

# The INSIDE REPORT

VOLUME 4 ISSUE 1

NEWS BREAKING PRISON WALLS

WINTER 2023

## Art in the making

*"One of the coolest human beings on Earth."*

Page 4



## Cosmetology

*"We all have a purpose."*

Page 2



## Algorithm for success

*"Culturally accomplished."*

Page 23

# If Light Closed Its Eyes

*A play performed entirely within the walls of a functioning living pod and opened to members of the public.*



Reflecting on our connectedness, from left to right: Jamal Watkins, Angel Lopez, Terry Mosely Jr., Lynell Hill, Contarius Alexander [Photo courtesy of Drummond West]

BY DANIEL FLEISHMAN  
SCF Contributor

An unusual bit of drama caught fire in SCF's Unit 4 during the last weeks of July. For once, it was not ignited by the typical friction created by hundreds of incarcerated men in close quarters. Rather, this was a powerful, Broadway-caliber production of an original play that moved many audience members to tears.

Two and a half years in the making, "If Light Closed Its Eyes" was not only written and performed by incarcerated men, it was also performed entirely within the walls of a functioning living pod and opened to members of the public. These were unprecedented firsts for DU PAI, which produced the play, and CDOC,

which lent support that was critical to its success.

The "verbatim documentary" play, written by a team including Matthew LaBonte, Terry Mosely Jr., Craig Forbes, and DeShon Mckinnie, is based on interviews with over 100 incarcerated people, victims, district attorneys,

politicians, spiritual leaders, and others. The script is made up of quotations from those interviews. The play employed over 80 cast and crew members, with original art, dance, lighting, set design, and music, most of which was created by men incarcerated at SCF.

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## Ben Bergeron: Building champions in CrossFit and life



Owner of CrossFit New England, Ben Bergeron

[Photo courtesy of Google Image Search]

BY EVAN LAWLOR  
IR Editor-in-Chief

It's not every day that you get the opportunity to sit down and interview one of the most renowned CrossFit coaches in the world. But on Nov. 23, 2022, that's exactly what happened.

With the gracious help of Damian Arguello and the guys of Xrucible, the CrossFit team at Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility, I, a current CrossFit Level I Trainer, along with IR Journalist Torey Kuznicki, was able to sit down with Ben Bergeron through a Zoom call.

For those who may not know, Ben is a proud father of four and the owner of CrossFit New England in Natick, Massachusetts. He is also the bestselling author of "Chasing Excellence" and "Unlocking Potential."

He has trained the likes of Mat Fraser

and Katrín Davíðóttir, both CrossFit Games champions. Others have included Brooke Wells, Cole Sager, and Amanda Barnhart.

When asked if he was excited about any up-and-comers in CrossFit, Ben said that he has just started working with Lucy McGonigle of Ireland.

"She's the real deal," Ben said. "She could do what other legends in our sport have done."

Believe it or not, Ben wasn't always into CrossFit. He started out in the business world of finance.

"I was doing investment banking and stuff like that. When 9/11 happened, I was kind of rocked and shocked by what happened and I moved to Wyoming for five months to try to figure out what I wanted to do."

It was during this time that Ben determined that he wanted to have some

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## Earned time for independent study graduates

BY ALEXANDER JASMINE  
IR Copyeditor

Incarcerated students who complete an approved associate or bachelor's degree via independent study programs will soon receive Achievement Earned Time (AET). The recent addition of AR 550-12B will award 30 days of AET if the degree was acquired after May 21, 2021. Completion of an approved bachelor's degree will award 60 days AET if acquired after May 21, 2021. This AR revision went into effect January 2023.

Independent study courses

must be pre-approved by the facility and the Office of Prison Programs. Universities will be contacted by CDOC upon completion of the degree to verify credit hours. Keep in mind that a degree earned through independent study is unrelated to the Second Chance Pell Program offered through Trinidad State College. However, Pell Grants for incarcerated individuals will be expanding in July 2023, allowing independent study students to apply for financial aid.

The influx of colleges and

universities offering higher education in prison presents an opportunity for CDOC administration to cultivate new partnerships with community organizations and revamp the mission statement of corrections, according to the Institute of Higher Education Policy. If CDOC allocates further resources toward proctoring services, computer access, and classroom availability, independent students earning AET may make an even larger positive impact across the state.

## Project Elevate

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN  
IR Journalist

Halfway houses were designed to help people leaving prison become acclimated to society. Over the years, they have become a place of transition for people with hurdles to overcome. People given the opportunity for community corrections/halfway houses often struggle to progress through the matrix and jump through hoops to transition into society. There has been a need to restructure how community corrections runs for some time now.

Project Elevate is pioneering a new type of community corrections. This halfway house is designed to house both women and transgender individuals. Cassandra Harris, or "Cass," the Director of Services, and Stephanie Robertson, Director of Operations, are working toward helping formerly incarcerated individuals regain their independence.

"No one should walk out of our door and not have a place to live. We expect 100% of our people to have a place to live, a job, and a plan to have their basic needs met. (We want them) to have their community supports in a safe and stable space," Robertson said.

"I think that my favorite thing about being employed with and being a part of this project is Denver's willingness and openness to change. They have been nothing but accommodating and amazing throughout the process. This is a partnership between the Empowerment Program and Denver. For two different agencies and ideas to come together, this has really

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## How to catch a beat

BY CASSIE RIEB  
DU PAI Group Leader

You could see them through the window—huddled in a classroom at DWCF, heads and shoulders moving back and forth in unison to the beat. Talent simmered beneath the surface of these residents, even if they didn't know it yet. Open Mic would become the platform that would teach them they could overcome anything, including being in DWCF's 3-D closed custody unit.

Open Mic is a resident-led program that was created by Amber Diecidue in 2021. Open Mic was launched with the intent of providing a new and unique outlet for DW's closed custody residents through spoken word and music. The success of the initial class, which was comprised solely of closed custody residents, allowed for a collaboration between the general population and closed custody in the same classroom for the second group. The students

had 12 weeks to write their own lyrics, compose melodies, and get their words to flow with an accompanying beat.

Many of the women, including Kelly "Lady" Martinez, had never created music before. Getting inspiration from the struggles she's experienced in her life, Lady wrote a poem that transformed into a rap. "I had to pick a beat and then learn how to catch a beat," she said. "I had to add a chorus and I included one of my homies I grew up with. It was merging everything together."

Like Lady did with her rap, Open Mic has displayed the amazing capacity we have to heal through merging pain and art. The caring and supportive atmosphere is palpable during rehearsals. Whether they are tackling stage fright or singing along when someone stumbles over their words, each artist is given space to be themselves, to grow, to make mistakes,

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## Traumatic brain injury behind the fences

BY ALEXANDER JASMINE  
IR Copyeditor

The latest research suggests 60% of Colorado's incarcerated population has a traumatic brain injury (TBI). This stands in stark contrast to the 8.5% rate of TBI in society's general population.

The discovery is credited to the Brain Injury Alliance of Colorado (BIAC), which works with various organizations to cultivate awareness and treatment of TBI symptoms. "There's no denying what the data is telling us," BIAC Vice President of Professional Programs Jaime Horsfall said.

"We know there are insane rates of TBI in the justice-involved population."

Specialists identify three types of head injuries: mild, moderate, and severe. Mild injury is described as an altered mental state with a loss of consciousness for under 30 minutes. Moderate head injury denotes losing consciousness for 30 minutes to 24 hours, and severe injuries exceed 24 hours of unconsciousness. Horsfall emphasized that multiple mild brain injuries over a short time, such as from childhood abuse or domestic violence, can

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## RESTORE Transitional Services

BY EVAN LAWLOR  
IR Editor-in-Chief

If someone were to sign up for an In-Reach Community Connection event at FCF, it would be fair to assume that all they would do is sit around a few tables, talk to a couple of community partners, and get information on resources available to them upon release. I mean, that's what all of the previous In-Reach events have been, right?

Denver WAGEES Case Manager Chelsea Secord, and Director of Operations, Marketing, and Business Development for Hazelbrook Community Center Jess Shvedov, had other ideas.

When participants walked into the FCF gym on Oct. 6, mixed reactions could be seen on their faces. While some were excited and some were curious, there were many that were immediately disinterested and clearly not amused.

Instead of the traditional set-up for meet and greets and networking with nicely dressed people, they were met with plyo boxes and medicine balls. And as for the nicely dressed people—they came in the form of Secord and Shvedov, two highly energetic women decked out in full workout garb.

Nervous energy filled the gym as participants for the event filed in. Once everyone was there, Kerry Barrett, the Community Connections Program Coordinator, took control, welcomed everyone, and introduced Secord and Shvedov. After that, it became the Jess Shvedov show.

Shvedov gave a brief overview of what the event would look like, informing everyone that exercise would be involved, with different workouts designed to target different areas of development. Again, mixed reactions could be seen on many faces. There were even a few whispers of, "I didn't sign up for this," and, "I'm not doing this."

Sensing some of the apprehension in the gym, Shvedov and Secord went into full motivation mode, ensuring people that it wouldn't be that bad and there would be a lesson to be learned.

After a thorough warm-up, Shvedov took the participants through a 10-minute push-up/plank combination workout. This was challenging even for the fittest people in the group. Immediately following that was

a five-minute wall-sit, which was absolutely devastating to most. You could hear Shvedov shouting, "You've done harder out there, a five-minute wall-sit is easy!"

Shvedov was nice enough to give everyone a few minutes to gather themselves and "recover" before she took participants through a quick leg routine. Then came the conditioning portion which was a 10-minute AMRAP consisting of running laps around the gym, burpee box jump-overs, wall ball shots, and jumping split lunges. A few minutes in, Shvedov offered these inspiring words: "When you're faced with a challenge, when you want to give up, what do you tell yourself? What's your self-talk? What's the voice in your head saying to you? It better be saying, 'Get the eff up and keep going!' Because you CAN!"

It was at this part of the morning that you could start to see a change in the overall demeanor of the group. You could see complete buy-in. At the encouragement of Shvedov and Secord, there were people competing with each other, people enjoying sweating with their friends, and others flat-out grinding to just get through it. Many were cheering each other on to keep fighting and finish. By the end of the workout, there was a sense of accomplishment among everyone involved.

With time becoming a factor, Shvedov took the group through a yoga-based cool down routine while answering questions anyone had. The lesson and message of the event was not lost on FCF resident Louie Moreno. "This was about more than just working out," he said. "This was a way for people to be tested to see how they react when tasked with something tough and unexpected. It was a way for them to find in themselves the will and the strength to persevere through a difficult time."

"What we can't do alone, we can do together," Secord says. "Don't pick up no matter what, and don't give up no matter what. Those are the only rules you have to follow."

A morning that started out with a high level of uncertainty ended as one brimming with self-confidence and self-assurance. It's just a small example of the inspiration and support our many community partners have to offer.

## Beauty school drop-ins at La Vista

BY SYDNEY WHITE  
IR Journalist

Every morning, LVCF residents hit the pavement to their assigned program or work assignment. For many, that walk is toward their future success through the cosmetology program. The cosmetology course, offered through Pueblo Community College (PCC), offers certifications for hairstyling, estheticians, and nail technicians.

The cosmetology program takes 18 to 24 months to complete, requiring 1,890 hours and 63 college credits. Instructors supervise students for their practical hours while they give various services to their clientele. Cosmetology teaches

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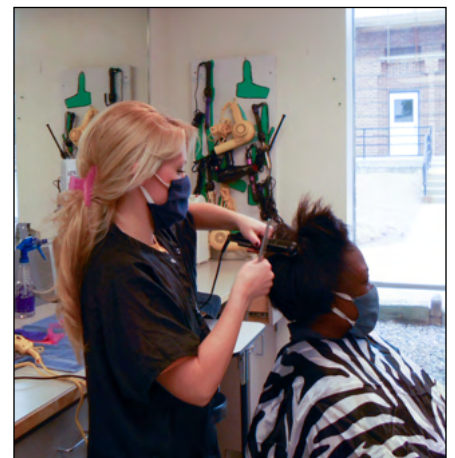
Oh you fancy, huh? Nails done...

[Photo courtesy of LVCF]



Hair done...

[Photo courtesy of LVCF]



Everything big...

[Photo courtesy of LVCF]

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

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## Changing The Face of INSIDE REPORT

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1  
 JULY 2023  
 Breaking News From Behind The Walls



### Dean Williams Pushes for a Culture Change

Interview with Executive Director Dean Williams

Dean Williams, Executive Director of the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative, is pushing for a culture change in the way we report on the news from behind the walls. He believes that the current way of reporting is outdated and does not reflect the reality of the prison system. He wants to see a shift in focus from just reporting on the news to also reporting on the people and the community that are affected by the news.



Dean Williams, Executive Director of the University of Denver Prison Arts Initiative, is pushing for a culture change in the way we report on the news from behind the walls.

## The INSIDE REPORT

VOLUME 2 ISSUE 1  
 BREAKING NEWS FROM BEHIND THE WALLS  
 OCTOBER 2023

### No horsing around

Four Mile Wild Horse Inmate Program



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a wild horse program.

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of the Four Mile Wild Horse Inmate Program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about wild horse management and conservation. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in the field. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the environment and the importance of wild horse management.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a virtual classroom.

### CDCC partakes in virtual classrooms

Creating accessibility to learning

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of virtual classrooms. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about various topics in a virtual environment. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a virtual environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about various topics and the importance of learning.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a memorial workout.

### Memorial workout brings out the best at Four Mile

A gift from the heart

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a memorial workout. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of physical fitness and the importance of giving back to the community. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a physical environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of physical fitness and the importance of giving back to the community.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a heart health program.

### How is your heart health?

It's time to take control

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a heart health program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of heart health and the importance of taking control of their health. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a heart health environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of heart health and the importance of taking control of their health.



## The INSIDE REPORT

VOLUME 1 ISSUE 1  
 JULY 2023  
 Breaking News From Behind The Walls

### Healing Through VOD

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a healing through VOD program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of virtual reality and the importance of healing through technology. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a virtual reality environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of virtual reality and the importance of healing through technology.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a redemption through the wire program.

### Redemption Through the Wire

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a redemption through the wire program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of redemption and the importance of learning through the wire. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a redemption through the wire environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of redemption and the importance of learning through the wire.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a one flew over the cuckoo's nest program.

### One flew over the cuckoo's nest

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a one flew over the cuckoo's nest program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of mental health and the importance of learning through the cuckoo's nest. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a one flew over the cuckoo's nest environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of mental health and the importance of learning through the cuckoo's nest.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a death penalty dies in house 38-27 program.

### Death Penalty Dies In House 38-27

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a death penalty dies in house 38-27 program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of the death penalty and the importance of learning through house 38-27. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a death penalty dies in house 38-27 environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of the death penalty and the importance of learning through house 38-27.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a lighting the path program.

### Lighting the Path

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a lighting the path program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of lighting the path and the importance of learning through the path. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a lighting the path environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of lighting the path and the importance of learning through the path.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a heroes among us program.

### Heroes among us

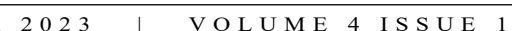
The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a heroes among us program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of heroes and the importance of learning through heroes. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a heroes among us environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of heroes and the importance of learning through heroes.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a no bare cupboard program.

### No bare cupboard

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a no bare cupboard program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of a no bare cupboard and the importance of learning through a no bare cupboard. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a no bare cupboard environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of a no bare cupboard and the importance of learning through a no bare cupboard.



A group of people, including inmates and staff, participating in a prison radio launch program.

### Prison radio launch

The CDCC is proud to announce the launch of a prison radio launch program. This program provides inmates with a unique opportunity to learn about the importance of a prison radio launch and the importance of learning through a prison radio launch. The program is led by experts in the field and provides inmates with hands-on experience in a prison radio launch environment. The program is a great way for inmates to learn about the importance of a prison radio launch and the importance of learning through a prison radio launch.

## Dying to get off the list

BY BOB EISENMAN  
IR Writer Development Coordinator

People are literally dying to get off the lifetime supervision list.

Statistics can be deceiving, and it is often the unreported statistics that put things to a new light. Sex offenders (SOs) are required to remain on the lifetime supervision list as per the Lifetime Supervision Act, but there are caveats that

allow SOs to earn early release from the list. On the surface, it looks as if the Sex Offender Management Board (SOMB) is making progress, as only 59 new court commitments were admitted to CDOC under the lifetime supervision provisions for sex offenders during the 2021 fiscal year, whereas 64 inmates were removed from the list. Unfortunately, the statistic not highlighted is that more people died to get off the list than were removed by the processes worked into the law.

Of the 64 inmates removed in 2021, 34 of those were from death. Further, while the SOMB report displays statistics that imply a downward trend of inmates put in prison under the Lifetime Supervision Act, when compared year to year, this is not the case. The 59 new court commitments is low compared to previous years, but nothing is noted about the slowdown of the courts due to COVID. Now that the courts are back open, the number of new commitments is expected to jump when the 2022

report is released later this year.

This statistic hits home, as a friend of IR was recently diagnosed with a terminal illness. He was granted Special Needs Parole, but is being delayed from release to his family because he remains on the waitlist for SOTMP classes, and there is a conflict in the statutes. On one hand, he is dying (soon) and was granted the ability to go home to his family; but on the other hand, the law states that all people convicted of a sex crime must progress in

treatment to even have a chance at parole. Conflicting statutes create more legal hoops to jump through so that he can live out his last days with his loved ones. The ironic “good news” is that at least he found a way to get his name removed from the list sooner than later.

There have been rumors of changes to the LSA for many years, but as of this writing, no upcoming alterations to the LSA or sex offender requirements have been confirmed.

## Eligibility for Special Needs Parole

BY RYAN JONES  
IR Writer's Workshop

Special Needs Parole (SNP) is one of the rights that many CDOC residents have without knowing it exists.

The Colorado State Board of Parole introduced SNP in 2014 with SB 11-241. This process matured through various iterations and was expanded and solidified in the legislative body in July 2021 through SB21-146. This required a revision of CDOC's Administrative Regulation (AR) in 2021 (AR550-13).

There are now four distinct categories of eligibility:

1. A person who is 64 years or older and has served at least 20 years. This does not apply to residents convicted of a Class 1 or 2 VRA Felony, unlawful sexual behavior, domestic violence, or stalking.

2. A person who is 55 years or older and has been diagnosed by a CDOC health care professional as suffering from a

chronic infirmity, illness, condition, disease, or behavioral or mental health disorder that limits the person's ability to function.

3. A person of any age who has been diagnosed by a CDOC health care professional as meeting the criteria for chronic, permanent, terminal, or irreversible physical illness, condition, disease, or behavioral or mental health disorder that requires costly care of treatment and is incapacitated.

4. A person who has been diagnosed by a CDOC health care professional as incompetent to proceed (due to conditions such as dementia).

The process to apply begins with an application available from a C/M. In 2022, CDOC created a specialized team of case managers in Colorado Springs who shepherd an inmate through the stages of SNP, once referred by their C/M.

In an interview on Aug. 2, 2022 with Inside Wire, the Head C/M for SNP, Alison Vinky, spoke passionately about the challenges CDOC faces with an aging

and/or ill population. Vinky reiterated that “everyone should apply... you are not alone through the process.”

Historically, CDOC would recommend to the parole board eligible residents for SNP. Through SB21-146, CDOC's role has been limited to advising the parole board only on an individual's eligibility to meet the clinical and legal criteria.

If a resident meets this criteria, a referral packet is prepared for the parole board to evaluate. This packet includes a parole plan, parole sponsor, and any persons who may be able to assist in providing medical or mental health needs upon release. This packet could also include a victim impact statement or response from the prevailing district attorney's office for residents convicted of a violent crime (as outlined in CRS 18-1.3-406) or a crime that is sexual in nature (as outlined in CRS 18-1.3-1004), if received within 30 days of notification.

The parole board has 30 days to review and vote on a proposed discretionary release. Should an inmate be denied parole, they can re-apply when their

medical or mental health status deteriorates further.

In 2022, the public defender's office also created a team to assist residents with additional support through the SNP process. The assistance this team offers includes: reviewing denied cases, completion of parole plans and personal statements, referral to CDOC re-entry, and the acceptance of referrals for consideration of SNP by other residents.

Despite all the support offered across the prison/legal community, Vinky noted that only 67 applications have been submitted to the parole board for consideration so far in 2022. Vinky reiterated, “If you know someone who should apply, let us know!” This plea was also extended to CDOC employees. “If you see something, say something.”

Vinky offered CDOC's email address to start the application process: DOC\_SNP\_CASEMANAGER@doc.co.us

**Editor's Note:** If you have applied for Special Needs Parole and met the clinical and legal criteria but were declined, we would like to hear from you.

## Fatal crash causes sentencing reform

BY ISAAC DAVIS  
IR Writing Corps

In December of 2020, activists and lawmakers called on Gov. Jared Polis for sentencing reform when truck driver Rogel Aguilera-Mederos was sentenced to 110 years in prison for his role in a fatal multi-vehicle crash in 2019. In this case, the lengthy sentence was statutorily required under Colorado law.

Following public outcry, Polis commuted the 110-year sentence down to a 10-year sentence. Subsequently, Polis asked the Colorado Commission on Criminal and Juvenile Justice (CCJJ) to address, specifically, the issues driving the mandatory sentence in this case. Polis also asked the CCJJ to revisit and change sentencing for misdemeanors and felonies. Aguilera-Mederos' case increased scrutiny on mandatory consecutive sentencing and mandatory-minimum sentences, which reform advocates hope to see addressed in legislation soon.

In January 2022, lawmakers hosted a hearing to question members of the Sentencing Reform Task Force about their timeline for the felony sentencing bill that is expected to introduce

new sentencing this year. However, according to Michael Doherty, the co-chair of the Sentencing Reform Task Force 20<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Attorney, it may not be until 2023 before the state legislature sees a vote on an overhaul of the current sentencing laws.

Fortunately, the CCJJ's Sentencing Reform Task Force has a record of achieving results. In July 2021, a bill that reduces the number of misdemeanor classifications and reclassified certain felonies as misdemeanors was signed into law. This bill positively affected numerous incarcerated individuals' sentences to date.

Doherty added that the work on felony sentencing, as pertaining to mandatory consecutive sentences, habitual offenses, and extraordinary risk, is underway and he expects to have a better idea of a timeline for this bill soon. At this time, it is not clear if these laws would be retroactive when voted upon.

A new bill could positively affect a great number of incarcerated people across the state that are suffering at the hands of Colorado's sentencing structure.

## Geriatric care unit

BY DAVID SCHULERUD  
SCCF Bureau Chief

A specialized unit within CDOC called the Dementia Unit is housed within the confines of SCCF in Pueblo. Seven clients and 10 Offender Care Aids (OCAs) made the trip to Pueblo in May 2020. Two years later, the unit has 11 dementia patients and 13 OCAs.

The unit has a unique and groundbreaking set up. Imagine not only working in a nursing home, but when your shift is done, you walk down the hall to your own room. The patients and OCAs reside in the same unit at SCCF. Even though the shift is eight hours, the care that the OCAs give never ends. Although staff is present, the majority of day-to-day care and upkeep is handled by the dedicated OCA and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNAs) assigned to oversee the unit.

Many age-related issues have begun to arise in Colorado's prison population as there are more and more elderly residents. A major one is dementia. The word “dementia”

is a generic term that describes the state of deterioration in the intellectual faculties brought on by an underlying condition of the brain. An individual can develop dementia from a number of situations including strokes, heart attacks, or alcohol/drug abuse. The most common and recognizable cause is Alzheimer's disease. Although rare, there are instances where the onset of dementia can be found even in younger people.

The severity of dementia varies from case to case and is degenerative, meaning it will worsen in most cases. Some of it depends on how long the patient has been diagnosed with or suffered from the underlying conditions. In some cases, such as when someone experiences a heart attack, cognitive functions can return to normalcy. Many of the clients experience memory loss and have difficulties remembering where they are or how they got there. Some of the clients also have serious behavioral issues, which can materialize as verbal or physical episodes. It is not uncommon for a patient to have violent mood swings

and cognition issues.

Each day brings new rewards and challenges to the OCAs and staff who look after clients. The level of care each client requires varies daily. Most of the OCAs have been working with their clients for a while and are well attuned to their needs. OCAs treat their clients with attentiveness and warmth, regardless of their mental or physical health. A visitor might find one OCA giving friendly reminders while another is dodging a right hook.

OCAs and staff have worked hard to create an environment where compassion and care is the norm, not the exception. OCAs dedicate themselves to their job by giving aid and succor to the most vulnerable population within CDOC. Most of them would say the job they do gives them a sense of giving back and making a positive impact in their community. Also, they take solace knowing that were they ever in need of this kind of care, there would be someone like themselves there to offer it.

## Hope is a form of rebellion

BY BOB EISENMAN  
IR Writer Development Coordinator

For the record, Editor-in-Chief, trying to sum up Molly Ott in 900 words or less an impossible writing assignment. But here we go anyway...

Hope is a form of rebellion. Hearing that statement alone, from an art instructor with DU PAI, told me IR needed to tell this story. Spoiler alert... this is not the story you think it is. We print many articles about classes and productions that DU PAI presents at various prisons

around the state. More often than not, we hear, “Hey, that's great. That facility got to do something cool and we didn't.” So rather than telling you about an art class (which was amazing, but irrelevant to this article), allow me to introduce everyone to Molly Ott, one of the coolest human beings on Earth. I asked around if I was overselling Ms. Ott but was informed that no matter what I say here, I will fall short of the mark. So, imagine the coolest person you know and then up that by a few notches.

Molly Ott is an incredible artist who works in a variety of mediums, but the point of this story is Molly herself. You may never meet her, but

I assure you that Molly cares about you, about us, about everyone. “Rare human being,” as Dr. Ashley Hamilton, Executive Director of DU PAI, stated, does not even begin to explain Molly.

Molly moved to Colorado to pursue her master's degree. Partway through her degree, she took a summer job working with goats on a farm outside Florence, Arizona, to get away from academia, leave the city, and work with her hands. While there, she learned of the infamous prison and the palpable effects one feels when a community's culture and economy centers around a correctional facility: Molly met the

Continued on page 16

## SWIFT job opportunities for firefighters

BY LUTHER HAMPSON  
IR Journalist

The State Wildland Inmate Fire Team (SWIFT) gives Colorado prison inmates a chance to receive training and employment as a wildland firefighter while serving their time. The program gives incarcerated men the same training as the state's seasonal fire crews. What good is this quality of training if it cannot be used to gain employment in the outside community?

Unfortunately, while more than 2,500 clients have participated in the program since its inception, fewer than 50 have been employed as a full-time firefighter after release. Only 2% of SWIFT members are given a chance to prove themselves in outside communities. A new law signed by Gov. Jared Polis is structured to make the SWIFT training not just

useful to re-entry and work in the industry, but a realistic employment opportunity.

This new law, SB21-012, opens a path for convicted felons to work for the State Division of Fire Prevention and Control as wildland firefighters. The bill also encourages the division to hire former fire crew members while they are incarcerated. The implementation of a peer mentor program is required for those hired for wildland fire services so that they may develop and maintain professional skills.

This new legislation could be a game changer for those SWIFT graduates who would otherwise have to climb a fiery mountain to find gainful employment. "Inmates who leave prison without jobs, without a home and no social connections, are more likely to return to

prison. While the program helps boost morale and provide structure for those incarcerated, it also lowers recidivism rates by helping prisoners find jobs once they are released and leave prison with some money in their pockets," Executive Director of CDOC Dean Williams said. Adamant about leaving a legacy of change for these men who will be returning to our communities, Williams said, "It doesn't solve all our recidivism problems, but it's important that we continue to take one more bite of the apple of providing work opportunities for people out of prison." Danny Redburn, a volunteer firefighter with the Dolores Fire Protection District and landowner whose ranch is vulnerable to forest fire, recognizes the importance of taking full advantage of the resources available to mitigate

that vulnerability. He supports the idea of hiring incarcerated and formally incarcerated residents as wildland firefighters.

Another bill signed by Polis, SB21-258, creates the Colorado Strategic Wildfire Action Program (COSWAP) after the 2020 fire season's devastating effects. COSWAP makes it possible to move state stimulus funds into wildfire mitigation projects for vulnerable communities. In addition, COSWAP creates a funding bank of \$17.5 million for the next three years to increase and expand SWIFT's capabilities.

This gives the Department the ability to include over 160 men willing to serve their communities. Director Williams, who previously stated the importance of being able to walk through the threshold of freedom with extra

money, has expressed a desire to pay crews higher wages—\$50 a day while fighting fires and even more for those who have earned supervisory positions. "We're going to pay a better wage, attract more people behind the walls to do the work, and it provides a meaningful opportunity to give back to the community. It is a high public service," Williams said. The Director also expressed his desire to expand the candidate criteria for the state program, which is currently limited to men with non-violent offenses to be more inclusive, including being available to women. Already, SWIFT has recently updated its PED restrictions from three years to five years.

Mega-fires have become a common occurrence in Colorado. An offensive tactic from firefighters must be

carried out to protect the communities from fire danger. The offensive playbook includes reducing hazardous fuels, forest thinning, and clearing evacuation routes). COSWAP helps ensure that this work can be done year-round and provides the hands to do so. This public service provides opportunities for offenders to save and manage funds, gain skills, and prepare for successful re-entry into the community. Going from victimizing your community to protecting its infrastructure, homes, and saving human lives is an incredible transformation. Recently, CDOC hired a former inmate on parole to be a fire boss for the program. A paid community position. He earned it and has been given the trust and respect that he worked so hard for.

## Job market not as great as you think

BY BOB EISENMAN  
IR Writer Development Coordinator

With the current labor market, one would think that getting a job would be easier than ever, even coming out of prison. Unfortunately, new research shows that formerly incarcerated people might not have it as easy as it seems on the surface.

An estimated 60% of formerly incarcerated people across the U.S. are jobless as of Feb. 8, 2022. In fact, over the last four years, 33% of the people released from federal prisons found no employment whatsoever. A study released by the Bureau of Justice Statistics shows that the formerly incarcerated who have found employment often have multiple jobs, averaging 3.4 jobs over a four-year period.

Unemployment is unfortunately not new to many incarcerated individuals. Many residents of CDOC were unemployed before they came to prison, which only adds to their difficulties finding a job upon release. In 2019, 48% of formerly incarcerated people in Colorado were unemployable because of their incarceration history. Not their criminal history, their incarceration history. Gaining consistent employment is one of the benchmarks of success for people on parole, yet those who are released from prison have to work substantially harder to find that employment.

Even when formerly incarcerated

workers find a job, they have to work harder to make a living wage. Understand that no matter the qualifications, formerly incarcerated people will earn roughly 53% of the median U.S. worker's wage when beginning a new job. Even after retaining that job, formerly incarcerated employee will earn roughly 84 cents for every dollar of the U.S. median wage.

Colorado has made strides to assist those men and women leaving prison by first removing "the box" from applications asking about criminal history. But most businesses still run a background check on applicants, and parole officers often visit job sites, so it is likely that felony convictions will come to light in one way, shape, or form.

What does this mean for those residents getting ready to change their status from "incarcerated" to "formerly incarcerated?" It means they have to work that much harder and fill out that many more applications than the average person. There are many job openings, as any news outlet touting the current job market will report, but keep in mind that coming out of prison and "wanting" to work is not enough. Put your best foot forward, over and over again. Formerly incarcerated people simply have to prove themselves more than someone without that record of incarceration hanging over their shoulder.

\*Editor's note\*

IR thanks Prison Policy Initiative for providing the data for this article.

## Backpack drive

BY CAPT. RANDY COOK  
TCF Contributor

On Aug. 18, 2022, members of the Facility Impact Team (FIT) at TCF stuffed 26 backpacks full of everything an elementary school student would need for the school year. These supplies were donated to a local elementary school for students whose families could not afford them. All funding for the project was raised by TCF residents and staff members. FIT is a group of residents who work closely with staff and the resident population to bring about change on behalf of both sides. Cpt. Randall Cook and Lt. Daniel Mascarenas acted as representatives of both staff and residents, and participating FIT members included Vaughn Seery, Al Williams, Kevin

Weidman, Karen Gasparyan, Josh Calhoun, and Caleb Collins.

