

The INSIDE REPORT

VOLUME 3 ISSUE 2

NEWS BREAKING PRISON WALLS

SUMMER 2022

Memorial workout brings out the best at Four Mile



We need to get crackin' on the inside
[Photo courtesy of Trevor Jones]

BY TREVOR JONES
JR Journalist

Four Mile Correctional Center (FMCC) is one of the locations where SWIFT (State Wildland Inmate Fire Team) operates. This innovative program trains and employs CDOC residents as firefighters, who can then be called into service to prevent

disasters or give aid when disasters strike. The crew and bosses show the highest respect to their vocation, and their labors have been greatly appreciated by many residents of our beautiful state.

On the holiday weekend of June 18-20, members of SWIFT

coordinated with the resident RF2 (Redemption Road Fitness Foundation) members and facility management to host a workout honoring a crew of firefighters who died in service on June 30, 2013. The permission to host the workout was deeply appreciated by the

FMCC residents, especially after FMCC declined a proposal in 2021 to formally expand RF2 into the facility.

Nine years ago, the Yarnell Hill fire in Arizona took the lives of 19 Granite Mountain Hot Shot Firefighters. The events

Continued on page 15

A gift from the heart

Colorado inmates paying it forward and giving back

BY DAVID HATCHER
CTCF Contributor

The residents at Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF) would like to share what "A Gift From the Heart" is all about. When the program started 26 years ago, it was simply someone doing a kind act for others. Soon it grew to something no one ever thought possible, and after it got started, the man who

Continued on page 12

Finding strength

BY FREDRICK B. HILL
FMCC Bureau Chief

Resilience: Can anyone have it?

Some of the greatest psychologists and thinkers throughout history have studied, dissected, and pondered resilience, trying to understand why some people display resilience while others do not. Though there is little agreement on how someone might become resilient, scientific studies and personal stories can suggest not only what resilience looks like, but

Continued on page 22

"These Walls"

BY TIMOTHY WAKEFIELD
CTCF Contributor

Last year, through the fog of COVID, Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF) saw 150 years of operation – 1,314,000 non-stop hours of incarceration. Quite a feat for a prison older than the state in which it is located. Some celebrated the 150th anniversary with a CTCF float in the Cañon City Blossom Day parade. But CTCF Warden Eddie Caley

Continued on page 20



There's something 'fishy' happening here. One of the many fresh looks on some of the cells at Sterling
[Photo courtesy of Ryan Krueger]

Want to live in a different world?

BY RYAN KRUEGER
SCF Contributor

In the 16 years that I have been incarcerated, I have woken up in countless cells in five different facilities. The set-up is always different: one cell is larger or smaller than the last, the toilet/sink combo is in another spot, and the bunk is longer, shorter, thinner, or wider. But they all share at least one trait: the same institutional gray paint on the metal and whitewashed walls. It is enough to make one think

that CDOC got a great deal on gray and white paint. Of course the paint is always chipped and peeling, with toothpaste-glue scattered here and there, and all walls have a smattering of graffiti left by previous residents.

Any incarcerated or previously incarcerated individuals reading this know exactly what I am describing. Over the years I have often

Continued on page 22

How is your heart health?

BY SAMUEL KASE WHITE
IR Operations Manager

Warning: Volunteering to help people can evoke a serious and highly contagious result – a change of heart. Over the last decade, the shape of this contagion has mutated: in 2012, most volunteers were people that facilitated faith-based programs; in 2021, most visiting volunteers were for non-faith based programs.

People in prison rarely get to meet the support personnel behind these volunteers and their work in prisons. Examples

Continued on page 6



Caitlin Konya is a former University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative Social Work Intern

[Photo courtesy of Caitlin Konya]



Dan Hugill a contributing community member of Colorado Springs for over six years

[Photo courtesy of Dan Hugill]



Peter Kim facilitates 7 Habits for parolees, probationers, and anyone who wants to attend

[Photo courtesy of IR]

Changing the world through Restorative Justice

BY BRAD ERICKSON
CTCF Contributor

Restorative Justice (RJ), a common expression among incarcerated individuals, is a multifaceted approach to both repairing and preventing harm. Simply put, RJ is an alternative to Retributive Justice, which currently governs our punitive systems in the United States.

Retributive Justice often serves to punish offenders and to separate parties, whereas RJ works to repair broken personal relationships and/or communal ties.

There are three key people currently delivering RJ's philosophy to the incarcerated people in CDOC. Melissa Smith, **Continued on page 8**

Leaders

BY JOHN BRANT
CTCF Contributor

If you asked a room full of people, "By a show of hands, who feels like they are living a life filled with purpose, meaning, and personal fulfillment," how many would raise their hands? I know I searched for years to find what my real purpose was. I looked high, I looked low, read this, and read that. Then, an epiphany. What would I do if I could not fail? We are born with a sense of purpose inside of us. As small children, most of us wanted to be firemen, policeman, doctors, lawyers, maybe even President. I wanted to be a trash man, but I digress.

My point is that most small children want to be part of something that helps others. No kid alive has ever said "I want to be an investment

Continued on page 11

RESTORE Transitional Services

IR Writing Corps

The original pitch to my editor-in-chief for this article was just a quick top-ten list of what parole officers (P.O.) want to see from their parolees to assure success. Quick, fast, and make my editor happy. But this turned out to be not so simple, since I have never been on parole. I realized my social circle has not either, and the only things we hear about parole are from the guys who come back. Maybe not the best, unbiased resource for learning about parole success. But after an interview with Jan Yuncker and Sondra Ballegeer, the story changed.

Yuncker and Ballegeer are two members of the RESTORE team at Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF) and they taught me some interesting aspects to parole and re-entry that a) I had never known, b) residents of CDOC tend to underutilize,

and c) show how these types of programs are so very different than I had thought. For those of you (OK, us...I'll own it) who might have a jaded view of re-entry programs, it might be time to take a fresh look at what CDOC is offering.

Reformative Engaging System of Transitional Opportunities for Re-Entry (RESTORE) is a program offered at Denver's Women's, Limon, and FCF. Sterling is currently going through a soft launch of the program. CDOC aims to offer RESTORE in every Colorado prison, state-run as well as private, by 2023. "We no longer call it re-entry," Ballegeer said. "We want to be talked about more as 'transitional services' now."

Not too long ago, CDOC's attitude to re-entry was to hand

Continued on page 19

Speaking in pictures

BY RONALD PIERCE
CCF Contributor

If a picture is worth a thousand words, then art is literally speaking in pictures. Americans are afforded many constitutional rights, but in prison many of these rights are taken. Free speech, as an art form, in prison, is difficult to achieve with the poor or nonexistent art supplies.

The lifer program at Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF) developed a discussion forum asking the question, "How can we institute change for the betterment of our peers?" One suggestion was to bring back hobby shops throughout CDOC. Hobby shops were created across the state due to

Continued on page 20

Realness Project

BY CLAIRE WELSH
LVCF Contributor

The Realness Project (RP) is a local non-profit in Northern Colorado providing classes with a goal to empower human connection in every student. These individuals, likewise, empower everyone with whom they interact when using the skills they have been taught. If you had the option to enhance the quality of your relationships—each and every relationship—would you?

Originally, the RP offered this education only to the free world. Skills were derived from a popular movement called Authentic Relating (AR), in which people learn trust, active listening, de-escalation of anger, and other useful strategies and aspects of effective communication. The founders of RP then thought how valuable this information could be in a stressful jail setting. Following success at one jail, interest broadened and offers were extended to incarcerated men and women in multiple locations.

Transformation from patterned and/or dysfunctional behavior is not simple. The program requires a lengthy timeframe, meeting consistently over four consecutive months, because every skill cannot be mastered on the first day you gather. Each month, new and substantial lessons are provided, building on the previous instruction. Students will practice between sessions, work on reinforcing-homework, and then report back their triumphs and frustrations. The group size is intentionally small, approximately 15 participants, to facilitate deeper bonds from Day 1. No one is added part-way through and those who sign up should assess whether they possess sufficient time and level of commitment to attend every session. All are welcome and encouraged to have a new outlook on self, others, and the future.

Many people identify with the expression, "Keepin' it real." Humans universally **Continued on page 4**

Wrongful convictions Korey Wise Innocence Project

A recurring column from a Colorado legal aid organization working to support criminal defense. This article is not intended to offer any legal advice.

BY ANN ENGLAND
KWIP Columnist

Innocent people are convicted of crimes that they did not commit. According to the National Registry of Exonerations, it is estimated that between 2% - 10% of individuals convicted of crimes are factually innocent. This number is hard to pin down and even harder for individuals in the criminal legal system to agree on.

It is undisputed that wrongful convictions happen most frequently in misdemeanor cases. In low-level misdemeanor cases,

innocent people have a huge incentive to accept a plea deal to get out of jail immediately, rather than take their case to trial. However, wrongful convictions can and do happen to individuals who are convicted of very serious crimes and are serving long prison sentences.

What are the causes of wrongful convictions and how can we prevent them from happening? The National Innocence Project and the National Registry of Exonerations have identified seven main factors that contribute to wrongful convictions: perjury

or false accusations by witnesses, official misconduct by police and/or prosecutors, mistaken eyewitness identification, inadequate defense counsel, false or misleading forensic evidence, false confessions, and finally the misuse of informant testimony. In a single person's case, multiple factors can be present. For example, an eyewitness could make a misidentification that in turn leads a police officer to interrogate that suspect and pressure him to falsely confess. Although much can

be said about each of the contributing factors, this article will focus on two topics: mistaken eyewitness identification and suggestive police identification procedures.

Most people believe that they are good at recognizing other people. We have all heard others say, "I never forget a face." We believe that this is true when we are the victim of a crime. Many individuals who are victims of crimes say that the perpetrator's face was "burned into their memory." However, the scientific research on eyewitness identification has challenged many of these commonly-held beliefs. Science has

shown us that while people are very good at identifying people they know, they are not very good at identifying strangers.

Many people believe that stress increases the accuracy and reliability of an eyewitness's identification. But the opposite is true. Studies show that high levels of stress or fear significantly reduce an eyewitness's ability to accurately identify a perpetrator. See Charles A. Morgan III et al., Accuracy of Eyewitness Memory for Persons Encountered During Exposure to Highly Intense Stress, 27 Int'l J. L. & Psychiatry 265, 275-76 (2004). When under high amounts

Continued on page 18

Costly therapy

BY BOB EISENMAN
IR Copyeditor

Depending on the source, either one in three or one in four Colorado inmates is a sex offender (SO). This is much higher than the national average among incarcerated people, which is one in ten. (US Bureau of Prisons Website) According to audits such as the June 2020 Performance Audit conducted by the Colorado State Auditor as well as a growing list of sex offenders awaiting treatment, CDOC is unable to timely comply with the State's order that all Lifetime Supervision Act (LSA) SOs sentenced to prison must successfully progress in treatment inside prison to be considered for parole. The growing backlog of SOs awaiting their chance to enroll in treatment not only delays thousands of people from paroling when they are eligible, but also comes with a hefty price tag for Colorado.

The Sex Offender Treatment and Management Program (SOTMP) as well as Colorado's SOMB (Sex Offender Management Board) have come under fire recently from a variety of angles. Audits done by the state (State Auditor) as well as the annual report done by the SOMB itself, have found flaws in their system and approaches to treatment, costing millions of taxpayer dollars. In an exclusive interview with IR, Colorado Senator Pete Lee (D - District 11) said, said "Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) is the conventionally accepted protocol for treating sex offenders, yet CDOC and the SOMB on the outside do not adhere to that with any degree of fidelity." He added that SOMB and SOTMP "have a few components of RNR, but they also have a sort of containment model mentality as well, which is a relic of 30 years ago. For the past 10-15 years, researchers have found that with respect to most SOs, treatment works. Unfortunately, there are some in the SOTMP world

Continued on page 7

The care aide, performer, servant, and Hawaiian

BY CARLOS MARQUEZ
DRDC Bureau Chief

It's a cool, quiet night in pod 4A of the Denver Reception and Diagnostic Center, except for the commotion going on in front of the door, under the control window, on a couch in front of a wide screen TV. Shockingly, you see a young correctional officer (C/O) jumping up and down and gyrating all over the place while a resident looks on. No, nothing bad is happening, and that is the surprising point. The excitement is because he just scored while playing Madden 21 with resident Paul Freeman. The score was an unbelievable 68 to 74. The C/O just took the lead. When the game ends, the C/O and Freeman fist-bump and walk away laughing and talking trash to each other about how the outcome will be different or worse the next time they meet. This is how normal people treat and interact with each other. Surely, the C/O and the resident understand and respect the roles they have within the prison walls, but it does not have to be



Being vulnerable in creative spaces helped Freeman express himself [Photo courtesy of Paul Freeman]

contentious nor adversarial. It can be humane.

It is a new day in CDOC. The mission and vision of its culture is shifting to integrate the progressive ideas of restorative justice practices, dynamic security, and the creation of safe/brave spaces.

In Colorado prisons, prisoners are serving their sentences to repay society, and because of the shifting culture, a select and growing number of these prisoners are accepting full responsibility and acknowledging the impact on the community and victim(s) alike in an effort to restore/transform justice through healing.

Aiding in the shifting of the prison culture, under the

Continued on page 23



Editor in Chief	Evan Lawlor
Senior Editor	William Sean Coney Raymond Gone
Operations Manager	Samuel Kase White
Copyeditor	Bob Eisenman
Submissions Manager	Alexander Jasmine
Associate Editor	Derrick Miller / FMCC Phillip Michael Montoya Atorrus Rainer Ranjit Sahota Phillip Trujillo Alison Turner / DU PAI
Graphic Design	Phuong Dang Patrick Suchaiya
Journalist	Sarah-Ann Beaudoin / LVCF Taylor Doucet / SCF Luther Hampson Torey Kuznicki Trevor Jones / FMCC John Red Cloud / Parole Anthony Ray Valdez Sydney White / LVCF Fred Barker / CSP George Chavez / SCF Zachary Doggett / CCCF Frederick B. Hill / FMCC Daryl Keener / CCF Carlos Marquez / DRDC Deveon Moore / YOS Brandon Moss / DCC David Schulerud / SCCF Michael Simpson / BVCF Amber Taggart / YOS Timothy Wakefield / CTCF Ashley Hamilton / DU PAI JoyBelle Phelan / DU PAI
Bureau Chief Advisor	Lilly Stannard / DU PAI
Bureau Chief	Ryan Conarro / DU PAI Major Allen / SCCF Mr. Brown / SCCF Captain Clare / SCF Captain Cook / TCF Captain Davis CCC / DRDC / DWCF Captain Fritchman / DCC Mr. Gronemeyer / AVCF Ms. Lewis / RCC Ms. Malebranche / CCF Captain McDonald / LCF Captain Miramontes / LVCF Ms. Percival / YOS Ms. Prosser / BVCF Ms. Schorling / CSP Captain Sherwood / FCF Ms. Stewart / FMCC Mr. Tenorio / CCCF Ms. Williams / CTCF
Executive Editor	Eric Davis
Managing Editor	Anthony Ray Valdez
Asst. Director of Programming	Inside Wire
Director of Creative Media	Reverberations
Liaisons	With(In)
Printing	LuxLit Media Prairie Mountain Media/ Lehman Printing Center

©2022 University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative

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

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

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



The Inside Report uses common acronyms for facility names, resident and staff work positions, state offices, etc. If you are viewing this on the internet, please refer to the Acronym Legend. If you are reading this from the inside, and you have a question about an unfamiliar word or acronym, ask someone. We left the legend out of the print version intentionally. *The Inside Report* strives to connect people affected by incarceration around the globe, and if asking a fellow incarcerated resident what an acronym stands for opens the door to that connection, we want to hear about it.

Name in honor

BY TIMOTHY WAKEFIELD
CTCF Bureau Chief

Mr. Executive Director:

Corrections staff are not required by Administrative Regulation to refer to residents as “offenders.” If there is need to correct a man, don’t treat him as he is and was. You treat him as he can and should be. A.R.100-19, “Communication with offenders,” permits CDOC staff to recognize us by last name only (IV.A.1.b.5). This AR also requires facilitation of professional contact and interaction between CDOC employees and residents of prisons. CDOC staff is to maintain “positive, open, and constructive communication with offenders” (IV.A.1.a). Can you begin to see the paradox of the administrative regulation?

How can the exhausting use of this term offender, be anything other than derogatory; belittling; disparaging; and tending to detract or diminish especially to people trying to make a positive change in their lives and of those around them in prison? “Unprofessional and derogatory references toward offenders are not acceptable under any circumstances.”

My good family name, Wakefield, has important meaning to me. It is a well-respected name and like everyone else’s, has value. Is preceding anyone’s family name with a derogatory term like offender considered professional, positive, respectful, or constructive?

We can be bombarded by “offender” hundreds of times every day, announced publically at high decibel from ubiquitous overhead speakers. This is dehumanizing. Please encourage the changes you wish to make.

Titles matter or else you would just be anyone of the folks beside you in rush hour traffic. Titles matter to the caller of titles as much as they do the bearer of titles. A title dictates how we treat the titled. It is our way of distinguishing one human from another; or worse, a way of segregating humans — one being elevated, others diminished. The former example being necessary; the latter, abusive.

Is the term necessary to correct bad behavior or is it more about generating a specific negative image of inmates in the minds and actions of staff? Does this title, “offender,” direct staff to take their job of correcting more or less seriously? But correcting isn’t their only duty. Do they care more or less about their responsibilities when we are merely offenders, forsaken, to them?

When one speaks and hears the title offender, images are evoked in mind and could be resentment, revenge, stupidity, unworthiness, and maybe even hatred. There can be no positive or even neutral perceptions brought to the minds of CDOC staff, especially when their every sentence and thought is besmirched by this term.

When I speak and hear the word resident, I think of home. When I speak and hear Wakefield I see the faces of my family. When I speak and hear Mr. Executive Director, I picture you honorably at your desk diligently working to make changes to CDOC that have positive lasting impact.

From the Copyeditor

BY BOB EISENMAN
IR Copyeditor

Well, we are back. Finally. I could go further into explaining how difficult COVID-19 has made life both inside the walls and outside, but I think we are well aware of the new normal the world continues to adapt to. I would rather talk about *The Inside Report* and where our newspaper is heading.

I am fairly new to the editorial staff at IR, and I am inspired daily by the people I work with here as well as every single contributor to this paper. Obviously, not everything reaches print, but I assure you that every submission you send is read and considered carefully. I realize contributing may be a bit intimidating, or perhaps you think you have nothing newsworthy to write about, but I know everyone reading this has something to share. One of our main goals here at IR is to connect people.

The isolation of prison is difficult on everyone. But maybe that carrot of “connecting” is not enough to motivate you to submit, or perhaps you are still a little intimidated to write for us. Perhaps a little background, as well as a little writing secret I have discovered, will do the trick.

I recently landed this sweet gig writing and editing for a newspaper. I believe I earned the job because of all of the fiction I have written, so maybe I approach writing from a slightly different angle. But the more I get into journalism, the more I realize writing is writing. Good, bad, or otherwise. Writing is writing.

Writing for a newspaper comes with a bit more responsibility than I originally anticipated. I have written fiction for years, but when someone buys a book or reads a silly story of mine, there is a certain expectation—readers know what they are getting into. Writing and editing non-fiction for a newspaper for my peers as well as the public, however, is a bit more daunting. With this format, you (the reader) and I do not have an existing relationship, so you have (as you should) a few questions: “Why should I listen to this guy? Where the hell does he get off trying to sound like some sort of expert?”

Well, as I am writing about writing, and the responsibility that comes with it, allow me to let you in on a secret. There are no experts. Not when it comes to writing. Ask any famous writer across time if they consider themselves an “expert writer.” I imagine most of them would guffaw at the mere question. (The few who answer yes, by the way, are the few know-it-all/teacher’s pet types who think more highly of themselves than they should.) More importantly, the “real” writers, the big boys and girls, the movers and the shakers—they know the truth. There is no such thing as an expert writer.

Why? Because we are all just shooting in the dark with our words most of the time. If any of you ever find the secret to putting the correct words in the correct order to resonate with 100% of your audience, 100% of the time, please forward that secret to me. I will then add you to my will and bequeath you all of my worldly possessions. I suppose I will send you most of my residual checks from

all of the massive wealth I will be accumulating as everyone (seriously, 100%?) is learning and growing from the beautiful masterpieces I will produce with that secret trick.

Alas, this is not how writing works. We are essentially blind to how our writing is received. Every writer asks, “Who is going to read this?” The truth is, no one knows. But fear not. We are in this together, fellow writers. We may be blind to what connects with readers, but that is the key. We are ALL blind. So, what do we do? We reach out, fumbling in the dark, and find that other blind author and hold their hand. We help each other. Support. No one can do this alone. Even those few who think of themselves as experts, yeah—they, as well. Maybe give those snotty know-it-alls a good pinch first so they know that you know they are full of it. But then reach out and offer support, anyway. Writing is a perfect example of the blind leading the blind.

So, once again, we are in this together. Reach out and connect with us, your fellow incarcerated brothers and sisters, and the outside world. We can make *The Inside Report* even better than anyone imagines. We look forward to your contributions.

As a side note, we just found out we are now a quarterly publication due to budgetary concerns. Some may find this disheartening, yet I say we celebrate this. Let’s be honest. Due to COVID, we have yet to publish four issues in a year, so I say this is progress. Keep those submissions coming, though, because our new Editor-in-Chief (Spoiler alert...we have a new EIC as of September 1st) has plans to expand our monthly online presence.

reverberations
The Magazine
is Looking for Creative People
Poets, Artists and Creative Writers
Request a media packet for our companion publication, Reverberations,
an art and literary magazine published by DU PAI and LUXLIT Press

Realness

Continued from page 2

crave honesty and a genuine connection with whomever they communicate. RP aligns with this foundational yearning and strives to nurture the best in everyone; to be their utmost daily. This gives emphasis on the 5 Practices of AR summarized below. (See box)

Exploring in more detail, consider the first AR Practice, “Welcome Everything.” Welcome everything? Everything?!? Some things in life quite frankly SUCK, so why would someone welcome them? This perspective is initially understandable without further explanation of AR. The main intention of “Welcome Everything” is to open one’s awareness, to be observational, and not attempt to correct, control, fix, or change anything of a circumstance. The target response is to pause and then notice whatever thought or emotion is happening inside at that

moment. This creates a space in which a clear comprehension of one’s internal experience allows for intelligent, healthy decision making. “Welcome Everything” does not suggest tolerating mistreatment or passively surrendering to an unfulfilling life situation. It can be, however, that crucial first step toward setting a necessary personal boundary.

The prison environment can be particularly difficult, with abuse, judgment, negativity, and pain bombarding from nearly every direction. RP believes coping well and diffusing absorption of these powerful energies begin with acknowledging them and with an inventory of one’s body sensations, such as muscle tension and breathing. Feeling anger or rage may often be one’s sincere experience but it does not entitle a person to unleash that emotion with violence or hurtful words. Instead, people begin by acknowledging that the feelings exist. This alone can help alleviate the impulse to react thoughtlessly or aggressively. With practice, the AR training

CAN override old habits of hostility and elevate the RP participant to relational leader status.

Practice #2, “Assume Nothing,” reminds the class that assumptions have been an asset from our earliest days of learning, using information from past experience for our benefit in the present. One common example from childhood is not touching a hot stove. In prison, however, assumptions can lead to an array of detrimental outcomes rather than benefits. A side look or stare may be viewed as confrontational, depending on the story you tell yourself about the intention. RP requests an alternate approach whereby a person asking excessive questions may not be intruding or plotting sabotage but in fact, awkwardly seeking friendship. When you “Assume Nothing,” the mere attempt will help you notice what stories you’ve created about the person, or the world in your own mind. Inaccuracies can be adjusted before problems ensue.

