Correctional Newsfront

The official newsletter of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections

pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

2016 News ~ October to December

Week of December 19…

The "Five R's" Because REENTRY Alone Isn't Enough

Submitted by Secretary John Wetzel

When one thinks about the herculean task Pennsylvanians need us to do to improve their safety, it's quite sobering. Each year, nearly 20,000 individuals, largely under educated, over 70% addicted, 28% suffering from a mental illness, will come through our front door. Our task? To have them leave us better than we received them. But wait, that's not all. Understand that while we are doing that, we are also confronted with the real issues that occur inside prison such as security threat groups, contraband, fights, etc.

So why does this matter? That one is simple; we are also going to release nearly 20,000 people to each and every county in Pennsylvania. You see, public safety for us, means more than just making sure people don't escape, rather it means that we help people to not commit more crimes.

Simply doing Reentry is not enough. As a matter of fact, I would argue that Reentry is just the first step, and a different definition than you may think. I want us to think about our job is the Five R's

Reentry

> Reentry in this context actually begins with classification. How can we rehabilitate someone if we don't first understand why they committed the crime? Programs in prison are the next step, using evidence based programming to address those needs. But an often ignored aspect of "reentry" is the accountability of ensuring that individuals understand that there are both rules and consequences for not following them. Finally, the essential role of our staff modeling appropriate behavior. This is reentry. Preparing someone to reenter.

Reengagement

> Reengagement is a vehicle or strategy and the primary focus of community corrections. Literally 50% of every individual who will recidivate will do so in

the first year. So reengaging an individual in the community is essential. I believe that every day someone stays out they are less likely to come back.

Reintegration

This step occurs when an individual is reintegrated back into the community. While they may be on supervision, they are living independently and functioning as a citizen. At best, they are back with their families, working and being a productive citizen. Estimates are that there are over 100 million Americans with a criminal record, many of whom, absent a background check, we would not know were criminally involved.

Redemption

The definition of "Redemption" is to clear by payment. Redemption occurs when an individual has returned to the community and made it. They have become productive citizens, and have paid their debt to society.

Not coincidentally, Dr. Al Blumstein, along with Dr. Kiminori Nakamura, did a study called "Redemption in an Era of Widespread Criminal Background Checks (https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/226872.pdf) that finds that a criminally involved individual, after living crime free, actually has a LOWER likelihood of committing a crime than the general population. Redemption is not only possible, but likely when we get the previous stages correct.

Restoration

The final step is Restoration, of fully restoring all the rights of citizenship to an individual, to include removing the collateral consequences of a criminal conviction. While this one may have less to do with the DOC, given the Blumstein study, it certainly makes sense.

Colleagues, our work is critical to the citizens of this great state; having individuals leave our facility and Reenter, get Reengaged, Reintegrate into the community, be Redeemed through good behavior, and, finally be Restored, as full citizens is our goal every day.

--John Wetzel, PA DOC Secretary
December 2016

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Retreat Helps Ruff Rescue

This year, the Ruff Rescue -- Hope and Joy's former family -- was in **dire** need for dog toys for Christmas. The rescue continues to receive litters of puppies, some were found in boxes by dumpsters and some were abandoned off the side of highways. It was the rescue's wish to have their puppies experience a somewhat "normal Christmas" and allow all of their puppies to receive toys from Santa Paws. The rescue also expressed a need for: puppy training pads, tuff chew toys, wet dog food and dog sweaters/boots. Retreat's employees came to the rescue and donated tons of items.

(Left to right) CO1 Bob Jesse, dogs Joy and Hope and Clerk Typist Tara Hoey.

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Retreat Employees Make Christmas Wishes Come True!

This holiday season the SCI Retreat Empowerment Committee sponsored a gift tree for children who receive services at Friendship House of Scranton.

The Friendship House provides quality programs and services designed to enhance the emotional, behavioral and social well-being of children and families.

The Christmas tree had ornaments with the “wish list” of children who were identified by the program to participate. Retreat employees took the ornaments and fulfilled their Christmas wishes!

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Retreat Employees Collect for Toys for Tots

For the second consecutive year, SCI Retreat was asked to partner with the Marine Corp Reserve of Wyoming Valley for Toys For Tots.

This year, employees collected two large boxes full of new and unwrapped toys!

Pictured left to right, are: Lt. Jim Provow, CO Bob Jesse, Sgt. Pastore, Deputy Kevin Ransom and Capt. Glen Dukes

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Holiday Cards Provide Cheer for Nursing Home Residents

Recently, SCI Mercer employees delivered 112 inmate-made holiday cards to the residents at Avalon Springs Nursing Center in Mercer.

This year marks the third year that SCI Mercer has delivered cards to the nursing center.

The residents were very appreciative to receive them, and for some, it is the only holiday card they will receive.

Pictured is ABE Teacher Stephanie Cubberley with residents of the nursing home.

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Benner Township Employees Participate in Angel Tree Project

SCI Benner Township employees participated in the Angel Tree Project. This project provided 72 children from Cambria and Centre County CYS with items that were identified on their wish lists. The Angel Tree Project is organized by staff at Benner Township.

The photo consist of CYS staff on the left and Benner Township staff on the right. In the front, from left to right, is Nicolette Sayers and Jackie Burd. In the back, from left to right, is CO1 Zerbee and CO1 Risban.

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Honor Guard Represents Prison

SCI Huntingdon's Honor Guard was proud to be asked to present the Colors and lead the town of Huntingdon's annual Christmas parade on Saturday, December 17, 2016.

Pictured, from left to right, are: CO Scott McDermitt, Lt. Darron Dickson, CO Joe Watt, CO Doug Clark, and CO David McMahon.

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Mercer Employees Donate to Local Charities

Frosty says, "The toys for 'Treasures for Children' and non-perishable food items have been delivered to local charities again this Holiday Season!"

SCI Mercer employees participated in the annual Treasures for Children toy drive sponsored by The Salvation Army. Gift tags for the young children from the local communities were provided by the Salvation Army, each indicating the first name, age and gender of the child, sizes for clothing items and several toy items the child would like. Employees donated many gifts for the children to have a Treasure to Remember for the holiday.

In addition, annually staff conducts a food drive at the facility to collect non-perishable food items to be donated to the local food pantry in Mercer. To increase participation in the food drive, each year at the Employee Association's adult and children's holiday parties, staff may bring non-perishable food items to be eligible to win a gift card from Walmart.