The goal for these types of projects is to develop altruism within the incarcerated community. Outreach is a part of rehabilitation. The culture that we are working to create at TCF involves purpose and impact. This project is one of many the members of FIT are working on in pursuit of that culture. The residents and staff at TCF hope to set a standard that other facilities across Colorado can witness and replicate. This standard is to be a part of our local communities even while residing at TCF and wishing to help our communities in their times of need.



Facility Impact Team members  
[Photo courtesy of Capt. Cook]

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## Life without... education

BY TOREY KUZNICKI  
IR Journalist

Imagine a lifer. What purpose does he or she have other than to occupy the space and time for all of eternity? Very few lifers have broken out of their own prison walls of self-limiting beliefs and adopted a sense of true self-worth and purpose. Some lifers seek out every opportunity within prison, but the reality is that most wait for opportunities that will give them a second look.

Higher education opportunities are few and far between for an individual with life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) because correctional departments nationwide would rather allocate limited educational funding to those who are re-entering society, typically within five years. This method makes sense. However, when do correctional departments take into account that regardless of a person's sentence, their lives still have tremendous value and meaning? This is especially true of those with LWOP sentences. Ultimately, those men and women who carry the burden of a life sentence have a court-

given right to enrich themselves. They can contribute to the incarcerated community by setting a positive example not only for other prospecting prisoners interested in a higher education, but also for the younger generation of inmates who looks up to the old-timers for guidance.

According to the VERA Institute, there are roughly 200,000 inmates across the United States serving a life sentence. That number makes up nearly half of the lifer population worldwide. Imagine if all of those men and women had access to higher education and walked the prison yards as influential scholars rather than floating purposelessly across the timeless waters of LWOP.

Through education, some may find a life-raft to help channel restorative practices back into the correctional community and beyond. The Second Chance Pell program (SCP), has made more than 50,000 grants available to incarcerated individuals across 42 states. Pretty wide-ranging, right? Unfortunately, according to Prison Legal News, less than

half of those grants have been used since the SCP began in late 2015. Fault doesn't fall upon the SCP or a shortage of applicants, but rather on a bureaucratic decision to exclude individuals with LWOP from the program entirely.

Due to logistical challenges within some state institutions, policies have been constructed that obstruct Pell program access to not just lifers, but to 95% of the nation's prisoners who are ineligible to participate. Even though Pell grants become available to lifers in July 2023, "Individual states can still set limitations on who's eligible for programs," says Charlotte West, a reporter from Open Campus, a non-profit national publication focused on higher education. The traditional paradigm that "prison should be punishment rather than rehabilitation" needs to shift toward creating a more academic prison environment for the entire population of prisoners, not just people who are reentering society. We are all deserving and worthy of educational opportunities, behind bars and beyond the gates.

## Peer-led programming

BY RAYMOND FREDERICKS  
IR Writing Corps

New ideas get thrown around the cell house for a productive activity that CDC should offer inmates to give people choices beyond sitting in the day hall all the time. However, few peer-led programs are in effect outside of CrossFit and 7 Habits. Wardens have called for program proposals, but few have come to fruition. Several people involved in that pipeline from concept to reality have advice for making the next program a success.

Staff availability is limited, as is space and money. Developing a program that uses staff, space, or money must provide significant benefits to the whole community. Programs done in a cell house have a better chance of being approved. For example, Gifts from the Heart has made its way to several facilities and runs entirely within the pods. Nevertheless, any good idea can become reality. "Ninety-nine percent of the time a proposal will work but you just have to tweak it," FCF Programs Captain Michael Sherwood said. "So, it's not uncommon for us to meet several times to make sure the proposal is written correctly and make sure its got

everything it needs."

A proposal must adhere to all Administrative Regulations (AR) and be submitted on AR form 900-01F. Many of the programs running currently had staff involvement and support before submitting proposals. While not required, if department staff aid in development, they can give guidance and more importantly expedite the process. Another necessity revolves around inmate appeal. Ensuring interest beyond just a few friends before starting determines whether five or 50 people sign up.

Vigilance triumphs. A new program, regardless of size, takes time and hard work to start. Then, more time to keep it running. Sherwood says not to take a proposal kickback personally. There are many reasons a proposal may need to be amended, but none of those are due to the name on the top. Also, be flexible. Modifications come from every administrative level, but many of those can be addressed upfront. "That's what I do. I assist you in writing that proposal," Sherwood said. "I'm going to give you all the resources, tools, and guidance you need, but you're going to do the leg work."

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

## Beyond Thinking

BY CARLOS MARQUEZ  
DRDC Bureau Chief

It was a crisp early Saturday morning, the beginning of a new year, 2020, when I noticed a diverse group of residents giving speeches. They stood... A transgender person was holding the attention of four men. Two of the four, one African American and one Italian-American, were former gang members, and the other two audience members were Indian-Muslim and Mexican-National. They hung to every word the speaker said and gave her a standing ovation when she ended her speech. It was incredulous. The group met on their own time for the purposes of improving themselves together. This is what normal looks like: collectively pooling resources (i.e. people) together to overcome adversity. This is a proven winning model.

This group was one of many informal groups I had seen these past two years on Saturday mornings. They are participants of Beyond Thinking.

Fredrick Mayberry, a former resident and now a

successfully re-integrated citizen, and Justin Box, a current resident at AVCF, developed "Beyond Thinking." Beyond Thinking is a class that lasts 10-16 weeks, featuring two facilitators and ten participants. To pass the class, participants give a final presentation of their chosen book, chair a class, and give 10-16 presentations.

The program started as a book club. Corey Wagner, an original participant, stated that Mayberry loved to read books and share his thoughts with others but often struggled to retain the information. Mayberry wondered, if he could get 10 people to read 10 different books and review them as a group, would they have the same issue? The book club would offer a platform to assist participants with the ability to reflect, retain, and repeat the books' information.

Mayberry pitched his idea to Michelle Howard, a drug and alcohol counselor. Howard thought it was a good idea. In turn, she tapped Box with the idea and asked for his involvement. Box entered CDC at the age of fifteen. A former gang member convicted of a gang-related crime of violence, he began to read anything that promoted

positive thinking to discover who he was. He wanted to turn his knowledge into action. Howard knew that Box would give the book club the professional attention it needed to lift off the ground.

Howard learned of Box's talent from her supervision of the Gang Awareness Program (GAP), developed by CDC residents Rhidale Dotson and Cedric Watson. GAP showed great potential as a pilot program but never fully launched throughout CDC. Dotson and Watkins handpicked Box to be the peer facilitator due to his determination, dedication, and diligence.

Box learned he was good at program development and bad at public speaking. He knew that in order to become an effective trainer and leader, he would have to learn to overcome this problem. Box read every book he could get his hands on regarding public speaking, while observing Dotson and Watkins speak publicly. Over time, he learned to be an effective communicator.

Indeed, Box saw the need for other trainers in GAP to practice public speaking. He designed a training class on public speaking and noticed

the positive results in the trainers, including confidence and improved self-esteem.

Box envisioned more than a book club. He collaborated with Mayberry to design, format, and structure what would become Beyond Thinking. Howard sponsored the program and AVCF gave the green light to run it.

A unique piece to a Beyond Thinking class is the focus on positive reinforcement. They open with each participant saying, "What's good, and what's new?" At the end of the presentations, each person says, "What's good, and what's next?" Box's motivation with this piece is to insert positive emotional attractors (PEA), which are a form of motivation that focuses on something you want to accomplish while promoting the avoidance of negative accomplishments. Furthermore, Wagner says, "It works ...it's like the class becomes organic in establishing a positive atmosphere and the participants become infused with self-reflection and awareness."

The first class had a slow start due to growing pains. But when residents saw the results of the Beyond Thinking graduates, they

wanted to get involved.

The waiting list grew beyond 70 and Box saw the need to expand the program's capacity. He developed a class to train peer facilitators to meet the demand. After the first graduating class of facilitators, Beyond Thinking grew to two classes, one in the a.m., and one in the p.m. In addition, the facilitators were able to have informal classes on Saturday mornings in the Incentive Unit.

The extraordinary success that unfolded required Box to sit down with Wagner, now a senior peer facilitator, and ask for his help to re-vamp Beyond Thinking. In 2019, Box and Wagner developed a new mission, vision, and value statements for Beyond Thinking

Mission: "To empower people in discovering their noble self through authentic self-expression."

Vision: "To be a universal platform for the application of communication skills and the authentic expression of self." Values: "(SPEAK) Self-expression, Projection, Empowerment, Affirmation, and Keeness."

Box and Wagner

launched three offshoots of Beyond Thinking: Beyond Thinking's Deep Dive, a ten-week, small group discussion series on real life issues; Open Mic, a monthly, open platform for verbal expression; and Re-Entry, a class for residents housed in the Re-entry pod.

The expansion has been overwhelmingly popular and successful. The diversity of people, talent, and topics is amazing. Box is ambitious about seeing Beyond Thinking grow further at AVCF and reaching other facilities in the next two to three years. At AVCF, he would like to see advanced and specialized versions in Spanish, along with debate classes, workshops, and seminars.

What is Beyond Thinking? It is a means to an end, to find your voice and define yourself. "We teach tangible skills as a means to develop intangible aspects of the self," Box said. Beyond Thinking is a communications program that will give you tools to express yourself on multiple levels, formats, and platforms. You will be able to transcend fears, setbacks, and barriers in order to exceed expectations.

## Beauty school

Continued from page 2

an array of skills, including business and resume preparations, grooming, and how to best present yourself for a job interview. Students learn customer service skills and how to interact positively with others. Their education includes subjects like chemistry, electricity, angles and design, safety and sanitation, and much more.

Another benefit of the program is the revenue it brings through students working on staff and residents in CDOC. Students are able to practice and maintain their skills. Currently, there are only two cosmetology teachers in CDOC, located at LVCF. Mrs. Winget and Mrs. Lerma, as well as a graduate of the program, sat down with *The Inside Report* to discuss the importance of the cosmetology program and what it offers to participants.

Winget is dedicated to her students and believes that the program's impact on students is profound. This impact not only sets the students up for success but also reaffirms why she teaches in CDOC. During her time teaching, she has noticed that some picked up the concepts right away, while others took a little longer. She contributes this to pride. She says "Once they put that wall down they are able to do tasks correctly."

Winget previously worked as a C/O and said the view as an officer compared to teacher is quite different. As a teacher she opens up more to the residents of CDOC. She admits there are new struggles as a teacher, too, and would like to feel more supported in her role. The main change instructors want is more contact time with their students. Particularly after COVID, teachers are expected to do other work beyond teaching. "Morale went down with staff and students after COVID. Getting back to normal is an adjustment, but one that can be done. Cosmo is a great incentive. Communication in facilities could be improved, because this also can affect students."

A lasting impression for Winget is the appreciation she receives from students after they pass their state boards. "So many view those incarcerated with a lens of, 'They've messed up and they're done.' When someone believes in them, they thrive." Winget supports her graduates by giving them a list of resources, contacts, and letters of reference. "This helps with success. I stuck with them no matter the difficulties."

Winget and Lerma agree that passing the practical exam is far easier than the written, in general, but students receiving their license is a great reward. Winget believes, for men and women, this is a great career field in which you can set your own schedule. "Positive reinforcement and constructive criticism pay off." She says her students have also taught her to be better.

Lerma has a bachelor's degree in mass communications. She was a radio DJ and ran her own salon, and her experience comes through as an instructor. This is Lerma's dream job. She loves teaching

and working in the beauty industry. She always wants to learn more and keep growing in her knowledge. She is so grateful for her students and their gratitude when they pass.

"Everyone learns differently. Everyone comes from different backgrounds," Lerma said. In cosmetology, teachers have to keep up with the industry as well as rules and regulations through DORA and CDOC. "I find it rewarding when my students are working in a salon, licensed, and doing well. Utilizing skills they learned to not come back to prison." Lerma goes over business plans with her classes and has them create their own. This teaches them a variety of tools they can use in their career and in life. She wants her students to build their self-esteem and know they are worthy.

Lerma detailed how graduates, after becoming licensed, can own their own salon. "There are different options as a business owner, such as having a partner or working by yourself. One can have their own salon suite or booth rental. The opportunities are endless once you are established." It is beneficial that residents in CDOC receive a free education in cosmetology that averages a cost of \$30,000. Even if students earn early release, they can still become certified in hair or nails, which can apply to their further education on the outside.

Especially in the cosmetology industry, presentation is everything. It is a strong networking tool and first impressions count. "If you look good, you feel good," Lerma said. "The 'cosmo world' offers clients a safe place, where they can sit in the stylist's chair and escape for a while. The cosmetology program is not only an escape from the day to day grind of prison, but it brings individuals their own identity, good behavior, a sisterhood, and family. It manifests positive growth and change. Students gain knowledge in customer service/communication skills. It prepares them to build and maintain their own clientele. It builds bridges

and opportunities. This programs helps people create short and long term goals."

Debra Mellinger illustrates what can happen when people pass the cosmetology program. Mellinger was previously incarcerated and is now the General Manager of Great Clips. She manages nine salons and supervises over 70 employees. Mellinger faced many challenges after release, "practically living in poverty," she said. Fortunately, she was always passionate about being a cosmetologist. Her mother and grandmother were both cosmetologists and she always had a love for it. Upon release she finished her training and became licensed. She knew this was a career she would be successful in. At the time they did not have the resources in school the women at LVCF have today. However, she took all she could from her education. It warms her heart to see the support offered to students today.

Mellinger began her career at Supercuts, eventually making the move to Great Clips. "This changed my life. They provided the tools, and offered additional training. I turned that salon into the busiest in the state," she said. "It comes from passion and determination. Wanting to get to a place to support myself. I wanted to prove to myself I could do it." Within three months at Great Clips she became a manager, and three years later, is now a General Manager.

"One of the things I like to tell you guys is we have to have a purpose. That's what keeps us going. Without that purpose, we fail. Purpose helps people get over their hurdles and get to where I am and now I do that for around 70 women that work for me. I used every skill I learned in prison, such as classes to build upon. You can't just take one program and be good. You have to fix everything." Mellinger had a five to ten-year goal to be a manager. She asked herself what she needed to do to achieve her goals. She believes you can't let setbacks deter who you are and where you're going. "There's

always a solution."

Mellinger compared outside schooling to schooling inside. "It gives one a different perspective. A benefit of school on the inside is it's a more intimate, smaller setting. More one-on-one attention." She believes time with her teachers and what she learned set her up for success. "Find your passion and go for it. That is the biggest step. In order to succeed when you get to the halfway house, you have to have a job with a paycheck. Working in a franchise gave me opportunity. I was able to depend on the paycheck, tips, bonuses, and commissions. I knew I needed to keep going." Mellinger addressed how attempting to work for a corporation is nearly impossible coming out of prison and recommends looking for private sectors. Small business owners often give opportunities whereas large ones will not. "We speak for ourselves, where a piece of paper doesn't. My biggest recommendation is go knocking on doors. Make YOU stand out." Mellinger came back inside to speak to the women at LVCF and said it was one of the most rewarding things she has done.

"The girl that went in had zero self-worth. Now I'm full of self-worth. I feel very valued, important, needed, and supported. All of the boxes are checked." Mellinger adores hiring those coming out of prison because those who have been through struggles are passionate and driven. She believes they have more to prove and more to gain. They know who they want to be. We've already hit rock bottom. We don't want to be there again. We have places to go now!"

Mellinger's next step is to be a franchise owner. "Small successes matter. Big ones are overwhelmingly important. Find what you're passionate about and fight like heck for it. Don't let go. Don't give up. You'll have a million setbacks. Take other classes to help you deal with them. Pick yourself up, and use the tools you've gained. Today is a new day. Let's make something good happen."



The cosmetology team at La Vista, from left to right: Mrs. Winget, Monica Torrez-Ruiz, Brandi LaClaire, Arianna Sanchez, Candice Lampley, Katie Wilson, Ebony Salcido, Cayla Cushman, and Bernadette Lerma  
[Photo courtesy of LVCF]

## A compassionate teaching approach

BY KORTNEY PAYNE  
DWCF Contributor

Rarely do we encounter individuals that have as much care and compassion as we need in this environment. Students attending Trinidad State College through the Second Chance Pell (SCP) program, including myself, have experienced the opposite with various professors. One of these caring and compassionate professors is Dr. Jean Alger. Through SCP, she teaches communications and English. She possesses a genuine heart, not only for her students, but also in her field of work.

Alger entered community college as a student without a clear direction of what she wanted to become. She was interested in psychology but shied away due to negative feedback. One of her professors, Pearl Klein, was a huge inspiration. A whole new world presented

itself when she was encouraged to become an English major. Alger's next chapter was graduate school, where she taught composition during her master's program. Alger helped her students tap into their creativity and self-expression. She loved this line of work because she formerly needed this same guidance.

Alger's desire to teach for the SCP stems from two main reasons. Teaching aligns with her values and she wanted to do something she had not done before. She strongly believes everyone should have access to education and providing that access matches her values. Teaching classes virtually can be a challenge, but it's one she enjoys. Alger said it is stretching her teaching muscles and refreshing her approaches. Her class sizes vary, but Alger averages about 65 students per semester through SCP. On campus, her three classes average 35 students. She prefers the lower class number so she can give more personalized attention.

Students take to the subject matter in a variety of

ways. Through SCP most of the incarcerated students are quite engaged. On campus, she does not find the same buy-in, but she understands the balancing act it takes with work, family, and a social life. She does her best to break down fears about writing. She likes for her students to step out of their comfort zones and learn new skills.

Alger believes everything is connected throughout existence. Much of how we live creates division rather than connections, and part of our purpose is healing those severed connections. Alger also has an affinity for Buddhism because of the emphasis on connection and interrelatedness. She firmly believes in being honest with oneself and others.

Alger embodies kindness and compassion in action. It is an inspiration for her students to witness these qualities and the effect on their lives. It is so crucial to recognize the leaders in our lives. They are a part of our quest for transformation.

## Restoring Promise

BY CHRISTOPHER WEBB  
AVCF Contributor

Joshua Somers, Civilian Facilitator and Native American Spiritual Guide for Restoring Promise, stood stoically before the assembly. He held a single eagle feather in his hand and spoke to the eclectic gathering of humanity—incarcerated peoples, CDOC employees, civilian volunteers—in a quiet, yet powerful, voice about spiritual medicine and the honoring of ancestors. With his long hair and elegant jewelry of bone and turquoise, he embodied the Shaman—one who walks between the spirit world and the world of the living, bringing healing and light into dark and dreary places. Somers prayed and consecrated the space where everyone gathered. After his final blessing, the ceremony began.

After 10 weeks of intensive training, Restoring Promise (a collaborative effort of The Vera Institute of Justice and The MILPA Collective) graduated its inaugural class of incarcerated people and staff at AVCF. This dynamic group of men and women opened the doors of the new mentoring unit on Dec. 20, 2021. This new program will hopefully pave the way for future culture change, not just in one facility, but in facilities nationwide.

Insisting that they are a movement rather than a program, Restoring Promise strives to replace the current punitive-based model with a new paradigm, emphasizing human dignity, healing, hope, and most importantly, accountability. In Restoring Promise units all across America, young adults participate in meaningful daily activities, guided by mentors who encourage positive self-expression, personal development, and family connection. The daily schedule in these units is specifically designed to reflect life on the outside as much as possible, providing the participants ample opportunity to learn how to overcome the myriad obstacles they will undoubtedly face on the streets. But before any of this could begin at AVCF, the Restoring Promise mentors took part in one final training session.

In AVCF's Visiting Room, several tables were arranged in a large "U" around a giant projection screen to join in a Zoom call connecting six Restoring Promise volunteers from the streets with the men and women seated around the tables. There was an overwhelming feeling of camaraderie—a prevailing sense of community. In this final training session there were no lines or boundaries between incarcerated people and CDOC staff.

The main speaker on the projection screen was a man called Matt Loen, Executive Director for Restoring Promise. Loen spoke fondly of all the hard work everyone put in during the 10 weeks of training and recapped some of the lessons learned over that time. After the training, incarcerated people and CDOC staff alike drew numbers from a bowl to take turns speaking—the previous number addressing the next number in line. The numbers were drawn randomly to compel incarcerated people to address staff, and vice versa.

The incarcerated people spoke words of love and encouragement, reflecting on the qualities and skills they admire and respect. The staff spoke of pride—pride in themselves for volunteering for such a radical program and pride felt in the incarcerated for having the courage to lay down their former lives in order to make space for mentoring. There were raucous eruptions of laughter and applause, interspersed with fraternal hugs where green and blue merged into a common color of collective dignity.

Captain Rob Martinez has a background in behavioral science and nearly 24 years of CDOC experience under his belt. As the Housing Captain for Living Unit 4, where Restoring Promise is housed, he personally supervises the development of not just the mentors and mentees, but the CDOC staff who work in Unit 4. His unique vantage point allows him to observe the character arc of AFCF over the years. "We were pushing for something like this before Restoring Promise. We affect culture change one mind at a time, and eventually the minority becomes the majority," Martinez said. "I expect staff and incarcerated people to treat each other with respect. Through humanity and speaking with respect, we can all go so much further and be so much more effective."

When asked for volunteers to work the Restoring Promise unit, the entire staff of Living Unit 4 decided to volunteer together and train as one unit to maintain the camaraderie and rapport they had built with the Unit 4 residents over the years. Wayne Burns, Unit 4 Sgt. with 19 years in CDOC, felt compelled to help out. "This movement is really going to take off, and it's going to be unbelievable." When asked about his personal involvement, he said: "My role will be determined by the mentees—what can I do to help them succeed? Or, if the mentors need me to speak on a particular subject, I can step in and give my insight. My personal and professional life experience will help with their training."

Incarcerated people influencing the roles of CDOC

staff? It sounds crazy and in blatant defiance of America's current prison model, and yet that is precisely what is happening.

Corey Wagner, a newly graduated mentor, offered some insights into this new shift. "The suicide rate for prison workers is the equivalent of [the rate of] prisoner[s] themselves. Cops suffer just as much as we do—they have to put on fronts in order to deal with the prison environment. That's trauma!" When asked about a possible solution to that trauma, Corey stated, "When staff leave us feeling traumatized, they take it with them—that's the immediate response. When a person is dignified, that changes the position—it's now a distinct position. Being a conduit of light—that's the result; that's resolve; that's God's work. We are all just allowing ourselves to be the vessels of that work."

Rhidale Dotson, another newly graduated mentor and one of the initial driving forces that brought Restoring Promise to AVCF, contributes in the "area of innovation, and the process of design and facilitation." He is an influential leader on the yard, and a man committed to the idea of human dignity. "As a change maker, I create space for solution to problems that matter—laying the groundwork for future bridges to span into family and community," Dotson said.

"Today is a cool day," said Dean Williams, Executive Director of CDOC, as he addressed the AVCF graduating class before their certificates were handed out. "What we do here impacts other programs. I'm so proud of all you mentors, so proud of this journey we're taking together." Williams elaborated on the importance of movements like Restoring Promise and how the presence of a mentor pod will help shift the perspective of not only people who live or work behind the fence, but of society as well. "You have the tremendous privilege and burden to make this a better system, whether you live here or work here. Some people may not agree, or see what we see—that's okay. Our job is to show the world that there is a better way."

Phil Duran, newly graduated mentor and keynote speaker, drove that point home during his concluding speech. "A single snowflake is extremely delicate and fragile, but when several snowflakes get together, they have the power to shut entire highways down... we have to acknowledge our past, embrace our present, and create our future—it all starts with the heart."

Restoring Promise is here to stay at AVCF, and the message is loud and clear: the time has come to repair the past and look to the future. The time has come for generational healing to begin.

## Inspiration from improv

BY ANTHONY JONES  
CTCF Contributor

Behind the walls at CTCF, residents are beginning to see signs of normalcy and community with the return of DU PAI and the in-person improv workshop taught by Kerstin Caldwell.

For two hours every Saturday, residents and Caldwell are shifting the paradigm of prison culture. They play theater games, such as tug of war with an invisible rope, tag, emerging where, and space walk. The exercises build up residents' inner strength and get them warmed up. Participants release energy, touching and connecting with everything in that space. Residents act spontaneously, entering the area of the unexpected. The improvisation encourages residents to remove their mask, escape outside influences, find out what really drives them, and discover what they are most passionate about. It teaches them how to cultivate the ability to be in touch with their inner child and to let go of the judgment and fear of disapproval from their peers.

Caldwell teaches that with improv, we have the ability to create something so moving and powerful that it can reach people in many ways. At the same time, she prepares students to take what we learn and utilize it in other aspects of our lives.

Caldwell realized at a young age she had been handed a gift and it was her responsibility to pass it on to others. She has found that there is so much more depth to this work than just the concept of comedy. She has grown to witness and experience the range of human experiences improv can bring to players and audiences. Caldwell said, "Yes, it fun to make people laugh, but it also allows people to connect and be honest about themselves, and their lives." She knew that improv would bring a level playing field by not holding judgment against backgrounds or beliefs. She created an environment that accepted everyone's humanity and created a sense of normalcy and honesty where participants can truly express themselves.

Caldwell expressed how passionate she has been for a number of years about wanting to teach in a prison environment. "After seeing how purposeful, powerful, and meaningful the work DU PAI was doing on the inside, I knew that this was the program I wanted to align with."

Why a prison environment? Caldwell has always been enthusiastic about being of service to others. She wants to help people go from having no belief in themselves to believing they can do something they never sought out to do. "I view no one as worthless, regardless of the choices they made. I want to help people who are on the inside feel they have value and can contribute to the greater whole in a meaningful way. At the end of the day, all humans are imprisoned in their own ways. Through their addictions, their jobs, marriage, and even their own thoughts. Bringing that same sense behind the wall is necessary in helping individuals feel a sense of freedom." Caldwell hopes that students experience that same sense of freedom when they play, and that they leave the class with the awareness that the same freedom exists within them every moment of their lives.

Participant Andres Martinez describes the improv workshop as "life changing." Martinez said, "It helped me open my mind and realize that I have options in life other than what I am used to doing. It helped me switch my mindset from negative to positive. The class has inspired me to possibly pursue a career in acting."

"It may sound weird to some people, but I'm experiencing one of my dreams as my reality. It's a pleasure working with the individuals I get to work with. We improvise every moment of our lives. I'm always excited to see what we will create each week and much like any improvised piece of art. I can't wait to see how it unfolds," Caldwell said.

If you are looking for an opportunity to challenge yourself and step outside of the norm, then I suggest you be on the lookout for the next DU PAI program at your facility.

## Redemption Road CrossFit 999 Specialty Courses

BY RICHARD M. MEDINA  
FCF Contributor

In an attempt to offer the community of FCF a few more options to be involved with Redemption Road, while not actively being enrolled in it, the crew from Redemption Road CrossFit 999 offered up a variety of specialty courses. Those courses are Fabric Softener (an SMR class), Leeping Lizards (a Buddy Lee jump rope class), and Ring Worms (a Brute Strength ring muscle-up class). Each specific class attacks different areas of interest.

Fabric Softener is led by Glen Worley, with support from John Vasquez, Lee Hood, John Kennedy, Joseph Taylor McGill, and Evan Lawlor. It addresses the areas of flexibility, mobility, and range of motion. Most techniques and prescriptions are taught from Kelly Starett's "Becoming a Supple Leopard." Each coach is assigned two athletes who then go through an initial assessment to help target areas in need of the most attention. "Mobility and complete range of motion are critical when it comes to most athletes' overall physical capabilities," Worley said. "They're equally as important in someone's day-to-day activities, as well."

Leeping Lizards addresses the learning and capacity-building of being able to jump rope. This course is headed by David Welch with assistance from Samuel K. White. Welch has incorporated various gymnastic skill work to help develop participants in other facets of physical development along with the techniques and

progressions that ultimately lead to better rope-jumping skills. White said, "As a coach, having the distinct pleasure of participating in Leeping Lizards jump rope and gymnastics specialty course is one of the most rewarding endeavors. People accomplishing goals that they could not even fathom in a very short time, often in matter of hours, is the result of the willingness of the athletes and a shared trust value that seem to have the most impact."

Finally, there's Ring Worms, the ring muscle-up class based on the Brute Strength Muscle-Up course. This particular course is spearheaded by Michael Beebe and Brooke Bastien. Together, they help participants attack the techniques and progressions needed to achieve one of CrossFit's most coveted movements. "Seeing our athletes, some of whom have never performed a pull-up before, come in, make some new friends, put in a ton of hard work, and walk away achieving something they put their mind to is just amazing," Bastien said.

Throughout the duration of the classes, which last 9-13 weeks depending on the course one takes, the sense of community is strengthened. "Offering these specialty courses has put our coaching staff and athletes in a unique position," Bastien says. "For the coaches, it gives us an opportunity to expand our knowledge in fields that are not traditional CrossFit. More importantly, for the athlete, it gives them a path to RF2 and what we believe in all while learning a super cool new skillset."



## Musical incentive

BY ALEXANDER JASMINE  
IR Copyeditor

Crowley County Correctional Facility (CCCF) has an all-inclusive music incentive pod offering a plethora of instruments such as guitars, keyboards, and drum machines to residents looking to tune out the stress of confinement. From first-timers to experienced musicians, residents unite via music with bands and instructional classes. Others take instruments and equipment back to their cells for solo practice sessions. With numerous innovative opportunities at their fingertips, residents are able to express themselves through music.

The inability to freely access music in other Colorado prisons pushes many residents away from music altogether. La Vista Correctional Facility (LVCF) resident Claire Welsh believes music can be triggering. Being deprived of generating music can be a detriment to musicians in other facilities. “I feel imbalanced because playing music is my coping tool that helps express anger,” Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF) resident Randy Flores said. “When you don’t have that emotional outlet, you’re unable to take negative emotion and create something beautiful through music.”

The addition of the music incentive program in 2017 fostered large interest from the CCCF population. Former CCCF para-pro William Lomax said residents delved deeply into classes to see how far they could take their music. The incentive pod evolved into a supportive community that featured various musical genres. Daily interactions fostering teaching and learning while sharing through music galvanizes CCCF pod member Dylan Thompson.

The incentive pod integrated residents from various

backgrounds. “People who would never associate with each other on the yard were jamming together in the program and blurring the lines of prison politics,” Lomax said. When creating the musical utopia, the leaders of the pod aimed to change the identity and culture of prison.

An extreme demand enabled the program to thrive. Equipment ranging from traditional instruments to electronic equipment such as drum machines, synthesizers, and digital audio workstations has been available to residents since 2017. “Uncompliant people with write-ups straightened their lives out to make it to the pod,” current FCF resident William Freemire said.

According to the European Journal of Criminology (EJC), music can act as a positive force that assists in constructing personal identity in prison. CCCF is pioneering this notion in Colorado. Lomax believes the incentive program pushed residents towards constructive activities instead of wasting their time.

CCCF’s music incentive pod sets the example by providing opportunities to alleviate hostility and create an uplifting musical environment. Thompson believes this opportunity was life-changing and is thrilled about having the freedom to take instruments back to cells. “It’s unbelievable to be able to write a song and record it. I never thought prison would be the place to pursue my passion,” Thompson said.

After learning to play Tom Petty’s “Learning to Fly,” one CCCF resident was so happy that he played it for six months straight. Freemire recalled his face lighting up with a glow and how that level of achievement transcended the struggles he was dealing with.

Renowned country artist, Mark Collie, even offered his

Song For Life program, which he developed for Tennessee prisons, to the residents at the CCCF incentive pod. The course entails a 10-week songwriting class with a performance at the conclusion. Freemire’s first show in front of a live audience at CCCF was simultaneously terrifying and exhilarating. “For a couple hours, the barbed wire disappeared,” Freemire said. Research in the EJC indicates that music programs in European countries helped the incarcerated to temporarily and symbolically escape the institutional environment and experience a sense of freedom, hope, and joy.

