produce, seed costs are \$20 to 30 per year. The entire labor force is supplied



Captain Smith, Lieutenant Archuleta, and cultivators stand with a small yield

[Photo courtesy of IR]

by volunteers, made up of established residents of FCF’s West Side and members of the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP). The volunteer garden crew is small, tight-knit, and thoroughly vetted by both the existing crew and Cell House 2’s line staff. Their established procedure for vetting a new volunteer includes the crew making a recommendation to supervisory staff members, who make their own assessment and appointment. According to Gay, “there is a direct collaboration” between staff and residents in this vetting and hiring process. “It is what makes this program actually work for as long as it has,” he says. “We live with these guys and know who is really trying to make a difference. We also will not recommend anyone with a negative attitude. This garden is a place of peace, and the love we put in goes into the food itself. We’re feeding more than just stomachs; we’re feeding hearts, as well.”

Every week during harvest season, produce is picked and sent to the community outside. Staff collect the harvested produce and personally transport it to the designated organization. There is no contact between the gardeners and the recipients of the donation. “The only way we really know how much difference we are making,” Gay says, “is when staff come back and say the [shelter’s] shelves were empty and [that] what we sent was a Godsend. That’s when we really feel like we’re making a difference.”

From inside prison, it is hard to see the effects that the gardening project has on the community beyond the fence line. What can be seen is the garden’s influence on the community inside. In spite of the posted “restricted area” signs, the residents in the three closest cell houses show a keen interest in the health and progress of the six garden plots. Daily, these residents



Byron Gay cultivating more than just a simple garden

[Photo courtesy of IR]

make vocal inquiries across the prohibited space from their authorized area of traffic. Alan Yerkey, a long-time FCF garden volunteer, says, “When guys find out about the mission of this garden and its connection to the homeless shelter, it helps one to feel more normal and a part of the world at large.” Gay adds, “These guys [the residents at FCF] are seeing something outside of themselves that needs to be taken care of, that needs time and fortitude; seeing that gives them a sense they are still alive. When they find out the produce is donated, they become more respectful and supportive. They become part of a bigger project even if they are not working it.” It is not only the residents who are positively affected. If one talks to nearly any staff member on Fremont’s west side, they respond with a deep tone of pride and satisfaction. “The great thing is that other offenders are able to see a constructive and positive

way to do their time,” says housing Sergeant E. Porterfield. “It’s good for them to see something else.” This sentiment is supported by the fact that theft from the garden beds by the prison population is entirely absent. Anyone who has served any time in such an environment is likely to recognize that this is an amazing fact.

However small the gardening project at FCF may be in comparison to the yields from large greenhouses on acreages of land, the significance of this project to the community on the inside and out is humbling. One step at a time, one season and relationship at a time, the cultivation of the garden is spreading and producing fruit larger than was initially intended. While the scope has evolved, the mission remains unchanged. As Gay says, “[Even from inside prison], we’re still contributing to society in a positive way.”

We are looking for creative WRITERS and ARTISTS



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Radio

Continued from page 1

result offers a variety of beneficial programming, entertainment through resident-selected music sets, and proud membership with Prison Radio International. For a behind-the-scenes glance at the difficulties and dedication required for this groundbreaking endeavor, readers can find a short documentary by MeiLi Smith about Inside Wire at coloradoprisonradio.com.

Limon is the base of operations with collaboration reaching across the state. Content arrives from multiple facilities and goes out over the airwaves.

The success of this station has residents across the state skipping pizza to hear “Up to the Moment with Dean Williams.” The music selections have others writing late night letters by their logo light. Listeners can catch announcements and updates on Hot Lines. First person narratives and interviews are available throughout the week.

Inside Wire and DU PAI thank CDOC and the many staff members across the system who facilitate the day-to-day production work and help keep Inside Wire on the airwaves.

Graduate

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birthplace of her success.

“There’s not much room to fail unless you are not trying,” Wilson said as she glowed with an almost-free hue. She was encircled by several supporting staff who recognized the importance of spotlighting her success story. The accomplishment of leaving prison with two college degrees does not happen to many people.

Wilson grew up in the Denver Metro area in Englewood, Colorado. She dropped out of school at 14 years old, as she felt it was a hindrance to her lifestyle at the time. Below, the excerpts from the interview that Wilson gave with *The Inside Report*, begins with Wilson’s response to a question about her support system:

Jenifer Wilson (JW): I didn’t really have any role models growing up, and I lacked a support system in that way. My Dad wasn’t in my life, and my Mom was in prison for all of my teen years, and by the time she was released we only had about nine months together before I came to prison, so we didn’t get a chance to spend any quality time together. So I was living a pretty reckless life and I think I needed this (prison) to find some stability and a sense of direction.

The first few months into Wilson’s sentence were undoubtedly the hardest to endure. YOS is structured in a phased system where new

arrivals are placed in “Boot Camp” where they are stripped of societal norms.

Torey Kuznicki (TK): Were you ready for change when you first came into prison?

JW: No...,” Wilson said with a playful smile. “It took me awhile to get myself together, and when I came in, I had to go into boot camp and shave my head with the other girls. You could tell who was here the longest by how long their hair was. I had to go through mediation a few times, but luckily I didn’t have to shave my head again.

TK: So when you made that change in yourself to do good, was education at the forefront? Or was education a second thought to everything else?

JW: So, I’ve pretty much been in school since I got here. I was put in GED right away, and I spent about a year and a half getting my GED. I did struggle with it. I was happy once I got my GED because I remember being on the streets thinking how I was going to get my GED. So once I graduated, it was a huge accomplishment for me. I had taken a couple of college classes before getting involved in the Second Chance Pell Program (SCP). Once I learned that I would be able to combine all those classes into a degree and have that to take with me, I think that made a big difference in how I viewed education.

TK: How do you view your time now since being involved in SCP?

JW: I have pretty much been working on these two degrees until I leave, and it’s honestly

been a blessing in disguise. I don’t view these past five years as time wasted, I see them as time I spent being productive. I got more done during my incarceration than I would’ve had I not come to prison. I am a first-generation college student, so the fact that I took advantage of these opportunities, it has been very life changing for me.

TK: What are your goals upon your release?

JW: I am looking to find a career in the health care field, but I also want to finish schooling when I get out. I don’t have any job experience to put on resumes, but I do have these two degrees to put on job applications. That makes me very happy and proud of myself, and definitely more confident about the job process.

TK: What would you tell others who are striving to be successful?

JW: I do feel like a mentor to new girls coming in, and they remind me of myself when I first came to prison. Once I graduated with a 4.0, I realized I am capable of anything. I know what I’ve been through, so I encourage others that they can be successful, too, and capable of anything. Also, take advantage of every opportunity possible.

Wilson plans on walking for graduation at Trinidad’s college campus to officially receive her college degrees. Wearing that prestigious cap and gown will feel like dressing for a new life, a worthy life, and a life anyone would be proud to live. The epitome of success.

Crafts

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streets of Colorado Springs could use some holiday cheer. Anne remembers her daughter explaining that, “the homeless need a Merry Christmas, too!” And with that, a new tradition was born.

Anne and Ashley assembled gift bags with blankets, hats, scarves, gloves, non-perishable food, water, and hygiene items. In addition, they made Christmas cookies and hand-made Christmas cards with the hopes of spreading Christmas cheer. In all, Ashley and her mom put together 15 bags and distributed them to the homeless population in downtown Colorado Springs.

Six years later, the tradition continues. “Kids Care Too,” the organization founded by Ashley and her mom, is rooted in the philosophy that children have the ability to create real change in their communities. They have invited school-aged children from all over the region to join in their efforts, gathering supplies and baking treats for the homeless population in both Colorado Springs and Pueblo. Several area businesses have contributed to these efforts as well. One Pueblo restaurant, the Dew Drop Inn, even hosted a community cookie night a few years ago. The pizza oven was used to bake the cookies, and children and their families were invited for an evening of decorating and fellowship. “You wouldn’t believe the amount of icing these kids can fit onto a single cookie!” Anne laughed.

When the story of this holiday tradition reached the residents at Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF), a group of crochet artists jumped into action. David “Hatch” Hatcher, one of the founding members of “A Gift From the Heart,” explains that this is just the kind of opportunity the crochet team looks for. ““A Gift From the Heart” began in 1995, as a way to give back to the community that so many of us have taken from,” Hatch explains. “We donate crocheted things like stuffed animals, scarves, hats, blankets, and stockings to non-profit organizations and community

members in need.” He expressed that the work allows the incarcerated individuals a creative outlet, an opportunity to make a difference, and a sense of community. Hatch, who ironically does not crochet at all, enjoys helping link the donated items with the appropriate organization. He said that over the years they have worked collaboratively with dozens of organizations, and they are always looking for additional ways to make a meaningful difference.

This year, Hatch and his team provided 40 hats and 40 scarves to be added to the gift bags distributed by “Kids Care Too.” Hatch expressed a desire of the residents of CTCF to continue to support these efforts for years to come. “We think it’s so great what that little girl is doing. She’s doing her part to make a difference in her community, and we want to help.”

When asked about future plans for “Kids Care Too,” Anne explained that they would love to be able to provide sleeping bags along with the other gifts. “Every year, at least one homeless person in Pueblo freezes to death. We can do something about that.” Anne also shared her vision of “Kids Care Too” reaching far beyond Colorado Springs and Pueblo, and has already established contacts in several other states, hoping to offer this opportunity to children throughout the nation. “We know there’s a real need and an opportunity for this kind of work all across the country.”

“Kids Care Too” has proven without a doubt that, given an opportunity, children can make a real difference in our society, regardless of their ages. “A Gift From the Heart” has proven that incarcerated individuals can make a difference, regardless of their pasts. While some may believe this is an unlikely partnership, it really goes to show that deep down, every human being has the ability to make a difference. It truly is up to each of us to make a decision to act. Witnessing the magical unfolding of this purpose-driven partnership, and the impact it has had on so many people, has proven to this writer season after season that the Christmas spirit is indeed alive and well.

I see you, OCA Offender Care Aide

BY ANONYMOUS
DWCF Volunteer

OCA (Offender Care Aid) man – I see you.

The work you do every day is noble and good — I see you.

When we sit in practice, I witness your presence, despite your circumscription — I see you.

Keep your mind right, come back to the breath and give up the fight — I see you.

I’m impressed by your ease and composure. While I can only imagine the strength

to carry the weight on your shoulders — I see you.

Be the warrior you are and know that you matter — I see you.

Keep shining your compassion into the dark. Forgive yourself, forgive others,

forgive the world and stay open to love — I see you.

One drop of water—not so powerful. More drops—things begin to change. Enough

drops and you move mountains.

You’ll see.

Hard to believe

A Milestone Mentor shares his experience

BY JOHNATHON EDMONDS
PAROLEE Contributor

As inmates locked in close quarters with the most ardent liars outside of politics, we hear a lot of stories that are hard to believe. Personally, I have met an astronaut from the Government’s Secret Space Program; the genius who actually invented the personal computer; and the guy who is the real father of both Beyoncé and J-Lo’s children. Once in a great-while, however, we encounter a man whose incredible story is well-documented and can be easily verified by any member of the general public.

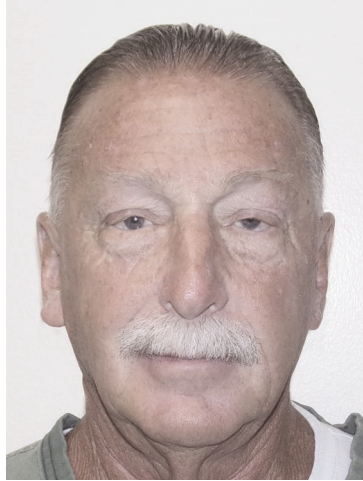
Steve Stilling is that rare exception.

Stilling’s story has been featured in countless news articles and has been covered on television shows like ABC’s Good Morning America. As a kid growing up in the San Francisco Bay area during the ’60s and ’70s, Stilling, who is now 69, found himself fully engulfed in a vibrant music scene so rich with fame and talent that only L.A. or Hollywood could come close to matching it. Before names like Jimmy Hendrix, The Grateful Dead, and Jefferson Airplane became cosmic superstars, the members of these bands hung out with Stilling in the smoky after-hours clubs where he partied and dabbled in the often-overlooked segment of the music business known as Promotions. Promotions is where the seeds of his future, both good and bad, were planted.

When the drug use of that perpetual party scene changed Stilling’s social path from celebrities to cellmates, he took his affinity for promotional work, and a few key connections, to the Oregon State Penitentiary (OSP). It was while locked up in Oregon that Stilling became involved with an organization that stresses individual development through leadership training and civic involvement. By 1965, this organization, the Junior Chamber of Commerce, which was founded in 1916 and went national in 1920, had adopted the name Jaycees. By the early ’70s, Jaycees was the State Street Chapter that was active in the state penitentiary.

Stilling describes his work organizing various activities involving the outside community through Jaycees as an accident rather than as anything intentional. Organizing these activities led Stilling to exercising his music industry connections. Of particular note was his interaction with Mimi Farina.

For those who do not know who she was, Mimi Farina was a fascinating woman with a legendary life story. The testimonials at her memorial service in 2001 were delivered by a collection of internationally known stars that reads like a Who’s Who of Grammy, Emmy, and Academy Award winners from the previous four decades. Mimi’s experiences as a singer, song



Integrity of honest storytelling, Stilling shared his musical history

[Photo courtesy of IR]

writer and activist included the founding of Bread and Roses. It is through this initiative that her life story also includes having Stilling as a friend.

Bread and Roses is an organization dedicated to bringing musical arts and entertainment to people who are not able to venture out to enjoy such cultural experiences. This would include, among others people confined to hospice, retirement or assisted living centers, and, of course, prison. Mimi and her charity provided Stilling with initial logistical support, and, most importantly, more connections.

Stilling’s first success at concert promotion inside OSP was a performance by Motown’s Martha and the Vandellas, an internationally famous soul group. The reviews, the experience, and the happiness that the concert generated inspired Stilling to work even harder on the next project. His increasing success provided more motivation, and before Stilling realized what was happening, his accidental involvement had become a purpose in life. He managed to bring in 43 acts in one 30-month time span, and around 60 acts over the course of his time at OSP. Before too long, the Chairman of the OSP Jaycee chapter was Stilling himself.

