

# Correctional Newsfront

The official newsletter of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections



## 2016 News ~ April to June

Week of June 27...

### Updating the Children's Playroom

At SCI Mahanoy recently, the children's playroom was updated with new tables, chairs, a flat screen television and murals painted by inmates from the Therapeutic Community Program.

The renovation began in January under the supervision of Security Lieutenant Michael Steinbauer and was just completed. Prison employees and inmates are very proud of this new, improved area for the children to utilize while they are visiting at the prison.



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## Graduation Season

On June 16, SCI Graterford held its annual graduation ceremony for inmates of the following classes: GED/ACSD, custodial maintenance, ICDL and warehouse operations. Noteworthy is the fact that six inmates graduated with degrees from Villanova University. The ceremony was held in the prison's chapel as proud families and prison employees looked on.



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## SCI Somerset's Education Department to Hold Graduation Ceremony, Academic Programs Highlight

By Susan Blazosky

With the summer semester starting, the Education Department is quite busy planning for its annual graduation ceremony, which is set for Wednesday, July 20 at 1 p.m. in the Visiting Room.

This year, we have a total of 123 graduates -- 43 completing academic programs and 80 completing vocational programs. Not all graduates participate in the graduation ceremony since some graduates have already left the facility. However, most that are here, if able, do participate.

Academic students have been busy this year working toward their High School Diplomas. Here at SCI Somerset, students have three options for completion of their High School Diplomas – the traditional General Equivalency Diploma (GED), the Commonwealth Secondary Diploma (CSD) and the fairly new Adult Commonwealth Diploma (ACSD).

The GED test is not as popular as it had been in the past. The new GED test introduced in 2014 not only changed to a computerized format from a paper-pencil

exam, but also changed slightly in structure and content going from a five-subject test to a four-subject test. The testing fee also increased, so the Bureau of Correction Education (BCE) has placed stricter testing guidelines for students to qualify to take the test. This allows for better assurance that a student is successfully prepared to take the test. Recent information from Central Office showed that for the third consecutive year, inmates in the DOC scored higher than the national average on GED tests. The DOC inmate average pass rate is 82 percent where the overall national average pass rate is 76 percent. SCI Somerset only had four students complete the entire exam to achieve their GEDs. However, we have many students taking a single GED test every month in the hope of expediting their goals toward achieving the Adult Commonwealth Secondary Diploma (ACSD).

Knowing all the changes with the new GED test that started in 2014, BCE came out with another way for inmates to achieve their High School Diplomas. It's called the ACSD program. Under this program, students can pick up where they left off in high school. The ACSD program requires 15 credits to complete. Each student needs 3 mathematics credits, 3 science credits, 3 history credits, 4 communications credits, 1 health credit and 1 career development credit. Credits that they already successfully passed from completing courses in 9th through 12th grade when attending high school will transfer to this program. They may also obtain credits by successfully passing individual GED tests. That is why many inmates choose to take some of the GED exam. For example, if an inmate needed three credits in science toward his ACSD, he could opt to take the GED science exam. If he passes, he will earn all three credits in science since the GED exam is reflective of science knowledge through the 12th grade.

Inmates may also earn credits by obtaining 10th to 12th grade equivalency levels on the Test for Adult Basic Education (TABE) and by taking the Education Department classes offered here at SCI Somerset.

Once students complete their 15 credits, they can apply for their ACSD which is issued by the PA Department of Education. We had 38 ACSD graduates this past year. This is a very high number of graduates compared to other SCI's. SCI Somerset's Education Department has been very proactive in its execution of the ACSD program since its start in 2014 and has been distinguished as a model ACSD program for other institutions to follow by BCE.

The final way a student can earn a High School Diploma is through the Commonwealth Secondary Diploma (CSD) Program. The program is similar to the ACSD program, but with two main differences. First, each inmate must be 21 or under and have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for their educational completion. The second difference is that they must complete 17 credits and a senior project presentation in order to graduate. We had one CSD graduate this past year. Many of the CSD students didn't have enough time to complete their credits by the time they reached 21. So, with the ACSD program in place, they are now able to transfer their credits to the ACSD program and continue on to graduation through that program.

Even though our vocational programs will be spotlighted in a future article, there are a great deal of graduates from these programs that keep our Education Department quite busy and deserve a quick mention. We had 22 Business Education graduates, 21 Carpentry graduates, 7 Electrical/Plumbing graduates, 7 Electrical graduates, 17 Plumbing graduates, and 6 HVAC graduates. That is a lot of knowledge and skill sets being passed along to what we hope will be future successful workforce employees.

Congratulations to all our graduates!

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## Somerset Employees Participate in FERT Training

At a recent training session, SCI Somerset's Fire Emergency Response Team (FERT) was able to use a thermal imager camera (TIC) that was furnished by the Somerset Volunteer Fire Department. What a great experience for those FERT team members that do not run with a fire department on the street.

You can see in the photos, which were taken at the Somerset County Fire Training Facility, that team members were able to check temperatures, see through the smoke and search for any personnel and/or victims in a rescue or recovery situation.

The cost for the TIC is around \$1,500. We all can be very proud of the FERT team here at Somerset they are very dedicated, well-trained caring individuals.



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## **Inmate Mail ... Something the General Public Doesn't Think About**

By Sue Darr

### **"Come Rain, Sleet or Snow.....on must the SCI Somerset mail go"**

As you enter our institution each morning, one cannot miss the friendly demeanor of our fine mailroom staff!

Introducing the most important part of our mailroom team are Tyler Foust, Mark Polaski, Caitlin Weigle and Supervisor Sue Darr. Like spokes of a wheel we work together as we support our awesome team. Each person is a valuable asset to our mailroom operation.



Our daily routine emphasizes on our priorities such as security, organization and teamwork! Security is always #1 in our daily mail processing.

Mail is processed adhering to the new DC-ADM 803, "Inmate Mail and Incoming Publications" policy that was implemented October 2015. Due to security reasons inmate mail may no longer be in colored envelopes. Several other changes were implemented with this new policy, such as no stickers, adhesives, crayons and white out.

Presently, we have three inmate runners who pick up the morning secured mailbags from the units after morning count clears. The mailroom staff then sorts all the first class letters, requests and outgoing mail. Two staff members sort all outgoing mail; one staff member processes the outgoing flats and mail on our Pitney Bowes Connect 3000 Mailing Machine. Inmate accounts will be checked for the availability of funds prior to sending out their time sensitive mail. Unit letter mail also will be logged to be sure inmates adhere to utilizing only the 8-postage free envelopes each month. All mail leaves this institution the same morning we receive it from the units.

Outgoing mail is delivered to the U.S. Post Office each morning. We pick up the incoming mail to deliver back to the institution for inspection process.

All incoming mail and property is x-rayed, marked and inspected for contraband prior to sending it to the units within the 24-hour policy period. A confiscation is issued when necessary with sufficient notification to the inmate.

All mailroom staff utilizes a Flashpoint Security light to completely visualize the seams, flaps and stamps on each envelope. Suboxone strips and K2 are the most prevalent hard contraband discovered by our mailroom inspectors.

Books are processed and inspected for contraband as well as content. If content is deemed questionable, the mailroom will send it to the institutional publication review committee for further review. The inmate will be notified on the arrival as well as decision pending.

Legal privileged mail will be opened and inspected for contraband unless it is from the courts and/or is legal mail with an Attorney Control Number from their attorney. All inmates will sign for their legal mail for accountability purposes.



Mailroom staff also screens and sends incoming and outgoing emails thru the new kiosk email system operated by contractor Global Tel Link (GTL). Our institution began utilizing this system in March 2016. Inmate families and friends may register at [www.connectnetwork.com](http://www.connectnetwork.com) to establish an account.

Family and friends must accept an agreement for each email that indicates that emails are subject to review by staff. The cost for inmates to send an email is 25 cents. It does not cost inmates anything to read an email. Emails will be delivered immediately unless they are flagged due to security concerns.

Mailroom staff screens all incoming property for inmate purchases via the x-ray machine and hands-on inspection process. All inmate property must have prior approval by R & D sergeant.

At the end of the shift all mail is placed in a secure locked mailbag. Only unit officers and mailroom staff have access.

The mail cart is delivered to the gate for the inmate to deliver to each unit for distribution.

To sum up our responsibility to our institution, Mailroom staff is a customer friendly environment that provides the public, staff and inmates with the mail service.

Most importantly, our mailroom staff is the first line of defense to ensure that no contraband enters this institution.

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Week of June 20...

## **Four PA Colleges to Receive Federal Grants Under Pilot Program to Provide Inmate Access to Higher Education Degree Programs**

Governor Tom Wolf announced that four Pennsylvania institutions of higher learning were among those selected to participate in a national pilot program to allow inmates to access post-secondary education with the goal of helping them get jobs and support families when they are released.

“More than 90 percent of the 48,000 individuals behind bars in Pennsylvania will leave prison one day,” said Governor Wolf. “It’s no secret that achieving basic literacy and completing high school are positive indicators of future success and reduced recidivism. Having a college degree or certificate in hand will give those individuals an even greater chance for successful reintegration and to become productive members of society. I thank the incredible institutions of higher learning who’ve partnered with us in this effort.”

Four Pennsylvania schools – Bloomsburg University, Lehigh Carbon Community College, Indiana University of Pennsylvania and Villanova University – were among 67 colleges and universities awarded federal grants under the U.S. Department of Education’s Second Chance Pell pilot program.

The awards will provide funding for 115 inmates at six correctional institutions to access college degree or certificate programs at the participating schools.

The \$30 million Pell pilot program is designed to test whether participation in high quality education programs increases after expanding access to financial aid for incarcerated individuals.

“With 20,000 individuals leaving our institutions every year the DOC has placed a heavy focus on reentry and removing barriers to reentry,” said Corrections Secretary John Wetzel. “For the last 22 years, college education was out of reach for most inmates who had to cover the costs themselves. Through this partnership with participating colleges and universities we can expand access to high quality education programs that will give individuals the skills they need to become tax payers rather than tax burdens.”

A 1994 Congressional change to the federal Higher Education Act eliminated Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated individuals in federal and state prisons. But the act gives the U.S. Department of Education secretary the authority to waive existing financial aid rules for experimental programs.

“This historic decision will have a lasting, positive impact on both the individuals in our correctional facilities and the commonwealth as a whole,” said Secretary of Education Pedro Rivera. “This opportunity will provide individuals with the tools they need to have a fresh start upon re-entry to society, and I congratulate the Pennsylvania colleges and universities for their partnership and progressiveness on this issue.”

A 2013 study from the RAND Corporation, funded by the Department of Justice, found that incarcerated individuals who participated in correctional education were 43 percent less likely to return to prison within three years than prisoners who did not participate in any correctional education programs. RAND also estimated that for every dollar invested in correctional education programs, four to five dollars are saved on three-year re-incarceration costs.

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## **Wolf Administration Joins Senator Vance to Support Bill Suspending Medicaid for Individuals Entering Corrections System**

Today, Wolf Administration officials joined Sen. Pat Vance (R-Cumberland/York), county commissioners, stakeholders, and advocates to support Senate Bill 1279 at the Cumberland County Prison. The bill proposes the suspension of -- as opposed to termination of -- Medical Assistance benefits, also known as Medicaid, for individuals entering the corrections system.

“For some time, I have been working to suspend rather than terminate Medical Assistance benefits for those who are incarcerated,” said Senator Vance. “Not only will this allow for a seamless transition for those with mental illness and drug addiction when they are released, but it will save money for county governments and taxpayers. I’m hopeful that the final 2016-17 budget will include this important change.”

Currently, Pennsylvania is one of 19 states in which Medicaid benefits are terminated upon entry into the criminal justice system. When an individual is released, they must reapply and reenroll for Medicaid. In addition to making it harder for the individual to obtain needed health care, termination creates an administrative burden, requiring the state to process a new application and check the person’s eligibility again.

Senate Bill 1279 proposes a temporary suspension, for a period of no more than two years, of an individual’s Medicaid. This allows people who are incarcerated to quickly reactivate their coverage upon release. Currently, 16 states follow a time-limited suspension policy.

“The Department of Human Services is committed to providing access to high-quality services and ensuring that people leaving the corrections system have access to the necessary health care coverage,” said DHS Secretary Ted Dallas. “Access to health care has proven essential to helping people avoid returning to jail or prison after release. This bill will enable the department to deliver benefits the day of release - resulting in



**Deputy Secretary for Administration Christopher Oppman speaks in support of legislation, sponsored by Sen. Pat Vance, to suspend rather than terminate Medicaid benefits when individuals enter state or county prisons. This would allow thousands of individuals returning to the community to more easily - and immediately -- access vital medications.**

maintenance of treatment, better health outcomes, and more successful re-entry into the community.”

There is currently a treatment gap for vulnerable individuals with mental illness and drug addiction leaving the corrections system. While they receive the medical help they need while incarcerated, a gap often exists upon release until a Medical Assistance application can be processed. This all too often leads to behavior that results in further incarceration, and the cycle of recidivism continues. As Pennsylvania continues to battle the opioid epidemic, providing immediate access to treatment is another way the commonwealth can combat this issue.

“This legislation is vitally important for the state corrections system and is a game changer for counties, which have large numbers of individuals entering and leaving prison every day and often don’t know until the last minute when people will be released,” said Corrections Secretary John Wetzel. “These are highly vulnerable populations and many need ongoing treatment for substance abuse disorder or mental illness. The passage of this legislation would mean thousands of imprisoned individuals at the state and county level would be able to resume their benefits immediately upon release.”

In addition to the efforts supported through this bill, DHS is ensuring individuals who were not enrolled in Medicaid prior to incarceration have immediate access to benefits, if eligible. DHS will shorten applications, provide access to electronic enrollment options in county jails and state correctional institutes, and will expedite applications for individuals released from the corrections system, currently occurring within five days.

“We’re thinking through benefit acquisition for everyone. This will put Pennsylvania ahead of the curve in terms of progressive Medicaid policies,” said Secretary Dallas.

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### **DOC Introduces Interactive Map Showing Numbers of Released Inmates by County**

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections recently posted to its website a new, interactive map allowing citizens to track the numbers of inmates released from state prison each year by committing county.

“Our agency has focused resources on a number of reentry initiatives that also are expected to reduce recidivism, such as performance-based contracts, employment initiatives and expedited enrollment in health insurance coverage,” Corrections Secretary John Wetzel said. “This interactive map can assist providers of these services to estimate the need and the number of returning citizens they can service.”

Wetzel also noted that the DOC is a leader in government transparency and said that the map supports his agency’s effort to provide information to the general public directly.

The interactive map, which is available on the DOC’s website, provides statewide release totals for the years 2013, 2014 and 2015. In addition, by clicking on individual counties, gender, race and risk score information is provided.