During the music incentive pod’s inception, Bob Eisenman, current FCF resident, generated vast support for the program. His master’s degree in music helped him develop a comprehensive plan for education to assist residents of all ability levels. “Bob was always there for anyone with questions,” FCF resident Miguel Valadesguzman said. “He helped a lot of Spanish-speaking people to complete music theory, too, and helped us outside of class become good musicians.” Eisenman aimed to cultivate a fundamental understanding of music and enlightened many minds along the way.

Unfortunately, unforeseen obstacles such as COVID-19 and resident transfers to other facilities have hindered the expansion of this program. “We can’t share our music and classes are hard to finish with no support from staff,” Thompson said.

However, those who complete the classes still walk away with music certificates and have further opportunities upon release. “I plan to teach my granddaughter about music theory as well as how to play the drums and keyboard once I get out,” Freemire said. CCCF’s music incentive program sets a brilliant example of the positive impact music can have on incarcerated individuals.

## Catch a beat

Continued from page 2

and to be vulnerable. This program is building an environment that no one thought was possible in closed custody.

When she first arrived at DWCF in 2020, Lady was immediately placed in closed custody. After four months, she was sent to the Management Control Unit (MCU). Eight months passed before she was released back into closed custody. This was a cycle of maximum-security lock up Lady knew all too well from being in and out of jail most of her life. She explained that in closed custody, “You can’t get away from it. Everything is so negative.” Open Mic helped Lady choose a different path.

Open Mic can be therapeutic and life-changing for residents who have never had a positive outlet. With Lady, it allowed her to let out her emotions in a healthy way. “I got a lot of stuff off my chest, and it was relieving.” With her focus on Open Mic, she saw that she was capable of making positive impacts rather than negative ones: “I felt like I could influence people to do something better. If I can do it, they can, too.”

The second class of Open Mic graduated on Friday, Aug. 26, 2022 with a concert at DWCF’s recreation yard. The audience was a combination of staff, general population, and closed custody residents, along with a vast array of outside guests from AA sponsors to members of the Second Chance Center.

After Open Mic’s ritual opening of “Green and Yellow,” a spoken word homage to the fluorescent-

green pants closed custody wears, it was Lady’s time to shine. As she looked at the crowd, the realness of what she was about to do hit her. With her nerves wrecked, she put all her anxiety aside and took the stage. “I kind of blacked out while I was on the stage, like it wasn’t me,” Lady reflected. “When we watched the video after, I was like ‘No way!’”

Many residents looked forward to Open Mic. As for Lady, it helped her stay out of trouble. She sees herself differently now, in a more positive way. “Now that Open Mic is over, I know I can do it for myself,” she said. Lady progressed out of closed custody and is in general population. She is continuing with the next class of Open Mic, along with several other graduates. With her sights set on the future, Lady hopes to become a mentor for people in closed custody and MCU. She knows that all it takes is motivation, “even if it’s a little light at the end of the tunnel.” Open Mic helped Lady find her light. She is prepared to help others find theirs, too. “Anything’s possible, even if you came out of the slums and it’s all you know, because it’s all I know, too... Anything can happen.”

The emergence of this program at DWCF is starting to shift the culture within closed custody. Giving these residents something meaningful and positive introduces a new path, one that’s paved with lyrics, microphones, and musical notes. Open Mic is breaking through and setting new standards for what peer-led development can look like.

## Para-pros: A look at the use of talented inmates to fill the gaps

BY LUTHER HAMPSON  
IR Journalist

The education system is overburdened, and when resources are available, they need to be utilized. This is true for not only the public school system, but the education systems across CDOC.

In order to engage incarcerated men and women in opportunities to make positive

behavioral changes, CDOC must use all available resources to transfer knowledge from those who have it to those who need it. One way is to take full advantage of incarcerated men and women who come with a plethora of skills and a higher degree of education, placing them in positions where they can benefit those thirsting for a better life. These residents,

when officially placed in the position of “para-pro,” shoulder some of the load from the state’s educators. While para-pros are not given full reign of the classroom, their contributions make inside education programs possible.

Sondra Ballegeer and Jan Yuncker, who are parole/release case managers for RESTORE (Reformativ Engaging System of Transitional Opportunities for Re-Entry) at Fremont Correctional Facility (FCF), say of their para-pro, “There are a lot of reasons why [our clerk] is very beneficial to have around. We get perspective from him that we wouldn’t otherwise get.” This speaks to bridging the gap between those in green and those in blue. It helps to break the traditional us-versus-them mentality that is so common in the prison system.

Raj Sahota, an FCF resident who holds a computer science degree and has taken graduate level courses in business, finance, and computer science at Stanford and UC-Berkley, has developed internet portals, applications, and databases for CDOC’s education and programs departments as well as the CCi Furniture Shop. He intends to be a part of the CCi Canteen transition to FCF. These systems are designed to



FCF RESTORE case managers Jan Yuncker and Sondra Ballegeer  
[Photo courtesy of IR]



FCF RESTORE Para-Pros Torey Kuznicki and Miguel Trimble  
[Photo courtesy of IR]

be operated by staff and resident clerks without programmer intervention.

Lieutenant Narva Courtney, who has been with CDOC since 2007, coordinates 22 religious programs, a task that she could not achieve alone. “Without my para-pros, I would need two staff members. I wish they got paid more for all the skills that they have. They use each and

every one of their skills to make sure our area functions.” Para-pros not only work hard, but also fill positions of trust. This requires them to have the skills necessary to get the job done and be of upstanding character. In a place where character development is the desired outcome, look no further than these educators to find it.

## Free yourself

BY JUSTIN BOX  
AVCF Contributor

Long before I came to prison, I was imprisoned. Locked within the confines of my own mind. Trapped. Failing to understand the true nature of freedom, as I think many of us do. I took it for granted. In doing so, I forfeited my inherent rights as a citizen, and perhaps as a human being. My path back to freedom—true freedom—was a long and arduous journey.

Like many people, I struggled as a kid. By looking at me, you never would have guessed that underneath my smile and happy demeanor lay a tortured child. A child so lost and confused, he would give up an easy life in pursuit of belonging, connection, and expression. However, no one would blame you for missing the telltale signs because at an early age I learned to bottle up and conceal my real self to avoid trouble and the suffering that comes from being your true self.

Every detail of my descent and ascension is not important. Suffice it to say, I was always “among” the popular kids. I was always “among” the best players on the team. I was always “among” the smartest kids in school. Always “among,” yet never “of” or “from,” because deep inside I lacked the feeling of belonging and connection. I felt off and different. I felt like an adopted child among my own family. I felt like the third

wheel among my own friends, the friends who never stayed around longer than a year or two. This constant feeling of loneliness and emptiness ate at me until I had to fill the hole with something, anything.

I learned how to be “cool” and fit in, to find “my people,” even as I knew I had no people. What I was not able to do was stop this feeling from festering and turning into a deep, gnawing ache that evolved into cancerous anger and hatred. As cancer turns the body against itself, my suppressed emotions turned against me. They became expressible only through violence. So I pursued a life where this was acceptable, and even celebrated, where “my people” supported this expression. I became a criminal and a gang member. Finally, I was able to express myself. I was finally seen for who I was, or more accurately, for how I had come to feel. Among the many problems with this scenario was the fact that the deep pain only worsened, became terminal, and erupted in violence.

This need to express myself culminated in me killing a man in a gang-related shooting at the age of 15. I was charged as an adult, sentenced to 40 years, and sent to prison at 17. I was left to deal with my unresolved issues in a cold and unforgiving world. I learned quickly the only “freedom” I had left was in what to think and how to act. In this

dark abyss of my own creation, I glimpsed the light and hope of my liberation.

Cogito ergo sum. Latin for, “I think, therefore I am.” The very foundation for knowledge and the only thing one can truly know, according to the philosopher René Descartes. In his attempt to figure out how we can know anything, Descartes conducted a thought experiment consisting of questions to which he had to have absolute answers based in facts. If he could not find factual answers, he reasoned, the answers to those questions would be false, or an illusion. He found that the only place without doubt was his own thoughts, because even in doubting his thoughts, he had to be the doubter. His thought verified his existence—I think, therefore I am—but nothing else.

At 17, I thought that my thoughts and the choices I made were the only things in which I could have complete confidence. As Stephen Covey says in the “7 Habits” curriculum, I found the freedom to choose between stimulus and response. At first, this was merely a coping mechanism to deal with doing time. However, as I developed my proficiency in making intentional choices, I found the world to be a simple realm of possibilities—some positive, some negative—that depended on how I approached them. The slow dawning of this realization

was my rebirth.

It is common to define being free as being in society without guards, fences, lockdowns, and confinement. It is common to push against the obstructions that block our path. And, unfortunately, it is common to let these definitions, beliefs, and worldviews stop us from becoming our best and true selves.

No matter where we are, there are things we have to do to survive. We must eat, drink, and sleep. The fact that we have to do these things does not mean we are not free. It can be harder to accept that in prison we must lockdown or do what the guards say in order to “survive.” I argue that we CHOOSE to do these things just as we CHOOSE to eat in order to survive—because we recognize the consequences of not doing so. I argue that what we have lost is our liberties, or at least the availability of options. What we can never lose is our freedom—which I define as the ability to exercise the options available to us.

Having freedom and choice does not guarantee that we always get what we want. That is a childish fairytale. If we jump off a roof and then say, “I don’t like the options of falling on my face or on my back. Therefore, I am not free to choose,” we prove nothing. That is not a real argument because we are always free to choose. What we fail to understand is that we

are choosing from the options available after our previous choices—picking among the scraps or bounty of our causal consequences.

It took me coming to prison and losing all of my liberties to find the true gift—the true key to living. Now, I will not lie to you. This key does not fix everything. My recognition and utilization of freedom has not yet impacted my liberty—at least in terms of getting out of prison. And some scars are so deep that I do not foresee healing. But I guarantee your life will only be truly yours when you take responsibility for what you do— from thought to choice to action. On both sides of the fence, others will discourage your liberation, but that is on them and should not discourage you from discovering yourself.

I implore you to begin now. It is a very unique time in DOC. There are more options now to be yourself than ever before. Think about who you really are and what you really want to do. Do not bow to what is “acceptable.” Embrace yourself and respect everyone’s right to be themselves. Utilize your resources, reach out to your friends and family, and join programs that teach you how to affect real change in your life. Above anything else, be the real you. You can only be free when you act according to what and who you are.

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## Level of concern

BY DEMITRIUS HERRON  
YOS Contributor

Anxious?

I know I am. In fact, many people are. Anxiety can be a blanket statement that covers a range of feelings and emotions that can interfere with life. I know what you might be thinking: “Doesn’t sound too bad.”

Stop that! You are minimizing one of the biggest contributors to insomnia, depression, addiction, social isolation, headaches, and chronic pain—and not just like

in your toe or something. Oh no! Chronic pain from anxiety can hit anywhere in your body at any time. There are reports of full body spasms that leave victims on the floor for long periods of time. Poor quality of life and suicide attempts are also factors to be aware of. These types of anxieties can range from the fear of public speaking to COVID-19 infecting you or your loved ones. You could even experience the inability to speak or move with panic attacks that are so severe that they can cause seizures and heart attacks—even in teens

and young adults.

Wondering if you might have anxiety? Symptoms come in many forms and to varying degrees. Many people experiencing anxiety feel nervous, restless, or tense, while others have a sense of impending danger, panic, or doom. They can also experience increased heart rate, rapid breathing, sweating, trembling, feeling weak or tired, insomnia, and gastrointestinal problems.

There are many suggested techniques to battle anxiety. First: stay active. This means both physical and mental

engagement, daily. Whether you are going out to the yard, playing sports, reading, or maintaining your chess/pinochle/whatever title in your facility. Staying involved in pro-social situations with other people can alleviate social anxieties and phobias relating to public embarrassment. It also does not hurt to talk to someone now and then.

Second: avoid drugs and alcohol. Also avoid those people who feel like a drug. You know, the ones that you have to be around even though the relationship might be toxic. For some, it is easy

to see why you should avoid these forms of addiction, but for others, it can feel like you are not yourself without them or that they help with your anxiety. They do not. They are just replacing one form of addiction with another. Hopefully, these long periods of depravity can kick those habits so you can form better ones! If you are stuck in those ruts, then I recommend seeing a real doctor who didn’t get their degree out of a Count Chocula box.

Third: get help as early as possible. Like other mental conditions, the sooner you catch it the

better, and if you wait too long it might end up being too late. Just remember, I might not be a real doctor, but my name is Dmitry and I sure am anxious.

Editor’s Note: Mental health and disorders are serious subjects. This article is provided by a person who is not qualified in the mental health field but is giving their personal perspective on the serious issue of anxiety. Please reach out to a peer assistant, case manager, or mental health facilitator at your facility if you have questions or concerns for your mental health.

## A cultural shift

BY JUSTIN RICH  
IR Writer’s Workshop

Life in DOC is different now. The system has changed and so have the people, clear up to the brass and buffet bars. In 2006, I cussed out the FCF shift commander and went to solitary confinement for two years. Yesterday, I watched a guy cuss, yell, and go donkey on a C/O, then walk away unscathed.

I was so nervous when I fell again after 11 years of being free and off paper. People looked at me funny in DRDC because I kept asking, “Am I going to have to go

back to CSP?” The lieutenant on duty laughed and said, “We don’t do that anymore Rich, just keep your nose clean and head down.” It used to be, when a guy fell and hit CSP, if he MRD’d from there and fell again with new charges, he went right back to CSP. You can see why I had more incentive to stay out for as long as I did.

Then you show back up at DRDC in 2019 and it’s a rebel’s dream! Medline for subs, everyone has flow (i.e. money), and no one is getting janky-ass write-ups anymore. They are calling it normalization. I did more time in solitary back in the day because of BS than these cats have done on the shitter. Wait, I think it’s, “I’ve done more time on the shitter than these cats done in

solitary.” Even words are different. Anyone notice how people say “scuze you” instead of “excuse me?” Instead of fadin’ it’s slidin’? I guess it’s feelin’ like a slap in the face when I watch guys do the things I used to do that would cost me 20-80 straight days in solitary. When I watch them do it now: no consequences, no worries. So, it’s not rebellion anymore and that’s supposed to be a step toward normalization? What did we rebel for then? What’s the price us old school rebels paid by our years in solitary? Folks today don’t even know it. So ‘scuze you if I don’t understand or even want to. Feels weird to wish I was back in solitary confinement.

## Kabul: reflections of Saigon

BY MICHAEL BACKUS  
LCF Contributor

In April of 1975, Saigon was abandoned by the U.S. government. In August of 2021, Kabul was abandoned by the United States. What happened in Kabul is a direct reflection of what happened in that capitol city in South Vietnam.

Thousands of American military service members gave their lives in Afghanistan, but for what? Fathers and mothers of these patriots are hurt and confused as to why their kids gave their lives or, in some

cases, became maimed for life. Americans were told we went to war in Afghanistan in retribution for the attack on America by Islamic extremists, who hate our country and way of life. Half a century ago, Americans were told we went to war in South Vietnam to stop the spread of communism and the oppressive force of Vietnamese people from the north.

It seems we could have learned from the mistakes made in Southeast Asia. The trauma from these war experiences never really leaves Americans.

It haunts us for the rest of our lives. Now the term “Post Traumatic Stress Disorder” (PTSD) is used to describe the mental health condition that some combat veterans suffer from. After Vietnam, when veterans returned home, they were told to get over it. There is really no “getting over” these experiences completely without mental health professionals.

In 2019, Robert Herdman and I started talking about how we could help troubled veterans who are locked up. We decided to form a veteran’s support

group. We started by sending a proposal to the management of LCF. We were not received with open arms at first, but we remained persistent. Finally, we were granted a chance to help veterans. We needed a name for this new support group, and after discussion, we decided on the name Restoring Honor. Since we were the founders, we picked a few other vets to fill the rest of the leadership team. Our group is growing now, as any veteran who is new to the facility is invited to attend our group. Of course, they are carefully

vettted to make sure they are truly vets. We have also made it possible for the leadership team to attend nationally certified Peer Assistant training to help veterans with mental health issues.

Let us pray that we never become embroiled in more conflicts that send us looking in the mirror to see the reflection of these two tragedies. May we learn and grow—for our service men and women, who valiantly fight for our freedom and our country.



Backus in Vietnam  
[Photo courtesy of Michael Backus]

## MAMBA

BY JOHN SANDOVAL  
TCF contributor

Men Achieving Missions Beyond Arrest (MAMBA) resulted from the Delta Wing Project proposal at TCF, a peer-led veterans program helping to decrease recidivism. MAMBA’s recent Facility Job Fair was a huge success with over 24 vendors in attendance. All participants left with something they could use for their future exit strategy.

MAMBA’s current community project is the Thanksgiving food-box fundraiser, which helps provide military and low-income families with a turkey and the fixings. MAMBA is developing a relationship with TCF’s local food pantry to make this happen. This will help folks negotiate the high costs of the holidays, while giving the members of MAMBA a chance to give back to their community.

Members have participated, in some form or fashion, in all TCF events and programs. For example, MAMBA regularly helps set up and break down for facility church and outside visitor events and helps canvas for worthy causes. MAMBA offered manpower to grill the 4th of July and Labor Day meals, while participating in Ping-Pong, Scrabble, volleyball, homerun derby, bean-bag toss, horseshoes, and dodge ball (yes, dodge ball).

It should come as no surprise that it was MAMBA members who polished the poignant 13-Fold Flag ceremony, rallied attendance, and setup video/audio and seating in the gym for local veterans, staff, and the general population at the Memorial Day ceremonies. The facility collected a small amount of funds to donate to local veterans.

One of the most profound interactions MAMBA has had is with the organizations that come to TCF. MAMBA had an opportunity to pick the brains of well-established churches, re-entry organizations, and influential individuals. For me, meeting so many men and women at this event who had once been incarcerated and were able to overcome their past circumstances was not only humbling, it was medicinal.

MAMBA members have grown individually and as a group, learning how to negotiate with ourselves and the arduous system we live in. We all have a story. As prisoners, we have all fallen and may be objectionable, distasteful or disposable in the eyes of the public. That’s one of the reasons we need each other and gravitate towards the greater good.

Editor’s Note: MAMBA is part of the VIPER (Veterans in Prison Ending Recidivism) program. See Volume 3 Issue 2 for a spotlight on this program.



Backus in the LCF Veterans Program  
[Photo courtesy of Michael Backus]



Members of MAMBA with local veterans  
[Photo courtesy of TCF]

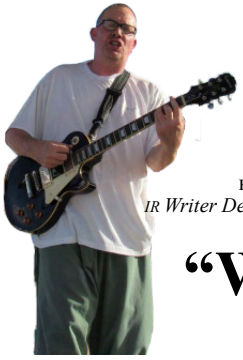
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Ask your Programs staff for the Inside Wire Program Schedule... & tune in on your television.



## The craziest thing

BY BOB EISENMAN  
IR Writer Development Coordinator

### “Weird”

We are all pretty weird. Seriously, in some way or another, you are pretty damn weird. Synonyms for weird include: bizarre, curious, funny, peculiar, quirky, wacky, and wild. We all have times where we act just plain goofy. Granted, some more than others. Odds are, if you cannot name the weirdest person of your social group, it is probably you.

Much has been written about the benefits and drawbacks of the way that we, both as a society and as individuals, throw labels around. I will not go down that rabbit hole. The majority of us reading this are incarcerated and deal with labels every day, and unfortunately, likely will for the rest of our lives. But the label of weird is one we should embrace.

The adage that you are special and unique, just like everyone else, is overused and cliché. But there is some truth to that. When it comes to our individual uniqueness, it should be celebrated. Stop trying to fit in with everyone else all the time. Be weird. Be wacky. Admit to everyone, most importantly yourself, that we all have some strange habits and behaviors that are just plain funny. Embrace this.

Humans are creatures of habit, which is something prison only amplifies. Just

think about some of the bizarre habits/ borderline OCD things you do on a daily basis. For example, showers. Can you picture showering without shoes on? The idea creeps me out now, which all of my outside friends think is odd. I have to use the exact number of deodorant passes on each armpit. Seriously. I will count out loud if I do not think anyone is listening. Weird? Absolutely. But I wear that freak flag for this type of stuff proudly.

It is OK to be different. We put in an inordinate amount of time and effort trying to fit in. And it is tough to break that mold. But we can still find common ground, even if we differ in a unique way. Who cares what trashy television shows you like or that you have a SHOCKING amount of cheesy romance novels on your library checkout record. (Am I talking about my editor-in-chief? Maybe. Maybe not.) Share these things with each other. Tell your buddies what embarrassing little quirks you have. (For the record, I am fairly sure I could not legally put all of mine in print.) Laugh with each other. Celebrate the things that embarrass you, just as you celebrate your friends' hilarious secrets. We all have these peculiar parts of our persona.

Stop trying to fit in. Put that energy toward being yourself. Anyone driven away by your quirks was probably not that great a friend in the first place. And remember, no matter how weird you think you are, there is always, without fail, someone whose idiosyncrasies are even zanier than yours. You will have to take my word on it, but just look to yours truly if you need to feel better about yours. Pretty sure I win. Looking forward to hearing from all of you! Until next time...

## “No” is a full sentence

BY WILLIAM FREEMIRE  
IR Writer Corps

As I was writing these little morsels of life improvement for my column, I thought I would ask someone I respect for a topic to write about. He said he had nothing at the top of his head right then. I said, “That’s cool, I just planted a seed for later.” He replied, “I will promptly forget it, I am super busy.”

He made me think of two things, and without knowing it, gave me this article. The word “no” is a full sentence. My friend has his priorities straight. His “yes” for his project was big enough to say “no” to mine. We can get lost in the minutia of others and abandon our own objective. It is important to prioritize your life and sometimes say no to someone else so you can say yes to yourself.

My friend was in the middle of putting together a workbook for the 7 Habits class here at Fremont. If he was playing a video game, should he stop and help me

or keep playing? The answer is different for each of us because it starts with our guiding principles. Let me exhibit some humility. In all fairness, I wasn’t respectful of his time. I could have asked if he had time for me.

The second thing is, “People over things.” I value relationships first and things second. To make a better world, we all need to adopt this philosophy. Here’s where it gets tricky. When do we come first and when should we put ourselves second? This becomes a balance only life experience can teach us.

Common courtesy can take us a long way in society. Unfortunately, it isn’t so common anymore. I guess this experience of being told “no” gave me something to write about, anyway. In a lifestyle of growth, learning comes from life and our self-awareness of it. Putting people’s feelings first isn’t always a bad thing. Putting yourself first isn’t always a bad thing. Moderation is a lesson life teaches us, one situation at a time.



## Doctors office blues

BY DA’NAIRE MARCHMAN  
CSP Contributor

Imagine an unfortunate accident in which you break your arm. Upon arriving to the hospital and being seen by the doctor, he gives you medication to manage the pain.

“That should take care of any discomfort for the time being,” he tells you.

You reply, “But what about my arm?” “It still needs treatment. It’s broken.”

Sadly, this is the approach many communities take with social and political issues. Management instead of treatment. A short-term fix that holds no long-term validity. This leads to an evolving and growing beast.

This halfhearted approach to treatment is not irreparable. It takes dedication to change and a willingness to improve our abilities to look, listen, and learn. It may be uncomfortable, but that makes it all the more necessary.

First, we must take the time to look within ourselves and understand what causes these issues. Why do I feel I need to respond the way I do? Is this response ultimately guiding me toward improvement of my situation or is it actually a hindrance to my progress?

It is through taking the time to look in the mirror and question ourselves that we can begin to obtain a true, clear, and properly focused view of ourselves and the issues we face. In many situations, we may even learn that we can improve whatever we are going through by committing to bettering ourselves before blaming the outcomes of our actions. In other words, by not putting the cart before the horse.

Will we choose treatment or management? Actual freedom comes from true rehabilitation, not a watered-down, weak reflection of it. Can we finally unlock the chains that we use to restrict ourselves? The key lies within our reach and the doctor is in.

## What’s your time worth?

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN  
IR Journalist

Take a moment and think about what you are doing with your time. I am not talking about simply waiting to get out of prison. I am talking about what you could be doing to get out and stay out. Are you taking classes? Exploring who you are? Studying a religion or spirituality? What are you learning? What are your plans? Who are you teaching? Are you working to rebuild yourself and help others do the same?

Asking yourself these questions could put you on a path to a better future for you and those around you. If you feel lost, it is important for you to reach deep inside to find your calling, your purpose, or your passion. Whatever your past choices, you can turn yourself around and have a meaningful and beautiful existence. You could be a role model to someone who looks up to you without realizing it.

The question then becomes, what is your game plan? Where are you headed? Do you know what your passion is? Once you know these things, you can turn your passions into something the community needs, no matter which community you currently live in—prison included. Look to your community and see how you can help those around you every day. Stop

and recognize the resources that are near you that are at your disposal. Doing this will get you closer to your dreams coming true.

State prisons have classes available to help inmates advance themselves, even if you may not have figured out exactly what you want to do. If you have not earned your GED, take the time to do it now. You will receive time off your sentence and open more doors to employment once you are released. See what college correspondence classes are available. Mental health classes are available to help you navigate your root issues and conquer them to help you stay out of prison in the future. Your case manager or facilities program coordinator may be able to help you with this. If you have the resources to research what other prisons offer, try to get new programs implemented in your facility.

When you set goals for your future, you take control of your life. Doing this will help you grow where you are planted and cultivate a new future for you and the people you love and care about. You can give your life more purpose and become a positive role model for your friends, families, and peers. People take notice of the world around them. What are they going to see in you?

## Free your mind

BY DANIEL SHEA  
CSP Contributor

Any examination of the variety of prison subcultures will reveal that many of them are full of holes. For example, the subculture that supposedly values silence and loyalty actually shows a disconnect between values and reality. Why do people in prison often say that they “keep it one-hundred,” that they’re “being real,” or sport tattoos about loyalty? Is it because truth, authenticity, and loyalty are actually in such short supply here? It’s worth noting that while many people on the street aren’t perfect, you can find folks out there who do a pretty good job of creating successful lives by aligning their words and actions.

These disconnects could affect you anywhere. Whether you’re on the streets or on the inside, you gotta be careful about who you hang out with.

“You are the average of the five people you hang out with the most,” according to author, podcast host, and investor Tim Ferriss. That’s why you should be careful about who you spend time around. Are the people you hang out with committed to living with integrity, being successful, educating themselves, and having healthy relationships? These are basics for many people in the larger prison culture. The idea that you’re like the people you hang out with isn’t new: an old Spanish proverb says, “Tell me who your friends are, and I’ll tell you who you are.”

Author Tony Robbins puts his own positive spin on the idea that you’re the average of the people you hang around: “Proximity is Power.” In other words, get as close to high achievers as you

can. It’s good to be the least-educated and least-skilled person in the room because it means you’re around people you can learn from. It’s hard to find high achievers in prison, but stick to yourself until you do. One of the quirks of this particular prison subculture is that all the guys want to teach others despite a total lack of qualifications. For example, it’s common that a guy will train others to work out when he has never done more than read fitness magazines. You even find people in here who teach yoga though they’ve never had a real yoga teacher. Keep a realistic view of yourself and those around you. If you follow a fool, what does that make you?

The suggestion here is not that these aren’t talented people in prison but that people in prison often hobble themselves by having limited and/or distorted perspectives. If you think highly of your talents or the talents of the unqualified person who trains you in a particular area, you can actually hold yourself back. This is the opposite of how successful people on the street operate. Often, someone with two or three college degrees and a high-paying job or profitable business thinks in terms of how much more they could learn or how much better they could be at something. Thinking you’re a legend – or that the person you train with is – is a great way to stagnate your growth.

In conclusion, if you want to have a happy and successful life – inside or outside prison – you need to grow beyond this part of the subculture here. The beliefs of this subculture are at odds with personal growth and are a recipe for a failed life.

## “Lock Down” Lemon Delight

BY CYNTHIA JOHNSON  
CC Contributor

Ingredients:  
3 tablespoons lemonade mix  
½ bag creamer  
½ bag cappuccino  
3 Snickers cut in squares (small)  
2 packages Duplex sandwich cookies  
2 packages Lemon sandwich cookies  
1 sleeve Graham crackers (crushed)  
(Optional) any other nuts to your liking (chopped)  
Cold water

Directions:  
Break up cookies in a large bowl. Save five cookies to the side for topping. Add Graham crackers, Snickers and nuts. In a separate cup, mix the lemonade, creamer, and cappuccino with cold water, adding small amounts of water at a time until a creamy texture forms. Pour over the top of dry ingredients. Make sure to mix all the way to the bottom. Place five remaining cookies flat on top. Cover and allow it to sit overnight in cool area. Enjoy!

## Shops fired

BY DONALD SMITH  
IR Writing Corps

There's a long tradition of arts and crafts in prison. Art has always been something inmates take pride in, whether as a way to kill boredom, make a little extra money, or create a gift to connect with friends and family. Getting lost in a drawing, painting, beadwork, or crochet piece is a positive pastime and escape that relieves anxiety in an extremely stressful place.

These days, there are limits to what is allowed and accessible to inmates. Few are lucky enough to have access to one of the hobby shops still open. In the days of COVID-19 and understaffing, hobby shops seem to be few and far between. There was a time though, when we were allowed tools in our cells such as X-ACTO knives to etch mirrors, saws to cut wood for frames, hammers and tools for leather work, and even torches and small files for belt buckles. Those amenities went away in the name of security.

Art in prison doesn't just benefit inmates. When

leather work was allowed in cells and hobby shops, staff could purchase quality leather goods such as duty belts, handcuff cases, and key ring clips. Handmade and cheaper than on the streets. Some prisons used to have curio cabinets where staff and visitors could receive art created for them during visits.

Despite these new limitations, CDOC residents have experienced a few positives, including Executive Director Dean Williams' support of DU PAI. DU PAI introduced inmates to performing arts such as dance, theatre, creative writing, drafting scripts for plays, and drawing classes. DU PAI has given outlets for people to show and sell their work via art shows at locations across the state and online through the Chained Voices art show.

Another outlet is the Art for Redemption website, which was created by former inmate Buck Adams with support from Breakthrough Colorado (formally Defy) investors. In cooperation with Williams, Adams has been able offer contracts to inmates, which was previously unheard of.

We've seen a lot of changes over the years, mostly things being taken from us, but hopefully, with the positive changes that are being made, and it now being post-pandemic, we can regain what was lost.



Blue Jay drawn by Donald Smith  
[Photo courtesy of IR]

## Redemption for everyone

BY WILLIAM CONEY  
IR Senior Editor

Many people leave prison having made promises too big to keep. Buck Adams was an exception. On the way from AVCF to the streets, he created something too large for any of us to realize on our own. Art for Redemption (AFR) is redemption for everyone.

It's not a state sponsored program with limited space. It's not a religious seminar, correctional cult, or popularity paycheck. AFR stands on its own so others may do the same. The idea came to Adams while attending Breakthrough, formerly known as Defy. The entrepreneurial program for the incarcerated continued to assist him after release. Breakthrough worked closely with Adams and CDOC Executive Director Dean Williams to allow inmates to earn money while in prison. The negotiation allows outside vendors to develop approved methods to help incarcerated individuals pay child support and restitution.

Families of incarcerated individuals have been paying these costs for years, by proxy. Regular inmate pay covers only phone and hygiene items. The pay scale has recently attracted the attention of advocacy groups concerned with slavery. Prior to AFR, trying to help pay for your crime or supporting yourself by entering into a contract was prohibited by Administrative Regulations. Attempting to feed, clothe, and provision yourself from canteen without support is a hustle. Prison art is a marketable commodity and also considered a hustle. Buck Adams decided to change this, and he did.

A hustler on the inside is an entrepreneur in a free market. This is perhaps what motivated him to design AFR's mission, which is to create a viable, ongoing, and sustainable business model. To sell not just a piece or two of art, but thousands of artworks to support the community, restorative justice, and artists. AFR is technically a national gallery that can be viewed worldwide. Adams believes the artistry and potential within the walls matches up with any talent pool

worldwide. They have modeled their percentage commissions on art galleries in the business world. The operation is online at [www.artforredemption.com](http://www.artforredemption.com). Residents can obtain a submission package with FAQs, procedures, and legal information from the address in the announcement.