Pictured are Andrea Shiock, CSA, Amanda Bistransin, CT3, Tim Quaill, CWP Labor Foreman who delivered the food items, and CO1 Bartolone.

Thanks to all who participated in these annual events that brighten the lives of many from the Mercer community.

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We're a Family that Helps Each Other

SCI Albion's employee Empowerment Committee raised $459 in one day to assist Food Service Instructor Susan Callahan and her family after they lost everything in a house fire.

A certified check was given to the family on Dec. 22, and donations will continually be accepted.

Our staff did a great job of helping one of our own in a time of need and we are very proud of them all!

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Giving

As a result of this year's inmate run-a-thon at SCI Cambridge Springs, more than $13,000 was raised and donated to the Big Brothers/Big Sisters Organization.

Also in 2016, prison employees showed support for a fellow staff member who was diagnosed with cancer in 2016 and is currently undergoing treatment. A spaghetti dinner benefit was held in the fall which raised more than $10,000 for this employee and her family to offset traveling costs. All classifications of employees came together during this time of need to help their DOC family member.

Finally, SCI Cambridge Springs assisted the local Helping Hands Organization with The Angel Tree Project by purchasing and donating Christmas gifts to nearly 50 children from 17 different families in the local community.

Additionally, the prison's Activities Department recently coordinated a donation of 240 teddy bear packages for local children in need this Christmas season. The bags included a fabric hand-painted bag completed by the inmates, a folded teddy bear hand towel, a body wash and poof, a lip balm, hand sanitizer, lotion, cookies and a knit or crocheted hat by the inmates. The $2,300 project was made possible by funds provided by the Phoenix Inmate Organization. The bags were given in conjunction with the prison's employee Angel Project gift donations. The entire CBS family (inmates and staff) provided their time, talents and treasures to provide a memorable Christmas for the community's less fortunate children this year!

Finally, the prison's administrative staff rang the bell to raise money for The Salvation Army during the 2016 holiday season.

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Pennsylvania's Justice Reinvestment Initiative Working Group Unanimously Approves Final Recommendations

On December 19, the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) reported that Pennsylvania's Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) Working Group unanimously approved their final recommendations on criminal justice reform in Pennsylvania.

The implementation of these reforms would result in a savings of $108 million, make our communities safer and protect the rights of victims.

"Today was the culmination of a yearlong, bipartisan effort to examine the data behind Pennsylvania's criminal justice system, and use that data to develop new and innovative ways to save money, increase public safety and protect the interests of victims," said PCCD Chairman Josh Shapiro. "I am proud of the work that the JRI Working Group has accomplished and that this was done in a bipartisan manner."

In September 2015, Governor Tom Wolf reached out to the Bureau of Justice Assistance in the U.S. Department of Justice and the Pew Charitable Trusts to request technical assistance in undergoing a second phase of JRI in Pennsylvania. Upon their agreement to provide this assistance, Governor Wolf appointed PCCD Chairman Shapiro to chair a working group to lead this effort. With the assistance of the Council of State Governments Justice Center, this working group has agreed on six recommendations for criminal justice system improvements for Pennsylvania.

Recommendations:

- Support public safety for victims by serving more people, more effectively.
- Improve pretrial decision making to increase public safety and decrease county prison costs.
- Revise polices to guide sentencing decisions to reduce recidivism.
- Increase the use of effective probation interventions to lower recidivism.
- Make short prison sentences more predictable and less expansive.
- Improve recidivism results for parolees by targeting resources and responses.

A detailed report from the JRI Working Group will be available early next year along with drafts of legislation to implement these changes.

“We believe these recommendations could affect real, positive change in the criminal justice system,” said Corrections Secretary John Wetzel. “We look forward to working with members of the General Assembly to codify these improvements to Pennsylvania's criminal justice system, improving public safety and reducing costs.”

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Benner Township Hosts VT DOC

On December 14, 2016, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections hosted staff from the Vermont Department of Corrections and Department of Mental Health as they work toward improving the collaborative provision of mental health treatment services in their state. They began their visit with a tour of SCI Benner Township, where they toured the Residential Treatment Unit (RTU), Special Needs Unit (SNU), Psychiatric Observation Cell (POC) area, and the Diversionary Treatment Unit (DTU).

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Donations Benefit Local Children

Michelle Vogt and Theresa Falls, both SCI Rockview employees, coordinated the collection and donation of toys/gifts for the Mifflin County Children and Youth Agency. Seventy-five children will benefit from this year's donation.

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Puppies Have Arrived at SCI Dallas!!!

SCI Dallas Superintendent Larry Mahally is proud to announce that the prison's "Hounds for Heroes" canine program has begun with the arrival of the first three puppies – Knight, Sarg and Colonel -- on December 6, 2016.

SCI Dallas, in conjunction with the American's VetDogs program, is working together to ensure these service dogs provide support to and motive veterans to tackle new challenges with the assistance of these remarkable dogs.

"Not only will the dogs change the life of disable veterans, they will change the lives of the veterans' loved ones, the inmates and the staff at SCI Dallas," Superintendent Mahally said.

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SCI Coal Township's CWP Assists Salvation Army

SCI Coal Township's Community Work Program, assigned to Labor Foreman Joe Mazer, assisted local Salvation Army centers prepare for their annual Christmas events. Coal Township's work crew helped at the Shamokin Salvation Army for the past several years; this year marks the second year in Sunbury.

Coal Township's crews worked for several days unloading, packing and organizing Christmas toys and other presents at both Salvation Army locations. The Shamokin Salvation Army work crew filled more than 1,000 pantry boxes with food items to help families prepare a Christmas meal. Items will be distributed to preregistered families this week.

The program is organized by the Salvation Army. All items distributed during the Christmas season are donated.

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Foundation Representative Visits SCI Rockview

Kevin Broderick, a volunteer with the “It’s About the Warrior Foundation” of Western Pennsylvania, recently presented a token of appreciation to SCI Rockview Superintendent Garman and SCI Rockview for their support of wounded veterans.

Mr. Broderick had the privilege of escorting veterans Scott Filsinger and Jay Willard to SCI Rockview in May to participate in the 2nd Annual Wounded Veteran Spring Gobbler hunt on Rockview grounds. The facility hosted four wounded veterans for a two-day spring gobbler hunt in cooperation with the Nittany Valley Longbeards Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation.