The risk score is a risk screening tool that was developed and is used by DOC staff to determining an offender's general risk to re-offend after his/her release from prison. According to the tool, individuals are classified as low, medium or high risk for re-offending. This helps to show the general risk composition of different individuals returning to communities.

The DOC will continue to update the map with new tabs as each subsequent year's statistical information becomes available.

Individuals can access this new, interactive map at [www.cor.pa.gov](http://www.cor.pa.gov)

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**The saving of lives continues...**

In May 2015, the DOC placed Naloxone at each of its community corrections centers (CCCs) to be used to save lives of center residents who may experience heroin overdoses. Since that time, more than 22 reentrants have been aided through the use of this drug. But the life-saving measures go even further.

Most recently, on June 16<sup>th</sup>, Wernersville CCC staff were alerted to an unresponsive individual on a bus that makes regular stops in front of the center. Three center employees – Lt. Lori Bilwin, Monitor Anthony Batista and Monitor Louis Lawrence responded to the scene and observed an unresponsive individual who had turned blue. Lt. Bilwin authorized the use of naloxone. There were minimal effects to the unresponsive individual, so a second dose was authorized.

The second dose resulted in the unresponsive individual becoming alert and talking. He was able to tell center staff his name and that he lived near the CCC.

Thanks to the quick action of all involved, a citizen's life was saved using a drug intended for center residents.

Learn more about the war on heroin/opioids by visiting the Opioid Epidemic Page at [www.pa.gov](http://www.pa.gov)

At this website you can:

- Download a naloxone standing order
- Learn how to use naloxone
- Obtain steps for First Responders Toolkit
- Find a drug take back location
- Search for care providers
- Locate county resources

 **pennsylvania**  
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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## Reimagining Prison



**JOHN WETZEL**

Secretary  
Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

On June 20, Eastern State Penitentiary officials – partnering with Vera Institute of Justice – held an event called “Reimagining prisons,” which served as a conversation among the nation’s top corrections leaders.

Experts, including DOC Secretary John Wetzel, discussed the issue of mass incarceration and concepts for

what an ideal prison system could look like and what resources would be needed to create such a system.

Moderated by Carrie Johnson a justice correspondent with National Public Radio, the event was live streamed and should be available later on Vera’s website.

Participants, in addition to Secretary Wetzel, included Michael Ashe, sheriff, Hampden County, Massachusetts; Vivian Nixon, executive director, College and Community Fellowship; and Ronald Simpson-Bey, alumni associate/JustLeadershipUSA 2015 JustLeadershipUSA LwC Fellow.

Vera Institute of Justice’s website is [www.vera.org](http://www.vera.org)

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## Smith Appointed BTS Director

In June, Tracy Smith was appointed director of the Bureau of Treatment Services. Smith has been serving as the acting director since August 2015. Prior to this position she was the chief of treatment programs in the same bureau, served as staff assistant and as specialized programs and services coordinator while working at Central Office. Prior to coming to Central Office she worked at SCI Dallas as a psychological services specialist and a psychological services associate at both SCIs Dallas and Mahanoy. She is a graduate of Kings College with a BA in psychology, and she received her Masters of Arts in psychology from Marywood University.

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Week of June 13...

## Discussing Mental Health Issues

In May, as part of Mental Health Awareness Month, SCI Camp Hill employees held a round-table discussion with several of the prison's certified peer support (CPS) specialists.

The agenda, "Building Bridges," provided a basis for meaningful conversations about administrative support, as well as communication about mental health issues at the prison. The mission and vision of the CPS program also was at the center of the discussion.

Superintendent Laurel Harry, Deputy Superintendent Kathleen Zwierzyna and key psychology staff talked about ways to improve mental health supports. The CPS's shared their experiences and recommendations for future endeavors and relayed issues/concerns, such as stigma faced by those individuals who have a mental illness. The conversation exceeded everyone's expectations; both immediate and long range goals were identified by the group. All participants left the discussion with an air of optimism and are looking forward to meeting regularly to discuss progress.



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## **Department of Corrections Secretary Wetzel Participates in White House Substance Abuse Meeting**

Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel, on June 17, joined a gathering of top national leaders at the White House for a discussion about justice-involved populations with substance use disorders. The event was hosted by the Office of National Drug Control Policy to raise awareness about the importance of including medication assisted treatment as part of a comprehensive treatment regimen in correctional settings.

"We are seeing the effects of the opioid crisis plaguing the nation and the Commonwealth play out behind the walls and we are working to respond by treating those with substance use disorders with therapy and medication assisted treatment," said Wetzel. "By addressing these issues while individuals are in prison, and developing 'warm handoff' procedures to treatment providers as they leave, we ensure the best possible outcomes when they are back in the community."

Participants included researchers, leaders from state departments of corrections, professional correctional organizations, and federal agencies involved in substance use disorder treatment programs such as the Departments of Justice, Health and Human Services, and the Interior.

Wetzel praised Governor Tom Wolf for ensuring the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections had a seat at the table at this important White House-led event. Governor Wolf has been holding roundtable discussions to talk about the importance of battling the opioid abuse and heroin use epidemic in Pennsylvania and to advocate for \$34 million to fight the opioid crisis in the final budget.

"The governor has established himself as a leader among governors in aggressively responding to the opioid crisis and laying out holistic solutions to address it," said Wetzel.

The Department of Corrections has moved rapidly to address the growing drug crisis affecting the Commonwealth. As part of its "Behind-the-Walls Treatment," the department is working to reduce criminal behaviors through individualized Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment and education for inmates to ensure successful community reintegration.

The DOC is tailoring comprehensive drug and alcohol treatment to inmates through a variety of services, including assessment, outpatient care, inpatient care and aftercare.

DOC also is conducting a pilot program using Vivitrol, a long-acting injectable form of naltrexone that blocks certain receptors to prevent a 'high' and removes the craving for drugs or alcohol.

The number of individuals entering state prisons with opioid-addiction has doubled over the past ten years, from six to twelve percent. Overall some 68 percent of inmates have substance abuse problems and more than one quarter are suffering from mental illness.

Under the Vivitrol pilot program, female inmates at SCI Muncy received an injection prior to leaving and then five subsequent injections after release.

As a result of the program's success it was expanded to include male inmates in four additional prisons.

Wetzel said there needs to be a more concerted effort to catch individuals before they end up in the criminal justice system.

"If someone comes into the emergency room or has an interaction with a police officer or is identified in school, we need to plug them into the treatment infrastructure," he said. "I think this is so different for us as a country and it signals a difference in philosophy to really focus on identifying the root cause of the crime to put someone on the path to be less likely to commit a crime."

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## Representing the DOC

In June, SCI Huntingdon sent representatives of its Honor Guard team to Pittsburgh, Pa., to participate in the Correctional Peace Officers Foundation PROJECT 2000, that spanned from June 8 to 12, 2016. The CPOF Project was established in Sacramento, Ca., in 1984 for fallen correctional staff members that were killed in the line of duty.

This year the project honored seven fallen staff members from across the United States. There were 29 Honor Guard teams from the United States and one team from Canada. Next year's 2017 CPOF Project will be held in San Francisco, Ca.



Pictured in the photo from left to right are: Lt. Sammuell Harker, Lt. Darren Dickson, Officer Brian Peroni, Sgt. Doug Crile, Officer Scott McDermitt, Officer Doug Clark and Officer Dave McMahon.

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## DOC Inmates Rank Higher than National Average on GED Test

*High School Diploma One Key to Success Upon Release*

(June 15) – For the third straight year, inmates in the Pennsylvania state prison system scored higher than the national average on GED high school equivalency tests.

Attaining higher education levels and improved vocational skills can lead to reduced recidivism. This is especially critical for individuals who entered the system lacking basic literacy skills.

“Ninety percent or more of all inmates will complete their sentences and be released one day,” said Corrections Secretary John Wetzel. “It is essential that these individuals have the tools to succeed when they are released and chief among them is a high school degree.”

So far this year 1,016 inmates have taken the test with 828 passing, for an 82 percent pass rate, compared with the national overall rate of 76 percent.

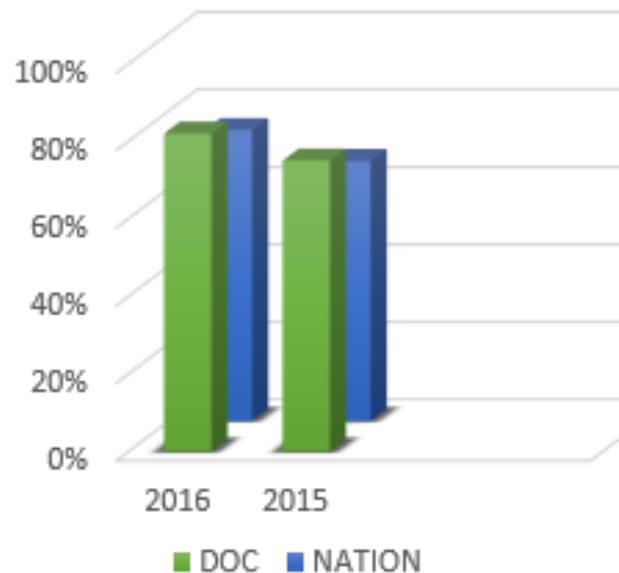
That figure shows an increase over 2015, when the Department of Corrections gave tests to 741 inmates with 555 passing for a 75 percent pass rate. The national rate in 2015 was 67 percent.

With the advent in 2014 of electronic testing, the DOC had to make extensive changes to accommodate the new system.

The DOC responded by working with its Bureau of Information Technology to ramp up systems to support this testing. With updated servers, computers, and the lab setting, all of the DOC institutions are now certified testing centers.

All corrections school principals and counselors are certified examiners for these sites, and all testing is done on-site in each prison’s education department.

### GED Passing Rates



At the same time, GED Testing Service also examined the content of the test and changed the subject areas to better conform with what was being offered to high school students.

The test now focuses on four content areas (math, science, social studies, and language/reading arts). There also are new computer-oriented features that require the test takers to create charts and graphs.

The DOC's Bureau of Correction Education provided training to DOC staff on the content and curriculum used to teach these new concepts and skills to DOC students. This new test now measures prior knowledge and understanding of content rather than simple reading comprehension.

The bureau also streamlined the qualifications to allow a student to be tested. The new test has been written at a higher learning level and is geared toward testing for college readiness.

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## **Saving Lives**

Gov. Tom Wolf today recognized law enforcement officers across the state for reaching 1,000 overdose reversals using naloxone.

CEC ADAPPT shift supervisor Setha Rajavongsack (at far left next to the map of county-by-county saves), who has performed multiple saves at the community corrections program in Reading, was on hand to represent the DOC.



Community corrections staff members, like police officers, also are on the front lines of the battle against opioid addiction.

PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED ARTICLE...

## **Saving Lives During an Epidemic**

By Susan McNaughton ~ October 2015

The heroin epidemic has reached crisis levels in our communities across our nation, and it also reaches into our community corrections centers (CCCs).

Realizing that our center staff faced the potential of dealing with heroin overdoses, and also realizing that time is of the essence when it comes to saving the life of such a person, DOC officials in May 2015 made the decision to provide each DOC-run center with Naloxone and required each contracted center to do the same. All CCC employees completed their web-based training that focused on the administration of the drug, and by May 26, the drug was in place at each center and was ready for use.

The placement of the life-saving medication in our centers is vital to helping offenders as they transition home from prison. Ninety percent of DOC offenders go home, and many have a variety of issues they have to overcome to be successful in that transition. Keeping them alive should they overdose on heroin is important. Many are still trying to overcome their addictions, and sometimes they slip up and take the drug while they are living in our centers. Should any of them overdose, we now have given this important tool to our staff.

"I liken it to the movement a few decades ago when people were working to place artificial external defibrillators (AEDs) everywhere," DOC Secretary John Wetzel said. "Today no one bats an eye when they see AEDs everywhere. They are vital in saving lives. So is this medication and its placement in our centers, where some people who are vulnerable to their addictions live while they return home from prison. It is simply the right thing to do."

Wetzel also pointed out that naloxone can be obtained by citizens from certain national drug store chains. In September, CVS announced that it was stocking naloxone on the shelves in stores in Pennsylvania and 11 other states. A prescription is not necessary. In 2014, a law allowed PA police officers, emergency response personnel and firefighters to carry the medication. Gov. Tom Wolf, also in September, encouraged all school districts to obtain the medication.

"This shows the seriousness of this epidemic," Wetzel said. "We need to place this medication everywhere that it can be used, and that includes our half-way houses."

Naloxone, also known as Narcan, is a medication that is used to reverse the effects of opioids especially in overdose. It is administered through the nose and works within several minutes. Sometimes

multiple doses are required to prevent a fatal overdose. After its use, emergency follow-up care is required at a hospital.

At what cost to taxpayers?

The DOC pays its pharmacy contractor just more than \$33 for each 2mg/ml syringe that is used as a spray and another \$8.40 for each nasal atomizer.

"How can you put a price on saving someone's life," Wetzel asked. "To pay less than \$42 to save someone... that's well worth the expense."

To date, five offenders' lives were saved throughout the DOC's community corrections system thanks to the availability of the medication.

Within the past six months and as recent as in September, ADAPPT community corrections contract facility experienced two inmate overdoses that required the use of Naloxone.

Operations Manager/Security Director Christopher Lynn was there for both cases, but speaks mostly about the most-recent incident.

Center employees, while conducting routine security checks of the center, found a female resident lying on the floor.

"She had a bluish tint to her skin and was barely breathing and barely had a pulse," he said.

Christopher said she looked exactly how the computer-based training said a victim would look.

Christopher immediately jumped into action without even thinking. He took the syringe and the nasal atomizer out of their individual sterilized wrappers and immediately gave her the initial dose.

"She was on her side, so a lot of it came back out of her nose," he said.

Staff worked to reposition the resident and tilted her head back in order to administer a second dose of ½ of the syringe amount in each nostril.

"You could hear her trying to swallow," he said.

By the time the second dose was administered, EMT and police had arrived. After the second dose, she still was not coming around and a third dose was required and administered by the EMTs.

"After the third dose, you could feel her irregular heart beat become regular and her breathing improved," Chris said. "Eventually she became combative, because that's one of the things that happens with overdose patients when you give them this medication. But you

realize that it's just their body's reaction, they aren't trying to assault you."

She was then immediately taken to the hospital for further treatment.

After treatment, the resident did return to the center and then was immediately sent to rehab for treatment. However, Christopher was able to ask her some questions. He said that she said she was scared and that she admitted to using heroin.

What advice would Chris give to anyone facing this type of situation?

"It is scary, but you have to remember that residents are people who have families," he said. "Don't second guess yourself. Do the training and then when faced with the situation just go with it... Don't think."

Christopher said the best advice he got from the EMT was this, "The drug won't hurt them, so just give it. You could save someone's life."

