tapestry

THREADS

TEDxMuncyStatePrison
x=independently organized TED event
November 21, 2014
WELCOME

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and the State Correctional Institution at Muncy, welcome to the nation’s first TEDx event inside a women’s prison.

As our theme of “Tapestry Threads” suggests, we all come from different backgrounds and experiences, but together we create something unique, something stronger and, at times, beautiful.

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections operates as one team, embracing diversity and committed to enhancing public safety. We are proud of our reputation as leaders in the corrections field.

Thank you for joining us today. We hope that you will leave here inspired, informed and excited about ideas worth sharing.

>> MORNING SESSION : 9:00 A.M. TO NOON

Welcome – SCI Muncy Superintendent Robert Smith

Master of Ceremonies – Secretary of Corrections John E. Wetzel

“Behind Closed Doors” – House of Hope

“Resiliency & Recovery” – Jennifer Storm

“The Storm” – Tameka Flowers

“The Institutions that Change You” – Piper Kerman

Break & Discussion

“Motivations from My Life” – Tamika Sheppard

“Wrong Side of the Road/Freedom” – B.L. Shirelle

“Changes & Consequences” – Amelia McPeek

“Tattooed” – Deb Sahd

Lunch & Discussion

>> AFTERNOON SESSION : 1:30 TO 4:00 P.M.

“Incarcerated” – Naomi Blount & friends

“Working toward Redemption” – Heather Lavelle

“Foundation of Friendship” – Tina Brosius & Melisa McManus

“I’m a Woman First” – Tiffany Williams

Break & Discussion

“Living Confined, Thinking Free” – Cheryl Pullins

“Value, Vision and Victory” – Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal

“From the Bottom to the Top – It’s Your Choice” – Judge Renee Cardwell Hughes

“This is Not My Home” – The Lady Lifers

S.C.I. Muncy
JOHN E. WETZEL
Secretary of the Department of Corrections

Secretary of the Department of Corrections John E. Wetzel is widely recognized as one of the leaders in corrections today. In 1989, he began his career as a corrections officer in Lebanon County. In 1992, he transferred to the Berks County Prison, where he rose through the ranks, serving as treatment counselor, supervisor of treatment services and training academy director. In 2002, Wetzel was named warden of the Franklin County Jail. In 2010, he was nominated to his current position as Secretary of Corrections. During Wetzel’s tenure, Pennsylvania saw the first reduction in prison population in four decades. He has also directed the restructuring of the community corrections system and the department’s mental health system.

During his 25 years in corrections, Wetzel has spoken to state and national audiences on several important corrections topics, including inmate labor issues, the mentally ill in corrections, working with the families of inmates, developing system-wide solutions to jail crowding and jail staffing.

A previous offensive line coach for Shippensburg University, Wetzel earned a bachelor’s degree in psychology from Bloomsburg University and is working toward his master’s degree in applied psychology at Penn State University. A founding member of St. Seraphim Homeless Shelter, Wetzel is a member of the Pennsylvania Forensics Inter-Agency Task Force, a core team member of Brother 2 Brother mentoring initiative, part-time instructor of an evening truancy school, and is an ethics panel speaker for Leadership Franklin County.

ROBERT L. SMITH
Superintendent of the State Correctional Institution at Muncy

Superintendent Robert L. Smith is a 24 year veteran of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

Smith began his career in 1990 at the State Correctional Institution at Dallas as a corrections officer. He laterally transferred to SCI Coal Township upon its opening in 1993 and was promoted to sergeant the following year. In 1996, he was promoted to the rank of lieutenant. In 2000, he was promoted to captain and served as a shift commander. In 2005, he assumed a unit manager position.

In 2007, Smith transferred to SCI Muncy as the major of the guard and, in 2008, was promoted to deputy superintendent for facilities management where he was responsible for security operations, unit management and the safety office.

Smith was appointed as the superintendent of SCI Muncy in January 2014.

Smith served in the United States Air Force from 1985 to 1989. He is a member of the Pennsylvania Prison Warden’s Association and the American Correctional Association.
Krista Blake: A mother, daughter and sister, Ms. Blake said she is poetic, passionate and believes in redemption because she is not defined by her past or her mistakes and is by hope for her future.

Felicia Fox: From Philadelphia, she is the mother of two beautiful daughters and a handsome son and recently earned her GED. She said she loves to dance, listen to music and be around her family and friends.