AR Practice #3, “Reveal Your Experience,” takes courage. Exposing parts of yourself and

your journey provides an opportunity for participants to discover points of commonality in past experiences, feelings, and coping methods, both healthy and unhealthy. Drop the façade and speak up. Your words can reduce emotional isolation and reassure someone in the midst of difficulty. If a specific topic raises intense fear or discomfort, try revealing the truth to yourself first, before sharing with others.

AR Practice #4, “Own Your Experience,” promotes conscious responding, not mindless reacting to life events. The self-responsible narrative elicits a sense of inner power. RP believes injustices or wrongs and their impacts can be admitted without getting stuck in a victim mentality. The focus should be on why this is happening, not why it is happening TO ME!

For many residents, the vulnerability caused by owning one’s mistakes and taking accountability is unfamiliar. Authentic strength and character exude from the person who walks into that fragile emotional arena in order to achieve vital personal

transformation. Give the gift of just listening. Truly getting someone’s world, empathizing with them, is a way to support and re-humanize the speaker.

Lastly, Practice #5, “Honor Self / Honor Other.” “Honor Self,” depending on the individual, can mean many different things. Fundamentally, it’s one’s preferences and needs that assist them in managing life effectively. Take care of yourself, focusing on your physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. “Honor Other” is having respect and understanding of others’ needs, but it is not limited to other people. Mundane objects we find in our everyday lives are integral to this process as well. These objects can be something as simple as your job, but it is anything with which you feel a connection to. Be creative in how you apply this practice, striking a balance between self and other. Sometimes answering ‘yes’ is appropriately putting someone else’s needs above your own. Alternately, a ‘no’ may be one way to disagree respectfully.

A few mothers from

LVCF’s March 13, 2022 graduating class expressed how much RP skills assisted in parenting their children by phone. Each occasion of listening without judgment was a stepping stone of greater openness and deeper trust. For released graduates, monthly parenting support calls keep the practice sharp.

Executive Director Dean Williams took time to attend an October 2021 session at LVCF. He has spoken often about transforming the culture of incarceration and he backs it up with programs such as RP. He similarly wants a focus on the connections that can be made rather than the differences that exist. Everyone, staff included, can be an active part of this new reality. Change takes time. Participants in cognitive development classes will move the community faster toward this collective goal. The consensus regarding RP training is that it is an exceptional experience.

THE 5 PRACTICES OF AUTHENTIC RELATING

- 1 WELCOME EVERYTHING**
We welcome everything that arises in our field of awareness, in ourselves, in others, and in the world.
- 2 ASSUME NOTHING**
We notice our assumptions of people and situations, and check them out with others.
- 3 REVEALING YOUR EXPERIENCE**
We let ourselves be seen, known, heard, and touched as who we really are, and invite others into our worlds.
- 4 OWN YOUR EXPERIENCE**
We take full responsibility for whatever we experience, and for having an impact on others.
- 5 HONOR SELF/HONOR OTHER**
We honor our own needs and wants while also honoring the needs and wants of others.

In-Reach seminar brings community

BY ANTHONY RAY VALDEZ
IR Journalist

Confinement of incarceration deals with one commonality – people. People to be housed, people to govern, people to teach, and of course, people to return. According to various sources, the rate of return to prison ranges between 40-60%.

On June 9, 2022, several formerly incarcerated people returned to the Cañon Complex. This time, though, they came with business associates, in street clothes, and on a mission. RESTORE, a collaboration for transitional services, created Community Connection In-Reach, a space for community partners and incarcerated people to interact. Since then, RESTORE has held five In-Reach seminars with additional community partners joining each event.

Community partners include Paradigm One (now called the Hazelbrook Community Recovery Center), Life-Line Colorado, Second Chance Center, Servicios de la Raza, CDOC Division of Adult Parole, Oxford House, Tribe Recovery, Elevate Recovery and Re-Entry Initiative. Residents interacted with the community partners,

learning of opportunities and difficulties for reintegrating into their community.

Synergistically, community partners spoke on the need to work with other partners and agencies, giving insight to residents of how the community of re-entry truly counts on one another for success. Many of the staff members working with and for these community partners are formerly incarcerated, in recovery, on parole currently, and are very relatable to the participants.

From Second Chance Center, Taj Ashaheed captivated the crowd with his political journey and determination for reform.

From Colorado Springs, Paradigm One team members Peter Kim, Corey Woodard, and Chelsea Secord spoke to attendees with rawness and honesty. Kim asked, “How many times have you been in prison? Once? Two times? More? We should be ashamed.” Kim, a formerly incarcerated person, continues his work through his ministry and Community Connections, in addition to Paradigm One.

Servicios de La Raza emphasized that there are more resources and support now than ever for people transitioning to the streets. Jennifer Roybal (Denver), Lizbeth Campuzano

(Denver), Amanda Cooper (Pueblo), and Alan Wilson

(Denver, formerly incarcerated) met with attendees to hand out flyers and business cards.

A couple of men expressed their doubts about RESTORE. One participant is a reoccurring visitor to prison, and another participant will be released soon enough to check his voice mails he missed a while back. Each gave concern to the validity of the program based on their own experience of incarceration. Nevertheless, the impact was

high and positive for them. Eric Nunez, a TC graduate currently still in the TC community, said he has been in constant communication with Life-Line Colorado and was privileged to meet with Paradigm One, which will help in his upcoming transition. RESTORE plans to continue to hold a Community Connection In-Reach seminar at the Cañon Complex to develop a strong network for reintegration.



Community Partners In-Reach seminar brought formerly incarcerated, transitional advocates, parole, and CDOC staff together with residents for a new endeavor

[Photo courtesy of IR]



Administrative Regulations accessibility

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN
LVCF Contributor

Administrative Regulations, also known as ARs, function as rules for every prison in Colorado. There are also Implementation Adjustments, or IAs, that further govern each institution individually. ARs and IAs were designed to oversee both the residents and the officers, and as in any community, they can be used for their intended purpose or adjusted to fit an agenda.

Knowing your ARs and IAs is as important as understanding the laws that govern your state or county. You can usually access them at the library, or you can send a kite along with a miscellaneous withdrawal slip to your facility's ACA Coordinator. Awareness of these laws could help you stay out of trouble.

The expectation that residents obey the rules, with this sometimes difficult access, is a growing problem in some prisons. With all of the technology available, it is hard to believe that a solution has not been developed. Access to an easily updatable tablet with current ARs, IAs, and Posted Operational Rules (specific rules that govern any particular area in prison), would be helpful.

This access became even more difficult during the pandemic. Between ACA Coordinators being unavailable and library time being canceled, ARs and IAs were difficult to look up, making the grievance process more challenging. How do we navigate a world where a Phase III lockdown could prevent an inmate from accessing the rules to protect themselves? This makes filing any grievances, even with the extended time frame, highly difficult. These difficulties only add to the challenge of availability that many facilities are currently experiencing across the state.

In the short term, the solution is to ask other inmates. Some residents have ARs printed out

from previous research. Also, knowing which categories to examine can drastically reduce research time, especially if you have to send kites for research.

Additionally, insight into Intensive Supervision Program (ISP) and community operations is covered in the ARs. It is important to know your rights and to be able to fight for them. The following is a directory of ARs:

- 100 – Administrative/ Organization
- 150 – Boards
- 200 – Business Services
- 250 – Adult Parole/ ComCor/YOS
- 300 – Facility Security
- 350 – Facility Services Operations
- 400 – Fugitives
- 450 – Industries
- 500 – Academic/Career/Tech Education
- 550 – Case Management
- 600 – Offender Classification
- 650 – Offender Group Living
- 700 – Offender Health Services
- 750 – Offender Legal Services
- 800 – Offender Pastoral Care
- 850 – Offender Personnel
- 900 – Offender Program Services
- 950 – Offender Records
- 1000 – Offender Recreation
- 1050 – Offender Career/ Tech Education
- 1100 – Inspections/ Audits
- 1150 – Investigations
- 1200 – Business Tech.
- 1300 – Parole/Probation/ Interstate Compact
- 1350 – Public Affairs
- 1400 – Research/Reporting
- 1450 – Staff Personnel
- 1500 – Training
- 1550 – Support Operations
- 1600 – YOS

You have the power to change your circumstances by standing up for what is right. Use these ARs to make where you live a better place and help suggest ideas for programming that will benefit everyone. Keep in mind, if you risk nothing, you gain nothing.

Marijuana sentence pardons

BY LUTHER HAMPSON
IR Journalist

In a state of constant flux, as is the case of the current legal system, reform brings with it change as well as wrongs that need remedy. In the great state of Colorado, adults are now within their legal bounds to possess and consume small amounts of marijuana. This is great for a large portion of our population, but what about those previously convicted of possession of these same amounts of grass? It does not seem fair that what is acceptable behavior today has stripped others of their freedom in the recent past.

Governor Polis agrees. Recently, Polis took a look at this situation and issued a mass pardon. Previously, the governor granted pardons to people that were convicted of possession of less than one ounce of marijuana. Subsequent legislative sessions

led lawmakers to raise that limit to two ounces. This created the need for an additional 1300 Coloradoans to have their criminal background remedied. "It's unfair that 1,351 additional Coloradans had permanent blemishes on their record that interfered with employment, credit, and gun ownership, but we fixed that by pardoning their possession of small amounts of marijuana that occurred during the failed probation era," Polis said in a news release in December 2021.

The Executive Order (C 2021 019) should find its way into your search bar for more information on the pardons. Blazing Coloradans will find the necessary information and guidelines for full and unconditional pardons.

Legislation on the inside

BY STEVE ALLEN
DRDC Contributor

Legislation on the Inside is a ground-breaking program that was initiated and directed by the Second Chance Center of Denver. With the support of Director Dean Williams, elections were held at multiple facilities to allow each population to select two participants from their community that they felt would do a good job representing them.

The purpose of the program is to utilize the experiences and perspective of the incarcerated population of CDOC, in the hopes of bringing knowledge and information to the legislature that was not previously considered. In addition to educating the incarcerated population on the processes of the government, and encouraging all of us to become involved in that process, both now and upon release. Due to the COVID lockdowns, the program did not get rolling until March, in the middle of the current legislative session.

By utilizing the experiences and perspective of the incarcerated population of CDOC, they hope to bring knowledge and information to the legislature that was not previously considered. Many people have real life

experiences that were directly impacted by the statutes that are written by our legislators. Not only do we bring our own individual histories, we have all heard many stories from others that we have known during our incarceration, concerning their struggles and we seek to continue to hear from the rest of the population to get their stories and opinions and present them in our discussions and testimonials.


The different facility representatives are separated into three different groups that meet virtually for 2 hours every week on different days and times. As representatives we are required to do a lot of reading and research to prepare for each meeting. We discuss the current bills being presented in the Colorado House and Senate and share our stories that relate to the subject. After our discussions, we are given the opportunity to write testimonials in support or opposition to the bills and present ideas for improvement.

Currently SCC has had some of their people read a few of our testimonials to the legislative hearings and presented the rest of them in written form. The hope is to find a way to one day present our testimonies ourselves, either virtually or

in person. The members of Second Chance have been so welcoming and are putting a lot of time and energy into the success of this program. It is refreshing to know that there are so many people outside the fences, who believe in us and are willing to put that belief into action. This summer, we are hoping to start learning how to draft a bill ourselves with the possibility of finding a sponsor to present the bill in the following session.

I feel blessed and honored to have been one of the two elected representatives at DRDC. So far it has been a great experience and I have learned a lot about the political ins and outs involved in the process of amending our current statutes and proposing new laws. I'm looking forward to the continuing education and the opportunity to contribute to society in a positive way.

After my 34 plus years of incarceration, now knowing that my life experiences and my opinions can be heard and that it may possibly help in improving future legislation, adds a sense of meaning to the struggles of being separated from my family and the rest of society. This has been a truly positive experience that has allowed me to use my time effectively and for a very good cause.



The Inside Report is looking for journalists that follow the 4 R's

- Reflection:**
Ponder an issue and determine whether there is in fact a conflict or problem requiring focus, investigation, and resolution.
- Reporting:**
Get the who, what, when, where, and why of the story.
- Reconstruction:**
Arrange your material into logical, coherent, and attention grabbing form readers can understand.
- Revision:**
Eliminate the extraneous or repetitious material, checking your facts and double checking your sources.

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

Colorado and the use of private prisons

IR Writing Corps

Rumors abound regarding the closing of private prisons in Colorado. Governor Polis, legislators, and prison reform advocates have stated publicly the desire to halt private prison use in our state. But as of January 2022, this rumor appears to be nothing more than gossip.

On January 21, 2022, the Colorado Joint Budget Committee moved plans forward to give \$5.41 million dollars in additional funds to CoreCivic, the private prison corporation that operates Colorado's two private prisons, to address what is deemed a staffing crisis. This is above and beyond the millions of dollars that CDOC pays CoreCivic (approximately \$58 million at the \$63.32 per diem). It appears private prisons are not going anywhere anytime soon.

The staffing crisis is not

new to the state's correctional industry, as the state-run facilities are having difficulties as well. But at least the state facilities are retaining some of their employees. According to Prison Legal News (PLN), Colorado state facilities have a retention rate of 77%, yet the private prisons retain less than 0%. No, that was not a misprint.

CoreCivic has a turnover rate of 126% at Crowley County Correctional (CCCF), located in Olney Springs, and 107% at Bent County Correctional Facility (BCCF) in Las Animas. Essentially, more people are starting and quitting than are actually employed at the facilities. The \$5.41 million dollars is an attempt to incentivize employee retention. This \$5.41 million is in addition to the \$1.3 million CoreCivic qualified for under the

COVID-19 relief fund through the CARES Act.

Colorado contracts CoreCivic to house approximately 2500 inmates. This is approximately 25% of the state's medium custody beds.

Why spend so much money to keep the private prisons open? Both of these rural communities rely heavily on property tax revenue and school district taxes to keep their counties running. PLN states that Crowley County collects 44% of its property taxes and 42% of the school district taxes from the prison. Bent County collects 18% of their property taxes and 25% of its school district taxes from its prison. We do not have to look much farther to see why people in those rural communities want to keep the prisons there.



Residents, staff, and community volunteers of Repairing Citizenship

[Photo courtesy of Paul Freeman]

The meaning of a chapel

BY SAMUEL MULLIKIN
DRDC Contributor

At the Denver Complex, a coalition of incarcerated residents, staff members, and community volunteers have united to build a chapel on the facility's grounds. Their goal is to solicit one dollar from a million people so that the residents of both the Denver Women's Correctional Facility (DWCF) and the Denver Reception and Diagnostics Center (DRDC) can have a place of their own for worship, faith services, and community events.

Religious services at DWCF and DRDC are currently held in cramped Multi-Purpose Rooms or in the gym. This lack of space challenges many residents, who sometimes feel left out in the cold. Building this spiritual sanctuary will give the complex a heart to promote the connection we need to heal and grow.

Under the leadership of Warden Ryan Long, the Denver

Complex sets a paradigm for rehabilitation known as Repairing Citizenship. It is a holistic approach that empowers staff and residents to take stewardship of their lives and their communities, both within DOC and in the world at large. It promotes principles and practices that define a clear path forward through the maze of normalization.

This 5,000-square-foot building will be constructed on DWCF's grounds next to the CCi Print Shop. An anticipated key driver to the project's success is the involvement of the residents themselves. From the fundraising effort, to the building's design, and even in its construction, the incarcerated community has been empowered to make this space their own.

On the morning of April 8, 2022, these incarcerated men and women gathered in the staff training room to discuss the challenges of a project so big. Joined by representatives of the Cherry Hills Community Church and Alpha USA, the group worked through fundraising strategies,

networking plans, and the logistics of constructing a million-dollar building.

Using the model of Repairing Citizenship, residents arranged themselves into subcommittees focused on tackling the specific challenges of building a chapel: Political, social, economic, ecological, and cultural. However, these five conceptual perspectives represent more than just a convenient way to break up a large project. They are the lenses through which we approach the rehabilitation of our residents and the healing within our community.

The word "chapel," derived

from the Latin word for cloak, is rooted in the story of St. Martin of Tours, a soldier in the Roman army, who died in the year 397. St. Martin is said to have divided his military cloak in half, giving one part to a shivering beggar at the gate of Amiens and wrapping the other around his own shoulders. This small act of kindness, the offering of shelter to one in need, has helped define what our spiritual centers mean to our communities.

In a time when the world seems focused on amplifying our divisions, the residents and staff of the Denver Complex demonstrate the power of unity.

Despite our many differences of race, religion, sex, age, background, and status, we are united in our purpose and willing to do the work required to achieve it. Constructing this chapel is about more than erecting a building. It is about offering spiritual shelter and uniting the community.

We are currently setting up the systems and processes to begin the fundraising and collection effort. It is a mission we feel called to, and one that is close to our hearts. As we work to uplift each other, we hope that you, too, find meaningful ways to serve your own community.



Residents and staff having a lively discussion

[Photo courtesy of Paul Freeman]

Heart health

Continued from page 1

of the work are given by three volunteers who dedicate their time, resources, and experiences to helping people in and transitioning out of prison while sharing a mission.

First, the heart-transformer who dedicates time to helping demolish the bias associated with those behind prison walls. Caitlin Konya, a former University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI) Social Work Intern and a first-generation college student said, "The initial perception — I can't describe it in a word, but a visual representation is what I imagined — a brick wall. That is where so many questions stemmed from. You want to know, but you don't know where to start asking those questions."

Inaction combined with a lack of knowledge motivated Konya to get involved and challenge the public to engage in the conversation. Observing and learning about interviews and audio review for Inside Wire radio station enables Konya a hands-on presence that allows her to view the intention behind the questions.

Konya understands that field experience is meaningful and is missing in the bookwork of graduate programs. Asking different organizations that support the DU PAI mission to re-evaluate their own impact and see how they show up in different spaces is an important aspect of Konya's volunteering.

Konya's belief in doing the right thing in the right way includes being critical of higher education systems that have racist and oppressive beginnings. People incarcerated and about to be released have a voice and Konya contributes to the amplification of that voice by volunteering time and energy to further DU PAI's vision and mission.

With so many ways to be involved in criminal justice reform, social work has allowed for Konya to choose a career that is informed by the people served and not informed by systems that are currently in place. Konya said, "That is where the light switch clicked ... I want to be involved in people's lives by being there in those spaces."

The mission of "leaving the world better than she found it," energizes Konya's focus on the needs of the individual as well as resources that support individuals. DU PAI, led by Dr. Ashley Hamilton, facilitates programs virtually and in-person, equipping people in prison with volunteer and paid-positions contracted within CDOC. DU PAI has reached 697 incarcerated residents and counting by offering 12-week workshops at 12 facilities, 7 productions, and long-term special projects consisting of *The Inside Report*, *Reverberations*, *Group Leadership*, *With(in) Podcast*, and *Inside Wire*. Contact your facility's DU PAI group leaders for more information on DU PAI programming at your facility, or find DU PAI on social media.

Next, meet the heart-reviver who sets the heart pumping: Dan Hugill. Hugill is the Program Coordinator with The Phoenix for Colorado Springs, and liaison for CDOC. Faith and fitness are the biggest part of Hugill's recovery. He has been a team member of The Phoenix since 2016 and an employee the past four years.

A couple of days after being released from prison, Hugill heard the phrase "free CrossFit" at The Phoenix and was there. "CrossFit at The Phoenix is what helped save me, and if someone else can have that same experience in their transition with extra support for them in a sober, active community — as Jon Willis from RF2 says — barbells are the bait."

There is no monetary cost to individuals for events, but there is sweat equity involved and a mandatory 48 hours of being sober prior to the event. Everyone committed to a sober lifestyle is welcome. Boxing, CrossFit, yoga, hot yoga, indoor rock climbing, volleyball, pickle ball, family dinners, music events, and events that include kids are the sub-communities uniting to form one giant community.

Hugill's focus is to get more events into prisons, so that when people get out they will be greeted with a warm handoff, while people that are here for a bit longer can continue to participate. "The Phoenix is so near and dear to me because CrossFit is one of the things that saved my life while I was incarcerated."

On ThePhoenix.org website and app, you can register your name, address, and phone number. Optional questions are used for statistics. On the app you can reserve a spot and various equipment, such as climbing, boxing-gloves, wraps, and bags. Locations in Colorado include Colorado Springs, Denver, Fort Collins, Steamboat Springs, and Grand Junction. If a physical location is unavailable, there is a virtual environment that hosts events from 5 a.m. - 9 p.m. (contingent upon your time zone) like yoga, chair yoga, Dungeons and Dragons, cardio kick boxing, CrossFit, and motivational speakers.

Finally, the heart-supplier, who models how the love of Jesus Christ remains tangible: Peter Kim. Kim is the Ministry Director for Connections Prison Ministry (CPM), a non-profit ministry with the ultimate purpose of sharing Jesus through relationships with individuals and their families who struggle with incarceration. Kim says, "Our mission is to introduce rescue through the grace and agape love of Jesus; to inspire a heart and life of redemption through the study and prayer of God's word; and to invest in restoration through fellowship and accountability."

As relationships are built, CPM offers assistance with resources for employment, transportation, housing, cellphones, clothing, food, basic household supplies, mentorship, counseling, and connections to the local Church. Getting

involved requires the following steps:

1. Request a "Connections Prison Ministry" application through the facility Chaplain's office.
2. Family members can also print a copy from this site and mail it to their incarcerated family member.
3. Completed applications should be mailed to:

Connections Prison Ministry
PO Box 64261
Colorado Springs, CO 80962.

4. Completed applications will be verified with facility chaplains, staff, and case management.

5. After applications are received, they are prioritized based on several factors including release dates, needs, incarceration history, and available resources.

6. Accepted applications will be contacted via facility mail or facility approved JPay letters. Following this acceptance, plans for support will be arranged.

"Providing this kind of tangible support to the incarcerated and parolees beginning the next chapters of life has given Connections the opportunity to be a vital voice as Jesus is shared and the Gospel is preached," Kim said.

Following empathy, compassion, and humane ideals brings volunteers inside prisons to help in any way they are able. The ability to strive and thrive in this setting is demonstrated by the heart-changers.

Meaning in transformation

BY WILLIAM SEAN CONEY
IR Senior Editor

The pandemic created a defining point in the state of mass incarceration. Millions soldiered through lockdowns, body counts, and quarantines. Our citizens learned about loneliness, toilet paper rations, and the direct orders of a mask mandate. America incarcerated itself, and the parole plan is being tabled. The collective anxiety and fear of change was a liminal experience. Prisons, hospitals, and nursing homes found new levels of anxiety. No one will ever be the same.

On the bright side, anxiety can incite creativity and imaginative problem solving. Many studies have demonstrated this apparent paradox. The Journal of Personality and Social Psychology conducted one such study in 2008. The experiment increased anxiety and other emotions through autobiographical writing of past events. People induced to feel more anxiety showed greater creativity for solving problems. It also helped with the imagination and effort required to focus on future possibilities.

This must be the reason “Tell It Slant: An Anthology of Creative Nonfiction by Writers in Colorado’s Prisons” is a finalist in the Colorado Book Awards. This compilation was composed during one of the darkest times in mass-incarcerated history. The “Tell It Slant” correspondence course ran in the midst of the COVID pandemic. It consisted of 10 prisons and served 185 participants.

Anxiety was supplied by the

pandemic and an additional variable was provided by the course creators. DU PAI inserted meaning into the writing assignments. “Zooming in to a single experience creates an invitation to truly grasp something,” stated Suzy Q. Smith and Elijah N., the course facilitators.

Neuroscientists credit the dopamine spike that occurs when anticipating rewards for activating the areas of the brain that motivate and prepare us for creativity. They also claim that the increased oxytocin primes us to seek more social support and connections.

Dr. Ashley Hamilton, Executive Director of DU PAI, uses the positive possibility of rehabilitation and transformation. “I have explored the contradictions that rehabilitation poses in this specific prison and cultural moment in time,” she said. She walks into prisons and proves this over and over. Instead of avoiding anxiety, she uses it as a tool for transformation. She takes people out of their comfort zone with art, theater, and personal narratives. She then guides them “to explore their past liminal experiences and their current liminal moment as we created new meaning.”