Sgt. Kuhns, Officer Hall and Equipment Operator Foster were three of four staff members who guided the veterans on the hunt. Rockview staff is in the process of planning the hunt for 2017. Broderick plans to support the event by bringing back both of his veterans this year to pay forward to others wounded veterans.

Pictured are Sgt. Kuhns, CO Hall, Supt. Garman, Kevin Broderick, Equipment Operator Foster and Lt. Lowry.

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Laurel Highlands Participates in Annual Charity

Pictured left to right: Karen Hillegass, Deputy Michelle Houser, Joyce Shaulis and Captain Ben Grove.

In November, SCI Laurel Highlands employees and Parole Board staff participated in the annual Children's Aid Home Angel Tree Project.

The Somerset County Children's Aid Home staff provided prison employees Karen Hillegass and Joyce Shaulis with the first name and ages of children that are in the system as well as gifts that are on their Christmas "wish" list. Staff then chose a child's name from the list and purchased the gift item that was requested by them.

The Laurel Highlands family is always so eager to participate in this worthwhile project that it doesn't take long for all of the children's names to be chosen and gifts purchased. Group items, as well as Day Treatment group items, also were purchased for the children, as they enjoy playing together with Legos, building blocks and games.

A Christmas tree was placed in the prison's lobby for employees who wished to make cash donations to the home, and angel ornaments were placed on the tree in their respective names.

On December 9, 2016, Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Michelle Houser and Security Captain Ben Grove, along with Clerk Typists Karen Hillegass and Joyce Shaulis, had the pleasure of "playing Santa Claus" and delivering the gifts to the aid home via a very, very, packed full DOC van. The aid home staff were overwhelmed by the kindness and generosity. The prison's Angel Tree cash donation amounted to $321, which will be used for children to go on special outings such as movies, bowling, skiing or dinner.

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Week of December 12…

Gov. Wolf Awards $1.5 Million to 13 Counties to Combat Opioid Addiction, Recidivism for Inmates

On Dec. 15, Governor Tom Wolf announced that the Department of Corrections had recently awarded $1.5 million to human service agencies serving 13 counties to provide Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) to offenders for substance use disorder.

The awards will help more than 150 people fight opioid use disorder and re-enter the community as healthier and more productive citizens.

“I have made addressing the opioid crisis a centerpiece of my administration,” Governor Wolf said. “Stopping the cycle of substance use disorder while an individual is in jail is critical to ensuring they don’t overdose when they are released and return to the community healthier than when they went in.”

The grants are aimed at reducing relapse, recidivism and overdoses by providing Vivitrol, a long-acting injectable form of naltrexone that blocks certain receptors to prevent a ‘high” and removes the craving for drugs or alcohol.

Counties, through their first responders, law enforcement, human service agencies and jails are on the frontline of the opioid epidemic and have faced increasing challenges as the number of overdoses has risen significantly in the last few years.

The funding targets counties – particularly in rural areas -- with high overdose rates and offenders with substance use disorder in order to address the problem before it leads to more serious crime or overdose death.

The number of individuals entering state prisons with substance use disorder has doubled over the past 10 years, from 6 to 12 percent. Roughly 68 percent of inmates have substance abuse problems.

“We believe these grants will be life savers in the war on opioid use disorder,” said Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel. “If we can address substance use disorder while an individual is doing short time in a county jail, we can make sure they don’t end up doing hard time in state prison – or die from an overdose.

The non-narcotic medication assisted treatment grant program was authorized by Act 80 (SB 524)

The counties receiving funding are: Allegheny, Bradford, Carbon, Cumberland, Dauphin, Franklin, Huntington, Lackawanna, Lehigh, Monroe, Northampton, Pike and Schuylkill.

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Graduation Marks Largest Expansion of DIU

A new class of K-9 handlers was recognized recently at a special graduation ceremony at the Drug Interdiction Unit (DIU) headquarters at SCI Rockview.

The addition of the five officers and their K-9s represents the largest expansion since the founding of the Drug Interdiction Unit K-9 program 21 years ago.

The unit now totals 25 handlers, three supervisors and 30 K-9s assigned to patrol the 26 DOC institutions, 64 community corrections centers and assist with county jail requests as needed.

“We have electronic drug detection, search teams and investigators that are vital to daily drug detection in our institutions“, said Corrections Secretary John Wetzel. “But the K-9 unit is the tip of the spear for our drug interdiction efforts.”

The officers, who were selected from 167 applicants, completed a rigorous 13-week course that matched them with a K-9 partner with whom they will work for years to come.

At a ceremony last week, DOC’s Chief of Security Scott Bowman discussed the importance of K-9s in prison security and the need for greater drug detection.

“The drug interdiction landscape has changed a lot,” he said. “In addition to organic drugs, we are now dealing with synthetic drugs. This is a change in scope and complexity.”

In addition to the drug-sniffing K-9s, there are now cell phone detecting dogs in the unit.

The Department of Corrections has made significant changes to its policy regarding K-9 safety in vehicles since the tragic death of K-9 Totti, who was accidentally left in a hot car last summer.

- All State Correctional Institutions have been provided two portable/collapsible kennels.
- At no time will the K-9 remain in the car while out of eye sight of the handler. If the handler goes inside a facility, the K-9 will be brought inside and placed in the portable/collapsible kennels.

- While on deployment and staying in hotel, the K-9 will not remain in the vehicle. The K-9 will be brought inside the hotel room and placed in kennel provided. Warning signs will be placed on the outside of hotel room door to alert hotel staff that a K-9 is present.

- Vehicle temperature warning placards have been placed inside every vehicle in view of the handler.

- All vehicle's equipped with tint and window visors.

- New 24 hour/7 days-a-week vet care service for canines.

The occasion also offered an opportunity to tour the new state-of-the-art kennel facility that will house up to 24 dogs during training exercises.

The kennel features floors with radiant heat, 24 kennel runs with indoor-outdoor access, an exercise area, a vet clinic, isolation area and wash room. It was built with staff and inmate labor at considerable cost savings to the commonwealth and gave inmates an opportunity to put trade skills to use on a new construction project.

Two inmates who helped install the electrical system at the kennel and have since been released are now employed as professional electricians.

From L to R Front: Tyler Baxter (Maint. Foreman), Anthony Pase (Maint. Foreman), Mike Wenrick (FMM1), Bill Cartwright (Carpenter), Brian Warren (Maint. Foreman), Al Hamilton (HVAC), Supt. Garman. From L to R Back: Ben Walstrom (HVAC), Matt Foster (Equipment Operator), Kyle Koch (Maint. Foreman), Mike Laskowsky (Electrician), Wade Stover (Carpenter), Mark Kumpf (Painter), Regional Deputy Secretary Tabb Bickell, Dave Novotny (Electrician).