This is an enormous undertaking, especially for just two employees. They handle logistics, inventory, and cooperate with prison rules across the country. "We got a few cease and desist letters back from prisons," Adams said. "It is complicated, it is uphill, it is expensive, but it is glorious work made great by knowing behind every work of art is a person... reaching out, and, yearning to give back."

AFR is not the first time Adams has created a new reality to lift up his comrades. The former service member founded and led Veterans to Farmers, a nonprofit that trains veterans in business operations, technologies, and agricultural systems necessary for a sustainable lifestyle. This time, the lifestyle adjustments come without training, since most artists on the inside are self-taught. AFR gives hustlers an opportunity to become entrepreneurs and stand on their own.

Lack of purpose and finances are the biggest causes of recidivism. AFR takes on both these issues, and that's why Williams found a common ground with Adams. "People get out. They're not as damaged by the system," Williams said. "They have purpose again; they can express themselves. And they have a life on their way out the door." The ability to make money by selling art online is more than just a business opportunity. The most unique aspect of AFR is the print-on-demand option. Thanks to print-on-demand,

families are wearing t-shirts to celebrate their loved ones in public. Signature art coffee cups find their way to the dinner table and hold the empty places. Redemption is for everyone.



This artwork was donated to Art For Redemption  
[Photo courtesy of William Coney]

## Prison life through the myopic view of disabilities

BY MATTHEW MOUNTS  
FCF Contributor

Most of us in prison have seen or experienced the level of dehumanizing behavior that happens in here, and I would ask that we look at it from another perspective. Some have had that run in with the person in chow line whose breath tells us they have only a nodding acquaintance with a tooth brush. Well, when you are in a wheelchair in that same line with someone who has questionable hygiene, you are essentially face-to-crotch or butt with the same people with said hygiene issue.

There are some who have been present when a fight happens in the chow hall and staff use pepper spray to control the situation. Now imagine that you are deaf and never hear the staff warnings, so when you turn to see what everyone is reacting to you get a face full of OC spray.

Imagine being blind. Someone could be walking up to jump someone, and of course you would never see it coming to get out of the way. Maybe being diabetic, and your sugar drops so low you are not able to process what is happening around you during any of these scenarios.

These examples are just the surface. Over the years that I have been

incarcerated, I have witnessed people victimized simply because some see them as "easy targets" who cannot fight back. No matter why they are here or what they may have done, they are still people.

When I came in, I stood up for the disabled because I hoped that if I had a disability one day, someone would stand up for me. Instead, I see people ask for ADA accommodations, medical equipment, etc., who do not need it but issue it as a quick way to get one over on the system. Instead, it makes it much harder for the people who need assistance, equipment, and Offender Care Aids to get what they need.

There are also those who request much more than necessary. One resident asked for an OCA I to help carry his food tray. He then insisted for his OCA to dress him, change his socks, and help him into and out of the shower. The person never requested the accommodations he insisted his OCA perform. The client attempted to get his OCA fired, but his pushy requests were revealed. The client ended up losing his accommodation, because he did not actually need one.

The next time you begin to think less of a person who has a real disability, please take some time to consider how it feels to be dehumanized.



## LIFESTYLE

### Shifting Priorities

BY JOYBELLE PHELAN  
IR Managing Editor

WAGEES is the acronym for the Work and Gain Employment and Education Skills program that was created in 2014 by legislative bill HB-1355. The bill created the first grant program in CDOC to provide funding to community non-profit organizations to help people leaving prison.

In 2017, the state reviewed WAGEES and returned a report indicating that since the program's launch in January of 2015 it has served over 1,700 people. Originally, CDOC hired the Latino Coalition for Community Leadership to manage the grant program. The audit also showed that the program had played a critical role in helping parolees become independent, which illustrates the long-term benefit in reducing recidivism as well as benefitting the entire community.

In January 2015, the Latino Coalition for Community Leadership was hired to manage the grant program. In 2017, the state reviewed the grant program and returned a report indicating that since the program's inception there have been over 1,700 people served by the program. The audit also showed that the program had played a critical role in helping parolees become independent, which illustrates the long-term benefit in reducing recidivism as well as benefitting the entire community.

In 2018, the legislature passed a bill that continued the WAGEES program for an additional five years and increased the funding. This increase enabled the addition of community partners and, the Women's Pilot Program, a re-entry program specifically for women with increased medical and/or behavioral health needs.

Currently, there are WAGEES community non-profit partners statewide. Each community partner offers specialized services designed to assist people releasing from prison to connect successfully with families and communities. The unifying theme is mentorship through employment readiness and education services.

Meeting with a case manager is expected, providing one point of contact for multiple needs such as transportation, employment, housing, life skills, and other support services. Many of the partners provide assistance with vocational training, resume preparation, interview coaching, career assessments, job leads, budgeting, basic computer literacy skills, and email setup, as well as support with soft skills like conflict resolution, anger management, time management, parenting, and interpersonal communication skills.

Some of the community partners also help with gang disengagement, medical benefits acquisition, housing assistance, and family reunification. Tool assistance helps pay for clothing, work boots, or shoes required by the employer. Identification acquisition covers

fees for birth certificates or driver's licenses. Transportation assistance covers bus tickets for work or WAGEES activities. Education assistance helps with classes and books. Since it is a grant program, there is never a fee to access the services and users will not be required to repay money to the non-profit organization.

Many of the people that work in the community partner organizations have been in prison or otherwise impacted by the criminal justice system and offer both empathy and experience in helping people releasing stand on their own two feet. It can be immensely helpful to talk issues out with someone who has been where you are and understands frustrations and struggles.

The Women's Pilot Program is focusing on the Denver Metro area to start and is a partnership between the Stout Street Health Clinic, the Empowerment Program, and CDOC. The team of doctors at Stout Street provides medical care for all men or women released from prison or on parole—people do not have to be enrolled in the Women's Reentry pilot program to receive their services. Whether someone wants a checkup, has more serious or ongoing medical concerns, or needs medication-assisted treatment (like Suboxone or Vivitrol) for opioid addiction, the clinic can make those decisions on a case-by-case basis. This is a voluntary program and the medical services include harm reduction, vision, dental, pharmacy, and therapists.

As a case manager with Paradigm One, Peter Kim works in the El Paso County Parole Office. Kim works closely with parole officers and re-entry staff in Colorado Springs offering various levels of support based on the individual's needs. In El Paso County, one of the most successful WAGEES partnerships is with Paradigm One. They offer several services including housing assistance, employment options, transportation assistance, clothing, and the basics that someone recently released needs to get back on their feet.

Paradigm One is a one-of-a-kind non-profit Recovery Community Center that provides recovery coaching, sober gatherings and events, life skills training, community reentry services, job placement, spiritual mentoring, mental health support, and more. Facilities include offering a fully equipped gym with a boxing ring, weights and more, and there are professional martial arts and fitness trainers on staff. There is a program that includes a variety of forms such as graffiti art and painting, and members can join a spiritual program to gather and grow in their faith. Paradigm One might serve as an inspiration for other WAGEES programs across the state for how to not only support recently released workers keep employment, but to help them thrive.

(Editor's Note: Since this article was written, Paradigm One is now called the Hazelbrook Community Recovery Center.)

### All That Jazz

BY JOHNATHON EDMONDS  
IR Journalist

In a 1992 MTV interview, saxophone player and presidential candidate Bill Clinton said that he had always dreamed of performing with Thelonious Monk. The music industry professional who was interviewing him, Tabitha Soren, asked, "Who IS the loneliest monk?"

Like most modern Americans, Soren had undoubtedly heard of jazz, but she did not know the legends, the players, nor the true experience. For most people, jazz is a genre of music on the fringe of society, a complicated, esoteric sound from another dimension that is sometimes called "music for musicians." The great jazz master Thelonious Monk (1917-1982) describes it most accurately: "Writing about jazz is like dancing about architecture." Any medium based on words is going to fail the mission.

With this in mind, to understand jazz we are left with basic history and some famous/influential names. The U.S. Gulf Coast, specifically New Orleans, is widely-accepted as its birthplace. Prior to the Civil War, New Orleans was the only U.S. city that allowed enslaved people from both Africa and the Caribbean to gather freely. The city's "Congo Square" held weekly sessions where enslaved and free people of color sang in their native languages and played their traditional instruments. By the late 19th century, these jam sessions had fused various rhythms, melodic styles, and social experiences into a distinct sound delivered in a unique manner.

Thus, jazz has clear, undeniable roots reaching back more than 200 years, though jazz legend Joseph "Jelly Roll" Morton (1890-1941) claimed that he alone was responsible for creating jazz in 1902. Perhaps, if Jelly Roll had been born 60 or 70 years later, he could have been a politician.

Exercising their newfound freedom and mobility, formerly enslaved people and their children moved north to Chicago and then New York, taking jazz with them. Somewhere in the years between 1895 and 1915, jazz managed to jump the racial divide so prevalent in early America. By the 1920s, the new high-tech phenomena of sound

recording and radio broadcasts had become the greatest development in mass media since the printing press, and their first big commercial success was jazz.

In 1916, the first offer to record jazz music went to black artist Freddie Keppard (1890-1933) and his "Original Creole Orchestra." However, Keppard was afraid that his method and sound could be stolen from him, a fear that extended to a habit of covering his horn-playing fingers with a handkerchief during stage performances. He passed on the recording opportunity. In 1917, the first jazz record was made in New York by the all-white "Original Dixieland Jazz Band." The "roar" in the "Roaring 20s" was jazz, and it forever changed American culture. Jazz incubated some of the world's most popular music for decades: swing, the big band era, bebop, and beyond.

Though Keppard did not cash in on a recording opportunity, his style ignited the Chicago Jazz explosion and paved the way for Louis Armstrong (1901-1971), whose career of major hits began in the 1920s and continued to his last pop-chart topper in 1967, "What A Wonderful World."

Meanwhile, Charlie Parker (1920-1955) made music history in the last certified home of jazz, Kansas City. The four cities, New Orleans, Chicago, New York, and Kansas City, formed a central core of jazz by 1929 and produced artists such as Billie Holiday (1915-1959), Ella Fitzgerald (1917-1996), Duke Ellington (1899-1974), Sarah Vaughn (1924-1990) and many, many more.

Like any other broadly defined genre, jazz has changed and grown. Now there is smooth jazz, fusion jazz, and a dozen other sub-genres. The style has never declined in popularity; it just seems to be a fringe genre because there are now more people in the world listening to other options. Contemporary artists such as Diana Krall, Herbie Hancock, Chick Corea, Diva, Al Di Meola, and others are still producing great music and playing to full houses around the world. If you are not a jazz fan, then you probably have not experienced enough of the spectrum to find your niche. A bold, new world awaits the open minded.



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### The paradox of judgment

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN  
IR Journalist

Judgment, good or bad, finds us in almost all circumstances of our lives. Sometimes we loath being judged. Other times we seek it out. Yep, we seek it out. You don't think so? Just turn on your television and you will find a host of game shows that people attend to judge or be judged. Take a look at "World of Dance." It hosts plenty of amazing and professional dancers who compete to be judged as the best. It seems funny that we seek out judgment when we want to be counted as great, yet we wish that we would not be judged for the worst possible day of our lives.

How did we get here? Why do we feel the need to make these hierarchies that fuel competition and drive us to be

better than what we are and have been? There must be a primal need to feel like we are the best and on top. Where does it start? Board games from childhood? Maybe in the family, if there are siblings around? We might even develop this on the playground or at school, when we are forced to socialize with others that come from either sordid or prestigious backgrounds. When we learn to judge in our youth, it can be hard to let go of judging when we are adults.

We need to ask ourselves as a society if we have a healthy relationship with judgment and the way we judge others. If we continue to use past mistakes as a tool for judgment, we make it hard for people to change their current situations and relationships, and we set ourselves and those around us up for failure. We should give people the room to grow beyond their mistakes but also know when and where to draw the boundaries that will ultimately keep us safe. To be willing to

judge, we must also be willing to become the judged. Yep, we have to be willing to be judged by others for our mistakes, too. However, we also get to be judged for our accomplishments.

When we become aware of how we affect others with our judgments, we can move from unhealthy judgments into healthy judgments that allow our society to grow instead of perish. We have to become mindful of how we as a society address judgment of others, so that we create people who can build each other up as leaders rather than choosing to find joy and relief in unhealthy ways, such as addiction, depression, self-loathing, and abuse of self and others. This is not to say that we should not be judged or judge others. It is simply a weird paradox; it is something we all do without a second thought.

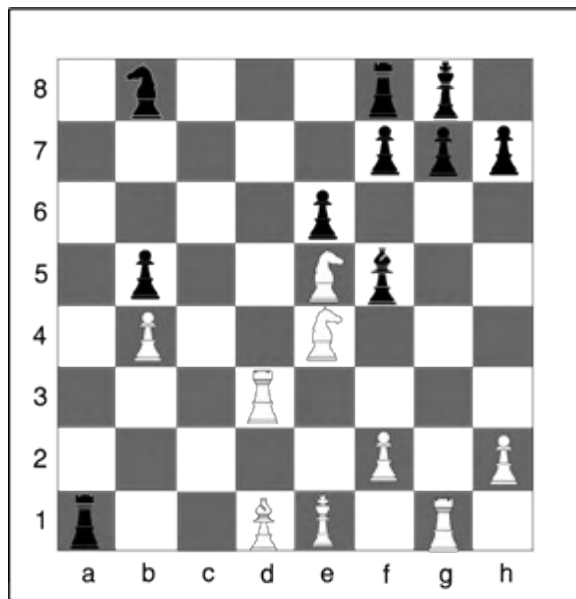
Would it not be neat if, for one day, we decided not to judge one another? This would be a phenomenal day for all of

humanity. One day, without having your past or what might happen in the future thrown in your face. Can you imagine a society in which our children do not have to worry about being judged due to the color of their skin, lack of money in their families, or anything that would be considered weird or outside of "normal"? What would that look like? Can we teach our kids how to judge in a healthy manner? What good could come out of a society in which we learn to forgive and treat each other with respect and human dignity? We are all guilty of judging someone in a way that may have had a negative impact.

What will you do to change the way that our society uses judgment? Will you be the kind of person who helps to change how our judgments help or hinder our society? It is up to us as individuals to make the change within and to live the change that we expect to see.

# Chess Tactician Puzzle 5 ★★★★★

Check Mate in Four Moves. White's turn to Move.



**Solution:**

- 1. Nf6+ (Knight to f6 + Check) Kh8
- 2. Nxf7+ (Knight takes f7 + Check) Rxf7
- 3. Rd8+ (Rook to d8 + Check) Rf8
- 4. Rxf8# (Rook takes f8 Rook #) Check Mate

This Chess puzzle illustrates the “Smother Check Mate” using your Knights to pin down the King into a corner and bringing in the Rook for the mate. The initial move of Nf6+ is also a good example of pinning: the Rook at g1 is set up nicely to pin the g7 Pawn from taking the Knight at f6 (it is an invalid move because it would put the King in check). The Nxf7+ sacrifice makes the Rook Rd8+ check and the final Rxf8# checkmate possible.

# Brain Teaser Puzzle 5 ★★★★★

## Intuitive Thinking Gone Wrong

A Bat and a Ball have a combined cost of \$1.10. The Bat costs \$1.00 more than the Ball. How much does the Ball Cost?

**Solution:**

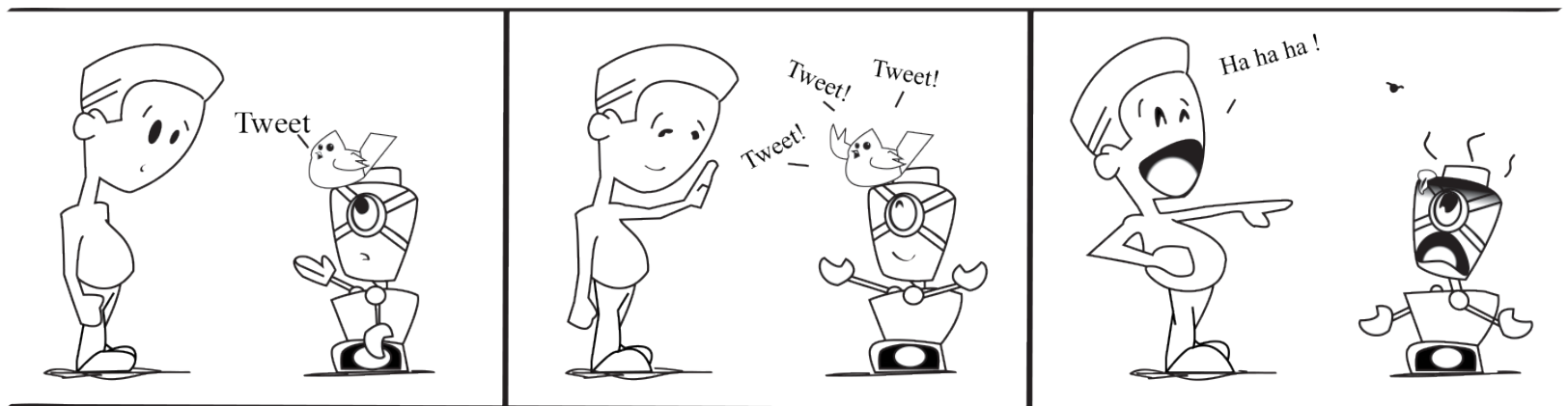
The Ball Costs 5 cents which would make the Bat cost \$1.05 and therefore the combined cost of both would be \$1.10 (1.05+0.05=1.10) as stated in the puzzle.

Many people who answer this question quickly get it wrong. If your first answer was the intuitively wrong answer of 10 cents, don't worry you're in good company. Many mathematically smart people who were asked this same question got it wrong—including MIT graduate students, doctors, CEOs and accountants.

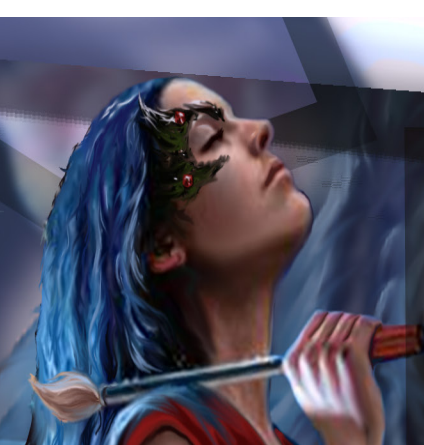
This is a good lesson that our quick decision-making, intuitive part of our brain can be wrong about problems that seem to have a simple solution. Always be careful to not rush to judgment on puzzles and your views of world situations—some things require brain work and a more thorough analysis through pure intuitiveness.



Franky & Georgy



# 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?



An artist's impression of a meal based on CDC's menu  
[Photo courtesy of Molly Ott]



A subjective impact of prison food  
[Photo courtesy of Molly Ott]



## Hope is a form of rebellion

Continued from page 2

prison town.

Molly grew up on the east coast where prisons are not as visible as they are out here in the Wild West. After her experience in Florence, she began to research incarceration. "I was just so shocked and in awe that it (prison) was something I didn't know about until I was in my mid-20s. It scared me that I could go that long not knowing something that's such a big presence in my identity as an American." She began writing to people on the inside to hear their personal perspectives. Many responded by telling her about DU PAI, which led to her current job. "I have the best job ever because of you all," Molly said.

"Artists turn invisible things

into something visible. I have an interest in what's invisible, and prison is the most invisible thing I have found yet in this society." Molly teaches classes on visual art in various state facilities but also uses her platform in academia and on social media to bring to light what she witnesses inside. Her website [m-ott.com](http://m-ott.com) includes her work with us—and for us. Her master's thesis was an immersive, interactive art experience that forced viewers in a gallery space to confront some of the realities of incarceration.

Molly's thesis project included many of the aspects of prison life that we take for granted from the inside, yet are completely foreign to the community at large. It was about giving spectators a glimpse into our lives. The visitors to the gallery were inundated with the multitude of rules and regulations read over out-of-sync speakers, while also having to put shoe-

booties on to give them the sense of being "dirty." Molly included dirt from around the Cañon City and Pueblo prison complexes, which some of the formerly incarcerated assistants said looked "just like the yard." Then the audience was shown how much of our lives can be censored with a sign displaying the picture criteria of what we are allowed to have. Molly covered images of her journal about her experiences inside with permanent marker. Guests were then asked to use muscle rub to remove the marker to experience what we go through to sometimes simply see images of family, loved ones, or even ourselves. The wall displayed her work with prison food and the impact it had on her as she explored the invisible and often ignored world we experience inside.

As many of you know, we get quite a few volunteers that come



A wild Cheeto cactus  
[Photo courtesy of Molly Ott]

## If Light

Continued from page 1



Free to climb to new heights

[Photo courtesy of Drummond West]



Life got flip-turned upside down

[Photo courtesy of Drummond West]



The only fictional character in "If Light" is the Interviewer, played by Mosely, whose role is woven throughout the various narratives. "I had come to them alone, but quickly realized that they were all talking to each other," the Interviewer tells the audience early in the play. "I started to imagine the interviewees in conversation with each other."

LaBonte, a co-author who also acted as a Unitarian Universalist Minister, echoed that idea in the play's program. "It's kind of ironic... we set out to collect and tell people's stories and we found our own," wrote LaBonte. "We discovered most people have no place for these types of conversations anywhere in their lives. We as a society, as an extended community, have to create space for them. They are vital."

DU PAI Executive Director Dr. Ashley Hamilton produced and directed the play. In the



In character inside the cellhouse

[Photo courtesy of Drummond West]



Pondering a meaningful experience through

[Photo courtesy of Drummond West]





**The discovery of what lies beneath**  
[Photo courtesy of Molly Ott]



**An interactive art experience**  
[Photo courtesy of Molly Ott]



**The aftermath of attempting to feel human**  
[Photo courtesy of Molly Ott]



**Cheeto blossoms**  
[Photo courtesy of Molly Ott]

inside to be seen helping more than to actually help. Not Molly. Need an example? The food portion of her thesis. Molly ate prison food as part of the project. Seriously. I thought I misheard her, too. But no, she ate the same meals as us (albeit with silverware and assumedly better table manners), added up the calories consumed, and then went on a walk to burn off every calorie. Her walks could last six or seven hours. She does not listen to music or fiddle with her phone. She stays in the moment, meditating on what the incarcerated person's experience is (boredom, exposure, discomfort, etc.). She tries to imagine what we deal with on a daily basis. She says the combined experience of eating our meals at the same time as us is a spiritual practice that experiments with actualizing new potentials of empathy. She took photos to curate the experience and include

it in her thesis. Oh, and she also makes food sculptures.

Molly is a food artist. Why food? Everyone has an established relationship with food, and quite frankly, it is accessible. It is not so "scary" to experience art in this way. Sounds made-up and your BS meter is maybe going off, but I assure you, Molly is the real deal.

How does one balance the heavy work she does with incarceration? Put simply, Hot Cheetos. That same summer in Florence, Molly spent a lot of time in the desert with the saguaro cacti and felt drawn to interact with them because of their strangeness. She started another art project: attaching Hot Cheetos to cactus spines. "Hot Cheetos are just floating in my mind, sometimes. Maybe it's a millennial thing? Life is pretty absurd." Hot Cheetos are fluid when put in a natural environment and can be mistaken

for strange blossoms rather than Cheeto blobs.

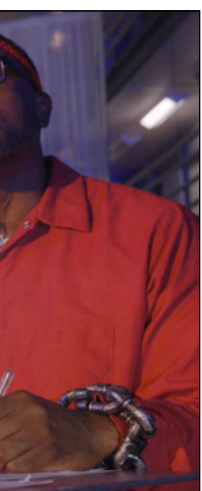
Molly's overall wish is for our incarcerated communities to dream and strengthen our imaginations together. Hope is a form of rebellion. "Hope keeps us alive. If we're alive, that means we get to be active participants/creators in the future," Molly said. She believes that whether art making is eating meals and going on a walk or making abstract forms using mashed potatoes, art is communication. Art is storytelling. She hopes for us all to become confident creators so that we can simultaneously become storytellers. She believes our stories can change people's ideas about what reality is and what the future can be. So, in the spirit of Molly, tap into your creativity, examine your surroundings, and use that creative spirit to make the invisible... visible.



**Cast and crew of "If Light Closed Its Eyes"**  
[Photo courtesy of Drummond West]



**Immersed in the performance**  
[Photo courtesy of Drummond West]



**High artistic expression**  
[Photo courtesy of Drummond West]

program, she too described the team's purpose for this project. "We set off to capture and understand a 360-degree view of the criminal justice system, in this moment in time, and what that reveals about our shared humanity."

Hamilton brought in masters of the craft including the likes of Joanna Rotkin, who runs a dance studio and popular blog, to choreograph the dancers, and Joe Salvatore, a New York University theater professor, to coach the team of amateur actors. In addition, crews erected 20-foot-tall white curtains on three sides of the pod, set up scaffolding in the back to support lighting and sound equipment, and built small bleachers for seating for about 120 audience

members.

The lighting, cool purples and greens, was designed by Mannie LeGrand and Shakiel Madden-Vaughn. The original mournful, hymnal music was written and performed by McKinnie, Chuck Garlick, and Lynell Hill.

At the start of the play, 10 dancers, clad head to toe in white, emerged from cells on all three tiers. The dancers, arms swaying, backs hunched, eyes steely and distant, make emotive appearances throughout, and in some ways, become the heartbeat of the show.

Hill wrote music for the play and was a member of the dance team. He had been part of hip-hop dance crews

prior to being incarcerated and felt challenged by the type of interpretive dance that was demanded of him here. "Going through hardships in prison gives you a new set of lenses," Hill said. "Dancing from a place without meaning is meaningless. People in here are so attuned to what people say they should be, but that experience allowed them to be who they really are. It's a very liberating process."

Originally, DU PAI leadership intended to send "If Light" on a tour of various CDOC facilities just as "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest" had previously. Thwarted by -19 lockdowns, staff shortages, and limited bed space for a large cast and crew, the show was kept at SCF

and limited to eight performances. Unfortunately, even that proved impossible when the final three public performances were cancelled following positive COVID tests within the facility.

The show was not shut down before the crew had a chance to spend two days filming. The final cut will be posted online through DU PAI's social media pages. It will eventually be broadcasted on one of CDOC's closed circuit stations so that Colorado's incarcerated men and women will have a chance to see the fruits of their peers' labor and the stories they sought to tell.

**IR's New Digs**

BY **BOB EISENMAN**  
IR Writer Development Coordinator

Not many of you realize this, but up until recently, *The Inside Report* office was based in what is essentially a glorified closet. Cramped together, no ventilation (picture a nice locker room scent/vibe), and little to no storage. Well, we are happy to show off our new office space. A special thanks to Capt. Michael Sherwood for spearheading the operation and getting the project approved by Maj. Justin McBride and Warden Siobhan Burtlow. The FCF self-proclaimed “Wrecking Crew” of Jorge Chavezflores, Ivan Grimaldo, Arnaldo

Luceroalmanza, and Felix Reyes came in with their fearless leader Sgt. Gallagher to take down walls, move cabinets, and even lay carpet. The level of enjoyment the IR staff gets out of the weekly vacuuming of the office is almost embarrassing. So, thanks to the DU PAI team, FCF Management Team, and the FCF “Wrecking Crew” for making our office the great working space it is now.

An additional thank you is extended to Capt. Rocchi, Lt. Sosnowski and their guys, Jose Gonzalez, Chris Baker, and Justin Smith for also putting in a helping hand to make the IR office a more comfortable work environment.



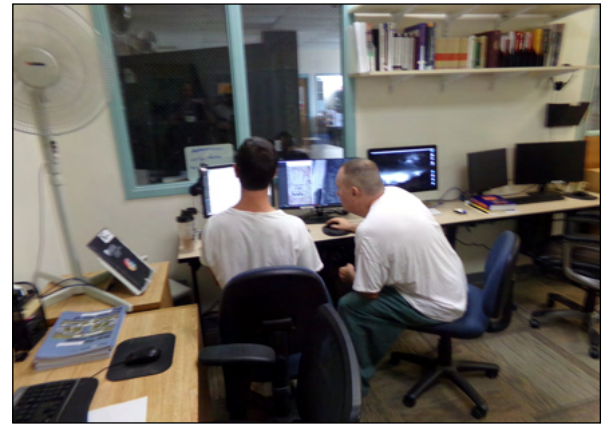
**Office space**  
[Photo courtesy of IR]



**The Wrecking Crew layin' it down**  
[Photo courtesy of IR]



**Newsroom construction**  
[Photo courtesy of IR]



**Test driving the new work environment**  
[Photo courtesy of IR]

**Book review of “Reboot: Leadership and the Art of Growing Up”**

BY **SEAN MUELLER**  
CTCF Contributor

Jerry Colonna, a successful venture capitalist turned consultant to entrepreneurs, has one main goal: make leaders into better people. Sounds like a noble pursuit, but how do you do that? In his book, “Reboot: Leadership and the Art of Growing Up,” Colonna said, “They need to understand the ‘why’ of what they do and ultimately who they are.”

Helping high achievers become better humans is no simple task. This is especially true if a person has overcome difficult childhood traumas and wears a mask to pretend everything is just as they planned and they have it all under control. Eventually, a person gets exhausted from the inauthenticity of being somebody else’s idea of perfection. Maybe they have been a successful start-up founder on the verge of another monumental growth phase and realized their life is severely unbalanced because of people-pleasing. Perhaps they have been uncovered as a fraud and have to put their life back together while rewriting their script from prison. Deep questions that uncover our actions and motivations are needed regardless of why somebody yearns to become a better version of themselves.

Colonna’s book asks us to turn inward. When you were a child, did you ever

have to act a certain way to feel safe or win somebody’s affection? While living in a two-bedroom apartment in Brooklyn, Colonna had a tumultuous childhood that included an alcoholic father, a schizophrenic mother, and six brothers and sisters. That is not how a typical success story starts. However, it certainly gave the author numerous experiences that required years of therapy but influenced his personal development.

Despite having incredible financial success, he suffered severe depression that occasionally shut him down. Colonna elected to help others find the path to being better humans instead of hoarding the information. “My journey as a leader has taught me that my childhood demanded a hyper vigilance

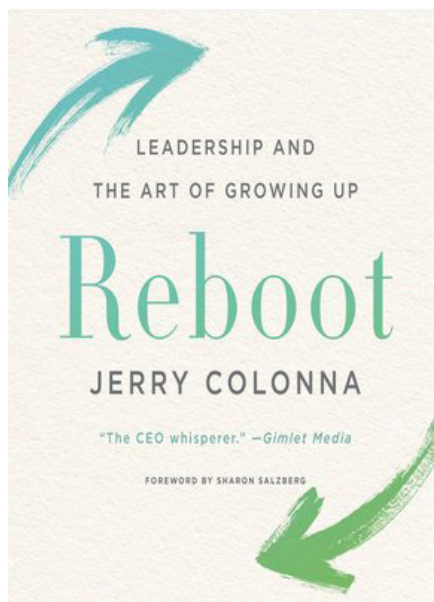
and that to stay safe, I learned to work ceaselessly to try to make sense of the world (even as I was confronted with insensible acts and facts),” Colonna writes. Sound familiar? “Money and success meant admiration, acknowledgement, and accolades. Success and money—and even more important, the busyness needed to create those—became proof of my worth as a human,” he writes. Perfection is a key defense mechanism children use to keep an emotionally unstable parent from physically or mentally assaulting them. Often times, we don’t realize that the perfectionism is causing more harm than good as adults.

All through this book, it felt like Colonna had interviewed me personally and exquisitely identified each skeleton

in my funhouse of clown horrors. All the masks, all the inauthenticity, everything. He has taken a bold step in sharing his story so others can understand they are not alone and there is a path to becoming a better person.