Is this simply creative non-fiction? The entire self-incarcerated country could use this chance to create new meaning. In the words of Victor Frankl, “Life is never made unbearable by circumstances, but by lack of meaning and purpose.”

Change Maker Village

BY JOSE PENA &
BRADLEY BENSON
AVCF Contributors

The Change Maker Village at AVCF woke up to an exciting day—a day the Village inhabitants had been looking forward to. Reginald Dwayne Betts, a civilian and founder of Freedom Reads, as well as CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams, came to celebrate the installment of the new Freedom Reads library at Restoring Promise on June 30th, 2022.

Betts is a formerly incarcerated person who served eight years in Indiana prisons for a carjacking he committed while he was sixteen. However, his time locked up did not hold him back from becoming an author of four books, a published poet, a lawyer, a graduate of Yale University, and the eventual founder of Freedom Reads, one of the most recognized prison reform non-profits known to man. This non-profit is an initiative geared toward making a wide variety of books available to prisoners in order to help them begin or further their education. The libraries are constructed of

reclaimed wood, signifying the transformation that comes from turning something unwanted into treasure.

Betts presented the story of how Freedom Reads became what it is today, as well as explained the importance reading has on a person’s life, during a rousing speech in the AVCF gym. It became clear as Betts spoke that the next step was to implement Freedom Reads libraries in every unit, not just in AVCF, but in other facilities as well. “We want to create beauty from our imperfections,” Betts said.

This is exactly the mission we pursue in Change Maker Village. Fully supportive of the mission, Williams said, “I want these libraries everywhere, not just here.”

Williams is not solely focused on bringing reading opportunities into prison. He wants to see people in prison have the ability to reach their full potential and put a stop to the oppression of the incarcerated. Williams looks forward to seeing prisoners in real clothes, rather than the dreary prison garb they have been forced to wear for decades. He hopes to bring

real jobs with increased pay opportunities to help incarcerated people develop a sense of purpose as well as dignity.

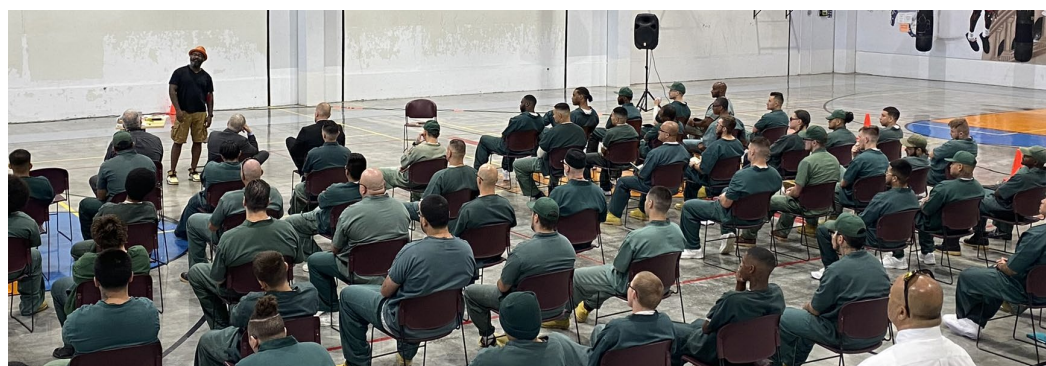
Change is coming, and Williams seems to be the biggest supporter in abolishing the oppressive prison system. There are many opportunities associated with normalization at facilities like AVCF, SCF, LCF, and FCC through Restoring Promise, Honor Units, Restoring Honor, and RF2 CrossFit.

Williams said that we “Should be able to run the places where we live,” because he believes we are “grown-ass men, and should be treated accordingly.”

There is a way to accelerate this growth and change occurring in CDOC, and Williams stressed what we have to do: “You have to want it more than I do. And I want it!” The ball is in our court. What are we going to do with it?

Editor’s note:

Mr. Pena and Mr. Benson are a mentor and mentee, respectfully, in the Restoring Promise Unit at AVCF. This article is their joint effort.



Reginald Dwayne Betts, founder of Freedom Reads, speaks to residents at AVCF

[Photo courtesy of Annie Skinner, Public Information Officer]

Costly therapy

Continued from page 2

who don’t subscribe to this and still believe in the containment model.”

The 2021 Annual Report to the Colorado legislature can be misleading and no longer reports specifics on the SOs granted parole and whether they met release criteria or not. The 2020 performance audit of the SOMB by the Colorado State Auditor found numerous problems. Most notably, only 18% of the sections that providers follow to evaluate, identify, and treat sex offenders are cited with supporting evidence, which is required by statute. There were also numerous complaints against the SOMB, but the Board did not comply with the statutory requirement to investigate.

These unaddressed issues contribute to the growing—and costly—backlog of SOs waiting to be enrolled in SOTMP classes. As of June 2021, according to the annual report presented to the state joint judiciary committees as well as the general assembly, there are 1583 inmates in Colorado prisons with indeterminate sentences, meaning that the court has given a prison sentence in the form of a “bottom number” (minimum time) that can then go “to life.” This gives SOTMP

and CDOC the ability to keep the offender for (theoretically) the rest of their life. The offender comes up for parole, just as anyone else sentenced to a similar amount of time (minus the “to life” qualifier), yet they are not allowed to be considered for parole until they take the SOTMP classes—which has a waitlist of over a thousand people. Though the 2021 Annual Report on Lifetime Supervision of SOs assures that the LSA legislation is not intended to increase the minimum sentence for SOs, interviews with people in the SOTMP classes as well as on the waitlist, attest that this is not the case. The average SO spends 3.5 years past their parole eligibility, with an estimated cost of \$50,000 per year, per person. Adding this up, current indeterminate sentences will cost the State roughly \$277 million dollars to house these inmates past their parole eligibility. And the number is only going up. In 2019, the total number of LSA SOs (incarcerated as well as in community or on parole) was 2,576 and in 2021 the number was 2,660. Judgments (most recently a ruling that cost the taxpayers \$50,000) in favor of SOs being held past their parole eligibility will only continue to add to the cost.

CDOC is unable to keep up with the demand for the SOTMP classes for several reasons. One of the main issues is a lack of qualified therapists.

“It’s hard to get people to move to Fremont or Cañon City to become treatment providers,” Senator Lee said. “There was a discussion to move all the SOs to Denver a few years ago, where there are more treatment providers, but they ultimately decided not to go with that.” One possible solution to the problem is using the new tele-health technology many Colorado jails use for behavioral health. “Tele-health makes all the sense in the world. Let’s take a lesson from COVID. We’ve learned that we can do a lot over virtual modalities,” Senator Lee said.

Another factor contributing to the backlog is the practice of indeterminate sentencing itself. Senator Lee calls indeterminate sentencing of sex offenders and belief in high recidivism a “relic of a bygone era.” The recidivism statistics confirm this stance. Sex offenders have a recidivism rate of less than 5% (some estimates are below 2%), in comparison to 49% for most other crimes (murder is also quite low). So, sex offenders are the least likely to return to prison on a new crime, yet they are kept in prison (on average) the longest.

Another issue, much contested around the world, is the use of polygraphs. In FY 2021, \$242,500 was allocated for SOTMP polygraph testing. “The SOMB and their advocates are absolute believers in polygraphs, though,” Senator Lee said. “There are others

of us who are skeptical about polygraphs. Because we do not allow polygraph evidence to be admitted into court systems, so why would we authorize and legitimize the use of polygraphs in treatment programs?” The counter to that argument is that the anticipation of polygraphs promotes candor and honesty. If an offender is in denial and is faced with a poly, they may, out of concern, admit or acknowledge things they may not admit or acknowledge under normal circumstances. The inexact science of polygraphs can hold up SOs in treatment for years when answers are not what treatment is looking for.

Much of the sentencing and treatment models that Colorado uses is outdated and does not follow the latest research or best practices for behavior health. Most of the legislation, as well as rulings in courts of all levels, uses terminology that did not come from scientific research, but rather a single article published in Psychology Today, a popular magazine that is not peer-reviewed. Senator Lee explained that the article was authored by an SO therapist trying to “gin up business” from the Indiana prison system for his practice. The article coined the terms “frightening and high recidivism,” a catch-phrase that was unsubstantiated and unsupported by any research whatsoever. Regardless, the phrase permeates the literature that decision-making boards

use to establish sentencing and treatment guidelines.

There are solutions to these issues, but it is difficult to legislate change when the public perception is often shaped by the media that follows any legislator viewed as “soft on crime.” Senator Lee refers to this as the “third rail” for politicians. They do not want to commit “political suicide” by actually fixing the problem. The public has been misinformed, often with that phrase, “frightening and high recidivism,” and the misconception about the actual dangers of having people who have committed sex crimes living in the community drives the millions of dollars Colorado taxpayers will continue to spend for years until the problem can be addressed using actual statistics and accepted RNR treatment protocols.

Senator Lee recommends that everyone affected gets their families and loved ones involved. “People who do not know anyone in the criminal justice system, it’s not on their agenda. So, for the vast majority of people out there in the world, they are not thinking of the inhumanity of indeterminate sentences. We need to encourage the families of citizens and residents of DOC to become knowledgeable and get this moved up on people’s agenda.”

Restorative Justice

Continued from page 2

CDOC Director of Programs, Monica Chambers, CDOC Restorative Justice/Victim Services Coordinator, and Kerri Quinn, CDOC Restorative Justice Contract Worker, are the driving force providing healing and restoration for victims of crimes. However, they believe in dignity for all human beings, including wrongdoers and incarcerated people.

One of the most important components of RJ is a normalization process that recognizes a standard across the board. Regarding normalization, Chambers said, “RJ aligns with and supports the efforts of normalization, reform, and rehabilitation. The fundamental RJ principles of respect, responsibility, relationship, repair, and reintegration are key components to the success of this paradigm shift. The principles can be woven into all aspects of living and working in prison.” Quinn agreed and said,

“Honoring and respecting each other, restoring accountability, and making it safe for people to be accountable. We have to change our response to harm from a focus on punishment, blame, and shame to an opportunity to repair harm to those impacted, support reintegration, and recognize underlying trauma and its impact.” Chambers added, “A culture and paradigm shift is an in-depth process that will take time. We are in the beginning stages of changing how we approach what daily engagement in prison looks like. While striving to achieve the goal of safer facilities, safer communities, and a more humane environment.” This is what has been termed “dynamic security,” a more existential lens in which we view security.

Residents living inside can be victims of several kinds of trauma and are still enduring trauma by the nature of our punitive system. Quinn said, “We are all recognizing signs of increased trauma. There is an awareness that we need to resist re-traumatizing and a need to enhance honoring, dignity, and accountability.

Efforts are on the way to respond to the needs of staff and residents.” Smith added, “RJ creates a platform for inmates and staff to be accountable for their decisions and start the process of addressing trauma.” RJ emphasizes addressing unresolved trauma. If punitive practices could be replaced with restorative practices in the daily functions of prison life, this could create an environment that is safe and offers opportunities for residents to take advantage of healing their traumas.

RJ is not a program or class; it is a lifestyle and a choice. This choice is to change the way one sees the world and navigate consciously to not create harm. Rehabilitation could take on a life of its own where individuals begin to take personal accountability and seek insight into the reasons that led them to prison in the first place. Smith said, “My goal is to promote RJ statewide. This is a culture change. Not a program, but a new way to interact and engage in relationships.” As of right now, RJ is operating only in specific facilities, with the permission of that facility’s

warden. It is facilitated by volunteers and residents that have fully bought into this lifestyle, continue to seek intrapersonal growth, and have confidence in the humanity of every person.

RJ can be practiced and applied to the everyday lives of all human beings. Similar to how the Bible serves as an instruction manual for living a good, wholesome life, RJ is often viewed as a compass for living a lifestyle of introspection and faith in humanity. People from all walks of life are invited to join the RJ community and enlighten their lives through these principles. The philosophy strengthens interconnectedness of the world through supporting relationships. Offering insight to their practices, Smith said, “I work very hard to be ‘other oriented’ and consider what effect my decisions will have on other people.”

Chambers added, “Working in RJ keeps me mindful of how I engage with people on a daily basis and has made me very aware of automatic assumptions. I am continually reminding myself that everyone

has a backstory and any negative behavior is based on an unmet need. Intentionally coming from a place of curiosity rather than judgment is important for me. I’ve discovered there is endless opportunity to consider these concepts and reflect with every person I encounter.”

Quinn also expressed how she applies RJ principles to her own life: “I focus on guilt, not shame, when I’m tempted to blame. I consider the unmet need that was trying to get met by the harmful behavior. I try to see the person for who they truly are rather than just what they did and try to come from a place of compassion and empathy.”

Chambers, Smith, and Quinn believe in the restorative process, not only by trying to provide it to the victims or offenders of crime, but by living this lifestyle for themselves as a path to be better connected to humanity. RJ allows for people to become a positive part of the greater community, supporting relationships, healing, and working towards making the world a better place for all.

Unemployment until a new industry arrives

BY ISAAC DAVIS
IR Writing Corps

On February 9, 2022, residents were informed that Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI) was to experience big changes that would affect many people inside as well as outside. These changes included the closing of several distinct CCI careers that provide services and products for outside communities as well as the incarcerated.

Fremont Correctional Facility lost the Furniture Shop. The Furniture Shop program has experienced a \$7 million deficit over the past five years, according to Jessica Warren, CCI director, who spoke with CCI employees at a meeting that announced the closure.

CCI plans to use the now empty building to facilitate statewide canteen services. This transition is forecasted to take approximately one year. The transfer to the new program requires extensive remodeling efforts to accommodate the new warehouse needs.

During the transition period, over 60 residents and several CDOC employees lost their jobs. While a small team remains employed to handle the transition, this displacement affects a great deal more than just the residents. It affects many residents’ ability to help support families on the streets, as well as robs them of the ability to save money for their transition back into society. The monetary aspect while incarcerated is one thing, but an even greater issue is the loss of on-the-job training, rehabilitation needs, and the mental health benefits of

not being confined to a cell house all day.

Residents assigned to the Furniture Shop were given two months of severance pay. The facility moved them to “unassigned.” Some are still unemployed or have found jobs in the kitchen or porter jobs in housing. These new jobs pay a fraction of what they were making at CCI. Some of the incarcerated workers moved to FCF specifically for the Furniture Shop job because of work history and years of experience in furniture making and woodworking industries. Others were employed in web-design, computer programming databases, assembly, and finish work.

All those employed at the Furniture Shop were promised employment in the soon-to-be canteen warehouse positions with the promise of a daily wage of \$8.27. Workers were informed that not everyone will make the transition to the canteen warehouse. This leaves many fearful of what this means and the overall impact across not just FCF, but CDOC as a whole.

With the \$7 million deficit, many of the CCI workers are concerned that much of their work may be taken advantage of. With a marginal labor cost, there is a massive hemorrhage of revenue/profit margins happening. In addition, Colorado communities will now have to source the needs met with inmate labor at a greater cost that will reflect on the consumer. This is at a time when inflation is currently at its highest in history. Highly skilled and hard-working residents, their families, and outside communities are again suffering due to these closures.

One aspect of independent study

BY WAYLON ROBITAILLE
IR Writing Corps

Earning a college education can be a difficult task when you are incarcerated. From seemingly endless wait lists to not meeting certain criteria, it seems to be a constant uphill battle. It is you against the prison system. This is why independent studies has become the go-to option for a college education in prison.

In the last two years, CDOC has brought back the Second Chance Pell Program (SCPP), which offers residents in most Colorado facilities a real life college experience through live feed video with college professors from Trinidad State College.

Enrolling in independent studies through programs other than the SCPP is a simple process that is explained in AR 0500-001. First, you select a school that offers correspondence courses. One of the most popular in Colorado is Adams State University, which offers a variety of degree options. After

you have selected a school, request a correspondence course enrollment packet by mail. Fill out the registration form, include the payment, and mail it back to the school. Once you are enrolled, you will receive a syllabus and a course map to guide you through the course. Expect to take tests with a designated proctor at your facility.

When it comes to payment, there are options available. The financial part is where the major road blocks are. If you are planning to enroll this year, you will need to find a sponsor or have family and friends help pay for the courses if you cannot pay for them yourself. But starting in the fall of 2023, all incarcerated individuals are eligible to apply for federal aid for the first time in over two decades. Until then, if you do have a sponsor and will enroll this year, it is important to know that you will need to purchase your textbooks separately.

Textbooks can be purchased through most schools or online. Be cautious when buying used textbooks. Check with your facility’s policy before purchasing used books. Check with your education department or case manager for more information about independent studies, SCPP, and FAFSA (Federal Application for Student Aid).

Education is extremely important and we can get it all inside the walls. Opportunity is at the doorstep of our confinement and it has been made possible with help from CDOC administration, the staff within our facilities and their willingness to support education and cultural change. So take their support, brave this opportunity and change your life! Be strong and courageous in earning your college education through the independent studies program. It’s your choice!

Justice goes green

BY WILLIAM SEAN CONEY
IR Senior Editor

Resident-led programs are slowly becoming the new normal. One such program, GreenWell, sprang up in 2019 to mend relationships with the community both inside and out. The organization establishes partnerships between incarcerated communities and non-profits in an effort to give back while also striving to be a “well of support” for everyone involved.

The program is unique in the way it gives back to the contributors. Fundraisers draw small monthly donations from the incarcerated population. These funds are passed onto a new organization each quarter. Soap, popcorn, cotton candy, or candles

are awarded to donors, some of whom choose to forward those gifts on to friends and family members.

GreenWell also looks out for community residents experiencing loss or circumstances beyond their control.

GreenWell did not dry up when its creator moved on, nor did it slow down with the COVID lockdowns. Billy Hankins, with the assistance of Correctional Officer Chubuck at Sterling Correctional Facility (SCF), stepped in to maintain the flow.

A small team is now working to solidify GreenWell at SCF. They hope to expand soon to other facilities. A short list of just few charities they have helped in the past includes the following:

CO-OP Ministries, Latina Safe House, Hope House, Safe Zone,



5280 Victims Advocacy Group, Sterling Fire and Rescue, and Food for Thought.

In short, GreenWell is a trifecta of wins. It helps heal relationships with the incarcerated community, staff, and incarcerated families. A “well” that heals us all.

CoreCivic Voc-Ed

BY LINDELL RENAUD
FCF Contributor

Like most of you on the inside, I have participated in some vocational education, from janitorial training to computer processing, with some CCI jobs in between. There is even a vocational program at Crowley County Correctional Facility (CCCF), a CoreCivic Prison, that provides vocational training to become a certified journeyman cabinet/furniture maker with the United States Department of Labor. Yet CDOC offers few CCI positions, if any, that offer accredited certifications in industry standards. Basically, CCI offers a

participation certificate, enough pay to fill your locker box with canteen, and enough money saved to make a meager new start in life when released from prison.

The question you have to ask yourself is where would you like to be successful: on the inside or on the outside?

Residents employed in CCI jobs are considered a success on the inside. They are generally housed inside of incentive units and enjoy the associated privileges. Residents benefit from the wages they earn and save. They never have to go without canteen and can save a little money for when they are released. They will learn work ethics and some employability skills in the field or industry in

which they have worked. Yet the knowledge one gains in the service of CCI is rudimentary at best. How many people do you know who trained at the Four Mile Correctional Center (FMCC) Dairy and became financially successful in the same industry when released? If your dream is to become an assembly line worker with a low-end pay scale, CCI is for you.

The pay one received at CCCF working in the We Build Vocational Trade School was substantially less than working at CCI. But CCCF's woodshop allows residents to achieve success outside of prison. It gives them a chance to provide themselves with a certifiable vocation that could mean a promising career when released

from prison. It is not for everyone and requires dedication for a minimum of four years (8000 hours). There is a four-part educational and hands-on curriculum starting with Foundations. Students then learn Basic Woodworking, Modern Cabinetry, and finish with Construction Print Reading. Each phase provides the student a certificate upon completion. The skillset learned at the CCCF Vocational Trade School is unmatched by any CCI assembly line job.

We all know that one of the many reasons for returning to prison could be not having "the skills to pay the bills" when released. There is an old proverb: "Give a man a fish, he eats for a day.



Furniture built by Renaud
[Photo courtesy of Lindell Renaud]

Teach a man how to fish, he eats for life." I do not want CCI's proverbial fish. Having completed and received my United States Department of

Labor journeyman certificate as a cabinet/furniture maker, I know how to "fish" and I know I will never go hungry when I am released.

Carpentry at LVCF

BY LEIGH ACKERSON
LVCF Contributor

As the incarcerated know better than others, success upon re-entry doesn't simply stem from taking classes. Mr. Paul Burrows, who teaches the Foundations class and subsequent carpentry class at La Vista Correctional Facility (LVCF), believes the most important lesson he can teach his students is that they are capable.

Recalling a moment from his 25 years working in the construction industry, he said, "I worked with some guys I would've never known they were felons if they hadn't told me." The foundations class is required to be completed before having the option to take the carpentry class. If carpentry veers away from the student's interest, once they're released, there are hundreds of other



The carpentry class strikes a pose with their handiwork
[Photo courtesy of LVCF IR Bureau]

post-foundation classes which build in many directions. The Foundations is called such because it's the first class a student is required to take in the National Center of Construction Education and Research (NCCER) curriculum to move into a specialty. The only specialty offered is carpentry, however, upon re-entry, there are hundreds of options

including Crew Leadership, Heavy Equipment Operations, Industrial Codings, Maritime Electrical (underwater welding), Power Line Transmission, and Crane Operations. To give an example of the potential in these positions, a crane operator makes on average a wage of over \$200 an hour.

NCCER is a nationally recognized organization

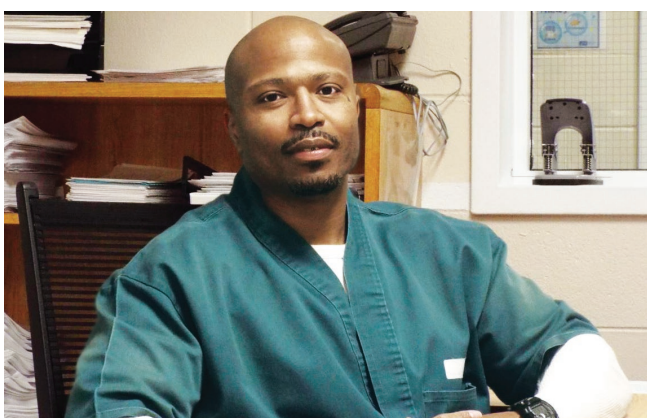
offering classes in a lot of high schools, community colleges, as well as many prisons. In Mr. Burrows' care, the classes he teaches have progressed from being textbook-based to Chromebook-based; he's incorporated new videos on different stages of construction and a new edition of the core curriculum taught in Foundations. He has brought in great speakers including John Dunsmore from Red Rocks Community College who spoke on OSHA safety standards. To keep his classes progressive and current, Burrows personally attends professional week-long workshops that are offered around the country for educators like him by a technical education organization called Career and Technical Education. "It's a huge industry," says Burrows, giving examples of trucking, warehousing, and Home Depot sales, which in his experience is very felon-friendly.

Although he hesitantly cautions that his classes have a

lot of math, he says his favorite part is when someone with no confidence gets excited about an accomplishment. He's realistic and doesn't expect all of his students to pursue a career in this field, but he does expect them to not need help fixing the door handles in their own home one day. He says, "Swinging a hammer might not be for everybody, but is there something you could take from that?"

A career in this industry would be a great path for any incarcerated person. Where one student may pursue a career in carpentry, another may simply feel more capable in their ability to succeed. As far as Mr. Burrows is concerned, both are equally worth investing in. "Mistakes—don't let that be the reason you end up back in here. A lot of people in here have a real low self-esteem," Burrows said. As his students learn how to build homes, Burrows' biggest goal is that they learn how to build a better future.