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Rockview Employees Donate to Toys for Tots

SCI Rockview held its Annual Toys for Tots drive recently. This event was started at SCI Rockview by Sgt. Steven Quigley who passed away in 2009. The tradition is carried on in his memory.

Pictured are COI Stover, Sgt. Mondy, a representative from the U.S. Marine Corps, Supt. Garman and COT Workman.

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Swanlek Promotes to Central Office Position

The Bureau of Correction Education would like to announce Annemarie Swanlek to Central Office as the Western Region Division Chief.

Chief Swanlek formerly held the school principal position at SCI Somerset. Chief Swanlek will oversee academic programs, GED, VEDS Reporting, TABE, CETA as well as the following SCI's: Albion, Cambridge Springs, Fayette, Greene, Huntingdon, Laurel Highlands, Mercer and Pittsburgh.

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Puppy Training Program Started at SCI Mahanoy

The Puppies Unleashing Progress (P.U.P.) Program that started at SCI Mahanoy on July 5, 2016, has proven to be a welcomed addition to the institution, bringing smiles to both inmates and staff.

In six short months, 14 inmate handlers have had the opportunity to work with the puppies from Brierwood Kennels. They have learned everything from basic grooming and commands to life saving PET CPR. With the help and assistance from Brierwood Kennel owners Amy and Steven Eckert, Unit Manager Traci Jacobson and Corrections Counselor James Flores, the inmate handlers and puppies participate in two training sessions a week.

The inmates were asked what impact the program has had on them. Several of the handlers mentioned that they have learned a new sense of responsibility caring for their dogs and have gained more self-worth. They felt that, like themselves, the dogs are being given a second chance, and helping the dogs become more adoptable is a huge accomplishment to experience.

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Fayette Participates in TFT

Through a number of employee fundraising events at the prison, SCI Fayette participated again this year in the United States Marine Corps Reserves Toys for Tots Program. New, unwrapped toys for children ages infant through 12 years old, were collected through December 14, 2016. A drop off box for the toys was located in the Human Resources area in the Administration Building, and employees donated 85 toys. In addition to toy donations, funds were raised by employees paying a per-day fee to wear casual clothing to work (non-uniformed staff only) and other events. A total of $787 was raised and was spent purchasing more than 60 items for the worthy cause.

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Week of December 5…

Latest TEDx Focuses on Children of Incarcerated Parents

At SCI Chester, on Dec. 7, DOC officials hosted their fourth TEDx event. Attended by approximately 100 invited guests and inmates from the prison, the event focused on children of incarcerated parents.

The presenter line up consisted of individuals from organizations that assist COIP, employees and inmates from the prison who had interesting/difficult upbringings and who are parenting from behind bars. A highlight of the day was the presentation from Pennsylvania's Auditor General Eugene DePasquale, who discussed his formative years and the fact that his father was in prison. There also were a few musical presentations by inmates whose musical messages continued the day's theme of COIP.

Also at the event, Secretary John Wetzel announced that the DOC was looking for House and Senate legislators who are interested in sponsoring what he calls "First Chance" legislation.

According to the DOC, there are more than 85,000 Pennsylvania children whose parents are incarcerated in the state prison system.

Wetzel hopes the "First Chance" initiative will help break the intergenerational cycle of crime – as COIP are more likely to end up in prison at some point in their lives just simply because they have an incarcerated parent.

Highlights of this First Chance Initiative are:

- Create legislation to authorize "The First Chance Act" that will allow the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections to create a public charitable trust that benefits disadvantaged youth.

- The trust will be funded not only by private, tax-deductible donations, but also through a small percentage of profits contributed from our large, public PA DOC service contracts, both existing and new.

- Monies from the trust would be distributed – by a board chaired by the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency - for scholarships and programs to benefit at-risk youth in an effort to derail their involvement in the justice system.

- Expansion of nurse family partnerships – a one-stop prevention program for low-income, first-time parents and their children.

- Access early childhood learning – a broad range of education programs and environments for young children of incarcerated parents.

- Promotion of personal mentoring – relationships that build character, provide stability and offer real life guidance for work and education.

- Encouraging regular family visits – restoring and maintaining the vital relationship between incarcerated parents and their children.

In closing the TEDx event, Wetzel said, "I don't care what you do, but do SOMETHING for these kids. Let's partner together to help children of incarcerated parents."

Previously hosted TEDx events were held at SCIs Graterford, Muncy and Pittsburgh and are coordinated thanks to the prisons' administrations and employees and TEDx coordination team which is led by Special Assistant to the Secretary Janet Kelley.

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DOC Highlights Drug Interdiction Unit

Five new handlers and k-9s graduate training, new kennel revealed

By Amy Worden, Press Secretary

A new class of K-9 handlers was recognized today at a special graduation ceremony at the Drug Interdiction Unit (DIU) headquarters at SCI Rockview.

The five officers - Joe Burger, Jeff McCusker, Tammie Vannatta, Trisha Hoover and Anthony Roper - represent the largest expansion since the founding of the DIU K-9 program 21 years ago.

The officers, who were selected from 167 applicants, completed a rigorous 13-week course that matched them with a K-9 partner with whom they will work for years to come.

Regional Deputy Secretaries Tabb Bickell and Mike Wenerowicz, and James Barnacle, DOC's chief of the Office of Special Intelligence and Investigations, were among the dozens of people, including other K-9 handlers, prison officials, staff, reporters and family members who packed the room to recognize the graduates.

DOC's Chief of Security Major Scott Bowman, who led the event, discussed the importance of K-9s in prison security and the need for greater drug detection.

"The drug interdiction landscape has changed a lot," he said. "In addition to organic drugs, we are now dealing with synthetic drugs. This is a change in scope and complexity."

He added that there are now three cell phone detecting K-9s in the unit.

The event provided an opportunity for veteran K-9 handler Melissa Wheatland to show off K-9 Kira's drug detection skills and to unveil of the unit's new state-of-the-art kennel facility. The kennel features floors with variant heat, a dog wash and laundry room, and specially designed dog doors to allow K-9s access to the outdoors.

The kennel was built with staff and inmate labor at considerable cost savings to the commonwealth. In addition it gave inmates an opportunity to put to use skills they learned in trade classes on a new construction project. Two of the inmates who installed the electric system at the kennel, who have since been released, are now employed as professional electricians.

