

# Correctional Newsfront

*The official newsletter of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections*



## 2015 News ~ January to March

Week of March 30...

### Mailroom Duties

The mailroom staff duties not only include abiding by the Department of Corrections policies, but also United States Postal Service, United Parcel Service and Federal Express rules and regulations.

The essential job functions include:

- The processing of both staff and inmates' outgoing and incoming mail, packages, newspapers, magazines and books.
- Operates postage meter and UPS machine.
- Maintains inmate mail records including personal data such as ID cards, birth certificates and social security cards.
- Uses computer data to sort by the block inmates mail and J-Pay e-mail letters.
- Re-route mail in which an inmate has been transferred or released.



The major objective is to ensure that no contraband enters into the institution. This is accomplished by scanning every item through an X-Ray machine first, then by opening all mail and packages according to DOC policy before it enters into the facility. The staff works closely with the Security Department and has aided in both past and present investigations. The cooperation with all departments when any issues arise is greatly appreciated.

Pictured here are SCI Retreat Mailroom staff (from left to right): Mail Inspector Supervisor Theresa Shibilski and Mail Inspectors Cathy Mackin and Carin Ives.

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## **THU Celebrates One-Year Anniversary**

January 15, 2015, marked the one-year anniversary of the opening of the Transitional Housing Unit at SCI Laurel Highlands.

This busy and successful year – headed by THU Unit Manager Susan Shoff, CCII/Reentry Specialist Rebecca Witt, CO1s Hessler, Latuch and Burgos – included many hours of answering questions, touring community corrections centers to learn about what the inmates go through upon release from prison, creating new programs on the housing unit for the inmates to participate in, and many, many other things.

Events that have taken place since the unit's opening include:

- presentations from former offenders
- the ability to video conference with a former offender from Harrisburg who now runs a non-profit recovery house
- provide THU residents with weekly Offender Workforce Development.
- provide a bi-weekly parenting group through Somerset County Children and Youth Services
- a job fair to help soon-to-be-released inmates
- resume and cover letter preparation
- visits by reentry parole agents who are familiar with using Career Link

Numerous other agencies have volunteered to educate the inmates, such as Good Will Industries of Conemaugh Valley, Renewal Inc., Geo Reentry Services, Boyer Financial, OVR, Career Link, Community Action/Tableland and Twin Lakes Center.

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## **Prison Employees Adopt a Veteran**

Several SCI Somerset employees thought it would be a nice gesture to adopt a veteran for the Easter season and asked everyone to buy items for a veteran living in a local VA home.

As you can see by the photo, there was an overwhelming response and on April 2, the gift bags will be delivered to 41 deserving veterans.



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## Teasdale Named Retreat's EOQ

SCI Retreat's Corrections Officer 1 Teasdale was recently named Employee of the Quarter for the first quarter. Officer Teasdale was nominated for this recognition because he assumes a key role in our Secure Residential Treatment Unit (SRTU) and volunteered to train all Retreat staff in Mental Health First Aid.

Superintendent DelBalso said Officer Teasdale possesses the "assertiveness, self-control and calm demeanor required to work effectively with the SRTU population."

Officer Teasdale started his career with the DOC in 2001 as a COT at SCI Retreat. He has also worked at the Training Academy. Officer Teasdale assists the Training Department as an instructor for Mental Health First Aid and also Security Level 5 Housing Unit Seminar. He has been working in the SRTU since it was opened as the Secure Special Needs Unit. He has been working in the Restricted Housing Unit since 2003.

Officer Teasdale would like to thank the entire team that works in the SRTU, from the CO's all the way up to the superintendent. Even though this is an individual award, Officer Teasdale says it was earned by having a team that works well together. He would also like to thank the people that have showed him ways to become a better officer.



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## Regional Superintendents Meeting Held

The regional superintendents meeting was recently held at SCI Rockview, and administrative staff were encouraged to attend. Topics at the meeting, which was held by Regional Deputy Secretary Tabb Bickell, included mental health initiatives, Prison Rape Elimination Act, safety initiatives, American Correctional Association accreditation, training, etc.



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## What is the DOC's Vivitrol Program?

In October 2013, the Department of Corrections – understanding the importance of medication assisted treatment to support an offender's reentry success – began piloting the use of Vivitrol to female offenders at the State Correctional Institution at Muncy who were returning to Allegheny, Dauphin and Philadelphia Counties upon their release from state prison.

Vivitrol is designed to reduce cravings for alcohol and/or opiates, and it acts as an antagonist blocking the ability to get high or feel euphoria. The administration of Vivitrol immediately prior to release from prison may allow eligible offenders the ability to focus on immediate reentry needs without also having to struggle with drug craving and relapse.

Offenders eligible for the pilot project must volunteer to participate and must be committed to remaining drug-free and will participate in community-based treatment services while taking Vivitrol. They also must have successfully completed alcohol or other drug treatment during their incarceration, are at medium to high risk to reoffend, have alcohol and/or opiate abuse/dependency and do not have any medical conditions that would interfere with the use of the drug.

Up to this point, 10 SCI Muncy inmates have received the Vivitrol injection prior to their release from prison. The injections were funded from by a Second Chance Act grant and totaled more than \$14,301. Inmates have been monitored but not for outcome purposes as it relates to Vivitrol use.