The path is the questions we have to ask. “Radical inquiry within allows us to step back and see the patterns of our lives not as random acts of a willful or even vengeful god, but as forces that shape who we are. It’s this understanding that will make us not only better leaders, but better, happier, more resilient people,” Colonna writes. These are the main questions that will start your reboot: How are you complicit in creating the conditions of your life that you say you don’t want? What are you willing to give up to stop being complicit? What are you not saying that needs to be said? This being so, so what?

Once you are aware of these answers, you are closer to uncovering who you really are. “Reboot: Leadership and the Art of Growing Up” is an excellent guide to releasing yourself from paralyzing thoughts caused by traumatic experiences. The stories and questions are an invaluable glimpse into Colonna’s gift of igniting personal healing and growth.



**Setting the stage**

BY **WILLIAM CONEY**  
IR Senior Editor

There are no quantifiable data sets to measure transformation and diagnose rehabilitation.

Only life sets the stage to allow community roles to play out. Art imitates life in all of its tragedies and triumphs. The stage allows for diverse interactivity to be rehearsed until it is natural. On this stage, it is common to see the gang-affiliated finding common purpose. On this stage, things are not black and white. The mood is set as “blues” and “greens” blend and gold glitters down unexpectedly.

The production of theater is about teaching people to work with what they have. Scenery, props and costume teams consist of strangers encouraged to dream big, communicate with each other and share ideas. They coordinate, plan, and present. Most ideas are shot down, and they are sent back to the drawing board. This experience of having their dreams and plans rejected is not a one-time event. The shark tank is filled at least three times before the business plan is

drafted. Needless to say, some people do not return.

Rejection is difficult for the recently re-integrated, but the stage is a wonderful place to rehearse. The deadlines and dependencies in life are imitated in this environment of purpose that has a common goal. The acts before actual production could easily be called “Normalization.” This is a fortunate substitute for the promises that COVID and staffing issues have forced facilities to reject.

Those in theater use terms like “company” and “troupe” to describe their business. This makes perfect sense when seen from the production side. To the audience, theater is a song and dance. It is temporary entertainment and considered a gift for their enjoyment. They are correct, but they also only see part of the show.

The players form new circles of influence and concern that intersect like ripples on water. The energy builds and those intersecting points begin to complement each other, forming waves that lead up to the production. It is so apropos that the opening theme of any production is baptism. A fitting theme to

match the mental health issues that are currently over our heads.

Theater has historically been used as a method for dealing with trauma. The plays of Sophocles were written when the Athenians were surrounded by war on five fronts. Every able-bodied citizen was required to serve. Plays were performed by enlisted guards and the audience was either wounded, on leave, or being redeployed. The play “Ajax” reads like a textbook description of PTSD.

Recent studies demonstrate that the incarcerated have experienced childhood trauma at a rate far higher than other control groups. Even more revealing is the high percentage of traumatic brain injuries compared with the general population. The findings alone reveal an unprecedented need for a more responsive way to deal with trauma. Ancient wisdom has found a place in the prison system behind the persona of a song and dance.



**Godspell production crew putting in work at Fremont**  
[Photo courtesy of IR]



BY ISAAC DAVIS  
IR Writing Corps

## Featured Artist: Leo Salas

The relationship between prison staff and residents is a changing and challenging story to tell. There has long been an “us versus them” mentality. This way of thinking has not achieved very positive results. Thankfully, not all CDOC staff agree with this status quo. Time/Release Operations Technician 3 Leo Salas is an enlightening example for how to understand the relationships between

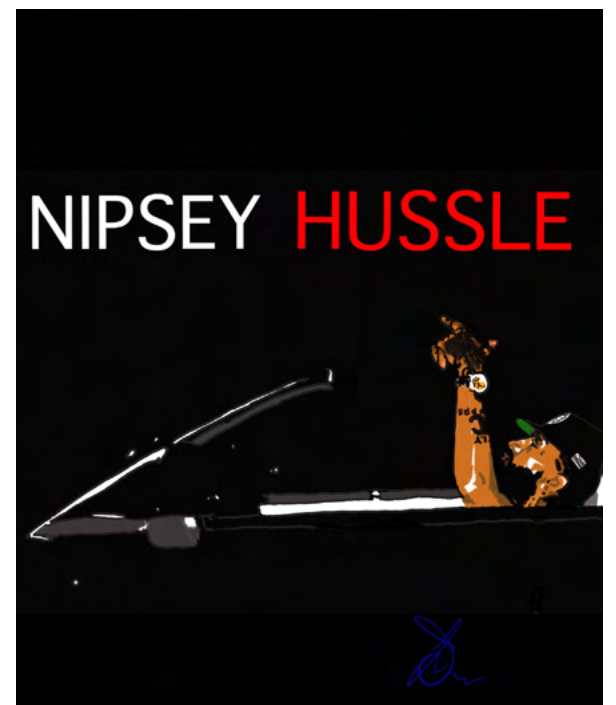
humans through art enrichment. Salas picked up a pen at the age of nine, back in the 90s, having no idea where that talent would take him. His mother supported his interest in art, which quickly grew into love. He was not challenged in the many schools he attended, so he turned to himself for art knowledge and tutelage. He created comics with his friends that showed

influences of the times, namely “Thundercats, Ninja Turtles, Masters of the Universe, and, The X-Men.” Salas attended college but dropped out because of a lack of patience with academia. He added that, “Maybe a bit of ego clash to boot.” He stopped drawing altogether for six years but was reinvigorated artistically by a Kanye West video he saw after a deployment

in Iraq with the military. A close friend who publishes children books introduced Salas to his now favorite medium, digital. A live creation on Facebook from famous comic book antihero artist Todd McFarlane spawned Salas’ desire to share his own work. Being a digital artist now allows Salas to connect with residents in a new way. In CDOC’s Milestone mentoring program, Salas

is working with residents to help individuals better themselves. Occasionally, he shows digital works of art to residents, which strengthens relationships between himself and program participants. Salas admits he dislikes that not enough art is allowed or taught in prison, but he takes great pleasure in seeing the amazing and productive artwork being done by inmates daily with the

limited resources they do have. Salas would really like to see digital arts/web design taught in facilities as those skills are relevant in current workplaces and serve a dual purpose for rehabilitation. Sharing his artwork gives Salas a great rapport with inmates and dissolves that old “us versus them” mentality. Salas is using art enrichment to build positive results and change the status quo.



## Redemption is a second chance

BY PATRICK SANCHEZ  
LCF Contributor

Redemption is getting back up when something or someone knocks you down. Picking yourself up and being willing to face that same obstacle. A minor setback for a major comeback is what I had in mind. Having to go down to FCF for a week to take the CrossFit Level 1 test for the second time after failing in September 2019 was a test of my resilience and my drive for redemption. Failing hurts and has a tendency to bring out every negative thought one can possibly imagine. For me, it was a complete and utter test of my growth and maturity as a man. I could've easily given up and gone right into that immature teenager I was upon entering CDOC. However, that is not what I did.

First thing I did was call my family and apologize for wasting their \$1000. I cannot even express the humiliation I felt pumping through my veins during the phone call that lasted about five minutes, if that. Once I hung up, I picked up my Level 1 training guide and

began to read as if it were my Bible. Heck, I probably read it more than most people read their actual Bible. OK, I might be exaggerating, but I'm sure you get the gist of what I'm trying to say. It became a mission of mine to take that test one last time and pass it.

My mission's objective finally came around. On Sept. 20, 2021, I walked into the gym at FCF feeling confident and worry free. I wanted that test and I wanted it bad. The Level 1 seminar is a two-day course from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Sadly, I had two more days to wait before I could attain redemption. The seminar was an experience of a lifetime. I met some amazing men from other prisons around Colorado. I had the honor of meeting three coaches that are staff members of CrossFit. But let me remind you that I was there for one reason only, my redemption.

Before I knew it, CrossFit Seminar Staff Member Nicole Gordon gave us the run down on the testing process and one of the other coaches, Jason, handed me my test. Here we go, test time, baby.

I open my test and the very first question stumped

me. I told myself, "No, not again." I took a deep breath and whispered to myself, "Remember why you are here." Once I regained my composure, I pressed on and completed my test. I handed it to Jason. As he reached out for it, he asked me, "Hey Pat, how do you feel?" I told him, "I'll be expecting my certificate in the mail." I was beyond confident. But again, I had to wait.

My patience was tested throughout this process. Back at LCF, a few weeks later, I asked Sgt. Bushong to pull up the CrossFit.com directory and click on "Find a Trainer." Once I saw my name pop up, I took off running to tell everyone and anyone that would listen. "I did it!" I passed my test. I didn't give up. I set myself a goal that was positive and realistic.

Life will only change when you become more committed to your dreams than your comfort zone. Everyone deserves a second chance no matter what they've done in life. Be willing to put in the work and acknowledge that you messed up or failed. We are all worthy of something better. So don't just sit back and wait. Go and get that redemption like I got mine!



The second of two CrossFit Level One seminars held at Fremont  
[Photo courtesy of FCF]

## Traumatic brain injury behind the fences

Continued from page 2

cause serious long-term effects because the brain has no time to heal.

BIAC collaborates with universities, agencies, and state programs to assist survivors of all forms of brain injury. They also promote training for law enforcement, correctional personnel, and re-entry organizations. Horsfall said the criminal justice system has been eager to learn about brain injuries among their clients and how support can be provided. "When I spoke to a parole board member, she showed real concern about my TBI and how it impacts my world," former FCF resident Jody Vigil said.

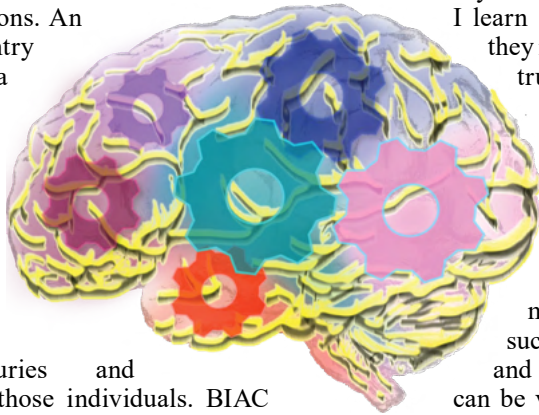
Ongoing grant work through an agency called Caring For Denver assists survivors with restorative options. An associated re-entry specialist leads a psychoeducation group at the Denver County Jail called Ahead. BIAC is partnering with CDOC on the pilot program resulting from SB-138 to screen for brain injuries and provide support to those individuals. BIAC is working on community-based programs including clinical services, peer mentorship, and case management to foster successful re-emergence into society. Horsfall believes addressing brain injury requires a multiple-pronged approach encompassing medical, psychological, financial, and legal support.

"Cognitive impairment, no matter what it is, and emotional well-being, are inextricably intertwined," Horsfall said. The frontal lobe of the brain is almost always impacted from TBIs, and this may lead to disinhibition and emotional dysregulation. As reported in Prison Legal News, people with TBI are more likely to commit violent crimes. Further, Horsfall said survivors often make the same choices repeatedly, regardless of negative consequences. According to Casey Leins at U.S. News & World Report, the recidivism rate for TBI survivors, around 70%, is twice that

of the general population. These challenges following a TBI easily become compounded.

Despite these statistics, residents are often unaware of any link between head trauma and functional problems. Attention, processing-speed, and short-term memory are commonly impacted. Attention deficits from TBI may cause issues for prisoners when responding to directions given by a correctional officer; this could be interpreted as deliberate defiance. A resident may experience trouble not only understanding what is being spoken, but also what is occurring around them. According to abnormal psychologist Ronald Comer, almost half of all TBI or repeated mild head injuries may cause permanent learning and memory problems. Comer also reports that TBI is a leading cause of neurocognitive disorders like Alzheimer's. "At first, staff didn't believe I had a TBI," Vigil said. "They validated my memory loss and acknowledged that I learn at a different rate once they realized I was telling the truth."

The BIAC reports that, in addition to the higher rates of disciplinary incidents, incarcerated individuals with TBI are at a greater risk for mental health disorders such as depression, anxiety, and substance abuse. "It can be very disorienting to not understand why you're getting sensory overload, why you have a short fuse, and why you say things without putting them through a filter," Horsfall said. Many of Horsfall's clients feel isolated, which can be devastating. Horsfall noted an extremely high rate of suicide following a brain injury. According to the American Journal of Public Health, people with a history of TBI in both civilian and military populations are one and a half to four times more likely to die by suicide than the general population. Horsfall recognizes the significance of connecting with survivors who have fallen through the cracks of available services while harnessing as many resources as possible to help them. "Having worked with the justice-involved brain injury community, I can say they are hands down the most resilient group of people I've ever worked with," Horsfall said.



From left: Jesse Wilkinson, Nicole Gordon, and Patrick Sanchez  
[Photo courtesy of IR]

## Stretched out

BY TIMOTHY WAKEFIELD  
CTCF Bureau Chief

This year, with the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, staff collaborated with CTCF's newly commissioned "Offender" Council to restore group yoga in the gym and yard.

Up to 25 residents gather for one-hour sessions on Sundays, Wednesdays, and Fridays between 2:50 p.m. and 3:50 p.m. Yoga is instructed by residents who are knowledgeable and safety-conscious. They stick to the basics and accommodate the needs of those attending.

Prison yoga isn't new, but it's becoming all the rage. Yoga was seen as the way out after COVID lockdowns—relief from bodily and psychological tensions. Group yoga became a way to reconnect. Unsurprisingly, it was one of the first things residents pleaded for.

Now, bodybuilders are pushing past their limits with yoga. Older folks are regaining their vitality. The young, well, they are staying yoga-young. Residents are adding yoga regimens to case management and parole plans.

Yoga is not only an ancient stretching method, but also a sacred meditation practice that affects the whole body and mind. Dr. Bessel Van der Kolk, M.D., treats PTSD with yoga. In his book, "The Body Keeps Score," Van der Kolk writes, "When people are chronically scared or angry, [their] constant

muscle tension ultimately leads to spasms, back pain, migraine headaches, fibromyalgia, and other forms of chronic pain." Further, yoga helps regulate breathing as much as it increases strength and range of motion. Breathing deeply is relaxing. According to Van der Kolk, studies confirm that changing the way one breathes can improve problems with anger, depression, and anxiety. CTCF Yogi Charles M. notices this when he breathes deeper throughout his day. He attributes this to meditative yoga.

Yoga poses can look goofy, thereby attracting judgment. Accepting that judgment by returning your focus to breathing and stretching is part of the practice. One participant said, "Yoga-ing through the jokers helps train my mind to be a calm preserve in frustrating situations in the cell house."

Acknowledging and accepting judgment to move towards better health sounds like a culture shift. That is exactly what is happening in CTCF's yoga community with every cat/cow, downward/upward dog, cobra, or lizard pose, and every "happy baby." Other people are getting more comfortable embracing vulnerability by watching the folks who are stretching into a new way of being.

For a free book on yoga write: Prison Yoga Project P.O. Box 415 Bolinas, CA 94924. Also check out "The Body Keeps Score" by Bessel Van der Kolk, M.D.

## Ben Bergeron

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impact on people's lives, thus leading him to become a personal trainer.

After a few years of doing this, Ben became a strength and conditioning coach which ultimately led him to CrossFit and opening a gym part-time. It was in 2009, after moving into the facility he's in now and doing CrossFit full-time, that he truly realized the change that CrossFit can have on people.

"It was way more than just faster mile times, stronger lifts, bigger muscles; it was this crazy transformative experience for people on a psychological, mental, and emotional level."

To really bring this point home, Ben talked about "that thing between our ears" and the way it dictates the levels of fulfillment and peace in our lives.

"If there's one thing we all want, and a lot of people have a hard time coming to this realization, the one thing we all want is peace of mind. We want to feel okay inside."

It's in this pursuit to feel okay inside that Ben believes the training methodology of CrossFit is as good of a tool that exists in the world to help people get there.

"I can get you faster to recognize the dichotomy of the mind standing over the barbell in the round of 15 of 'Fran' than I could having you meditate for four months. And that's why I love this."

Ben goes on to describe how the typical 60-minute class at his gym is more of a training session for the next 23 hours.

"It's transformative in the fact that 'I am a more centered person. I'm more valued in terms of I understand my own values.'"

"So it's the Trojan horse," he continues. "They think they're coming in for the physicality. But it's the psychological and emotional that is the true transformation."

This was an excellent segue for the question of how he motivates those who start to get discouraged when they're maybe not seeing the results they were expecting and also some of his methods to keep people striving towards their goals. After some hesitation, his answer surprised me.

"We live in an incredibly results-driven world, right? And because of that, we become very goal-oriented," he explains. "This sounds weird, because on a certain level, I don't believe in goals and goal setting."

You're right, Ben. That does sound weird.

He goes on to explain that as motivating as goals are, for a certain group of the population, they can be equally discouraging. He uses the example of someone who has been coming to the gym five days a week for three weeks, has been working hard, and hasn't lost any weight and is still last in the class.

"Your question is how do we have that conversation with people? Well, what if we just didn't start with [losing weight] as the goal? What if instead... the thing we're looking for is for you to show up? That's the goal. That's the objective."

What if we, instead of focusing on the results—which are the end state—we focused on the process, and the process is show up four or five days a week?"

Showing up is just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to this process. There are other factors such as training, nutrition, sleep, stress levels, and relationships that can affect results.

"The role of the coach is to be analytical and figure out where are the gaps, and the gaps are in the process," Ben said. "If you're the coach of an NFL football team, you don't sit the team down and go, 'Guys, we're gonna get 'em next game.' No, you go to the film and you're like where's our weakness? Where's our holes? What are we missing? That's what we do as coaches when people aren't seeing results."



Ben Bergeron preparing his athletes for what could turn out to be an uphill battle  
[Photo courtesy of Google Image Search]

In understanding that CrossFit can be scary or intimidating for some people, whether because of the athletes, the movements, or the high-intensity at which the movements are being performed, I asked Ben if there were any ways in particular he had to help ease people who may still be on the fence about doing/joining CrossFit.

"I'll do it in three pieces. That's the first one, recognizing that it's scary, and you got that one. The next one is whenever we're leading—I'm a big fan of, I think it was George Washington that said it—like, the way to lead is to first listen, then learn, then help, then lead."

He continues, saying, "We're so eager and excited to get people to do this thing this way. But when someone is hesitant to come in, understanding a little bit more about them as a person, listening to them completely, helping them... Said another way is meeting them where they are, not trying to get them to do something different. When you do that, you establish quite a bit of trust in people."

The third part of his three-pronged approach in helping people to feel more comfortable is leading by example. It is in the way he describes and breaks down this approach that hit me especially hard because I have been, and can still sometimes be, the coach he is encouraging people not to be.

"I really believe every single CrossFit coach, regardless of ability, should go slow and scale the majority of their weekly workouts. But if you're there to race everybody; if you're there just to move as fast as you possibly can; if your objective is keep yourself on top of the leaderboard, then no matter what you say... they're not going to listen to that, because you're not doing it."

Ben furthers his point from the perspective of his members and how it's important for them to see him using lighter weights and not posting his scores on the leaderboard.

"So many people do it, and they ride the emotional rollercoaster of the leaderboard and that becomes the focus of their workout. 'Well, if my coach isn't posting his scores to workouts, maybe that's not everything there is to be had in this thing.'"

In his book "Chasing Excellence," Ben hits on a number of qualities that he believes go into overall character development; qualities such as commitment, positivity, and embracing adversity to name a few. I asked him if there was one that maybe stood alone or the process couldn't be without.

"Everything kind of rides on the ability that is having a growth mindset."

Ben strongly believes that people are either of a

fixed mindset or a growth mindset. The former being someone who believes they are born with a certain number of traits and capacities.

"Growth mindset is the exact opposite," Ben said. "Everything is plastic, meaning it can take shape. And you can grow new neurons; you can grow new skillsets."

It becomes very apparent how he feels about coaches who have a fixed mindset.

"If you have a fixed [mindset] as a coach, there's nothing we can do for you. Because you're not interested in getting better. All you want to do is make sure life lines up so you can pass the tests and show your prowess."

Ben goes on to explain that in a growth mindset, one wants the challenge the feedback, and to learn to grow.

"It's not about passing the test. It's who I become by taking the test."

Transitioning to CrossFit in prison, this may come as a shock to some, but it hasn't been received very well by some members of the outside community. This was evidenced by numerous comments posted to an article written by Andrea Maria Cecil called "Building Community Behind Bars" that highlighted the start of Redemption Road at Limon Correctional Facility. Some of those comments included, "Why are we wasting time training murderers!!! WTF!!!... This is not right!" and "This is disgusting." Another asked, "Do we need to do background checks on our CrossFit coaches now? We give them our credit card and bank information. What protections are being put in place?"

I was curious as to Ben's thoughts about CrossFit in prison, what kind of redeeming qualities CrossFit could have for those who do it in prison, and what, if anything, would he say to the naysayers?

"It's the most transformative program I've ever seen," he said. "The thing it does is it changes you from the inside out."

He then asks, "What do we believe prison is? Is it a place to send the bad people? So we don't have to see them again? Or is it a place to rehabilitate people; to turn them into better versions of themselves? And that answers the question for the naysayers."

"But if you believe that anyone that's been incarcerated should have—could have—the opportunity to be reintroduced to society, wouldn't it make sense to help develop those people?"

And if we're going to help develop those people," he added, "wouldn't we want to provide them with some of the most impactful, transformative programs that we've ever seen?"

He goes on to make a case for why CrossFit would be even more beneficial for those who aren't coming back out.

"Wouldn't [lifers] be the people we want to transform the most because we know those people are going to be in there forever as the leaders for the transient community? Shouldn't those people be the stalwarts... the leaders that are helping transform everyone else that's coming in and out?"

"It seems to me it's more of a belief system about what you believe prison is than should we be doing CrossFit or not."

Being someone who has been involved with CrossFit long enough to have seen its many ups and downs and overall evolution, I asked Ben whether he's noticed a change in philosophies between founder Greg Glassman and its new leader Eric Roza, and his thoughts on the future of CrossFit.

"Fundamentally, besides the tonality, which in the beginning was like 'You guys are dumb for doing fitness the way you're doing it, and talking about nutrition the way you're doing it, and we're right. And if you don't believe we're right, put your money where your mouth is, we're gonna beat you,'—that's kind of fun to be a part of, by the way—the methodology hasn't changed at all but the tone has, because we don't have to prove it

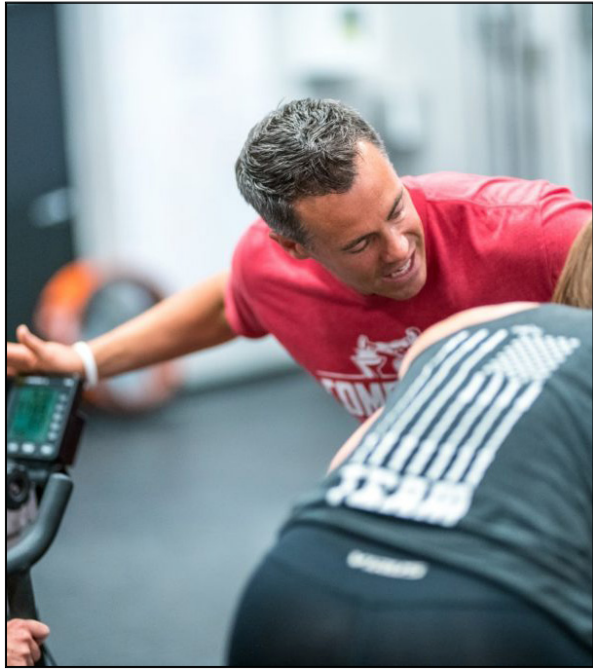


Listen to your coach  
[Photo courtesy of Google Image Search]

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## Ben Bergeron

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Breaking the fixed mindset  
[Photo courtesy of Google Image Search]

anymore.”

When talking about the future of CrossFit, he brought up how in 2020, amidst COVID-19 and the Black Lives Matter movement (the death of George Floyd in particular), Glassman made some regrettable comments that not only had profound impacts on the CrossFit community, but ultimately led to him stepping down and eventually selling the company to Roza.

“There was a retraction,” Ben said. “The hope is that the new leadership reinvigorates the community.”

According to Ben though, it’s going to be very challenging. He explains why by contrasting the different leadership styles.

“Coach Glassman was truly a revolutionary. He was more interested in picking a fight and winning a fight than he was in terms of making another million dollars,” Ben said. “That’s the way to lead a movement with true vigor.”

Ben proceeds to describe that with the new leadership, it’s not just a single person leading the charge.

“It’s a company who represents a bunch of investors. And those investors have to see returns. So I hope that the community isn’t affected by that.”

He continues the thought saying, “I think it’s hard to keep the ethos of what [CrossFit] was when balance sheets matter and the bottom line

matters. If they can do it, heck yeah! Heck yeah. But it’s a new challenge. And it’s a hard challenge.”

As challenging as it may be, Ben is quick to point out that it’s not impossible. He uses the examples of Yvon Chouinard with Patagonia and Steve Jobs with Apple and how they were able to stay true to their values.

“It can be done,” Ben concludes. “It takes a special, special person to be able to do that.”

Switching gears, I brought up the prevalence of performance enhancing drugs (PED) in CrossFit. This question was inspired after watching the dominant return of Ricky Garard at the 2022 NOBULL CrossFit Games, who was coming off of a four-year ban from competition after testing positive for banned substances at the 2017 Games. When it comes to PED’s being used to gain a competitive edge, Ben seemed fairly confident in his response.

“I do think it’s rare. I don’t think it’s prevalent,” he said.

He also said he’s not naïve enough to think that cheating the doping agency can’t happen.

“I mean, Lance Armstrong did it for a decade against the seemingly best testing in the world. So I’m sure it can be done. But I don’t believe it’s the norm. I think it’s the exception, not the norm.”

He added to this with his thoughts on why people may believe PED’s are more common than they are and that’s because they see the overall physical

appearance of most elite athletes.

“What people don’t realize is [elite CrossFit athletes] are training in a way that no human beings have ever trained in the history of humanity,” he explains. “They’re doing this new revolutionary program which, by the way, is the way to elicit natural growth hormone. You can get massive amounts of natural growth hormone by doing CrossFit.”

He expands on this concept saying, “They’re training five, six, seven hours a day... and sleeping 10 to 11 hours a night, and eating incredibly nutrient-dense foods, and all of the right supplementation, and no stress levels. Your body responds.”

As we were wrapping up, I noticed numerous books on a bookshelf behind Ben and asked if there were any he was particularly fond of or would recommend.

He immediately reached for a copy of Viktor E. Frankl’s “Man’s Search for Meaning.”

“For you guys doing what you’re doing, if you haven’t read this,” he said while holding up Daniel Coyle’s “Culture Code.”

He also recommended “Never Split the Difference” by former FBI Hostage Negotiator Chris Voss, along with “Chop Wood Carry Water” by Joshua Metcalf, saying “This would be cool for your athletes. It’s a super easy read and just kind of talks about commitment to the process.”

Last was a well-worn edition of “Mindset: The New Psychology



Climbin’ his way to success  
[Photo courtesy of Google Image Search]

of Success” by Carol S. Dweck, Ph.D. that focuses on the fixed and growth mindset.

After thanking Ben for his time and me admitting to being a fan boy of his and telling him what he does is really dope (To which responded, “The fact that you choose the word ‘dope’ like, I’m a fan boy of yours, Evan.”) the interview was over.

I’ve heard it said before that you should never

meet your idols and I think it’s because they’re usually not who you think they are.

Well, mine turned out to be exactly who I thought he was and some. Thank you Ben for being an inspiration and positive light in what can often be a dark place. If we could live by even half of the example you have set, we’d be doing alright.



Ben Bergeron  
[Photo courtesy of Google Image Search]

## Bonded by knurling and chalk

BY ALARICO MEDINA  
SCF Contributor

When I was first approached with the idea of being a CrossFit core member, my initial reaction was, “NO!” My weightlifting career started as strength training, and this was all I did. Five days on, two days off, chest and legs twice a week. The reason this was so appealing to me was the strength I saw from the work I put out, but also the idea of setting goals and seeing myself accomplish those goals. This was all I needed to survive.

I have been a CrossFitter now for almost three years. Now, I see that this mentality that segregates the weight pile and the CrossFit box was—and is—flawed. It was not until I met John Carbonell with RF2 that I saw all the work I put in on the pile meant nothing. I remember him teaching me to do a “full clean.” Boy, did I fail.

I approached CrossFit the same way I did strength training. I used this mentality in everyday life. Set a goal, accomplish a goal, and never be afraid of failure. Pretend the gym is your life and fight through that failure. As the saying goes, it is through failure that we find success. Many people limit their workouts to only what they know. Running, the weight pile, or cardio machines. Just as we restrict ourselves from workouts, I’ve noticed that most of us restrict ourselves from friendships and relationships. It was this ambition to strive for community that helped me fall in love with CrossFit.

My very first class as a core member was the most profound experience of my life. It was then that I saw and started to believe in our abilities as men and women to change and overcome any obstacle. In a space where so much of our time is spent isolated in our circle and affected by outside influences, in CrossFit we strive forward with the idea of creating new bonds. We do this by the chalk we coat our hands with and the knurling ripping our hands and shins raw.

Here at Sterling Correctional Facility West Sanctvm,

we are a newer group of guys forging a path. Perhaps a bit behind on the spectrum of RF2’s methodology, we move forward. We have a few road blocks in our path as we struggle with the infancy of our connections. Four of us took and passed our CF-L1s and have brought in new core members. My personal goal is to grow this program on this side of Sanctvm, as we are the infants of this gym. As I have said, I truly believe in people and our abilities to change. For us in this gym, it starts with trust and developing new relationships. We are now a gym of 20 core members with the long term goal of creating a pod of CrossFitters, which could be 108 athletes in one living area.

A mantra of CrossFit is “learn a deadlift, teach a deadlift.” This is something we do and should always promote: teachers creating teachers. This is one way we can truly affect both our communities inside as well as outside. Belief in ourselves is the reflection of the work we put in. Like our WODs, variance is key. So why stop at those gym doors? Why not bring this mentality outside the gym, as well?

We are not all competitive athletes. However, this does not mean we are not all athletes. I hope to encourage people of all types to take on the challenge and join your local RF2 gym with this in mind. We have a saying, “It’s not about being great at one thing, but good at everything.” Do not limit yourself. Continue to prove to yourself that you have what it takes to conquer all obstacles in your path with the knowledge that there is always someone there to share the load. The first step in change is trust. Trust others the same way you want to be trusted. Here at RF2, we promote the willingness to be there for all.

Remember, it is not always about being the best, but striving to be the best version of yourself. Inside this gym, we will encourage, support, and hold each other accountable. If you stumble, do not fret. It is through failure that you will see your true success.

## Can’t Bear to watch

BY AUSTIN LONGO  
AVCF Contributor

It was nothing but bad news for the AVCF Bears with a disappointing 0-4 start to the 2022 softball season. From sloppy play on defense to an overall lack of team chemistry, the Bears have struggled to get rolling.

The Bears’ offense was atrocious as well. Games one and two were shutouts for the Bears, losing 10-0 in game one and 4-0 in game two. In both games, they failed to get runners into scoring position.

The Bears appeared as if they had never played before a crowd of spectators, due to the overabundance of inaccurate throws, sporadic pitches, and a prodigious inability to catch fly balls for easy outs. “I feel like I’m at the circus,” said one spectator. “It’s like when the clowns come out and start running all over the place.”

Bears coach Jared Bonicelli was asked about his concerns for the team after game two. “It really comes down to a lack of quality practice time. We’re so short-staffed here, it’s hard to get any kind of consistency in our yard schedule. If we could just get some batting practice to shake off the rust, we’d be more competitive.”

And, as if God was listening, the Bears were finally able to get some practice time. The results were immediate and spectacular. The team looked sharper and more focused going into game three. The defense showed up tough, making several plays to check the opposing runners and quell their ability to score runs. The bats showed up as well. Up and down the lineup, hitters made contact and got on base. In the end, the Bears scored 10 runs in a heart-breaking loss. Game four showed an even greater improvement with 15 runs scored. Unfortunately, they were still 0-4 at that point.