Christopher, who is from the Frackville, Pa., area and has several family members who work for the DOC, has worked in community corrections for five years, starting as a security monitor on second shift at Min-Sec Hazleton. He serves as the security director now at ADAPPT, which is located in Reading, Pa.

Another account of using the medication is provided to us by Harrisburg CCC Monitor Stephanie Pitts, who is the first DOC CCC employee on record as having provided the medication. Here is her account of that incident:

"On July 7, while working the metal detector, I was alerted by two offenders that there was a resident that was turning blue and unresponsive. After responding to the room, I found the offender, who was lying in a top bunk, not responsive and appeared to not be breathing.

After calling control and requesting staff assistance to the room, I checked his pulse which was almost non-existent, and he was making gurgling sounds. He was immediately carried off of the top bunk to the floor for safety precautions.

Recognizing the symptoms as a possible heroin overdose from training, I then quickly administered 2mg of Naloxone Hydrochloride into the offender's nostrils -- (1mg in each nostril). After administering the Naloxone, the offender began to get color back to his face and his pulse was getting stronger. Shortly after, EMS arrived and administered another dose of Naloxone. Once the second dose was given by the paramedics, the offender opened his eyes and began to vomit, becoming somewhat alert. He was then transported to the hospital where he stayed for three days before being released."

Pitts recalls that one of the paramedics mentioned to her that had the medication not been given when it was the offender would not have survived.

"That shows the importance of the medication," Pitts said. "Quick response and teamwork, along with Naloxone is what saved this offender's life. Had it not been for my coworkers responding quickly to assist, I'm not sure the outcome would have been the same."

Pitts, who has been a monitor at the center since May 2011, says that when it comes to someone's life at stake, you do what you can to help them.

"It's a scary situation to be a part of, but you do what you can in the moment and don't second guess yourself," she said.

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Week of June 6...

## Assisting with Critical Incident Management

In April there were two large wildfires that broke out in Monroe County, Pa. Employees from the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency (PEMA) were deployed on April 23<sup>rd</sup> to assist Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) employees with incident management duties.



SCI Fayette Lt. Matthew DeSimone and DOC Security Division Critical Incident Manager Coordinator Capt. Mark Hacherl were deployed to the scene with the Pennsylvania Incident Management Team (PIMT) on April 25<sup>th</sup>. DeSimone assisted with the logistics section and Hacherl assisted with the incident commander duties.

"We worked hand-in-hand with a federal incident management team and were deployed for four days," DeSimone said.

DeSimone said that the 16-mile fire was believed to be an act of arson. It consumed more than 8,800 acres of land.

In May, Gov. Tom Wolf met and thanked everyone from DCNR, PEMA, PIMT and all other assisting agencies who responded to the incident.

Pictured are: Capt. Mark Hacherl, Gov. Tom Wolf and Lt. DeSimone.

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## Restoring Lives

On June 8, 2016, SCI Laurel Highlands hosted a speaking event, which included a special appearance by DOC Secretary John Wetzel. The event focused on restoring lives as well as positive progression and mentoring within the walls and beyond.



The panel of speakers, shown from left to right were as follows: Jamey Luther, SCI Laurel Highlands superintendent; Dr. John Stanko, president of Purpose Quest International; Khadijja Diggs, Esq., deputy director of the Governor's Pittsburgh Office; Ryan Yoder, corrections counselor 2 and the event's coordinator; Minister Debra Germany, founder and executive director of Divine Intervention Ministries; and DOC Secretary John Wetzel.

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Reading Eagle (06/06/2016)

<http://www.readingeagle.com/news/article/corrections-secretary-john-wetzel-talks-to-reading-eagle#sthash.wWSVNkxt.q8laTY3e.dpuf>

### **Corrections Secretary John Wetzel talks to Reading Eagle**

By Karen Shuey

The words we use have meaning. And sometimes the meaning of those words can have unintended consequences.

That's the reason why the head of the state Department of Corrections has decided to scrap the terms "felon" and "offender" when discussing those who have served their prison sentence and been released.

Secretary John E. Wetzel has been in the spotlight for an essay he penned for The Washington Post recently in which he explains that demeaning words like those make the transition back to society more difficult for those trying to make better choices moving forward.

He instead thinks "re-entrant" is a more appropriate and less controversial term for former inmates.

Wetzel, who once worked as a guard and counselor at Berks County Prison, sat down with the Reading Eagle last week to discuss the attention his essay has received, why he decided to write it, why he believes in its message and how that change impacts what his department is trying to accomplish. Here's what he had to say.

### **Why did you decide to write the essay?**

It's truly the direction we've been heading as a department over the past three years as we really focus on outcomes. By outcomes, I mean wanting people to come out and not commit crimes. And beyond that we want them to come out and become good citizens. So we've been talking a lot about humanizing people who are in our system. When we treat people like "normal human beings" they tend to behave that way, and the opposite is also true. That is not a new concept. Berks County Prison was actually one of the first to adopt that philosophy.

### **Why did you decide on this policy change now?**

A few people who I served with on the Colson Task Force on Federal Corrections, a group that identified solutions that would improve the federal prison system, challenged me about the terms I was using. I thought about it and realized that they were inconsistent with what we were trying to do. Imagine you're teaching a kid and say, "You're dumb. Now get an A on this test." That's basically what we're doing by using those terms.

### **What do you think of the reaction?**

The fact that changing from saying "offender" to "re-entrant" has garnered so much attention really speaks to the state of our approach to criminal justice. I've certainly gotten some interesting comments from some folks in criminal justice, and it's really interesting to me, because I don't understand what would be threatening by the department changing our language. If 95 percent of the people who come in our front door are going to get out, I think we have an investment in them getting out and not committing more crimes. If our goal is to have less crime and less victims, I believe that setting a higher expectation for people coming out is an important part of meeting that goal. You're going to have a hard time convincing me that hanging a negative label on someone makes them less likely to commit a crime.

### **You were appointed to this post by Gov. Tom Corbett. Why do you think Gov. Tom Wolf decided to keep you on?**

Certainly, under the Corbett administration, we had success with our recidivism rates dropping to historical lows. But I think philosophically, especially as it relates to criminal justice policy, we have very similar approaches. What I've appreciated from Gov. Wolf is that he sees that what's feeding our criminal justice system is bad education outcomes and behavior health problems like mental health issues and drug

and alcohol addiction. And that's really what I've been talking about for the past five years, that corrections reform is really more about community reform.

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## Riverside CCC Reentrants Donate Seeds

During the month of May 2016, staff and residents of Riverside Community Corrections Center (CCC) collected fruit, vegetable and flower seeds for Troy Hill Citizen's Park. Troy Hill Citizen's Park has flower beds, organizes children's pumpkin patches throughout Troy Hill, and maintains a community Vegetable Garden.

The seed packets were also donated to the community of Troy Hill in Pittsburgh to help with their efforts to beautify and provide resources for community members to be able to grow healthy fresh vegetables for their own families.

This was Riverside CCC's first time donating to Troy Hill Citizen's Park, but we look forward to more opportunities to assist the community of Troy Hill and its surrounding neighborhoods.



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## Wernersville CCC Donates to Children's Home

Employees and reentrants of the Wernersville Community Corrections Center recently donated more than \$200 worth of gifts to the Children's Home of Reading (CHOR).



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## Job Well Done!

On June 2, 2016, Superintendent Thomas McGinley, Deputy Superintendent Ed Baumbach, and Majors Victor Mirarchi and Keith Tripp presented a Letter of Commendation to Corrections Officer 2 (Sergeant) John R. McLaughlin for his actions while on duty on Saturday, May 28, 2016.

While Sergeant McLaughlin was assigned to Dining Room #2 for the afternoon inmate meal, he observed an inmate hunched over and in visible sign of distress. Sergeant McLaughlin responded to the inmate, assessed him and confirmed he was choking. He immediately performed several abdominal thrusts on the inmate and dislodged the obstruction blocking his airway. The inmate was assessed by facility medical staff and returned to his housing unit without injury.



"Sergeant McLaughlin's quick response and immediate action is testament of his commitment to the corrections profession, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and SCI Coal Township," said Supt. McGinley. "It is with great pleasure that we recognize and commend him on a 'JOB WELL DONE.'"

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# Blood Drive!

Recently DOC Central Office employees participated in a blood drive. Sixteen employees donated 14 pints of blood, which is an increase from the 11 pints collected in June 2015!

According to the Central PA Blood Bank, this recent donation will help save the lives of 42 local patients!

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## Talking about Key Issues

On June 6, 2016, DOC Secretary John Wetzel addressed a group of individuals at Washington County Prison. Wetzel talked about the heroin/opioid epidemic, recidivism and mental health issues. Included in the audience were members of the county prison board, advisory board members, Common Pleas judges, district magistrates and police chiefs.



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Week of May 30...

## Addressing the PA Bar Institute

Secretary Wetzel addresses PA Bar Institute's Criminal Law Symposium. Topics included juvenile lifers, opioid addiction and reentry.

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## DOC Participation Highlighted in eNewsletter

Promoted in Eastern State Pen's June eNewsletter... DOC's Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal speaking at the launching of a new exhibit.

### Instagram Photo of the Month



@easternstate launching #prisonstoday a critical and care-filled exhibit. Shirley Moore Smeal, Exec Dep Sec PA Dept of Corrections at podium. "We need to meet people where they are. We need to have compassion." Come visit for education, engagement and empowerment to join the conversation.

Courtesy of @karenelliottgreisdorf

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## THANK YOU!

We don't often receive "thanks yous" in this line of business. Here is a recent e-mail from an inmate's wife...

*"Because my husband is being transferred out of SCI Somerset to another prison, I won't be making the trip to SCI Somerset any longer. I just wanted to pass along that the prison's staff was always very helpful and patient. I think all of the men and women that work in that area are the best, and I just wanted them to get the recognition they deserve. They work hard every day. Please let me know that someone appreciates their fair, honest and compassionate servitude."*

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## SCI Greene Names Volunteer of the Year

Erica Seaver-Engel was recently selected as the SCI Greene 2016 Volunteer of the Year.

She began volunteering in May 2014 as SCI Greene's trainer and prison puppy program liaison for Canine Partners for Life.

Twice a month she facilitates trainings with inmate and staff handlers working with puppies-in-training to reach full service dog status.

Erica also assists SCI Somerset and SCI Laurel Highlands with training classes.



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## Official Provides DOC Update

Executive Deputy Secretary Smeal (left) joined Life Esteem TV co-hosts Pastor Nathaniel Gadsden and Pat Gadsden for a discussion on the DOC, including the future of juvenile lifers, the increase in the number of female inmates and Smeal's own career path from clerk-typist to top corrections official.

The show airs on WHP-TV 21 Harrisburg at 6 a.m., June 12. It will be available on Harrisburg public access WHBG-TV Channel 20 the following weekend.

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Week of May 23...

## Kicking it for the Kids!

SCI Greene employees and their families participated in the 2nd Annual Kicking Cancer's Butt Kickball Tournament on Saturday, May 21, 2016. A total of 19 teams participated in the event, with the "Greene Team" coming in 6th place. The event raised over \$11,000 and will benefit a 6 year old Greene County boy who is battling an in-operable brain tumor.



**Pictured L-R: Row 1: Jack Zaken, Nico DiAlesandro, Mark DiAlesandro, Frankie Berarducci, Andrew Gilmore, Kelly Falcione, Courtney Vehar. Row 2: Mike Zaken, Lou Giachetti, Shelly Mankey, Jill Capra, Molly Lamp, Erin Erjavek. Row 3: Dan Caro, Rob Gilmore, Fred Waive, John Burt, Traci McBeth.**

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## PREA Auditor's Training

The Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, National PREA Resource Center held a Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Auditor's Certification Training at the Harrisburg University of Science and Technology in Harrisburg, Pa., from May 16th to May 20th, 2016.



Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal provided opening remarks to the audience. This training screened and accepted applicants from across the nation to fill approximately 85 seats. Four of our own department staff were selected among numerous applicants to attend this sought after training. The four PA DOC employees were Somerset's PCM Joseph Allen; Camp Hill's PCM David Radziewcz; Mahanoy's Unit Manager Traci Jacobson; and Office of County Inspections and Services Inspector Stephen Noll.

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## CCPM Meeting Focused on LGBTI Issues

A day-and-a-half-long, department-wide meeting for DOC corrections classification and program managers (CCPMs) was held in May.



Opening remarks were delivered by Regional Deputy Secretary Mike Wenerowicz and focused on culture change. During his remarks, Deputy Wenerowicz congratulated the CCPMs for the outstanding work they have done to ensure compliance during the first audit cycle. He also expressed optimism about the two remaining PREA audits and thanked the CCPMs for their commitment to sexual safety.

Some of the guest speakers included Dave Gaspar from the PREA Resource Center, Outreach Coordinator Kayla Houser from the PA Coalition Against Rape, TransCentral PA President Joanne M. Carroll, and SCI Chester's LGBTI Clinician and Licensed Psychologist Manager Wayne Popowski.



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## Pa. Dept. of Corrections to discard terms 'offender,' 'felon,' 'ex-con' to ease transition for released prisoners

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/true-crime/wp/2016/05/25/pennsylvania-dept-of-corrections-to-discard-terms-offender-felon-in-describing-ex-prisoners/?postshare=4121464173629934&tid=ss\\_tw](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/true-crime/wp/2016/05/25/pennsylvania-dept-of-corrections-to-discard-terms-offender-felon-in-describing-ex-prisoners/?postshare=4121464173629934&tid=ss_tw)

*The discussion started on the True Crime blog earlier this month, when Assistant Attorney General [Karol Mason announced](#) that the Justice Department's Office of Justice Programs would no longer use terms such as "felon" or "offender" when discussing those who had served jail or prison time and been released. Some thought that was [political correctness run amok](#).*

*But now the head of the Department of Corrections in Pennsylvania, Secretary John E. Wetzel, is moving toward a similar policy for his entire statewide agency. He participated in*

*a Washington Post Live panel earlier this year entitled, "Out of Jail, Into Society," in which he said, "I think it's critical that we set these individuals up for success." Here he blames himself for making that transition more difficult, in an essay he titled, "I Am an Offender:"*

**By John E. Wetzel**

Words count . . .

I've offended friends, family, coworkers, colleagues, and even thousands of people I've never met. It happens embarrassingly often. Fortunately I'm not defined by my worst day, or even by one of my "off days." Nope, not me, I'm defined by the sum of my days and my title -- Secretary of Corrections.

It's high time that I extend this courtesy to others, which is why I'm embracing "people first" language for everyone -- including those who committed a crime. Surely, the language we use more accurately defines *us* than it does those we seek to describe -- and I need to be better.