Beginning, April 1, 2015, the DOC will continue offering Vivitrol to women offenders at SCI Muncy and will expand the Vivitrol project to include 175 male offenders at SCIs Chester, Mahanoy and Pittsburgh, and will monitor those individuals for an

outcome evaluation. That evaluation will help the DOC to determine the efficacy and impact of Vivitrol on recidivism for offenders diagnosed with opioid and/or alcohol addiction issues.

No state monies will be used for the expansion of this project due to funding from a federal grant. The criteria for the female offenders that was mentioned previously also applies to the expanded group of 175 male offenders.

Vivitrol costs approximately \$1,000 per injection. The first injection is provided while the offender is still in state prison, and all follow-up injections are provided by a community provider.

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## Celebrating Women

The theme for SCI Graterford's 2nd Annual Women in History Month event was "Weaving the Stories of Women's Lives."

On Wednesday, March 25, 2015, a group of ladies and gentlemen gathered for tea to celebrate Women's History Month. The event was organized by staff at the State Correctional Institution at Graterford. Various teas, finger sandwiches and pastries were served.



Speakers included Superintendent Michael Wenerowicz, Superintendent Laurel Harry, Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Link, institution staff, as well as the "Tea Lady" herself (Ave-Marie Volinsky, owner of "Take Time for Tea"), providing a history of tea.

Guests were asked to write the names of motivational women or messages on ribbons to be woven together into tapestry artwork. The plan is to hang the artwork in the lobby of the new SCI Phoenix facility.

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## Lighting Up SCI Phoenix

As construction of SCI Phoenix – the replacement prison for SCI Graterford – continues, workers need to install the high-mast lighting for the prison’s perimeter.

For several hours on a recent Saturday, a helicopter was used to perform this work. Here are photos of the day’s events...



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# Cleaning Up Reading

As part of the annual Reading Spring Clean Up Project, residents of ADAPPT recently helped to beautify the city by cleaning up trash.



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## Pine Grove Holds Community Volunteerism Forum

On March 20, through the combined efforts of Religious Services, the volunteer coordinator and the Reentry Services Office, SCI Pine Grove conducted its first annual Community Volunteerism Forum at the Church of the Brethren in Indiana, Pa.

Despite inclement weather, a variety of volunteer attendees were provided with the opportunity to mingle, update paperwork, review PREA information, explore programming and develop workshops.

Several current volunteer relationships were rejuvenated during the forum and many new relationships were developed making this event an overall success.



SCI Pine Grove Chaplain Kirt Anderson and Pastor Daniel Carpenter, who will volunteer at the prison with Yokefellowship.

SCI Pine Grove Re-entry Coordinator Stephanie Ackley with Dr. Lenall Thomas, CEO of The Center for Family Excellence in Pittsburgh, and Mary Henning, her administrative assistant. Their purpose in coming was to try to organize some sort of arrangement where they can provide reunification workshops/services to individuals returning to Allegheny County.



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## Mercer Holds Career Fair for Inmates



In early March, SCI Mercer's Education Department held a career fair in the visiting room for inmates within one year of their minimum sentence date.

The event was organized as an effort to assist inmates with making community connections in preparation for their imminent release from prison.

The event was attended by 152 inmates who were able to connect with eight local organizations, including PennLine, Lindenpointe at Butler County Community College, Erie Community Corrections Center, Riverside Community Corrections Center, CareerLink, GEO Reentry Services, Gaudenzia Erie Inc., Renewal Inc., SCI Mercer Library's Career Center, SCI Mercer Inmate Employment Office.

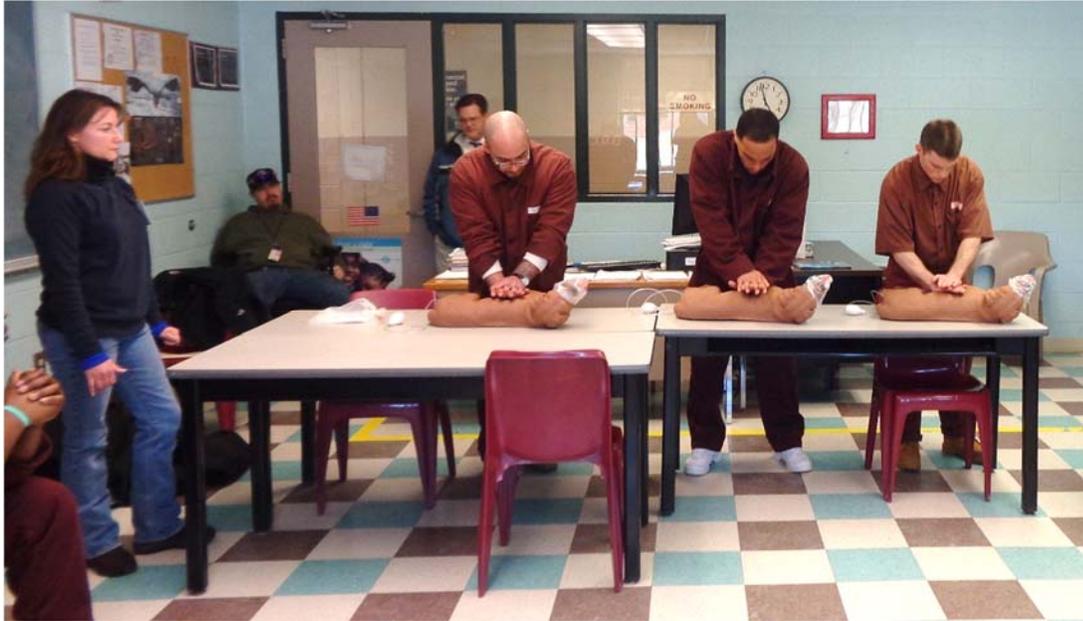
The agencies enjoyed a tour of the facility, visiting the various areas of the Education Department, as well as the Vocational program classrooms.