This accomplishment led to Stilling’s involvement with another well-known fund-raising association that finances community service organizations and charities. Originally founded in 1887 in Denver, Colorado as the Charitable Organizations Society, the organization Stilling would find himself involved in was renamed in 1964 as the United Way. While yet being an incarcerated convict, Stilling sat on the Marion-Polk United Way Board of Directors and Legal Services Advisory Committee. He acquired this position by responding to a bet — err, challenge — to meet a charitable goal through concert promotion. Stilling successfully ran a fund-raising campaign that pulled in more than \$25,000.00 — a huge sum of money 40 years ago.

All this activity meant that Stilling occasionally needed to attend meetings outside the prison. His United Way position required him to help decide who would get award money, and how much. The

Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, the Salvation Army, crisis hotlines, and similar organizations all vied for funding. There were band needs — equipment to be picked up, moved, and cleaned — returned, and other activities. In order for Stilling to complete the various necessary tasks, the Oregon DOC would assign a guard to escort him off the premises as needed.

While this hurricane of activity swirled around him, Stilling continued to organize concerts for the prison. He brought in entertainers such as Barbara Mandrell, Country Joe MacDonald and The Fish, and Jerry Garcia of the Grateful Dead. Oregon State Penitentiary became a “must play” venue that was quite popular with the performers themselves. In January of 1983, George Thorogood & The Destroyers, who were fresh off their Saturday Night Live appearance, opened their world tour with a show at OSP. Later that same year, Stilling was paroled.

Stilling’s reputation and extensive social network in the promotions business meant instant employment upon release. However, working in the entertainment industry also meant instant exposure to a drug-rich social scene. After a few years of increasing chemical indulgence, Stilling found himself back in prison, but not in Oregon. His attempts to recreate the modus operandi of activism in rehabilitation were met with resistance from an administration in Colorado less conducive to community interaction. However, Stilling managed to bring two shows into a Colorado penitentiary against the odds. Unfortunately, one of these shows resulted in the arrest of a visiting band member. The underwhelming production of these shows, combined with the lack of community involvement and programs such as the Jaycees or United Way, was enough to ruin Stilling’s motivation.

In the time that has passed since then, Stilling has experienced ever more restrictive versions of correctional life. State administration, department policies, correctional officers, and even parole officers, have insisted that Stilling restricts his activities to those of a “normal” offender. This means attending only pre-existing inmate-oriented social programs and regular hourly jobs. Such rules are partially effective at separating him from exposure to drugs and completely effective at separating him from the work he most enjoys. Perhaps as our political environment changes, and Stilling’s fond memories re-inspire him, we will see him rubbing elbows with famous entertainers once again. Maybe, just maybe, if the moon is in the right phase and the creek don’t rise, CDOC residents will benefit and be encouraged by Steve Stilling’s efforts and experience.

Listening to silence

BY DERRICK MILLER
FMCC Associate Editor

Imagine for an instant that due to a poor decision, you are stranded in the middle of the Philippines. Far from home, in a foreign land, you are now stuck. In addition, you do not speak Tagalog, the native tongue. This was the example given by someone raised with a deaf sibling when asked about the unique challenges deaf people must face in prison.

A person may experience deafness from birth; they may acquire the condition in early childhood; or they may develop it much later in life. Some cases of deafness simply go unrecorded. Due to HIPAA laws safeguarding personal medical information, precise data does not exist providing the actual number of deaf cases in this country, but estimates suggest that there are one half million deaf people in the United States. This is a significant number of people without the ability to hear, navigating a culture dominated by vocalized words. Those who are deaf who lost their hearing later in their lives have the capacity to speak their wants, needs and issues. The individuals who never had the chance to learn how to speak verbally learn to rely on other means of communication, such as American Sign Language (ASL). Federally recognized as an official language, ASL has

its own syntax, grammar, and cultural context, and it is the fourth most-used language in the United States.

According to members of the deaf community in CDOC, there are approximately 22 deaf individuals living in the Colorado Department of Corrections. This number does not include those who are hard of hearing. By their own tally, deaf residents state that there is at least one deaf woman at Denver Women's Correctional Facility (DWCF), and that the vast majority of deaf men are at Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF). More precise numbers are unavailable.

In Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF), there were two deaf individuals living in Cell House 3. They were both in pre-release and have access to a specialized phone system allowing face-to-face communication. While at FCF, they face unique challenges and opportunities that many other incarcerated deaf people do not.

One of the challenges facing deaf people at FCF is that there are no official translators of ASL in the facility. As such, these residents rely on written communication, which can be laborious, time consuming, and frustrating; the assistance of a few hearing residents who have passing understandings of ASL; or the help of staff who

33-year-old Paul Gallegos, who was born deaf, replied, "It feels hard without help, without hearing. More staff need to learn how to communicate with the deaf."

know some ASL but have their own schedules, work-loads, and assigned areas. When asked about the greatest difficulty of being deaf in prison, 40-year-old Alex Vasquez-Gonzales, who lost his ability to hear at age three, replied, "It is hard because [there are] no dependable staff." For Alex, the problem boils down to the fact that only certain staff are knowledgeable enough to help, and those staff members have their own schedules. According to Alex, communication breakdowns often occur between himself and staff. When posed the same question, 33-year-old Paul Gallegos, who was born deaf, replied, "It feels hard without help, without hearing. More staff need to learn how to communicate with the deaf."

Another challenge at FCF is the lack of deaf community. With only two people who are deaf out of some 1,400 residents, who else can these residents socialize with? From a mental health perspective, being isolated and alone with one's own thoughts is not a healthy situation. When CDOC decided to change policy on long-term administrative segregation, the negative impact of long-term

isolation was one of the most significant factors. In spite of CDOC's policy change, the two deaf residents at Fremont may in fact continue to experience their own version of long-term segregation, due to the communication barrier between them, other residents, and staff.

On the other hand, Vasquez-Gonzales appreciates the opportunities available at FCF. According to him, there are more work assignments open to deaf residents at FCF than there were during his time at CTCF. At FCF he was able to gain employment working grounds maintenance, a job he says he loves. Furthermore, at FCF a group of JYACAP and Veterans Program participants are learning ASL together.

With the opening of cohorts in FCF, the two groups (deaf and ASL students) were able to meet and collaborate. The group of new ASL students has resulted in a community environment where deaf residents can interact with a larger pool of people. The deaf residents in turn provide expertise and real world experience for those seeking to learn ASL as an additional language. When asked how he felt about being in

FCF, Vasquez-Gonzales stated, "I really enjoy helping people in prison learn how to sign for the deaf community, and I enjoy working maintenance and construction." For Gallegos, too, this collaborative effort is a progressive move in the right direction toward community and connection. He states, "There should be more classes like JCAP learning ASL."

At FCF this collaborative learning is a novel endeavor. Phillip Mike Montoya, the JCAP participant who started the quest to learn ASL, explains how the ASL group began: "I was just bored during COVID and found an interesting book in a bargain book catalog." The book was called "Talk With Your Hands, Listen With Your Eyes" by Gabriel Grayson. Turning a small group learning exercise into a community project was completely unintentional for Montoya, but he says he is glad it is happening. Trying something new has provided an environment where two isolated individuals have a chance to be part of something more than a two-man world, and to share the knowledge with the larger FCF community.

Incarceration reform

BY MONSEL DUNGEN
CSP Bureau Chief

If a life sentence could bring back the life of a victim or restore normalcy to their family and friends affected by the tragedy of murder, then maybe a life without parole sentence would be effective. This is not the case, though, and the United States still locks up more people for longer sentences than any other country in the world. People with life sentences often get only one chance to plead their case and ask for clemency or commutation.

According to the 2020 Prison

Policy Initiative report, the American criminal justice system holds almost 2.3 million people in 1,833 state prisons, 110 federal prisons, 1,772 juvenile correctional facilities, 3,134 local jails, 218 immigration detention facilities, and 80 Indian Reservation jails. There are also military prisons, civil commitment centers, state psychiatric hospitals and prisons in U.S. territories. The lifer's population has nearly quintupled since 1984. One in seven people in prison are currently serving life with parole, life without parole, or virtual life (50 years or more). In 2020, the number of people serving life sentences reached

over 150,000. These high numbers endure while serious, violent crime has been declining for the past 20 years and little public safety benefit has been demonstrated to correlate with increasingly lengthy sentences.

After someone has served 20-plus years, they are not the same person they were when they came in. They have lived with pain, loss, fear, and uncertainty. Research shows that "Because recidivism rates decline markedly with age, lengthy prison sentences, unless they specifically target very high-rate or extremely dangerous offenders, are an inefficient approach to preventing crime by incapacitation."

A lot of energy is aimed at the war on drugs, mandatory sentencing, felony murder statutes, prison demands, privatization of prisons and incarceration in general. One would think this could convince our nation's leaders that something is seriously wrong with our justice system. Most felons are given second chances while very few lifers get the opportunity to reenter society, even after participating in every rehabilitative program CDOC offers.

Life in prison sentencing is not only costly but amounts to just another form of a death sentence. The long, slow one. The International Court of

Justice, also known as the World Court, has for many decades debated the argument of "so-called humane" methods of carrying out a death penalty. Granted, there are those who probably do deserve to die in prison for the crimes they have committed. However, there are many who can and have learned the social skills to be beneficial to communities and society. Society and the leaders of our country need to reevaluate decades-long sentencing traditions and develop a more humane, restorative justice perspective.

Leaders influencing leaders

BY CARLOS MARQUEZ
DRDC Bureau Chief

On Aug. 6, 2021, CDOC facility leaders packed into an academic's classroom to see Paula Faris, an Emmy Award winner for television broadcasting and the 2021 co-host for the Global Leadership Summit (GLS), to give a live shout-out to Justin Box and the 50 Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility (AVCF) participants. This shout was heard live around the world, yet it resonated with the audience at AVCF even more. This was personal.

This story began in Aug. of 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. While in his cell during quarantine, Box caught a re-run of the 2019 GLS on the AVCF Education channel. Inspired by the

summit, he decided the GLS needed a larger presence at Ark Valley and among its residents.

Box decided to host a spinoff of the GLS in the incentive unit. He called it the Arkansas Valley Leadership Summit (AVLS), and it turned into a two-day event with eight speakers from different programs, faith groups, and communities. Speakers shared their experiences in leadership to an audience of twenty other leaders. The idea was to invest in each other to make the community better.

In January 2021, Box wrote GLS begging forgiveness for copying their model and to ask for permission to keep running these summits. He explained what he accomplished during the pandemic. He received a response and, sure enough, Kylemae Hrovat, a GLS Development and Prison Program Associate, responded. She forgave him for using their model, admitting she was actually happy he did. She then informed him that AVCF

could stream the 2021 Summit live after filling out the proper paperwork.

Box recognized the impact of the previous AVLS and invited leaders across the whole yard to network around the GLS and discuss what they could accomplish together. They pitched "Purpose to Invest," with the goal to educate, equip, inspire, and guide others in the development of local leaders. This was for the benefit of the immediate community and beyond. These efforts resulted in a meeting between representatives from Beyond Thinking, Above! Recovery, Woodmen Valley @ Ark Valley, and the Chaplain's office. Franklin Covey also became involved to support the two-day event in the academic's department. At the end of the successful conference, Box made one last announcement: "This is only the beginning. Now we have work to do."



Peer led programs allow leaders to influence leaders

[Photos courtesy of AVCF]

Crushing the Game...

WODFEST



“The” Eric Davis with “The” Mat Fraser at DWCF
[Photo courtesy of RF2]



Mary Dofelmire catches her breath in the middle of the WOD
[Photo courtesy of RF2]

Continued from page 2

Mat Fraser, five-time CrossFit Games champion. The CrossFit G.O.A.T. (Greatest Of All Time) was there inside a prison to watch and encourage as volunteers and incarcerated residents from seven Colorado prisons came together to compete in the first-of-its-kind WODFEST (Work Out of the Day). Competitors and volunteers milled around the gym floor and wandered into the enclosed yard. All were ready for the day, the sweat, the work, and the exhaustion to begin.

As the women of DWCF began their daily routine, heading for their first stop of the day, whether it was med line or the chow hall, many filed past the recreation area adjacent to the gym. But what they saw in the gym made them stop and stare: men in orange prison jump suits were filling the yard. These men were just like the women who watched them—they had the same name tags on their t-shirts. But they were breaking new ground as the first group of incarcerated men to work out and compete within a women’s prison. And it was not only these men who were new to DWCF. Women

from La Vista Correctional Facility in Pueblo had also been transported to compete. All kinds of walls were crumbling before everyone’s eyes.

Trevor Jones was also there. That morning Jones, one of the original founders of Redemption Road CrossFit, was transported—handcuffed, chained, and shackled—from the Four Mile Correctional Center in Cañon City. This was possible because of the founders of RF2 and their encouragement of others. RF2 founders follow principles of integrity, determination, and an unwavering desire to have a positive effect on RF2 participants and the greater community. The path of dedication that these men walk in their daily lives inside multiple facilities has not gone unnoticed by CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams and his management team. They knew there was a risk in putting on an event like this. But this core group of RF2 founders are changing perceptions of incarcerated individuals both inside and outside of prison walls.

That could be said of Zion Woody. This 19-year-old man found his way into DWCF to

compete in one of the most unusual ways. He had begun CrossFit because his father, Micah, who was incarcerated in the Limon Correctional Facility when Zion was nine, had told Zion about the amazing impact that RF2 was having on his life. For half of his life, Zion’s father had been inside of prison, and now Zion had come to prison to work out to be closer to his dad. No, Micah was not able to attend WODFEST, but he was there in Zion’s heart as he crashed through his workouts. Zion wanted his dad to know that he has never felt relief from anxiety the way that he does when working out with CrossFit, and that even though his dad was not there physically, he felt very connected to him all day.

In 2020, the founder of CrossFit, Greg Glassman, came under fire after making controversial comments during a Zoom meeting following the murder of George Floyd. At the same time, he was facing multiple accusations of sexual harassment. Glassman agreed to step down as CEO and eventually sold CrossFit to Eric Roza, the former senior vice president and general manager of Oracle Data Cloud. Roza began

training in the CrossFit method in 2008. He has now rebuilt the team that runs CrossFit and has taken a personal interest in the RF2 model.

Robin Opie, chief analytics officer and vice president of software engineering for CrossFit, was also at DWCF to take part in the day’s event. While discussing the RF2 model, Opie conveyed that the CrossFit story that was happening within the CDOC is right in line with what CrossFit is hoping to achieve across the country and around the world. Opie made it clear that stories like this are not remarkable for CrossFit, because for CrossFit, remarkable is the norm. This is one of the reasons that Roza wants CrossFit boxes (CrossFit jargon for “gym”) to be in areas they would not normally be found, such as prisons. What better way to reach the many who are looking for a center, a way to move forward?