Walking in first class: Fading into the moonlight



Damon Davis
[Photo courtesy of IR]

BY CARLOS MARQUEZ
DRDC Bureau Chief

It is a cool, crisp, spring evening in Denver. The stars are visible in the sky as a hawk soars in and out of sight. While walking laps around the yard at DRDC, Damon Davis stops in his tracks, in awe as he gasps at the ominous full moon with dark shadow clouds creeping past it. "It's like we are right there, next to the moon. That's the biggest full moon I've ever seen in my entire life. It looks like a perfect picture," he exclaims.

"I wonder why we admire sights like this in nature, but when we see awe inspiring moments and qualities in human beings, our first instinct is criticism or denial of that 'wow' factor in them? We seek to shrink them and the moment itself into a limited perception that our minds can accept," Davis adds.

Davis' point illuminates something we see more often in environments like prisons. Here, negative mental constructs seem to repeat themselves. Ego and ignorance are more prevalent than gratitude and honor for what God has created. Yet, this night, in the midst of a most limited, unnatural environment, nature is readily admired and appreciated. Even

after 23 calendars, adversity has not yet scarred another heart with its bitter talons.

It seems that the quality of rehabilitation in CDOC is largely dependent upon the "range value of a sentence" rather than the "value of a person." What does it look like when someone serving time for a violent crime continues to behave violently for decades, has an overnight epiphany, and decides to hit the change stage? Within a few short years, this person is granted a second chance opportunity based solely on the range of a sentence rather than consistent fortitude of behavioral change. This chance could come for someone even if that sentence is a life without the possibility of parole.

How does the system determine the sincere depth of change within an individual if at any time anyone can demonstrate a few moments of good behavior, be deemed a leader and a mentor, and go home? Does real rehabilitation even matter at that point? Even more alarming, how does someone like that end up on equal footing or even higher ground than one who has demonstrated positive longevity for over a decade, long before constructive change

paradigms and mentorship was trending popular, before all the cameras and the spotlights, and has never stopped putting in the work?

Furthermore, if CDOC operates with the understanding that a sentence itself determines the value of a human being and therefore the quality of behavioral change, what then is the true fabric of the "evidence-based practices" vetting process of evaluating changed behavior? After all, the number one concern of the justice system is public safety. If there is no authentic measuring stick of true change within an individual and one is simply banking the safety of the public on mere "numbers," then why not give anyone a go at freedom? A gamble is a gamble.

In this CDOC climate, the anthem of corrections is "change" and its "mantras" are accountability, restorative justice, pro-action, personal achievement, self-empowerment, pro-social dynamic security, and normalization. No one is truly questioning the "methods" in ratio to "real change." Many have only aligned themselves with such programming to simply look the part.

In this CDOC climate, the anthem of corrections is "change" and its "mantras" are accountability, restorative justice, pro-action, personal achievement, self-empowerment, pro-social dynamic security, and normalization.

Regroup, rebuild, and reconnect

BY TROY BROWNLOW
SCF Contributor

What began as an informal Veterans Support Group in the fall of 2017 evolved into a full-fledged residential peer-led program by the spring of 2018. At Sterling Correctional Facility (SCF), former service members blazed a path on the precipice of normalization before “normalization” became vogue in the lexicon of CDOC. Most veterans are self-directed and recognize the utility of the peer-to-peer dynamic and the motivation it can create for personal transformation.

These shared ideals are the foundation for the Veterans In Prison Ending Recidivism (VIPER) program. The VIPER’s insistence on peer-to-peer accountability ensures that personal responsibility remains the focus for all members. What began as an informal Veterans Support Group in the fall of 2017 evolved into a full-fledged residential peer-led program by the spring of 2018. At SCF, former service members blazed a path on the precipice of normalization before “normalization” became vogue in the lexicon of CDOC. Most veterans are self-directed and recognize the utility of the peer-to-peer dynamic and the motivation it can create for personal transformation.

The mission is pretty straightforward: leave the prison drama behind and focus on the changes residents want to make to become the best version of themselves while working on

an exit strategy that can lead to the type of life they are meant to live.

Part of what establishes the uniqueness of the VIPER platform is that participants represent nearly every demographic found in the CDOC’s general population, meaning the program can work for and is accessible to everyone. Veterans, as well as other residents, are welcomed and encouraged to live in a community that strives to adhere to the common core values found in the principles of our military service (loyalty, duty, respect, selfless service, honor, integrity, and personal courage). VIPER residents are held to a higher standard and together we develop our own community standards that serve as guidelines for how we live and interact with one another. These community standards stand in place of the more traditionally accepted convict codes in prison. The VIPER community reveres traits like self-construction, introspection, communication, and mindfulness, as we continue to foster a consensus for pro-social attitudes and behaviors.

The VIPER program actively recruits and attracts likeminded individuals (both veterans and other patriots) who gravitate towards the positive and are on a trajectory of what we in the program commonly refer to as “some good guy stuff.”

We offer a diverse compilation of in-house resident-led groups that further promote the VIPER mission. These core

curriculum activities consist of: AA/NA Encounter groups, PTSD Narrative Therapy Groups (based on the Veterans Helping Veterans program), Yoga/Mindfulness class, Continuing Justice for Society class (a Restorative Justice/Victims Awareness course), Foundations of Fitness group, Veterans of Time Support/Advocacy group (for long term residents with multiple years of incarceration), and a Pre-Parole Board Hearings support group. The VIPER program also provides one-on-one re-entry planning and has partnered with the Remerg.com organization to augment and enhance this effort.

The VIPER program boasts a compendium of program inducements and innovations to support its members. These include a backyard Activities Center (open from 5:30 a.m. to midnight), complete with a community/leisure garden and a fitness center (weight machines, free weights, ab wheel, jump rope, foam roller, flex bands); an appliance loaner program (TVs, radios, coffee makers, etc.); on call 24/7 Mental Health Peer Assistance; and special events (4th of July, Veterans/Memorial Day celebrations, open houses, etc.)

Recently, the VIPER program has agreed to develop and participate in a couple of “sensory perception” pilot projects, including therapeutic cooling weighted blankets (promoting deeper sleep while decreasing anxiety), and a back patio wood burning fire



VIPER residents, from left to right: John Lopez, Melvin Newton, Paul Inman, with Troy Brownlow in front
[Photo courtesy of Troy Brownlow]

pit for special events and other occasions. In fact, we are already planning our first s’mores party. Plans are underway to introduce even more projects, activities, and groups. For individuals who like to contribute on a personal level, the VIPER program has several community service committees where residents’ skills and talents can be utilized and their service to others appreciated. There are volunteer opportunities in our VIPER community initiatives such as the garden committee, special events group, building maintenance committee, fitness development group, and our programs committee. All of these subgroups contribute to the overall objective and goals of the VIPER program.

To learn more about the VIPER Vision—REGROUP, REBUILD, AND RECONNECT—contact the Veterans Case Manager, Mrs. Rynek, in Unit 32. For veterans, Regroup, Rebuild, and Reconnect is a platform upon which we help our peers create new pathways for success. Being part of a community that is all inclusive and values the uniqueness of the individual while working together is an ethos that VIPER members embrace because it is the reason they stepped up to do what they could. The VIPER program invites you to consciously choose to live your best life today while you are preparing for tomorrow.

Left behind

BY CHRISTOPHER WEBB
AVCF Contributor

The images on the television screen are hard to ignore. American soldiers in full battle-rattle, flanked by armored fighting vehicles, staring down a desperate and unruly mob with weapons at the ready. Their mission is to secure the international airport in Kabul, Afghanistan while the U.S. government attempts to evacuate all remaining American citizens trapped in-country by the Taliban. According to the Pentagon, an estimated 12,700 people have been evacuated since August 14, 2021, but it is unclear how

many more remain.

For months, the Biden Administration assured the world that the withdrawal of all U.S. military forces from Afghanistan was not only necessary but could be facilitated without major issues. Americans were told repeatedly that the Taliban did not have the capability to gain control of the region once U.S. forces were withdrawn.

“Our intelligence indicated that it would take the Taliban months to seize Kabul,” President Biden said in an interview.

The Taliban conquered Kabul in four days.

A large percentage of the inmates at Arkansas Valley

Correctional Facility (AVCF) are veterans. Whether it is a laundry worker folding greens or a chaplain’s clerk handing out religious material, it is not difficult to notice that what is currently happening in the Middle East is affecting them all.

The moods vary from outspoken and indignant to somber and withdrawn. Some vets have no problem expressing their feelings, while others speak in hushed and guarded tones. One particular vet, when asked how he felt, looked off to the horizon, his eyes haunted, unable to speak, as if a part of his soul was left in Afghanistan, roaming its craggy, battle-scared mountains.

“It just feels like it was all for nothing,” said inmate Joseph Kimsey, a vet who served in Afghanistan as a Staff Sergeant with the 101st Airborne Division. “We need to ensure my brothers didn’t die in vain.” When asked about the current evacuation crisis, he said, “I just wish we could leave with some honor.”

Another veteran, who was part of Operation Mountain Thrust while serving as a Noncommissioned Officer with the 10th Mountain Division, lamented the damaging effect of the U.S. military’s chaotic withdrawal. “In Kandahar, we not only established one of the safest staging grounds in Afghanistan, we established

relationships with the locals and laid a foundation of goodwill. They weren’t happy to have us there at first, but over time we earned their trust and friendship.” When asked if the 20-year war was worth it, he responded, “A year ago it was, but now... no. All the work we did, all the goodwill we established, is gone.”

Inmate Dave Bean, a fully retired U.S. Air Force Colonel, summed up the situation in Afghanistan with a prediction. “The world is shaking its head at us now, but eventually the world will realize that America brought goodness to Afghanistan, while the Taliban brought nothing but evil. In time, these facts will be undeniable.”

G.R.A.A.C.E. It’s so much more than an acronym. Think about the actual word: grace. Grace gives us the ability to be generous or helpful, good-willed and merciful. It’s through grace that we’re able to take head-on what holds us back when it comes to gender, race, ability, awareness, culture, and equity.

We at G.R.A.A.C.E. Alliance believe, whole-heartedly, that everyone deserves to have an environment that is free of inequity (prejudice) and want to encourage a culture of inclusion and fairness for everyone.

Will you join us?

Feel free to contact us via email at doc_grace_alliance@state.co.us or your facility’s G.R.A.A.C.E. Alliance representative



It's a Wonderful Life (Prison Version)

BY BEN BLOOM
LVCF Contributor

We all know how the original version of "It's a Wonderful Life" goes with George Bailey. He comes from a fallen state then rediscovers the miracle of the gift of worth, hope, and even love.

Now, let me share another version of this story. Not every life is like Bailey's. No, there is another life, another world that many only hear about. Similar to Bailey and his fallen state, as you see at the beginning of the story, there are those who are in a fallen state but then placed into prison. These people carry many of the same burdens yet are quite different. Each cross borne is different for each person.

The story I share is what I've come to refer to as the "It's a Wonderful Life (Prison Version)."

This comes from experience and the perspective that "doing" my time is coming to accept my time. The search for how to make a home within my faith with a few friends,

and to give genuine love where there is no love. A genuine love to those who have known only heartache and shattered pasts that can be filled with anger, or sometimes simply feelings of being lost. I am serving a natural life sentence, yet the importance of this story can be applied to anyone doing time.

Each prisoner feels the depth of loneliness and despair and has entertained some form of the idea that they have been erased. They are questioning their very nature and beliefs, and they see the things they once knew disappearing. People they once held dear have come and gone. Many of the things we once thought we knew are now questioned. I've done 13 years finding myself, and I have been comparing my experience to the story of George Bailey and Paul from the Bible. I'm content in everything. I am looking at the question of how to be un-erased, yet beholding the sight of seeing God in the small things and watching His angels do their work.

Leaders

Continued from page 2

banker" or "I see myself at thirty selling my tech firm, and then exploiting a third world country until I make my first one hundred billion. Then I'll start a non-profit and blah, blah, blah..." No! We have the ability to affect how other animals and plants merely survive or thrive. We are powerful and we have a mission on our planet.

Gil Bailie, a founding member of The Colloquium on Violence and Religion, said, "Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and go do that, because what the world needs is people who have come alive." Purpose is not merely a job, it's a reason to wake up in the morning. It is a deep, fundamental human need that can evolve as we grow. When you are in line with a life of meaning, you will feel it. Others will see it and be affected by it. The universe opens up for you and the world seems much smaller and people seem much cooler. Take risks, follow your heart, help others, and be the change you want to see in our world.

Now, by being a purpose-driven person, the next step is to be a leader for others. Having character is a huge part of being a leader. We are all leaders, but most of us do not realize it. Through the butterfly effect, we influence our families, friends, communities, co-workers, and even random strangers. This is where trust comes in — when we trust others, and they trust us, our influence increases exponentially.

When we have the courage and compassion to take care of one another when our leaders fail, we become the leaders people want. Good leaders are loyal, loving, honest, and driven by integrity.

Socrates said, "Let him that would move the world first move himself." Use your purpose and power and let us lead this world into a better future. This brings me to the last part of leadership: affluence. Someone asked me last week, "What's one thing you want in your life?" Finally, I said I would want affluence. In the dictionary, affluence is described as "wealth, prosperity; a great quantity or abundance." For me, affluence is deeper than merely being rich in worldly goods. It means being so wealthy in spirit, soul, heart, and body that this wealth spreads out to the whole world through us. The path begins with purpose, which leads to leadership, and ends with affluence.

Use your power to help others create, love deeper, think more, and be more.

I want everyone who reads this to live lives of purpose. I want all of us to inspire others as leaders and have a life of influence and affluence. We have an opportunity right now to change, grow, and evolve into the people we want to be and the type of people this world needs. People who are warriors, lovers, educators, communicators, and leaders. As Malcolm X said, "The future belongs to those who prepare for it today."

Tune in to music, stories, information, and entertainment 24/7 from behind the walls on Inside Wire: Colorado Prison Radio - your radio station, by incarcerated producers for incarcerated listeners, across Colorado.



COLORADO PRISON RADIO

Inside Wire broadcasts 24/7 from studios at Limon, Sterling, Buena Vista, and Denver Women's Correctional facilities into every Colorado state prison and across the U.S. and beyond, from the Inside Wire app and coloradoprisonradio.com. Inside Wire is a program of the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative, in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Corrections. It's the first statewide prison radio station in U.S. history, and the first in the globe to reach from inside prisons to the public.

Ask your Programs staff for the Inside Wire Program Schedule... & tune in on your television.

An unexpected journey

BY RYAN ILIFF
AVCF Contributor

Although generating an idea for a CDOC program may occur spontaneously, tremendous effort is required to bring the concept to fruition. While sitting in an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting at Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility (AVCF) in August 2015, I realized that most of the participants had never worked any aspect of the program, especially the 12 Steps. I thought, "Would it be possible to create a way of working the 12 Steps that would be applicable in this environment?" I assumed it would be easy to create a program. However, the journey was a two-year process of struggle and frustration. In the end, the "New Beginnings 12 Step Workshop" was born. The first workbook was rough, but it was the start of something incredible.

The first 12 Step workshop began at AVCF in September 2017. It featured fifteen participants and a facilitator (me) who was completely clueless if it would work. The same question kept coming up: could a bunch of incarcerated addicts and alcoholics develop trust amongst themselves, not only confiding their truths to one another, but helping each other to become and stay sober? The first class was difficult. After a 20-week venture, 13 participants completed the

course. The graduates enjoyed a small celebration with cake and coffee after receiving official certificates.

Twenty participants started the second class in May 2018. This workshop was more organized. However, the warden of AVCF shut down the second venture after four short weeks. The official reason provided was, "Offenders are not allowed to lead other offenders." I was devastated and did not know how to proceed. We eventually fostered a plan. Simply make the facilitator complete the workshop with the participants so that he is not considered a leader. The proposal was approved. Fourteen of the 20 participants graduated at the conclusion of the 28-week workshop. The celebration became a "continuation" ceremony with cake, coffee, juice and certificates. The name change resulted from the realization that these participants were starting a new chapter of their life with sobriety. Afterwards, the program reverted back to the developmental phase to improve the workshop and workbook and incorporate the feedback and suggestions of past participants.

The third workshop, which began in April 2019, included the Narcotics Anonymous 12 Step Workshop, which made interest in joining the program skyrocket.

After a vital program inventory and review, the most recent 12 Step workshop began in October 2019. The program continued to improve and was recognized for its legitimacy and impact on the participants' lives. In November 2019, the opportunity to expand the program and possibly introduce it to other facilities became a reality. The 12 Step workshops recently concluded with a total of 23 participants, and these graduates are currently waiting to celebrate their continuation into sobriety.

This challenging journey is the greatest high I have ever experienced. I would like to extend a special thank you to every participant of our workshops. Your hard work, dedication and desire are the reasons for our workshops' success behind the walls. Without you, it would remain an idea. I hope this story can serve as an inspiration to everyone in DOC with great ideas. I encourage you to go for it, no matter how many times you face rejection. The only failures in life are the things you never try. If it does not work, that just means you have another opportunity to improve and try again.

If you are interested in our workshop at your facility, please contact your programs supervisor.

The Inside Report is looking to showcase your talents. Please reach out to your facility bureau chief for further information.





The craziest thing

BY BOB EISENMAN
IR Copyeditor

What is the wildest thing you have seen since you came to prison? I get that question a lot when I talk with new guys fresh off the bus as well as friends from the outside. I have seen quite a bit — not as much as some of you, perhaps — but enough that this question always gives me pause. I know everyone expects stories of riots or extreme violence. Maybe extortion or drug use. You know, the stuff we see in movies and read about in novels.

Sure, I have seen plenty of that over the years, but the wildest thing comes down to a single verbal argument that ended in a few swings that were more comical than violent. What was the subject of said argument? Was it money, or “hoods,” or anything else we see regularly? Nope. I witnessed two tattoo-covered, affiliated inmates get into a fight over whether crochet was superior to knitting. You think I am joking, I know. Absolutely not. Kit Carson, Delta-Bravo, 2009. Witnessed by many. Forgotten by none.

It is humorous now because it never went anywhere in terms of bad blood or retaliation. Both guys realized after their heated exchange how silly they were behaving, and we all had a good laugh. But it brings to light a bigger issue, which is the extent to which we can sometimes allow these walls to get to us. Would that argument have happened on the outside? I sure hope not. If so, things are going even more downhill than my friends and family are letting on. Remind me to check with a few nursing homes or knitting circles, though. I suppose you never know. But things like that happen when we allow the walls around us (literal and figurative) to dictate too much of our lives.

That fight, along with the thousands of wild things we witness every day in here, is a bigger indicator of how we can lose focus. We are incarcerated. For a variety of reasons that emerge from as many stories as there are DOC numbers, we are away from our families, friends, and outside lives. We get so caught up in in this different world we live in that we often allow it to push us to new lengths. Sometimes, we feel like we are going to snap. And then, that day comes where the tiniest thing simply pushes us over that edge.

What am I getting at? Find an outlet. Find another way to release that tension. Go for a walk. Take up yoga. Meditate. Talk to somebody. Because we often feel like we are alone and going through this journey by ourselves. Even those of us who have support on the outside feel this way. You are not alone.

The longer I spend living behind bars, the more I realize how similar we all are. We all have our “stuff.” Everyone has baggage. Some of us more than others, but it is all there. So reach out. Find something to help you ease that tension of prison life. A hobby of some sort. I suppose you could even take up knitting or crochet, but tread lightly. Some of those guys take that shit entirely too serious.

The Americans with Disabilities Act

BY MATTHEW MOUNTS
FCF Contributor

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), known as 29 CFR part 35 et sequence, was ratified in 1991. It covers a disability, whether physical or mental, that impacts major life activities of an individual. Across CDOC, implementing the ADA for its intended beneficiaries becomes particularly complicated.

Although there are many disabilities/issues that may fall within the purview of the ADA, the case of Montez vs. Governor Hickenlooper, 92-cv-00870-JLK, which affects CDOC and the inmates incarcerated in the system, addressed only four of the possible concerns: diabetes, vision, mobility, and hearing issues. The ADA subsection §35.104 provides an exhaustive list of many other circumstances

that are relevant in prison settings. For example, the category “Major Life Activities,” defined as “functions such as caring for oneself, performing manual tasks, walking, seeing, hearing, speaking, breathing, learning, and working.” This section of the ADA also lists certain diseases that are considered to be disabilities whether or not you have symptoms. A short list includes lupus, multiple sclerosis, cancer, HIV, heart disease, and certain learning disabilities like dyslexia.

The Montez case produced a more specific definition for disability, stating that a disability is a physical or mental issue that 1) has existed for at least six months; 2) impacts a major life activity; and 3) is not expected to improve. The bigger issue is that just because an issue/disease is

listed as a “disability” does not mean the person needs an accommodation.

Every facility in CDOC has a contact person called the ADA Inmate Coordinator (AIC). Their job is to work with people who have a disability and make sure that they have “reasonable accommodations” so they are not discriminated against and have access to programs.

The process for accessing these possible accommodations is pretty straightforward. If you: 1) had the disability prior to incarceration; 2) feel you need an accommodation; or 3) have had some troubles you think may fall under the umbrella of the ADA, you simply fill out a request for accommodations (available from your case manager). Alternatively, you can write a letter to the facility AIC

or write the AIC at CDOC headquarters (postage free), and they will research your status and get back to you. The response may be to grant you what you ask, deny what you asked, or simply request more information about either the disability or the accommodation to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

The whole purpose of the ADA in prisons is to ensure that each person regardless of their disabilities has equal access to programs, education, rehabilitative programs, and health needs while incarcerated. If you feel your ADA needs are not being addressed, you can have outside doctors forward your medical records to your facility’s medical providers and address the issue with them at the time the records arrive, and resubmit the paperwork.

From the heart

Continued from page 1

began the concept realized it could make a great difference. Not only for the people the program helps, but also the men that are a part of it.

“A Gift From the Heart” started out by collecting finished products that men were crocheting, such as stuffed animals, hats, scarves, baby blankets, and Afghans, among others. If they made it, it became part of a donation to the American Cancer Society, Colorado Children’s Hospital, VA Nursing Homes, National Center on Shaken Baby Syndrome, and many other charities. The men participating looked at it as the more, the better, and soon they were donating to other programs. It all makes

a difference. After making personal donations, they chose the name “A Gift from the Heart” to give the program more credence. Twenty-six years later, the name is still there, and it continues to represent the desire to do something for the victims of all crimes. Because of this mission, “A Gift From the Heart” has seen great change and has even been turned over to CDOC. Staff involvement has helped the program grow even more, and the program participants cannot thank staff enough for all that they have done to help the program reach its goals.

Each year, the program crochets and gives out 150 Christmas stockings and fills them with good stuff for kids in foster homes, shelters, and wherever there is a need. They also took on

the VA home this year and have received many kind words in return. Even with the difficulties that COVID has brought, participants were able to do even more. The team crocheted almost 300 stockings and donated hats and scarves to a young lady who gave them to people experiencing homelessness through the program that she started called “Kids Care Too.” That is what the program is all about, and the joy of giving touches us all.

“A Gift From the Heart” not only helps the people that need a little cheering up, it also helps all of the men who join the program. They grow in ways that will help them when they return to their life outside of prison. The hope is that they will continue growing and becoming the good people they know they can and

want to be. It is important to know that without their support, the program would not be operating at the level that it does today. A big thank you to everyone.

Over the years, they have reached out to many places to see if they would be willing to help provide such things as yarn, candy, and toys. To date, they partner with over 20 churches, stores, candy companies, and other businesses, some of which have been helping for the past 13 years. Each year, more and more people reach out to get involved.

“A Gift From the Heart” hopes that readers will find it in their hearts to start a program like this and discover ways to give back. They will see that it truly does help you change and grow.