“They are leaving here better people,” said Mike Wenrick, head of maintenance at SCI Rockview. “And they accomplished something huge.”

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Donated Gifts for Good Girls and Boys

Santa's sleigh is loaded up and heading for good girls and boys in Schuylkill County.

For the third year in a row, the generous employees at SCI Frackville donated Christmas gifts for needy children through the local Angel Tree-Salvation Army in Pottsville.

Frackville's K-9 mascot, Feye, was on duty monitoring the donations being picked up at the institution.

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Coal Township's 20th Year of Secret Santa

SCI Coal Township employees participated in Northumberland County Children and Youth Services "Secret Santa" Christmas program recently. This year marks the 20th year the institution has participated in the county's program that provides services to more than 1,200 children each year.

Grace Piaseczny, a human resource assistant at the prison, coordinated this event for the prison every year.

"I am so proud to announce that 2016 marks my 20th year coordinating the Northumberland County Children and Youth Services Secret Santa Christmas program," Piaseczny said. "I could have not done it without the support of the great employees here at SCI Coal Township!"

This program is organized by many volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to collecting and distributing Christmas gifts to needy children.

Staff at the institution, including administration, food service, non-uniformed, support staff, maintenance and corrections officers purchase and wrap gifts which are then delivered by Children & Youth staff to the families thorough out Northumberland County.

Coal Township PRIDE MC Organization again offered a monetary donation in support of the Christmas program.

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BIT Team Presented with Award

Over the past year, the Bureau of Information Technology has deployed security servers which has enabled a mobile workforce for both the Department of Corrections and the Board of Probations and Parole. These servers create a secure bridge between the virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) servers at the Enterprise Data Center and the internet. This allows users to connect to their work environments easily and securely from nearly anywhere, any time. Not only has this solution allowed for both agencies to reduce their VPN accounts, but it has an estimated annual savings of $150,000.

Pictured are: Sue Mathis, Joe Tomeo, Josh Thomas, Lamont Cooke, Ken Thomas, Scott Wickenheiser, Joe McConnell, (not shown) Rob Siebener.

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Brittain Named SCI Frackville Superintendent

Kathy Brittain, a 16-year veteran of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, has been named superintendent of the State Correctional Institution (SCI) at Frackville.

“Kathy is a bright leader with a perfect combination of education and experience to meet the challenges presented in the current corrections environment,” said Corrections Secretary John Wetzel.

Brittain began her Department of Corrections career in 2000 as a corrections counselor at SCI Dallas. In 2001 she was promoted to drug and alcohol treatment specialist supervisor and was tasked with opening a 46-bed alcohol and other drug therapeutic community (TC).

During her tenure as a drug and alcohol treatment specialist supervisor, she also served as an adjunct faculty instructor overseeing a five-day experiential therapeutic training program, as well as serving on several central office committees that produced the new standardized cognitive behavior-based programs used currently in the agency.

In 2006, Brittain was promoted to unit manager, where she supervised specialized blocks, including the special needs unit, a TC and two areas with special medical cases. In 2008 - 2009, she was the acting major for unit management.

Prior to leaving SCI Dallas, Brittain served as acting corrections classification and program manager before being promoted to a similar position at SCI Retreat in 2011.

In 2013, she was promoted to deputy superintendent for centralized services at Retreat.

Brittain earned her bachelor’s degree in social work from Millersville University and master’s in social work from Marywood University. She is a Pennsylvania licensed social worker and was for 10 years an internationally certified addictions counselor. She has been an adjunct faculty member at Keystone College since 2008 where she teaches sociology and psychology courses.

Throughout her 23-year career in social work and in correctional settings, she has taken a particular interest in program development/delivery, staff training and working with the seriously mentally ill and multi-disciplinary team collaboration.

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DOC Issues 2015 Annual Statistical Report

For decades the DOC has issues an annual statistical report for each calendar year. Recently, the 2015 report was completed. Each year's report provides highlights and statistics on receptions/admissions, year-end population and releases that all took place within that year and are as of December 31. The report is only available in an electronic form and is posted to the DOC's website (www.cor.pa.us).

Here are the highlights from this most recent report:

Receptions:

- Between 2005 and 2015, the number of inmates admitted into the Department increased by 24.6%, from 15,534 in 2005 to 19,353 in 2015.*
- From 2005 through 2015, the number of parole violator admissions increased by 46.2%, from 6,505 in 2005 to 9,512 in 2015.
- The number of court commitments grew by 11.0%, from 8,830 in 2005 to 9,798 in 2015.
- Philadelphia County accounted for 19.4% of all new court commitments in 2015.
- In 2015, more than half (58.5%) of all new court commitments were sentenced to a minimum sentence of two years or less. These inmates may be eligible for some type of release by 2017.
- Of the total new court commitments, 84.1% received a maximum sentence of 10 years or less. These inmates will complete their sentence and be released back into to the community no later than 2025.

**NOTE – data includes new court commitments, parole violators and county transfers.*

Population:

- The overall incarceration rate in Pennsylvania was 389.9 per 100,000 state residents in 2015. Nationally, the incarceration rate of state prisoners only (not including federal prisons) was 412 per 100,000 U.S. residents for year end 2014 (U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics).
- From 2014 to 2015, the number of inmates incarcerated has decreased by -1.7%, from 50,756 to 49,914.
- At the end of 2015, the population was comprised of 84.5% sentenced offenders and 14.6% parole violators.
- A demographic breakdown of the Department's inmates indicates that offender age, race, and gender have remained relatively constant between 2014 and 2015.
- In 2015, the majority of DOC offenders were African Americans (48%), followed by Caucasians (41%), Hispanic (10%), and other races (1%).
- As of calendar year-end 2015, the DOC population consisted of 47,089 males and 2,825 females.
- In 2015, the average minimum sentence length for Part One Offenders was 9.7 years and the average maximum sentence length was 21.5 years. For Part Two Offenders, the average minimum sentence length was 5.3 years and the average maximum sentence length was 12.2 years.
- The number of inmates serving a minimum sentence of more than 20 years (excluding inmates serving life sentences and capital cases) increased by 5.5% from 2,567 in 2014 to 2,709 in 2015.