Kurtis Bowler was also in attendance that day at DWCF. Bowler is the direct testing program manager, overseeing all levels of CrossFit trainer certification. He is also the oldest box owner in the country. Just one more member of the CrossFit team looking inside of

prisons for answers.

As the day progressed, everyone had the opportunity to see how gracious the greatest CrossFit competitor of all time really is. Mat Fraser cheered as loudly as anyone as teams competed and triumphed together. He never hesitated to hang out, listen, share, and congratulate. Multiple times throughout the day, he relayed his own story of addiction as a teenager, his daily reminder that he holds onto as he grinds through whatever workout or challenge he faces. His openness and willingness to listen was very well received.

One of the most remarkable sights of the day was the large number of CDOC headquarters staff, as well as online officers, who were caught up in the energy of the competition. CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams and his wife were clearly thrilled at the way the event unfolded. Director Williams mingled throughout the entire day with incarcerated individuals and attendees from beyond the fences. In his remarks following the event, it was clear that he would continue to support the growth of RF2 and the changes it is presenting to those who take up the challenge.

The road back to redemption

The Xrucible returns to AVCF

BY CHRISTOPHER WEBB
AVCF Contributor

Sixty fitness maniacs howl in unison to create the deafening sound known as the Spartan’s battle-cry – Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility (AVCF) CrossFit (aka The Xrucible) is back in business.

COVID-19 wreaked havoc throughout CDOC, shutting down all programs and confining inmates to their cells for unbearable durations. Reawakening programs forced into hibernation is a predominant issue as yards slowly return to normal. However, the inmates at AVCF are not wasting time resuming operations for Redemption Road RF2 CrossFit.

But how did The Xrucible find a home at AVCF in the first place?

Former AVCF resident John Carbonell began his romance with CrossFit at Limon Correctional Facility (LCF) and has now returned. He performed

the routines he observed via televised competitions, often improvising with available equipment. The thrill of pushing through the grueling exercises was intoxicating, but his true joy came from the communal feeling that CrossFit encouraged.

He and a few other diehards approached LCF’s Program’s Officer about adding CrossFit as a permanent fixture in recreation. Their persistence paid off. CrossFit was quickly approved and certified, making Limon the first prison in CDOC to offer CrossFit to residents.

When John transferred to AVCF, he pushed to have CrossFit implemented there as well. Unfortunately, he met substantial resistance. It was the Go Map mentoring program that eventually moved CrossFit across the finish line to full approval. Once given the green light, John spent three days at Limon earning his Trainer’s Certification.

Back at AVCF, he carefully selected his initial training staff and taught them the characteristics of CrossFit. John prepared them to teach others the benefits of living a CrossFit lifestyle, from proper form and lifting techniques to essential diet and nutrition. After flyers were posted, 120 inmates attended the first class.

John cites “culture change” when asked what motivates him to teach other inmates. “Once we change how we live behind these walls, the outside world will have no choice but to change how it treats us.”

Jordan Ellis, one of the 120 inmates in The Xrucible’s inaugural class, helped bring outside support to the program at AVCF via The Phoenix, a Colorado-area sober gym. Through his work with Above! Recovery, Jordan was able to convince The Phoenix to get on board with the culture change occurring at AVCF.

“Outside involvement validates the CrossFit mindset,” Jordan said. “It’s one thing to have an inmate – even a certified one – try and instill a new concept. But when someone comes in from off the street and volunteers to teach us something, it’s a whole different experience.”

In CrossFit, Jordan discovered a fitness element that his typical prison weightlifting routine lacked, an element that only The Xrucible could provide. It drives him to “continuously learn,” knowing that one day he will be called to mentor the youth in his community and inject positive structure with his personal mission statement. “Live each day better than the last.”

John chuckled as he spoke about his ironic love for CrossFit: “The pain is terrible, but we’re all feeling terrible together. For that one hour we are united ... we are a family.”

Bragging Rights CTCF's Leaderboard

CTCF Squat competition

BY ALFRED H. MILLS
CTCF Contributor

On Oct. 24, 2021, Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF) held the second of three single-lift competitions, this one being the squat competition. A total of eight participants competed, ranging in age from 23-66 years old. Three of these participants were in the masters division, which has several categories for people between the ages of 40 and 69.

This competition was the second in a two-year period due to the COVID-19 restrictions. Approximately 30 people watched closely and cheered enthusiastically. There were three competitors who were outstanding crowd pleasers.

Jimmy Naas, first time competitor, age 56, received some of the loudest and longest cheers for his efforts. When he received a DNF ("did not finish") for a lift he could not complete, he was both thrilled and puzzled that everyone was still cheering. He asked why they were all cheering for him and heard, "Because of how hard you tried, my friend."

2021 CTCF Squat Competition I, Oct. 24, 2021:

The overall winners were determined by the Wilks calculator. This formula was developed for powerlifters and makes it possible for a lighter athlete to compete against a heavyweight lifter. It calculates overall, pound for pound, who is the best lifter.

Overall squat rankings for all weight and age classes:

Name/#	Body weight	age	Total lift	Wilks score
Craine, David	154lbs	32	425	144.70 1st
Jackson, Cedric	226lbs	23	525	143.55 2nd
Candelaria, Juan	167lbs	45 **	440	141.24 3rd
Gomez, Carlos	183lbs	26	405	122.62
Morris, Geordan	190lbs	29	265	78.53
Mills, Alfred	179lbs	66 ****	205	62.90

- *Open Class All ages
- ** Masters 1 Ages 40-49
- *** Masters 2 Ages 50-59
- **** Masters 3 Ages 60-69
- *****Masters 4 Ages 70+

Due to the lack of competition among all age groups, only the top three finishers will be paid for this event.

The second outstanding cheer was for first-place finisher 32-year-old David "Da-vee" Craine as he bucket-squatted 425 lbs. Weighing in at 154 lbs., this lift was nearly three times his body weight and the winning performance.

Cedric "Static" Jackson, 23, weighing in at 226 lbs., was the last lifter of the day. It was dead quiet when he cleared the bar out of the rack, but when he hit bottom and started back up, the whole gym erupted as he struggled through the last third of his successful 525-lb. squat. Afterward, he was rushed by friends and competitors in celebration of his accomplishment.

CTCF will hold one more single-lift competition this year: the bench press. It promises to attract an even larger turnout as newer guys see these competitions, and we now have enough benches to accommodate CTCF's growing number of lifters. Hopefully, our second squat rack will be repaired and returned to the weight pile before the full powerlifting meet. Start training for the bench press and the full meet next year. Good luck, fellas!

CTCF Bench competition

BY ALFRED H. MILLS
CTCF Contributor

On Dec. 26th, 2021, the Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF) 2021 bench press competition was held in the gym. This was the third and last of the singles competitions at CTCF, though a spring powerlifting meet is planned for March or April of 2022.

Juan "Stranger" Candelaria, 45, weighing in at 170 lbs., won the Masters 1 division, and the overall competition, with a bench press of 325 lbs. and a Wilks score of 104.07. This is his second overall win in the singles competitions as he also won the deadlift competition.

Brian "Mack" Mackes, 51, weighing in at 230 lbs. placed first in the Masters 2 division, but ended up second in the overall competition with a bench-press of

350 lbs. and a Wilks score of 95.08. Mack is completely blind, yet his benchpress is always a sight to see.

David "Da-vee" Craine, 32, weighing in as 162 lbs., placed first in the open division with a lift of 275 lbs. and came in third in the overall competition with a Wilks score of 90.18. This is Da-vee's second time on the podium as he was also the overall winner in the squat competition.

The overall judging by Lt. Beicker, Sgt. Johnson, and C/O Amirault was fair and even for all age and weight groups. Thanks go to the judges, weight-changers, and the photographer. Also, thanks to everyone at the meet for helping to return the equipment to the outside weight pile. Many hands made short work of the cleanup.



CTCF's Bench competition athletes keep their bragging rights
[Photo courtesy of CTCF]



CTCF's squat competition had impressive athletes competing
[Photo courtesy of CTCF]



AVCF's Nuggets hard in the paint
[Photo courtesy of AVCF]

CTCF Softball 2021 playoffs

BY JUAN CANDELARIA
CTCF Contributor

Four Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF) softball teams participated in the end of the season tournament. "The Vibes" went 3-0 in the round-robin playoffs and then

mercifully "The Bombers" 18-8 in the finals. There is a plan to form an all-star team of CTCF ball players to take on an outside church team once COVID-19 restrictions are lifted.

What are your markers?

Markers of your health include: A1C, Blood Pressure, Muscle Mass, etc. Any of these measurements can tilt the scale from sickness — to — wellness — to — fitness. In other words, to become fit you would first become well and to become sick from being fit, you would first become well. This is known as the sickness — wellness — fitness continuum in CrossFit.

AVCF Nuggets win in three

BY CHRISTOPHER WEBB
AVCF Contributor

Three-on-three basketball at Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility (AVCF) came to an end when the Nuggets defeated the Ballerinas in a dramatic three-game series.

The Nuggets appeared lethargic in the beginning, losing game one 13-21 to a Ballerinas team filled with shooters and anchored by #7, a tank-sized man who easily made his presence known in the paint.

Faced with the possibility of being swept, the Nuggets showed their resilience with the offensive play of #14 and #18, and the stellar defense of #22, who used his length to effectively shut down the Ballerinas' big man. The

Nuggets won game two 18-17, forcing a final game three.

Encouraged by a rowdy crowd, the two teams played tight defense. Four minutes into the game, the score was only 5-5. With 23 seconds left in regulation, and the game still tied at 14-14, the Ballerinas' #5 dribbled the ball for the final play. However, he was called for a five second violation, turning the ball over. The Nuggets then also failed to score before time expired.

The costly turnover at the end of regulation appeared to drain the Ballerinas' will to win. The Nuggets cruised through overtime to a final score of 22-18, winning the 2021 championship.

Bragging Rights



Ezekiel Garcia breaking records
[Photo courtesy of FCF]



Benjamin Vivian broke the facility squat record
[Photo courtesy of FCF]

Shattering records in more ways than one

BY DAVID HEHN
FCF Contributor

A huge shout-out to all the Fremont Weight Meet participants, volunteers, and staff for a job well done. Fremont has never had a weight meet of this magnitude before,

and it was a true testament to the dedication of our population. In two days we saw more weight than we could easily count. Along with the numerous personal records that were crushed, over the weekend participants broke three facility

records and one state record. A big congratulations to Ezekiel Garcia in the 114 lb. weight class, who broke the facility deadlift record with a super-strong 300 lbs. This is hard for mere mortals to imagine. Our own Ben Vivian also set

his name firmly in the history books over the weekend. Competing in the 275+ weight class, Ben broke the state and facility bench press record with 495 lbs. while also crushing the facility squat and over-all records with 620 lbs. and 1,715

lbs. respectively. Again, thank you and congratulations to all participants, volunteers, and staff for a great weekend. Let's make the next one even better!

La Vista's DROMOS competition

BY MAGGIE HENDERSON
LVCF Contributor

In the fall of 2021, La Vista Correctional Facility (LVCF) was in an uproar of excitement for months. There was an inspirational turnout of staff and spectators to watch the Redemption Road Fitness Foundation's (RF2) DROMOS CrossFit competition. The DROMOS is the official RF2 program-wide athletic tournament, and it is not just any competition. DROMOS is a test of the limits and physical competence of the participants in each of the ten fitness domains including cardiovascular/respiratory endurance, stamina, strength, flexibility, power, speed, coordination, agility, balance, and accuracy.

This is the first time RF2 has hosted the DROMOS competition. Athletes will compete against their facility peers through two qualifying rounds. Then the top athletes at each facility will

advance to the finals, competing against the other top qualifying participants across the state. Sixteen LVCF participants have joined the challenge. Each week, participants learn new challenges and what the competition consists of. Workouts vary from push-presses to burpees, deadlifts to clean-and-jerks. There are a variety of repetitions and weights in each event.

Participants in each facility compete in three arenas. The first one is the Pit, which has three variants of skill level: prescribed, scaled, and adaptive. These three levels apply to competitive and masters divisions. The second arena is the Stage, and the third arena is the DROMOS, neither of which has scaled versions of the workout. This means that participants must do the hardest skill level, the prescribed version, for the duration of the final two arenas. The competition workouts that are

given each week are not easy. They are meant to test the limits of both mind and body.

CrossFit is inclusive and supports people from all backgrounds. Any workout can be scaled to meet a participant's skill level. This includes people with injuries, disabilities, or other physical limitations. Adaptive athletes fall into this bracket. Adaptive teammate Claudia Barajas, LVCF resident, said the event made her "feel powerful and that nothing was impossible." Barajas has been doing CrossFit for a little over nine months. Her strength and determination has inspired us all.

The competition pushes a person to their limits. Teammate CJ Lockhart says she knows all about limits and pushes them every day. Lockhart is the number one power lifter on the team and in the LVCF facility, with a personal record of 325 pounds on deadlift, 192 pounds

on the bench press, and 222 pounds on her squat. Lockhart is also competing in the CrossFit DROMOS competitions under the prescribed variant. Lockhart said that after an event she feels, "exhausted or overwhelmed, depending on performance."

It is not just the RF2 team athletes, staff, and spectators that show up to support the DROMOS competition, but also entire living units. LVCF's very own Therapeutic Community (T.C.) unit attended to support its athletes. The deafening roars from outside the gym as the T.C. residents cheer their athletes on was heard around the facility. Ruby Infante is one of those athletes. Her motivation inspired many along the way. "After an event, I'm feeling ready for the next event so I can prove myself," Infante said.

Mary Dofelmire was the LVCF RF2 liaison since Redemption Road CrossFit began at LVCF almost two years ago. She continued to be a leader and mentor to the LVCF team throughout the

competition until she left LVCF in early 2022. Dofelmire, who competed in the CrossFit DROMOS competition in the prescribed variant, explained her commitment. "After I complete an event, I feel such a sense of fulfillment. I feel the broken pieces of myself begin to reconfigure and shift. But none of it would be possible without my team. These amazing sisters of mine push me past my own limits."