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## Animal CPR

Part of the FIDOS Program at SCI Coal Township includes dog handlers recently being certified in animal CPR.

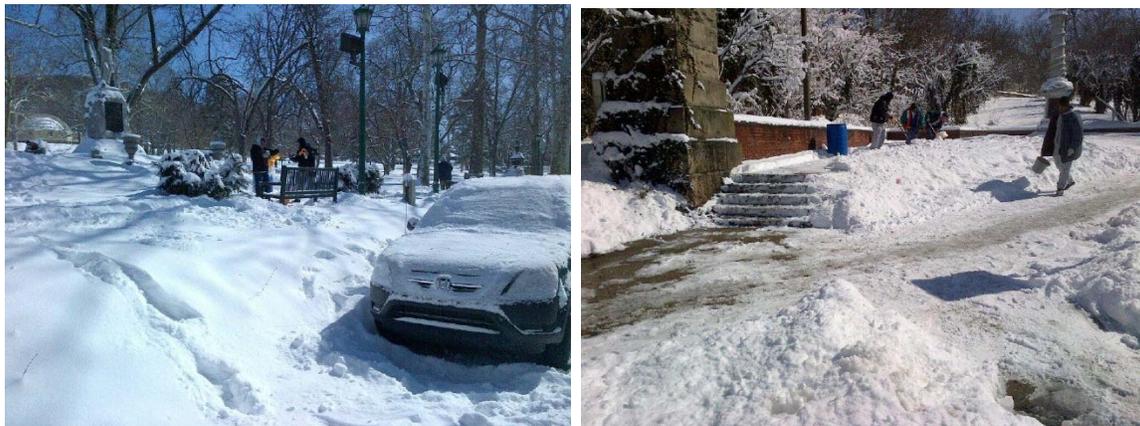
Pet CPR was sponsored by Pet Supplies "Plus" and provided by BowwowBeauty.com



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## More Community Service – ADAPPT Residents

In March ADAPPT residents and employees helped to shovel snow for the City of Reading. Here are the before and after photos...



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Week of March 2...

## THU Friends and Family Day Held at Laurel Highlands

On February 26, 2015, SCI Laurel Highlands hosted its first Transitional Housing Unit Friends and Family Day. The event included several of the voluntary participants in the program as well as their family members, some of whom traveled from neighboring states and from across the state to attend.



"I believe that it is in the best interest of this program, and its mission, to actively involve the family members," Reentry Specialist Rebecca Witt said. "Providing family members with the opportunity to get a firsthand glimpse into what their loved ones are working on while incarcerated was very impactful."

The day was kicked off by a welcome message from the unit team headed by Unit Manager Susan Shoff, Reentry Specialist Rebecca Witt and Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Bill Mailman. A lunch was then served with a blessing provided by Reverend David Klink before a panel of volunteer service providers addressed the families. Panelists included Nancy Barron, Family Support Specialist from Somerset County Children and Youth Services, who provides a parenting workshop; and Rob Warren, Johnstown CCC, who offers offender workforce development. Additionally, Julian Rubeo from the DOC's Bureau of Community Corrections and PA Board of Probation and Parole employees Rich Podguski and Jason Grow also spoke to the families and answered questions.

The event was well received by all who attended and was appreciated by the families who were present to offer their support to the offenders.

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## Pressley Ridge Donations

February 2015 was a month full of charity at Riverside Community Corrections Center (CCC)!

Riverside CCC residents and staff donated boxes and bags full of non-perishable food items to Pressley Ridge, a nationwide organization whose goal is to serve society by caring for its most vulnerable members and who is committed to do all in their power to



improve the lives of children and families everywhere.

Riverside CCC residents and staff donated to Pressley Ridge's Backpack Giveback program. This program allows for the children of Pressley Ridge's school to take home food on the weekends in order to sustain and promote nutrition.

"This was successful collection that allowed Riverside CCC to connect with another community agency," Corrections Counselor Dan Coulehan said. "We look forward to working with Pressley Ridge again in the future."

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Week of Feb. 23...

## **THU Friends and Family Day**

On Feb. 26, 2015, SCI Laurel Highlands hosted its first Transitional Housing Unit Friends and Family Day. The event included several of the voluntary participants in program as well as their family members, some of whom traveled from neighboring states and from across the state to attend.

The day was kicked off by a welcome message from the unit team headed by Unit Manager Susan Shoff, Reentry Specialist Rebecca Witt and the Deputy Superintendent of Centralized Services Bill Mailman. A lunch was then served with a blessing provided by Reverend David Klink before a panel of volunteer service providers addressed the families. Those individuals included Nancy Barron, family support specialist from Somerset County Children and Youth Services, who provides a parenting workshop; and Rob Warren from the Johnstown Community Corrections Center, who offers Offender Workforce Development. Additionally, a representative from the Bureau of Community Corrections, Julian Rubeo, was on site, as were Rich Podguski and Jason Grow from Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole to speak to the families and answer questions.

The event was well received by all who attended and appreciated by the families who were present to offer their support to the offenders. Reentry Specialist, Rebecca Witt, said, "I believe that it is in the best interest of this program, and its mission, to actively involve the family members. Being able to provide them (family members) with the opportunity to get a firsthand glimpse into what their loved ones are working on while incarcerated was very impactful."