Jasquinta Jackson-Smith: Her two beautiful children are the love of her life. From Philadelphia, she enjoys reading and writing poetry and short stories. She hopes to influence young people to stay in school and not commit crimes.

Rachel Kozloff: The loving mother of four "amazing" children, Ms. Kozloff says she is learning to expand her artistic talents at Muncy and "growing toward a better and brighter me."

Holly Miller: Originally from Sullivan County, Ms. Miller is the mother of two "amazing" children that she describes as her "heart and soul." She loves the outdoors, animals and her family photos.

Andrea Prince: An "all-star mom, extraordinary daughter, reliable sister and exuberant best friend," she said during some of the worst experiences of her life, she gained a stronger, unbreakable bond with her loved ones.

Anna Lee Ross: The proud mother of four children and three grandchildren, she said her passion is to help others not go where she's been and to make a difference. "I want to a woman of faith, hope and courage."
**JENNIFER STORM**  
Pennsylvania’s Victim Advocate

As the state’s Victim Advocate, Ms. Storm is responsible for representing the rights and interests of crime victims. Her duties include notifying crime victims of the potential for inmate release and movement within the correctional system, as well as offering the victims an opportunity to provide testimony and other assistance.

Ms. Storm is the author of several books and magazine articles for the telling of her personal story of victimization, addiction and recovery. She has traveled the country giving keynotes, lectures, workshops, and panel discussions regarding victims’ rights, addiction and recovery.

The Office of Victim Advocate created and maintains the Inmate Apology Bank. While the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has strict rules prohibiting offenders from directly contacting their victims, the Apology Bank allows inmates to write letters of apology or expressions of remorse to the victims of their crime. The OVA reviews the contents of the letters to ensure they are appropriate. Victims who wish to be part of the program are then notified. Victims who chose not to be in the program are not notified.

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**TAMEKA FLOWERS**

A self-described physical fitness fanatic, Ms. Flowers has focused her energy on running, weight lifting, Zumba, Pilates and other exercise routines at SCI Muncy and she enjoys coaching others.

“My greatest enjoyment and passion is helping others push themselves to achieve their physical fitness level,” Ms. Flowers said. “I have no children but take great joy in spoiling others’ kids. The love of God and my mother, Marie, along with my friends here have helped me to become a better person.”

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**PIPER KERMAN**

Piper Kerman is the author of the memoir, "Orange is the New Black: My Year in a Women’s Prison." The book has been adapted into an award-winning television series, now in its third season.

Ms. Kerman currently works as a communications consultant with nonprofits, philanthropies and other organizations. She is also a frequently invited speaker to students of law, criminology, gender and women’s studies, sociology and creative writing, as well as correctional organizations and justice reform advocates.

She serves on the board of the Women’s Prison Association and has testified before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on topics of solitary confinement and women prisoners. Ms. Kerman has also spoken at the White House on re-entry and employment.
**Morning Session**

**Tamika Sheppard**

Originally from Philadelphia, Ms. Sheppard said she enjoys reading, writing and has "the God-given ability to make people laugh."

At 42, she is the mother of three "beautiful" children and three grandchildren.

She dedicates her remarks today to her aunt, Diane Ritchett, who died in September while preparing for this event, knowing that she would be "proud that I'm sharing my experiences to help other people."

**B. L. Shirelle**

Monique Mull, who wrote the music and lyrics to both songs the group performed today, said she enjoys writing music and rapping and plays several instruments. And, yes, she said, her beard is natural.

Demetrius Patterson – vocals, said she enjoys rapping and has three children.

Emily Smith – guitarist, said she is into heavy metal music and is the mother of one son.

Kelly Kunk – vocals, said she has one son and loves her family more than anything.

**Wrong Side of the Road**

My wheels spinning on the wrong side of the road/ I've been drifting even where the hitchhikers won't get out of control/ Around here you gotta pay with your life as the toll/ Still I ride, I roll, I ride all alone, ride on my own/ Hoping this dead end takes me home.

If you GPS it, you're still headed in the wrong direction/ Perseverance in the mirror's reflection, but success is it's just a mile away.

My wheels spinning on the wrong side of the road/ I pray to find that my children never ride the streets I rode/ My dad had this car, he sold it/ I found it whole/ I've been on the road since/ Hopeless, homeless/ I wish that this dead end takes me home.