The team component is important in CrossFit. Teams are there for you, motivate you, and hold your hair away from your face when your head is in a trashcan after a hard workout. Participants say that if you have not wrecked on a box, hit your chin on a bar, or felt you were going to die, then you have not done CrossFit. But your team is there for you all along the way. This competition is not just about winning and seeing who the best athlete is, it is about bringing out the best in each individual and community.

RF2 2.0

Continued from page 2

assurance, a surer path. The time commitment is more intensive than many CDOC educational programs and continues to increase as the participant's progress. Each level of the coaching track requires participants to meet three areas of criteria before moving on: general, specific, and professional. The general criteria include community service, other program involvement, and electives, which help to build a professional portfolio. Specific criteria involve a demanding syllabus of educational classes and self-study bookwork and seminars. Finally, the professional criteria involve mentorship and accountability by demonstrating the six

coaching techniques in real time by a group of peers. The demand increases, but so do the benefits.

The first stage of the coaching track is the candidate phase, which takes each individual as long as necessary to complete. A formal proficiency demonstration is held for each item in the syllabus to show how well candidates can apply the knowledge they have learned in a practical and professional manner. Candidates begin building professional portfolios with a regimented educational and vocational program, including RF2 academy curriculum, scholarships, and more. Once successful, they attend a graduation ceremony to celebrate their achievement and advance to the next tier, which can take them from Coach 1 up to Coach 4.

The new format and syllabus of the RF2 2.0 accomplishes

two goals. First, it ensures all RF2 programs benefit equally by making each branch accountable to the same standards and criteria. The curriculum provides guidance for hosting this program to existing and new affiliates. Secondly, for a person wanting to pursue the coaching track, the syllabus has clearly explained criteria. Participants know exactly what is expected of them from the start and all the way up through Coach 4. Meanwhile, RF2 continues to host CrossFit seminars and increase the number of events like fundraisers and competitions to support the influx of men and women who have shown themselves as not only ready and willing, but trustworthy. Recently, RF2 had almost 60 new members take their CrossFit Level 1 (CF-L1) and continue on the professional track. These events bring a little

fun to the normal monotony of prison and bring our participating facilities closer together. Redemption Road has a directive from the Executive Director of the Colorado Department of Corrections to expand and offer this program to every facility throughout the state.

The heart of Redemption Road is its core team. What separates RF2 from most CDOC programs is that the core team is not selected by the prison system in any way. They arise from the population and are recognized by RF2 because of their pursuit of excellence.

RF2 seeks to be the best around. On the way, the RF2 coaches continue helping people be the best they can be individually, too. The ever-increasing number of participants, coaches, volunteers, and staff are joining to make this process one of

the most successful ventures to come from inside the walls. RF2 welcomes all who are not currently involved and congratulates those who help to make sure everything about RF2 2.0 a success.

I strive to remember that the failures we have made in the past do not define who we are today. In fact, they shape a testimony that burns brighter because of our contact with the struggles, setbacks, and life altering moments we overcome on a daily basis. The people of RF2 want to help people remember to let our scars and marks be a sign of victory, not a brand that says we cannot, but one that says we have and always will. Let our failures show exactly where we need to reinforce our foundation to build an everlasting legacy.

I am enough

BY ANTHONY VALDEZ
IR Editor in Chief

Brandin Kreuzer and Jon Willis carry the legacy of Redemption Road CrossFit. They organized a CrossFit certification seminar behind the walls of CDOC that brought together athletes from La Vista (LVCF), Sterling (SCF), Trinidad (TCF), Limon (LCF), Arkansas Valley (AVCF), and Fremont (FCF) Correctional Facilities. From September 19th-22nd, 2021, these athletes completed a two-day seminar at FCF to obtain CrossFit Level One certification (CF-L1).

Kreuzer and Willis came with SCF's Captain Clare and Programs Manager Ginga Elbel, and were joined by Tevin Calhoun from Community Corrections. The magnitude of this event that combined people from the outside and multiple prisons into one space was palpable. CrossFit (CF) trainers Nicole Gordon, Becky Harsh, Jason Ackerman, and David Title awaited the arrival of each facility's participants. LVCF athletes arrived daily and returned each afternoon. Other athletes stayed on site at FCF throughout the seminar. The guest athletes were unable to interact with the FCF population, or even to go to yard, but Major Justin McBride allowed hosting athletes to meet with guest athletes after seminar hours.

Redemption Road CrossFit

999, led by Evan Lawlor, coordinated with FCF to meet the needs of this revolutionary endeavor. Multiple departments within FCF came together to accommodate the community. Catherine Pritt, the Juveniles and Young Adults Convicted as Adults Program (JYACAP) administrator, furnished the Prometheus Board, a new platform – instead of traditional white board – to assist CF coaches.

The expected roster of athletes totaled 61 athletes. Logistically, the coordination between facilities set the standard for what is possible within CDOC; however, not all eligible athletes were able to make the trip. Trevor Jones from Four Mile Correctional Facility was unable to attend due to miscommunications within the complex logistics.

The success rate was real. The failure rate was real. There were no handouts. Kreuzer explained that the expectation from CF is for a fairly high failure rate for the CF-L1 exam, but after the incarcerated candidates were assessed, a staggering 55 out of 61 participants passed. Kreuzer, along with fellow CF trainer Nick Wells, stated that the goal of CrossFit in the Colorado system is to not accept mediocrity. "When we're talking about CF in prison, we are not at all interested in prison good. You see prison good everywhere and prison



Redemption Road CrossFit 999 hosted the CrossFit Level One seminar at the Fremont Correctional Facility

[Photo courtesy of IR]

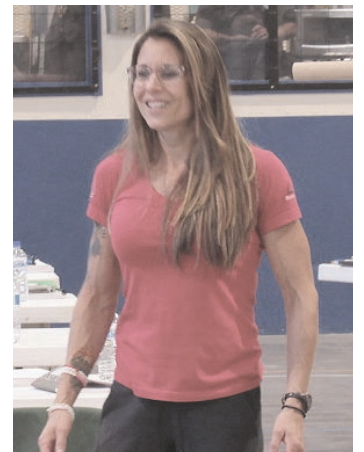
good sucks," Kreuzer said. "It has been very important to us, to not only meet the actual, real professional standard. If we are not going to meet real standards, then what is the point?"

Ackerman said, "First, I was nervous. The only thing I heard was that prison was really structured. I wanted to be able to give the same product, no different than an affiliate." He did not want to use the word "normal" to compare experiences, as these were athletes whose lives could be changed by CF, just as his had been. "CF kept me doing what I

love and I want to continue that for everyone else. It (prison) is not what you see on television and the movies. You cannot judge a book by its cover."

The CF trainers participated for a variety of motivations. Ackerman said, "I lived different when I was younger. I had a temper, and life wasn't always easy. I relate to the people here." Gordon's daughter is an activist who brought awareness to the different favors that life has given their family. Dealing with incarceration aligns with the awareness her daughter brought to her. She said, "I do not want to know your past because I do not want to judge. I want to know your life now. I want to have a connection to people who want to do better overall in their lives. I do not want to hear about the negative past, I want to know why you want to be better. A workout is what we want but it's more than that, it's wanting to be better that connects us."

This connection with people on the outside is one of the many reasons Kreuzer and his fellow incarcerated CF trainers do what they do. The yearly CrossFit Open is a competition held all over the world where all CF athletes do the same workout to compare results. "There is a bond with the outside over trading results," Kreuzer said. He adds that the opportunity to connect with family, CF volunteers, and even other incarcerated friends around the state follows the concepts of restorative practices he so firmly believes in.



Nicole Gordon

[Photo courtesy of IR]

There were many great moments between old and new friends connecting, but the business of the seminar, the reason they were brought together, was taken seriously. Theory lectures gave invaluable insight to CF expectations. Trainers demonstrated the correct movements with clear identifiers of faults and errors. "The greatest adaptation in CF happens between the ears," Ackerman said, sharing one of his favorite CF quotes.

Recent months have revealed each athlete's results. "Our community continues to lift up one another, and the recent CF-L1 trainers are implemented into their new roles," said Lawlor. The reality that some participants did not pass the course rippled through the community. However, RF2 has a strong leadership organization behind the walls and its members continue to grow.



SANCTVM participated in the first of two CrossFit Level One seminars

[Photo courtesy of IR]

reverberations

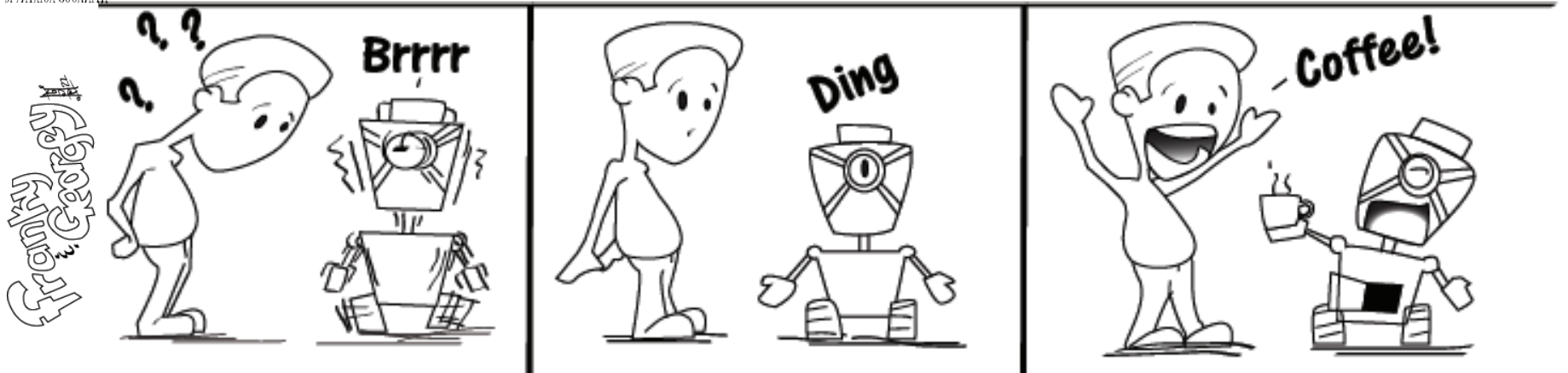
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BY PATRICK SOGHATEVA



Nutrition

Continued from page 1

This is an important part of the mission of the Food Services Headquarters Team, which, according to CDOC's Food and Laundry Service resource webpage, is "responsible for assessing inmates' nutrition plans for various health conditions. In addition, the registered dietitian (RD) team supplies inmates with nutritional education through means of one-on-one sessions, group sessions and handouts."

McBride teaches diet, exercise, and behavior changes that support people in making realistic goals. The responsibility does not reside with the incarcerated alone. McBride offers consultations, saying, "If people have concerns about their health, we do like when people put in a kite to medical to have a counsel." Once a provider receives the

kite and evaluates the need, the request for a dietician may be submitted at the provider's discretion.

Chronic health issues deriving from poor dietary routines of incarcerated people have society-wide detrimental impacts after release. "Food for Thought," a Prison Voice Washington article, found that in jails and prisons, health issues stemming from incarcerated people substantially raise costs for the DOC.

McBride agrees. She advises her clients to consider the difference in costs between fruits and vegetables versus health care. Taking information from a variety of sources, CDOC dietitians are implementing changes to food service menus. Without influence on food service purchasing or available canteen items, McBride's nutrition classes are part of the balancing act that CDOC dietitians negotiate while supporting incarcerated people.

CDOC nutrition standards itemize target nutrition values based on gender, age, and specialty considerations like pregnancy and participation in the Challenge Incarceration Program (formerly Boot Camp). The Department's Diet Manual procedure states that institutions will meet 95-100% of RDA for general diets on a weekly average and that Target Nutritional Values may not apply to medically prescribed diets.

In the nutrition classes, incarcerated participants inquire about specialty diets, food quality, and preparation. One participant, Justin Tyme said, "During the class, McBride took the time to talk to me about my diet and met with nurse practitioner Blessed Barrack to come to a compromise with myself and the gastro surgeon. This brought a conclusion to months and months of trying to get my diet corrected. McBride was very helpful."

A study that includes 20 prisons and organizations around the world is working to improve food sustainability in prisons. An article published in "Food Revolution Network" in September 2018 highlighted multiple U.S.-based organizations aiming to alleviate hunger and build employable skills. The World Health Organization (WHO) recognizes the global repercussions of poor-quality food, citing a case study showing that food "not only affects physical and mental health" but is crucial in the rehabilitation and reintegration of incarcerated people.

In March 2017, the Prison Policy blog stated that 30% of incarcerated people have hypertension, 10% have heart problems, and 9% have diabetes — all of which are higher rates than in the general population. As the American Heart Association makes clear, conditions like these can be



Registered Dietician McBride recently revamped the nutrition class, with more workshops on the horizon [Photo courtesy of McBride]

prevented or even reversed to some extent by a nutritious diet.

"I recommend the Choose My Plate for the Dietary Guidance for Americans. I love how the picture of the plate gives a visual of what you should be eating. I love how it shows the balance and everything. Learn how to read food labels to help make better choices with canteen," said McBride.

Teaching this class to a population of people that have a variety of needs can be difficult. The class is based on general topics, and McBride teaches that uncomplicated practices can lead to healthy living. Future plans are developing to start the workshops in other facilities. On the horizon for McBride is the continuation of the nutrition class, the annual diabetes class, and smaller consulting collaborations.



Nutrition class participants receive applicable knowledge to maintain a healthy life while incarcerated [Photo courtesy of IR]

CTCF's Turkey Trot event

BY JUAN CANDELARIA
CTCF Contributor

There was a big turnout at the annual Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF) 2021 Turkey Trot with over 100 participants. About 150 had signed up, but due to the cold front the night before, some had decided not to go.

For the first time in a long while, pictures taken outside during an event were allowed to be purchased by all. There was also a sidewalk for the ADA participants and walkers, and a table of refreshments with Kool-aide and water.

Unfortunately, there was a death at the end of the run. An older man of nearly 60 fell face-first and became unconscious. The C/Os and nurses attempted CPR, but unfortunately, it was too late. He was the Chaplain's clerk and had been down for almost 30 years. This was an unexpected and terrible loss.

Latest Standings

Big 3 B-Ball

This year, the weekend playoff league, which usually runs Friday through Sunday, went into overtime into Monday. We played half court doubles with 20-minute halves. A "skunk" was awarded if the team was more than 35 points ahead at the half or any time during the second half. This was a best two out of three elimination bracket.