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Week of Feb. 16...

## **Celebrating BHM and the History, Culture of African Americans**

SCI Coal Township's Rev. Michael Comick recently was an honoree at a Feb. 18, celebration of Black History Month by the City of Allentown.

Rev. Comick was selected because of his community leadership, hard work and dedication.



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## Patriot Award

SCI Graterford Captains Stephen Campbell and Etta Williams were recently awarded the prestigious Patriot Award by the Pennsylvania Committee for Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve.

Corrections Officer Raymond Brown nominated his shift commanders for the award for their continuing efforts in supporting their military obligations.

The ESGR is the lead Defense Department office promoting cooperation and understanding between civilian employers and their National Guard and Reserve employees.

Established in 1972, ESGR operates within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs. ESGR develops and promotes supportive work environments for service members in the Reserve Components through outreach, recognition and educational opportunities that increase awareness of applicable laws and resolves employer conflicts between the services.



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# Explaining the Importance of Fire Safety

SCI Rockview Safety Manager Douglas Sampsel was recently invited by the Centre County Christian Academy to do a presentation for the school's Fire Safety Week.

Sampsel was accompanied by Facility Maintenance Manager John Hayles. The pair discussed both home and school fire safety, and Hayles dressed in fire fighter gear while Sampsel explained the gear, its necessity and its function and use.



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**EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER**  
**1<sup>st</sup> QUARTER - 2015**



**Corrections Counselor Amanda Aungst** was selected as Employee of the Quarter due to her positive attitude, commitment to excellence and willingness to lead by example. She has been employed by the Department of Corrections since September 2013, and in that short time has set a fine example of the kind of employee Wernersville Community Corrections Center is proud to employ. She is reliable and can always be depended on to go that extra mile. She is patient, takes the time to teach new tasks, comes to work with an open mind and is well respected by her fellow coworkers. **CONGRATS MISS A!**

Week of Feb. 9...

## Celebrating Black History Month

February has always been the month to recognize and celebrate significant contributions of African Americans in the United States. But at SCI Graterford, co-workers were able to become unified in the workplace by celebrating the accomplishments of those great people through poems, biographies, sharing of recipes, as well as the opportunity to enjoy a Soul Food Luncheon prepared by staff members.



Captain James Johnson spoke about crossing cultural barriers and the changes throughout history. Special guest speaker was SCI Chester Superintendent John Thomas who spoke about how diversity specifically affects us in the correctional environment and that even the smallest things can help shape change.

The celebration was closed by Superintendent Mike Wenerowicz, who also agreed that history and staying culturally diverse in the workplace is of great importance.



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## From Cost Savings to Cupcakes

SCI Graterford's food service employees were tasked with finding savings within their budget. Through their efforts, the prison saved a considerable amount of money through some very basic changes over the past year.

Those changes required them to challenge the prison's culture and to challenge the process. Their work began with them watching the inventory more closely and ordering only what was actually needed.

They also found items that they had on hand that could be used as menu substitutes, further helping to keep spending down.

Food preparation methods changed to a "batch method" allowing them to only make what was needed to feed everyone, and they were creative and resourceful in the use of leftovers.



Using a meal management system, food service employees identified trends in meal attendance, which allows them to be even more effective in production of only what is needed.

Elimination of Styrofoam trays - unless there is an emergent reason to do so - resulted in food service staff being better able to control loss and better manage the food stuff on hand.

The result has been fewer grievances and complaints about food from the inmates and cost savings for the prison.

To show appreciation to the employees for their work in this area, Deputy Superintendent Cynthia Link, at no expense to the prison, worked with retired Unit Manager Andretta Golden to have Golden make some of her famous cupcakes to "treat" food service employees.

The "Cupcake Festival," as it now is known, was just a small way to thank this hard-working group of corrections professionals, who sometimes go unnoticed.

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# What is a Critical Incident Manager?

By Lieutenant W. Robbins, SCI Retreat

The critical incident manager (CIM) at state prisons are individuals that ensure that employees at our prisons are prepared and ready to handle any emergency situations that may arise. The CIM also ensures that his/her prison's emergency plans are current and that there are procedures in place to respond to a variety of emergencies, manmade or natural.



Throughout each year, the CIM coordinates and conducts a variety of exercises and drill, some of which involve multiple outside agencies such as the state police, county EMS and local fire and rescue departments. The exercises and drills are designed to help prepare staff, as well as to give other first responders the opportunity to become familiar with the prison grounds.

CIMs also work closely with the superintendent or incident commander when the Incident Command System is activated. During an ICS event, the CIM serves as liaison officer, whose primary responsibility is to advise and coordinate with outside agencies, such as PEMA and county emergency management agencies, etc.

Through the efforts of each state prison's CIMs, our employees are better trained and prepared to respond to emergencies, bettering our chances of keeping a minor incident minor and to keep major incidents from escalating.

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## Understanding Health Insurance

On Feb. 10, 65 SCI Pine Grove inmates participated in a two-hour workshop intended to prepare them for return to society. Health care representatives spoke to the inmates about knowing when they need to seek health insurance, the types and sources available and eligibility requirements.



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## Retreat Employee Appointed to State Board

In December, SCI Retreat's barber teacher Robert Kingkiner was selected to serve a two-year term on the State Board of Barber Examiners. The State Board of Barber Examiners oversees barber licensing and helps protect the public from unethical, unsanitary, unsafe and illegal practices in the barber field.