Refraining from referring to those who have committed a crime as offenders, I do not excuse their behavior or minimize the impact they've had on those they've offended, nor do I disrespect victims, by respecting those who have victimized. Rather, I acknowledge the humanity of incarcerated individuals despite their damaging behavior, and, as importantly, acknowledge their capacity to change. After all, we, all of us, are invested in the future success of those who have committed crimes. We call our system the "corrections system," and surely respect for humanity is an essential element of that.

So if we're really going to embrace rehabilitation, then we can't send re-entrants back home wearing a label that dehumanizes them -- like "offender" or "felon" or "ex-con." They (and we) already know why they're in our system. We add nothing by placing a label on a person's chest that says, "Hello, I'm an OFFENDER" other than making an already daunting task next to impossible. Frankly, negative labels work against the expectation of success and are inconsistent with what we're trying to achieve in our corrections policy - less crime and less victims. Assisting those who have committed a crime with walking a path of restoration furthers that goal. It makes us safer and makes us better.

Think about it. One of the definitions of the word "offend," means "to cause pain." While acknowledging that those who have committed a crime have caused pain, mustn't we also acknowledge the path to less communal pain is the transformation of these same individuals? If labels don't further THAT goal, then we have no business using them.

Because words count...

They count when we say "You're a failure" or "I love you" or "You are smart" or "You are worthless." They also count when we say "I respect your humanity, and I believe in your capacity to change." Proper word choice leads to proper practice which leads to better outcomes, less crime, and a better us.

When we create an inspirational narrative that also has a positive effect. So I won't keep using words that impede our goals. I know that words have the power to create significant change. The impact from words can be painful and damaging or positive and elevating. As

for me, I will be less of an offender. I will be cognizant of my word choices and the subsequent impact that they have.

If I must choose a word to describe these individuals, I choose "reentrant," a term that will be adopted in our system.

I was first challenged to think about this by my colleague, Doug Burris, the Chief U.S. Probation Officer, who spoke about the term "offender" and how it's inconsistent with expecting success. More recently, Nancy La Vigne from the Urban Institute's Justice Policy Center and the Colson Task Force, asked me to read and consider what she wrote about using "People First" language. Finally, Cynthia W. Roseberry, of the Clemency Project 2014 and the Colson Task Force, challenged me to understand that the path to redemption really starts with valuing an individual's humanity and validating their hope for a second chance and only then can we achieve our goal to lower recidivism.

At the end of the day, everything they said is consistent with the direction we're headed. Absent a value shift, corrections reform will always come up short.

Consider this a value shift.

I want my marker, my legacy to meet football coach Herman Edwards' imperative, that "our words and our life match." A truism is that once a word is said, it can't be taken back, much like the effect wine has after being spilled on a white shirt, a stain that ...

We all have a choice to make. Me? I'll choose to elevate. In the words of T.S. Eliot, "Between the idea and the reality falls the shadow." Let's all walk out of this shadow together.

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## Lt. Meyer Speaks at Congressional Briefing

On May 24, 2016, SCI Muncy's Lt. Virgil Meyer addressed members of Congress about the importance of Mental Health First Aid.

Mental Health First Aid is an evidence-based education program that helps the public identify, understand, and respond to signs of mental illnesses and substance use disorders. The training presents an overview of mental health and addiction



disorders in the U.S. and introduces participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems, and builds understanding of their impact. Perhaps most importantly, the instruction teaches a five (5) step action plan for making referrals to mental health care when needed.

He was joined at the briefing by fellow presenters: Alyssa Fruchtenicht, School-Based Mental Health Coordinator, UnityPoint Health (Iowa); Michael Allora, Deputy Chief, Clifton Fire Department (New Jersey); and Tousha Paxton-Barnes, U.S. Army veteran, 82nd Airborne Division (Texas).

Meyer is a 10-year veteran of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections. He began his career as a corrections officer at the State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Frackville and later served three years as a training instructor/sergeant at the DOC's Elizabethtown Training Academy. In 2013, he promoted to lieutenant at SCI Muncy – one of the DOC's two female prisons – where he works the 2 to 10 p.m. shift working posts in all of the facility's various mental health units and infirmary. He also serves as a trainer for the DOC's Crisis Intervention Team training initiative that provides advanced mental health training to DOC employees who work closely with mentally ill or intellectually challenged inmates.

Here's what Lt. Meyer said:

*"Good afternoon. My name is Virgil Meyer and I have been a corrections officer with the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections for the past 10 years. Since 2013, I have been working in Muncy at one of the state's two female prisons, specifically in the mental health unit and the infirmary. I am also a trainer for our system's Crisis Intervention Team as well as Mental Health First Aid instructor.*

*Many people do not know that more than two thirds of inmates have a mental illness, are addicted to drugs or alcohol, or both. In fact, more people with behavioral health conditions are in jails and prisons than in hospitals, making our correctional system the largest inpatient care provider in the country.*

*In my 10 years as a corrections officer, I have witnessed many changes. The biggest change has been in our approach to dealing with inmates who have a mental health diagnosis. At the direction of Governor Wolf and with support from the Secretary of Corrections, John Wetzel as well as the National Council for Behavioral Health, every Pennsylvania Department of Corrections employee – more than 15,000 individuals -- has been trained in Mental Health First Aid. And all new employees receive the training as part of the basic training curriculum.*

*As you might imagine, working in the mental health unit of a state correctional institution is stressful and challenging at times. Mental Health First Aid training has changed the way we do our job.*

*In the past, we might not have recognized the signs of a mental health crisis – even within the mental health unit. An inmate that refused to cooperate*

*with instructions might have been seen as simply being non-compliant, making a conscious choice not to follow an order. For an inmate that is hallucinating or experiencing some kind of psychosis for example, they are not in a position to follow orders. But we were not trained to see it that way. Instead, non-compliance becomes a disciplinary issue and the response would have been some form of punishment. The inmate would likely have been put in a more restrictive environment. When that happens, any mental health treatment that inmate was receiving would have been halted until they were transferred back to their unit. In addition, they would be cut off from any other programs they were a part of, including education or job training as well as drug and alcohol treatment. And because it was a disciplinary matter, their parole date could be affected.*

*Today, because of our training, we respond very differently. Rather than using a very authoritative, "command and control" style with an inmate experiencing a mental health crisis, we begin with a more compassionate and empathetic approach. Our officers are trained to tell the difference between non-compliance and an inmate who cannot follow orders because they are in crisis. We let them know we understand they may not be able to control themselves. We listen more so that we can understand what is happening. We de-escalate the situation so they do not feel threatened. Doing so reduces the need for force, which is better for everyone – inmates and corrections officers.*

*The inmate may still need to be moved to a safer environment, but not as part of a disciplinary response. They will continue to receive mental health treatment regardless of where they are located. And we work to make sure they can continue to participate in necessary programs.*

*Corrections facilities are not factories and we cannot deal with people in a one-size-fits all, black and white manner. We have to work with inmates as individuals. And for those with mental health issues, we are part of their treatment. We observe them, we interact with them, we see changes in their behavior and can report those changes to the treatment team quickly so they have a complete picture of the inmate's health. Part of our job is to have compassion and empathy, something you might not expect from a corrections officer. But our goal is to help people receive the necessary treatment while they are in our care and complete their service in a timely way so they can get out. Mental Health First Aid has given us important tools – how to talk, how to stand, what questions to ask, how to listen, how to evaluate a situation – and with those tools we can do our job better while keeping everyone safe.*

*Mental Health First Aid also helps us as individuals. Many corrections officers are military veterans. I served for 13 years as an active duty Marine with the Pennsylvania Army National Guard and I was deployed to Afghanistan. When I came home, I went back to work very quickly, without much time to decompress and think about what I experienced during my deployment. This is true for a lot of my peers. We jump back into civilian life and we put our problems on the back burner. With Mental Health First Aid training, we are*

*better equipped to help each other. This job is tough, no doubt about it. And we are a family, we take care of each other and when one of my colleagues is suffering, I know how to help them. I know how important it is to tell them they are not alone and that it's ok to ask for help.*

*I wish that every corrections officer could receive Mental Health First Aid training. I believe that our corrections system would be better because of it – the inmates would benefit, the officers would benefit and ultimately our communities would benefit. I want to thank my shift commander Capt. Curham for her support and allowing me to attend training. I also want to thank my Superintendent Robert Smith and Superintendent Marirosa Lamas for the opportunities and their support as well. And of course, I want to thank you all for taking the time to be here today to learn about this important program."*

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## **Boots on the Ground**

On May 25, Ms. Venus Azevedo-Laboda gave a heart-wrenching personal account to staff and inmates at SCI Mercer on why she founded Boots on Ground (BOG) and her struggle with PTSD. Two sessions were held with 130 inmates and 24 staff in attendance. Although Ms. Azevedo-Laboda is not a combat veteran, her brother was, and she was literally outside the door to his house when he killed himself. Through this experience, she suffered the same symptoms as anyone else experiencing such a life-changing event.



Founded in 2014 in Erie, Pa., by veterans and family members, Boots on Ground is passionately dedicated to helping veterans and their families who are struggling and living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) by linking them to vital local, state, and national agencies. These agencies offer mental health support, drug and alcohol treatment, and grief counseling. BOG offers many services to veterans and their families, such as educational programs, training in suicide prevention, and providing peer support. They connect veteran families to funding, support, and resources after their loved one has taken his or her own life. BOG is also committed to working within the veteran prison population for those struggling with PTSD and other mental health related issues.

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## **DOC Announces Plans to Close Allentown Community Corrections Center**

Due to recently-announced plans involving the building in which the Allentown Community Corrections Center (CCC) is located, Department of Corrections officials this week announced plans to close the center, which employs 16 individuals and houses approximately 90 residents.

“Over the next several months, we will focus our efforts on closing the center. During this time, the Department will work cooperatively with the respective unions, and employees will be offered jobs elsewhere in the system. Residents will be transitioned to their new locations,” Corrections Secretary John Wetzel said.

DOC officials anticipate the center’s closing will be completed by August 31, 2016.

The DOC will work with center employees and the unions on placement options and will offer all employees jobs.

A majority of residents will be transferred to the Lehigh County Prison’s Work Release facility, while others may be transferred to centers located within the region, such as Scranton or Wernersville, or, upon review and approval, may be released by the PA Board of Probation and Parole to their home plans.

In operation in Allentown since 1974, the Allentown CCC has operated from its current location of 608-610 Hamilton Mall since 1985.

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Week of May 16...

## **DOC highlights Pathways unit at Wernersville CCC**

*Facility aimed at helping those with serious mentally illness transition from prison to society*



As part of Mental Health Awareness Month, Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel on May 17, gave an overview of mental health services provided by a unique facility within the corrections system.

The media event and tour at Wernersville CCC/Pathways Transitional Wellness Center focused on highlighting treatment programs for those with serious mental illness who are preparing to return to the community.

Pathways, which opened last year, is the first and only state-run facility solely dedicated to helping offenders with serious mental illness re-enter society.

“We are proud of our efforts to address the behavioral health needs of those who are incarcerated in Pennsylvania,” said Corrections Secretary John Wetzel. “We anticipate that Pathways Transitional Wellness Center will become a model facility for other states.”

Wetzel was joined by DOC Mental Health Advocate Lynn Patrone and Pathways Transitional Wellness Center Director David Kopinski.

“With fully one-quarter of all of those entering prisons in Pennsylvania diagnosed with mental illness and nine percent of those struggling with serious mental illness, it is imperative that the department develop the best possible programming to help them succeed when they return to the community,” Wetzel said.

Residents at Pathways receive all the resources they need to succeed in one supportive environment. A committed staff of counselors, social workers, psychiatrists, psychologists, and peer support specialists work with residents to provide a range of services such as mental health and substance abuse counseling.

The center also offers educational opportunities and employment counseling and facilitates job opportunities while residents are in the program.

Following the information session, reporters toured the facility and spoke with residents.

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Coverage of this event...

The Philadelphia Inquirer (05/18/2016)

[http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20160518\\_Helping\\_mentally\\_ill\\_inmates\\_find\\_their\\_way\\_home.html](http://www.philly.com/philly/news/20160518_Helping_mentally_ill_inmates_find_their_way_home.html)

Helping mentally ill inmates find their way home  
By Stacey Burling

WERNERSVILLE - When Henry Hamm, a 61-year-old Lancaster man who has schizophrenia, finished serving time for writing a bad check, he was sent to a new

program designed to help offenders with serious mental illnesses rejoin the outside world.

He joined Pathways Transitional Wellness Center, which connects mentally ill parolees to social and medical services, housing, and jobs before they try to make it on their own.

Three months later, he's a fan of the nine-month-old Department of Corrections program, which is housed in a boxy, utilitarian building on the grounds of Wernersville State Hospital, about nine miles southwest of Reading.

"If you give into this and do what they say, you'll come out a winner," Hamm told a small group of reporters who were invited to tour the facility Tuesday.

Pathways is the first halfway house of its kind in Pennsylvania run by the Corrections Department, although contractors offer less-comprehensive programs. The state runs 14 transitional programs and contracts out almost 50 others. Ten of those, including five in the Philadelphia area, accept severely mentally ill offenders.

Officials hope Pathways will become a model of broader services for a population in need of more help.

John Wetzel, secretary of the Department of Corrections, said Pathways is part of his department's response to a report four years ago that faulted the prison system for placing too many mentally ill inmates in solitary confinement, making them even sicker. "Those allegations were 100 percent accurate," he said.

Since then, the state has stepped up efforts to identify inmates with mental illnesses and provide care for them, Wetzel said. They tend to stay in prison longer than healthier peers, and are more likely to have alienated the friends and family members who could help them after their release.

This year, the department plans to work with a county to examine how gaps in community services are contributing to the arrests of people with mental illnesses.

About a quarter of the state's 50,000 inmates have a mental illness. Eight percent have the most serious diagnoses: schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, and major depression. Pathways serves that group. It is meant for parolees returning to six nearby counties - Berks, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Northampton, and Schuylkill.

The 32-bed program has parole officers and counselors on site. It operates under the recovery model, the idea that people with serious mental illness can get better. Residents can sign up for Medicaid while there. Their time at Pathways is structured and their reentry is slow, an approach that Wetzel said has proven effective for high-risk offenders.

Residents share dorm-like rooms and a big activity area with an overhead TV, hard plastic chairs, and a ping-pong table. During the tour, some were attending a discussion on accepting their diagnoses and the need for treatment. Inspirational posters lined the wall. "Anger makes you smaller," one declared. "We should not let our fears hold us back," said another.

David Kopinsky, who directs Pathways, said many residents are nervous about going home after years behind bars. Employees of outside programs come to Wernersville to meet them, easing their fears. The expectation is that most will stay from six months to a year. About 60 percent of the residents, who are allowed to leave the grounds for five to eight hours a day, have jobs.

Three residents picked by the program praised their care and said they expected to get adequate help when they leave.