- 1st-The Ballers, Coach Candelaria
- 2nd-Hard Hitters, Coach Ardoin
- 3rd-The Squad, Coach Garrette

Timed Arm Hang

This event uses the pull-up bar. It began during practice, when participants could hang for more than two minutes. A similar challenge between participants occurred in Pueblo at the State Fair, and now the tired arm hang challenge has become an official event.

- 1st-Evans (Time 2:19.18 sec.)
- 2nd-Guerrero (Time 2:13.91 sec.)
- 3rd-Sanchez (Time 125.37 sec.)

Pickleball Tournament

- 1st-Montano & Olivogutierrez
- 2nd-Erickson & Purnell
- 3rd-Davis & Beserra

Top Overall 10K

- 1st-Philip Hufstader-Time (43:30)
- 2nd-Scott Hanchett-Time (45:50)
- 3rd-Salvador Guerrero-Time (49:03)

Ages 40-49:

- 1st-Fay
- 2nd-Robinson
- 3rd-Contreras

Top Overall 5K:

- 1st-Nate Fischer-Time (21:31)
- 2nd-Jose Cabral-Lopez-Time (23:18)
- 3rd-Carlos Gomez Jr.-Time (23:24)

Ages 40-49:

- 1st-Cabral-Lopez
- 2nd-Candelaria
- 3rd-Watkins

Ages 50-59:

- 1st-Gomez Sr.
- 2nd-Self

Over 60:

- 1st-Rivera, F.
- 2nd-Welch
- 3rd-Weare/Irby

ADA:

- 1st-Chavez
- 2nd-Torres
- 3rd-Chavez, R.

Volleyball

We had a month long season with seven teams and a round-robin tournament with double elimination.

1st-Coach Candelaria, Morris, Gomez Jr., Ericson, Hansen, Purnell, Flores, Jones.

- 2nd-Coach Stookey
- 3rd-Coach Beserra

Three-Point B-Ball Challenge

- 1st-Martinez (7 out of 14)
- 2nd-Cardoza (7 out of 14)
- 3rd-Forrest (5 out of 14)

Over 50:

- 1st-Self
- 2nd-Muller
- 3rd-Suarez

Standings Wanted

We welcome all facilities to submit. Please coordinate all submissions for the Health and Sports section through your Bureau Chief, email through your Facility Liaison, or send through the mail at: The Inside Report, P.O. Box 999, Canon City, CO 81215. Also pictures are always welcome, please ensure that all people in the photograph sign a Media Release. Any questions/concerns please contact us.



LOOKING FOR SPORTS WRITERS

submit your articles to the bureau chief in your facility

Ranges

Continued from page 1

personal accountability and a case-by-case approach to encourage incarcerated people to take responsibility for the actions that sent them to prison. People living and working within the CDOC are already seeing the positive effects on the prison population and the communities that incarcerated people return home to. As CDOC marches forward into the new dawn of reform, the criminal justice system must also examine how sentencing is handled for people who find themselves in courtrooms across the state.

Mandatory minimum sentencing is robbing the judicial system of its integrity and the very justice society seeks from it. When someone is charged with a crime, there is a presumptive range of the number of years required to serve for the conviction of that crime. Sentence enhancers and aggravating circumstances often increase this range to double or

even triple the maximum years. Since over 90% of criminal cases are settled with a plea agreement as opposed to a trial, the goal of public defenders is often to ensure that their client receives short sentences. But because of these predetermined ranges, the judge's hands are tied when it comes to sentencing a defendant, even when mitigating circumstances might encourage the judge to deliver a shorter sentence.

The ideals of prison reform call on incarcerated people to take responsibility as individuals. If the state of Colorado revokes its mandatory minimum sentencing guidelines, this would serve as an additional call for greater personal responsibility - not just for the accused, but also for defense counselors, district attorneys, judges, and greater communities. This shift would open the door for mitigation hearings, and it would allow presentencing investigators to do their intended jobs, thus ensuring that courts present the clearest possible picture of an individual and their circumstance when they stand accused of committing a crime.

Attorneys, particularly public defenders, would be required to ensure that the lengths of their clients' sentences realistically reflect the severity of their crimes. Currently, the best defense for someone accused of a crime includes hiring a private attorney rather than working with a public defender. This comes at a high price. The reason that this is the best possible defense is because, in a startling number of cases, public defenders are overloaded, appearing either unable or unwilling to do a thorough job defending their clients. District attorneys, meanwhile, would be pushed to charge the accused parties appropriately, knowing that defense counsels are going to be bringing the whole truth to the table. Presentencing investigations and mitigation hearings would ensure that the punishment fits the crime of the defendant who stands accused.

Finally, judges, as elected officials, would be called upon to use their wisdom to make well-informed decisions on how to best serve justice, as opposed to having to hand down sentences that fall within a presumptive

range. They would serve their communities as gatekeepers to the criminal justice system, with no end to the good that could be done if they were free to impose sentencing that reflects the needs that they see within their districts.

As the system moves toward this new age of personal responsibility, society can extend the precepts of prison reform beyond the walls of correctional facilities to ask those who are in charge of ensuring justice to do their part, as well. Legislation to repeal mandatory minimum sentencing requires both rewriting law and advocates who are willing to take up the fight. Justice must be served, not just for those who have the funds to pay for better counsel, but for every single member of communities touched by crime. If society removes the barriers erected by these mandatory minimums, defendants will be able to bridge the gap between what they can afford monetarily and what they can afford to learn about themselves and their communities. Culpability and responsibility go hand in hand.

Project Elevate

BY ALEXANDER JASMINE
IR Submissions Manager

The former Tooley Hall halfway house in Denver will reemerge exclusively for women via Project Elevate as early as July 2022. Denver's Department of Public Safety pushed to allocate funds in the 2022 budget to kick-start this program.

Project Elevate will employ forward-thinking methods such as trauma-informed design, a technique that emphasizes comfortable spaces by factoring in lighting and color schemes that refrain from triggering a resident's former traumatic experience. The interior design of the facility is on track to be completed before it reopens.

Denver's City Council denied new contracts in August 2019 for GEO Group and CoreCivic, the previous operators of Tooley Hall. Both corporations were heavily criticized for the treatment of residents along with questionable political contributions. The new facility will be operated in partnership with Empowerment Program, whose mission is to holistically help individuals build better lives from the inside out and offers support services for women.

This new partnership symbolized a paradigm shift in funding for this facility. Project Elevate, a non-profit organization, plans to work in partnership with city officials to re-envision Tooley Hall. Community Corrections Director Greg Mauro said the contract with Empowerment Program was introduced to lawmakers for deliberation in October 2021. The deal has been finalized at this stage.

The promising facility will house up to 55 women and will not charge residents a rental fee. Nightly fees at similar facilities commonly obstruct people from going through re-entry programs. According to Mauro, waiving that cost could help women save roughly \$4,000 to \$5,000 per year.

Approval of this proposal will generate a safe haven for women. This facility will be all the more necessary after the Denver City Council's decision against the renewal of contracts in 2019 that inadvertently led to the closure of the Williams Street facility.

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Colorado Territorial – Channel 6
Delta – Channel 31
Denver Reception & Diagnostic Ctr - Ch 36
Denver Women's – Channel 36

Four Mile – Channel 48
Fremont – Channel 48
La Vista – Channel 42
Limon – Channel 29
Rifle – Channel 39*

San Carlos – Channel 42
Sterling – Channel 47
Trinidad – Channel 13
Youthful Offender System - Channel 42

*Rifle Correctional Facility staff are working to repair facilities infrastructure, to make the Inside Wire signal available to Rifle residents and staff.



Chess Tactician

BY RANJIT SAHOTA
IR Associate Editor

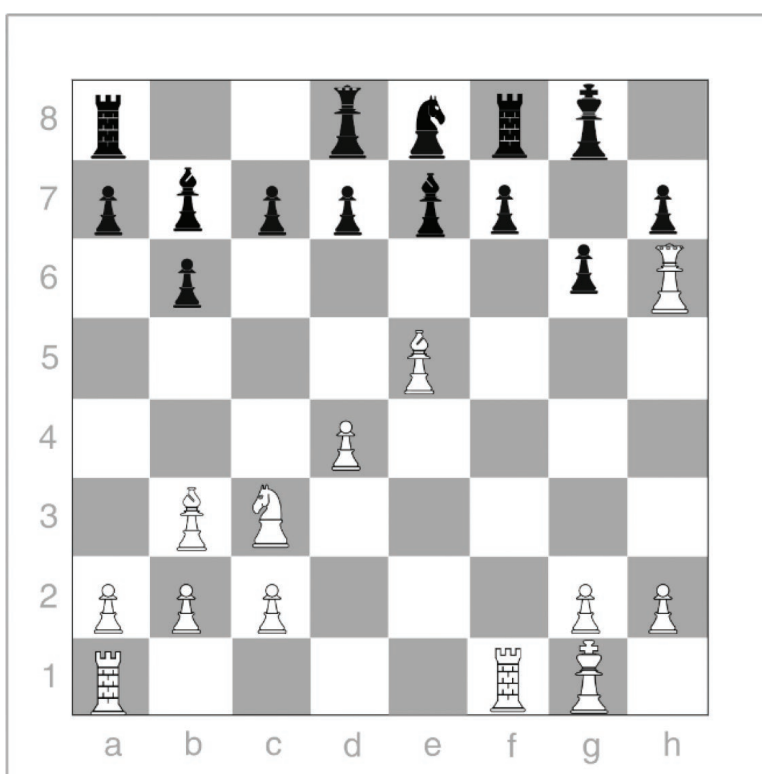
Puzzle 4

Checkmate in Four Moves. It is White's turn to Move.

Solution:

1. Qxf8+ (Queen takes f8 Rook – Check!) Kxf8
2. Rxf7+ (Rook takes f7 Pawn – Check) Kg8
3. Rg7+ (Rook to g7 – Check) Kh8
4. Rg8# (Rook to g8 – Check Mate)

This puzzle checks your understanding of sacrificing and the concept of discovered check. Sacrificing the Queen to Qxf8+ is the key move. Using the Rook to Rxf7+ to move the enemy king to the final mate position is the next set of moves. The interesting thing about the Rook moves Rg7+ and Rg8# is that they expose the King to a discovered check from the Bishops. Using the discovered checks forces the black King to move into the final mate position. Note that the final move of the Rook 4. Rg8# could also be to other valid positions such as Rg6 because the mate is based on the discovered check from the two Bishops.



The Inside Report announces our 1st ANNUAL non-fiction writing competition. We are asking for a 350-550 word article written on a topic of your choice. DU PAI staff will judge the articles, based on journalistic writing, and prizes will be awarded. Please contact your facility bureau chief, facility liaison, or The Inside Report itself. The deadline is July 15, 2022.



Korey Wise Innocence Project

Continued from page 2

should hold a pro se pleading to “less stringent standards than formal pleadings drafted by lawyers[.]” *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972). That means that the court must “apply the applicable law, irrespective of whether the pro se litigant has mentioned it by name[.]” *Dluhos v. Strasberg*, 321 F.3d 365, 369 (3rd Cir. 2003). Both these cases were cited with approval by the Colorado Supreme Court in *People v. Bergerud*, 223 P.3d 686, 696-97 (Colo. 2010).

And a 35(c) petition does not have to include all the evidence that supports its claims. The default rule is that an evidentiary hearing should be held unless it is clear from the court file and transcripts that the claims should be denied. *Ardolino v. People*, 69 P.3d 73, 77 (Colo. 2003). A petition that refers to facts outside the court file and the transcripts has a much better chance of getting counsel appointed and an evidentiary hearing granted than a petition that does not include such facts or raises only a legal issue.

The tone of a pro se petition matters. A person who has been unconstitutionally convicted and incarcerated is—of course—angry. But a petition that showcases that anger is not going to be viewed favorably by the court. Being very clear and avoiding unprofessional language are important.

Time limits and justifiable excuse/excusable neglect

People seeking relief from a felony conviction generally

must file a 35(c) petition within 3 years of the date the conviction becomes final. If the conviction is for a class 1 felony, there is no limit on when a 35(c) may be filed. However, if a person was convicted of both a class 1 felony and any other class of felony in the same case, the 3-year limit still applies to any of the non-class 1 convictions. If no direct appeal was filed, a conviction becomes final on the date the court imposed the sentence. If a direct appeal was filed, the conviction becomes final on the date the mandate affirming the conviction issues from the Colorado Supreme Court. If you appealed your conviction, be sure to ask your appellate lawyer to confirm in writing the date the mandate issues, so that you can calculate the 3-year time frame for filing a 35(c) correctly. If you are filing a 35(c) outside the 3-year time limit, your pro se petition must explain any facts that constitute justifiable excuse or excusable neglect for missing the deadline. The following is a list of factors that are relevant to deciding whether justifiable excuse or excusable neglect are present:

- The extent to which the defendant, having reason to question the constitutionality of a conviction, timely investigated its validity and took advantage of available avenues of relief;
- Whether the defendant had any previous need to challenge a conviction and either knew it was constitutionally infirm or had reason to question its validity;
- Whether the defendant had

other means of preventing the government’s use of a conviction, so that a post-conviction challenge was previously unnecessary; and

- Whether the passage of time affects the prosecution’s ability to defend against the challenge.

People v. Chavez-Torres, 442 P.3d 843, 847-48 (Colo. 2019).

Other situations that will justify dismissing a 35(c) on its face

People who have filed and lost a 35(c) petition usually can’t file another petition, even if the second petition raises different claims for relief. And a 35(c) petition that raises a claim that was previously denied on direct appeal will also usually be denied on its face. The only exceptions to this are found in 35(c)(3)(VI), (VII), and (VIII). If any of these exceptions apply, it is important to explain why in the petition.

Ineffective assistance of counsel claims

The most common 35(c) claims are that a former lawyer was ineffective. To prevent such a claim from being dismissed without a hearing, the 35(c) petition must allege two sets of facts: first, that the lawyer was ineffective; and second, that if the lawyer had been effective, there is a reasonable probability that the outcome of the case would have been different. In other words, a 35(c) petition that states only “my trial lawyer did not investigate this case before trial” may well be dismissed on its face, without a hearing.