Currently, Kingkiner has a 100% pass rate of students who have taken the barber exam. He is an excellent asset to the DOC barber program and SCI Retreat's Education Department.

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Week of Feb. 2...

## **Corrections Department Issues State Intermediate Punishment Progress Report**

(Feb. 2) – Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel today announced the release of the DOC’s State Intermediate Punishment (SIP) Program 2015 Performance Report.

“This report shows that SIP is showing some positive recidivism reduction results,” Secretary Wetzel said. “Offenders in SIP have a lower recidivism rate than comparable offenders who serve traditional sentences during three years after release from prison, and while this is good news, we continue to see that SIP is underutilized. Only 24% of eligible cases are being referred. If more were referred, we could see a greater cost savings.”

Wetzel said that SIP saves \$33,250 per participant and has saved the commonwealth a total of approximately \$79.9 million since the program was started.

“At a time when everyone is looking to decrease costs and save money, programs like SIP are huge cost-savers,” Wetzel added. “In addition to saving money for the commonwealth, SIP also helps offenders break their addictions and change their behaviors resulting in their being more pro-social and crime free. Even after all of the work done to educate judges, district attorneys and public defenders about SIP, why more counties don’t take advantage of this win-win program is puzzling to me.”

Highlights of this report include:

- The 3-year overall recidivism rate is 10 percentage points lower for SIP participants than for a comparable group of inmates who do not go through SIP (42% vs. 52%).
- SIP saves \$33,250 per participant and has saved the commonwealth a total of approximately \$79.9 million since the program was started.
- In 2014, the new SIP-HOPE initiative was implemented. The initiative is based on the Hawaii HOPE program, and is intended to build even better results for SIP by utilizing certain and swift sanctions for drug relapse in the community phases of SIP.

The SIP program was created in response to concerns about the link between substance abuse and crime and the finding that many persons commit crimes while under the influence of alcohol and/or other drugs. SIP was designed as a sentencing alternative, with the goal of enhancing public safety through a period of incarceration while at the same time reducing recidivism through intensive substance abuse treatment. Act 112 of 2004, which created the SIP program, was

signed into law by Governor Rendell on Nov. 19, 2004, and became effective on May 18, 2005. Act 122 of 2012 expanded and modified SIP eligibility requirements.

SIP consists of four phases and lasts a total of 24 months.

- Phase 1 involves confinement in a state correctional institution (SCI) for a period of no less than seven months. Currently, all male SIP participants are sent to either the Quehanna Boot Camp or SCI Chester, and female SIP participants are sent to either the Quehanna Boot Camp or SCI Cambridge Springs for programming. During this first phase, at least four months are spent in a therapeutic community (TC) treatment program, which is an intensive inpatient alcohol and other drug treatment program.
- Phase 2 involves a minimum of two months in a community-based TC treatment program.
- Phase 3 involves a minimum of six months of outpatient addiction treatment. During this period, the participant may be housed in a community corrections center or placed in an approved transitional residence.
- Phase 4 consists of DOC supervised reintegration into the community for the balance of the 24 months of the program. In September 2014, SIP-HOPE was introduced into phases 3 and 4.

The three key components of the HOPE model are: 1) clearly defined and communicated expectations of rules; 2) close, enhanced monitoring of program participants for adherence to the rules, and; 3) swift and consistently-delivered, but moderate and graduated, sanctions for each and every infraction of the rules. The HOPE model is intended to deter rule violations and reduce recidivism, with the swiftness and certainty of punishment mattering more than the severity of punishment.

In accordance with Act 112 of 2004, which created the State Intermediate Punishment (SIP) Program, the DOC is required to provide the Judiciary Committees of the Pennsylvania General Assembly with a program performance report in alternating years with the Pennsylvania Commission on Sentencing. This report provides current descriptive statistics and performance analysis of the SIP program and is available on the DOC's website at [www.cor.pa.gov](http://www.cor.pa.gov) under "Statistics-Reports."

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## Recognizing Handlers and Staff Volunteers

On Jan. 27, SCI Smithfield held its 2015 CPL Puppy Banquet to recognize inmate handlers and staff volunteers.

With the help of staff, the handlers were able to select the menu for the banquet and volunteer to speak about what being in the puppy program means to them.

Several individuals from the DOC's Central Office, the prison's executive staff and the owner of Faithful Friends Veterinary Care attended the event.

Canine Partners For Life (CPL) staff were unable to attend due to the weather.

At the gathering, Superintendent Kevin Kauffman spoke about the importance of the program for the institution and as part of his own life.

Darlene Sullivan, executive director of CPL, sent a thank you letter expressing her gratitude for the handlers' and volunteers' service.

Four inmate handlers spoke of how the program has made them better and what it means to them to give back. Each handler was provided a free photograph with their pup in front of a newly painted "Park Background" and a personalized "My Pup Brag Book" to hold their pup photos.



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## Riverside CCC Employees, Inmates Donate to Parenting Program

Throughout the month of January 2015, Riverside Community Corrections Center (CCC) residents and staff collected diapers, baby food, baby wipes and small toys for NorthShore Community Alliance's Parenting Program. Once again, the residents took an amazing interest in the opportunity to donate to such a great cause and organization. More than 20 packs of diapers were donated, along with many packs of baby wipes and containers of baby food. NorthShore Community Alliance, which is located on the North Side of Pittsburgh, is very appreciative of Riverside CCC's donations, as well as our new found partnership. Riverside CCC looks forward to working with NorthShore Community Alliance again in the future.