Joseph Rivera, 37, of Schuylkill County, said he was proud of his restaurant job. "They help you, but they don't spoon-feed you," he said. "You've got to go out and get it."

Jeremy Gordon, 33, who was in prison for theft and struggles with depression, said the program's structure "makes it a lot easier for me to stay sober and stay clean."

Gordon, a Wernersville native who was addicted to opioids, said he has not been able to work because of health issues, but hopes to one day become an addictions counselor.

"Even if I can help one person not end up like I did, that's worth it," he said.

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Allentown Morning Call (05/18/2016)

<http://www.mcall.com/news/nationworld/pennsylvania/mc-state-prison-mental-illness-halfway-house-tour-20160517-story.html>

State touts reentry program for seriously mentally ill inmates  
By Riley Yates

As a state prison inmate with serious mental illness, 61-year-old Henry Hamm represents one of the biggest challenges that Pennsylvania's corrections system faces.

Hamm, who is serving a 2- to 4-year sentence in Lancaster County for felony theft, is diagnosed with schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Too often, the extra hurdles he faces would make his time as a prisoner a difficult one, and one in which he risked returning to the streets no better able to cope with his problems than when he left.

Enter a first-of-its-kind program at a halfway house run by the Department of Corrections on the campus of Wernersville State Hospital, roughly 10 miles west of Reading.

A 32-bed initiative that opened in October, the program seeks to transition mentally-ill inmates nearing parole back into their communities by helping them tie into local social services, find housing and jobs, and get the medications and therapy they require.

"Of all the places I've been to, they really care, the counselors and the staff," Hamm told reporters Tuesday during a tour of the Pathways Transitional Wellness Center. "It's not a paycheck for them."

Pennsylvania's prison system has long fielded criticism for how it treats mentally-ill inmates, culminating in a recently-closed civil rights investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice into the overuse of solitary confinement for inmates with serious mental illness.

Alongside that, the state was sued federally by Disability Rights Pennsylvania over the same issue, settling in 2015 when it agreed to phase out solitary confinement for the seriously mentally ill, while establishing special disciplinary units to provide them more treatment and more time outside their cells.

The allegations were that segregating prisoners with mental illness was actually making them worse, Corrections Secretary John Wetzel said.

"Those allegations were like 100 percent accurate, so we've spent the past three years ... really re-engineering our mental-health facilities," Wetzel said.

Wetzel spoke as he and other corrections officials touted the Wernersville Community Corrections Center's new program as a part of the system's new face. He cited statistics showing that 27 percent of the state's nearly 53,000 prisoners have mental illness, with 8 percent identified as seriously mentally ill.

Those inmates are more likely to serve a greater portion of their sentences before winning release, and to "max out" their terms by spending the entirety of them behind bars, Wetzel said.

"Not only is that not good policy or good practice, it just ain't right," Wetzel said. "So we really wanted to find a good way of re-entering this challenging population back into the community."

The transitional center serves inmates who are from the counties of Berks, Schuylkill, Lehigh, Northampton, Lebanon and Lancaster. Officials said it could prove a model for expanded efforts at halfway houses across the state.

The center offers residents access to counselors, social workers, psychiatrists and addiction specialists. Residents are permitted to leave the grounds for appointments, jobs and other planned activities, with their hours expanded as they show progress. Several times a day, support group meetings are offered to help residents cope with the stresses they face.

Residents live in pairs in Spartan dorm-style rooms that are not locked. There's a common area with a television. Motivational posters and artwork line the walls.

"We make sure that once they go to the street, we're not just leaving them high and dry," said center director David Kopinski. "We don't want to put them completely on their own [with] no services provided to them."

Of those residents who are not on Social Security disability, 60 percent have secured work, Kopinski said. Already, five residents have graduated the program and successfully returned to their communities, he said.

"It's very structured," Kopinski said. "We clean. We're up early in the morning. We're making beds, we're doing things. We're participating, and I think that structure helps individuals to get back into society."

In a telephone interview, Kelly Darr, the legal director of Disability Rights Pennsylvania, said she believes that prison officials are sincere in their desire to fix failings in how the system treats those with mental illness.

"It's only fair to say that: that they've shown commitment and effort about trying to address these situations," said Darr, whose nonprofit continues to monitor the state's compliance with the solitary confinement settlement.

Back at the halfway house, Hamm said he hopes to one day get his own apartment and get on with his life. A Vietnam War veteran, he said the program has helped him connect with services through the Veterans Administration.

Hamm said he trusts he is getting the help he needs.

"When I was outside, I wasn't listening to anybody or anything," Hamm said. "I was doing my own thing, and as usual, my own thing got me into a jam."

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Reading Eagle (05/18/2016)

<http://www.readingeagle.com/news/article/state-corrections-secretary-celebrates-success-at-wernersville-center>

Corrections secretary celebrates success at Wernersville Center

By Karen Shuey

WERNERSVILLE - Before Jeremy Gordon came to terms with his severe depression, it nearly cost him everything.

The Wernersville native was arrested three times in two years for theft and possessing drugs. Instead of taking the advice of his therapists, he chose to find a more immediate and destructive way to mask his mental illness. And those decisions landed him in jail.

"When I got incarcerated, I really didn't have a care in the world," he said. "You do something whether it's wrong or right for a long period of time and you start to feel like you're invincible. But when you go to jail, you start to better understand the consequences."

Gordon is now finding his way back to treatment. And that makes him one of the lucky ones.

Mentally ill Americans are disproportionately more likely to be arrested, incarcerated and commit another crime once released. This problem extends to the state level.

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel said about 27 percent of all inmates in the system have a mental illness and about 9 percent of those are battling severe disorders.

So to address the needs of this unique population the department launched a new program solely dedicated to helping those offenders return to the community after they have served their time.

The Pathways Transitional Wellness Center, which opened last fall at the Wernersville Community Corrections Center, is the first and only state-run facility that offers residents all the resources they need in one place. A staff of counselors, social workers and peer support specialists work with the residents to make sure they have mental health services and substance abuse counselling lined up before they head back home.

"The vision behind this was to give us time to sign these people up for medical assistance so we could do a warm pass off to whatever local behavioral health entity is in place at the county level," Wetzel told reporters during a tour of facility. "All this comes from a real simple place: We believe that every citizen in Pennsylvania is invested in individuals who come out of being incarcerated and do well."

Lynn Patrone, a mental health advocate for the Department of Corrections, said dealing with mental illness is paramount for this population of offenders since their disorders are most likely the root cause of their crimes.

"The foundation of this program is that people who have mental illness can and do recover," she said. "Our goal is to help give them the tools in that journey." Patrone said the department hopes to replicate the program at facilities throughout the state.

The program at Wernersville, funded through the Department of Corrections budget, currently has space for 32 people. To be accepted into the program, Patrone said, the participants have to meet certain requirements when it comes to the severity of their diagnosis, their level of commitment and county of residence. Only offenders from Berks, Lancaster, Lebanon, Lehigh, Northampton and Schuylkill counties are eligible at this time.

David Kopinski, director of the Pathways center, said the goal is to have residents back in their communities within six months of their release from prison. He said the program has so far been very successful for the five residents who returned home.

"It's very structured here and that helps reintegrate them back into society," he said. "They have chores, they have employment counseling, they have goals they have to meet before they can leave."

Wetzel said the model for Pathways was created as part of the department's effort to overhaul the way the state treated prisoners with serious mental illness. The overhaul followed a U.S. Department of Justice investigation into the overuse of solitary confinement on such prisoners - which violated their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

"Those allegations were like 100 percent accurate so we spent the past three years really re-engineering our whole mental health system," Wetzel said. "As a result, we really beefed up diagnosis because a lot of people were falling through the cracks and embraced the opportunity to make our system better."

Gordon said Pathways is helping him confront the reality of his condition and current situation.

"It was always easier to go out and use drugs rather than talk to someone and wait for the medicine they gave me to take affect," the 33-year-old said. "A lot of things I chose to do in my past, unfortunately, pushed a lot of people away."

Gordon said he's spent the past five months at the facility attempting to turn his life around. He speaks about his illness with therapists, he attends group programs, he thinks about how he can rebuild his relationships and he plans for his future.

The father of two said he just finished applying for financial aid so he can go back to school. He said his goal is to become an addiction counselor.

"I think I can show other people that it's possible to come through addiction if you work on getting yourself better first," he said. "If I can help one person not end up where I did, then it will all be worth it."

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## Retreat Gets DIRTY!!

On May 7, 2016, SCI Retreat had a team of female employees participate in the Dirty Girl Mud Run - a mud run that benefits breast cancer research. The Dirty Girl Mud Run is a 3.1-mile, 14-obstacle muddy event that took place at Montage Mountain. The staff was challenged to climb, jump, crawl, slide, through the muddiest mud ever. Participants took the course at their leisure, it's not a 'race' in the traditional sense.

Retreat's team shared a ton excitement, laughter and camaraderie - It's a day they will never forget!



Week of May 9...

## DOC Highlights Mental Health Services

On May 10, DOC officials, at SCI Benner Township, provided news media representatives with an overview of mental health services and a tour of the prison's Residential Treatment Unit.

"For the past several years, the employees of this agency have worked hard to enhance and improve the mental health services delivered to our inmates," Corrections Secretary John Wetzel said. "Some of the changes were the result of a settlement with the Disability Rights Network, while other changes had already been in progress because it was the right thing to do. As part of Mental Health Awareness Month, we believed it was a perfect opportunity to showcase some of our accomplishments in this area."

At today's event, DOC Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal provided a general overview of the DOC's statewide services. In addition the DOC's Mental Health Advocate Lynn Patrone spoke about her role in ensuring individuals receive appropriate care and services, and SCI Benner Township Superintendent Tammy Ferguson discussed services specific to her prison. Following the overview, a tour of the prison's residential treatment unit was provided, along with interviews of employees and inmates who work and live in that unit.

Twenty-six percent of the DOC's inmates are receiving some level of mental health services; while eight percent are seriously mentally ill.

"We have devoted time and resources to training staff and developing best practices," Wetzel said. "Pennsylvania is proud to be a national leader in these and many other initiatives to make our facilities better and safer."



**Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal, speaking to reporters, highlights mental health programs in prisons. "We are setting a standard the nation can follow."**

To learn more about mental health services, [visit the DOC's website](#).



PA DOC Mental Health Advocate Lynn Patrone discusses her typical day visiting prisons to address issues of those with mental illness. With SCI Benner Township Superintendent Tammy Ferguson, DOC Director of Office of Psychology Dr. Robert Marsh and Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal.

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## **GO-TIME: Department of Corrections Saves \$500,000 by Reducing Inmate Transportation Costs**

*By consolidating similar medical treatment cases, resources are used more effectively*

The Department of Corrections is saving more than \$500,000 a year in transportation costs by temporarily relocating inmates receiving radiation treatment to a single facility.

"Here is another example of how my administration is making government more efficient and saving taxpayer dollars," Governor Wolf said. "From our prisons to our mailrooms, we're focused on changing the way business is conducted to assure

taxpayer dollars are spent wisely, redundancies are eliminated and customer interactions – in-person, online and by phone – at all levels are improved.”

In 2015, the DOC began consolidating inmate radiation treatment cases at the State Correctional Institution at Somerset.

Relocating inmates from throughout the DOC to this prison during the course of their radiation treatments reduces the costs associated with transporting inmates to various medical facilities across the state.

Through an agreement with Somerset Hospital, DOC inmates are transferred from other state prisons to SCI Somerset where they are then transported - on an out-patient basis - to the local hospital to receive their radiation treatments, resulting in a cost savings for taxpayers.

“DOC officials again prove that government works and that it works at saving taxpayer money. This consolidation of inmates uses DOC resources, specifically transportation officers and vehicles, more efficiently,” Corrections Secretary John Wetzel said. “It is so effective that we have already achieved an annual net savings of \$528,600.”

This initiative was one of several concepts submitted by the DOC to the Governor’s Office of Transformation, Innovation, Modernization and Efficiency (GO-TIME), created by Gov. Tom Wolf in 2015. GO-TIME leverages inter-agency coordination and collaboration to maximize efficiency, modernize state government operations and provide the highest quality services.

Dr. Paul Noel, clinical services director for the DOC’s Bureau of Health Care Services, and his staff identified the savings and partnered with SCI Somerset Superintendent Trevor Wingard and his employees, Wetzel said.

“I am extremely proud of our employees who are committed to providing appropriate care to our inmates in a fiscally responsible way,” he said.

DOC staff reviewed all off-site trips for this specific medical treatment and determined that housing inmates at one facility would improve efficiencies and reduce transportation costs.

Between April 2015 and April 2016, 491 inmates were treated at SCI Somerset. By moving a number of cases to SCI Somerset, officials discovered that the number of trips could be reduced through consolidation, and the need for lengthy trips would be reduced. Some trips were averaging 4½ hours in length due to the location of the prison from the medical facility.

GO-TIME works with agencies, boards and commissions to identify opportunities to share resources, collaborate and engage employees in transformation. GO-TIME also seeks partnerships with external entities to bring new ideas and best practices into state government.

To date, GO-TIME has identified over 200 projects with cost savings and other benefits, putting the office well on its way to meeting Governor Wolf's goal of saving \$150 million in the 2015-16 fiscal year. Pennsylvanians can track GO-TIME's progress at <https://governor.pa.gov/go-time/>.

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## **Albion Employee Named CEA Teacher of the Year**

At a recent chapter conference of the Correction Education Association, SCI Albion's Custodial Maintenance Vocational Instructor Mike Danch was named Educational Staff Member of the Year.

Danch was a 2015 Department of Corrections Outstanding Performance Award recipient.

Danch's former careers as a teacher and a journeyman carpenter made him a natural fit at SCI Albion as a custodial maintenance vocational instructor.



When Danch joined the Department of Corrections in 2004, he was asked to develop a vocational program that would provide meaningful employment skills for men without a high school education.

His enthusiasm for his work is notable and contagious, as is his genuine interest in assisting men to become responsible and productive members of society.

Danch demonstrates integrity and a strong work ethic, which his students recognize and emulate, and he does so in a safe, conscientious, security-minded fashion.

His program has been such a success, that it has been recognized as a model for other institutions. Danch has been asked to join the steering committee to develop standardized curriculum guidelines for programs at other state institutions.

Meanwhile, Danch continues to expand his program to provide additional employment skills for his students in a variety of other areas of building and grounds, as well as custodial maintenance.

In addition to his classroom instruction, Danch serves as the local bargaining unit representative for the Correctional Institution Vocational Education Association and on both the suicide prevention and safety committees.

Danch earned two separate bachelor's degrees from Penn State University in elementary education and health education, as well as vocational teaching and education development certificates from Indiana University and Wilkes University, respectively.