A 35(c) petition that states “my lawyer did not investigate this case before trial and because of that, (witness name) who would have testified that (description of the favorable testimony) was not called at trial. If the jury had heard this testimony, there is a reasonable likelihood that the outcome would have been different” is far less likely to be dismissed on its face. For each claim of ineffective assistance, it is important to explain what the impact of effective assistance would have had on the outcome of the case. In other words, the petition should not just say that a former lawyer failed to do something. It should also explain why that failure made a difference. This is why, for example, a petition that claims a lawyer was ineffective for failing to let the client read discovery is unlikely to be successful, unless the petition also explains why letting the client read discovery would have created a reasonable probability of a different case outcome.

The most common forms of ineffective assistance are:

- Failing to investigate the facts, including facts affecting witness credibility
 - Failing to consult with expert witnesses as part of the investigation
 - Failing to advise the client about a plea offer
 - Failing to advise the client about the sentence that could be imposed if the client was found guilty at trial or pled guilty
 - Failing to advise the client about the immigration consequences of a conviction
- This is not an exhaustive list. And — again — it is important to remember that a successful petition needs to explain why,

if the lawyer had not been ineffective, there is a reasonable probability that the result would have been different.

Other grounds for post-conviction relief

Remember that ineffective assistance of counsel is not the only thing that may entitle people to relief under Crim.P. 35(c). For example, if the prosecutor failed to provide information in discovery, that may be grounds for a 35(c) claim, if there is a reasonable probability that information would have changed the case result. And if a former lawyer had a conflict of interest that materially limited the representation, that may also be grounds for relief. *West v. People*, 341 P.3d 520 (Colo. 2015).

Abandonment of claims

When the trial court receives a pro se 35(c) petition, the court has 63 days to review it and decide whether to deny it on its face or appoint counsel for the petitioner. Crim.P. 35(c)(3)(IV). If the court decides to take more than 63 days, it must notify the pro se petitioner of the new deadline it sets for itself. If, after 63 days, you have not heard from the court, you should write a polite letter asking for an update on the status of the 35(c) petition. Failing to do so could keep the case in limbo indefinitely and might even open you up to being accused of abandoning your claims. Always keep copies of everything you mail to the court, including the pro se petition.

REENTRY and EMPLOYMENT STRATEGIES

Reducing Recidivism and Promoting Job Readiness ARE YOU READY FOR THE STREETS?

Perplexing pronouns: gender identifiers

BY LEE RIDDLE
IR Journalist

You are not alone if you wake up every day and wonder what the next scandal is, or who said what and how much trouble they are in because of what they said. If you have completely shut down because everything is “too PC” (politically correct) and you feel you cannot keep up, things are not as dire and complex as they may seem. Even you, a cisgender male, can make a difference.

Gender politics is an ultra-challenging and confusing area for many. Depending on your age (the older you are the truer this is), you may have grown up with the simple knowledge that there are men and women. Boys are boys and girls are girls. Straight, gay or bi, (and if you are the latter two, keep it to yourself) - those are your options. Apply the KISS method (Keep It Simple Stupid) to your life, at least Gen X and before. But, change happens and today many discussions that are focused on inclusivity

challenge this outlook.

At Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF), Claudia Burton said, “It’s a dream come true to be able to be myself. I discovered I was female when I was 9, but it was violently beat out of me in 1969 by my father. I was not allowed to be myself and now to be able to share how I feel on the inside is a real self-esteem boost. I feel alive, finally.”

Burton has a level-headed approach about challenging the status quo. She said, “One hand is as full as the other. I see people who I would have never thought to be on board. I see people making a real effort. But on the other hand I interact with young people I think would be on board, but they are as bad as my father ever was 50 years ago.”

As the status quo is challenged, discriminatory legislation continues to pass because the changes are too rapid and too complex for some of our society’s members. Christopher Hudy, FCF resident

said, “I feel that change is good in general, but there are things that bother me. Where do we draw the line? I think telling your story is good and everyone should feel free to express themselves, but where do we draw the line between feelings and reality?”

But for Fremont resident Claudia Burton, this is a feeling and a reality. She began the transition in prison five years ago. “I was in treatment and during the process of learning about myself, I finally was able to draw conclusions about my behavior and feelings. I got my life back. And suddenly I realized I have rights.” Burton said, “The staff have been very respectful. I have staff members that refer to me as ma’am and I appreciate it. Some of my peers struggle, and a few refuse to call me anything but ‘he.’ It really hurts. In general though, staff have the right idea and are moving forward.”

One method of inclusion is to stop making assumptions about gender to stop “misgendering”

people. Instead, ask about and use preferred pronouns. You misgender someone when you call them by a gender that they do not identify with. Unfortunately, some people are resistant to change, even if it means disrespecting someone else. Everyone deserves respect, though. Period.

This is where it gets complicated, but in reality it is not. Remember Rule #1: everyone deserves respect; and Rule #2: it is a big, beautiful world. That’s right, there is not just blue and pink; there are a myriad of colors and shades. Thousands of undiscovered species. Earth yet unmapped. So it is with gender; there are not just males and females. In fact, there is a whole spectrum of gender.

For many, gender is what you are born with, and it seems unfathomable that someone would be a gender other than the one assigned at birth. For many it is simple: I have boy parts and I feel like a boy, so I am a cisgender (pronounce “sis,”

from the Latin, meaning “on the side of”) male. In other words, they identify with their gender at birth.

But there are many who do not feel that way. For some, people like Burton are making choices, but not everyone chooses their gender. For some, they have girl parts but do not feel or identify with what others believe to be feminine. Or some days, they feel “masculine” and other days, “feminine”, or simply have no feeling or attraction to either on other days. The point is that people are digging deep within, finding their true feelings and expressing themselves to the world.

It pays to be aware and inclusive. Universities and businesses are two environments that are encouraging this freedom to express oneself. Adding pronouns is a way to respect employees and celebrate diversity. Some businesses ask employees to add their pronouns to their email signatures and

Continued on page 19

El Proyecto Inocencia Korey Wise

Continued from page 2

supuesto, enojada. Pero una petición que muestre esa ira no será vista favorablemente por la corte. Ser muy claro y evitar un lenguaje poco profesional es importante.

Límites de tiempo y excusa justificable/negligencia excusable

Las personas que buscan alivio de una condena por un delito mayor generalmente deben presentar una petición 35(c) dentro de los 3 años posteriores a la fecha en que la condena se vuelve definitiva. Si la condena es por un delito grave de clase 1, no hay límite en cuanto a cuándo se puede presentar un 35(c). Sin embargo, si una persona fue condenada por un delito grave de clase 1 y cualquier otra clase de delito grave en el mismo caso, el límite de 3 años aún se aplica a cualquiera de las condenas que no sean de clase 1. Si no se presentó una apelación directa, la condena se vuelve definitiva en la fecha en que el tribunal dictó la sentencia. Si se presentó una apelación directa, la condena se vuelve definitiva en la fecha en que se emite el mandato que afirma la condena de la Corte Suprema de Colorado. Si apeló su condena, asegúrese de pedirle a su abogado de apelaciones que confirme por escrito la fecha en que se emite el mandato, para que pueda calcular el plazo de 3 años para presentar un 35(c) correctamente. Si está presentando un 35(c) fuera del límite de tiempo de 3 años, su pro se petición debe incluir cualquier hecho que constituya

una excusa justificable o negligencia excusable por no cumplir con la fecha límite. Si no se incluye esta información, el tribunal tendrá una justificación para denegarla a primera vista. La siguiente es una lista de factores que son relevantes para decidir si la excusa justificable o la negligencia excusable están presentes:

- La medida en que el acusado, teniendo motivos para cuestionar la constitucionalidad de una condena, investigó oportunamente su validez y aprovechó las vías de reparación disponibles. ;
- Si el acusado tenía alguna necesidad previa de impugnar una condena y sabía que era constitucionalmente inválida o tenía motivos para cuestionar su validez;
- Si el acusado tenía otros medios para evitar el uso de una condena por parte del gobierno, de modo que antes era innecesaria una impugnación posterior a la condena; y
- Si el paso del tiempo afecta la capacidad de la acusación para defenderse de la impugnación.

Pueblo v. Chávez-Torres, 442 P.3d 843, 847-48 (Colo. 2019).

Otras situaciones que justificarán desestimar una 35(c) de principio

Las personas que han presentado y perdido una petición 35(c) por lo general no pueden presentar otra petición, incluso si la segunda petición plantea diferentes reclamos de reparación. Y una petición 35(c) que presenta un reclamo que podría haberse presentado

y denegado en una apelación directa o que fue presentado también se denegará en su cara. Las únicas excepciones a esto se encuentran en 35(c)(3) (VI), (VII) y (VIII). Si aplica alguna de estas excepciones, es importante explicar por qué en la petición.

Reclamaciones de asistencia ineficaz de un abogado

Las 35(c) más comunes son que un ex abogado fue ineficaz. Para evitar que tal reclamo sea desestimado sin una audiencia, la petición 35(c) debe alegar dos conjuntos de hechos: primero, que el abogado fue ineficaz; y segundo, que si el abogado hubiera sido efectivo, existe una probabilidad razonable de que el resultado del caso hubiera sido diferente. Por ejemplo, una petición 35(c) que establece únicamente que “mi abogado litigante no investigó este caso antes del juicio y, por lo tanto, recibí asistencia ineficaz” bien puede ser desestimada sin una audiencia. Una petición 35(c) que dice “mi abogado no investigó este caso antes del juicio y por eso, (nombre del testigo) quien habría declarado que (descripción del testimonio favorable) no fue llamado al juicio. Si el jurado hubiera escuchado este testimonio, existe una probabilidad razonable de que el resultado hubiera sido diferente” es mucho menos probable que se desestime. Para cada reclamo de asistencia ineficaz, es importante explicar cuál habría sido el impacto de la asistencia efectiva en el resultado del caso. En otras palabras, la petición

no debe decir simplemente que un ex abogado no hizo algo. También debe explicar en qué marcó la diferencia ese fracaso. Esta es la razón por la que, por ejemplo, es poco probable que una petición que alegue que un abogado fue ineficaz por no permitir que el cliente leyera el descubrimiento tenga éxito, a menos que la petición también explique por qué, si al cliente se le permitió leer el descubrimiento, hay una probabilidad razonable de que el resultado del caso hubiera sido diferente.

Las formas más comunes de asistencia ineficaz son:

- No investigar los hechos, incluidos los hechos que afectan la credibilidad de los testigos.
- No consultar con testigos expertos como parte de la investigación.
- No informar al cliente sobre una oferta de declaración de culpabilidad, que el cliente habría tomado, si se le hubiera comunicado;
- No informar al cliente sobre la sentencia que podría imponerse si el cliente fue declarado culpable en el juicio o declarado culpable
- No informar al cliente sobre las consecuencias migratorias de una condena

Esta no es una lista exhaustiva. Y, nuevamente, es importante recordar que una petición exitosa debe explicar por qué, si el abogado no había dejado de hacer algo, existe una probabilidad razonable de que el resultado hubiera sido diferente.

Otros motivos para el desagravio posterior a la condena

Recuerde que la asistencia

ineficaz de un abogado no es lo único que puede dar derecho a las personas a la reparación en virtud de Crim.P. 35(c). Por ejemplo, si el fiscal no proporcionó información en el descubrimiento, eso puede respaldar un reclamo de reparación 35(c), si existe una probabilidad razonable de que la información hubiera cambiado el resultado del caso. Y si un ex abogado tuvo un conflicto de intereses que limitó materialmente la representación, eso también puede ser una base de reparación. West v. People, 341 P.3d 520 (Colo. 2015).

Abandono de reclamos

Cuando el tribunal de primera instancia recibe una petición 35(c) pro se, el tribunal tiene 63 días para revisar y decidir si la niega o nombra un abogado para el peticionario. Rizar. 35(c)(3) (IV). Si el tribunal decide tomar más de 63 días, debe notificar al peticionario pro se del nuevo plazo que se fija. Si, después de 63 días, no ha tenido noticias de la corte, debe escribir una carta educada solicitando una actualización sobre el estado de la petición 35(c) (asegúrese de fechar la carta, para que tenga un registro de cuándo la envió por correo). No hacerlo podría mantener el caso en el limbo indefinidamente e incluso podría exponerlo a ser acusado de abandonar sus reclamos. Guarde siempre copias de todo lo que envíe por correo a la corte, incluida la pro se petición, y toda la correspondencia sobre el caso.



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Gender politics, sexuality, genderqueer. In a complex world, there is no need to overthink respect.

Continued from page 18

some universities encourage ice-breakers in class that include students sharing their pronouns.

Creating environments that are more inclusive helps ensure everyone get the respect they deserve. According to Beck Bailey, who works for the Human Rights Campaign, businesses are seeing inclusion (equal rights/chances/acceptance for all human beings) as a business imperative. Businesses have learned that happy employees are productive and the right thing to do is to treat everyone fairly and equally. They also celebrate diversity because diversity brings profit in a creative economy.

Billieann, 73, an engineer who had gender affirmation surgery five years ago, said she told a small group that included her boss and manager. “My boss was very accepting as was my best friend. I know the manager knows, but we’ve never discussed it.” She explained,

“This is something I had to do. It was very real for me [to have the surgery]. I was two days away from committing suicide.” Billieann was interviewed by phone and requested her last name not be included.

Gender affirmation surgery is not just something you can go out and get, though. The University of Michigan has devised a series of tests for eligibility. Only after people are vetted and approved by trained professionals can they get the surgery. Billieann is one of those people.

Not everyone is supportive of Billieann. “The guys at work were not all accepting. It is still new for them.” She has not had any incidents at work and is happy with how everything has turned out. “Trans-people need the support. This isn’t just something that you do; it is inside of you.”

Gender pronouns are not as difficult as they may seem. No need to panic - a short grammar lesson. Pronouns are words that replace nouns.

For example, I visited the

Eiffel Tower. It was amazing (“It” replaces “Eiffel Tower”). We use pronouns all the time (see, “we” is used to replace “everyone”).

But, we cross the line of respect for some when we choose pronouns for them based on how we see them. Again, some may have girl parts, but they do not feel feminine, so when you call them “she/her”, you misgender them and disrespect them whether you intended to or not.

People do misgender on purpose. Think about the bully who tries to emasculate a male classmate by calling him a girl. Joke or not, the consensus is moving toward a culture of respect and inclusion.

Most people try to be nice and just do not know how. One way to do this is to ask, “What pronouns do you use?” For example, “Hi, I am Lee and I use he/him. What is your name and what pronouns do you use?” Nice and easy. No assumptions. Respect conferred to another human being.