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Week of Jan. 26...

## **Department of Corrections Facility First in State to Achieve PREA Compliance**

Harrisburg – Department of Corrections Secretary John E. Wetzel announces that he received notification that the State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh has met all applicable Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards following an audit that was conducted earlier in 2014.

“We are pleased to have our first facility become PREA compliant,” Secretary John E. Wetzel said. “It signifies that our employees have been successful in their work to increase sexual safety in our prisons and to enforce our agency’s zero tolerance policy.”

The agency’s zero tolerance policy dictates that anyone who engages in, fails to report or knowingly condones sexual harassment or sexual abuse of an inmate shall be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Employees also are required to immediately report any inappropriate staff-inmate behavior and are protected against any form of retaliation for doing so.

Wetzel said that this audit is only the first of many. SCI Muncy, located in Lycoming County, was audited in December; and in 2015, nearly half of the state’s prisons are scheduled to be audited.

Independent auditors trained and certified by the Department of Justice conduct PREA audits. They look to ensure that victims are treated appropriately when an allegation is made and that prison employees follow a consistent course of action each time. Auditors also ensure that staff and inmates are educated about sexual abuse and PREA.

“During the SCI Pittsburgh audit, which was conducted June 30 through July 3, 2014, the team toured the facility looking to identify any areas that are not compliant with the standards and observed and randomly interviewed staff to see that standards are being implemented appropriately,” said DOC PREA Coordinator Jennifer Feicht.

Feicht said the audit included measurement against 43 national standards that ensure the prison has appropriate procedures and documentation in place; that all employees are current with required training; and that inmates have been given the required education and assessments. PREA standards define sexual abuse and sexual harassment to include any form of sexual activity, consensual or otherwise, among inmates or staff-on-inmate.

SCI Pittsburgh’s audit is good for a period of three years, and the audit report will be made publicly available on the DOC’s website once it is received.

The Prison Rape Elimination Act, was signed into law by President George W. Bush on Sept. 4, 2003. The final regulatory standards to implement PREA went into effect on Aug. 20, 2012.

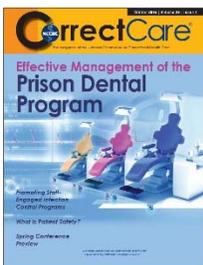
Since the new regulations were published by the U.S. attorney general in August 2012, all states are required to take a number of actions to prevent, detect, reduce and respond to sexual abuse in confinement facilities. Among these are:

- establishment of a zero-tolerance standard for sexual harassment and sexual assault
- training and education of correctional staff, contractors and volunteers about the nature of prison sexual violence, and how to prevent, detect and respond to incidents of sexual assault
- thorough and appropriate risk assessment and screening of offenders to keep apart potential aggressors and potential victims
- holding corrections administrators accountable for the occurrence of prison sexual violence in their facilities
- disciplining and prosecution of corrections staff who perpetrate sexual abuse against an inmate
- collection and reporting data on prison sexual violence

To learn more about PREA as it relates to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, individuals should visit this page of the DOC's website:  
[http://www.cor.pa.gov/Administration/PrisonRapeEliminationAct\(PREA\)/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.cor.pa.gov/Administration/PrisonRapeEliminationAct(PREA)/Pages/default.aspx)

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Week of Jan. 19...



## Management of Prison Dental Programs

The Winter 2015 issue of CorrectCare®, a magazine produced by the National Commission on Correctional Health Care (available at [www.ncchc.org](http://www.ncchc.org)), features an article about the management of prison dental programs written by PA DOC's chief of dental services, Dino R. Angelici, DMD.

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Week of Jan. 12...

## **Assisting Northumberland County Prison**

(Jan. 15) -- Following a devastating fire that destroyed the Northumberland County Prison on Jan. 14, DOC officials assisted the county by taking custody of all of the county prison inmates. Females were sent to SCI Muncy in Lycoming County, and males were sent to SCI Coal Township in Northumberland County.

DOC Secretary John Wetzel commended Northumberland County Prison employees for their work in successfully evacuating staff and inmates from the burning complex.

"We stand at the ready to help the officials and the citizens of Northumberland County through this challenging time," Wetzel said.

Inmates transferred to the two state prisons without incident later on Jan. 14, and they were medically reviewed, fed and given a safe place to sleep. All of the inmates' immediate needs were met and continue to be met.

Today, inmates will continue to be processed into the state prison system. DOC officials expect it to take about a week before any information about visits and telephone calls can be arranged. Inmates were given the opportunity today to make one free telephone call.

Special phone numbers and e-mail accounts were established for friends and families of inmates. They are:

**SCI Coal Township:**

(570) 644-7890, extension #2406  
RA-CRNRTHMBLNDSCO-COA@pa.gov

**SCI Muncy:**

(570) 546-3171, extensions #280, #311 or #313  
RA-CRNRTHMBLNDSCO-MUN@pa.gov

NOTE: DOC officials ask that individuals use e-mail to contact the prison rather than the prison phones.

The DOC also created a page on its website to provide continually-updated information on these inmates. This information is at [www.cor.pa.gov](http://www.cor.pa.gov)

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## **Justice Reform Efforts Result in Declining State Prison Population**

*Governor Corbett Announces Historic Prison Population Reduction*

**(Jan. 12)** – Four years ago, Pennsylvania's state prison population was expected to top more than 56,000 inmates by the end of 2014.