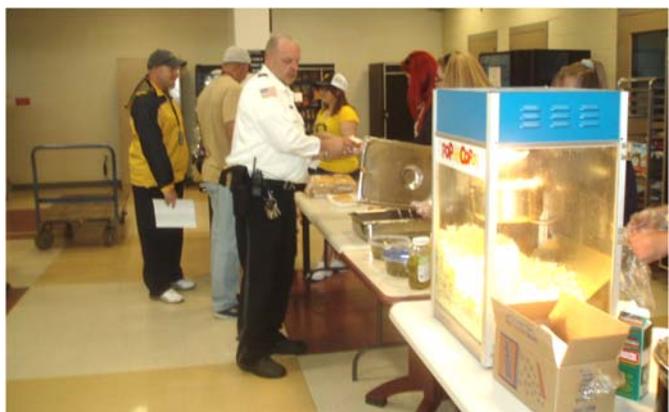
He also earned credits from then Community College of Allegheny County while serving a four-year apprenticeship as a carpenter in Erie.

Outside of work, Danch is very active in his church, including volunteering as a religious education teacher, youth group leader, parish council president and Eucharistic Minister. He also volunteers with community youth athletic activities.

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### **Pirates Baseball Picnic**

On April 27, SCI Fayette's Empowerment Committee and Employees Association sponsored a Pirates Baseball Picnic. Non-uniformed employees were permitted to wear their favorite baseball shirt and hat to work. Uniformed staff was permitted to wear their favorite baseball team hat. Staff on all three shifts were served hot dogs, nachos w/cheese and popcorn. A raffle was held with all proceeds being sent to a local domestic violence shelter.



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### **AHA Donation**

Recently, SCI Fayette employees held a fundraiser to benefit the American Heart Association that resulted in more than \$873 being collected.

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### **Celebrating Corrections Employee Week**

SCI Mercer

A collage of images and text related to Corrections Employee Week. It includes several small photographs: one of a person in a uniform, one of a group of people, and one of a person holding a certificate. There are also several paragraphs of text, some of which are partially obscured or blurry. The overall theme is celebrating the staff of SCI Mercer.

CE Week Cookout

On May 5, SCI Mercer employees were treated to a cookout in honor of Corrections Employee Week. The prison's Employee Association (EA) provided the hot dogs, hamburgers and buns for this event for all shifts. Management staff did the cooking, and the Morale Committee provided the fresh-squeezed lemonade. The EA also provided the fixings for the "Make Your Own Sundae" bar on Tuesday. Officials would like to give a "shout out" to Randy Rickert, EA president, and the EA committee for their extra efforts during Employee Week.



Wernersville CCC

The director of the Wernersville Community Corrections Center Building #27 – Theresa Granville – showed her appreciation of her center staff by providing employees with goodies all week long. Here are some items she gave:



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Week of May 2...

## **Lt. Governor Mike Stack Visits Quehanna Boot Camp**

On May 2, 2016, Lt. Governor Mike Stack, his Chief of Staff Matthew Franchak and Board of Pardons Secretary Mavis Nimoh visited the Quehanna Boot Camp.

The group toured the facility and received information on reentry initiatives, educational classes such as GED and Adult Commonwealth Secondary Diploma, and vocational classes which include fiber optics and OSHA.

Lt. Governor Stack and Secretary Nimoh had an opportunity to speak with individuals regarding their experience at Quehanna in both the boot camp and State Intermediate Punishment (SIP) programs.

Following the tour, Lt. Governor Stack served as the keynote speaker for the Boot Camp graduation ceremony. The graduating platoons were comprised of 44 males and 3 females. Lt. Governor Stack spoke to a total of 216 offenders and approximately 75 family and friends of the graduating individuals. He offered words of encouragement recognizing the struggles we all face but emphasizing to never give up. He expounded on some adversities and disappointments he has overcome and triumphed.

The Quehanna Boot Camp greatly appreciates the visit from Lt. Governor Stack and thanks him for the support he has offered.

Since the beginning of the boot camp program in June 1992, approximately 8,197 individuals have successfully completed the program. Approximately 3,319 individuals completed phase 2 of the SIP program at Quehanna Boot Camp since 2005.

To learn more about State Intermediate Punishment, visit the DOC's website at [www.cor.pa.gov](http://www.cor.pa.gov)



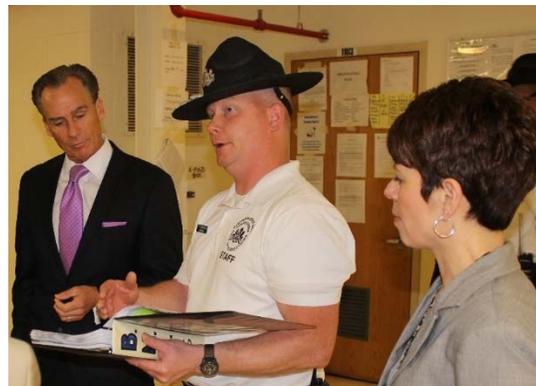
Pictures from Lt. Gov. Mike Stack's Visit:



Discussing ACSD program with Adult Basic Education Teacher Michael McCombs.



Learning about female Boot Camp with Unit Manager Ellen McMahon.



Discussing managing inmate behavior with Unit Manager Clint Youngfleish in male Boot Camp housing unit.



Discussing State Intermediate Punishment (SIP) program with CCPM Stover and Superintendent Natoli in male SIP housing unit.



Boot Camp platoons marching in for graduation ceremony.



Graduating platoon marching in for ceremony.

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## Celebrating Success

By Tara A. Marhefka, Corrections Counselor 2, SCI Pine Grove

It is always fun to celebrate a successful service dog team, and last night was no exception!

We welcomed Dan and Suzy Keller and their daughter, Danielle, to join us to present Somerset with her "big girl" working vest and their Team Certification to Paul and Erik Muffuletto (great smile Erik).

As you can see by the picture below, those smiles say it all.

Congratulations to Erik and Somerset for passing their Public Access Test and now being a Certified Team.



Somerset, as some may remember, was raised by inmate handlers at SCI Pine Grove through our first prison program, TAILS, and the Keller's were her sponsor!!!

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## Mercer's Rev. Ohl Retires

On May 6, 2016, Rev. William Ohl retired as SCI Mercer's facility chaplaincy program director (FCPD). He began his DOC career at SCI Mercer in January 1996 and has served as the facility's FCPD for the last 20+ years.

Employees shared a cake and many great memories with Rev. Ohl, along with the reading of an original poem by Rev. John Finkbeiner. The prison's Morale Committee presented Rev. Ohl an SCI Mercer challenge coin and a certificate in honor of his retirement.



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## Waymart Achieves Accreditation!



Left to right: Regional Deputy Secretary Michael Wenerowicz, Deputy Superintendent Paul DelRosso, Deputy Superintendent Ronda Ellett, Clerk Typist 3 Christine Altemier and Superintendent Jack Sommers.

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## Barry Smith Named SCI Houtzdale Superintendent

Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel has named Barry Smith as superintendent of the State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Houtzdale. Smith, whose appointment was effective April 24, 2016, replaces Ken Cameron, who retired after many years of DOC service.

"Barry originally began his career at SCI Houtzdale and now he returns to that prison as its superintendent," Secretary Wetzel said. "The facility is undergoing a number of changes and improvements, and I am confident in his leadership abilities. Barry is the right man to lead Houtzdale into the future."

Raised in Indiana, Pa., Smith graduated from United High School and later attended Indiana University of Pennsylvania. He also served in the United States Navy (serving in the Persian Gulf War). He joined the United States Army reserve and served in both Operations Iraqi and Enduring Freedom. He retired from the military in 2013 with 22 years of service.

Smith began his corrections career as a corrections officer in 1995 at SCI Houtzdale. Over the years he rose through the ranks having served as sergeant, lieutenant and captain. In 2013, Smith was named major of the guard at SCI Albion. In 2015, he was appointed deputy superintendent for facility management. He then transferred to SCI Camp Hill as deputy superintendent for facility

management and held that position until his appointment as superintendent at Houtzdale.

He has been a member of the DOC's Corrections Emergency Response Team (CERT), has been a regional Corrections Rifle Specialist Team (CRST) member and served as a regional Hostage Rescue Team (HRT) member.

In addition to his DOC duties, he served as a municipal police officer with multiple jurisdictions in both Indiana and Cambria counties.

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## **Heroin Epidemic & the DOC**

Over the past 10 years, the number of individuals coming into the state prison system already addicted to opioids has increased from 6% to 12%, or about 2,400 of our 20,000 new receptions each year.

"This fact led us to start our [Vivitrol Project](#), even though we have good programs in our prisons and connections to good drug and alcohol programs in the community," DOC Secretary John Wetzel said.

Wetzel said that the Medication Assisted Treatment initiative added another layer to how we help addicted individuals.

"The Vivitrol Project started with a smaller group of women who were returning to certain counties. They received the first injection while in prison. We signed them up for Medical Assistance, which then paid for each monthly shot after they were released from prison. We were seeing successful outcomes and decided to expand the project," Wetzel said.

In addition to expanding the project – learn more on our website – the DOC is studying the results. The study consists of half of the volunteers getting the actual drug and the other half not receiving it. We will study their success upon release from prison.

The purpose of Vivitrol is to remove the barrier some individuals face – it removes the craving for opioids. This intervention, along with cognitive behavior therapy is very promising.

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## **Corrections Department Reaches Milestone in Crisis Intervention Team Training**

*Program aimed at improving response to prisoners with mental health needs*

Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel announced that 1,000 prison staff members have received Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training aimed at improving response to inmates with mental health needs.

"We have made significant improvements to our mental health services and key to all of the services being successful is how our employees respond to a mental health crisis at the onset," Secretary Wetzel said. "We need to be able to respond quickly and appropriately when a mental health crisis happens. Doing so helps to ensure proper care de-escalates a situation so that potential violence and harm to inmates or prison staff is averted."

All 26 state prison superintendents finished their training last week.



One quarter of all inmates in Pennsylvania prisons suffer from mental illness, while eight percent of those have severe forms of mental illness.

"Twenty thousand people leave our prisons every year and we want them to return to their communities healthier than when they arrived," said Wetzel. "Increasing the level of staff training on mental health issues is one important step toward achieving that goal."

The training program is part of a system-wide initiative to place an inmate's mental health at the forefront of treatment in prison. Ninety-percent of inmates in the state system are eventually released and the DOC goal is that they return to the community prepared to be productive citizens.

"Crisis Intervention Training involves a long-term commitment by an agency, because it is not only a vital training, it is a change in culture," said Superintendent Marirosa Lamas, the department's executive leading and managing this special training initiative. "If you are going to do something right, you must also change your culture to embrace the change, and that is what we are doing through this training."

The U.S. Department of Justice recently closed an investigation into the DOC citing significant improvements made to policies and practices intended to protect prisoners with serious mental illness and intellectual disabilities from the harmful effects solitary confinement.

The federal department opened its statewide investigation into the use of solitary confinement on prisoners with serious mental illness and intellectual disabilities in

May 2013 after finding a pattern of constitutional violations and violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The Justice Department said in closing the investigation this month that the DOC demonstrated its commitment to reforming its use of solitary confinement by working closely with the department and beginning improvements at the outset of the investigation. Since then, the DOC has worked to ensure that prisoners with serious mental illness and/or intellectual disabilities are no longer subjected to solitary confinement and are instead provided with specialized treatment to meet their individual needs.

CIT training, first used to educate police officers to better respond to mental health issues they encounter in the community, was modified by the DOC to encompass an extensive multi-day training course that provides correctional employees with an understanding of the ways in which mental illness may affect the inmates they deal with every day. It also provides employees with skills to de-escalate crisis situations.

Training is not limited to corrections officers. Other staff members and volunteers with inmate contact in a wide array of areas also receive training, including counselors, food service workers, chaplains, parole agents, social workers, teachers, as well as employees with community corrections centers and county prison systems.

"All new employees who require this training will receive it," Wetzell said. "We are committed to ensuring that our employees have the skills and tools necessary to successfully fulfill their duties."

All DOC employees, contractors and volunteers receive training in basic Mental Health First Aid in order to better understand, recognize and respond to the symptoms of mental illness.

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## **Celebrating Corrections Employee Week**

### Laurel Highlands

On May 2, SCI Laurel Highlands employees celebrated Corrections Employee Week by honoring the brave men and women who have served to protect the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as well as the United States of America. A ceremonial wreath was presented as well as representation of our Armed Forces. The ceremony concluded with a moment of silence in memory of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice as well as a prayer by Reverend David Klink.

The following employees participated in the ceremony (left to right): Ryan Yoder, Sherman England, Jeff Pryal, Kyle Myers, Terry Gibbner and Ken Myers.



### Retreat

On May 4, SCI Retreat employees participated in a cook-out to celebrate Corrections Employee Week.



Benner Township

For Corrections Employee Week, SCI Benner Township employees held a picnic over their lunch periods.



This week the prison also held a luncheon for SCI Benner Township and SCI Cresson retirees.



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## Suicide Threat Cards

DOC Bureau of Community Corrections officials recently developed a suicide threat card for use by all community corrections employees. The cards are kept by each phone and are used to ask questions of callers should there be a concern that the caller is about to commit suicide or knows about a center resident who may be contemplating/threatening suicide.

Questions asked will help to locate the person at risk, and then tips are provided as to how to proceed in order to help the person, such as call 911.

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## PPWA Names Mooney Warden of the Year

At this year's spring conference of the Pennsylvania Prison Wardens Association, officials presented SCI Retreat Superintendent Vince Mooney with the association's Warden of the Year award.

Because he was unable to attend the PPWA conference, his award was presented to him at a recent DOC training.

When speaking of the recognition, Superintendent Mooney said he was shocked when he was presented with the award. He sincerely credited his success to many of his co-workers.

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## "Prison Goes to the Dogs"

Recently, WNEP-TV and the Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice were given access to the latest commitments at SCI Retreat – Goose Chasing Dogs, Hope and Joy.

Here's the article from the Citizens' Voice:

Wilkes-Barre Citizens' Voice (04/30/2016)

<http://citizensvoice.com/news/geese-police-prison-pups-bring-smiles-to-many-1.2037055>

Geese police: Prison pups bring smiles to many

By Bob Kalinowski

NEWPORT TWP. — Plagued by a geese problem, State Correctional Institution at Retreat has gone to the dogs — literally.

The prison along the Susquehanna River recently purchased two geese-chasing dogs to scare off the fowl animals — and eliminate the foul droppings they leave behind on prison grounds.

So far, so good.

"It's almost like we flipped a switch and stopped the geese from coming to the compound," prison Superintendent Vince Mooney said. "The dogs get all the credit."

The dogs, Hope and Joy, are part border collie, part boxer. They are sisters from the same litter of nine puppies born in Georgia in December.

"They were rescue dogs from the South. They were going to be euthanized because nobody wanted them," Tina Shaup, the superintendent's assistant, said. "Now, they're the celebrities of Retreat."