The following are characteristics of offenders serving life sentences in the Department:

- The number of offenders serving a life sentence increased by 1.5%, from 5,352 in 2014 to 5,431 in 2015.
- The average age of inmates serving life sentences in 2015 was 46.8 years. The average age of 46.8 years for inmates serving life sentences remains higher than the average age of 38 years for the total population.

Releases:

- Commonwealth overall, the average time served for all inmates released in 2015 serving both Part One and Part Two Offenses was 48.9 months.
- The average time served for Part One Offenders released in 2015 was 63.6 months and the average time served for Part Two Offenders was 39 months.
- The number of inmates initially released serving a sentence of two or more years was 12,375 in 2015, a decrease of .007% over 2014.

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SCI Retreat Holds Graduation Ceremony

On November 2, 2016, SCI Retreat held its annual Graduation Ceremony in the gymnasium for 102 graduates. Those being honored earned their scholastic diplomas along with various vocational certificates. Also present were family members and/or friends of the inmates.

Education Department faculty and several prison employees were also in attendance. After the ceremony, light refreshments were provided for the visitors, and friends/family were permitted to visit with the inmates.

The guest speaker was Regional Director Jim Beach (pictured below) from Pennsylvania Treatment & Healing (P. A. T. H.), which is a drug and alcohol treatment program.

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Week of November 28…

DOC Tests Use of Virtual Reality with Inmates

Late last month at SCI Muncy, DOC and prison officials assisted an inmate who was awaiting medical release due to her debilitating, incurable disease the opportunity to test a virtual reality device.

The device is being used throughout the DOC to help prepare inmates who will be returning home after long periods of incarceration. For most inmates it takes them on a virtual tour of community corrections center where they may reside for a period of time. It can also show them grocery stores, gas pumps and a variety of things that will help them successfully manage today's technology.

While the use of this device is in its infancy stages within the DOC, officials are reviewing its use with mentally ill inmates to reduce distress and assaults on staff/other inmates by a using it as an incentive. It also can be used to help inmates transition from various specialized units back into general population.

For employees, virtual reality can be used as a training tool to expose them to different situations such as cell extractions, searches and to deescalate a number of corrections.

DOC officials say they hope the use of virtual reality devices will reduce incidents of violence and allow for inmates to reintegrate into general population through VR, and not risking the health and well-being of staff/other inmates.

For the Muncy inmate – who has spent 30 years in prison – she was provided a virtual reality tour of New York City and Rockefeller center during Christmas, she was able to go paragliding, visit the ocean and have a ride on a rollercoaster all through virtual reality.

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DOCs Visit SCI Somerset to Learn about Swift, Certain & Fair

On Dec. 1, SCI Somerset was fortunate to receive a visit from DOC officials from Illinois and Nebraska. They were accompanied by a BetaGov staff member who set up this "Peer to Peer" visit.

The visitors included a regional deputy secretary, wardens, a classification and program manager and a unit manager. Additionally, Dr. Bret Bucklen, director of the PA DOC's Planning, Research & Statistics participated in the visit.

"The primary purpose of the visit was for them to learn more about the "Swift, Certain and Fair" (SCF) program and to share ideas which can benefit all three jurisdictions," SCI Somerset Superintendent Trevor Wingard said.

The group was joined by SCI Somerset staff and toured several areas of the facility, focusing on the SCF units and the RHU pods.

"This was a very successful visit with some great networking and new partnerships formed," Wingard said.

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After hearing April Kemp from Marley's Mission speak, inmates took action

From Shawney P:

> *"I am an inmate at SCI Retreat. You spoke here twice this summer. You first spoke at my Impact of Crime class, it was a small group setting. You told us how your 5 year old daughter was brutally attacked. I was shocked, sadden, and angry.*
>
> *I went through a range of emotions that day. I had no idea your story would affect me so much, it immediately changed my life. I went back to my housing unit and shared your story with several other inmates. They were all as angry, upset and sadden as I was and some even got real emotional.*
>
> *The second time I heard you speak you spoke at our Day of Responsibility Wed. Aug. 24th 2016. I told everyone in my section to pay close attention she is about to tell an incredible story.*
>
> *At first your microphone was not working properly, so I tapped an inmate that knows how to operate the sound system to go up there and fix the problem. Your story was way to important not to be heard by everyone.*
>
> *Once you were able to tell your story completely and how Marely's Mission was born out of this tragic situation, you could hear a pin drop. I looked around and saw a lot of guys trying to hold back their tears including myself.*
>
> *At that moment I felt compelled to do something; help in some way. I'm a member of the C.D.O. (Community Development Organization) here at Retreat and we made a donation or will be making a donation to Marely's Mission, but I want to take it a step further. I have asked my brother if he could make a donation on our behalf also, to continue to help children that need this valuable."*

From Shawney's brother:

> *"I am sending you this letter for three reasons:*
>
> *First, my brother Shawney asked that I make a donation to Marley's Mission on his behalf after hearing you speak on two separate occasions at SCI Retreat.*
>
> *The information you shared with my brother about the crime committed against your daughter impacted him deeply as well as the other prisoners that heard you speak. My brother and the other inmates were beyond angry at the person who committed the assault on your daughter. But, they were also inspired by you and your daughter. When I say my brother was impacted, I don't say that lightly.*

Second, my brother was incredibly impressed by your strength and the strength of your daughter. He was quite emotional when he told me the story you shared with him as well as how your visit affected him.

Many years ago, my brother made a decision to right his wrongs and be the best person he could be. Your visit only helped to further enforce his decision to take the right path in life. More importantly, you were able to access a place in the hearts of prisoners that very few people can access and bring about a positive change in them...from within.

Third, I want to say thank you!

I want to applaud you and all that you have done for your daughter and hundreds of other children and families who are in need of healing after experiencing a trauma or abuse. I hope the sun shines on you, your Board, your therapists, your horses, and most of all, on the children and families you serve. Yesterday, 1 was a stranger.. .today I hope that you can count on my brother and I as friends of Marley's Mission.

I know this donation isn't much, but I hope it helps Marley's Mission to continue its good works."

NOTE: This letter included a check for $2,500.

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DOC Officials Work with Native American Chaplains

On November 30, Native American contracted chaplains met at Central Office to review policy and practice related to Native American spirituality. They offered their insights into best practices and shared their expertise in suggesting tweaks to permissible Native American practices in DOC institutions. The meeting/review was coordinated by DOC Bureau of Treatment Services employees, who oversee inmate religion.

DOC Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal thanked the chaplains for their dedication in facilitating Native American gatherings in nearly every corner of the Commonwealth.