Shining light on a dark place

BY JOHN RED CLOUD
IR Journalist

Checking out. Giving up. Throwing in the towel. Suicidal ideation can sound relatively innocuous and can even go unnoticed. Mental health in prison is incredibly important. Scores of people are kept from society and are isolated from lifelines such as friends and family. Many are staring down years, and in some cases, decades. That prospect can overwhelm one’s

resolve. Hunger strikes are not uncommon. From jails to prisons, we have all seen a person in the “turtle suit.”

There are few lonelier places than sitting in a cell with years of incarceration to look forward to. Statistics from CDOC in a June 30, 2021 report indicate that approximately 33% of male residents and 79% of female residents are listed as having “mental health needs.” CDOC has 24/7 mental health crisis response for individuals who

may experience difficulties and would benefit from intervention. However, while engagement in mental health programs can be requested, it is not mandatory.

Thanks to NFL wide receiver A.J. Brown, a broader discussion around mental health is getting a boost. Brown posted to his social media accounts thoughts he had about taking his own life. “Depression is real.

Anxiety is real,” Brown wrote. “I’m kind of nervous even to be saying this, but a year ago from today, I thought about taking my own life. I had no more hope for better days and everything was going wrong for me,” he continued.

New England Patriots’ tight end Jonna Smith supported Brown. “People don’t really deal with their emotions, and

I think that it just continues to weigh them down, and put them in a dark place.” The recurring message is encouraging people to talk to somebody. Anybody. Getting help starts by speaking up. Put in a kite to mental health and share your thoughts. Discuss your emotions and coping skills. It could change your trajectory and inspire others to do the same.

Statistics from CDOC in a June 30, 2021 report indicate that approximately 33% of male residents and 79% of female residents are listed as having “mental health needs.”

Coping in prison

BY WILLIAM FREEMIRE
IR Writing Corps

Coping in prison? Why not live? We could start with acceptance and make peace with our current situation. This would mean not giving up on freedom but surrendering to our present circumstances. To do this, we need to embrace forgiveness of self and all who are involved. This may take practice, but it is possible. Releasing ourselves from this poisonous cup of bitterness requires patience, like any life-altering step.

To get things we have never had, we have to do things we have never done. Make room for mistakes, though. Mistakes are our friends and greatest teachers. As we learn new things, let's allow mistakes to be part of the process.

As this burden is being lifted, we stop focusing on what we have lost and see what we have gained: time. Time we did not have before. Time to use for positive change. On the streets we were so busy living for the world that many of us forgot about ourselves. Who am I? What do I want? What are my needs? These are some big questions, and when we focus on everyone and everything else, we forget to focus on ourselves.

Einstein said, "You cannot solve a problem with the same level of thinking that created it." So, let us get elevated. Not medical card elevated, but higher-thinking elevated so we can get on top of these problems. The path you take to the summit is unique from the path that I may take. The one ingredient that we will all share as we succeed is getting comfortable with being uncomfortable.

In challenging our thinking, habits, and philosophies, we can feel out of place, which is OK. To get things we have never had, we have to do things we have never done. Make room for mistakes, though. Mistakes are our friends and greatest teachers. As we learn new things, let's allow mistakes to be part of the process. Tell yourself that you will make 20 mistakes in the next challenge that you pursue. If you make all 20 mistakes, make 20 more, as long as you learn from them.

Prison may have walls, but thinking transcends all barriers. Freedom is a state of mind, a gift that you can unearth. Stop coping and start living. It is a choice that starts with you.

An expectation of greatness

BY BRANDON W. MOSS
DCC Bureau Chief

Normalization is not a new concept. This became clear in a recent interview with a group of long-term CDOC residents. These men all served time around when Ron Lyle—a former inmate who became a world-class heavyweight boxer fighting the likes of Jose Luis Garcia, Oscar Bonavena, Earnie Shavers, George Foreman, and even Muhammad Ali—served time in Colorado. Those participating in the interview included Freddie Glenn, a one-time death row inmate; Jeremiah Cushon, a member of the prison community shortly after Ron Lyles' stay; and William "Mad Man" Campbell, a boxer who served time with Lyle.

In 1973, Campbell was an up-and-coming boxer who brought his talent from the streets to the boxing rings in Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility (CTCF) and Shadow Mountain, the only state penitentiaries in Colorado's system at the time. Campbell quickly rose to glory, climbing his way to the top of a rigorous group of individuals in the sport and earning the nickname "Mad Man." He would eventually challenge then-champion Henry "King" Constantine for the outright Welterweight title, winning by knockout.

But Campbell cannot attribute

his greatness to just hard work, dedication, and skill. The behind-the-scenes support was a huge key to success. At the time, Lieutenant Cliff Maddox was the head of the recreation department and staff leader of the Colorado State Prison boxing program. Maddox, and many

year, to bring entertainment and excitement to a dangerous and sometimes violent environment. "It had guys looking forward to something," Glenn said. The efforts of staff members to reach out to the community helped to reintegrate residents through fight cards, inmate and family

Maddox also allowed the two prisons a chance to show their best against each other and often invited inmates from the women's prison to participate in the festivities. "You just wanted to be a part of it," said Cushon.

These examples of how the yard used to be are the outside appearance made possible only by constant hard work. Inmates held each other accountable because of what they could lose by one slipup. People like Campbell, Cushon, and Glenn wanted to prove they could be something not only by showing self-worth, but also by taking every opportunity to help someone else. In a joint statement, they said, "This state of mind was widespread and it was an expectation of greatness. If I could help you commit a crime, why wouldn't I help you do something positive?"

That is what greatness is all about—growing and helping others grow. The three men challenge the men around them to stay productive, keep giving, and believe in themselves. An appropriate adage about leaving an impression on someone is that the last thing you say to them is the first thing they remember about you. So, in the case of Freddie Glenn, remember these words. "Being in prison makes it harder, not impossible."

"...the last thing you say to them is the first thing they remember about you."

other staff members at that time, had a very contagious mindset, believing that sports brought people together. Maddox not only pushed his programs, he spearheaded them. Because of Maddox's efforts, William "Mad Man" Campbell, along with others, were taken from prison and allowed to train and fight all around Colorado in different venues including "The Old Ice Arena" and the Denver Elks Club.

Jeremiah Cushon and Freddie Glen remember how staff made it possible for incarcerated athletes like Campbell to compete outside of prison walls. "The stakes were higher," Cushon said, regarding the programs' security concerns. "It was trust," said Glenn. Maddox was part of a culture that allowed basketball, softball, soccer, football, and boxing groups to come in from the streets, all 52 weeks of the

member parties, and even sports groups like the Air Force college football team coming to play the semi-pro team at Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF).

During these events, the prison community would walk the campus-style prison walkways to the prison bank, gathering red and green plastic money chips to buy a meal and popcorn from the prison restaurant to enjoy the game with friends. All the while, the prison radio station would broadcast the different events live with play-to-play commentary and a PA announcer called the games for the crowd. "They knew the value of sports," Cushon said, as he reminisced back to the time when he would sit with Glenn and watch boxers like Campbell. They would have watched Campbell box on the Saturday night fight card hours after a basketball game against Denver's best prospects.

Gardening at SCF: A work of heart

BY KEITH BROOKS
SCF Contributor

Correctional facilities are places of legalism — strict obedience to rules and laws. Sterling Correctional Facility is CDOC's largest prison, housing nearly 2,500 inmates, and can serve as a classic example of this. There are no mountains dominating the landscape like BVCF, nor lush vegetation in the surrounding area like FCF. Huge walls of concrete are all one is guaranteed to see in the life of a sentence served at SCF.

Imagine my surprise when I arrived at this and found a lone man, Timothy Nicholls, tending the dirt and sand, prepping it for the gardening season. Nicholls, it turns out, is a man of unabashed faith. He arrived at SCF in 2007 when it was considered to be an extremely violent yard. The culture shock of being locked up did not dissuade his vision for service. While SCF underwent drastic changes in management philosophies trending with normalization practices, Nicholls thought it would be prudent to start a garden using empty plots of dirt and sand. Former Warden Matthew Hansen gave Nicholls the green light to be a green-thumb in 2015. Nicholls' primary motivation was to begin a relationship with the

outside community by giving back.

The Cooperating Ministries of Logan County (CMLC) provided the perfect avenue for Nicholls' idea. Every spare plot on the southeast and southwest yards housing medium custody state prisoners is devoted to gardening. Nicholls' Volunteer Prison Community Gardening Project (VPCGP) has expanded beyond his dedication to giving back. Residents serving sentences have taken up more than a casual interest in their plots, as the yard is bustling with groups cultivating the season's young crop. Nicholls' seminal act has spread organically and inspired others, giving the administration's goal of normalization a place to roost.

What Nicholls did was remarkable because it marked a step outside of the status quo — legalism. Tools, seeds, and gardening materials are not distinctive features of typical conditions in confinement. This is an integration of restorative justice as a guiding principle.

Nicholls has seen a shift in the prison community since groups have engaged in the VPCGP. This shift in culture was noticed by volunteers involved in Kairos, a religious program, as they prepared a letter of support to

SCF's administration citing articles about the psychological benefits of gardening in prison. As Nicholls sees it, though inmates might not know who he is or why he started this, residents here have an opportunity to give back to the community. He is amazed at how diverse the volunteers are.

Executive Director of CMLC, Richelle Greenwood, has been involved with the VPCGP since the second season of the first established garden. Greenwood wrote current SCF Warden, Jeff Long, saying, "This unique collaboration is undeniably worthwhile. The benefits of reading material, teamwork, commitments, problem solving, decision making, patience, learning the processes, and execution of said knowledge gained, as well as the responsibility to manage and maintain these gardens are all valuable life skills which develop a sense of personal pride and self-confidence. While participants are learning self-awareness, team building, and gardening skills, they are also utilizing restorative justice and giving back to the community that surrounds them. The Garden Project creates an absolute environment for many to thrive, for those that created it and for those that benefit from the creators." Indeed, the VPCGP does more than

change the landscape of the yard, it refreshes the sense of duty that is the bedrock of society. "It's a "win-win," Greenwood said.

CMLC did not hesitate to support allowing SCF prisoners to help local households experiencing food insecurity and used its own funds to purchase all the tools and materials needed to give prisoners a legitimate opportunity to grow crops. Even a local welding shop designed,

lack supervision. Both Nicholls and Greenwood would like to see the quality of the soil get better and an increase in gardening grounds. This would enhance CMLC's ability to meet the needs of their clients.

The other source of produce comes from grocery rescue items. While this serves an important interest to reduce waste and tackle hunger, items often arrive in a degraded

This is an integration of restorative justice as a guiding principle.

built, and donated large soil shifters in true community fashion. Hansen permitted an entire prison community to promote cultivation, labor, and fruits and vegetables of the Spirit. Nicholls has enabled his peers to engage in restorative justice without the slightest hint of vanity. It would have been understandable for Nicholls to have given up this project because the facility did not officially create a gardening job nor receive credit. This activity took over empty plots of dirt, sand, and weeds. It resides in the hearts of men, and is as normal as cutting grass. Worth it!

However, sand and dirt can be fickle soil, yielding unpredictable crops. SCF has more areas that can be used for gardening but

state. Produce from VPCGP arrives garden fresh. There is a major difference in nutrition and providing wholesome food. Gardening probably was not on Long's to-do list when he took office, but perhaps he might consider expansion and allow Nicholls to take a more formal approach to helping CMLC get fresh food to vulnerable populations experiencing food insecurity or hunger.

Hopefully, this is a sign of more natural restorative justice practices to come. Much can be done learning from the example Nicholls and Hansen set, without fanfare and unnecessary legalism. Natural and normal are two peas in the same pod and VPCGP accomplished all of the above.

Crushing the Game...

A league of their own

BY LEIGHA ACKERSON
LVCF Contributor

You know it is spring time when you hear the crack of the bat at La Vista Correctional Facility (LVCF). It is softball season. The hype and enthusiasm is all from the love of the game. Faces on the field, and those spectating in the yard, display the enjoyment from coming together for a sport. Whether showcasing sportsmanship or mentorship, there is competition and fun in the air. Everyone is like-minded in wanting to have a good game and fun in the sun –incarcerated as well as staff.

The tone is set weeks in advance when potential captains begin scoping the facility for athletic talent. Many have been playing softball in prison for years and know that sometimes talented players are found in the most unexpected places. No corner of the facility is skipped over. Their search reaches every room of every housing unit. The hype builds as the potential captains collect the names of those planning to play. They discuss and then begin to get an idea of who will play specific positions. Competitive smirks creep across faces, and game plans for victory begin to take root. The excitement

is contagious.

Because it is friendly competition, those with more skill and practice bring others to the gym to train for game day. Exercises and stretches are exchanged, accompanied by suggestions to eat bananas or buy muscle rub. As game day approaches, friendships are formed in unlikely places.

The recreation officer, Rusovik, has been coordinating the softball games for over six years. He absolutely loves softball season. “The games are hilarious, sometimes,” he said. “It’s really fun. It’s fun to get out there.” In Rusovick’s first year of high school,

he played baseball. He struggled with hitting. When he plans these games, he says, “I want it to be a real kind of thing, like it would be on the outs.” He advises the teams so the talent is balanced and the games are exciting. He says, “When it’s good, they want to win; they want to compete.” He enjoys the games most while on the edge of his seat in the bottom of the ninth.

What makes the games fun is the sportsmanship shown by those here in LVCF. Chants of “hustle, hustle” hit the air as bases are run while Henderson yells next batter and person on deck, “After Ace is Ashley!” The

pitcher, Cayla Cushman, pauses the game to help who she was pitching to. Against what the crowd wanted, she helped the

game and her motivation behind it. She would prefer the game to be close rather than slaughtering the opposing team. “If you



Cayla Cushman credits her dad with instilling qualities of sportsmanship in her. “My dad just taught me to always lift people up.”

[Photo courtesy of LVCF IR Bureau]



Back row, left to right: Brittany Lyons, Raelynn Lewis, Kelsey Capps, Alexandra Spangler, Leigha Ackerson, Christine Lewis, Hillary Abeyta, SenaRah Martinez, Rebekah Acosta, Madelyn Johnson, Sharon Martinez, Julie Baumgardner, Kambria Zentz
Front row, left to right: Ashley Reaksecker, Lindsey Ward, Stephanie Hernandez-Mata, Cayla Cushman, Ariel Scott, Ivory Brinkley, Tamara Specht, Shayla Meza

[Photo courtesy of LVCF IR Bureau]



Back row, left to right: Diedra Motta, Angalique Romero, Hilda Gutierrez, Tore Harrison, Roxanne Hill, Kimberly Crabtree, Brittany Nobles, Stephanie Jaramillo, Susan Bergeron, Madeleine Boone, Shawna Cowden, Hillary Stout
Front row, left to right: Natasha Swenson, Stephanie OtanoLopez, Lucille Johnson, Amy Schroeder, Crystal Lucas, Samara Epstein, Claudia Dimas, Anna Hernandez-Gonzolaz

[Photo courtesy of LVCF IR Bureau]

opposing team’s batter and made both teams remember why they love playing softball.

Where teamwork is found, confidence is found. Cushman says, “I like any moment in the game because as long as we’re always having fun and learning something, it’s awesome. It takes us out of this place. It’s a comfortable place. We can come together and be a team.” She first tried softball at 13 years old and loved it. With an older sister who excelled in track and a younger brother (nicknamed Little Peanut) who excelled in hockey, when Cushman found softball, she says “It gottension out that I finally had something I was good at.” Her dad was a big influence with teaching her sportsmanship and teamwork. “My dad just taught me to always lift people up. If I was doing something wrong, looked stupid, or was going to hurt myself, I would want someone to help me,” she says when reflecting on her initiative to pause the

slaughter them, it’s not a game,” Cushman said. “It gives me something to look forward to. Something that makes me feel more confident in myself. Because I’m still good at this, so when I get out, I can do a league game with my dad.” Echoing this, her teammate, Mara, said, “It makes me feel good about myself. All my accomplishments are from my time incarcerated, so playing these games, because my son plays baseball, it starts a good conversation.”

Sports bring people together. What sports mean to each player and recreation officer varies, but with the excitement in the air and the smell of the grass, we find more in common. Although stepping up to home plate takes confidence and striking out takes humility, America’s greatest game takes teamwork and good weather. And those incarcerated in LVCF have stepped up to the plate and formed a league of their own.

BIPOC (Black Indigenous People of Color)

BY SAMUEL KASE WHITE
IR Operations Manager

What is a BIPOC athlete?

As you will find the term “BIPOC athletes” (which is pronounced “buy pock”) in recent articles and publications related to sports, it is important to understand the context of this phrase.

BIPOC is an acronym that stands for “Black, Indigenous and People of Color.” One of the earliest references has been accredited to social media in a

2013 tweet. Many people have mistakenly assumed that the term means “bisexual people of color” or “biracial people of color.” The term was coined to move away from descriptions such as “marginalized” and “minority” that are missing the people or humanity component in their descriptions. Though this phrase addresses this concern, it is best practice to refer to the person’s specific ethnicity if

possible.

One of the complaints of using the term “BIPOC athlete” is that it “lumps” people of color who are athletes into a single group, not accounting for their individual voice, experience, or background.

So, when you encounter this term in the future—or perhaps you thought it meant something else—now you know the facts.

Fitness Corner Facts

The burpee was developed by American physiologist Royal Huddleston Burpee, who developed the exercise at the YMCA Bronx in 1939 as part of his PhD thesis. Burpee was looking for a quick and simple way to assess fitness in ordinary individuals.

The burpee is one of the most complete exercises in terms of the use of muscular mobilizers and stabilizers. Many variations of the original 4-point exercise have been developed and evolved, including the standard 6-point CrossFit burpee, which contains a push-up in the middle and a plyometric jump at the end.

Freedom in motion



[Back row left to right] Deidra Motta, Rebekah Acosta, Yarimeth Bernal, Hailey Dagg, Crystal Lucas, Stephenie Deverick, Kim Vasquez, Joy Tomlinson
[Front row left to right] Chamell Cole, Arianna Sanchez, Candice Lampley, Johana Melchiorre, DTBF founder Lucy Wallace, Claudia Barajas, Lakiesha Vigil, Ariel Scott

[Photo courtesy of Sydney White - IR Bureau Chief Advisor]

BY CLAUDIA BARAJAS
LVCF Contributor

I am a Dance to Be Free (DTBF) certified lead instructor and one of the liaisons for DTBF here at La Vista Correctional Facility (LVCF). DTBF was created by the amazing LVCF volunteer Lucy Wallace. Wallace gives incarcerated women the opportunity to be mentally free and heal their trauma. By doing so, they begin to believe in themselves. DTBF teaches women that it is OK to be themselves and let go of the chains of insecurity, abuse, and trauma. The program helps our population find a healthy outlet for stress. Most importantly, DTBF teaches women to dance with emotion and heal while

they dance. I have experienced this healing through dancing firsthand.

DTBF has been a blessing in disguise for me. Coming to prison is one of the hardest trials I have endured. However, it has helped make me the woman I am now.

Before I started dancing, I was mentally imprisoned for decades. I have been dancing for about four years of my incarceration, and I have found that it makes me free, emotionally and physically. I love the feeling of confidence that dancing brings. I've finally found a sense of belonging. I've found my identity and my autonomy. I have been an introvert most of my life, and

dancing allows me to open up and to feel free of judgment.

I have been an amputee for 25 years now and never thought I could feel complete again. I cannot explain how I feel when I am teaching a dance, seeing the look in students' eyes, and watching how they let go. That is the best payment I can get. I plan to continue dancing when I get out. I want to teach teenagers and women to find their self-worth, and guide them to a healthy and healing outlet.

When I came to prison my life was falling apart. I left three kids behind and I was at my lowest. I felt like I deserved only the worst. I punished myself for a long time, trying several outlets that worked

temporarily, and then when they stopped working, my self-esteem got to its lowest. Then I started showing up at dance and it was a game changer. I made a commitment to myself and danced, danced, and danced until I realized that dance was the best therapy for me. A friend of mine, Rebekah Acosta, said that dance is more than just a program she is part of. "If I'm being honest, I get a sense of community and leadership when I dance, and a chance to show other broken women to accept themselves," she said.

Another dancer, Hailey Dagg, said, "I dance because I like helping women work through their trauma, and by doing so, I am working on my

own. #DTBF4life." Every week Chamell Cole looks forward to sharing the sisterhood of dance. Crystal Lucas loves the expression, freedom, and fellowship of dancing. Lakiesha Vigil says she dances for the emotions and the encouragement.

Here at LVCF, recreation staff are amazing and very supportive of DTBF and any programs that help the empowerment of women. I will continue to empower and uplift women by sharing the message of healing through dance.

A special thanks to Lucy Wallace for making it possible for us to be leaders and mentors inside these walls.

Memorial

Continued from page 1

of that tragedy are captured in the motion picture "Only the Brave," and the book, "Granite Mountain." As is common in the world of CrossFit, members created an intense workout to give space for people around the world to honor these brave men who sacrificed their lives in the service of others. Such workouts are known as "Hero WODs," and give participants the opportunity to reflect, suffer, and push to be their best in honor of those who gave their all. The WODs are never easy, but they are always graced with the dignity and gratitude of those who perform them.

Over the three-day weekend, 73 residents participated in

the grueling workout. The WOD consisted of 30 air squats, 19 power cleans at 135 pounds, 7 strict pull-ups, and a 400-meter run, all performed

as quickly as possible for six rounds (modifications to these prescriptions were performed as needed). The number scheme corresponds to those men who

died fighting for something other than their own good. The six rounds and 30 squats are for the day and the month the men died, the 19 power

cleans represent the heroes themselves, and the 7 pull-ups and 400-meter run are for the time of day they were found (7:40 pm). Organizers read this numerical emphasis to participants throughout the weekend. They also read the following excerpt from "The Essentials of Fire Fighting:"

"This is dedicated to the members of that unselfish organization of men and women who hold devotion of duty above personal risk, who count on sincerity of service above personal comfort and convenience, who strive unceasingly to find better ways of protecting the lives, homes, and property of their fellow citizens from the ravages of fire and other disasters... THE FIREFIGHTERS OF ALL NATIONS."



Participants look on while encouraging an athlete to keep pushing, thus exemplifying community

[Photo courtesy of Four Mile Correctional Facility]

Raising funds through recovery and redemption

BY RYAN ILIFF
AVCF Contributor

On October 16, 2021 the ABOVE! Recovery program and RF2 CrossFit Xrucible program held a fundraiser at the Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility for the Recovery Peer Coaching Program. The intent was to raise the necessary funds for the training and certification of (10) men at AVCF. The event was a success, and had it not

been for the community volunteers, the event would not have the tremendous impact in and out of prison that it did. The total raised was \$1900.00. In collaboration with The Phoenix Multisport and Springs Recovery Connection, the event raised a total of \$1,200 inside and \$700.00 dollars in the community at various CrossFit locations.

Volunteers for the event included Dan Hugill, at the time, a representative of

The Phoenix Multisport; Dominique Knowles, Jared Dominguez, and Julia Brownfield from Springs Recovery Connection; representing RF2 was Mike Egelbercht, Sofia Lind, and Nicole Gordon; Chaplain Larry Walker from Grace Without Borders Ministries (Community Partner); Chaplain Howie Close of Woodmen Valley Chapel (Community Partner); Lindsay Gouty, Staff Sponsor at ABOVE! Recovery;

Crystal Montoya, former Staff Sponsor at Xrucible CrossFit; and Robin Garrelts, current Mental Health Counselor at SCCF.

Editor's Note: This accompanies the article, "The road back to redemption: The Xrucible returns to AVCF," originally printed in Volume 3, Issue 1

Bragging Rights

Favor for the greats at FCF

BY ANTHONY RAY VALDEZ
IR Journalist

Fremont Correctional Facility celebrated Memorial Day weekend with live music, Murph participation numbers in the 90s, and competitions for some old school bragging rights!