Months ago, the state Department of Corrections granted Mooney permission to get a dog to scare off the dozens of geese that fly into the compound, which sits between the river and a mountainside.

Shaup said she searched the internet for "goose dogs" and she came across a Susquehanna County dog rescue that took in the dogs so they wouldn't be euthanized. It didn't take her long to convince Mooney that the siblings shouldn't be split up.

Staff members at Retreat donated money in a collection jar to cover the \$400 it cost to buy the dogs. The pups arrived April 12 and staff selected the names Hope and Joy.

They are assigned to several inmate handlers and live among the prisoners when they're not out patrolling for geese. They even were issued their own identification badges, which includes their name, photo and job title just like any other employee. Their badges say "Goose Dog."

It immediately was clear that they were not only good at their jobs, but they boosted morale in a place that is often bleak.

Employees and inmates love them.

Some inmates commented to staff that they are getting the chance to pet an animal for the first time in decades. Hope and Joy truly have delivered joy and hope to the 1,100-inmate institution.

"These dogs are never left alone. They are spoiled. We love them," Deputy Superintendent Kathy Brittain said. "It's hard to say we rescued them because they rescued us."

Staff members are donating all the food for the animals. The prison's inmate association bought them a few things. An area veterinarian has agreed to come to the prison to provide free care to the dogs. A groomer also volunteered her service.

On Friday, prison officials let Hope and Joy play on the front lawn of the administration building during a visit by The Citizens' Voice.

Honks from a bunch of geese could be heard from the marshy area down by the river.

That's where the geese stay since the prison brought in Hope and Joy, Major Luke Cronauer said.

"Since they arrived, there hasn't been one inside the jail property, inside the fence," Cronauer said. "If you don't know anything about geese, they make a mess."

Cronauer sometimes takes the dogs with him on patrols of the facility and has noticed a big change the past few weeks.

For instance, recently when one of the cell blocks would normally be loud while inmates were interacting, it was absolutely quiet. The inmates said they were being quiet because Hope and Joy were taking a nap.

"They really have changed the atmosphere of the facility," Cronauer said.

Tere Morris, founder of Ruff Dog Rescue Northeast, which rescued the dogs from a high-kill shelter in Georgia, is happy the dogs have a forever home.

"It worked out really good. I'm pleased how well the girls adjusted there. They are so happy," Morris said. "The dogs have no concept what prison is. All they know is they have 1,500 people to love."

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## **Rockview Inmate Organization Makes Donations**

Since November 2015 and through the end of April 2016, the inmate organization at SCI Rockview, "New Breeds Society," has donated more than \$4,500 to various charities.

"Inmates only earn .19 to .42 per hour at their prison jobs, so it is quite an accomplishment when they pool their money to benefit community organizations," said SCI Rockview Superintendent Mark Garman.

The inmates donated to organizations such as Toys for Tots, St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital, Big Brothers/Big sisters, various little league teams and the Salvation Army.

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Week of April 25...

## Recognizing Crime Victims

In recognition of Crime Victims' Rights Week (April 10-16, 2016), SCI Huntingdon held a series of events in support of this year's theme, "Serving Victims, Building Trust, Restoring Hope."

An essay contest for Residential Treatment Unit inmates was held and prizes were awarded for the top three chosen submissions as voted on by the psychology department.

The Huntingdon County Victim Witness Coordinator and the Executive Director of Huntingdon House, a domestic violence shelter, each gave a formal presentation to staff. The Pennsylvania Lifer's Association (PLA) presented a \$500 donation to Huntingdon House. A highlight of the week's events included a special guest provided by the Office of the Victim Advocate who spoke about his experience as a crime victim and the impact it has had. His story left a meaningful impression on all staff present. The week's events concluded with the planting of a tree in front of the facility in dedication and remembrance of all crime victims.



**Pictured, left to right: Treatment Specialist Tim Strait; Treatment Specialist Crystal Loy; Jean Collins, Executive Director, Huntingdon House; Craig Miller, special speaker; Allison Hall, Victim Awareness Coordinator, Huntingdon County District Attorney's Office; Deputy Superintendent Raymond Moore; Unit Manager Paul Lechner; Program Manager Chris Garman; Deputy Superintendent Lonnie Oliver; Lt. Walter House; Lt. Darren Dickson; Health Care Administrator Paula Price; Major Scott Walters; and Superintendent Eric Tice.**

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## **Building (and Retaining) a Diverse Workforce**

On April 13, DOC Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal and several superintendents and representatives from the DOC's Human Resources Bureau and the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity attended a seminar at Millersville University that focused on recruiting, retaining and developing a diverse workforce.

"This workshop provided DOC leaders an opportunity to learn about and develop additional recruitment strategies," said Moore Smeal.

The purpose of the event was to gather learders that champion diversity and inclusion and to share models of best practices. In addition it was to facilitate networking and collaboration.



Pictured, from left to right, are: Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal, Director of Human Resources Ty Stanton, DOC Office Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Acting Director Kathy Peters, SCI Dallas Superintendent Larry Mahally, SCI Graterford Superintendent Cynthia Link, SCI Muncy Superintendent Robert Smith, SCI Camp Hill Superintendent Laurel Harry, SCI Benner Township Superintendent Tammy Ferguson, EEO Chief of Investigation and Training Tarita Kauffman and SCI Smithfield Superintendent Kevin Kauffman.

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## **SCI Mahanoy Donates to SCI Coal Township**

During the month of March, SCI Mahanoy employees visited SCI Coal Township to deliver donated items for Coal Township's FIDOS Program.

Mahanoy's PSCOA, CERT, HNT, PRIDE and staff members donated toys, treats, baby wipes, food and a gift card for use in purchasing other items needed for FIDOS.



The collection was coordinated by Sally Dreher and Terra Gordner. Terra and Sally delivered the items to Coal Township along with Loki, a graduate from FIDOS. Loki was adopted by Terra and Sergeant Derek Nejedly. Layla was happy to see Loki again, and more than happy to inspect the treats and toys that were donated by SCI Mahanoy staff.

Thank you SCI Mahanoy!

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Week of April 18...

## Recognizing Prison Volunteers

SCI Pittsburgh held its annual volunteer recognition banquet on April 20, 2016.

The prison's administrative staff pitched in to purchase the pizza and beverages that were served.

The husband of SCI Pittsburgh Facility Chaplaincy Program Director Rev. Tami Hooker, who also is a professional pastry chef, baked and donated two cakes that were served.

Inmates in the prison's therapeutic community constructed the gifts that were presented to the volunteers, and some of Pittsburgh's inmates created the theme, which was "Things Worth Holding On To." Inmates also arranged a presentation for the evening's entertainment.

Thirty-five volunteers and guests attended the banquet, where John A. Harris (shown in the picture with Superintendent Mark Capozza) was recognized as SCI Pittsburgh's Volunteer of the Year.

It was very enjoyable evening.

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## SCI Dallas Hosts its First "Kid's Corner Program"

On April 19, 2016, SCI Dallas partnered with the Luzerne County Head Start Program and Penn State Extension to present the Kid's Corner Program. The program targets parents of pre-



school age children, ages 2 – 6, and provides workshops and instruction in early childhood development to parents.

Offenders enrolled in the program participate in quarterly parenting classes facilitated by Tammi Burke who is the supervisor of client services at the Victims Resource Center in Luzerne, Wyoming and Carbon Counties.

The program also consists of quarterly “family days” in the visiting room. Both parents attend workshops while the children participate in educational activities with staff and volunteers.

Topics facilitated by Head Start representatives were: reading to your children, age appropriate books and the importance of reading.

During the day’s event, Mary Belanchik from Penn State Extension presented a workshop on the Eating Smart and Moving More program. Caregivers were given cook books, handouts and measuring utensils. They also received instructions in safe food handling, budgeting and healthy food prep for children.

SCI Dallas’ Food Service Department also provided healthy snacks and lunch using recipes from the cookbook that was provided to families.



**First Row: Corrections Counselor 2 Natasha Amaral; Corrections Officer Trainee Kayla White; Major Lori White; and Special Assistant to the Secretary Janet Kelley. Second Row: Corrections Counselor 2 Tiffinie Kaye; DOC Eastern Regional Deputy Secretary Michael Wenerowicz; Superintendent Lawrence Mahally; and Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Norm Demming.**

**Head Start Staff: Lynn Biga, Executive Director; Alley Leskowsky, Health Specialist; Britany Schoemaker, Infant Toddler Specialist and Kelly Chamberlain, Childhood Specialist Mary Belanchik, Penn State Extension**

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## **Painting, Writing and Reflecting**

On April 15th, in observation of National Crimes Victims’ Rights Week, 12 inmates took part in a “Paint, Write, and Reflection” program in the Activities Department at SCI Mercer.



Ms. Walko, an art major at Moravian College, guided the inmates in painting a National Crimes Victims' Rights Week theme-based painting.

After completing the painting, the inmates reflected upon the theme of the week and wrote an apology letter to their victim. The inmate had the option of keeping the letter, shredding it, or sending it to the Apology Bank.

This painting class was well received by the inmates and Activities Manager April Harvey plans to have a similar event this coming winter.



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**SCI Retreat  
of the Second Quarter**

**Names Employee**

Records Specialist Maura Johnson was selected an SCI Retreat's Employee of the Quarter! Maura has taken on extra responsibilities within the Records Department with a positive attitude and without complaint. She has been able to keep the Records Office running efficiently while being short-staffed. She also filled in while the records supervisor was off for an extended period of time. Her workload more than doubled, and she stepped up when needed. She is a true team player. She is a credit to the Department of Corrections! Maura is very deserving of the recognition of Employee of the 2nd Quarter!

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## A Call to End Harm

On April 14, 2016, 60 SCI Graterford inmates, with the help of Haverford College and the PA Office of Victim Advocate, sponsored a special event titled "A Call to End Harm."



Participants explored ways to serve victims, restore hope and build trust that has been broken. The group was interactive and engaged in lively conversations related to the courage

needed to be pro-social leaders and role models. In breakout sessions they discussed the importance of being one's brother or sister's keeper. The workshops challenged members to ask themselves "am I doing the right thing or the easy thing." A call went out to be courageous and not wait for someone else to make the world a better place. The call to end harm event invited participants to get rid of the "me first

cancer."

The activities of the day encouraged members to speak up for what is right and seek out ways to build relational and safer communities.

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Harrisburg Patriot-News (04/16/2016)

[http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/04/satisfied\\_with\\_progress\\_justic.html](http://www.pennlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2016/04/satisfied_with_progress_justic.html)

Justice Department ends investigation of Pa. prisons' use of solitary confinement  
By Paul Vigna

The Justice Department announced Thursday that it has closed its investigation into the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PDOC) following significant improvements made by PDOC to its policies and practices that are intended to protect prisoners with serious mental illness and intellectual disabilities from the harmful effects solitary confinement, according to a news release.

The department opened its statewide investigation into the use of solitary confinement on prisoners with serious mental illness and intellectual disabilities in May 2013 after finding a pattern of constitutional violations as well as violations of the Americans with Disabilities Act at the State Correctional Institution in Cresson, Cambria County. After working in cooperation with PDOC to conduct an intensive review of prisons across the state, on Feb. 24, 2014, the department notified PDOC that the same violations discovered at Cresson were present across the system.

In its closing letter to PDOC, the department said that PDOC demonstrated its commitment to reforming its use of solitary confinement by working closely with the department and beginning improvements at the outset of the investigation. Since then, the release said, PDOC has worked to ensure that prisoners with serious mental illness and/or intellectual disabilities are no longer subjected to solitary confinement and are instead provided with specialized treatment to meet their individualized needs.

The closing letter also identifies areas where continued efforts at improvement would be appropriate.

"Solitary confinement should be used only when necessary – never as a default solution," said Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Vanita Gupta, head of the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division. "Today, Pennsylvania is headed in the right direction. We commend the state for beginning to reform its system to ensure that prisoners with serious mental illness and intellectual disabilities receive care, rather than suffer harm. Those prisoners are in a much better position than they were three years ago to return to the community."

PennLive writer Daniel Simmons-Ritchie spent much of 2015 investigating the repercussions of a continued increase in seriously mentally ill people being imprisoned in correctional facilities. His series began in July 2015 and continued through the end of the year. This rate of incarceration among the mentally ill has grown substantially, correctional officers believe, because of the closure of state hospitals, including the Harrisburg State Hospital in 2006.

Simmons-Ritchie found in his collection of stories that this longer time in prison often does more to aggravate the conditions of those who are mentally ill than treat them. A slideshow used with the series accompanies this story.

Meanwhile, the subject of solitary confinement has found itself under closer scrutiny, in part because of continued work done by The Marshall Project, a nonprofit, nonpartisan news organization covering America's criminal justice system. NPR and The Marshall Project combined on this sobering story on the lack of cells for a growing population of criminals in death row, resulting in a number of states doubling up the cells with fatal ramifications. You can read that story at this link.

According to the release, the department initiated this investigation under the Civil Rights of Institutionalized Persons Act (CRIPA), which prohibits a pattern or practice of deprivation of constitutional rights of individuals confined to state or local government-run correctional facilities. This investigation was conducted by attorneys with the Civil Rights Division's Special Litigation Section and the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Western District of Pennsylvania.

Recently, the department also conducted a broader review of solitary confinement – and other forms of "restrictive housing" – to formulate policy solutions for reducing the use of these practices throughout the nation's criminal justice system. The department concluded that while there are occasions when correctional officials have no choice but to segregate inmates from the general population, as a matter of policy, this practice should be used rarely, applied fairly and subjected to reasonable constraints.

The department's report, including a series of "Guiding Principles" for limiting the use of restrictive housing, can be found at this link.

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In response to the recent action by the DOJ, DOC Secretary John Wetzel said:

***You did it!!!!!! Two times, the civil rights division of the Department of Justice came to PA, and twice, you all stepped up and made difficult, systemic changes.***

***The investigation of our mental health system was one of the most difficult thing that our department has ever faced, and in response, you did the impossible, not just respond, but improve the system in a manner that sets the bar for our profession.***

***I could not be prouder of a group of individuals than I am of the staff at PADOC, and you, who lead this department and country to better prisons and a safer PA.***

***THANK YOU! You are truly the best in the business.***

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## Non-segregated Housing for County Medical Inmates

SCI Laurel Highlands Superintendent Jamey P. Luther would regularly inquire of her staff during meetings, “Why do we have to keep these county medical offenders housed in the L5?”

After the question became repetitive, Superintendent Luther tasked her staff to identify some thoughts and processes that would provide relief in the form of Administrative Segregation Reduction.



After a short time, staff presented the concept of a dormitory on Medical Housing Unit E that would provide housing without segregation.

During formation phase of the dormitory concept, Secretary Wetzel toured SCI Laurel Highlands. The dorm concept was presented to the secretary and he gave the “green light” to move forward to identify what the project would entail.