Front Row (L to R): Cherie Dancing Sun Begay-Germer, Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal, Kevin McGee, Jennifer Hudson, Rev. Ulli Klemm.
Back Row (L to R): Ammon Bailey, Erroll Wilson, Mark Cassells.
Not Pictured: MaryAnn Robbins, Native American consultant to the DOC's Religious Accommodation Review Committee.

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Walk-a-thon Donation Benefits Local Food Pantries

SCI Mercer's 2016 Annual Walk-A-Thon, sponsored by the prison's Inmate Action Committee, benefited the Community Food Warehouse of Mercer County. This organization supplies all of the food pantries in Mercer County and also sponsors a backpack program that provides children in need with a backpack of food for the weekend.

George Gerhart, President of the Board of Directors for the Community Food Warehouse was present to receive the check. Pictured with him are Classification and Program Manager Michelle Wagner and Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Bill Woods.

Twenty-eight inmates participated in this year's event, walking 687.5 miles in six and a half hours. The top two inmates each walked 36 miles.

Participating inmates asked staff and peers for sponsors, raising $816.38 for the Community Food Warehouse.

The Walk-A-Thon is a great fundraiser for a great charity. SCI Mercer would like to thank everyone who sponsored an inmate and/or made a donation to the event.

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Inmates Donate Murals to Local Humane Society

Over the past few years, SCI Somerset has worked with talented inmates allowing them to paint murals throughout the prison. In fact, so far 63 murals are gracing the walls of the state prison.

"A few months ago the inmates asked if they could do something for the local community," said Superintendent Trevor Wingard. "The results were canvasses that the life-sentenced inmates created."

The six inmates painted murals to donate to the Humane Society of Somerset County. They paid for the canvasses themselves and then donated them to the Humane Society of Somerset County on November 29, when officials from the local agency visited the prison to receive the donations.

According to Superintendent Wingard, the two ladies who serve on the Humane Society's board of directors were completely appreciative of this gesture and said that the paintings will be placed throughout their center.

A reporter from the Somerset Daily American was present for the donation and will write an article for the newspaper.

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Paying Tribute to a Fallen Officer

On November 16, SCI Pittsburgh's Honor Guard paid tribute to Canonsburg Police Officer Scott Bashioum, who was killed in the line of duty as he responded to a domestic disturbance call.

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The Story of Huntingdon's Cows

The publisher of the Huntingdon Daily News often sees beef cows in the pasture along Pennsylvania Avenue. To learn more about them, the paper sent a reporter to SCI Huntingdon.

“Years ago, SCI Huntingdon was fairly self-sustaining with dairy cattle and a farm. Former Supt. Ray Lawler had the idea to restore the beef cattle, so we started out with a few cows. SCI Rockview was kind enough to lend us the services of a bull, and the herd has grown since then. We use the beef here at HUN and share with the other institutions,” said prison Public Information Officer Connie Green.

You will be able to learn more by reading the Huntingdon Daily News’ article.

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National Prison Visiting Week

Fences topped with razor wire are designed to keep inmates from getting out. “Prison Visiting Week” – a national initiative launched by the Vera Institute of Justice – was aimed at giving the community a chance to look inside.

Pennsylvania joined 16 other states and local correction departments, as well as the Federal Bureau of Prisons, in this initiative to increase public awareness and visibility of prison and jail as well as conditions of confinement.

On November 17, Laurel Highlands hosted 13 community members from Somerset County and elsewhere in western Pennsylvania, including Allegheny County judge

John Zottola, representatives from area businesses, mental health facilities, non-profits and academia who had the chance to interact with jail staff and inmates, observe group activities and learn about the current state of incarceration.

After Superintendent Jamey Luther and her staff provided an overview of the programming available at the institution, the group took a walking tour of the facility where they were able to interact with inmates and staff.

Laurel Highlands is designated for geriatric patients and those with serious medical needs. End-of-life care has become a focal point of efforts to address inmates with terminal illnesses. In the hospice unit, tour group members talked to an inmate volunteer who tends to the needs of patients and ensures that no inmate dies alone. Highlights of the tour included a visit to the busy dialysis unit and the Transitional Housing Unit, where soon-to-be-released inmates were learning computer skills, preparing resumes and applying for jobs,

The group also visited the Restricted Housing Unit, the Therapeutic Housing Unit and the newly-opened “blue room” – a quiet mural-covered space where inmates can go to reflect while watching a TV playing nature videos. The room is part of a pilot initiative to decrease stress and reduce violence.

“SCI Laurel Highlands is proud to be one of 17 states involved in this endeavor," said Luther. "Pennsylvania understands the goal of rehabilitation and via this tour is able to highlight several programs utilized within the prisons to return a better citizen. As a neighbor, friend, co-worker, family member it’s important to believe change is possible and see how it’s being accomplished through incarceration and successful rehabilitation."

Ron Aldom, executive director of the Somerset County Chamber, called the tour "very enlightening" and "showed how the prison system is working to get these people educated and back into society." He added, "It was also nice to see what is happening at one of our largest employers in the county."

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Cocoa Brown Inmate T-Shirts

For the first time in the DOC's history, officials have decided to change the color of inmate t-shirts to standardize the color of t-shirts issued.

In July 2016, DOC officials approved cocoa brown t-shirts for basic issue for both male and female inmates.

The system's diagnostic and classification centers either are already in the process of or soon will begin ordering and issuing the new cocoa brown t-shirts.

Inmates already in the system will be permitted to wear both white and cocoa brown t-shirts. Eventually, through wear and tear, all white t-shirts will be eliminated.

Facilities and the prison's commissary system have been directed to continue providing white t-shirts to inmates already in the system until their supplies of white t-shirts run out. After that point only cocoa brown t-shirts will be provided/available for purchase via the prison commissary system.

The DOC estimates that it will take about six months to transition the entire system to the cocoa brown t-shirts.

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Three DCCs for Male Inmates

Earlier this year – in July – DOC officials opened two additional diagnostic and classification centers, bringing that number to four statewide.

Diagnostic and classification centers (DCC) are now operating at SCIs Graterford (in the eastern part of the state), Camp Hill (in the central part of the state) and Pittsburgh (in the western part of the state), and at SCI Muncy for female commitments.

DCCs are reception centers for all new inmates entering the state prison system. Upon reception, the individual undergoes extensive evaluation and testing to determine medical and mental health needs, education and treatment needs, risk assessments and more. After classification, the individual's "home" institution is determined, and the individual is then transferred to that prison upon availability of bed and transportation space.