It will be interesting to see which way the AVCF Bears will trend as the rest of the season unfolds. There is still plenty of time to turn the season around and make a push for the playoffs. Perhaps the Bears won’t be so unbearable after all.

## Fair Chance Alliance

BY WILLIAM CONEY  
IR Senior Editor

Historically, the people charged with creating rehabilitation solutions have often been unable to think outside the box. But there are many changes being made by people inside concrete boxes, so it is no surprise that one of the difference makers has recently moved out of one. Governor Polis commuted Rick Dryer two years ago. He is a networking mastermind with well-earned friends in and out of the system. If you are getting ready to reenter the workforce, he is your friend, too.

Dryer spent most of his 12 years as an Inmate Representative at LCF. In his spare time, he ran book clubs, volunteered in pre-release, and taught a few people to read. Dryer got caught up in his own message of self-betterment and it manifested in The Fair Chance Alliance (TFCA). Since his release, he has been spreading this selfless hustle to the community. Dryer considers TFCA to be “culturally accomplished.” He says, “The movement has been borne on the shoulders of the people that came before.”

TFCA means business, and its rallying cry is this: “There

has been no significant change in the underemployment, difficulty in employment, under-compensation, barriers to housing, or recidivism rates and any other metric reflecting the burdens of reintegration of returning citizens.”

Dryer believes that easy solutions have overpowered the good intent of the fair chance movement. In the last 20 years, support for fair chance hiring has culturally changed. However, the impact on algorithms and training HR Departments is nonexistent. Four factors place a chokehold on justice-involved individuals (anyone affected by a criminal record) receiving a fair follow-up interview. These factors are actually encoded into the employment algorithms. Stigma has been preprogrammed into the matrix. Fair chance employers have unknowingly replaced a criminal history checkbox with something opaque that relinquishes meaningful communication and results in bias.

The first factor is the resume gap, interpreted by the algorithm as lack of persistency. The biggest obstacle to employment ironically highlights laziness, the very reason for using the algorithm over an interview. When viewed through the sunny orange shade of stigma-

colored glasses, the gap looks like drug abuse or health issues. Dryer’s mission is to adjust this filter by filling in the gaps.

The second move in the chokehold is a lack of references. The algorithm will interpret a lack of references as poor performance history in the workplace. Stigma vision may glimpse shiftiness or even theft. No one realizes that C/Os are actually forbidden by regulation from giving references. Dryer sees this concept as politically shifty, at best, when viewed from a gerrymandering perspective. Dryer sees a potential for performance reviews by an outside source based on quantifiable data available for public scrutiny. Dryer believes the solution must come from the outside.

The final step in silencing the applicant is on-point experience. The workplace in an institutional setting requires unique methods to obtain simple solutions. This fact is well known to any correctional supervisor that cannot give a reference. The algorithms flag potential employees for extra training, without highlighting what supervisors would have happily shared. Once more, easy solutions have covered up real potential by eliminating communication. Someone flipping burgers part-time for



Nick Wells and Rick Dryer  
[Photo courtesy of Rick Dryer]

years at McDonald’s appears better qualified than a culinary-trained institutional cook. The military does not have a problem highlighting unique experience for the business world. Prison is big business and requires a common business language for its product.

This discrepancy prompted Dryer to act. “To pretend that fair chance hiring, housing, or any aspect of the fair chance movement is working is irresponsible,” said Dryer. Taking action is about creating a common dialog that goes beyond the stigma. He believes that if a follow-up interview does take place, communication must be made easier for human resource personnel. This is the final choke point that kills the opportunity.

Talking takes time and can be complicated if it is filtered through stigma. People are not banning the box just to feel good, but they do lack a criminogenic vocabulary due to media hype and misinformation. One third of the prospective workforce has a criminal record, yet this same group can only boast a 2% employment rate. The

problem is compounded by recidivism statistics that do not reflect individuals. Another issue is programs that have corporate buzzwords when taken on company retreats but sound like prison on the inside. “Seven Habits on the Inside,” is a perfect example. The program stresses planning, networking, and time management. Dryer is working hard to create a dossier that preps the interviewer to realize the corporate benefits of cognitive programs, CrossFit, The Realness Project, DU PAI and so much more.

Dryer believes that better algorithms and a new vocabulary inclusive of justice-involved individuals is critical. The American workforce is unsustainable, one reason being mass incarceration. His goal is to save 1000 families from exile by telling the truth. He believes the collateral effects from this modest goal will save half a million children. The Fair Chance Alliance is “culturally accomplished,” meaning there are people out there working hard at being the best friends you have never met.



From left: Rick Dryer, Carol Peeples, and Dave Coleman  
[Photo courtesy of Rick Dryer]



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## Making connections inside out

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN  
IR Journalist

Just because you are in prison does not mean that you are out of reach. They say that when you go to prison you are basically buried alive. This is not always the case. The people that you meet in here, and the people that you once knew, are connections. You have the option to make and keep good relationships in your life. If you make the effort, these people will hopefully stay around, despite what brought you to prison.

The first thing you should ask yourself is whether or not you would like to keep certain people in your life. Weighing the good and the bad will help you make good decisions. You are a product of your own actions and goals. To change what you would normally do or how you would normally act is not the easiest thing to do. Now you should think about who you would like to know and why you would like them in your life.

You may think that you cannot contact anyone, but all it

takes is a little bit of courage and a whole lot of humility. There are people in here who have contacted prominent business owners and other influential individuals from the free world to help them create a better life for themselves and the world they will one day be part of again.

Once you have chosen to change your life for the better, you will hopefully be able to repair the good connections that you once had and rebuild the bridges that you burned down.

To do this, you must have the confidence and the ability to move forward, which means that you will own your past and your part in it. It also means that you will communicate this to those you may have hurt and to those who you choose to be in your life.

Make a list of all the people you wish to meet and all the people you wish to have back in your life. Then, start to write to them. Tell them about your goals and what you plan to accomplish, trying to better

yourself while inside. Ask them if they will support or mentor you.

Ask yourself what you can do for them in return. Show your appreciation for their help, friendship, and advice. Let them know how much they mean to your progress and all of the amazing things that you are doing because of their help. Doing this will keep those connections, help you rebuild your community, and ensure that you have a successful future.

# Street Outlaws

BY STEVE SPIESS  
DRDC Contributor

Two DRDC artists recently had an opportunity to share their work with an unusual audience—the racers from The Discovery Channel’s “Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings.” Some of the show’s superstars held in their hands and admired the work of Albert Gallegos and Joe “Peanut” Jackson, who are known for their artistic abilities and being involved in multiple groups dedicated to initiating positive impacts inside and outside prison...

“I never thought my artwork would end up in the hands of a television star



Lizzy Musi with some of the art  
[Photo courtesy of Steve Spiess]



Albert Gallegos and Joe “Peanut” Jackson  
[Photo courtesy of Steve Spiess]



Autographed photos from the drivers  
[Photo courtesy of Steve Spiess]

from my favorite show. I can’t even put into words how much it means to me,” Jackson said. Gallegos commented, “It’s awesome. I love it. I’m grateful to him (Lt. Williams) for making it possible.”

It all began nearly a year ago, when Lt. Williams noticed Jackson working on a drawing of Lizzy Musi from the show. He told Jackson he had seen the Street Outlaws gang at Bandimere Speedway and had gotten to meet several of them. He then said that if Jackson could create some original pieces of art, he would try to get the drawings into the hands of the drivers. When Jackson was asked if he knew anyone else who could contribute quality artwork, he immediately mentioned Gallegos, who was more than

happy to help.

Gallegos immediately began work on a portrait of Musi and Kye Kelly, another person on the show. When he learned that the show’s Chuck Seitsinger was an ex-Marine like himself, he began work on a drawing of Seitsinger and his car, as well.

Williams kept his promise when “No Prep Kings” returned to film and race at Bandimere in mid-September. When he shared the sketches with the drivers during the autograph session, he told them both artists were DRDC inmates and fans, and that the Denver facility had quite a few big fans of the show. Musi held Gallegos’ and Jackson’s drawing of her up for a photograph, and Seitsinger thanked the artists for their work and

support. All three drivers autographed a photo of the three pictures together.

The episode is expected to air on The Discovery Channel in November. Be sure to watch it to support the racers who took the time to acknowledge our inmate population as well as both artists.

On behalf of the inmate community, thank you to Gallegos, Jackson, and Williams for helping provide a positive image of prisoners to the outside world.

Editor’s Note: The episode of The Discovery Channel’s “Street Outlaws: No Prep Kings” referred to in this article ran prior to the printing of this story. If you missed it, be sure to check your local listings for potential reruns of the episode.

## Prison for 100

BY JOHN RED CLOUD  
CC Contributor

“To be free, you must think free.”—Unknown

When I’m unsure about anything electrical, I consult an electrician. Plumbing issues, I call a plumber. Because they are experts in their respective professions, I view them as sources of authority on the subject. When I knew I was on my way to prison, I approached CDOC inmates in county on writs. I perceived them to be the experts on prison, and I wanted to “succeed” in prison. I wasn’t asking the guards or any of the guys in jail with me who hadn’t been in prison. Why should I? They didn’t have any experience doing CDOC time. Makes sense, right?

Statistics indicate that on any given day across Colorado, there are more than 9,000 parolees living under some form of supervision. Unless you are bound and determined to come back to prison by simply not caring, you are given every opportunity to succeed while out there. We all know somebody who got out on parole, only to see them a few months later in A&O. We all say, “You gotta be kidding me, what went wrong?”

Every month, approximately 40-50 guys leave FCF on parole or are discharged. Naturally, I began to imagine what it

would be like living under supervision, because unless you were convicted before 1993, we all fall under Colorado’s mandatory parole scheme. Plenty of guys have been on parole before and have had it revoked for one reason/excuse or another. By virtue of their failure on supervision, some lessons can be learned (i.e. “Here is what not to do”). Learning from mistakes is one of the hallmarks of growth. Though these “parole violators” do have experience on parole, I would hardly call them experts. An expert is defined as a person with a high degree of skill in or knowledge of a certain subject.

On the afternoon of Jan. 18, 2018, I attended the “Living Under Supervision” presentation in MPR-1 with Parole Officer (P.O.) Sheppard. It made sense to hear about parole from an actual parole officer with caseload experience in Colorado. Although guys are paroled from FCF every single month, I was surprised at how few of us there were in attendance (less than 10). Because of the seriousness of the topic, I was convinced the room would be packed. Not so much. Nonetheless, Sheppard ran through important topics ranging from time management to common pitfalls while on parole.

It was clear to us that

P.O.s are not paid based on the performance of parolees on their caseload. Translation: whether or not we make it on parole doesn’t affect their paychecks. According to Sheppard, there are over 300 parole officers throughout Colorado. We make up but one responsibility on their caseload. She did remind us we can get a hold of any one of them in the state if the need arises.

Would you ever go skydiving without first attending a safety presentation? “What do you mean I have to pull the rip cord? What’s a rip cord?” Just about everything we do in life will be affected by our intentions going into it. What do you intend to do while under supervision? Be honest with yourself. Once you answer that question, you can probably guess how things will work out. Statistically speaking, the numbers do not favor us. The majority of us will fail on parole. But it doesn’t have to be that way. Be the guy that makes it. Proper preparation prevents piss-poor performance.

If you choose to make good decisions while living under supervision, you can be one of the ones continuing to live under supervision. What’s the alternative?

“Here is your \$100 gate money. We’ll see you in a few months.”

## Project Elevate

Continued from page 2

flowed very well, and I am honored to be a part of the project,” Harris said.

The intention of Project Elevate is to help with the reform process. They believe formerly incarcerated people should be empowered to become successful. “We are really interested in everyone’s success and are committed to helping everyone in their path forward. We do not see anyone as expendable. There is no life that is not valuable in this program and we want everyone to have an opportunity to make it in the community, and we will continue to show up every day to try to make it happen,” Robertson added.

What sets this halfway house apart from others is that no one pays for rent, food, hygiene, or laundry. There are no bunk beds and every mattress is six inches thick. There is more privacy. Residents are assisted in opening formal bank accounts. These accounts will be monitored, which is required by the state. This is to ensure that personal needs, restitution, and child support are being taken care of. Participants are expected to manage their own money to become self-sufficient.

Project Elevate is able to support resident through funding provided by grants, donations, and the state per diem for participants. The city and county of Denver has helped finance the endeavor by making sure that everyone’s needs are met in a trauma-informed, gender-responsive way.

Participants fill out a form called “Know Me” before they get to Project Elevate. This helps the program create a care package built to welcome residents into the community. It includes a blanket of their favorite color, snacks, and a first meal from a restaurant of their choice, to name a few of the items included. Participants are involved in their assessment from the day that they arrive. Hand-tailoring the program with a care manager helps individualize the eight levels of the program so that the work being done is an investment in themselves. Levels one through four are the residential levels, in which

participants work toward independence. This includes obtaining vital documents, a care plan, participating in assessments, financial planning, identifying support systems, participating in onsite structured support, and working toward employment. Levels five through eight are non-residential and continue moving clients to self-sufficiency.

Jade Anthony and Andrea “Evette” Collins are two accepted persons to Project Elevate. Both women met with staff via Web-Ex to answer questions. They expressed a concern with the less-restrictive structure. They wondered how it could affect their release from the program. However, both are excited at the opportunity to help shape the program for future residents.

“One thing I hope to gain from this experience is exposure to the opportunity to do something different,” Anthony said.

“If we come together, we would get so much further. Yes, I’m scared to go to this new halfway house, but I am not going to deny this second chance that has been given to me. A second chance to go out and claim what’s mine, and that’s my life and freedom,” Collins added.

Project Elevate is already open, and they accept most women and transgender individuals. They are not currently allowed to take in sex offenders. They do hope to be able to support these individuals in the future. They review arson on a case-by-case basis and do not take actively suicidal or homicidal individuals, but will not let mental health be a barrier to the program.

Project Elevate supports the movement for long overdue reform. They are building a new community corrections model to help formerly incarcerated residents become productive members of society. This is paramount to the future of Denver because formerly incarcerated residents will become neighbors, workers, volunteers, and members of the community. The success of Project Elevate relies on both staff and residents participating in this new program, as well as the Denver community. The facility appears to have everything in place to become a catalyst for change toward a more hopeful future.





## KWIP on retroactive laws

BY ANN ENGLAND  
KWIP Columnist

Over the last five years, the Colorado legislature has passed a group of criminal laws that reduce the penalties for certain crimes, mostly drug crimes and certain theft crimes. Whenever a new criminal law is passed by the legislature, especially one that reduces the penalties for a crime, it is a challenge not to wonder what its effect might be and if it could help you. This question is answered by understanding two legal concepts: retroactive and prospective laws and how they are applied by the Courts. This article will try to explain this. However, please remember that this is general legal information and not legal advice about your case. Every case is different and everyone's situation is different. Follow your lawyer's advice or your own research about your case.

When a law is passed, the legislature has two choices in deciding who it should apply to. Legislators can make laws prospective. This means they could say that this law applies to everyone who

is charged with a crime after a certain date. This is common, especially in very controversial laws. It is often a part of the negotiation process in trying to pass a law. They will say if you agree to this law, we will agree it won't go into effect for a year or two years. So, for example, in 2021 the legislature changed the felony murder law. It used to be that felony murder was a class 1 felony that carried the sentence of life in prison. In 2021, the legislature changed it to a class 2 felony. However, they specifically said that "This act applies to offenses committed on or after the applicable effective date of this act." The effective date for the law was Sept. 15, 2021. Thus, only people who committed felony murder after Sept. 15, 2021, could be charged with felony murder as a class 2 felony. It is a prospective law. There are some exceptions to the prospective part of this law for individuals who committed felony murder as a juvenile but those issues are complicated and you should consult with your lawyer if those exceptions may apply to you.

The other option is that the legislature doesn't say. For example, in 2013 the legislature passed a law reducing felony

theft (where the value of the things stolen was between \$5000 and \$20,000) from a class 4 felony to a class 5 felony. This new law significantly reduced the possible penalties for someone convicted of this level of felony theft. However, the legislature did not say the law was retroactive and they did not say it was prospective (that it only applied to crimes committed on or after a certain date). They did not say anything. So, then what happens?

This issue was brought to court and the Colorado Supreme Court decided that when a law is silent as to whether it is retroactive or prospective (applies to crimes on or after a certain date) then it is retroactive as applied to people whose cases are not final when the law is enacted.

So, when is the final case? This also can be very complicated depending what the context where the Court is using it. But in this circumstance, a final conviction means after your direct appeal is finished. Then the conviction becomes final. So, in other words, a jury convicts a person and then they appeal their conviction to the Colorado Court

of Appeals. This is usually called their direct appeal. Then that appeal is denied. They petition for cert to the Colorado Supreme Court. If the petition for cert is denied, then the case is final. But, until that time, the case is still pending and the conviction is not yet final. So, if the law is passed between when they committed the crime and before the completion of their direct appeal, they should be able to file a motion under C.R.S. 18-1-401(f)(1) and ask that their sentence be corrected due to the change in the law. Currently, the only way a sentencing law is retroactive is under these narrow circumstances.

One way a sentence in the past can be changed is through a Presidential or a Governor's pardon. For example, in early October of 2022, President Biden pardoned everyone who had been convicted in federal court of simple possession of marijuana since 1970. At the time, there was no one in federal prison with only possession of marijuana case. Similarly, in 2021, Governor Polis had already pardoned everyone who has been convicted in Colorado state court of possession of two ounces or less of marijuana.

## Legal writing 101

BY JOSHUA YAKAS  
IR Writer's Workshop

Including all information is imperative when filing a document in court. The courts also prefer writing that is concise. To achieve both of these standards, many filers use a method called IRAC. Although there are other terms for this process, the majority of filers follow these general rules:

The "I" is for Issue, meaning, "What is the issue?" This is a short sentence or paragraph that explains the issue being addressed. This can be in a statement or posed as a question.

The "R" is for Rule, meaning, "What is the law?" This is where most of the citations are placed. First, cite any primary laws such as statutes, case laws, and constitutional provisions that are binding.

Then, when necessary, use any non-binding laws or secondary sources.

The "A" is for Application/Argument, meaning, "Why or how does this apply to this case?" Show why the "rule" affects the case or how it applies. A relative history here would be useful, unless there is a dedicated "Statement of Facts" or "Statement of Case."

The "C" is for Conclusion, meaning, "So what?" Tell the court what action is requested for it to perform. This should be a brief summary and limited to a couple of sentences or less.

IRAC can be used in macro form as layout for an entire issue that spans several paragraphs. It may also be in micro form, within a single paragraph. This is a brief description of the IRAC method and varies depending on the filing and purpose.

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## SWIFT oportunidades de trabajo para bomberos

BY LUTHER HAMPSON  
IR Journalist

El Equipo de Bomberos de Reclusos Forestales del Estado (SWIFT, por sus siglas en inglés) brinda a los reclusos de la prisión de Colorado la oportunidad de recibir capacitación y empleo como bombero forestal mientras cumplen su condena. El programa brinda a los hombres encarcelados la misma capacitación que los equipos de bomberos de temporada del estado. ¿De qué sirve esta calidad de formación si no se puede utilizar para obtener empleo en la comunidad exterior?

Desafortunadamente, mientras que más de 2500 clientes han participado en el programa desde su inicio, menos de 50 han sido empleados como bomberos de tiempo completo después del lanzamiento. Solo el 2% de los miembros de SWIFT tienen la oportunidad de demostrar su valía en comunidades externas. Una nueva ley firmada por el gobernador de Colorado, Jared Polis, está estructurada para hacer que la capacitación de SWIFT no solo sea útil para reingresar y trabajar en la industria, sino también una oportunidad de empleo realista.

Esta nueva ley, SB21-012, abre un camino para que los delincuentes convictos trabajen para la División Estatal de Prevención y Control de Incendios como bomberos forestales. El proyecto de ley también alienta a la división a contratar ex miembros del equipo de bomberos mientras están encarcelados. Se requiere la implementación de un programa de mentores de pares para aquellos contratados para los servicios de incendios forestales para que puedan desarrollar y mantener habilidades profesionales.

Esta nueva legislación podría cambiar las reglas del juego para aquellos graduados de SWIFT que, de otro modo, tendrían que escalar una montaña en llamas para encontrar un empleo remunerado. “Los reclusos que salen de prisión sin trabajo, sin hogar y sin conexiones sociales, tienen más probabilidades de regresar a prisión. Si bien el programa ayuda a elevar la moral y brindar estructura a los encarcelados, también reduce las tasas de reincidencia al ayudar a los prisioneros a encontrar trabajo una vez que son liberados y salen de prisión con algo de dinero en

sus bolsillos,” dijo el director ejecutivo de CDOC, Dean Williams. Inflexible sobre dejar un legado de cambio para estos hombres que regresarán a nuestras comunidades, Williams dijo: “No resuelve todos nuestros problemas de reincidencia, pero es importante que sigamos dando un bocado más a la manzana de brindar oportunidades de trabajo para la gente fuera de la cárcel.” Danny Redburn, un bombero voluntario del Distrito de Protección contra Incendios de Dolores y terrateniente cuyo rancho es vulnerable a incendios forestales, reconoce la importancia de aprovechar al máximo los recursos disponibles para mitigar esa vulnerabilidad. Él apoya la idea de contratar residentes encarcelados y encarcelados formalmente como bomberos forestales.

Otro proyecto de ley firmado por el gobernador Polis, SB21-258, crea el Programa de acción estratégica contra incendios forestales de Colorado (COSWAP) después de los efectos devastadores de la temporada de incendios de 2020. COSWAP hace posible mover fondos de estímulo

estatal a proyectos de mitigación de incendios forestales para comunidades vulnerables. Además, COSWAP crea un banco de financiación de \$17.5 millones para los próximos tres años para aumentar y expandir las capacidades de SWIFT.

Esto le da al Departamento la capacidad de incluir a más de 160 hombres dispuestos a servir a sus comunidades. El director Williams, quien anteriormente declaró la importancia de poder cruzar el umbral de la libertad con dinero extra, ha expresado su deseo de pagar salarios más altos a las cuadrillas: \$50 por día mientras apagan incendios e incluso más para aquellos que han obtenido puestos de supervisión. “Pagaremos un mejor salario, atraeremos a más personas detrás de los muros para hacer el trabajo, y brinda una oportunidad significativa para retribuir a la comunidad. Es un alto servicio público,” dijo Williams. El director también expresó su deseo de ampliar los criterios de candidatura para el programa estatal, que actualmente está limitado a hombres con delitos no violentos para ser más inclusivo, incluso está disponible para mujeres ya, SWIFT ha actualizado

recientemente sus restricciones PED de tres años a cinco años.

Los mega-incendios se han convertido en algo común en Colorado. Se debe llevar a cabo una táctica ofensiva por parte de los bomberos para proteger a las comunidades del peligro de incendios. El manual de ofensiva incluye la reducción de combustibles peligrosos, la tala de bosques y la limpieza de rutas de evacuación). COSWAP ayuda a garantizar que este trabajo se pueda realizar durante todo el año y proporciona las manos para hacerlo. Este servicio público brinda oportunidades para que los delincuentes ahorren y administren fondos, adquieran habilidades y se preparen para reingresar exitosamente a la comunidad. Pasando de victimizar su comunidad a proteger su infraestructura, hogares y salvar vidas humanas es una transformación increíble. Recientemente, el CDOC contrató a un ex recluso en libertad condicional para que fuera jefe de bomberos del programa. Un puesto comunitario remunerado. Se lo ganó y se le ha dado la confianza y el respeto por los que trabajó tan duro.

## Mercado de trabajo no tan estúpido como piensas

BY BOB EISENMAN  
IR Writer Development Coordinator

Con el mercado laboral actual, uno pensaría que conseguir trabajo sería más fácil que nunca, incluso saliendo de prisión. Desafortunadamente, una nueva investigación muestra que las personas anteriormente encarceladas podrían no tenerlo tan fácil como parece en la superficie.

Se estima que el 60 % de las personas anteriormente encarceladas en los EE. UU. están desempleadas al 8 de febrero de 2022. De hecho, en los últimos cuatro años, el 33 % de las personas liberadas de las prisiones federales no encontraron empleo alguno. Un estudio publicado por la Oficina de Estadísticas de Justicia muestra que los ex encarcelados que han encontrado empleo a menudo tienen múltiples trabajos, con un promedio de 3.4 trabajos durante un período de cuatro años.

Desafortunadamente, el desempleo no es nuevo para muchas personas encarceladas. Muchos residentes de CDOC estaban desempleados antes de ir a prisión, lo que solo aumenta sus dificultades para encontrar trabajo al ser liberados. En 2019, el 48 % de las personas anteriormente encarceladas en Colorado estaban desempleadas debido a su historial de encarcelamiento. No su historial criminal, su historial de encarcelamiento. Obtener un empleo constante es uno de los puntos de referencia del éxito para las personas en libertad condicional, sin embargo, aquellos que salen de prisión tienen que trabajar mucho más para encontrar ese empleo.

Incluso cuando los trabajadores anteriormente encarcelados encuentran trabajo, tienen que trabajar más duro para ganar un salario digno. Comprenda que,

sin importar las calificaciones, las personas anteriormente encarceladas ganarán aproximadamente el 53 % del salario promedio de un trabajador estadounidense al comenzar un nuevo trabajo. Incluso después de conservar ese trabajo, el empleado anteriormente encarcelado ganará aproximadamente 84 centavos por cada dólar del salario medio de los Estados Unidos.

Colorado ha hecho grandes progresos para ayudar a los hombres y mujeres que salen de prisión eliminando primero “la casilla” de las solicitudes que preguntan sobre antecedentes penales. Pero la mayoría de las empresas aún realizan una verificación de antecedentes de los solicitantes, y los oficiales de libertad condicional a menudo visitan los lugares de trabajo, por lo que es probable que las condenas por delitos graves salgan a la luz de una manera o forma.

¿Qué significa esto para aquellos residentes que se preparan para cambiar su estado de “encarcelado” a “anteriormente encarcelado?” Significa que tienen que trabajar mucho más duro y completar muchas más solicitudes que la persona promedio. Hay muchas ofertas de trabajo, como informará cualquier medio de comunicación que promoció el mercado laboral actual, pero tenga en cuenta que salir de prisión y “querer” trabajar no es suficiente. Pon tu mejor pie adelante, una y otra vez. Las personas anteriormente encarceladas simplemente tienen que demostrar su valía más que alguien sin ese registro de encarcelamiento colgando sobre su hombro.

\*Nota del editor\*

IR agradece a Prison Policy Initiative por proporcionar los datos para este artículo.

## Unidad de cuidado geriátrico

BY DAVID SCHULERUD  
SCCF Bureau Chief

Hay una unidad especializada dentro del CDOC llamada Unidad de Demencia que pocas personas afuera sabe que existe. Se encuentra dentro de los límites de SCCF en Pueblo. Para aquellos individuos que han pasado tiempo en CTCF, reconocerán que esta unidad fue antes en CH3. Durante el comienzo de la pandemia Covid 19 en Mayo del 2020, fue estimada ser la unidad más segura si fuera movida para SCCF. Así que siete clientes y 10 ayudantes al cuidado de ofensores (OCAs) viajaron a Pueblo. Dos años después, la unidad tiene 11 pacientes con demencia y 13 OCAs.

La unidad tiene una configuración única e innovadora. Imagínese no solo trabajar en un hogar de ancianos, sino que cuando termine su turno, camine por el pasillo hasta su propia habitación. Los pacientes y los OCAs residen en la misma unidad en SCCF. Esto ha resultado en que las dos partes han desarrollado una unión el uno al otro. Aunque la jornada es de ocho horas, la atención que dan los OCA nunca termina. Aunque el personal está presente, su encarcelamiento es mínimo y la mayor parte del cuidado y mantenimiento diarios está a cargo de OCAs dedicados y Asistentes de Enfermería Certificados (CNAs) asignados para supervisar la unidad.

Han comenzado a surgir muchos problemas relacionados con la edad en la población carcelaria de Colorado, ya que hay más y más residentes de edad avanzada. Una de los principales es la demencia. La palabra “demencia” es un término genérico que describe el estado de deterioro de las facultades intelectuales provocado por una condición subyacente del cerebro. Un individuo puede desarrollar demencia a partir de una serie de situaciones que incluyen accidentes cerebrovasculares, ataques cardíacos o abuso de alcohol/drogas. La causa más común y reconocible es la enfermedad de Alzheimer. Aunque

es raro, hay casos en los que el inicio de la demencia se puede encontrar incluso en personas más jóvenes.

La gravedad de la demencia varía de un caso a otro y es degenerativa, lo que significa que empeorará en la mayoría de los casos. Parte de esto depende de cuánto tiempo el paciente haya sido diagnosticado o haya sufrido las condiciones subyacentes. En algunos casos, como cuando alguien experimenta un ataque al corazón, las funciones cognitivas pueden volver a la normalidad. Muchos de los clientes experimentan pérdida de memoria y tienen dificultades para recordar dónde están o cómo llegaron allí. Algunos de los clientes también tienen serios problemas de comportamiento, que pueden materializarse como episodios verbales o físicos. No es raro que un paciente tenga cambios de humor violentos y problemas cognitivos.

Cada día trae nuevas recompensas y desafíos para los OCAs y el personal que atiende a los clientes. El nivel de atención que requiere cada cliente varía diariamente. La mayoría de los OCAs han estado trabajando con sus clientes por un tiempo y están bien sintonizados con sus necesidades. Los OCAs tratan a sus clientes con atención y calidez, independientemente de su salud mental o física. Un visitante puede encontrar un OCA dando recordatorios amistosos mientras otro esquivo un gancho de derecha.

Los OCAs y el personal han trabajado arduamente para crear un ambiente donde la compasión y el cuidado sean la norma, no la excepción. Los OCAs se dedican a su trabajo brindando ayuda y socorro a la población más vulnerable dentro del CDOC. La mayoría de ellos diría que el trabajo que hacen les da la sensación de retribuir y tener un impacto positivo en su comunidad. Además, se consuelan sabiendo que si alguna vez necesitaran este tipo de atención, habría alguien como ellos para ofrecérsela.



*Reverberations* is a high quality literary and visual magazine with engaging, thought-provoking ideas, providing a critical and creative outlet for incarcerated individuals and serving as voice for a community of writers and scholars, artists and visionaries, to grapple with big questions, stimulate minds, and spark imaginations. *Reverberations* aims to educate writers, make incarcerated creators and readers feel valued and ultimately, to deepen the conversation on who is in prison. *Reverberations* nurtures emerging writers through feedback and guidance, explores exquisite beauty even in darkness, and provides substantive literature to readers inside and outside Colorado's prisons.

Contact your facility Submission Rep

## El costo de terapia

BY BOB EISENMAN  
IR Writer Development Coordinator

Según la fuente, uno de cada tres o uno de cada cuatro reclusos de Colorado es un delincuente sexual (SO). Esto es mucho más alto que el promedio nacional entre las personas encarceladas, que es uno de cada diez. (Sitio web de la Oficina de Prisiones de EE. UU.) De acuerdo con auditorías como la Auditoría de Desempeño de junio de 2020 realizada por el Auditor del Estado de Colorado, así como una lista creciente de delincuentes sexuales que esperan tratamiento, el CDOC no puede cumplir oportunamente con la orden del Estado de que toda la Ley de Supervisión de por Vida (LSA) Los SO condenados a prisión deben progresar con éxito en el tratamiento dentro de la prisión para ser considerados para la libertad condicional. La creciente acumulación de SO que esperan su oportunidad de inscribirse en el tratamiento no solo retrasa la libertad condicional de miles de personas cuando son elegibles, sino que también tiene un alto precio para Colorado.