Hudy said about the change in culture, “It isn’t easy to just erase assumptions and ask the question, ‘what pronoun do you use?’ We have formed a habit and we’ve been taught a behavior. We will have to break old habits which seems easy, but we always have a tendency to revert. I’ve been doing this for 40+ years.”

Younger people have grown up in this new culture and the transition for them is less difficult. Of those born after 2000, over half identify as “not straight,” which can mean many things, or nothing at all. Some choose not to subscribe to traditional uses or conventions of anything — especially the male/female binary. They may want to go with the flow and feel the way they feel in the moment. And many of these younger people identify with they/them pronouns. An example would be: Hi, I am Stuart and I use they/them pronouns. Stuart is a great person. They are always there when I need them. Stuart now has a big smile on their

face because they are AFAB (Assigned Female at Birth) but identify otherwise.

Stuart feels respected and included.

Culture continues to change, as it always has, and while many feel these challenges seem new, they are actually over 100 years old. In fact, the use of pronouns to include a third or “other” gender was noted in 1850 when a new pronoun was tried out. It just did not stick, but genderqueer, as it is now called, has been around for some time.

So get your red pen out and correct your grammar teacher (ah, sweet revenge). Make yourself more marketable by being unique and creative and learn the etiquette of workplace culture. Include your pronouns, do not make assumptions about others, and treat people with respect. Remember, it is a big beautiful world out there and we have a lot of work to do.

“Our Town”

BY SAMUEL KASE WHITE
IR Operations Manager

In December 2021, Dr. Ashley Hamilton, Executive Director of the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI), produced a stage reading of “Our Town.” The production was a first of its kind in that the actors were a mix of DU undergraduate students, formerly incarcerated men and women, and currently incarcerated men from Sterling Correctional Facility (SCF). The production brought the message of living in the moment, as well as other lessons from the well-known play, to a Denver audience. This joint project also made quite an impact on its participants.

“Our Town” is a 1938 three-act play by American playwright Thornton Wilder. It tells the story of the fictional small town of Grover’s Corners between 1901 and 1913 through the everyday lives of its citizens. “Our Town” had success on Broadway and won the Pulitzer Prize for drama. In 1989, the play received a Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Revival and a Tony Award for Best Revival. The DU PAI production was performed without a set, and, with only a few exceptions, the actors mimed actions without the use of props.

The main character in Dr. Hamilton’s interpretation is the Stage Manager, played by Eric Davis, a formerly incarcerated graduate of the Juveniles Convicted as Adults Program (JCAP). He introduced the audience to Grover’s Corners and the people living there in the year 1901. The Stage Manager also addressed the audience, brought in guests, and filled in playing some of the minor roles. Davis sat behind the DU student actors and the Sterling actors were projected on screens raised above the stage.

The message of “Our Town” awakened each participant differently, most notably depending on where they lived: inside the walls or outside. The most impactful part of the play for the incarcerated participants was the third act, Death and Eternity. The ghosts of Grover’s Corners cemetery look down on the town and discuss why the living pay so much attention to insignificant daily events instead of focusing on what is truly important. The message resonated with many of the residents when put into the context of the insignificant things their loved ones on the outside spend so much time with. John Moore, Denver Gazette journalist and Journalism instructor at DU as well as DU PAI, commented “That’s a powerful moment in the play, no matter who is performing it. But in this unique instance, with a cast that blended college students with current and formerly incarcerated actors together, it delivers that message with a profound new meaning and perspective. Do the free ever realize life while they have it?” Moore added that he could tell that the production meant something to the incarcerated actors. Their passion and larger-than-life appearance on the movie screen above the stage actors made the

production special.

The collaboration did not just include a few actors from prison, either. The incarcerated participants also helped with set design and every aspect of the production they could. Craig Forbes, SCF, planned the floor design and was blown away when he saw a DU student follow his suggested design. “To see a DU student, Naila, take my floor designs and add her own artistic flair, and then actually paint it on the theatre floor, was probably one of the most meaningful artistic collaborations I’ve ever been a part of. I was a little scared about being involved with Our Town at first, especially when Ashley (Hamilton) brought up the idea of live painting. I chose to participate because our director, as well as our whole team of actors and designers, made me feel comfortable and an important part of the whole process.”

Matt LaBonte, one of the incarcerated actors, explained how the production impacted him. “One of my favorite words, taught to me by Dr. Hamilton, is ‘liminal.’ Essentially it refers to the ‘in-between’, where something is in a state of transition and neither one thing or the other. The greatest gift of Our Town wasn’t the professional working environment, or the ability to be seen and heard beyond the walls, or even the ability to be a part of a piece of art with an incredibly high aesthetic standard. The truest gift I received was the realization that every moment is a liminal moment and gives me the opportunity to be a participant in the experience of my own life.”

The production not only impacted the people on stage or behind the scenes. Moore added “No one in the audience could watch and be unmoved.” Producing Our Town was not an easy undertaking, but the finished product was worth the struggles for all involved. Resilience is an



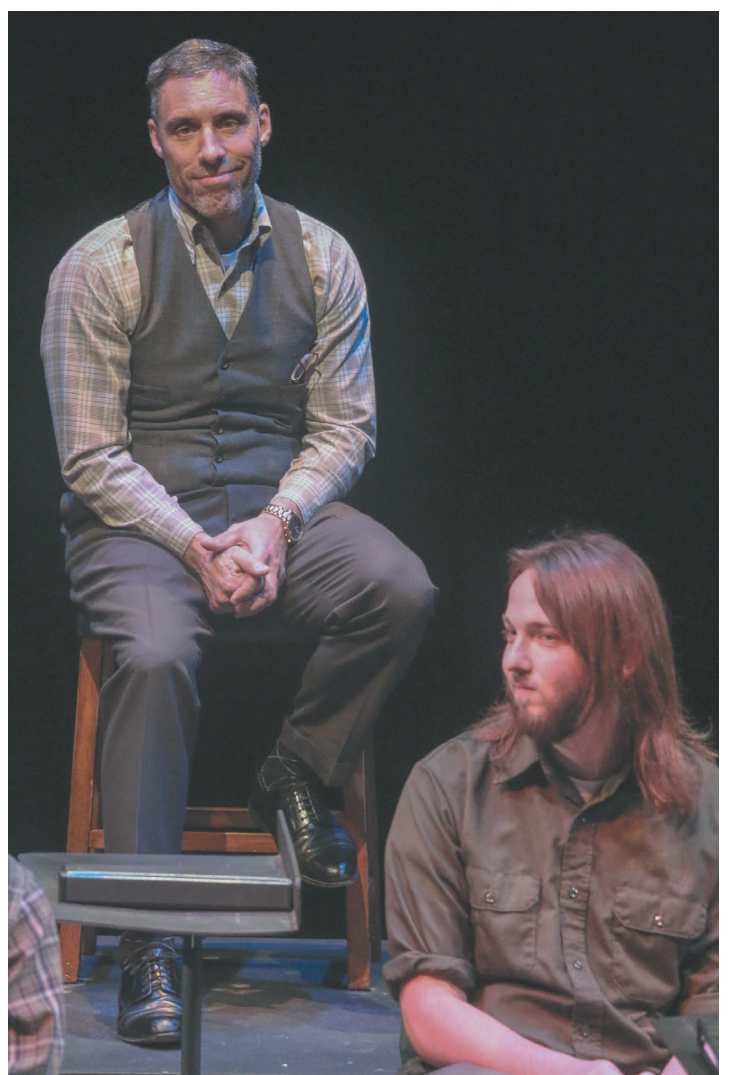
The “Our Town” stage brought students and players together with the incarcerated on screen [Photo courtesy of John Moore]

important quality that true leaders possess. Dr. Hamilton overcame some enormous hurdles to produce “Our Town,” including COVID-19 restrictions and scaling walls surrounding prisons through telecommunications. DU PAI, under the leadership of Dr. Hamilton, has maintained their focus on humanity by creating and maintaining lasting bonds between people, regardless of the walls between them.

*The message of “Our Town”
awakened each participant
differently, most notably
depending on where they lived:
inside the walls or outside.*



Dr. Ashley Hamilton sets the stage for transformation [Photo courtesy of John Moore]



The formerly incarcerated Stage Manager sits behind a DU student actor [Photo courtesy of John Moore]



Photo of artist Harrison Williams

[Photo courtesy of IR]

Pride speaking through art

BY ANTHONY VALDEZ
IR Editor in Chief

Montebello artist Harrison Williams has created art for a lifetime. The 30-year-old artist is often found with headphones on and working on his latest masterpiece. Williams states he is not good at writing or talking, but what he needs to say comes out with graphite.

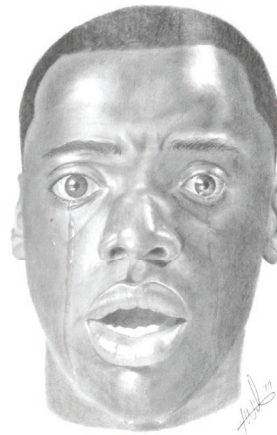
Graphite is his preference. He can feel with it, the paper under his pencil, the smudge, the vibe. “Graphite has its own soul,” Williams said. He classified the techniques he uses as an “ancient Nubian secret,” but the tip he does share is to create from the heart, always.

Williams does art for people who can’t. The inspiration comes from his love and adoration of his black people. His work speaks to racial indifferences, while not solely focusing on racism. He displays the pride of black people, black heritage, and black women.

According to Williams, art should have a light. When he got serious about art, people began to feel his work. Not until he “caught feelings” looking at his own art did he consider himself an artist. It could be love or anger; as long as it makes people feel, that is art to him.

Poverty and racism are obstacles Williams dealt with as a black man. He makes sure his voice on these struggles is heard through art. “It’s a shame that we have to express ourselves so extremely to get our point across. I feel like I have to blast a mural on the side of a building to say racism is bad,” Williams said.

The story that Williams tells through art, he explained, is not only for black people; it is for people who feel they do not have a problem or that there is nothing wrong with the system. This is the story he says he needs to tell, and he will not stop telling it as long as his hands work.



You know how the the the Black boys kidding and pranking. You know how love to see Black boys rapping and dancing and singing and balling. You know how the Black boys struggle but don't let Black boys.

Olvan Part One

BY RYAN J. KRUEGER
SCF Contributor

The Empty Tankard was not the first place most thought of when deciding where to get a drink. In fact, only two types spent their nights in the dark, dank taproom with watered down ale, air thick with a rank mixture of tobacco smoke and unwashed bodies, the floors sticky with spilled ale, or worse: those looking for trouble, and those looking to hide from something, or someone.

Olvan was the latter. He wanted to be left alone and to drink in peace, as always. It was a quiet night, with only a dozen or so others in the tavern, and he sat at his usual table in the back corner of the room, farthest from the door, nursing an ale and minding his own business. He was good at that, usually. For some reason, though, Olvan could not keep his eyes off the girl as she walked in, paused at the door, then made her way across the room to an empty table near him. Neither could a good many of the other patrons.

Dressed in form-fitting pants and a jerkin, a soft leather cloak draped over her shoulders, the hood up to hide her face, and boots that rose nearly to her knees, she looked utterly unlike the other women who frequented the tavern – those, of course, being more of the tired, worn down, working variety that dared to search out customers here. Crossing the room, she walked with confidence,

unfazed by the many sets of eyeballs following her. More than a few of which leered as her hips swayed beneath her cloak with each step, and still others took note of her expensive clothing and the bulge of a coin purse tied to her belt. None watched her innocently.

The mysterious woman tossed her cloak to one side, allowing Olvan a glimpse of a dirk tucked into her belt at the hip. The weapon's hilt and pommel stone seemed familiar to Olvan for some reason, though at the moment he could not put his finger on why. "Interesting," he thought to himself as he puzzled over the warning bells going off in his head. The woman pushed back her hood revealing long brown hair framing an angular elven face with tanned skin, almond shaped eyes, and pointed ears. "Beautiful," Olvan continued his thought.

The serving girl, Melisandra, a 20-something waif of a girl whose "uncle" owned the place, sauntered over to the woman's table. Olvan could not hear the exchange, but he saw the girl's eyebrow raise as the woman ordered. With a shrug, Melisandra turned and disappeared into the back room, returning a moment later with a bottle of whiskey and a small glass. The elf pulled the pouch from her belt, deftly loosened the tie-string, and dumped a small pile of coins onto the table. Melisandra glanced first over one shoulder and then the other. Everyone watched the newcomer sort a silver

coin from the pile and slide it across the table.

Olvan, too, glanced around the taproom and watched as the wolves licked their chops. One group near the door, a trio of miscreant cutpurses, did little to hide their interest as they whispered, no doubt debating how best to relieve the woman of her coin. They were a nasty bunch known for murdering their marks rather than leaving witnesses.

For the better part of an hour, the elf sat drinking, the pile of coins still sitting before her, unaware of, or perhaps unconcerned with, the many eyes sizing her up. If she was trying to attract attention, she did a good job of it. "What's your game?" Olvan thought to himself, as he drained the last of his third mug.

The screech of wood scraping against wood resounded loudly as the elf pushed her chair back and stood abruptly, if not a bit wobbly. She fumbled as she scooped the pile of coins into the pouch, leaving a silver on the table, and struggled to tie it to her belt. The elf pulled her hood over her head, snatched the near-empty bottle from the table, and stumbled toward door.

Olvan watched her leave. A moment later, he watched the trio of thugs drain their mugs and, staring down any other would-be pursuers, follow her out. "Shit," Olvan said aloud as he stood, loosened his sword in its scabbard, and joined the parade.

Editors note:

This is an original fictional work that will continue in future issues.

"Born a Crime"

A Book Review

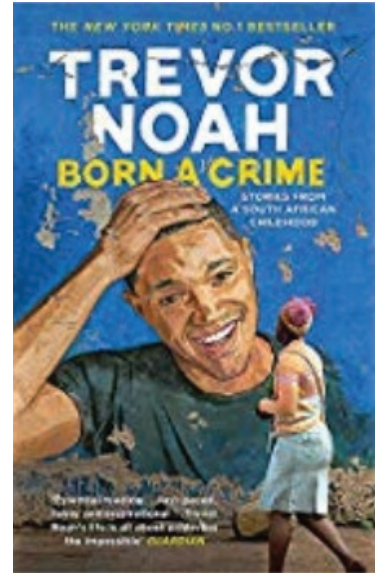
BY EVAN LAWLOR
IR Associate Editor

We have become a little too comfortable with how we use Black History Month as the only celebration of U.S. Black History. It was not until I read Trevor Noah's "Born a Crime" that I realized how narrow-minded and ignorant to Black history I really was—and still am.