Instead, Governor Tom Corbett announced today, the agency ended the calendar year with 50,756 inmates – the lowest inmate population since June 2009.

“The utilization of Justice Reinvestment initiatives are producing measureable results,” Gov. Corbett said. “These numbers prove that our reforms are working.”

Governor Corbett began leading this reform by ordering the corrections system to analyze and improve.

“The decrease in prison population is a joint accomplishment and the result of internal efficiencies and collaboration between the Department of Corrections, the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, county judicial systems and many others in the criminal justice continuum,” Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Secretary John E. Wetzel said.

**“The Department of Corrections ended the 2014 calendar year with 50,756 inmates – the lowest inmate population since June 2009.”**

**--John Wetzel**

Last year alone, the number of people held inside a state prison was down 908 inmates from the previous year, Wetzel said. This number does not include those inmates held in secured halfway houses or other contracted county facilities.

One of the important factors in decreasing the population numbers, Wetzel said, is reducing the backlog in the parole process. This enables more offenders to meet the parole board, have their cases reviewed and, when appropriate, subsequently released in a timely manner. Approximately 75 percent of releases are the result of a paroling action.

In addition, the length of incarceration time has been reduced for parole violators. Should a parole violator be returned to state custody, the length of incarceration has been reduced from an average 12-to-14 months to a maximum cap of six months for a first violation.

Also in 2014, the Department of Corrections experienced the lowest number of court commitments in seven years. Specifically, there were a total of 10,321 commitments in 2014, compared to 11,520 commitments in 2013.

“Fewer court commitments combined with policy changes that enable Pennsylvania to both reduce spending and increase public safety are beginning to take shape,” Wetzel added. “All of this, it should be noted, is occurring while the crime rate continues to go down.”

To reduce recidivism, the Department of Corrections looked at ways to help ex-offenders succeed after they were released from prison and returning to their communities.

The Department of Corrections initiated performance-based incentive programs for halfway houses contracted by the state, offering rewards for the private operators who hold down recidivism and revoking the contracts of those who don't. Halfway houses were also required to provide mental health services.

To give offenders more tools to succeed after release, the Department of Corrections also:

- Made available guides and maps to community resources, easily accessible on computers and mobile apps.
- Developed a housing voucher program to provide security deposits and rental aid for low-risk inmates whose lack of a place to go left them in halfway houses despite release recommendations.
- The Department of Corrections also partnered with the Department of Transportation to ensure inmates leaving the state prison system had state identification cards required to access many services. Last year, more than 9,000 inmates had IDs when they left prison.

In addition, the Department of Corrections partnered with the Department of Labor and Industry to aid the prison system's vocational offerings and to better prepare ex-offenders for the workforce upon release. It established structured mentoring through new contracts with nonprofits and faith-based community organizations.

"In 2014, the inmate population within the state correctional institutions decreased by 908," said Dr. Bret Bucklen, the Department of Corrections' director of Planning, Research and Statistics. "This also was the largest one-year drop in our population since 1971, and only the fourth time in the past 40 years that our population has shown an annual decrease rather than an increase."

An analysis of the prison population done in September 2010, projected the state's inmate population at approximately 56,082 by December 2014, Bucklen said.

"At the same time Governor Corbett initiated the Justice Reinvestment Initiative, he urged all of us in the criminal justice system to reach their goals in only a matter of months, where in other states, similar efforts take years," Wetzel said. "By taking a bi-partisan, participatory planning approach, this process should allow us to build on the progress we've made during this administration.

"We are continuing in the right direction thanks to everyone's efforts," Wetzel said. "I especially want to acknowledge the leadership of Executive Deputy Secretary

Shirley Moore Smeal, who has headed up the internal improvement efforts for the Department of Corrections.”

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Week of Jan. 5...

## **Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Settles Lawsuit with the Disability Rights Network of Pennsylvania**

*Department Continues to Implement Measures to Enhance Treatment and Care of Inmates Suffering from Serious Mentally Illness*

**Harrisburg** (Jan. 6) – The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) has reached settlement with the Disability Rights Network (DRN) of Pennsylvania on a lawsuit that the organization filed in March 2013 concerning the treatment of inmates diagnosed with serious mental illness (SMI). DRN is a federally-mandated organization that advocates for the civil rights of individuals with disabilities.

The settlement agreement outlines procedures to divert inmates with serious mental illness who have demonstrated problematic behavior to specialized treatment units where they will receive enhanced mental health care, programs and services, instead of traditional restricted housing units. The agreement calls for the appointment of an independent technical compliance consultant who will independently assess and report on the DOC’s implementation of the agreement’s terms. The term of the agreement will extend for two to five years depending upon how quickly the DOC can successfully implement the agreement’s terms.

Pennsylvania Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel applauded the agreement, stressing that “the DOC and the DRN share a common goal – the safe and appropriate delivery of mental health services for inmates who suffer from serious mental illness.”

Wetzel described the agreement as another example of the DOC “stepping up to do the right thing” to address the issue of the DOC’s burgeoning population of inmates with serious mental illness.

“Unfortunately, prisons and jails have become the defacto system responsible for treating the mentally ill. While we continue to step up and face this challenge, we also must continue to call for better and more abundant mental health services in the community. Specialty courts, such as mental health and veterans courts, provide vital treatment services where they should be delivered -- in the communities – and they divert such individuals from entering our system in the first place,” Wetzel said.