The five-year legacy of Fowl Balls took the bracket for the eastside and achieved their second championship for the one-pitch softball tournament. Head coach Evan Lawlor and assistant coach Ricardo Cortez gave the MVP to George Peters and his flowing dreads for his offensive hits and defensive skills in the outfield. The MVP may have been mistaken for Captain Jack Sparrow from the way he navigated the outfield like the seven seas.

Tyler Groce had the infield on lock while he played shortstop and was the designated ball handler. The westside champions, the Warriors,

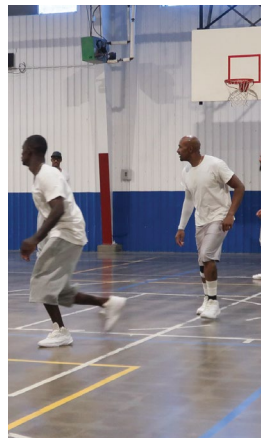
played tough through the windy Memorial Day. Head coach Robert Fitzpatrick kept pitcher Roy Saldivar on the mound as he served up meatballs to his teammates. Heavy hitters from the Warriors cranked placement hits throughout the tournament, leading them to victory.

Handball champions Alejandro Rojas-Bravo and Jorge Chavez-Florez, from the eastside yard, ran the court with devastating ambition. They took the leaderboard with grueling dedication to unreturnable shots.

Three-on-three basketball champions for the westside, Daniel Wright, Quenon Glaspy, and Deddric Hill, stood on the first-place podium with an easy sweep as no contenders stepped up to challenge them. For the eastside, the Losers took first place against Team 1. The Losers — Ronald Bryant, Desmond

Martin, and William Jackson— glazed the paint, delivering shots like a happy-hour bartender. Team 1 — Lysander Harvey, Maurice Martin, and Kuahtleko Garcia — was no joke on steals and defense, but just couldn't pull it out.

Tennis gave a racket of a time to spectators as Ricardo Cortez won the tournament and his second championship for the weekend. Fifteen contenders participated in the tennis tournament, creating scheduling conflicts as many of the athletes went from other sports and activities. Cortez's athleticism and knowledge of sports had him busy all weekend, with judging, setting up, and playing. Congrats to Cortez for the hard work in assisting the other competitions and giving a stellar performance.



Top left: The Warriors

Top right: Team 1- Lysander Harvey pictured

Second left: Metal found on the yard

Second right: Roybal and company laying it down

Middle left: The Fowl Balls reach for the sky

Middle right: In the park Fowl Ball home run

Bottom left: The Losers 3 on 3 basketball champions

Bottom center: Handball champions

Bottom right: Ricardo Cortez caught racketeering



[Photos courtesy of IR]

Colorado Territorial Correctional Facility competitiveness and camaraderie

BY JUAN CANDELARIA
CTCF Contributor

Every month, CTCF has an event calendar that includes a Holiday Event Day. With each event, winners receive tokens for 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place as well as a free picture for 1st place. These events are pickle-ball, Ping-Pong, bocci-ball, bowling, cornhole, handball, and 3-point shooting, too.

Every one of these events bring the competitiveness and camaraderie out in everyone from all ages. On occasion, we pull out the speakers from the band room and listen to music all day.

The big events, such as soccer, 3-on-3 basketball, softball, and full-court basketball (which got canceled due to COVID), are the

The soccer game was a shutout. The Barcelonas beat the UnderDogs 3-1. It started out as an evenly-matched game, but

two days, 25 participants gave it their all while everyone on the fences and in the pile cheered them on. There was a Top 10

here. The Bombers had made a huge comeback to rally to get the lead. In the bottom of the seventh, the Mon-Stars were up to bat. The top of their line-up came up with no outs. After a walk, the sweetest pitch came, and the batter swung and hit it out to the concrete... a walk-off homerun. Game over. The Mon-stars defended their title again... 17-16.

CTCF is about to have our first 5-on-5 flag football season. Be sure to encourage your facility to keep as many sports and activities going and let IR know about them. It's all about the "Bragging Rights."

Be sure to encourage your facility to keep as many sports and activities going and let IR know about them. It's all about the "Bragging Rights."

main attractions.

The big 3-on-3 basketball is the game where all the "ballers" come out to show off their skills. The undefeated champs, the UnderDogs, won again against their rivals.

Barcelonas' skills and stamina won the game.

For the first time, we held a CrossFit challenge. Not like the big ones everyone is used to, but it was as competitive and brutal as any other competition. Over

finisher group picture, a rare treat in here.

The closeout of the summer was a softball game that came down to the wire. The last inning started 16-15 between the two most competitive teams

Bragging Rights

Official Murph host for 2022

BY CHRISTOPHER WEBB
AVCF Contributor

On Memorial Day, May 30th, 2022, RF2 CrossFit XRUCIBLE at Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility (AVCF's CrossFit Box) hosted "The Murph Challenge," a Hero WOD designed specifically to honor the life, service, and sacrifice of Navy SEAL Lt. Michael Murphy.

In years past at AVCF, the Murph was completed in modified ways due to staff shortages and COVID lockdowns. This consisted of incarcerated people swapping the running aspect of the Challenge with line-over burpees or other endurance workouts performed inside the housing unit.

The grueling aspect of the Murph is what drives Damien Arguello, XRUCIBLE's lead trainer and gym manager. Affectionately known to everyone in the Box as "Grandpa," Arguello (a certified CF-L2 trainer) was the driving force in not only bringing RF2 CrossFit to AVCF, but in gaining the official endorsement of the Murph Foundation, clearing the way for AVCF to join Trinidad Correctional Facility as the only two prisons in CDOC authorized to do so.

Arguello discovered CrossFit in 2009 while reading an article at Limon Correctional Facility (LCF). The Filthy Fifty workout



Joshua Smith and Damian Arguello from AVCF XRUCIBLE

[Photo courtesy of Christopher Webb]

was his first attempt at a WOD, but he admits that he did not perform it very well. Still, he was inspired to continue, developing and conditioning his routine along the way, garnering strange looks from the other guys on the weight pile as he performed his workouts alone. Every WOD pushed him to new limits of endurance, but it was the Hero WODs that truly resonated with him. This routine provided an opportunity to "beat himself up" as a penance for the wrongs he had committed in his past,

and, in his own way, honor the people he had harmed.

His solo act did not last long. Before he knew it, a group of 15 incarcerated people had gathered around him on the weight pile: the beginnings of an unofficial class. This was met with mixed reviews. Politically speaking, LCF was a different animal in 2009. While a healthy percentage of the population was excited to learn everything it could about the new fitness routine, there were some who hated on the sudden shock to the

"norm" on the yard. The administration was slow to sign off on the changes, as well.

In 2016, all of that changed. Arguello learned about the CrossFit Open, an annual worldwide competition that pitted the best athletes across the globe against each other. In typical convict fashion, he and his workout buddies held their own CrossFit Open without asking permission. They conducted and judged the WODs during normal rec pulls, and awarding the winning athletes with prizes

such as bags of Lean Meal and homemade microwave fudge. This turned out to be a spectator event, compelling other guys who normally played ball or lifted weights during rec to halt their routines and watch the roughly 30-35 CrossFit participants break themselves off.

In 2017, Arguello joined nine other men to become the first incarcerated people in the world to earn CrossFit Level 1 (CF-L1) certification, making them official CrossFit trainers. He then achieved his CF-L2 in 2019, and now it appears his dedication and diligence have paid off. Not only will XRUCIBLE proudly fly The Murph Foundation's guideline for the event, the AVCF administration has authorized the use of the inner yard to do so, allowing the participants to conduct the one-mile runs in the facility's courtyard for everyone to see—a tribute to the hard work, discipline, and character of incarcerated people like Grandpa and the other CF-L1 trainers, candidates, and athletes. It is a wonderful opportunity to show out and display the results of all the hard work and training. Most importantly, it is a sacred moment to reflect on and remember the sacrifices of our heroes.

Demanding excellence

BY TREVOR JONES
IR Journalist

Performing monumental feats and fulfilling large, long-term goals comes only with supreme effort. Success usually comes only after deep determination, focus, discipline, and then—most often—the support of others. The demand for personal excellence is a virtue that former CDOC resident Joseph Gilbert greatly admires in others, and aspires to possess in himself. It is a value that he recently proved to be a driving force in his life when he earned the awards for the International Powerlifting Association's (IPA) Overall Men's Raw World Champion, for the Men's Drug-Tested Raw Super Heavyweight World Champion, and for the Drug-Tested Super Heavyweight Deadlift World Record!

During his incarceration, a Redemption Road Box 999 volunteer told Gilbert about Elevation Pro-Gym. Gilbert joined the gym upon release, and was accepted into the gym's "White Light Power Lifting" team (the gym is a member of the International Federation of Body Building, i.e. the IFBB). To qualify for the IPA event, Gilbert's gym owner and coach, who is an IPA chairperson, submitted videos of Gilbert bench pressing 405 lbs., deadlifting 705 lbs., and back squatting 765 lbs. These numbers essentially gave Gilbert a win in Nationals and qualified him for Worlds in Texas. He prepared for competition by entering a deadlift challenge in Pueblo, which he easily won, pulling 750 lbs.

While still incarcerated, Gilbert watched Hafthor "The Mountain" Bjornsson set the

deadlifting record in the Arnold Strongman Classic (a feat he accomplished several years in a row). Seeing this remarkable

and expand his lungs to establish his inner bracing before big lifts. But with his passion for training and achieving his goals, he found a way.

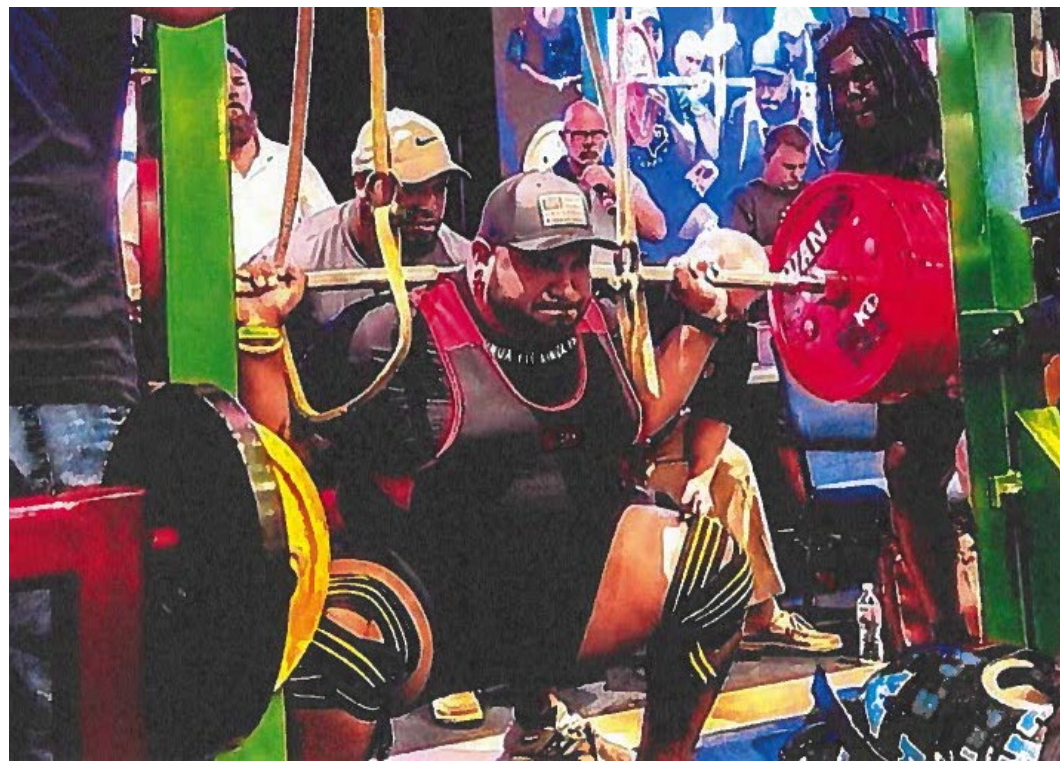
The IPA Worlds was held near

press, and 766 lbs. deadlift. Gilbert's back squat numbers were in part due to an error of the men loading the bar, and confusion over pounds verses kilograms, and the correct

the challenges and setbacks.

When asked what this monumental accomplishment meant to him, he simply said, "Not much. It doesn't really mean a thing. I did it because it is fun to compete, and to be in a community of others who are trying so hard." Gilbert found motivation for training and competing in the people in his life. He thought of his mom and how she never really got to see him win (Gilbert lost his mother before the competition). His girl has been a constant source of help and encouragement to him, helping with all facets of his preparation, and was in Texas that day to cheer him to success. Gilbert also remembers his friends and former training partners in prison, especially Travis Bland and others who spent those times with him.

Having accomplished what he set out to do in his powerlifting, Gilbert is ready to return to CrossFit, in order to reestablish his overall health and fitness. Gilbert worked remarkably hard to meet his goals and is ready to move on from the sport. He continues to find success in his life, showing everyone that people—especially the incarcerated and formerly incarcerated—really can possess and promote excellence.



Just in case you forgot how to squat, take notes

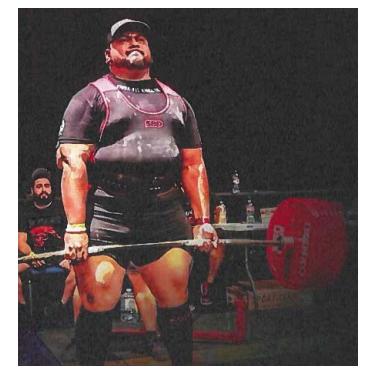
[Photo courtesy of Joseph Gilbert]

lift, Gilbert felt the fire to pull the most weight he ever could. After Gilbert was released, he was at his gym doing sets of 4 deadlifts at 695 lbs., and doing burpees (Gilbert trained CrossFit for over a year before his release). An observer told him, "You've got problems!" and invited him to the Pueblo event.

During his peak training season earlier this year, Gilbert contracted COVID-19. He was hospitalized for three days and lost an entire month of training. Lingering effects of the sickness would sap his strength and energy when he did get back to the gym, and he struggled to fill

Houston, Texas, on May 14, 2022. Over 90 people competed in the events, which were hosted by legendary bench presser, Tiny Meeker. Gilbert, age 32, competed in the open class (ages 18-35), against nine other super-heavyweight athletes. In the raw, drug-free class, athletes are tested for performance enhancing drugs, and are only allowed the use of chalk, a powerlifting belt and knee sleeves (with knee wraps being noted in official record keeping if they are used in the squat). To take the gold medal and all of the above titles, Gilbert lifted a total of 2014 lbs., the sum of his 880 lbs. back squat, 368 lbs. bench

press, and 766 lbs. deadlift. Gilbert did not intend that much weight on the attempt, but squatted through the significantly increased load. The conditions were also not completely ideal for Gilbert, as he had never used the "monolift" rack for his back squats, and the deadlift platform had sandpaper grip (left over from the "Baddest Bench" competition also being held that day) for his footing, which constrained his normal set up habits. But Gilbert has come to learn the valuable lesson that life itself hits us with the unknown and unknowable, and that a person must be adaptable and persevere despite



Making it look easy

[Photo courtesy of Joseph Gilbert]

Wrongful convictions

Continued from page 2

of stress, witnesses are often unable to remember basic details like facial features or clothing. When a person's basic survival response is triggered by adrenaline and other hormones, they are less able to record and then later recall these details. Id.

It is also a common misperception that our memories work like video recorders –creating a fixed recording of everything we see – but that is not accurate. Our memories can only take in a small amount of information at a time and stress significantly reduces our capacity to remember. Further, the more that we are focused on one thing the less we can focus on many things. A common example of this, as it relates to eyewitness identification, is weapon focus. Scientific studies have consistently shown that when a perpetrator has a weapon, eyewitnesses tend to focus on the weapon and are significantly less likely to remember key features of the assailant. See, e.g., Kerri L. Pickel, Remembering and Identifying Menacing Perpetrators: Exposure to Violence and the Weapon Focus Effect, in 2 The Handbook of Eyewitness Psychology: Memory for People 339 (R.C.L. Lindsay et al. eds., 2007).

Another problem with eyewitness identification is cross-racial identification.

Studies show that witnesses are significantly better at identifying members of their own race than those of other races. See Christian A. Meisner & John C. Brigham, Thirty Years of Investigating the Own-Race Bias in Memory for Faces: A Meta-Analytic Review, 7 Psychol., Pub. Pol'y, & L. 3 (2001). This has also been found to be true with other features such as age. Similar to identifying people of our own race, we are better able to identify people of our own age than those who are older or younger.

Finally, a commonly-held belief is that the more confident a witness is about their identification, the more accurate the identification must be. However, studies show that witness confidence is not a good indicator of accuracy. See Gary L. Wells & Elizabeth A. Olsen, Eyewitness Testimony, 54 Ann. Rev. Psychol. 277, 283 (2003). Further, witnesses are highly susceptible to positive feedback following an identification. So, if following an identification procedure, a police officer says, "Good, that's who we thought did this," such feedback typically causes the witness's confidence to skyrocket. Then, when asked later by a prosecutor during trial, the witness may not even remember the conversation with the officer but instead remembers the feeling of certainty and tells the jury that they are very positive about their identification. A witness's expression of certainty is very persuasive to juries. Studies

show that eyewitness confidence is the single most influential factor in juror determinations regarding the accuracy of eyewitness identification. See, e.g., Gary L. Wells et al., Accuracy, Confidence, and Juror Perceptions in Eyewitness Identification, 64 J. Applied Psychol. 440, 446 (1979).

The types of identification procedures used by police have a big impact on the reliability of eyewitness identification. Witnesses' memories are easily influenced or contaminated by the actions of the police and others. Police procedures that suggest to a witness, even subtly, that they should pick one person over another can push a witness to identify that person. Steven E. Clark et al, Lineup Administrator Influences on Eyewitness Identification Decisions, 15 J. Experimental Psychol.: Appl. 63 (2009). The most suggestive procedure used by police is called a one-on-one show up. This is when police take one person to the witness and ask them if this is the person who did it. David A. Yarmey et al., Accuracy of Eyewitness Identifications in Showups and Lineups, 20 Law & Hum. Behav. 459, 464 (1996). In stepping back, this makes sense. Witnesses often believe that the suspect is only in police custody because the police already have evidence against them. While sometimes this is true, sometimes it is not. Having only one choice and having that person standing next to the police, can be highly suggestive to the witness.

Less suggestive is a live or photographic line-up. This is when the police put a person or a person's photograph in a group of other similar people or photographs and ask the eyewitness if the perpetrator is in that group. Line-ups can also have their own problems. First, witnesses often mistakenly believe that the perpetrator must be one of the people in the line-up and so they pick the person that most closely resembles the perpetrator. Additionally, the line-ups themselves can be suggestive. The people in the photos can be dissimilar in a way that draws attention to a particular person. For example, if the witness has described a white man with acne scars and all of the photos have white men who look similar to each other but only one person has acne scars, then this can lead the eyewitness to pick that person. Similar to the issues with a one-on-one show-up, the police's actions during the lineup can be suggestive to the witness. Studies have even shown that when the officer administering the lineup knows who the suspect is, and which photos are just fillers, a witness can subconsciously pick up those clues and identify the police's suspect. Elizabeth F. Loftus & Guido Zanni, Eyewitness Testimony: The Influence of the Wording of a Question, 5 Bull. Psychonomic Soc'y 86 (1975).

Many things can be done to make eyewitness identification more accurate. The first is for the police to be trained in the suggestibility of eyewitnesses.

Police should be encouraged to only use one-on-one show-ups in emergencies. Police should be required to videotape all identification procedures so that defense counsel and jurors can see the procedures used and evaluate whether any of the actions taken by the police were suggestive. Studies have shown that having a "blind administrator" (an officer who does not know who the suspect is) conduct the lineup improves the accuracy of the identification. Finally, police departments should be pushed to use sequential lineups. This is when a police officer hands an eyewitness one photograph at a time. Rather than making a comparative judgment between photographs, the eyewitness must instead say "yes or no" to one photo at a time. The photographs need to have similar backgrounds and be of people who have similar features. This type of lineup has been shown to avoid many of the problems with lineups and identification procedures. Dawn McQuiston-Surrett et al., Sequential vs. Simultaneous Lineups: A Review of Methods, Data, and Theory, 12 Psychol. Pub. Pol'y & L. 137, 143–51 (2006).

In conclusion, the law has a lot to learn from science about the reliability of eyewitness identifications and police procedures, and how they can create misidentifications that can lead to wrongful convictions.

Inside/Outside Scoop

Guest columnist William Owens III gives advice on dating

BY WILLIAM OWENS III
IR Guest Columnist

Question:

I am getting out of prison and am excited about getting in a relationship. I have done a significant amount of time and am wondering how I should best go about finding that person. I have heard a lot about online dating. Any suggestions for navigating this changing dating scene?

Answer:

I thought that driving hard on the weight pile was the path to getting my body right so that I could attract the best woman. That is incorrect. After almost 17 years, I got on every dating website I could find (mistake #1). I knew that after all those years, I wanted a relationship. The thing that I did not think

about was that I did not have anything to offer a woman except my mind and my body, which is not worth much to some nowadays. After a few months going on a few dates, I realized that I needed to focus more on myself before getting out into the dating world.

Do not focus on online dating when you first get out. Focus on self. Later, after you get yourself together, consider a dating site. Ultimately, I found my girlfriend on Facebook Dating and we are happy.

So, some suggestions:

- Choose the site wisely.
- Only deal with one or two sites, at most. More than that and you risk devoting more time to cultivating your profile instead of your life.
- Do not pay for a site.

As for online dating versus traditional courtships, the main difference is that with online dating, you have a database of people to choose from, which makes it easy to narrow your search for someone with like-minded behavior. The dating sites have platforms to text within the site (called direct messages, aka DMs) so that you don't have to share your personal number. This is wise because there is a real problem with swindlers and prostitutes (both genders). You are already a convicted felon trying to portray yourself as an upstanding member of society, so don't make it worse. Don't be that guy.

I'm going to offer an answer to a question no one asked this time around. (Keep those questions coming to *The Inside*



Inside/Outside Scoop guest columnist William Owens III

[Photo courtesy of William Owens III]

Report, by the way.)

Question:

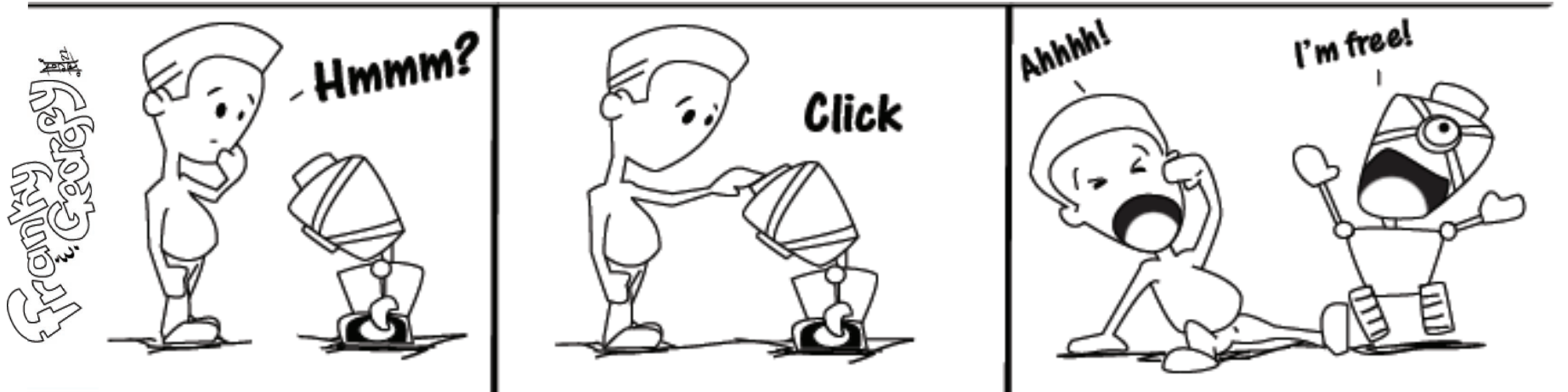
When is it appropriate to reveal to someone you want to get to know better that you were in the joint?