My wheels spinning on the wrong side of the road. And I bring my head everyday/ I hit a pot hole/ You'd think by now I'd know how/ Just slow down/ Foolish knows no bounds/ I marred the go round praying that this dead end takes me home/ I don't let a dead end take you home.

**Freedom**

So they call me a misfit/ I got my (11) equipment/ But my experiences will still exist/ I'm alive for now while you live for this/ It's not guaranteed, and it's the difference/ I use my eyes when I listen/ I can see the wind whispering/ I can feel the breeze kicking in/ Mind drifting.

Chorus: I yell, freedom, Lord knows, I yell freedom. Freedom on a Saturday night, all night. I yell freedom, Lord knows, I yell freedom. Screaming it with all of my might. All night.

How much you gonna cost me? You crossed me, you lost me. Get off me! You can't pay enough to be the boss of me. Can't buy! I won't sell any part of me! So I wash you away/ I'm getting drenched by the rain/ Every drop brings a little change/ these clouds will never be the same.

I yell Freedom! It's not easy when you're trying to change/ trying to manage from day to day/ Sick and tired of living this way/ So I yell freedom.
AMELIA MCPEEK
Corrections Officer

Amelia McPeek has been a corrections officer at the State Correctional Institution at Muncy for almost 30 years. In her spare time, she enjoys running and the outdoors.

DEB SAHD
Assistant to the Secretary of Corrections

With more than 26 years of experience, Ms. Sahd’s correctional career began at SCI-Smithfield in 1988 as secretary to the deputy superintendent for operations when the facility opened. Subsequently, she has worked her way up to superintendent’s assistant, executive secretary to a regional deputy secretary and Executive Deputy Secretary Jeff Beard. She was promoted again when he became the Secretary of Corrections and is currently the assistant to Secretary of Corrections John Wetzel.

She has also successfully pursued entrepreneurship outside of corrections and has found it to be empowering by challenging self-conceived notions while honing innate skills, expanding personal boundaries, and effectively problem solve, which have only assisted in her corrections career.

Ms. Sahd has been playing the piano, singing and writing songs since her youth. She has been a volunteer at the children’s hospital at Hershey Medical Center and attended the PA College of Art and Design for interior design.

Tattooed
By Deb Sahd

Like raindrops on roses your words cover me
Snowflakes on hilltops a blanket will be
Softly falling down to the ground
Under its cover is where I’ll be found

Like ocean waves crashing upon jagged shores
Smoothing edges til they’re no more
Now softly swirling all around
Upon these waters is where I’ll be found

As the sun warms my skin
So your words bring life again
Ever tattooed on my soul
With every stroke I am made whole

Like raindrops on roses
Ocean waves crashing
Tattooed on my soul

Chorus:
I will remember you
I will remember you
All the days of my life
I will long for and I will cherish and I will remember you
NAOMI BLOUNT AND FRIENDS

Naomi Blount has one son, “the perfect daughter-in-law,” and two beautiful grandchildren. Originally from Philadelphia, she began recording music at the age of 15 and is still very much in love with music.

Tamika Bell, 36, is originally from Philadelphia. She said she loves to spend time with her family, sing, and play the drums.

Florence Caesar, 74, has been a resident of Muncy for more than 26 years. She served proudly in the U.S. Marine Corp, earning the rank of lance corporal, before she was honorably discharged.

Rose Marie Oinkins, 66, describes herself as a daughter, sister, mother, grandmother and great-grandmother first. A resident of Muncy for more than 42 years, she said she loves to sing.

Tequila Fields is originally from Philadelphia. The oldest of three children, she says she loves her mother and enjoys reading, quiet time, comedy shows, bowling and food.

Leah Johnson, 23, of Philadelphia, said she started pursuing her interest in a musical career at an early age by playing percussion instruments at the age of 9 and guitar at the age of 13.

Yarnell Jones, is the mother of two beautiful children. She said she works every day to better herself so that she can continue to do what’s right on whatever journey she embarks upon.

Jacqueline Massey, 62, is the mother of three children and has nine grandchildren and six great-grandchildren. A resident of Muncy for 33 years, her hobbies include singing, crossword puzzles and directing choir.

Tameika Minifiefield, the mother of a beautiful baby girl who she describes as a “blessing,” said she wants to one day help others by becoming a mentor to victims of domestic and family violence.