Under Secretary Wetzel, the DOC has made significant improvements to its mental health system which include:

- **Establishing a Centralized Office for the Administration of Mental Health Care**
  - Establishing a Psychology Office at the Central Office level to centrally promulgate policies, track data, review incidents and provide

appropriate direction for issues related to the department's delivery of mental health services.

- Improving requirements and procedures for clinical reviews of self-injurious behaviors, suicide attempts and completed suicides.
  - Developing a centralized tracking system of all inmate self-injurious behaviors, serious suicide attempts and similar extraordinary occurrences.
  - Enhancing its special needs psychiatric review team through the use of various types of data to improve mental health services at the systemic, institutional and individual levels.
- **Development of New Misconducts Procedures to Divert Inmates with SMI from Restricted Housing Units**
    - The development of new treatment units and implementation of more robust misconduct diversionary procedures for inmates with SMI has resulted in a steep decline in the number of inmates with SMI who are currently housed in restricted units for disciplinary reasons. Currently, less than 150 inmates who are diagnosed as SMI are housed in restrictive housing units, down from nearly 850 inmates previously.
  - **Vera Segregation Reduction Project**
    - The DOC has partnered with the nationally recognized Vera Institute of Justice. Vera's Segregation Reduction Project will examine the DOC's use of segregation for the overall inmate population and develop strategies to safely reduce the use of costly segregation through training, policy modifications and other initiatives.
  - **Enhanced Classification and Treatment for Seriously Mentally Ill Offenders**
    - The DOC has updated its definition of SMI to better capture and track those individuals who suffer from the most severe forms of mental illness, requiring the most treatment services. Because the new definition is diagnosis driven, it better identifies individuals in need of services and ensures that they are connected to needed resources. For those inmates who require intensive treatment, a recovery model individual treatment plan is generated – with the inmate's participation – to identify and isolate certain treatment goals that the inmate and treatment team will strive to meet together.
  - **Certified Peer Support Specialist Program**
    - DOC's certified peer support specialist program has trained more than 300 inmates to provide support and counseling services to other inmates on a variety of issues, including participation in mental health treatment.

- **Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) Training**
  - CIT training, first used to educate police officers to respond to mental health issues that they encounter in the community, has been modified by the DOC into an extensive multi-day training course to provide our correctional officers with an understanding of the ways in which mental illness may affect the inmates they deal with daily, and provide them with skills to deescalate crisis situations. Trainings occur several times per year and classes typically include dozens of officers and corrections personnel. Those officers whose position within institutions put them in close contact with the mentally ill have been prioritized for this critical training. The DOC is planning to offer this training to the Pennsylvania county prisons in the future.
  
- **Mental Health First Aid Training**
  - The DOC is on track to have all of its employees trained in mental health first aid by the end of fiscal year 2014. The training equips employees to understand, recognize and respond to the symptoms of mental illness.
  
- **Improved Treatment Units**
  - The DOC developed several new specialized units to address the different treatment needs of inmates with SMI, including Secure Residential Treatment Units, Behavior Management Units, Residential Treatment Units and Diversionary Treatment Units. The variety of treatment units ensures that inmates are receiving individualized care specific to their particular needs regardless of their security level. Additionally, inmates in specialized units receive – at a minimum, and often far in excess of – 20 hours of structured and unstructured programs out of their cells each week; for those inmates in general population, treatment units have even greater out-of-cell program opportunities.
  
- **MHM performance contracting**
  - The contract with MHM Services for inmate mental health care includes performance-based incentives and penalties. The contract provides incentives for positive outcomes for offenders to further the DOC's goal that inmates leaving the system are better than when they entered it. The contract incentivizes treatment that reduces misconduct and mental health recommitment rates for the mentally ill. Additionally, MHM will be required to maintain or exceed an established baseline medication compliance rate.
  
- **Partnering with NAMI, Rutgers, etc.**
  - The DOC has partnered with various advocacy groups and leading researchers in the field of mental illness to analyze current systems, complete a mapping of the prison's mental health system from reception to reentry and develop training and initiatives to improve

mental health care. Partners include the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill and Rutgers University.

- **Development of Suicide Prevention Committees**

- Each state correctional institution has instituted a Suicide Prevention Committee, which includes a multi-disciplinary team of mental health and security personnel, to review serious incidents of self-harm, attempted and completed suicides. These committees will monitor policy compliance, conduct training exercises and make recommendations for improvements to policy and procedure.
- Each state prison is required to conduct suicide response drills aimed at improving response times and best practices of all employees;

- **Trauma Screening**

- All female inmates received at SCI Muncy will undergo a thorough trauma screening upon their reception to the institution and be connected with appropriate follow-up services.

The agreement can be viewed on the DOC's website at

<http://www.cor.pa.gov/Administration/Newsroom/Pages/News-Releases.aspx>

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## Coal Township Names Employee of the Quarter



SCI Coal Township congratulates Steph Weikel, information technology generalist, on her nomination and selection as Employee of the Quarter (EoQ).

Weikel began her DOC employment at SCI Coal Township as a clerk typist in August 2005. In December 2007, Steph was promoted to information technology technician, and in January 2010 promoted to her current position as IT Generalist.

Steph was nominated by her coworkers for this quarter's EoQ for her meritorious service, outstanding work ethic and dedicated commitment to fellow employees and the institution as a whole. Superintendent Vincent Mooney congratulated Steph and thanked her for her continued superlative work.

Steph was presented with her award at the Administration's Staff meeting.

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