Answer:

I guess it depends on your crime, time down, or how you feel about your actions. I revealed that I was in prison, but only to women that I felt were women that wouldn't judge my

past. I wanted to be completely transparent. Lying will start you on a path back to prison. I would rather a woman say that she didn't want anything to do with me because I was too busy or an asshole than because I lied about my past. Everyone has history. The goal is to find the person that doesn't care about yours. Patience is key. My final bit of advice: don't be a "knack" (prison lingo for a guy who acts a fool). Be honest with people!

BY PATRICK SOCHATYA



Transitional

Continued from page 2

those on parole a huge packet of resources to sort through, see what applied, and seek out what was relevant on their own. That is no longer the case. RESTORE staff interviews everyone to customize their parole plan. “Why spend a bunch of time on housing when someone already has multiple housing options?” Yuncker said. “We find out exactly what each client needs. Do they need employment assistance, or maybe transportation? Not just for their primary situation, but backups. And then backups to the backup. That’s what we do now. Everything is individualized.”

When should you start preparing for your release? “The day you get to prison,”

Yuncker and Ballegeer said in unison. “The number one thing you can do to succeed on parole is to communicate with your P.O., your support, and the re-entry specialists,” Yuncker said. “Colorado is a resource-rich state. We have the WAGEES program and all of their partners, as well as several other services to help people out. But you have to ask. Communicate if you are having trouble. Communicate when you are having success. Guys sometimes say that their P.O. wanted them to fail. False. We want to hear how well you are doing, too.”

RESTORE also helps participants anticipate the tough stuff. For example, the question of how much to include about your incarceration to an employer or potential landlord is a difficult one for most men and women hitting the bricks. The

RESTORE team encourages everyone to play to their strengths. “Do not discount the work you have done while in here,” Yuncker said. “Your work inside means more than you might think.”

Ballegeer agreed. “I have no idea how an industrial kitchen even works. But many of you do. Use that. It is important to emphasize the positives of what you accomplish while in here.”

There are many misconceptions about parole. For starters, you DO NOT have 24 hours to report to your P.O. “You should report immediately,” Yuncker said. Yuncker has been with Parole for 14 years and has been with CDOC for 23 years total. “They are wanting to work with parolees more and more nowadays, but you have to have a good rapport with your P.O.”

Showing up the day after your release pleading ignorance and saying “I thought I had 24 hours” is probably not the best start. “Also,” she added. “Don’t tell your boss, if you have one already, that you’ll be to work the day you get out. Give yourself three days to get settled. Take care of all of the things that come with parole. The UAs, paperwork, food stamps, treatment, etc. Take care of your needs first and then go to work.”

Another myth is the quota we have all heard about. The one where P.O.s have to send back a certain number of parolees each month. “You have to really (mess) up to come back now,” Ballegeer said. Oh, and my favorite myth, and the one I unfortunately have to put to rest, is the one about marijuana in a weed-legal state. “You

can’t smoke pot on parole. No, not even that rumor about the Red Card is true,” Yuncker said. Sorry to debunk that one, everyone. I was sad, too.

Success on parole seems to come down to a few key factors. Communication with your P.O., support, flexibility, and asking for help when you need it. If you are open with your P.O. about what is going on in your life, they may be more willing to work with you. “Don’t be scared to ask for help. There is no shame. It is literally our job to help you and the job of tons of people out there. It’s not our job to judge.”

Parole should be an easy thing, if you put a little thought and effort into it. Yuncker summed it up best: “If parole is consuming ALL of your time, you are doing something wrong. Ask for help.”

More than re-entry, it’s a living space geared towards responsibility

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN
IR Journalist

La Vista has a re-entry unit unlike any other in CDOC. The women picked for the unit are all considered by CDOC as medium-to-high risk for recidivism. The program is structured to give these women a better shot at getting out and staying out.

The unit has its own yard with some workout equipment, a basketball court, a picnic table, trees, and a grassy section to relax in. The unit is equipped with washers and dryers and has a TV room to watch movies or use the computers to type resumes. It is also the room where re-entry classes are held. The facility recently added two small plastic fish tanks.

Every person assigned to the re-entry unit goes through an orientation that informs them how to move through three phases to gain privileges in the program. Each phase has its own requirements and added benefits. Each person receives a copy of the “Design Your Life” workbook to help them better prepare for release. Finally, each person is given a re-entry peer support specialist to help map out a better future.

Re-entry peer support specialists are fellow residents who have been out before, on parole, or in community corrections. These individuals have had the experience of being released from prison and can help their peers know what to expect from parole and community. They are also people who are leaders in their incarcerated communities and devote themselves to helping others. They regularly make themselves available to the re-entry unit women and provide them with up-to-date resources to help them successfully re-enter society.

Maggie Henderson is the current re-entry clerk. She keeps files updated, checks workbooks, and makes herself available to all re-entry support specialists, participants, and the re-entry officer. “Re-entry gives opportunity for planning and help for not returning to prison. Helping others to succeed and being a positive role model are important to me. It gives

them the tools they need to be successful in society. Re-entry is not a forced program. You do not have to participate.” She says this can be a hindrance. “The people that want to do the program may be surrounded by people who do not.” Unfortunately, women can be moved to the unit involuntarily, and this can create challenging dynamics for those who are eager for the opportunity.

Tatianna Manon Davis, a re-entry support team member, volunteers her time because she likes helping people. “Honestly, I wanted the exposure to the emotion involving release. I noticed the panic when their release date was approaching. Therefore, I wanted to be of assistance. Helping people helps me,” Davis said.

I have been a re-entry peer support team member since its inception three years ago, and I have seen firsthand the change in a lot of the women I have mentored. I have only had three women I have mentored come back in the last three years and I have mentored as many as 18 at a time or as little as six, depending on the fluctuating numbers of residents due to COVID restrictions.

The staff and volunteers in the re-entry unit create a positive and encouraging environment for participants. Crystal Bachicha said, “[I’m in the re-entry unit] to take advantage of the classes/programs to better myself before re-entering the community. My goals are to gain employment and become financially stable and be successful both in my personal life and community/professional life.”

In La Vista’s re-entry program, participants are able to cook in a real kitchen, grow their own fruits and vegetables, and do their own laundry. They also have a parole officer to go to with any kind of release questions. These are options not common in CDOC. This program has helped and continues to help the women here find resources, life-skills, and hope where once they only found dead ends.

**No community left behind
Coloradan author is no stranger to prison**

IR Writing Corps

A few months before COVID-19 lockdowns hit and the world changed, IR journalist Mark Horton interviewed bestselling author Jerry Jenkins about his “Left Behind” series. Horton and Jenkins also discussed religion, philosophy, writing methods, and a few burning inquiries that Horton had about Jenkins’ books.

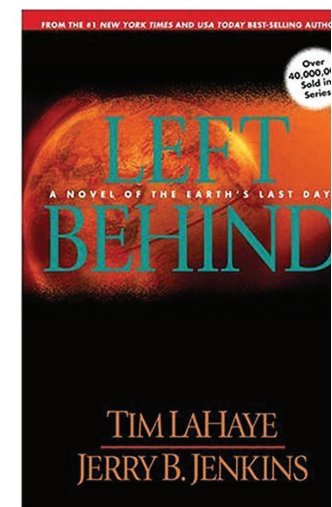
The interview was a longshot, but Horton had questions that only Jenkins could answer. Since Horton did not have access to Google like the rest of the world, he took a chance and reached out to Jenkins to ask him personally. Jenkins surprised Horton by not only responding, but agreeing to an exclusive interview with the fledgling prison newspaper that DU PAI and CDOC had just started.

For readers who are not aware of Jenkins’ fame and writing proliferation, his “Left Behind” series, co-written with Tim LaHaye, sold over 400 million copies.

Jenkins shared that he began writing for his local daily paper at the age of 14, covering high school sports and getting paid one dollar per column-inch that survived the sports editor’s red pencil. He has been a professional writer ever since. He broke into bigger success when he was tasked to assist two big names write their memoirs: Hank Aaron’s “Bad Henry” and Dr. Billy Graham’s “Just As I Am.” He credits his writing journey to his mother, whom he identifies as the greatest influence on his life. He is also inspired by numerous authors that populate CDOC’s

library shelves, such as Bragg, Conroy, King, Turow, and Koontz, to name a few.

Jenkins’ success caught even him by surprise. Before “Left Behind,” he had never seen someone reading one of his books, but now he sees people turning his pages all the time and it brings him great joy. Horton asked if Jenkins had any advice for the aspiring authors behind bars. “Don’t start your career with a book. Starting your writing career with a book would be like applying



for graduate school when you should be in kindergarten. There’s a lot to learn.” Jenkins advised writers to submit to magazines and newspapers, first. Learn how to write before you begin pitching a book to a publishing house.

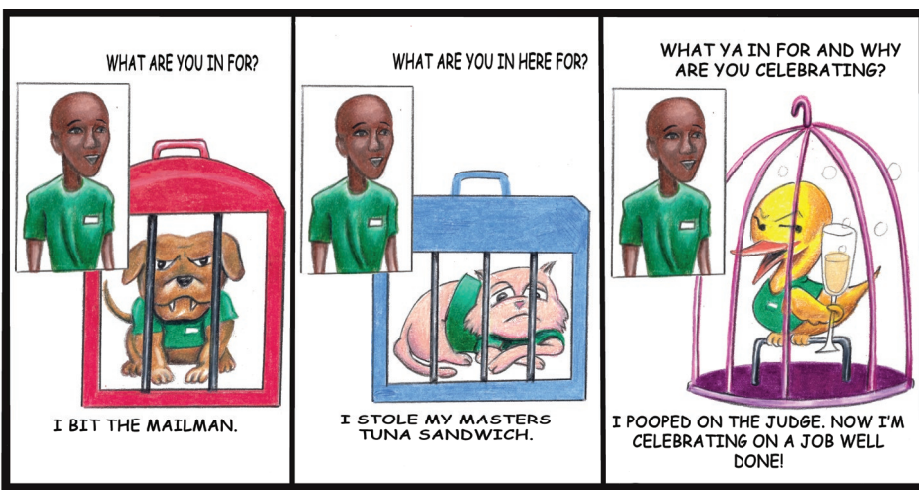
Horton asked if Jenkins feels pigeonholed as a Christian author, but Jenkins states that this is not the case. He writes for both the Christian and general market and has never felt constricted by his massive success in one market over the other.

Jenkins is no stranger to the inner working of prisons, and he takes his writing about prison settings seriously. When researching his self-proclaimed favorite book “Riven,” a story about a man sentenced to death, he interviewed a chaplain at the super max federal prison in Florence, Colo. He also watched countless hours of documentaries on people who are incarcerated, and visited two lower-custody prisons where civilian visitors were not normally allowed. This research led his readers who have been incarcerated to comment on the realistic way he portrays prison life through the use of daily sights, sounds, and even smells that those of us who are incarcerated know so well.

Jenkins is aware of the normalization movement occurring in Colorado prisons and is supportive of the initiative. He sees the value in rehabilitation, but also acknowledges that normalization is neither easy for CDOC to implement, nor is it a popular concept for the free population. “It certainly seems it should be the ultimate goal, though,” he said.

Granting *The Inside Report* an interview hints at the much bigger story that we, the incarcerated, often forget. Or perhaps we become so accustomed to the status quo and the day-to-day that we neglect to realize there are people from all walks of life, and varying degrees of renown, who genuinely care about what is going on inside our prisons. More people care about us and our plight than we appreciate.

THE RAP SHEET
BY IVAN STAMPS



Walls

Continued from page 1

wanted to express the milestone in a special way: offering an unbiased look at history with a hopeful eye toward a desirable future.

How do you tell the complex story of a 150-year-old prison as a historical monument? How do you give voice to the people who have lived, worked, and died there? Fortunately, today's CDOC is equipped with modern tools for this kind of storytelling. One of those tools is the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative (DU PAI). Caley requested the professional experience of theater directors Dr. Ashley Hamilton and Dr. Clare Hammor. Along with former DU PAI staff member Julie Rada, the DU PAI duo has executed theater in prisons from New York to Colorado. Most recently, they directed "A Christmas Carol" at Denver Women's Correctional Facility, "Antigone" at Limon Correctional Facility, and "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" at Sterling Correctional Facility. These theater doctors know the power of theater and how to get it done in the dynamic prison environment.

DU PAI operates on the belief that performance arts offer more than entertainment. Theater is a metaphor for the human experience – life. The stage teaches us about each other, brings awareness to disparities, clarifies controversies, and offers solutions. As audience members, we are invited to explore the complexities that

make us human.

As performers on the stage of life, we do not have that luxury. We tend to get caught up in our roles. Blind to the reaches of our actions, deaf to the cry of our

were incarcerated there during [CTCF's] 150th year, and draws from historical accounts and contemporary personal narratives in order to investigate one man's search for humanity



Dr. Ashley Hamilton introducing the production team

[Photo courtesy of John Moore]

fellow humans. Theater rips off the Band-Aids and blindfolds at the same time. Only then does theater become a healing salve. Perhaps this is exactly what Caley was seeking.

When Hammor agreed to direct this retrospective film about the search for humanity in 150 years of incarceration, he was insistent that he would not celebrate or glorify all that prison time. His aim was to honor the life and humanity that passed through the walls.

Hammor worked with DU PAI Group Leaders at CTCF. Every Saturday starting in June 2021, they brainstormed iterations. The production mutated as many times as COVID before settling on a retrospective film titled, "These Walls."

According to Lilly Stannard, Assistant Director of DU PAI Programming, "These Walls" is "Devised, written, and performed by artists who

through the unexpected correspondence within the walls of a prison hewn from the canyon that became Cañon City."

The troupe wanted to correct the false narrative that they discovered in the available media about CTCF. Several documentaries and books seemed to stigmatize residents and overplay staff's roles as tyrannical disciplinarians. The available media is outdated and promotes a strange sense of "Frontier Justice," meaning heavy handed, retributive, punitive, and authoritarian treatment that was meant to deter a "Wild West." The group decided that sensationalizing prison in this way is insensitive to those who have been harmed by crime and those inside "These Walls" since 1871.

The troupe's main objective behind the scenes of "These Walls" is to humanize the people who live and work in our

prisons. The hope is that when everyone sees "These Walls" from the comfort of their beds or bunks, they will come to know the people in our prisons are not as far removed from themselves as political forces portray them to be.

This work of humanizing has already begun as a result of "These Walls." CTCF's Captain Wendy Rosen has long been giving tours of CTCF. The gas chamber viewing room and the cell where executed inmates spent their final hours were included in this tour. After working with DU PAI on "These Walls," she realized her tour was lacking sensitivity to the depth of what has taken place there and why. Now, Rosen's tour acknowledges the various human emotions that took place in CTCF. The same variety of emotions she experienced filming the project in that space.

The work of humanizing continues for the cast and crew. The film premiered at CTCF for staff and residents with a live Q & A. The public

viewed "These Walls" at the Sie Theater in Denver with a live virtual talk back. The film is expected to shift CDOC culture and ripple across the nation. At the very least, it will continue the difficult conversation about the heaviness of crime, incarceration, and how time is served by our fellow incarcerated men and women.

In the discussions of script writing, incarcerated people empathized with victims and CDOC staff. Likewise, members of staff empathized with residents and their families. One of the writers of "These Walls" said, "We had to ask one another not to judge men condemned to death. The same way we are asking the world to not harshly judge us." The people who worked on this project will never be the same. Thanks to this film, the death house at CTCF will never be the same, either. The death penalty died. Perhaps, it is time for the old death house to be full of life.



The Territorial players and producers meet and interact with the audience

[Photo courtesy of John Moore]

Take me down mackerel and fried rice!

BY CYNTHIA JOHNSON
COMCOR Contributor

Ingredients:

- 1 package of mackerel fillets
- 2 seasoning packets from the shrimp bowl noodles
- 2 seasoning packets from hot vegetable ramen soups
- 2 spoons of chopped onions
- 2 spoons of red & green peppers
- 1 bag white rice
- 4 spoons of honey
- 4 packets of mayonnaise
- Hot water
- *Mix rice, mayonnaise, peppers and onion in a bowl and fry to light brown
- Add 1 cup hot water

Season to taste

Microwave on high, checking often to make sure it does not burn, until rice is soft and well cooked. There should be a small amount of water left. Add honey and mix well. Add mackerel and return to microwave for an additional 6 minutes. Remove and let sit for a few minutes. Enjoy!

*This stand-alone meal is also great with crackers.

Pictures

Continued from page 2

legislation prompted by mental health professionals.

"A thriving hobby shop had once been this building's purpose," said one of the lifers. "Many years before that, the area was the gallows," said the same lifer. He was discussing the unique location of their meeting since many in the room did not know about the history of where their meeting was taking place. People were actually hanged in the area for horse thievery and other reasons. Only redacted photographs taken on location

gave those hanged a voice. Many of those images have since been removed. Fortunately, reporters documented our nation's past with images because many stories were never told.

It's the only method afforded to those unable to put words to their feelings. This speechless phenomenon was witnessed by one of most celebrated reporters in the business. These were the words of Ed Murrow on the atrocities witnessed from the liberation of Buckenwald, a Nazi concentration camp: "I pray that you believe what I have said. I reported what I saw and heard, but only part of it. For most of it I have no words."

For many who have

experienced any type of trauma, there are long-lasting effects. There is visual proof that the effects of trauma are not different from the effects of physical suffering from conditions like strokes. In his book, "The Body Keeps the Score," Bessel Van Der Kolk, M.D. writes, "Our most surprising finding was a white spot in the prefrontal lobe of the cortex, in a region called Broca's area." The Broca's area is one of the speech centers of the brain, which is often affected in stroke patients when the blood supply of that region is cut off. Without a functioning Broca's area, you cannot put your thoughts and feelings into words.

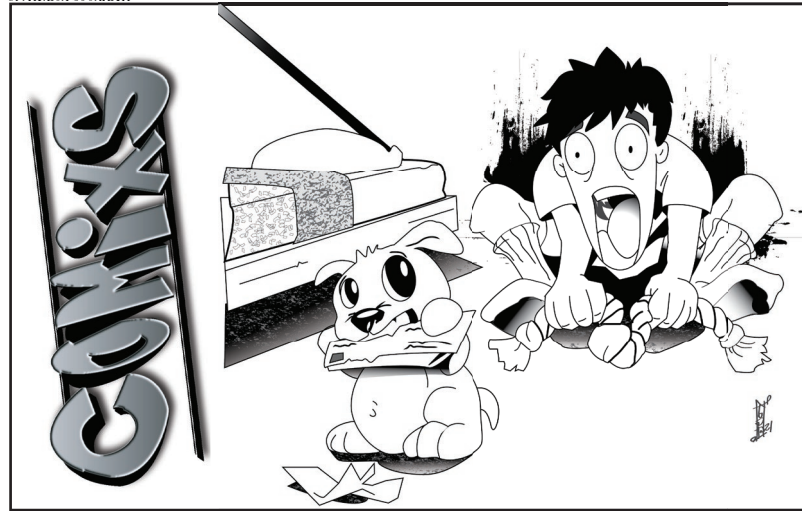
The best place to find this proof is actually in a picture, since we can now image the brain. Brain scans proved that the Broca's area went offline when flashbacks were generated. This can be a real issue for the high numbers of traumatized incarcerated people. Arts and crafts are an outlet for many forms of pain, anger, and grief. These art forms can allow broken minds to communicate what cannot be put into words.

Trauma interferes with the areas of the brain that manage and interpret experience. Studies of trauma patients' brain images find abnormal activation of the insula, the part

of the brain that integrates and interprets input from internal organs. These are the "gut feelings" that accompany guilt and loss.

Many feel that the elimination of hobby shops, compounded with mismanagement of art supplies, tramples on free speech. This is especially true for the traumatized prison population. Arts provide a therapeutic release from the stress of incarceration. The beauty created by hands that once caused harm actually allows for admitting responsibility. It is only fitting that quite often, the only way to explain this to people is with an image.

BY PATRICK SOCHATYA



Teaching music to others

BY WILLIAM LOMAX
IR Writing Corps

I am trying to focus on what I am doing, but this guy, not ten feet from me, has been beating the same lick out of his guitar for 30 minutes. My practice routine is different, and while I learned to play in prison, I have to wonder: Who looks forward to teaching music in prison?

I spoke with Randy Flores and Bob Eisenman, two guys at Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF) who have years of experience doing just that. Flores tells me, "I've been doing this for over 15 years in prison and about the same before prison." Eisenman said, "I've taught 14 years in prison and I taught for a living before prison, including all levels up through college." Eisenman co-authored a book titled "Music Theory for Prisoners" that has been widely distributed by inmates throughout CDOD.

There are challenges to teaching music in general, but prison brings specific obstacles. Flores has navigated this in different facilities and tells me that when people come

in with an open mind and are honest with themselves about what they know and what they do not, it is a better learning experience. "When it comes to music, you want to learn the right way. Anything less is cheating yourself," Flores said.

More often, the challenges revolve around staff. When staff is not supportive of music education programs, it makes the experience more difficult. "Staff is trained to think inmates are always trying to get over on them. It gets even worse when it involves inmates teaching inmates," Eisenman said. At Crowley, a program was developed by Eisenman who taught during morning and afternoon count periods in about 12 different classes. "I have to give them (CoreCivic) credit for buying into the program," Eisenman said. "They invested in equipment, issued certificates for completion, and had staff that really supported the whole program."

"It is the 'Ah-ha' moments that make the effort worth it," Flores offered. "When something falls into place, and they get it and



Flores and Eisenman offer their years of experience to the community for the small fee of gratitude

[Photo courtesy of photo journalist Phillip Michael Montoya]

realize they are a musician now." Eisenman agreed, telling me, "It's about access as well. On the streets, instruments are expensive and my lessons were \$100/hour, while in here we have instruments and I get to teach them for free." He added, "There is not as much support in DOC, though. It's embarrassing that the best music education

program in the state is at a private prison."

How do we make this opportunity available to everyone? It starts with support and equipment. "There should be more instruments and more variety than just guitar, bass, keys, and drums," Flores said. "What about wind or string instruments?" Another benefit

would be support. "With some outside support like DU PAI, maybe we could get the staff support like DOC gives with CrossFit and other programs," Eisenman suggested.

Learning to play music is life changing. It is another form of artistic expression that is unique to human beings.

"The Upside of Stress"

BY DAVID SCHULERUD
SCCF Bureau Chief

"The Upside of Stress" is an insightful and new look at how people can leverage stress to fulfill their life goals. The book is written by Kelly McGonigal, a psychology professor at Stanford University. Her field of expertise is the study of how human beings react to the chemical and emotional factors our brains use in shaping our decisions.

McGonigal begins by detailing how most of us view stress as harmful. We then become distracted from the cause of this stress and mask it with negative emotions and behaviors. She details the numerous chemical reactions that our bodies go through during stressful events that occur throughout our day.

McGonigal proposes a new possibility. She finds that when recognized

and processed correctly, stress can help us focus our attention on whatever task is at hand. Stress can activate pro-social instincts and enhance social cognition, and it can dampen fear while increasing courage. Most importantly, McGonigal explains how we can use stress to help the brain learn and grow from our experiences.

I highly recommend "The Upside of Stress" to

anyone interested in further understanding how our brains and bodies deal with everyday life. Since I read it, I have become more aware of stress. I have also learned how to more effectively deal with the various situations I encounter on a daily basis. The book has shown me how to view stress not as a negative factor, but as an opportunity for growth.