El Programa de Manejo y Tratamiento de Delincuentes Sexuales (SOTMP), así como el SOMB (Junta de Manejo de Delincuentes Sexuales) de Colorado, han sido atacados recientemente desde una variedad de ángulos. Las auditorías realizadas por el estado (State Auditor), así como el informe anual realizado por el mismo SOMB, han encontrado fallas en su sistema y enfoques de tratamiento, lo que cuesta millones de dólares de los contribuyentes. En una entrevista exclusiva con IR, el senador de Colorado Pete Lee (D – Distrito 11) dijo: “Riesgo-Necesidad-Responsividad (RNR) es el protocolo convencionalmente aceptado para tratar a los delincuentes sexuales, pero el CDOC y el SOMB en el exterior no se adhieren a eso con algún grado de fidelidad.” Agregó que SOMB y SOTMP “tienen

algunos componentes de RNR, pero también tienen una especie de mentalidad de modelo de contención, que es una reliquia de hace 30 años. Durante los últimos 10 a 15 años, los investigadores han descubierto que, con respecto a la mayoría de los SO, el tratamiento funciona. Desafortunadamente, hay algunos en el mundo SOTMP que no se suscriben a esto y aún creen en el modelo de contención.”

El Informe anual de 2021 a la legislatura de Colorado puede ser engañoso y ya no informa detalles sobre los SO a los que se les otorgó la libertad condicional y si cumplieron con los criterios de liberación o no. La auditoría de desempeño de 2020 de la SOMB realizada por el Auditor del Estado de Colorado encontró numerosos problemas. En particular, solo el 18% de las secciones que siguen los proveedores para evaluar, identificar y tratar a los delincuentes sexuales se citan con evidencia de apoyo, lo cual es requerido por ley. También hubo numerosas denuncias contra la SOMB, pero la Junta no cumplió con el requisito legal de investigar.

Estos problemas no abordados contribuyen a la creciente y costosa acumulación de SO que esperan inscribirse en las clases de SOTMP. A junio de 2021, según el informe anual presentado a los comités judiciales conjuntos estatales, así como a la asamblea general, hay 1583 reclusos en las prisiones de Colorado con sentencias indeterminadas, lo que significa que el tribunal ha dictado una sentencia de prisión en forma de “número inferior” (tiempo mínimo) que luego puede ir a “la vida.” Esto le da a SOTMP y CDOC la capacidad de retener al delincuente por (teóricamente) el resto de su vida. El infractor se presenta para la libertad condicional, al igual que cualquier otra persona sentenciada a una cantidad de tiempo similar (menos el calificador de “de por vida”), pero no se le permite ser considerado para la libertad condicional hasta que tome

las clases SOTMP, que tiene una lista de espera de más de mil personas. Aunque el Informe anual de 2021 sobre la supervisión de por vida de los SO asegura que la legislación de la LSA no pretende aumentar la sentencia mínima para los SO, las entrevistas con personas en las clases SOTMP y en la lista de espera atestiguan que este no es el caso. El SO promedio pasa 3.5 años más allá de su elegibilidad para libertad condicional, con un costo estimado de \$50,000 por año, por persona. Sumando esto, las sentencias indeterminadas actuales le costarán al Estado aproximadamente \$ 277 millones de dólares para albergar a estos reclusos más allá de su elegibilidad para libertad condicional. Y el número solo está subiendo. En 2019, el número total de LSA SO (tanto encarcelados como en la comunidad o en libertad condicional) fue de 2576 y en 2021 el número fue de 2660. Los fallos (el más reciente, un fallo que le costó a los contribuyentes \$50,000) a favor de que los SO sean retenidos más allá de su elegibilidad para la libertad condicional solo seguirán aumentando el costo.

CDOC no puede mantenerse al día con la demanda de las clases SOTMP por varias razones. Uno de los principales problemas es la falta de terapeutas calificados. “Es difícil lograr que la gente se mude a Fremont o a Cañon City para convertirse en proveedores de tratamiento,” dijo el Senador Lee. “Hubo una discusión para trasladar todos los SO a Denver hace unos años, donde hay más proveedores de tratamiento, pero finalmente decidieron no hacerlo.” Una posible solución al problema es usar la nueva tecnología de tele-salud que muchas cárceles de Colorado usan para la salud del comportamiento. “La tele-salud tiene todo el sentido del mundo. Aprendamos una lección del COVID. Hemos aprendido que podemos hacer mucho con las modalidades virtuales,” dijo el Senador Lee.

Otro factor que contribuye al

atraso es la propia práctica de las sentencias indeterminadas. El Senador Lee llama a las sentencias indeterminadas de los delincuentes sexuales y la creencia en la alta reincidencia una “reliquia de una era pasada.” Las estadísticas de reincidencia confirman esta postura. Los delincuentes sexuales tienen una tasa de reincidencia de menos del 5% (algunas estimaciones están por debajo del 2%), en comparación con el 49% para la mayoría de los demás delitos (el asesinato también es bastante bajo). Por lo tanto, los delincuentes sexuales son los que tienen menos probabilidades de volver a prisión por un nuevo delito, sin embargo, son los que permanecen en prisión (en promedio) por más tiempo.

Otro tema, muy discutido en todo el mundo, es el uso de polígrafos. En el año fiscal 2021, se asignaron \$242,500 para pruebas de polígrafo SOTMP. “Sin embargo, el SOMB y sus defensores son creyentes absolutos en los polígrafos,” dijo el Senador Lee. “Hay otros de nosotros que somos escépticos acerca de los polígrafos. Debido a que no permitimos que se admitan pruebas de polígrafo en los sistemas judiciales, ¿por qué autorizaríamos y legitimaríamos el uso de polígrafos en los programas de tratamiento?” Lo contrario a ese argumento es que la anticipación de los polígrafos promueve la franqueza y la honestidad. Si un delincuente está en negación y se enfrenta a un poli, puede que, debido a su preocupación, admita o reconozca cosas que no admitiría ni reconocería en circunstancias normales. La ciencia inexacta de los polígrafos puede demorar a los SO en tratamiento durante años cuando las respuestas no son lo que busca el tratamiento.

Gran parte de los modelos de sentencia y tratamiento que usa Colorado están desactualizados y no siguen las últimas investigaciones ni las mejores prácticas para la salud del comportamiento. La mayor parte de la legislación, así como los fallos en los tribunales

de todos los niveles, utilizan terminología que no proviene de investigaciones científicas, sino de un solo artículo publicado en Psychology Today, una revista popular que no es revisada por colegas. El Senador Lee explicó que el artículo fue escrito por un terapeuta de SO que intentaba “hacer negocios” con el sistema penitenciario de Indiana para su práctica. El artículo acuñó los términos “reincidencia aterradora y alta,” un eslogan que no tenía fundamento ni respaldo de ninguna investigación. Independientemente, la frase impregna la literatura que utilizan las juntas de toma de decisiones para establecer pautas de sentencia y tratamiento.

Hay soluciones para estos problemas, pero es difícil legislar el cambio cuando la percepción pública a menudo está moldeada por los medios que siguen a cualquier legislador visto como “blando con el crimen.” El Senador Lee se refiere a esto como el “tercer carril” para los políticos. No quieren cometer un “suicidio político” solucionando el problema. El público ha sido mal informado, a menudo con esa frase, “reincidencia aterradora y alta,” y la idea errónea sobre los peligros reales de tener personas que han cometido delitos sexuales viviendo en la comunidad, impulsa los millones de dólares que los contribuyentes de Colorado seguirán gastando durante años. Hasta que el problema pueda abordarse utilizando estadísticas reales y protocolos de tratamiento RNR aceptados.

El Senador Lee recomienda que todos los afectados involucren a sus familias y seres queridos. “La gente que no conoce a nadie en el sistema de justicia penal, no está en su agenda. Entonces, para la gran mayoría de las personas en el mundo, no están pensando en la inhumanidad de las oraciones indeterminadas. Necesitamos alentar a las familias de los ciudadanos y residentes del DOC a que se informen y hagan que esto se mueva hacia la agenda de las personas.”

## Inspiración de improv(isación)

BY ANTHONY JONES  
CTCF Contributor

Detrás de las paredes de CTCF, los residentes están comenzando a ver signos de normalidad y comunidad con el regreso de DU PAI y el taller de improvisación en persona impartido por Kerstin Caldwell.

Durante dos horas todos los sábados, los residentes y Caldwell están cambiando el paradigma de la cultura carcelaria. Juegan juegos de teatro, como tira y afloja con una cuerda invisible, etiqueta, emerger de dónde y caminata espacial. Los ejercicios aumentan la fuerza interior de los residentes y los calientan. Los participantes liberan energía, tocando y conectando con todo lo que hay en ese espacio. Los residentes actúan de forma espontánea, entrando en la zona de lo inesperado. La improvisación alienta a los residentes a quitarse la máscara, escapar de las influencias externas, descubrir qué es lo que realmente los motiva y

descubrir qué es lo que más les apasiona. Les enseña cómo cultivar la capacidad de estar en contacto con su niño interior y dejar de lado el juicio y el miedo a la desaprobación de sus compañeros.

Caldwell enseña que con la improvisación, tenemos la capacidad de crear algo tan conmovedor y poderoso que puede llegar a la gente de muchas maneras. Al mismo tiempo, prepara a los estudiantes para tomar lo que aprendemos y utilizarlo en otros aspectos de nuestras vidas.

Caldwell se dio cuenta a una edad temprana que se le había dado un don y que era su responsabilidad compartirlo a los demás. Ella descubrió que hay mucha más profundidad en este trabajo que solo el concepto de comedia. Ha crecido para presenciar y experimentar la gama de experiencias humanas que la improvisación puede brindar a los actores y al público. Caldwell afirma: “Sí, es divertido hacer reír a la

gente, pero también les permite conectarse y ser honestos sobre sí mismos y sus vidas.” Sabía que la improvisación traería igualdad de condiciones al no juzgar en función de los antecedentes o las creencias. Creó un ambiente que aceptaba la humanidad de todos y creaba un sentido de normalidad y honestidad donde los participantes pueden expresarse verdaderamente.

Caldwell expresó lo apasionada que ha sido durante varios años por querer enseñar en un entorno carcelario. “Después de ver cuán decidido, poderoso y significativo era el trabajo que DU PAI estaba haciendo por dentro, supe que este era el programa con el que quería alinearme.”

¿Por qué un ambiente carcelario? Caldwell siempre ha estado entusiasmada por estar al servicio de los demás. Quiere ayudar a las personas a pasar de no creer en sí mismas a creer que pueden hacer algo que nunca quisieron hacer.

“No veo a nadie como inútil, independientemente de las elecciones que hayan hecho. Quiero ayudar a las personas que están adentro a sentir que tienen valor y pueden contribuir a un todo mayor de una manera significativa. Al final del día, todos los humanos están encarcelados a su manera. A través de sus adicciones, sus trabajos, matrimonio e incluso sus propios pensamientos. Llevar ese mismo sentido detrás de la pared es necesario para ayudar a las personas a sentir una sensación de libertad.” Caldwell espera que los estudiantes experimenten esa misma sensación de libertad cuando actúan y que salgan de la clase con la conciencia de que la misma libertad existe dentro de ellos en cada momento de sus vidas.

El participante Andrés Martínez describe el taller de improvisación como “un cambio de vida.” Agrega: “Me ayudó a abrir mi mente y darme cuenta de que tengo opciones

en la vida distintas a las que estoy acostumbrado a hacer. Me ayudó a cambiar mi mentalidad de negativa a positiva. La clase me ha inspirado para posiblemente seguir una carrera en la actuación.”

Caldwell agrega: “Puede sonar extraño para algunas personas, pero estoy experimentando uno de mis sueños como mi realidad. Es un placer trabajar con las personas con las que trabajo. Improvisamos cada momento de nuestras vidas. Siempre estoy emocionada de ver lo que crearemos cada semana y tanto como cualquier obra de arte improvisada. No puedo esperar a ver cómo se desarrolla.”

Si está buscando una oportunidad para desafiarse a sí mismo y salirse de la norma, le sugiero que esté atento al próximo programa de DU PAI que sea ofrecido en su reclusorio.

## Más allá del pensamiento

BY CARLOS MARQUEZ  
DRDC Bureau Chief

Era una fresca madrugada de sábado, el comienzo de un nuevo año en el 2020, cuando noté que un grupo diverso de residentes daba discursos. Se pararon... Una persona transgénero acaparaba la atención de cuatro hombres. Dos de los cuatro, un afroamericano y un italoamericano, eran ex pandilleros, y los otros dos miembros de la audiencia eran indios musulmanes y de nacionalidad mexicana. Se aferraron a cada palabra que dijo el orador y le dieron una ovación de pie cuando terminó su discurso. Fue increíble. El grupo se reunía en su propio tiempo con el propósito de mejorar juntos. Así es como se ve la normalidad: reunir colectivamente recursos (es decir, personas) para superar la adversidad. Este es un modelo ganador probado.

Este grupo era uno de los muchos grupos informales que había visto en los últimos dos años los sábados por la mañana. Son participantes de Más Allá del Pensamiento.

Una mirada más cercana  
Fredrick Mayberry, un ex residente y ahora un ciudadano reintegrado con éxito, y Justin Box, un residente actual en Arkansas Valley, desarrollaron "Más allá del pensamiento" ("Beyond Thinking"). Es una clase que dura de 10 a 16 semanas, con dos facilitadores y diez participantes. Para pasar la clase, los participantes dan una presentación final de su libro elegido, presiden una clase y dan de 10 a 16 presentaciones.

El programa comenzó como un club de lectura. Corey Wagner, un participante original, afirmó que a Mayberry le encantaba leer libros y compartir sus pensamientos con los demás, pero que a menudo le costaba retener la información. Mayberry se preguntó, si pudiera hacer que diez personas leyeran diez libros diferentes y los revisaran en grupo, ¿tendrían el mismo problema? El club de lectura ofrecería una plataforma para ayudar a los participantes a reflexionar, retener y repetir la información de los libros.

Mayberry le presentó su idea a la Sra. Michelle Howard, una consejera de drogas y alcohol. La Sra. Howard pensó que era una buena idea. A su vez, le contó la idea a Box y le pidió su participación. Box ingresó al CDOC a los quince años. Un ex pandillero condenado por un delito de violencia relacionado con pandillas, comenzó a leer cualquier cosa que promoviera el pensamiento positivo para descubrir quién era. Quería convertir su conocimiento en acción. La Sra. Howard sabía que Box le daría al club de lectura la atención profesional que necesitaba para despegar.

La Sra. Howard se enteró del talento de Box gracias a su supervisión del Programa de sensibilización sobre pandillas (GAP), desarrollado por los residentes del DOC Rhidale Dotson y Cedric Watson. GAP mostró un gran potencial como programa piloto, pero nunca se lanzó por completo en todo el CDOC. Dotson y Watkins seleccionaron a Box para ser el facilitador de pares debido a su determinación, dedicación y diligencia.

Box aprendió que era bueno en el desarrollo de programas y malo para hablar en público. Sabía que para convertirse en un entrenador y líder eficaz, tendría que aprender a superar este problema. Box leyó todos los libros que pudo conseguir sobre hablar en público, mientras observaba a Dotson y Watkins hablar en público. Con el tiempo, aprendió a ser un comunicador eficaz.

De hecho, Box vio la necesidad de que otros capacitadores en GAP practicara hablar en

público. Diseñó una clase de capacitación sobre cómo hablar en público y notó los resultados positivos en los capacitadores, incluida la confianza y la mejora de la autoestima.

Box imaginó más que un club de lectura. Colaboró con Mayberry para diseñar, formatear y estructurar lo que se convertiría en Beyond Thinking. La Sra. Howard patrocinó el programa y AVCF dio luz verde para ejecutarlo.

Una pieza única de una clase de Más Allá del Pensamiento es el enfoque en el refuerzo positivo. Comienzan con cada participante diciendo: "¿Qué es bueno y qué es nuevo?" Al final de las presentaciones, cada persona dice: "¿Qué es bueno y qué sigue?" La motivación de Box con esta pieza es insertar atractores emocionales positivos (PEA, por sus siglas en inglés), que son una forma de motivación que se enfoca en algo que quieres lograr y evita los logros negativos. Además, dice Wagner, "Funciona... es como si la clase se volviera orgánica al establecer una atmósfera positiva y los participantes se infundieran con la auto-reflexión y la conciencia."

La primera clase tuvo un comienzo lento debido a los dolores de crecimiento. Pero cuando los residentes vieron los resultados de los graduados de Beyond Thinking, quisieron involucrarse.

La lista de espera superó los 70 y Box vio la necesidad de ampliar la capacidad del programa. Desarrolló una clase para capacitar a facilitadores colegas para satisfacer la demanda. Después de la primera clase de facilitadores que se graduaron, Beyond Thinking creció a dos clases, una en la mañana y otra en la tarde. Además, los facilitadores pudieron tener clases informales los sábados por la mañana en la Unidad de Incentivos.

El extraordinario éxito que se desarrolló requirió que Box se sentara con Wagner, ahora un facilitador colega mayor, y le pidiera ayuda para renovar Beyond Thinking. En 2019, Box y Wagner desarrollaron una nueva declaración de misión, visión y valores para Beyond Thinking

Misión: "Empoderar a las personas a descubrir su nobleza a través de la auténtica autoexpresión."

Visión: "Ser una plataforma universal para la aplicación de habilidades comunicativas y la expresión auténtica de uno mismo." Valores: "(HABLAR) Autoexpresión, Proyección, Empoderamiento, Afirmación y Agudeza."

Box y Wagner lanzaron tres ramificaciones de Beyond Thinking: Inmersión profunda de Beyond Thinking, una serie de debates en grupos pequeños de diez semanas sobre problemas de la vida real; Micrófono abierto, una plataforma mensual de expresión verbal abierta; y Re-Entre, una clase para residentes alojados en la cápsula de Re-entre.

La expansión ha sido abrumadoramente popular y exitosa. La diversidad de personas, talentos y temas es increíble. Box tiene la ambición de ver a Beyond Thinking crecer aún más en AVCF y llegar a otras instalaciones en los próximos dos o tres años. En AVCF le gustaría ver versiones en español, avanzadas y especializadas, además de clases de debate, talleres y seminarios.

¿Qué es Más Allá del Pensamiento? Es un medio para un fin, para encontrar tu voz y definirte a ti mismo. Box dice: "Enseñamos habilidades tangibles como un medio para desarrollar aspectos intangibles del yo." Beyond Thinking es un programa de comunicación que le brindará herramientas para expresarse en múltiples niveles, formatos y plataformas. Serás capaz de trascender miedos, contratiempos y barreras para superar las expectativas.

## Ganancia de tiempo para graduados de estudios independientes

BY ALEXANDER JASMINE  
IR Copyeditor

El tiempo ganado por logros (AET, por sus siglas en inglés) se otorgará al completar un título de asociado o licenciatura aprobado a través de programas de estudios independientes de acuerdo con una adición reciente de AR 550-12B. La obtención de un título de asociado aprobado otorgará 30 días AET si el título se adquirió después del 21 de mayo de 2021. La finalización de una licenciatura aprobada otorgará 60 días AET si se adquiere después del 21 de mayo de 2021. Esta revisión de AR entra en vigencia en enero de 2023.

Los cursos de estudio independiente deben ser aprobados previamente por la instalación y la Oficina de Programas Penitenciarios. El CDOC se comunicará con las universidades al finalizar el título para verificar las horas de crédito. Tenga en cuenta que un título obtenido a través de un estudio independiente no está relacionado con el Programa Second Chance Pell que se ofrece a través de Trinidad State College. Sin embargo, las becas Pell para personas encarceladas se ampliarán en julio de 2023, lo que permitirá a los estudiantes de estudios independientes solicitar ayuda financiera.

La afluencia de colegios y universidades que ofrecen educación superior en prisión presenta una oportunidad para que la administración del CDOC cultive nuevas asociaciones con organizaciones comunitarias y renueve la declaración de misión de las correccionales, según el Instituto de Política de Educación Superior. Brindar AET a los estudiantes de estudio independiente puede tener un impacto positivo en todo el estado, especialmente si el CDOC asigna más recursos a los servicios de supervisión, el acceso a computadoras y la disponibilidad de aulas.



Community Outreach Service Center, [www.coscdenver.org](http://www.coscdenver.org), are people working together for a better community and since 1988 have proudly served the homeless, returning, and marginalized citizens in the Five Points Denver Metro Area with employment, housing, peer support, basic needs, and community wealth building to build a better community.

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## Un acercamiento compasivo de enseñanza

BY KORTNEY PAYNE  
DWCF Contributor

Rara vez nos encontramos con personas que tienen tanto cuidado y compasión como necesitamos en este entorno. Los estudiantes que asisten a Trinidad State College a través del programa Second Chance Pell (SCP), incluido yo mismo, hemos experimentado lo contrario con varios profesores. Uno de estos profesores cariñosos y compasivos es la Dra. Jean Alger. A través de SCP, enseña comunicación e inglés. Posee un corazón genuino,

no solo por sus alumnos, sino también en su campo de trabajo.

La Dra. Alger ingresó a la universidad comunitaria como estudiante sin una dirección clara de lo que quería ser. Estaba interesada en la psicología, pero se alejó debido a los comentarios negativos. Una de sus profesoras, Pearl Klein, fue una gran inspiración. Un mundo completamente nuevo se presentó cuando la animaron a estudiar inglés. El siguiente capítulo de la Dra. Alger fue la escuela de posgrado, donde enseñó composición durante su programa de maestría. La Dra. Alger ayudó a sus alumnos a aprovechar su creatividad y autoexpresión. Le encantaba esta línea de

anteriormente necesitaba esta misma orientación.

El deseo de la Dra. Alger de enseñar para el SCP surge de dos razones principales. La enseñanza se alinea con sus valores y quería hacer algo que no había hecho antes. Ella cree firmemente que todos deberían tener acceso a la educación y siempre que ese acceso coincida con sus valores. Dar clases virtualmente puede ser un desafío, pero le gusta. Está estirando sus músculos de enseñanza y refrescando sus enfoques, dijo. El tamaño de sus clases varía, pero la Dra. Alger tiene un promedio de 65 estudiantes por semestre a través de SCP. En el campus, sus tres clases tienen un promedio

de 35 estudiantes. Ella prefiere el número de clase más bajo para poder brindar una atención más personalizada.

Los estudiantes toman el tema en una variedad de maneras. A través de SCP, la mayoría de los estudiantes encarcelados están bastante comprometidos. En el campus, no encuentra la misma aceptación, pero entiende el acto de equilibrio que se necesita con el trabajo, la familia y la vida social. Ella hace todo lo posible para romper los miedos acerca de la escritura. Le gusta que sus alumnos salgan de sus zonas de confort y aprendan nuevas habilidades.

La Dra. Alger cree que todo está conectado a lo largo de la existencia. Gran parte de

la forma en que vivimos crea división en lugar de conexiones, y parte de nuestro propósito es sanar esas conexiones cortadas. La Dra. Alger también tiene afinidad por el budismo debido al énfasis en la conexión y la interrelación. Cree firmemente en ser honesto con uno mismo y con los demás.

La Dra. Alger encarna la bondad y la compasión en acción. Es una inspiración para sus estudiantes presenciar estas cualidades y el efecto en sus vidas. Es tan crucial reconocer a los líderes en nuestras vidas. Son parte de nuestra búsqueda de transformación.

## Liberate

BY JUSTIN BOX  
AVCF Contributor

Mucho antes de venir a prisión, estaba aprisionado. Encerrado dentro de los confines de mi propia mente. Atrapado. No entender la verdadera naturaleza de la libertad, como creo que muchos de nosotros hacemos. Lo di por sentado. Al hacerlo, perdí mis derechos inherentes como ciudadano, y quizás como ser humano. Mi camino de regreso a la libertad, la verdadera libertad, fue un viaje largo y arduo.

Como muchas personas, batallé cuando era niño. Al mirarme, nunca hubieras supuesto que debajo de mi sonrisa y comportamiento feliz yacía un niño torturado. Un niño tan perdido y confundido que renunciaría a una vida fácil en busca de pertenencia, conexión y expresión. Sin embargo, nadie te culparía por pasar por alto los signos reveladores porque a una edad temprana aprendí a reprimir y ocultar mi verdadero yo para evitar problemas y el sufrimiento que conlleva ser tu verdadero yo.

Cada detalle de mi descenso y ascensión no es importante. Baste decir que siempre estuve “entre” los chicos populares. Siempre estuve “entre” los mejores jugadores del equipo. Siempre estuve “entre” los niños más inteligentes de la escuela. Siempre “entre,” pero nunca “de,” porque en el fondo carecía del sentimiento de pertenencia y conexión. Me sentí apagado y diferente. Me sentí como un niño adoptado entre mi propia familia. Me sentía como la

tercera rueda entre mis propios amigos, los amigos que nunca se quedaban más de un año o dos. Este constante sentimiento de soledad y vacío me carcomía hasta que tuve que llenar el agujero con algo, cualquier cosa.

Aprendí a ser “cool” y encajar, a encontrar a “mi gente,” incluso cuando sabía que no tenía gente. Lo que no pude hacer fue evitar que este sentimiento se enconara y se convirtiera en un dolor profundo y punzante que evolucionó en ira y odio cancerosos. Así como el cáncer vuelve al cuerpo contra sí mismo, mis emociones reprimidas se vuelven contra mí. Se volvieron expresables sólo a través de la violencia. Así que busqué una vida donde esto fuera aceptable, e incluso celebrado, donde “mi gente” apoyara esta expresión. Me convertí en un criminal y un pandillero. Finalmente, pude expresarme. Finalmente me vieron por lo que era, o más exactamente, por cómo me había llegado a sentir. Entre los muchos problemas con este escenario estaba el hecho de que el dolor profundo solo empeoró, se volvió terminal y estalló en violencia.

Esta necesidad de expresarme culminó cuando maté a un hombre en un tiroteo relacionado con pandillas a la edad de 15 años. Fui acusado como adulto, sentenciado a 40 años y enviado a prisión a los 17 años. Problemas en un mundo frío e implacable. Aprendí rápidamente que la única “libertad” que me quedaba era qué pensar y cómo actuar. En

este oscuro abismo de mi propia creación, vislumbré la luz y la esperanza de mi liberación.

Cogito ergo sum. Latín para, “Pienso, luego existo.” El fundamento mismo del conocimiento y lo único que se puede conocer verdaderamente, según el filósofo René Descartes. En su intento de descubrir cómo podemos saber algo, Descartes realizó un experimento mental que consistía en preguntas para las que tenía que tener respuestas absolutas basadas en hechos. Si no podía encontrar respuestas fácticas, razonó, las respuestas a esas preguntas serían falsas o una ilusión. Descubrió que el único lugar sin duda eran sus propios pensamientos, porque incluso al dudar de sus pensamientos, tenía que ser el que dudaba. Su pensamiento verificó su existencia, pienso, luego existo, pero nada más.

A los 17, pensé que mis pensamientos y las elecciones que hacía eran las únicas cosas en las que podía tener total confianza. Como dice Stephen Covey en el plan de estudios “7 Hábitos,” encontré la libertad de elegir entre estímulo y respuesta. Al principio, esto era simplemente un mecanismo para poder hacer frente a pasar tiempo en prisión. Sin embargo, a medida que desarrollé mi habilidad para tomar decisiones intencionales, descubrí que el mundo era un simple reino de posibilidades, algunas positivas, otras negativas, que dependían de cómo las abordara. El lento amanecer de esta realización fue mi renacimiento.

Es común definir ser libre como estar en sociedad sin guardias, vallas, encierros y confinamiento. Es común empujar contra los obstáculos que bloquean nuestro camino. Y, desafortunadamente, es común dejar que estas definiciones, creencias y visiones del mundo nos impidan convertirnos en nuestro mejor y verdadero yo.

No importa dónde estemos, hay cosas que tenemos que hacer para sobrevivir. Debemos comer, beber y dormir. El hecho de que tengamos que hacer estas cosas no significa que no seamos libres. Puede ser más difícil aceptar que en prisión debemos encerrarnos o hacer lo que dicen los guardias para “sobrevivir”. Argumento que ELEGIMOS hacer estas cosas tal como ELEGIMOS comer para sobrevivir, porque reconocemos las consecuencias de no hacerlo. Argumento que lo que hemos perdido son nuestras libertades, o al menos la disponibilidad de opciones. Lo que nunca podemos perder es nuestra libertad, que defino como la capacidad de ejercer las opciones disponibles para nosotros.

Tener libertad y elección no garantiza que siempre consigamos lo que queremos. Eso es un cuento de hadas infantil. Si saltamos de un techo y luego decimos: “No me gustan las opciones de caerme de cara o de espaldas. Por lo tanto, no soy libre de elegir,” no probamos nada. Ese no es un argumento real porque siempre somos libres de elegir. Lo que no entendemos es que estamos

eligiendo entre las opciones disponibles después de nuestras elecciones anteriores, eligiendo entre los desechos o la generosidad de nuestras consecuencias causales.

Me llevó llegar a prisión y perder todas mis libertades para encontrar el verdadero regalo, la verdadera clave para vivir. Ahora, no te mentiré. Esta clave no lo arregla todo. Mi reconocimiento y uso de la libertad aún no ha afectado mi libertad, al menos en términos de salir de prisión. Y algunas cicatrices son tan profundas que no preveo curación. Pero te garantizo que tu vida solo será realmente tuya cuando asumas la responsabilidad de lo que haces, desde el pensamiento hasta la elección y la acción. Desde ambos lados de la valla, otros desalentarán tu liberación, pero eso está en ellos y no debería desanimarte a descubrirte a ti mismo.

Te imploro que comiences ahora. Es un momento muy singular en DOC. Ahora hay más opciones para ser uno mismo que nunca antes. Piensa en quién eres realmente y qué es lo que realmente quieres hacer. No te inclines ante lo que es “aceptable.” Abrázate y respeta el derecho de todos a ser ellos mismos. Utilice sus recursos, comuníquese con sus amigos y familiares y únase a programas que le enseñen cómo efectuar un cambio real en su vida. Por encima de cualquier otra cosa, sé tu verdadero yo. Sólo puedes ser libre cuando actúas según lo que eres y quién eres.

## Nivel de ansiedad

BY DEMITRIUS HERRON  
YOS Contributor

¿Ansioso?

Sé quién soy. De hecho, muchas personas lo son. La ansiedad puede ser una declaración general que cubre una variedad de sentimientos y emociones que pueden interferir con la vida. Sé lo que podrías estar pensando: “No suena tan mal.”

¡Pare! Usted está minimizando uno de los mayores contribuyentes al insomnio, la depresión, la adicción, el aislamiento social, los dolores de cabeza y el dolor crónico, y no solo en el dedo del pie o algo así. ¡Oh, no! El dolor crónico por ansiedad puede afectar cualquier parte de su cuerpo en cualquier momento. Hay informes de espasmos en todo el cuerpo que dejan a las víctimas en el suelo durante largos períodos de tiempo. La mala calidad de vida y los intentos de suicidio también son factores a tener en cuenta. Estos tipos de ansiedades pueden variar desde

el miedo a hablar en público hasta que el COVID-19 lo infecte a usted o a sus seres queridos. Incluso podría experimentar la incapacidad de hablar o moverse con ataques de pánico que son tan graves que pueden causar convulsiones y ataques cardíacos, incluso en adolescentes y adultos jóvenes.

¿Te preguntas si podrías tener ansiedad? Los síntomas se presentan de muchas formas y en diversos grados. Muchas personas que experimentan ansiedad se sienten nerviosas, inquietas o tensas, mientras que otras tienen una sensación de peligro inminente, pánico o fatalidad. También pueden experimentar aumento del ritmo cardíaco, respiración acelerada, sudoración, temblores, sensación de debilidad o cansancio, insomnio y problemas gastrointestinales.

Hay muchas técnicas sugeridas para combatir la ansiedad. Primero: mantente activo. Esto significa compromiso tanto físico como mental, todos los días. Ya sea

que salga al patio, practique deportes, lea o mantenga su título de ajedrez o pinacle en su instalación. Mantenerse involucrado en situaciones pro-sociales con otras personas puede aliviar las ansiedades sociales y las fobias relacionadas con la vergüenza pública. Tampoco está de más hablar con alguien de vez en cuando.