Cristina Castro Pedroza, 34, is originally from San Anton, Puerto Rico. She said her favorite pastime, besides singing and listening to music, is spending time with her “brilliant” and “inspirational” mother.

Letitia Smallwood, 62, grew up in Carlisle, Cumberland County. She is a graduate of Penn State University and has been a resident of Muncy for 37 years.

Incarcerated
words and music by Naomi Blount

“When I was just a young child I had all the things any child could want. A beautiful house, beautiful parents, but most of all, we had the love of God. And as I grew older, I began to run away from home! Not realizing that Momma and Poppa was strict only because they wanted what was best for me. I started smoking cigarettes, smoking marijuana, drinking alcohol and staying out all night, all night long.

Then I made one of the biggest mistakes of my life; taking a needle filled with heroin and sticking it in my arm, not knowing then that that one shot would make me prison bound. Sometimes when I’m all alone my mind starts to wander; I made many mistakes in my life. Locked up! No bail! But you know my conscience pays the price.

I been away far too long! Lord, I am incarcerated.

My baby boy, was only 10 years old, went through adolescence without me. Got shot. So many, many stories I was told. I would lay in my cell late at night, wondering who could have possibly shot my child. And saying to myself, had I been there, would that have made things all right?

Oh, if only I could turn back the hands of time. I’d live my life different, have better things on my mind. Oh, if only I had finished high school, I might have been in Paris, somewhere, but I chose to be a fool.

So many things I took for granted. Please give me one more chance, now I understand it. Lord I am, Lord I am, Lord I am, incarcerated.
HEATHER LAVELLE

Ms. Lavelle is involved in a number of activities at the institution with a focus on helping other people. She shares her story in groups, workshops, meetings and at the alcohol and drug treatment programs.

In addition, Ms. Lavelle trains service dogs for Canine Partners for Life, a non-profit service dog organization, and facilitates workshops in the Reentry Services Department. She is a member of the Muncy Inmate Organization and the Catholic community at Muncy. She enjoys singing and running. She has a loving and supportive family, good friends and a deep faith that sustains her.

MELISA MCMANUS

“I have overcome many things and I have accomplished more than I would have imagined 21 years ago. Although I do not want to glorify incarceration, I would like to say that good can come from the programs, the education and therapeutic communities offered here.

“Everyone has a choice. I am one of many who made the choice to get involved with any and everything offered. I wanted and needed the help offered to me, so that I would not become a product of my environment and not be the same person I was prior to my incarceration. With each success, I continue to set new goals for myself.

TINA BROSIUS

Tina describes herself as “the proud mother of two beautiful daughters, Kerri and Sarah. They have been my biggest fans, supporters and inspiration.”

“Through education, groups and therapy, I have become a better, wiser and stronger woman. I have become the mother my daughters can be – and am proud of. I want to especially thank my mother and father for all the love and support they have given me through me years. And to everyone else, thank you for all the prayers and support.”
TIFFANY WILLIAMS

Originally from Brooklyn, N.Y. Tiffany moved to Pennsylvania at the age of 19. Now 34, she is the mother of five children and has earned her general equivalency diploma and cosmetology license.

While poor choices have resulted in repeated incarcerations, Ms. Williams said she prays that “each experience is a lesson learned that will be applied in order to have a productive and positive life.”

A Woman First
by Diamond Dallas and Tiffany Williams

“Many stories written on miles that hide under the soles of my feet. Stretched my soul as wide as the sky/ I’ve cried much as the ocean is deep. My walk has been a thousand miles/ I could talk ‘til eternity from now/about why I’ve done the things I’ve done/About how I am what I’ve become.

I’m your daughter/I’m a mother/ I’m a best friend/I’m a lover/I feel/ I laugh/I hurt/ I’ve tried some things that didn’t work.

Before a number/I had a name/above my pride and aside from all my shame/ doesn’t change one cent of my worth/ before anything I’m a woman first.

There’s just one thing I hope you remember when you see me/ I’ve had my highs and lows. If there’s one thing I hope you remember/ Just this one thing I need you to know.

Before a number/I had a name/above my pride and aside from all my shame/ doesn’t change one cent of my worth/Before anything I’m a woman first.

SHIRLEY MOORE SMEAL
Executive Deputy Secretary – Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

As Executive Deputy Secretary, Shirley Moore Smeal is second in command of the agency responsible for nearly 16,000 staff members and more than 50,000 inmates. She oversees numerous administrative programs, security and operational areas for the department.