With collaborative input from all departments to ensure security, safety and medical treatment of the offenders would be met, the physical plan was designed, along with identification of administrative requirements required to provide final submission of the overall County Dormitory plan.

Ultimately, the plan was approved and SCI Laurel Highlands’ staff once again stepped up to the plate in admirable fashion to see the project through to completion. The results of the completed project are a success. Reviewed and approved non-sentenced, unclassified, county or state, and sentenced county offenders that require medical treatment Laurel Highlands can provide are afforded similar privileges and opportunities afforded general population offenders that a short time ago were only a thought.

The County Dormitory project is a gold standard of the prison’s ability to move forward and progress with the direction of Department of Corrections.

A special thanks to all of the staff at SCI Laurel Highlands for their input and work to make this Administrative Segregation initiative a success.

Also, a special thanks to Unit Manager Nicole McKee from SCI Muncy for her assistance in the administrative requirement portion of the project.

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## Biggest Loser

Biggest Loser is a friendly competition among staff at SCI Laurel Highlands to promote weight loss for good health. There are monthly weigh-ins to track individual progress. The first weigh-in was 1-4-16 and the final weigh in was 4-4-16. Participants are notified of the percentage of weight loss of all participants, hopefully to give some motivation. Actual weights are not disclosed. Winners are determined by the percentage of weight loss.



Left to Right: Clint Fleegle, 4th place; Donna Platt, 2nd place; Roger Mason, 1st place. Robert Lushko was the 3rd place winner, but not in the photo.

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## King's College Students Visit SCI Retreat

On April 7, 2016, SCI Retreat Superintendent Vincent Mooney welcomed 23 pstudents from King's College. Most of the students who participated in the tour were criminology majors.



The students had the opportunity to tour some areas of the institution, talk with staff regarding their jobs and had the opportunity to meet three inmates. The

students asked questions of the staff and inmates pertaining to the inmates' daily lifestyle, educational opportunities and programs available to the inmates.



Wayne Inniss shares his experience as a correctional counselor with the group of students.



Unit Manager Stacy Miller talks with the students about housing inmates at SCI Retreat.

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## SCI Retreat Goose Dogs

On April 12<sup>th</sup>, 2016 SCI-Retreat gained two new staff members...meet Hope and Joy!

Here is our happy story...

Superintendent Vincent Mooney was given permission to get a dog that will be able to chase geese from the grounds at SCI Retreat. Those who have ever visited Retreat know that the geese flock to areas inside the enclosure leaving behind their feces.

Hope and Joy are five-month old Border Collies/Boxers mix. Hope and Joy are twin sisters and are rescue dogs that the "staff" purchased (through staff donations) from the Ruff Dog Rescue North East. Tere Morris, co-founder and president of Ruff Rescue, was more than happy to help SCI Retreat with its mission – she was so helpful that she greatly discounted the adoption price. Ms.



Morris, being that she is also a certified trainer, even helped teach the inmate handlers how to properly train the dogs to chase geese and to perform other commands.

Their names, Hope and Joy, were chosen by staff. A special contest was open to all staff to help name our soon-to-be new staff members. Activities Specialist Charles Maculloch originally submitted those names; and through a voting process, majority ruled - Hope and Joy won!

Hope and Joy have only been here a short time, but they are fast learners. The inmate handlers are so upbeat with them; they already learned so much. They have a temporary dog run where there is so much room to run, they feel like they are in doggie heaven – wait until their permanent one is built!



Their personalities are remarkable. They are very friendly and love to give kisses. They also love to be scratched behind their ears and chin. They haven't even barked yet!



The atmosphere of SCI Retreat changed in a very positive way. The inmates smile when they see the dogs, and they ask to pet them. Some inmates even made the comment that this is the first time in years that they pet a dog! An inmate, who will be graduating an educational program, recently asked his teacher if he can write a paper on the dogs and the handlers. Also, with more than 50 percent of the prison's inmates receiving some sort of mental health service, having the dogs around is serving to be very therapeutic. When the dogs are not in training, staff are able to take the dogs to their department. The atmosphere at SCI Retreat has changed!

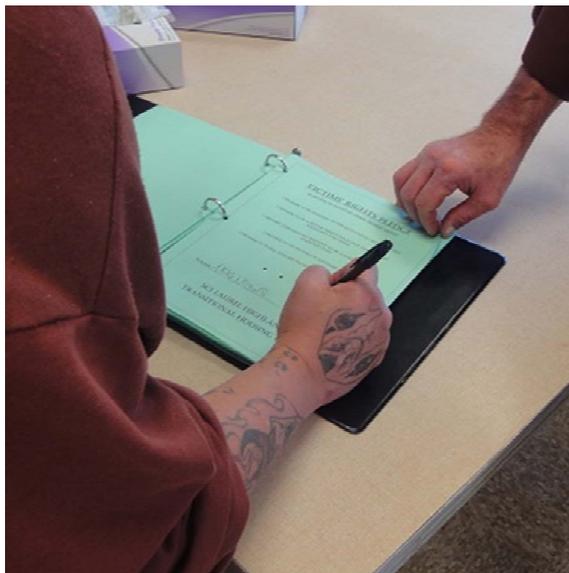


If you have a chance, visit SCI Retreat and meet Hope and Joy...They certainly will bring you ... Hope and Joy...! ☺

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## Honoring Crime Victims

On April 13<sup>th</sup>, inmates housed in SCI Laurel Highlands' Transitional Housing Unit (THU) completed a mural to honor all victims. Handprints of the participants were painted on the mural which is entitled "The Acknowledgment of The Pain We Cause Others by Our Own Hands." As the participants did so, they also signed a Victims' Rights Pledge.



**VICTIMS' RIGHTS PLEDGE**  
IN HONOR OF NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS

I PROMISE TO BE MINDFUL OF THE PAIN I HAVE CAUSED OTHERS

I PROMISE TO BE A BETTER PERSON EACH DAY THROUGH MY THOUGHTS AND DEEDS

I PROMISE THROUGH MY REENTRY TO BE A PART IN HEALING SOMEONE'S PAIN

I PROMISE TO NEVER CREATE ANOTHER VICTIM

I PROMISE TO WORK TOWARD VICTIMS' RIGHTS UPON REENTRY

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

SCI LAUREL HIGHLANDS  
TRANSITIONAL HOUSING UNIT

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## Planting a Tree in Honor of Victims

On Friday, April 15, SCI Laurel Highlands employees were present for and observed as a weeping cherry tree, donated by the Empowerment Committee, was planted on grounds dedicated to Victims' Rights Week. The planting included a small placard fashioned by Maintenance Dept. with National Crime Victims Rights' theme inscribed on it.



Left to right: Brad McDermott, Rebecca Witt, Captain Ed Evans, Deputy Glass, Superintendent Luther and Susan Shoff.

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## Celebrating Victims' Rights Week

During Victims' Rights Week, SCI Cambridge Springs inmates have participated in creating housing unit bulletin boards. The prison also held a special Victim Awareness t-shirt sale for the inmates with proceeds going to the Women's Shelter of Crawford County. Inmates also participated in an essay contest about Victims Awareness – the attached pamphlet shows some of the excerpts from the inmate essays.



### Words from Our Victims

"It's with me every minute of every day. I go to sleep praying to God to wake up from this nightmare and be standing right in front of me. Just to touch his hand again."

"My life was taken much too soon. I was only 3 years old."

"My family felt a lot of guilt. Some still wonder "what if" and "only if."

"I wasn't only in shock, I was numb with brokenness."

"I have to change things so I can bring more trust and hope into my life."

### Words from Us

"We must move forward, look ahead and live for today, learn from our bad choices, to make a better tomorrow and love one another."

"This is no contest to me. I'm telling you how I feel. This is not a game, my life is real."

"There are many different ways to victimize someone: abuse, bullying, neglect, etc."



### Words from Our Victims

"Today my life was shattered as though I was a china cup falling on a ceramic tile floor, broken in very sharp edged pieces."

"I wish I had my brother to play with."

"I still have nightmares about that horrible day. I awake sweating, screaming and crying thinking ... is going to get me again."

"I wish I was alive to show how murder doesn't just affect a victim and offender. Everybody pays for it: family, friends and strangers alike."

"Who is going to take care of my family?"

"It's not just the milestones like graduations and weddings that I'll miss, it's smiles in the morning and that goodnight kiss."

"Will I ever be able to forgive and move on?"

"I opened my eyes to a new beginning and recognized I was with the Lord and not coming back to my family."

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## An overview of Office of Victim Advocate Programs

THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS WERE CREATED BY THE OFFICE OF THE VICTIM ADVOCATE AND CAN BE FOUND IN ALL SCI'S ACROSS THE STATE:

### INMATE APOLOGY BANK

The Inmate Apology Bank was created for victims of crime who have an interest in receiving an apology letter from the offender in their case (if the offender is a state inmate or state parolee). Victims often wonder whether or not their offender has taken responsibility and/or is sorry for their criminal actions.

Likewise, inmates sometimes seek to put into words acceptance of fault, responsibility, and/or pain caused by their actions. They may wish to write of letter of apology to the victim(s) of their crime. However, if they are incarcerated in a state prison, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

has strict rules prohibiting inmates from directly contacting their victims. This apology program allows for the letters to be written and received without violating these rules.

### FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Does writing an apology letter benefit an inmate?

The only benefit an apology letter would have for an inmate would be personal growth and insight. Writing an apology letter does NOT affect his/her conditions of incarceration, nor will it shorten their sentence or affect their release date.

What does OVA do with the apology letters that they receive from inmates?

After OVA receives an apology letter, the letter is reviewed for appropriate content. We want to make sure that the letter does not contain any threats or anything harassing in nature. If the letter is appropriate, we then check to see if we have a victim who has registered to receive an apology letter. If there are no victims registered to receive an apology letter, we file the letter in our Inmate Apology Bank in case there is interest shown in the future. If we do have a victim registered to receive an apology letter, we will call that victim to verify that they still want to receive the apology letter. If so, the letter is mailed to them for their review.

Will the inmate know that I read the apology letter?

The only way an inmate would know if you read the apology letter is if you instructed our office to notify that inmate. If you would wish to have any additional contact with the inmate through correspondence, you can be referred to the Victim Offender Dialogue Program.

How do victims of state inmates register to indicate their interest in receiving an apology letter?

Victims can register with the Office of Victims can register with the Office of Victim Advocate (OVA) to be notified if an apology letter is submitted by their offender. They can contact OVA at 1.800.563.6399 or [ra-ovainfo@pa.gov](mailto:ra-ovainfo@pa.gov).

OVA will not forward an apology letter to a victim unless we are 100% certain that they wish to receive one.

## **VICTIM OFFENDER DIALOGUE PROGRAM**

It is not unusual for crime victims or surviving family members to have unanswered questions: "Why did you do it?" "Are you sorry?" "What were my loved ones last words?" Some victims and survivors want to ask these questions and express their feelings directly to the person that caused them harm. The Victim Offender Dialogue (VOD) Program offers a safe, secure and structured way to do this.

VOD is a victim-initiated program. It's an opportunity for the victim/survivor to ask questions about the crime, tell the offender how it affected their lives and can empower the victim/survivor to hold the offender directly accountable.

The offender may also benefit by being able to accept responsibility and recognize the real person(s) they have affected. The offender's participation is voluntary and has no effect on their institutional or parole status.

The program includes extensive preparation for both the victim and offender by trained volunteer facilitators. The facilitators prepare both parties independently for the face-to-face meeting, are present during the face-to-face meeting and provide subsequent follow-up. The face-to-face meeting is held in the state correctional institution housing the offender or in a safe, private setting within the community (if the offender is on parole).

Either party has the right to put the case on hold or end the process at any time.

For those who are unable to or do not want to meet the offender face-to-face, "indirect dialogue" or letter writing is available. This form of dialogue utilizes the same preparation as with a face-to-face meeting. However, the facilitators assist each party with composing, exchanging and reading the letters. No letters will be sent directly to the victim or offender. Instead, the letters go through the Office of Victim Advocate.

If you are interested in learning more about the program or would like to do an intake, please contact OVA at 1.800.563.6399 and ask to speak with the program coordinator.

Please note there is currently a waiting list of approximately one year and there are certain case restrictions.

## **IMPACT OF CRIME CLASS**

The Impact of Crime Class (ICC) has the ability to run in all state prisons throughout the Department of Corrections (DOC). It is a voluntary, interactive and educational program designed to raise an inmate's awareness about the impact of crime on victims. It is also designed to increase an inmates' level of accountability and empathy for those they harmed, while

providing a healing platform for victims and survivors of crime to share their experiences.

The Office of the Victim Advocate (OVA) worked with the DOC to develop a curriculum for the Impact of Crime Program, which reflects what victims and victim advocates throughout Pennsylvania want inmates to know about the effect of crime on victims. This course does not affect an inmate's institutional status or increase an inmate's chances for release as it is a voluntary program.

The curriculum used in Pennsylvania focuses on the following offenses:

- Property Crime and Violations of Personal Security
- Robbery and Aggravated Assault
- Domestic Violence and Stalking
- Sexual Violence
- Homicide
- Hate/Bias crime
- Driving under the influence

This comprehensive curriculum relies on group activities, videos, lectures and speaker presentations. The speakers are victims and survivors of crime who enhance the program through the sharing of their experiences of crime and their journey to recovery. If you are interested in becoming a speaker for the Impact of Crime Classes or have any questions, please contact OVA at 1.800.563.6399.

## **VICTIM AWARENESS EDUCATION CLASS**

Victim Awareness Education Class is an educational course developed under the scope of The Crime Victims Act, to teach inmates convicted of a crime of violence, the physical, financial, and emotional impact of their crimes on victims and the community. This course must be instructed to those inmates prior to their release on parole.

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## **Culture Change Training**

During the week of April 5 – 7, and in coordination with the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Resource Center, Andie Moss of the Moss Group and Dr. Reginald Wilkinson presented information about culture change for SCIs Laurel Highlands, Retreat and Rockview. This picture includes the trainers and officials from the three institutions.



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Week of April 4...

## Helping a Local Shelter “Clean Up”



In March, the residents of Allentown Community Corrections Center (CCC) held a donation drive for the 6th Street Shelter in Allentown, Pa. Not only do they run a shelter, but they provide apartments to families, run a day-care facility and food pantry. They asked for cleaning supplies this month. The residents donated \$1,836

worth of detergent, multi-purpose cleaner, dish soap, glass cleaner, sponges, brooms, mops, etc.

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## Sports Equipment Donation



The Scranton CCC collected sports equipment during the month of March 2016. All donations will benefit the Boys and Girls Club of Scranton.

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The Scranton CCC collected items for the local veterans during the month of February 2016. All donations benefited the Veterans at the Gina J. Merli Veterans Center.

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