Though written as a memoir, "Born a Crime" incorporates history of South Africa that opens the eyes of readers to a side of Black history that a lot of us are not aware of. The premise of the book is Noah's upbringing as a mixed race child in South Africa during apartheid, when sexual relationships between Whites and Blacks was strictly prohibited. Noah writes, "In America, you had the forced removal of the Natives onto reservations coupled with slavery followed by segregation. Imagine all three of those things happening to the same group of people at the same time. That was apartheid." He tells of tumultuous times, not only between Blacks and Whites, but also among the native tribes of South Africa. It was a scary time in history, especially for Noah, a little boy who already had it rough because he was different.

Not all of "Born a Crime" reads as a history lesson, though.

As a stand-up comedian and current host of Comedy Central's "The Daily Show," Noah leans heavily on his humor to keep the book light. There are plenty of tales from his childhood and adolescence in the ghettos of South Africa that will have you laughing out loud. Some are more outrageous than others, and many seem so ordinary that if you did not



know any better, you would think they occurred here in America.

The biggest and best part of this book is Noah's portrayal of his mother. Almost immediately, you get a picture of a strong-minded, steel-willed woman who has a unique but unbalanced view of the world and how people should be and act toward each other. The daily battles she faces to survive and provide for her son would break just about anyone. As humorous as she can be at times, she is at root a fierce and proud woman who instills only the best values into her son, and for that Noah pays homage to her as only a son can.

"Born a Crime" is a well-balanced blend of humor, sadness, love, loss, and history, which makes it a must-read. There is so much more to Black history than we can learn in only one month each year, and a story like "Born a Crime" can help us celebrate it all.



Artistic Justice: A new approach to building bridges

BY ANTHONY VALDEZ
IR Editor in Chief

During August and September 2021, DU PAI co-founder Dr. Ashley Hamilton and the DU PAI Artistic Development Team (ADT) created space for dialogue among incarcerated people and CDOC staff.

ADT members Brett Phillips, Terry Mosley, Angel Lopez, George Chavez, Matt LaBonte, and Andrew Draper traveled from Sterling Correctional Facility (SCF) to participate.

Hamilton and the team traveled to nine CDOC facilities, where they facilitated Artistic Justice (AJ) workshops based on the play "If Light Closed Its Eyes," which offers dialogue between lives impacted by incarceration.

Some members of the ADT team had not left SCF in over a decade, and Mosley had not been away from SCF for 21 years.

Hamilton and the team of six spent hundreds of hours on the curriculum for the workshop. Working individually and collaboratively at different stages, the workshop evolved from their experiences developing the play. "Our project goal with the play was to explore themes around the criminal justice system and shared humanity," said LaBonte.

After several interviews for the play, the team meditated on what they were feeling. The experience became too significant not to share. "We had to share. I was not excited

at all. I was actually scared and anxious, because I knew this meant bigger monsters and work beyond anything I have ever done," Mosley said.

Sleeping in a strange bed and cell was a significant event for workshop leaders. Being guests at different facilities imposed limitations to visits, renewing medications, and ordering canteen. The team members went almost two months without ordering canteen. Yet each facility ensured the team had what they needed and more.

When the Denver Reception and Diagnostic Center's Warden, Ryan Long, learned of the team's limitations, he provided care packages. Accommodations for medication were made by the Health Service Administrator

at Limon Correctional Facility.

Hosted by 12 facilities, the AJ workshop afforded space for executive staff, line staff, and incarcerated people to find commonalities among each other. The selection criteria varied. A few facilities allowed the AJ team to review the applications, but the goal was to provide seats for those who truly needed to "get there."

The group selected between 15 and 18 staff and incarcerated people to attend the workshop at each facility. The customary CDOC selection was also implemented, a process that was comparable to that of kitchen duties or overtime during the pandemic. The balance of staff and incarcerated people at each location focused on fostering the building of bridges and

relationships.

Each team member took part in the creation of the curriculum. Mosley said, "During the workshops I have felt the way my own section of our curriculum has challenged me to reflect deeply. Hope and healing. I have struggled with this thing called hope. With a life without parole sentence, there is not much of that around when you believe you are dying in prison."

LaBonte summarized the impact of the workshops when he said, "My relationship and understanding of harm has been irrevocably altered." Hamilton's dedication helped the team through difficult moments. Her work inside continues to offer spaces of possibilities.

A Blue & Green Book Review

Transforming our community through the power of literature

“The Alchemist”

BY LYSANDER HARVEY
IR Journalist

I invited Mrs. Ballegeer to participate in a book review because, as a case manager, she is genuinely interested in encouraging residents to take full advantage of all available programs. This is a quality I admire when I see it expressed by CDOC staff.

“The Alchemist” centers on a young and passionately driven boy named Santiago. Throughout the book, young Santiago ends up going through numerous trials and tribulations in his journey to realize his dreams. A few of the obstacles he faces include the fear of failure, being robbed, and even facing the possibility of death. With a bit of luck and some persistent friends, Santiago perseveres despite the jagged journey. “The Alchemist” is a quick read and full of valuable life lessons. Every page has a gem to offer, making this a true page turner.

As I dove into this book, I reflected on my dreams and the dreams of residents throughout prisons in the state. How many people have given up on their dreams? How many have given up dreaming altogether? Behind these walls, I see residents who have given up on their dreams, and I sense their deep regret, the ringing in their ears whispering “what if?”

Unfortunately, many of us have fallen into this trap. When we make a terrible choice in life, it can feel as though we have lost everything. We have all been there, whether we are in prison or not. However, like the young boy in this book, we too can persevere. The beautiful message of the book is this: It is never too late. Any one of us can still fulfill our grandest dreams. Always work towards your dreams, even while in prison. To dream is to have hope, and to have hope is to have purpose.

You may not believe in everything this book mentions because it is a blend of spiritual belief systems, but “The Alchemist” is nothing less than inspirational. It is a book that will motivate you to rekindle your dreams or to fuel your fire to pursue your purpose. I strongly recommend reading this book.

BY SONDRAL BALLEGEER
PAROLE RELEASE Case Manager

I often recommend “The Alchemist” by Paulo Coelho. I have found that people either love or hate the book; either way, they are passionate about their sentiment.

The story follows a young boy by the name of Santiago who finds the courage to follow his dreams. He encounters many different people throughout his journey: some are in the middle of their own journeys, others have fulfilled their dreams, and a few have completely halted their quests to achieve what they want most.

Santiago goes through various ups and downs. At one point, he loses everything he values in his life and gives up. During that moment, he feels that the risks and the losses far outweigh the rewards. He manages to piece himself together and makes the decision to go back to the life he knew before he began his journey to fulfill his dreams. However, his conviction is too strong; he cannot go back, and he cannot spend the rest of his life wondering if he made the right choice.

Santiago continues to face difficult decisions and delays in his journey, but ultimately he finds what he is looking for. What I love about this book is that it illustrates how success cannot be measured in any specific way, nor is it achieved by following a straight line. Life will teach you lessons and then life will test you based on those lessons.

Coelho writes that Santiago “realized that he had to choose between thinking of himself as the poor victim of a thief and as an adventurer in the quest of his treasure.”

“The Alchemist” combines and simplifies philosophy and words of wisdom, which makes the story one giant parable. Depending on where you are in your own life, you may experience this story as a beautiful fable about universal truths or as complete hogwash.

“To Kill a Mockingbird”

BY PETE LEE
COLORADO Senator

As an avid reader and former English major, I am a strong advocate of reading. I thought a lot about books to discuss with you. I first thought about “The Power of One,” a coming of age story about a young man in South Africa. I also considered Bryan Stevenson’s “Just Mercy,” for obvious reasons. But what I decided to recommend is “To Kill a Mockingbird” by Harper Lee.

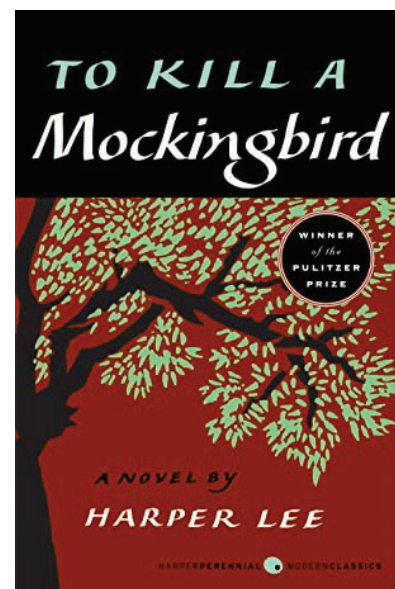
First and foremost, it is a great piece of literature with marvelous characters, a riveting story, and enduring themes. It seems appropriate as it is, in part, the story of a criminal trial and Atticus Finch is an extraordinary lawyer. More than that, though, it is a story about race, poverty, and mental illness. Set in the 1930s, it tells the story of Tom Robinson, a Black man wrongly accused of raping a White woman in the small segregated southern town of Maycomb. The defendant is represented by Atticus Finch, a highly respected local lawyer who is part of the White establishment of the community and shaped by the institutions and conventions of the times. But he is also deeply committed to justice, fairness, and the principles of the legal system. Woven within the story, Lee tells the tale of Scout, Atticus’ daughter, and her coming of age and youthful wisdom. After reading the book, I am interested in your interpretation of the title of the book. What does “To kill a mockingbird” mean?

BY MARK HORTON
PAROLEE Contributor

As I reflect on Harper Lee’s title, I draw two conclusions as to what the title is meant to convey. Based on a surface level examination of the text, my first interpretation is a scholastic response. Lee, through the narrative of Scout, explains to the reader that, “To kill a mockingbird is a sin.” We learn more about the justification of this sin from the conversation between Scout and her dear elderly neighbor, Miss Maudie: “Mockingbirds don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy they don’t do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That’s why it’s a sin to kill mockingbird.” I believe that Lee gives the reader this explanation as an allegory for the unjust fatality in the story line of Tom Robinson, an innocent man found guilty, who dies while incarcerated. This allegory also foreshadows how a trial would play out if charges were brought against Boo Radley, a man who is ostracized from the community. The community judges Boo Radley on his past mistakes.

This brings me to the second philosophical interpretation of the title. A mockingbird is so named because it mimics, or repeats, the songs of other birds. Similarly, the people of Maycomb repeat the charge against Tom Robinson. The jury then repeats the charge again even after viewing evidence that proves his innocence. So, I believe that “To Kill a Mockingbird” means to silence the repeaters in life. I believe Lee is encouraging the reader to silence the repeaters and mockers in their life; to think for themselves and to use their conscience to form their own decisions. Especially when their decision affects the community. Atticus Finch enforces this lesson when he tells Scout, “I’ve got to live with myself. The one thing that doesn’t abide by majority rule is a person’s conscience.”

“To Kill a Mockingbird” is a great work of classic American literature that is just as relevant today as it was when it was first published in the 1950s. Lee creates prose that addresses hot topics of debate in society: race inequality, justice, and an American citizen’s right to be innocent until proven guilty. I encourage everyone to read “To Kill a Mockingbird,” to think for themselves, and to create a better tomorrow, today.



Catch & Release Gumbo

BY CYNTHIA JOHNSON
COMCOR Contributor

This succulent and satisfying dish makes you feel for a moment like you are not incarcerated. Remember to comply with the facility’s regulations and rules whenever cooking.

Ingredients:

Salsa verde
1 package Jack Mackerel or fillet (clean)
1 spoon hot garlic chili
1 spoon vegetable flakes
1 spoon soy sauce
1 spoon honey
1 spoon chopped onions
1 tablespoon oatmeal
4 spoons sweet red & green peppers
1 cup rice (cooked separately)
1 package smoked oysters
1 Halal hot/mild beef sausage
1 beef summer sausage
1 spicy sausage (any)
2 packs chicken
1 pack green chili mix
2 shrimp bowl seasoning packs
Hot water

Cooking Instructions:

Slice all sausages into circles and fry until light and crispy. Add oysters toward the end. Drain oil and set meat aside in bowl. Make the roux: In a large bowl mix 1 cup hot water, garlic chili, vegetable flakes, soy sauce, honey, salsa verde, oatmeal, red & green peppers, green chili mix, shrimp bowl seasoning, and onions. Heat in microwave until it boils. The roux should be dark brown and the consistency of a thick soup. Season to taste. Add the meat. Cover and cook, simmering for 30 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve over rice.



SONDRA’S LIST OF THE GREATEST BOOKS

1. “FLOWERS ON THE MOON” by Billy Chapata
2. “THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GREY” by Oscar Wilde
3. “ASTROPHYSICS FOR PEOPLE IN A HURRY” by Neil de Grasse Tyson
4. “HITCHHIKER’S GUIDE TO THE GALAXY” by Douglas Adams
5. “BELOVED” by Toni Morrison
6. “THE DIVINE COMEDY” by Dante Alighieri



MARIO RIOS

[Photo courtesy of AVCF]

The art of Mario Rios cannot be fenced in

BY WILLIAM CONEY
IR Senior Editor

Rios was a scribbler since he took his first steps. The early masterpieces were low to the ground, on canvases such as his grandmother's walls and any other medium that could exhibit crayon in a suitable style. Now, Rios has a comprehensive portfolio comprised of pumpkin and wood carving, cake decorating, and airbrushing – his latest mastery. Rios is the winner of recent Defy and Chained Voices logo competitions. His art can be found on newsletters, pamphlets, and even t-shirts. He was featured in Inked Magazine's Instagram last July and was interviewed by Outlook Magazine.

Rios realized his love for art by scratching color across empty surfaces. This soothed the inner itch produced by traumatic scars of mental and physical abuse.

Art allows Rios to meditate and self-analyze. Art inspires him to visualize the disorders that he has studied. His unique interpretations, and the patience required for art, have given him control over the anger and anxiety that haunted him for years. This is physically apparent when his trembling hand stills upon contact with any artistic instrument.

Living with and learning about mental health has helped more than Rios' art. It has also helped him help others. His unique perspective has enabled him to assist those that struggle with issues like depression, anxiety, psychosis, and substance abuse, a remarkable task for a man serving life plus 80 since 2005. Rios is a proud graduate and peer facilitator of Defy (recently rebranded as Breakthrough), and he earned his certification as a mental health peer assistant through Mental Health First Aid USA.