She began her career in corrections in 1987 as a clerk typist at SCI Huntingdon. Over the years, Ms. Moore Smeal moved progressively up through the correctional ranks serving in increasingly responsible positions and at various institutions, including Superintendent of SCI Muncy.

In August 2010, she was appointed to serve as the acting Secretary of Corrections, a position she held until Secretary John Wetzel’s nomination to the post in January 2011.

She is also a member of the American Correctional Association, association of Women Executives in Corrections where she serves on the Executive Board, and is a consultant for the National Institution of Corrections. She earned a bachelor’s degree from Edinboro University, and is married with one son.
JUDGE RENEE CARDWELL HUGHES

The Honorable Renee Cardwell Hughes is the Chief Executive Officer of the American Red Cross Southeastern Pennsylvania which covers the City of Philadelphia and the four surrounding counties, (Bucks, Chester, Delaware and Montgomery). As such, she is responsible for the provision of American Red Cross Humanitarian Services including disaster response, preparedness and recovery in addition to service to the Armed Forces.

Judge Hughes retired from the Court of Common Pleas, in a district encompassing Philadelphia, where she served for 16 years.

She graduated from Georgetown University Law Center and the University of Virginia. She also teaches at Drexel University, Villanova University School of Law and Temple University Beasley School of Law.

Judge Hughes received her legal degree from Georgetown University Law Center and her undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia. She also teaches at Drexel University, Villanova University School of Law and Temple University Beasley School of Law.

Judge Hughes has served on the state and national Commission on Crime and Delinquency. She has previously served on the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing as well as an advisory committee to the state’s General Assembly to examine the issues of geriatric and seriously ill prisoners. She is president of the Board of Directors for The Sentencing Project, a national think tank working to reduce racial disparity in the criminal justice system.

CHERYL PULLINS

Cheryl Pullins is no stranger to challenges. She was adopted at the age of 2, shot by a stray bullet at the age of 9 and met her biological mother at the age of 18.

Ms. Pullins knows what it takes to overcome and transform lives because she started with her own. For more than 20 years, Ms. Pullins worked as a human resources professional, but realized that she was to play a bigger game. She decided to step into her power and authentically use her voice to make a difference in the world. With a leap of faith, she started her own business, and in less than two years, she became a respected voice for women who beat the odds by turning her trials into triumphs.

Ms. Pullins is an internationally acclaimed certified coach, an Amazon bestselling author, and an award-winning speaker in the areas of personal development, marketing, branding and leadership. She has been featured in numerous media outlets and has helped hundreds of women realize their potential for success in business and life.
Dannielle Hadley, 55, from Philadelphia, is the daughter of Mae Hadley. She has two sons, six granddaughters and longs to make a positive contribution to society.

Diane Metzger, 65, has earned four college degrees and won several writing awards. She has one son and one grandson and participates in many community service projects.

Thelma Nichols, 47, is the mother of two adult sons. A resident of Muncy for 27 years, she said she enjoys reading and most of all corresponding with her oldest son.

This is Not My Home
words by Howard Woodring, music by Naomi Blount

I’m a woman, I’m a grandmother,
I’m a daughter, I have a son,
I’m not an angel, I’m not the Devil,
I came to jail when I was so young.

I spend my time here inside these prison walls,
Lost friends to death, saw some go home,
Watched years pass by, people come and go,
While I do life without parole.

As the years go by, I hold back my tears
Cause if I cry, I give in to fear.
I must be strong, have to hold on,
Gotta get through another year.

I’m not saying that I’m not guilty.
I’m not saying I shouldn’t pay.
All I’m asking is for forgiveness.
Gotta have hope, I’ll be free someday.

Is there a place for me in the world out there?
Will they know or care that I have changed?
Is there redemption for the sins of my younger days?
‘Cause I have changed, Lord knows, I have changed.

Chorus:
I am a prisoner for a wrong I’ve done,
Doing time here, but this is not my home.
I dream of freedom, I hope for mercy,
Will I see my family, or die alone?
Our TEDx Muncy Facebook Page is TEDxMuncyStatePrison

Our Twitter page is @PAstateprisons

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
The staff and residents of the State Correctional Institution at Muncy

The Pennsylvania Correctional Industries