THE UPSIDE OF STRESS

WHY STRESS IS GOOD FOR YOU (AND HOW TO GET GOOD AT IT)

KELLY MCGONIGAL
AUTHOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER THE WILLPOWER INSTINCT

Olvan Part 2

BY RYAN KRUEGER
SCCF Contributor

The distinct sound of glass breaking against a stone wall told Olvan he was close and that the woman was in trouble. A block away was an alley, the long and dark corridor, a dead end he sincerely hoped she had not ventured into. But he had a sinking feeling that was precisely where she had gone. Only a moment behind the trio of thugs trailing her, Olvan quickened his pace to catch up before they had time to do her harm.

As he rounded the corner, Olvan could just make out the scene before him, the light from the street lamps barely seeping into the alley. The elf was backed against the wall, the thugs spread out before her a dozen or so paces away and about the same again from Olvan. She was outnumbered and outsized, but that did not seem to bother the elf as she stood defiantly. The two largest of

the thugs, half-elves that Olvan knew as Dasmer and Masmer, were armed with a short sword and crossbow, respectively. They had not noticed Olvan's approach, nor had the elf.

"Give us your coin and maybe we let you keep breathin'," threatened Bruug, a half-orc, in a gravelly bass. As he spoke, he gave a slash with his sword in an attempt to frighten the woman.

Olvan knew this threat for the lie that it was, as did the elf, apparently.

"I suppose I'm to take your word on that?" she answered, sarcasm dripping from each word.

Bruug took a step forward, but the elf held her ground.

"You'll wanna be listenin' to him, else maybe we cut you up good before we finish you," Masmer added in a nasally tone.

Olvan did not doubt the man. There was little question what they would do if given the chance, even if she did give up her coin quickly.

"I think I'll take my chances," the elf said, a sly grin on her face as she drew her dirk, inverting the blade.

"I was hoping you'd put up a fight," Bruug sneered as he advanced, closing the distance with a few long strides and raising his cutlass to strike.

The elf crouched into a defensive stance and let him come. When he swung, she nimbly ducked the blade, turning, and slashed the half-orc across the belly before reversing her attack. Rising, she stabbed backhanded twice into his rib cage. The wounded half-orc roared in pain and swung violently back at the elf in a vain attempt to fend her off. She spun behind him, letting the momentum of the swing carry his arm out wide, before slashing across his forearm, severing the muscle and causing him to drop his sword. In the blink of an eye, the elf tumbled forward, spun, rose to her feet and, reversing her blade, slammed the dirk up and through the half-orc's chin.

The long blade, buried to the hilt, ended the creature.

Masmer fired then, his shot wide of the mark but near enough to draw the elf's attention. She snarled at him but settled her gaze on Dasmer who still stood a few paces away, holding his sword. Olvan drew his sword and closed the distance between himself and Masmer, who was desperately trying to reload his crossbow. In a second, Olvan grabbed the man by his greasy hair, yanking back his head to expose his throat and then pressed his sword there, drawing a thin line of blood.

"Drop it!" Olvan ordered. Masmer complied immediately.

The elf drew a second dagger as she stepped toward Dasmer, who turned to run. He made it three strides before the elf's dagger found a spot between his shoulder blades, sending him sprawling to the ground. Without so much as a glance, the elf bounded past Olvan, pulled the dagger free, and in the same motion plunged it into the soft

spot at the base of Dasmer's skull.

"Wait!" Olvan said as the elf turned and headed his way, the look in her eyes one of pure blood lust.

"Why?" she said coldly as she stepped up and, without warning, grabbed the elbow of Olvan's sword arm and pulled. He hadn't anticipated that move and the result was a wide gash opened in Dasmer's throat and a spray of blood onto the elf's face. Olvan released the man, who fell to his knees, his life spilling through his fingers in a red gush.

"I didn't need your help," the elf said as she turned to walk away.

Dumbfounded, Olvan stood there, sword in hand, and watched her leave.

"Well met! I'm Olvan by the way," he called after her.

The elf paused, turned, and looked at him. "Nire," she said before continuing.

"Well met, Nire," Olvan said, too quietly for her to hear.

Strength

Continued from page 1

also what resilience makes possible.

Even before resilience became the important topic that it is today, researchers ran experiments that would contribute to understanding how resilience works. In 1964, two psychology doctoral students named Marty Seligman and Steve Maier were in a windowless laboratory watching caged dogs receive electric shocks to their back paws. The shocks came randomly and without warning. If the dog did nothing, the shock lasted for five seconds, but if a dog pushed a panel at the front of the cage with his nose, the shock ended early. Next to that cage was a second cage in which other dogs were shocked at the same time but with no panel to push on. So, the dogs in the first cage were in control, whereas the dogs in the second cage were not. The next day, one by one, all the dogs were placed in a different cage called a shuttle box. In the middle there was a low wall, a barrier that was just high enough that the dogs could leap over it if they tried. Researchers played a high-pitched tone through the floor

beneath the dog, heralding an impending shock. Nearly all the dogs who had control the previous day leaped over the barrier. This experiment proved for the first time that it is not suffering that leads to hopelessness. Hopelessness is suffering you think you cannot control.

Later studies show how people can overcome surroundings over which they have little control and work toward a life not of hopelessness but of joy and success. For example, in 1989, a psychologist named Emmy Werner published the results of a 32-year longitudinal project. She followed a group of 698 children in Kauai, Hawaii from before they were born through three decades of life. She monitored them through stress in utero, poverty, problems in the family, and so on. Two-thirds of the children came from backgrounds that were, essentially, stable, successful, and happy; the other third qualified as “at risk.” Werner soon discovered that not all at-risk children reacted to stress in the same way. Two-thirds “developed serious learning or behavior problems by the age of 10, or had delinquency records, mental-health problems, or teenage pregnancies by age 18.” But the remaining third developed

into “competent, confident, and caring young adults.” What was it that set the resilient children apart? Werner proposes that some elements of resilience had to do with luck: a resilient child might have a strong bond with a caregiver, teacher, parent, or other mentor-like person in their life. Werner asks the question, “Which side of the equation weighs more, resilience or the stressor?” In environments of high stress, children who have strong mentors can learn the skills of resilience to outweigh those stressors.

The findings in these scientific studies are complemented by stories of resilience that show the variety of ways that resilience can impact a person’s life. For example, New York bestselling author and psychologist Angela Duckworth describes how she did not give up when her high school science curriculum had not prepared her for the rigors of her first neurobiology class in college. Immediately after her first quiz, the teaching assistant pulled her aside and said, “You should really consider dropping this course. You’re just a freshman. You have three more years. You can always take this class later.” Duckworth stood her ground and argued how she had received an A in AP Bio in high school. Determined to do

better, she studied “madly” to no avail. She got the same result on the mid-term. Back in the assistant’s office a second time, his tone was more urgent. “You do not want a failing grade on your transcript. It is not too late to withdraw from the course.” She left his office, closed the door, and reviewed the facts of the situation: two failures and one more exam – the final – before the end of the semester. Duckworth curled her hands into fists, clenched her jaw and marched into his office, stayed in the course, and made it her major. She said, “It was a moment when I could have stayed down. I could have said to myself: I’m an idiot! Nothing I do is good enough! Instead my self-talk was defiantly hopeful: I won’t quit! I can figure this out!” She changed the way she studied and in the end got a B for the course.

Tiffany Haddish shares a story that shows how resilience got her through a more complex situation. Haddish was born in South Central Los Angeles. In 1988, her mother got severe brain damage from a car wreck, which may have caused schizophrenia. Haddish claimed in an interview that her mother became quick-tempered, violent, and abusive after the crash. Haddish said, “If

I could make her laugh and turn her anger into joy, I was less likely to get beat.” According to Haddish, when she was 12 years old, her step-father told her that he tampered with the brakes on her mother’s car. He intended to kill her mother, her, and her siblings to collect the insurance money. Haddish and her siblings were placed in foster care. Haddish attributes some of her eventual success to a teacher who spent valuable time teaching her how to read. Even with that, after one too many incidences, her case worker gave her an ultimatum: go to psychiatric therapy or go to the Laugh Comedy Camp. She chose the Laugh Camp. While there, she was mentored by comedic greats like Richard Prior, the Wayans brothers, and more. Now, Haddish is one of the most beloved and successful comedians of our time.

The question remains, are you resilient? If not, what would it take for you to be? To quote President Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Have a fierce resolve in everything you do. Demonstrate determination, resiliency, and tenacity. Do not let temporary setbacks become permanent excuses. Use mistakes and problems as opportunities to get better – not reasons to quit.”

Different world

Continued from page 1

asked myself why it has to be that way. I have learned that it does not. At least not at Sterling, not with Warden Jeff Long making the calls.

Recently, I moved to Sterling to open the “Saddle Shop” here. When we moved into the cell where we have lived for the better part of the last year, my cellie and I had a crazy idea. We had seen amazing murals painted in the incentive pod and even some inside of other cells, and we thought, “Why not take it a step further?” So, we put together a proposal.

My cellie sketched schematics and he and I wrote the proposal with what we thought was a big ask. “Can we paint our cell to look like the inside of a log cabin?” To our surprise, unit staff gave us their approval. There were a few caveats, though. First, we had to pay for everything ourselves. Second, we had to understand that with COVID, we might be moved to a different pod. And lastly, if the facility did not like what we had done, we would have to paint over it, at our expense. Of course we agreed.

What followed was a process that was not without difficulties. We spent weeks scraping, mudding, and sanding the walls and desks to prep them for paint. The paint, brushes, rollers, and other materials cost around \$600 and took weeks to be delivered. While waiting for the materials to arrive, we were told the upper echelons of the management team heard about the project and decided we could not do it. At that point, we thought we had hit the wall (pun intended). Then, Long happened to walk through the Saddle Shop and my cellie pulled him aside and explained what

we wanted to do and the process we had already gone through. We explained the resistance to our idea. Long did not hesitate. He told us to move forward and that if we encountered any more resistance we should encourage staff to speak with him about it directly. So we did... and we did.

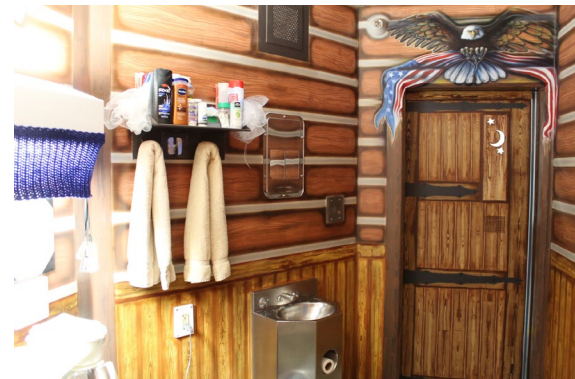
We learned a lot about painting cells over several months. For instance, we learned that it is impossible to keep paint from getting on your clothes no matter how hard you try, and that moving your things around to avoid paint splatter or sanding dust is not only a real hassle, but also futile. We learned that some colors look one way when you mix and apply them, but totally different once they dry. Our first attempt at a woodgrain tone actually turned pink when it dried. We learned that getting the look you want on the first attempt is virtually impossible and that ordering more paint than what you think you might need is a good idea because you are likely to paint over things a few times. But we have also learned that at the end of the process, the reward you get from laying back on your bunk and looking at the finished product is worth the effort.

After countless hours of work and with thanks to the many contributions from one of our more artistically talented friends, the end result is truly awesome. The pictures speak for themselves, but here is something you cannot get from them. Waking up in this room, one that now only vaguely resembles a prison cell, is a unique experience. Everyone who walks in says it is a different feeling inside. Almost like it is not even a cell. You breathe just a bit easier inside. It makes me wonder why CDOC would not encourage us to take a bit of ownership in our “homes”

and make them more our own. If nothing else, it improves the look of the place.

Long often brings by different groups on tours and I have heard him remark that he hopes all the cells in Sterling could one day look like ours. Not all as log cabins of course, but something more individualized to the tastes of those that live there. The “Tiki-Hut Undersea” cell mural (also pictured) is another great example of what is possible with a little imagination. Long has supported us in our endeavor which gives me hope that one day in the not-so-distant future a lot more of us can wake up in a different world. Even if it is one created with nothing more than motivation, hard work, and few gallons of paint.

Artistic Credits: “Log Cabin” by Jeremy Hodges and Ryan Krueger, with contributions from Craig Forbes; “Tiki-Hut Undersea” by Craig Forbes



Creative imagery allows residents to put their talents on display

[Photo courtesy of Ryan Krueger]



The hardest part of the process was ‘dragon’ everything in and out of the cells

[Photo courtesy of Ryan Krueger]



The slightest change of view, can drastically change your outlook

[Photo courtesy of Ryan Krueger]

“A Universe Within”

La Vista tells women’s stories through performing arts



Back row, from left to right: JoyBelle Phelan, Rebekah Acosta, Tarry Carneal, Angelica Abeyta, Tracie McCaslin, Sydney White, Madelyn Johnson, Shanna Gossett, Kelsea Ponewall, Amberlee Theodoratos, Maggie Henderson, Dr. Clare Hammor
Front row, from left to right: Crystal Lucas, Kambria Zentz, Chris Nye, Sarah-Ann Beaudoin, Claudia Barajas
[Photo courtesy of LVCF IR Bureau]

BY SYDNEY WHITE
IR Bureau Chief Advisor

LVCF Residents became inspired after their first DU PAI theatre production. The performance was held in the gym on June 3rd and 4th. The facility felt the positive impact of the production’s message.

“A Universe Within” was a collaborative piece written by the women participating in the theatre class. Different pieces from the act were constructed from fragments of the women’s lives and forming a collage of a story about a woman named Anne. The story featured Anne’s journey from childhood into young adulthood. Adult Anne narrates the story of redemption directed toward her daughter. After younger Anne’s father left, she took his coat (symbolizing the weight of the world), and with each trauma in her life, a patch of material was added. With each healing step, she stripped away the coat and was left with empowerment.

“I believe that opportunities like this, benefit residents by

giving them an outlet they don’t normally have. The most healing part about theatre is you get the chance to do something different. This shows you that anything is possible,” said JoyBelle Phelan, DU PAI staff.

Three cast members sat with *The Inside Report* and discussed their takeaway.

“This experience was inspiring and empowering. It reminded me how just alike we really are. By using community as method. We’ve all come together as a whole to create something beautiful,” said Kelsea Panewall, who played Adult Anne.

“I’ve always been a sucker for a sense of community. I’ve never done anything like this and I learned things about myself I didn’t know. I’m always excited to challenge myself. My character in the play embodies a true part of my life that I can connect with. I’ve reached a point that my growth can be shared with others. Being able to portray a character so close to my own self shows how far I’ve

come,” said Crystal Lucas, who played Young Anne.

“I’ve been pushed passed my comfort zone. I think the audience will be able to relate to it. Hopefully it helped people reflect on their own lives and make them aware of things they can change in their future,” said Madelyn Johnson, who played Victoria, Anne’s best friend.

An interactive strategy was fused into the play known as Street Theatre. It originated in Brazil, a method to include the public and create community. Dr. Clare Hammor, director from DU PAI, shed light on why he’s passionate about performing arts in prison. “Being in community in a really vulnerable, honest, and collaborative way is so rewarding. People on the outside say of their experience, ‘This changed my life.’ People on the inside, like the guys I worked with at Territorial for a year, really know what that means. We’ve opened that space for community, when people grow, change, and find that realization



Hard work made fun and rewarding with the direction and methods of Dr. Clare Hammor

[Photo courtesy of LVCF IR Bureau]



The cast and crew brought their own stories to life through the inspiration and leadership of Dr. Clare Hammor

[Photo courtesy of LVCF IR Bureau]

through art is so impactful.”

Hammor began teaching theatre in prisons in men’s maximum facilities in New York. He attended a Franciscan School, where Sister Helen Prejean left a huge impact on him from her work with men on death row. “I was captivated.” From that point, Hammor knew the path he wanted to take in graduate school. He went for his Masters and PhD in Applied Theater.

Hammor explained why he does what he does. “Theater

is the most powerful way to tell a story. I hope that everyone who participated in ‘A Universe Within’ has a sense of empowerment from this story.”

Hammor announced his excitement for the next production he will be directing at Fremont and Territorial Correctional Facilities. *Godspell*, a play written by Steven Schwartz, who is well-known for writing “Wicked.” Watching the inspiration unfold is truly transformative and is changing prison culture.

Hawaiian

Continued from page 2

direction of CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams, staff around the state are taking steps to normalize relations and conditions in prison. To help residents and staff better themselves by creating interactions that are more positive, humane, and dignified. The goal is to assist with the restoration of the men and women of the CDOC prison system.

Freeman, serving a sentence since 2007, with a parole eligibility date still years away, commented on his interaction with staff. “My recent experiences with staff is beyond simply socializing in sports activities or video gaming. I’ve sat down and have had heart to heart conversations about life with staff. Whether it be about the news and what the world is going through, or, more important, ways in which we can make a difference here at DRDC for residents and staff.”

Starting in 2017, Freeman lost his mom, Deborah, and brother Jammal to health issues. He observed the high and consistent

level of care that his family members received during their years of illness by Certified Nurse Assistants and medical staff members. Hearing of this motivated him to become an Offender Care Aide (OCA).

Freeman, thinking of the care his family received and wanting to pay it forward, took multiple OCA courses to become a certified OCA level 3 through CDOC. Freeman proactively asked his case manager to transfer to DRDC to work in the infirmary, where the need for higher level OCAs remains constant. Freeman was trained and now assists the medical staff and nurses with hospice care. He assists in the care for the very ill, severely physically challenged patients, and patients recovering from serious operations.

Freeman comments that the work is emotionally, mentally, and physically demanding. He finds the work rewarding, though, because he is helping his peers as well as staff. “My experience has opened up my eyes by aiding those on their death bed. When I’m free from prison, I will volunteer my time at Hospice, elderly homes and VA hospitals.”

DRDC is not a facility that

offers the typical amenities and programs. It is a facility that assesses new arrivals to the prison system, a transfer hub for other residents, and a medical facility that treats residents that rely on kidney dialysis and other major medical needs.

Inasmuch, there is not much for a permanently assigned resident to do at DRDC. Freeman likes to spend his time constructively by studying and growing his faith as a Christian believer, practicing his arts and crafts, and pursuing education.

In 2020, Freeman was watching the educational channel that DRDC provides and noticed that DU PAI was offering a class. He signed up for that class and every other subsequent DU PAI offering. Freeman has taken the classes Tell It Slant: Reading & Writing Creative Non-Fiction, Learning to See Through Drawing, Fine Art and Reflection, Learning Through Movement, and currently, Exploring Improvisation.

“So, we have this facility channel we call the ‘Smart Channel,’ and one day I was watching it and saw a course by DU PAI. The course was on “Dance.” The men were

performing and demonstrating different movements and it brought to mind the movements of my Hawaiian culture of the Haka. I inquired more about the DU PAI classes and saw there was a sign-up sheet to enroll in an upcoming course on non-fiction creative writing. I took it and learned a lot about myself. I learned I had deep emotions that I never thought that I had. I also gained the courage to open up and share with others. DU PAI instructors create safe spaces to grow and heal. I encourage everyone to enroll in any DU PAI course if given a chance. I guarantee you will learn something new and exciting about yourself.”

Freeman also involves himself in pro-social events like the fundraiser for Denver Dream Youth Center and “Boulder Strong” for the Boulder shooting victims where he drew and donated a painting piece called the Phoenix. “The Phoenix piece that I drew was my interpretation of the mystical beauty and power of this bird dying and then rising up from the ashes. I seek to help others around me in here as well as those out there in society.”

In addition, Freeman



Renaissance Man: Joaquin Mares

BY BOB EISENMAN
IR Copyeditor

I have never met Joaquin Mares personally, but for my entire incarceration I have heard of his talents from numerous people who run in the same artistic circles. When tasked to sum up his accomplishments, I turned to the men who have been lucky enough to learn directly from the master.

Mares is not only the Production Manager and Producer at Inside Wire, but is also a multi-talented, self-taught artist who excels in a multitude of mediums while residing at Limon Correctional Facility (LCF). Visual art and music are his primary foci, but his less visible art lies in his ability to inspire and lead others, often with as few spoken words as

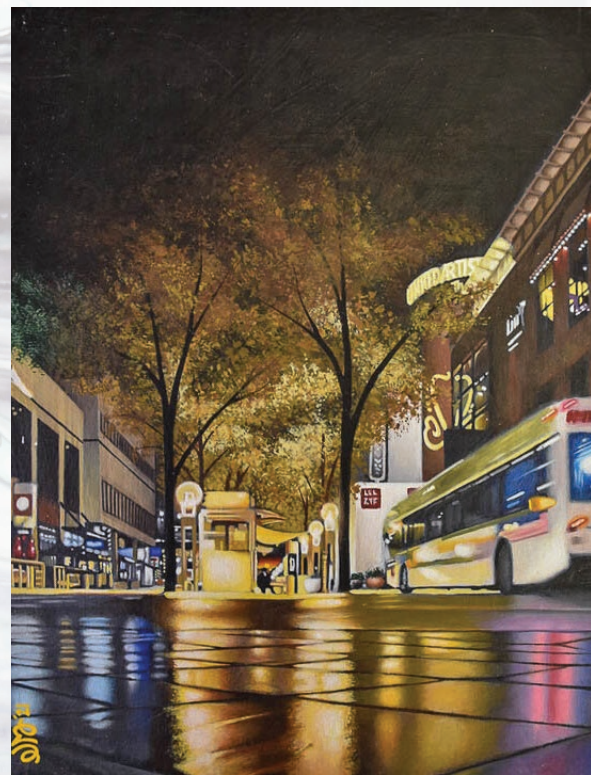
possible. “Joaquin’s humility is the most admirable thing about him,” FCF resident Phillip M. Montoya said. “The man will teach you to play like Carlos Santana or paint like Bob Ross, but trying to get him to brag about himself is pointless.”

“The man is a visionary,” FCF resident Raymond Gone added. “So talented and willing to share his knowledge with others, all while being patient and humble about his own skills.”

Mares began his artistic journey at a young age, dreaming of attending art school one day. Those aspirations were cut short by a life sentence, but Mares’ perseverance and dedication drove him to a personal transformation soon after his incarceration. Through

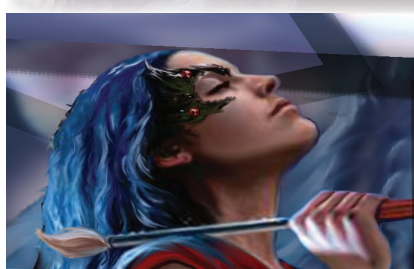
mutual acquaintances, Mares said, “When I first came to prison, art was a way for me to escape the hopelessness of my situation. But I later realized that I could empower myself through art, embrace my reality, and use it as motivation to create positive change.”

Whether his fingers are dancing across the fret board of a guitar or bringing images to life on canvas, Mares inspires others. The list of musicians and artists he has mentored over the years is extensive, and he has no plans on slowing down. He strives to both better himself and affirm the message that people are more than the worst thing they have ever done. Here is a small sample of the amazing artwork of one of our own. A true Renaissance man.



Top left	“Hot Shot”	36” x 48”	acrylic on masonite
Top right	“Vortex”	24” x 24”	acrylic on canvas
Center right	“Now and Zen”	8” x 10”	acrylic on canvas
Mid left	“Horizon”	12” x 48”	acrylic on masonite
Mid right	“Night at the Pavilion”	10” x 8”	acrylic on canvas
Bottom left	“Eurozone”	10” x 8”	acrylic on canvas
Bottom center	“Dreamscape”	10” x 8”	acrylic on masonite
Bottom right	“Terraform”	24” x 30”	acrylic on masonite

Featured Artist Submission



Artist Bio:

Age, Where were you born, Where did you grow up, How long have you been drawing?

Artist Statement:

What inspired the piece?
What techniques did you use?
Any tips you’d like to share with our readers?

Profile Questions:

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