Segundo: evitar las drogas y el alcohol. Evite también a aquellas personas que se son como una droga. Ya sabes, aquellos con los que tienes que estar a pesar de que la relación puede ser tóxica. Para algunos, es fácil ver por qué deberías evitar estas formas de adicción, pero para otros, puede parecer que no eres tú mismo sin ellas o que te ayudan con tu ansiedad. Ellos, “no.” Simplemente están reemplazando una forma de adicción por otra. ¡Con suerte, estos largos períodos de depravación pueden eliminar esos hábitos para que puedas formar mejores! Si está atrapado en esos surcos, entonces

le recomiendo ver a un médico real que no obtuvo su título de una caja del Conde Chocula.

Tercero: obtenga ayuda lo antes posible. Al igual que otras condiciones mentales, cuanto antes lo atrape, mejor, y si espera demasiado, podría terminar siendo demasiado tarde. Solo recuerde, puede que no sea un médico de verdad, pero mi nombre es Dmitry y estoy ansioso.

Nota del editor: la salud mental y los trastornos son temas serios. Este artículo es proporcionado por una persona que no está calificada en el campo de la salud mental pero que brinda su perspectiva personal sobre el grave problema de la ansiedad. Comuníquese con un asistente de compañeros (peer assistant), su administrador de casos o un facilitador de salud mental en su centro si tiene preguntas o inquietudes sobre su salud mental.

## ¿Cuánto vale tu tiempo?

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN  
IR Journalist

Tómese un momento y piense en lo que está haciendo con su tiempo. No estoy hablando simplemente de esperar a salir de prisión. Estoy hablando de lo que podrías estar haciendo para salir y permanecer fuera. ¿Estás tomando clases? ¿Explorando quién eres? ¿Estudiando una religión o espiritualidad? ¿Que estas aprendiendo? ¿Cuáles son tus planes? ¿A quién estás enseñando? ¿Estás trabajando para

reconstruirte y ayudar a otros a hacer lo mismo?

Hacerse estas preguntas podría ponerlo en el camino hacia un futuro mejor para usted y quienes lo rodean. Si te sientes perdido, es importante que busques en tu interior para encontrar tu vocación, tu propósito o tu pasión. Cualesquiera que sean tus elecciones pasadas, puedes darte la vuelta y tener una existencia significativa y hermosa. Podrías ser un modelo a seguir para alguien que te admira sin

que te des cuenta.

La pregunta entonces es, ¿cuál es tu plan de juego? ¿Adónde te diriges? ¿Sabes cuál es tu pasión? Una vez que sepa estas cosas, puede convertir sus pasiones en algo que la comunidad necesita, sin importar en qué comunidad viva actualmente, incluida la prisión. Mire a su comunidad y vea cómo puede ayudar a quienes lo rodean todos los días. Deténgase y reconozca los recursos que están cerca de usted y que están

a su disposición. Hacer esto te acercará a que tus sueños se hagan realidad.

Las prisiones estatales tienen clases disponibles para ayudar a los reclusos a avanzar, incluso si es posible que no hayas descubierto exactamente lo que quieres hacer. Si no ha obtenido su GED, tómese el tiempo para hacerlo ahora. Recibirá tiempo libre de su sentencia y abrirá más puertas al empleo una vez que sea liberado. Vea qué clases universitarias por correspondencia

están disponibles. Las clases de salud mental están disponibles para ayudarlo a navegar por sus problemas de raíz y conquistarlos para ayudarlo a mantenerse fuera de prisión en el futuro. Su administrador de casos o el coordinador de programas de su instalación pueden ayudarlo con esto. Si tiene los recursos para investigar lo que ofrecen otras prisiones, promueva que nuevos programas sean implementados en su instalación.

Cuando establece metas para su futuro, toma el control de su vida. Hacer esto te ayudará a crecer donde estás plantado y a cultivar un nuevo futuro para ti y las personas que amas y te importan. Puede darle más propósito a su vida y convertirse en un modelo positivo a seguir para sus amigos, familiares y compañeros. Las personas toman nota del mundo que les rodea. ¿Qué van a ver en ti?

## Redención es una segunda oportunidad

BY PATRICK SANCHEZ  
LCF Contributor

Redención es levantarte cuando algo te golpea y te tira al piso. Levantarte por ti mismo y estar dispuesto a enfrentar el mismo obstáculo. Un menor contratiempo para una mejor remontada es lo que tenía en mente. Teniendo que ir a FCF por una semana para tomar el examen de CrossFit nivel 1 por segunda vez después de fallar en Septiembre del 2019 fue una prueba de resiliencia y mi motivación por redención. Fallar duele y tiene la tendencia de traernos todo pensamiento negativo que uno puede imaginar. Para mí, fue una completa y absoluta prueba de mi crecimiento y madures como hombre. Pude haberme rendido fácilmente y haber regresado a mi inmadura adolescencia como cuando entre a CDOC. Como sea, eso no es lo que hice.

Lo primero que hice fue llamar a mi familia y disculparme por tirar a la basura sus \$1000 dólares. No puedo expresar ni

quiera la humillación que sentí bombeando a través de mis venas durante la llamada telefónica que duro acerca de cinco minutos, si mucho. Una vez colgué, levante mi guía de nivel 1 y comencé a leer como si fuera mi biblia. Cielos, probablemente yo lo leí más veces que la mayoría de personas leen su biblia. Está bien, puedo estar exagerando, pero estoy seguro de que tomaste la idea de lo que estoy tratando de decir. Esto se convirtió en mi misión tomar ese examen una vez más y pasarlo.

El objetivo de mi misión finalmente llevo. El 20 de Septiembre del 2021, camine hacia el gimnasio de Fremont sintiéndome confiado y sin preocupación. Yo quería pasar esa prueba demasiado. El seminario de nivel 1 es un curso de dos días a partir de las nueve de la mañana hasta las cinco de la tarde. Tristemente, tenía que esperar dos días más antes de que pudiera

alcanzar la redención. El seminario fue una experiencia de por vida. Conocí algunos hombres increíbles de otras prisiones de Colorado. Tuve el honor de conocer a tres entrenadores que son miembros del personal de CrossFit. Pero déjame recordarte que yo estaba ahí solo por una razón, mi redención.

Antes de que lo supiera, Nicole Gordon nos dio un informe detallado del proceso de prueba y uno de los otros entrenadores, Jason, me dio el examen. Aquí vamos, tiempo de examen muchacho.

Abrió mi examen y la primera pregunta me dejo perplejo. Me dije a mi mismo, "No, no otra vez." Tome aliento profundamente y me dije a mí mismo, "Recuerda porque estás aquí." Una vez que recobre la compostura, seguí adelante y complete mi examen. Lo entregue a Jason. Al alcanzarlo, me pregunto, "¿Oye Pat, como te sientes?" Yo le dije, "Estaré esperando mi

certificado en el correo." Estaba más que confiado, pero otra vez, tenía que esperar.

Mi paciencia fue probada a través de este proceso. De regreso a LCF unas semanas después, le pedí al sargento Bushong sacara del directorio de CrossFit.com y señalara en "Encontrar un entrenador." Una vez vi mi nombre saltar, Salí corriendo a decirle a todos y a todo aquel que escuchara. "¡Lo hice!" pase mi examen. No me di por vencido. Me propuse una meta que era positiva y realística.

La vida solo cambiara cuando seas más comprometido con tus sueños que con tu zona de confort. Todos merecen una segunda oportunidad no importa lo que hayan cometido en su vida. Debes estar dispuesto a poner el trabajo y reconocer lo has arruinado o fallado. Somos dignos de algo mejor. Así que, no solo te sientes a esperar. ¡Ve y obtén esa redención como yo obtuve la mía!



## Tribe Recovery Homes

Tribe is an organization focused on recovery for those suffering with addiction to drugs or alcohol. Our organization takes a hard look at the needs of our Tribe members on an individual basis by way of actions through positive/proactive reinforcement. Our approach to recovery homes is based on Maslow's Hierarchy of needs. After Tribe has had an opportunity to help members establish a foothold on recovery, they are held accountable to their new responsibilities and supported when they fall down.

**Tribe Recovery Homes**  
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## Esperanza es una forma de rebelión

BY BOB EISENMAN  
IR Writer Development Coordinator

Para que quede constancia, Editor en jefe, tratando de resumir a Molly Ott en 900 palabras o menos es una tarea por escrito imposible de llevar a cabo, de todas maneras aquí va.

La esperanza es una forma de rebelión. Solo escuchar esta afirmación, de una instructora de arte que trabaja con DU-PAI, me dijo que IR necesitaba contar esta historia. No la quiero arruinar... esta no es la historia que tu piensas. Publicamos muchos artículos sobre diferentes clases y producciones que DU-PAI presenta en varias prisiones del estado. Muy a menudo escuchamos, "Oye, eso es grandioso. Esa prisión consiguió hacer algo genial y nosotros no." Así que en vez de hablarte acerca de una clase de arte (la cual fue increíble por cierto, pero irrelevante para este artículo), permítanme presentarles a Molly Ott, es uno de los seres humanos más impresionantes de la tierra. Pregunté si estaba vendiendo en exceso a la Señorita Ott, pero fui informado que no importa lo que diga aquí, no alcanzare la meta. Entonces, imagina a la persona más genial que conoces y luego súbele un poco más.

Molly Ott es una increíble artista que trabaja en una variedad de medios, pero el punto de esta historia es Molly misma. Tal vez nunca la conocerás, pero te aseguro que a Molly tú le importas, nosotros, y todos.

Molly se mudó a Colorado para obtener su maestría. Hace unos años, tomó un

trabajo de verano en una granja de cabras en las afueras de Florence, Arizona, para escapar de lo académico, dejar la ciudad y trabajar con sus manos. Mientras estuvo allí, se enteró de la infame prisión y los efectos palpables que uno siente cuando la cultura y la economía de una comunidad está centrada alrededor de un centro penitenciario: Molly conoció el pueblo prisión.

Molly creció en la costa este, donde las prisiones no son tan visibles como lo son aquí en el Salvaje Oeste. Después de su experiencia en Florence, ella comenzó a investigar acerca del encarcelamiento. "Estaba muy conmovida y asombrada que esto (prisión) era algo que no supe hasta mis 20's. Esto me asusto, que pude estar tanto tiempo sin saber algo que tiene tan grande presencia en mi identidad como estadounidense." Ella comenzó a escribir a personas internas para escuchar sus perspectivas personales. Muchos respondieron contándole sobre DU PAI, lo cual la llevo a su trabajo actual. "Tengo el mejor trabajo gracias a todos ustedes," dijo Molly.

"Los artistas convierten las cosas invisibles en algo visible. Me interesa lo que es invisible, y prisión es lo más invisible que he encontrado hasta ahora en esta sociedad." Molly imparte clases de arte visual en varias prisiones estatales, pero también utiliza su plataforma en la comunidad académica y en redes sociales para traer a luz lo que ve en el interior. Su sitio web m-ott.com incluye su trabajo con nosotros y para nosotros. La tesis de su maestría

fue una solícita e interactiva experiencia artística que forzó a los espectadores a confrontar algunas de las realidades de la encarcelación.

Como muchos de ustedes saben, tenemos bastantes voluntarios que entran para ser vistos ayudando más que para realmente ayudar. No Molly. ¿Necesitan un ejemplo? Como parte de su proyecto tesis comió como se hace en prisión. En serio. Yo pensé que había oído mal también. Pero no, ella ha comido lo mismo que nosotros aquí adentro (solo que con cubiertos y supongo que con mejores modales en la mesa), sumó las calorías consumidas y luego salió a caminar para quemar cada caloría. Sus paseos podían durar seis a siete horas. No escucha música ni juega con su teléfono. Ella permanece en el momento, meditando en cuál es la experiencia del encarcelado (aburrimiento, exposición, incomodidad, etc.). Ella trata de imaginar que es lo que enfrentamos a diario. Ella dice que la experiencia combinada de comer como nosotros a la misma hora es una práctica espiritual con la que experimenta para actualizar nuevos potenciales de empatía. Ella también realiza esculturas con comida.

Molly es una artista en la comida. ¿Por qué comida? Todos tienen una relación establecida con la comida, y muy francamente, es accesible. No da tanto "miedo" experimentar el arte de esta manera. Suena inventado y sin sentido, pero te aseguro. Molly es un verdadero trato.

¿Cómo se equilibra el arduo trabajo

que ella realiza con el encarcelamiento? En pocas palabras, Hot Cheetos. Ese mismo verano en Florence, Molly pasó mucho tiempo en el desierto con los cactus saguaro y se sintió atraída con ellos debido a su rareza. Comenzó otro proyecto de arte: sujetando Hot Cheetos a las espinas de los cactus. "Hot Cheetos solo están flotando en mi mente, a veces. ¿Tal vez es algo de milenarios? La vida es bastante absurda. "Los Hot Cheetos tienen la capacidad de ser confundidos por un extraño florecer en vez de lo que en realidad son en un ambiente natural.

El deseo de Molly sobretodo es que nuestras comunidades encarceladas sueñen y se fortalezca nuestra imaginación, todos juntos. La esperanza es una forma de rebelión. "La esperanza nos mantiene vivos. Síes que vivimos, esto significa que debemos ser participantes activos/creadores del futuro," dijo Molly. Molly cree que ya sea que hacer arte sea comer y salir a caminar o hacer formas abstractas usando puré de papas, el arte es comunicación. El arte es contar historias. Ella espera que todos nosotros lleguemos a ser creadores confiados de tal manera que simultáneamente nos convirtamos en narradores. Ella cree que nuestras historias pueden cambiar las ideas de las personas sobre lo que es la realidad y lo que puede ser el futuro. Entonces, en el espíritu de Molly, has un llamado a tu imaginación, examina tu entorno y use ese espíritu creativo para hacer lo invisible... visible.

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# Proyecto Elevate

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN  
IR Journalist

Las medias casas fueron diseñadas inicialmente para ayudar a las personas quienes dejando prisión serán aclimatizadas a la sociedad. A través de los años, se convirtieron en lugares de transición con obstáculos a vencer. A la gente que se le ha dado una oportunidad para ir a medias casas/comunidad correccional, con frecuencia batallan para atravesar las matrices y saltan aros para transicionar de regreso a la sociedad. Ha sido una necesidad el reestructurar el manejo de la comunidad de correcciones desde algún tiempo hasta ahora.

El Proyecto Elévate está promoviendo un nuevo tipo de comunidad correccional. Esta media casa está diseñada para albergar a mujeres e individuos transgénero. Cassandra Harris, "Cass," la Directora de Servicios, y Stephanie Robertson, Directora de Operaciones, están trabajando para ayudar a que individuos antiguamente encarcelados recobren su independencia. "Nadie debería salir de estas puertas y no tener un lugar donde vivir. Nosotros esperamos que el 100% de nuestra gente tenga un lugar para vivir, un trabajo, y un plan para obtener sus necesidades básicas. (Nosotros queremos) tengan su apoyo comunitario en un lugar estable y seguro," dijo Robertson.

"Yo pienso que lo que más me gusta de ser empleada y ser parte de este proyecto es la disposición y apertura al cambio en Denver. Ellos no han sido más que comprensivos e increíbles

a través del proceso. Esta es una sociedad entre Denver y el Programa de Empoderamiento. A pesar de ser dos agencias con diferentes ideas a unirse, esto ha fluido realmente bien, y estoy honrada de ser parte de este proyecto," Harris añadió.

La intención del Proyecto Elévate es ayudar con el proceso de reforma. Ellos creen que las personas anteriormente encarceladas deberían ser empoderadas para ser exitosas." Estamos realmente interesados en el éxito de todos. Estamos comprometidos a ayudar a cada uno en su camino hacia delante. No vemos a alguien como prescindible. No hay vida que no sea valorada en este programa y queremos que todos tengan una oportunidad de hacerla en la comunidad y nosotros continuaremos presentándonos todos los días para intentar que esto suceda," Robertson añadió.

Que lo que aparta a los demás de la media casa es que nadie paga renta, comida, higiene, o lavandería. No hay literas y todas las camas tienen colchones de seis pulgadas de grueso. Hay más privacidad. Residentes son requeridos y asistidos a abrir cuentas bancarias formales que serán monitoreadas, lo cual es requerido por el estado. Esto es para asegurar que las necesidades personales, restitución, y ayuda financiera para hijos hayan sido cuidadas. Se espera de los participantes manejen su propio dinero.

El Proyecto Elévate es capaz de alcanzar las necesidades de los residentes a través de fondos provistos por concesiones, donaciones, y el día por día estatal por participantes. El condado y ciudad de Denver han reconocido la necesidad y han ayudado a financiar el esfuerzo para asegurar

que las necesidades sean alcanzadas de una manera trauma-informada, genero-responsiva. La ciudad está en apoyo del Proyecto Elévate sea sensitiva a género.

Los participantes llenan una forma llamada "Conóceme" antes de entrar en el Proyecto Elévate. Esto ayuda al programa a crear un paquete de bienvenida construido para recibir a residentes dentro de la comunidad. Esto incluye una cobija de su color favorito, botanas, y una primera comida de un restaurante de su agrado. Los participantes son incluidos a su tasación desde el día que llegan. Trazando a mano el programa con manejo cuidadoso ayuda a individualizar niveles de manera que el trabajo hecho es una inversión a ellos mismos. Hay ocho niveles para trabajar. Del uno al cuatro son los niveles residenciales donde los participantes trabajan hacia la independencia. Esto incluye obtener documentos vitales, un plan de cuidado, participar en evaluaciones, planeamiento financiero, identificar un sistema de apoyo, participación en apoyo estructurado en situación, y ponerse a trabajar. Los niveles del cinco al ocho son no-residenciales y mantienen a sus clientes en su camino hacia la autosuficiencia.

Jade Anthony y Andrea "Evette" Collins son dos personas aceptadas en el Proyecto Elévate. Ambas se reunieron con el personal vía Web-Ex para responder preguntas. Esto no se sintió como una entrevista para estas mujeres fue más como una conversación. Ellas expresaron una inquietud en una estructura menos restrictiva y qué podría afectarles a salir del programa. Sin embargo ambas están emocionadas a la oportunidad de formar el programa

para futuros residentes.

"Lo que espero ganar de esta experiencia es la exposición a hacer algo diferente," Anthony dijo.

"Si nos juntáramos, llegaríamos mucho más lejos. Si estoy temerosa de ir a esta media casa, pero no me voy a negar a esta segunda oportunidad que me ha sido dada. Una segunda oportunidad de ir y reclamar lo que es mío, y eso es mi libertad y vida," Collins añadió.

El proyecto Elévate acepta a la mayoría de mujeres e individuos transgénero. Las únicas personas que actualmente no son permitidos entrar son ofensores sexuales, y ellos revisan en base caso por caso a personas con daños a la propiedad en su registro. Ellos esperan poder ayudar a ofensores sexuales en un futuro. Ellos tampoco toman individuos entusiasmados al homicidio o suicidas, pero no permitirán que la salud mental sea una barrera que limite a solicitantes al programa.

El Proyecto Elévate apoya un movimiento de reforma largamente debido. Ellos están construyendo un nuevo modelo de comunidad correccional para ayudar a residentes anteriormente encarcelados se conviertan en miembros productivos en la sociedad. Esto es primordial para Denver por que los residentes anteriormente encarcelados se convertirán en vecinos, trabajadores, voluntarios y miembros de la comunidad. El éxito de este programa es contar con residentes participantes y los empleados en esta nueva media casa, y la comunidad de Denver también. La facilidad parece tener todo puesto para convertirse en un catalizador para el cambio.

# Prisión por 100

BY JOHN RED CLOUD  
CC Contributor

"Para ser libre, debes pensar libre." -Desconocido

Cuando no estoy seguro acerca de algo eléctrico, consulto a un electricista. Problemas de tuberías, llamo a un plomero. Debido a que son expertos en sus respectivas profesiones, los veo como fuentes de autoridad en el tema. Cuando supe que estaba en camino a la prisión, me acerqué a los reclusos del DOC en el condado con órdenes judiciales. Los percibí como los expertos en prisión y yo quería "tener éxito" en prisión. No le estaba preguntando a los guardias ni a ninguna de las personas en la cárcel conmigo que no habían estado en prisión. ¿Por qué debería? No tenían ninguna experiencia haciendo tiempo en DOC. Tiene sentido, ¿verdad?

Las estadísticas indican que en un día cualquiera en Colorado, hay más de 9,000 personas en libertad condicional que viven bajo algún tipo de supervisión. A menos que esté obligado y decidido a regresar a prisión simplemente porque no le importa, se le brindan todas las oportunidades para tener éxito mientras esté allí afuera. Todos conocemos a alguien que salió en libertad condicional, solo para verlo unos meses más tarde en A & O. Todos decimos: "Tú Tienes que estar bromeando, ¿qué salió mal?"

Cada mes, aproximadamente 40-50 muchachos dejan FCF en

libertad condicional o son dados de alta. Naturalmente, comencé a imaginar cómo sería vivir bajo supervisión, porque a menos que fueras condenado antes de 1993, todos caemos bajo el esquema de libertad condicional obligatoria de Colorado. Muchos personas han estado en libertad condicional antes y se les ha revocado por una razón/ excusa u otra. En virtud de su fracaso en la supervisión, se pueden aprender algunas lecciones (es decir, "Esto es lo que *no se* debe hacer"). Aprender de los errores es una de las características del crecimiento. Aunque estos "violadores de libertad condicional" tienen experiencia en libertad condicional, difícilmente los llamaría expertos. Un experto se define como una persona con un alto grado de habilidad o conocimiento sobre un tema determinado.

En la tarde del 18 de enero de 2018, asistí a la presentación "Vivir bajo supervisión" en MPR-1 con el oficial de libertad condicional (PO) Sheppard. Tenía sentido escuchar acerca de la libertad condicional de un oficial de libertad condicional real con experiencia en muchos casos en Colorado. Aunque los muchachos son liberados condicionalmente de FCF todos los meses, me sorprendió los pocos que asistimos (menos de diez). Debido a la seriedad del tema, estaba convencido de que la sala estaría repleta. No tanto. No obstante, PO Sheppard analizó temas importantes que van desde la gestión del tiempo hasta las trampas comunes durante la libertad condicional.

Nos quedó claro que a los PO no se les paga en función del desempeño de las personas en libertad condicional en su carga de casos. Traducción: si logramos o no la libertad condicional no afecta sus cheques de pago. Según PO Sheppard, hay más de 300 oficiales de libertad condicional en todo Colorado. Inventamos solo una responsabilidad en su carga de trabajo. Ella nos recordó que podemos comunicarnos con cualquiera de ellos en el estado si surge la necesidad.

¿Alguna vez harías paracaidismo sin antes asistir a una presentación de seguridad? "¿Qué quieres decir con que tengo que tirar de la cuerda de apertura? ¿Qué es un cordón de apertura?" Casi todo lo que hacemos en la vida se verá afectado por nuestras intenciones al hacerlo. ¿Qué *piensa* hacer mientras está bajo supervisión? Se honesto contigo mismo. Una vez que responda esa pregunta, probablemente pueda adivinar cómo funcionarán las cosas. Estadísticamente hablando, los números no nos favorecen. La mayoría de nosotros fallaremos en la libertad condicional. Pero no tiene por qué ser así. Sé el tipo que la hace. Una preparación adecuada evita mear un mal rendimiento.

Si elige tomar buenas decisiones mientras vive bajo supervisión, puede ser uno de los que continúan viviendo bajo supervisión. ¿Cuál es la alternativa?

"Aquí está su dinero de entrada de \$ 100. Nos vemos en unos meses."



# Haciendo conexiones desde adentro

BY SARAH-ANN BEAUDOIN  
IR Journalist

El hecho de que estés en prisión no significa que estés fuera de alcance. Dicen que cuando vas a prisión básicamente te entierran vivo. Este no es siempre el caso. Las personas que conoces aquí y las personas que alguna vez conociste son conexiones. Tienes la opción de hacer y mantener buenas relaciones en tu vida. Si haces el esfuerzo, es de esperar que estas personas se queden, a pesar de lo que te llevó a prisión.

Lo primero que debes preguntarte es si te gustaría o no mantener ciertas personas en tu vida. Tanteando lo bueno y lo malo te ayudará a tomar buenas decisiones. Eres un producto de tus propias acciones y metas. Cambiar lo que haces normalmente o cómo actúas normalmente no es lo más fácil de hacer. Ahora debes pensar en; a quién te gustaría conocer y por qué te gustaría que esa persona estuviera en tu vida.

Puedes pensar que no puedes contactar a nadie, pero todo lo que se necesita es un poco de valor y mucha humildad. Hay personas aquí que se han puesto en contacto con destacados empresarios y otras personas influyentes del mundo libre para ayudarlos a crear una vida mejor para ellos, y para el mundo al

que algún día volverán a ser parte.

Una vez que haya elegido cambiar su vida para mejor, con suerte podrá reparar las buenas conexiones que alguna vez tuvo, y reconstruir los puentes que quemó. Para hacer esto, debes tener la confianza y la capacidad para seguir adelante, lo que significa que será dueño de su pasado y de su parte en él. También significa que comunicará esto a aquellos a quienes hayas lastimado y a aquellos que elijas estar en tu vida.

Haz una lista de todas las personas que desees conocer y todas las personas que desees volver a tener en tu vida. Entonces, empieza a escribirles. Cuénteles sobre sus objetivos y lo que planea lograr, tratando de mejorarte a ti mismo mientras estás adentro. Pregúnteles si lo apoyarán o lo guiarán a conseguir su meta.

Pregúntate qué puedes hacer por ellos a cambio. Muestre su aprecio por la ayuda de ellos, su amistad y consejos. Hágales saber cuánto significan para su progreso y todas las cosas increíbles que está haciendo gracias a su ayuda. Hacer esto mantendrá esas conexiones, lo ayudará a reconstruir su comunidad y garantizará que tenga un futuro exitoso.

# In Memoriam

To eulogize:

expressing thankfulness for them and speaking well of them, which may produce a healing power or quality in the eulogizer

One may experience the rich joy and fullness of life, even in the midst of pain and suffering.

Some elements of a fulfilled life may include:

- \* **Humility.**
- \* **A pursuit for peace.**
- \* **A love for what is right.**
- \* **Pure and honest speech.**
- \* **A dislike for what is wrong.**
- \* **Loving attitude toward people.**
- \* **Non-vindictive behavior (may also include one's enemies).**
- \* **Eulogies may not include victims and/or their families.**

## Unlikely friends: Bobby Baker Eulogy

BY MICHAEL D. SELL  
FCF Contributor

I don't remember exactly when I met Bobby (that's what he preferred to be called), but I do remember his insistence that we play a game of pinochle.

Which we eventually did. I prefer to play team pinochle, as did Bobby. I prefer to tell jokes, gossip a bit, and exchange "information" about things that may or may not be happening in our facility or throughout CDOC. So did Bobby.

Bobby loved fishing. Over time, I watched my new friend deteriorate from several health complications he had prior to COVID-19, which only exacerbated them further. I'm an old soldier. Retired. Death doesn't bother me much. Truth be told, I may have seen just a bit too much of it in my time. It seemed Bobby had, too.

But I have a different outlook on life and death than most people I know. Bobby was one of the few I met who also had no fear of death.

I'm from Minnesota... land of 10,000 lakes. I grew up with a fishing pole in my hand.

Bobby loved cooking. He truly appreciated food that tasted good.

My favorite activity with my family is cooking... and eating good food. Bobby and I played our last game of pinochle about a week before he left. If you know the game, you'll truly appreciate what happened over the course of about an

hour's time.

My teammate and I had Bobby and his partner down 499 to -74. Then something happened—"Bobby's Luck." The man, over the course of six hands, proceeded to do the following: dealt himself a "150;" was dealt and saved "80 Kings;" his partner received "60 Queens" and got a "non-saver" on us; then, Bobby was dealt another "150" by me. Another non-saver. Then two more non-savers to win the game. Yeah, you heard me correctly. Bobby beat us, and he was down by 573 points. I've never seen anyone get two 150s in a single game. I probably never will again.

Before he left, I knelt down next to him and said, "Remember 499... I'll see you again, Bobby. Someday."

A few days later, one of our associates had to pass through CTCF. He said he saw Bobby, and that he didn't look good or even seem responsive. He told me he said to Bobby, "Big Mike says to remember 499, Bobby." He said Bobby smiled and nodded. But nothing more than that.

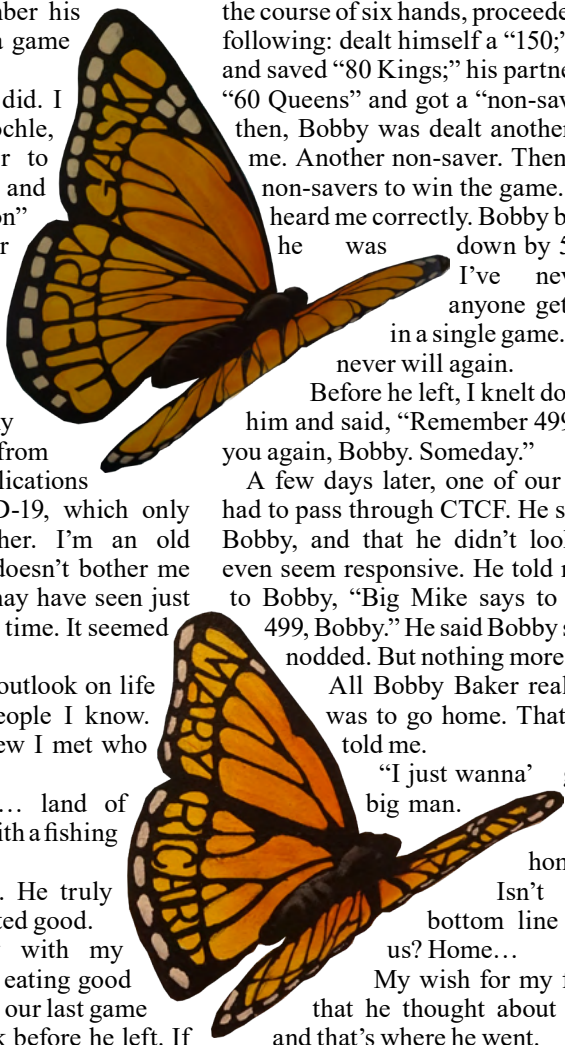
All Bobby Baker really wanted was to go home. That's what he told me.

"I just wanna' go home, big man. I just wanna' go home..."

Isn't that the bottom line for all of us? Home...

My wish for my friend was that he thought about his home, and that's where he went.

So long, Bobby. We'll meet again. Someday...



## Grandmothers

BY ANONYMOUS  
IR Contributor

Most of the magic in the world was woven into the fabric of life by grandmothers. The Kitanemuk knew this well. They made their medicine wheels with spokes to mirror the celestial weave of spider grandma.

Our tribe gathered in a lodge within this sacred realm, witnessing the magic from the rear bedroom of a double-wide. Under the stars of the high desert in western Mojave.

The sound of a Singer sewing machine thumping like a tiny foot-powered locomotive chasing a distant drum. Enchanted miniature railways cross-stitching adventure with imagination and dreams with aspirations. Her hand caressed the spinning wheel, mixing the machine's tempo with a lullaby.

She was a real life fairy grandmother... Waking from her spell

under a new cape with an iron-on talisman. It could fly down halls, leap lawns, and detach at poolside disguised as a towel. The magic that sewed Pan to his shadow was present in everything she crafted. The animal spirits of tigers, bears, puppies, and kittens woven right

cuss, it sounds like hell," she would say with a sparkle in her eye and a soft voice tuned to a piano. You could always hear the young girl that stole our grandfather's heart with a song before the Great War.

Unlimited and unconditional love for her children, their children, and their children's children. A multi-generational tapestry woven with devotion and affection. Leaving everyone interconnected like strands caught in a dream of her love.

Elsie Mae Cody is survived by tigers, bears, pirates, and princesses. She leaves puppies, kittens, softball and soccer stars, warriors, musicians, and scholars. She is survived by directors, editors, believers, and a whole new generation of weavers. She will be with us always, like her hugs.

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