Opening the two other DCCs for male inmates is expected to produce a more effective and efficient system. For example, individuals who are received at SCI Pittsburgh's DCC can be classified, programmed and released from that facility, thus eliminating unnecessary transportation from SCI Pittsburgh to SCI Camp Hill and increasing public safety.

It should be noted that the DOC had three DCCs for men at these same facilities prior to the 1990s, when officials decided to consolidate the diagnostic and

classification centers into one at SCI Camp Hill. As a result a special reception center building was designed around the intake process, and for nearly two decades, SCI Camp Hill served as the sole DCC for men entering the state prison system.

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Week of November 15…

DOC's Moore Smeal Featured in NIC Webinar

Earlier this week, Department of Corrections Executive Deputy Secretary Shirley Moore Smeal was among a select group of national correctional leaders picked to lead a training session during a two-day nationwide conference.

The conference, "Restrictive Housing: Roadmap to Reform" was hosted by the National Institute of Corrections, under the U.S. Department of Justice, which is seeking ways to reduce the use of restrictive housing in correctional institutions.

Restrictive housing, also known as solitary confinement, is under intense scrutiny at the national level as well as in Pennsylvania where sweeping changes are being made to reduce violence and the need for restrictive housing.

Last year President Obama asked the Justice Department to look at the overuse of restrictive housing, saying that it too often led to inmates being more likely to commit violence when they were released.

Since 2015, under the leadership of Secretary John Wetzel, the Pennsylvania DOC has been actively developing and implementing a number of strategies to reduce the use of restrictive housing from improved staff training to changes in cell block design.

Moore Smeal's presentation highlighted a number of initiatives now underway in Pennsylvania facilities to improve conditions in restrictive housing units and reduce tensions that can lead to violence.

Among the most successful programs is the expansion of Certified Peer Support Specialists where inmates, who themselves have suffered from mental illness or

substance use disorder, are trained to help other inmates who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

Moore Smeal outlined design changes taking place to improve cells and common spaces in restricted housing units and the introduction of mural arts and dog training programs as ways to create a more humane environment.

One video featured Deputy Superintendent Wendy Nicholas and members of her treatment staff at SCI Muncy, one of two women's prisons in Pennsylvania, who have developed a team-approach to addressing those with mental illness to help them better reintegrate with their families upon release.

"There are programs for women that are gender responsive and that are effective and successful," said Moore Smeal, adding this and other changes can be made without jeopardizing safety or security.

Also highlighted was the Swift, Certain and Fair (SCF) punishment policy, which started as a pilot in January at SCI Somerset. The idea behind the initiative was to establish unacceptable behaviors and sanctions beforehand and then apply punishment swiftly and fairly.

The program has been recognized for reducing inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-staff assaults and has been expanded to nine other prisons.

Moore Smeal also detailed the variety of different units developed to address inmates with diverse needs, whether veterans, those suffering from mental health disorders or those transitioning from restrictive housing to the general population.

"We're talking about changing the culture, humanizing the system," said Moore Smeal. "We need to look at each person as an individual and what is best for that individual."

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Philly Comes to the Mountain

SCI Smithfield hosted the first “Philly Comes to the Mountains” on November 15, 2016. Unit Manager Nancy Thomas came up with the idea because the majority of the population housed at the prison are from the Philadelphia area, and re-entrants from that area need information before they return home. Therefore, “Why not bring Philly to the Mountains?”

Reentrants spoke to approximately 175 men from the general population, and they shared how they have been able to successfully transition back into society. The gentlemen shared their personal stories of how tough, yet possible, it is to live a pro-social life after incarceration. It was stressed how important it is to build a strong network of family, friends and especially community, and they stated that giving back to the community shows that it is not just about the individual.

Through their presentation they informed those attending of the reentry housing, programming and job services that their non-profit agencies/organizations offer. Packets of information were also handed out.

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Quehanna Boot Camp Holds Apprenticeship Day Event

The Quehanna Boot Camp, in conjunction with the Builders Guild of Western PA and members of the Western Pennsylvania Joint Apprenticeship Training Centers (JATC), held an Apprenticeship Day event on October 25, 2016.

During the event, about 230 male and female individuals in the Boot Camp program heard from representatives from various unions, including the Builders Guild of Western PA, Ironworkers Local #3, Bricklayers Local #9, the Operative Plasterers and Cement Masons Local #526, Western PA Laborers Union, Steamfitters Local #449, Sheet Metal Workers Local #12, Roofers Local #37 and Keystone+Mountain+Lakes Regional Council of Carpenters.

The union representatives gave brief presentations on career paths and opportunities in the building and construction trades industry. The presenters stressed the importance of respecting yourself and others, taking pride in what you

do and continuing to learn and grow on the job. Following the presentations, teammates had an opportunity to stop at each union's table to obtain additional information and applications.

The Apprenticeship Day event is part of Quehanna Boot Camp's reentry initiative to assist reentrants with obtaining meaningful careers upon their release. As a result of the event held last year, several Boot Camp reentrants pursued union apprenticeships.

The Quehanna Boot Camp opened in June 1992 as the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections' first military-style motivational boot camp. The program must be judge recommended and individuals must meet medical and sentencing guidelines. Approved individuals assigned to the boot camp undergo a rigid six-month disciplinary and training program. Those successfully completing the six-month program are released but remain under state supervision until they reach their maximum sentence date.

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Teaching Inmates How to Manage Money

On October 17, 2016, members of the Criminal Justice Club from the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown and staff from the Johnstown Federal Credit union assisted DOC and SCI Laurel Highlands staff and Transitional Housing Unit (THU) participants in facilitating an interactive budget simulation.

Participants were each allotted an amount of money based on life sustaining employment with which they had to manage throughout a simulated month time frame. Throughout the simulation, the participants were given unexpected expense/incidents to contend with and manage into their budget. Upon concluding

the simulation they all met individually with a financial analyst who reviewed their monthly planning and budget to determine whether the participant was successful or not.

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Meet the DOC's Oldest, Active CERT Member

Have you ever met a 61 year old member of the Corrections Emergency Response Team (CERT)? Well, if you haven't, you're about to.

Meet Michael J. Proce, a lieutenant at the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill. Mike can't work a smartphone, but he sure knows how to handle weapons and chemical munitions. Mike is currently the oldest active CERT member in the PA Department of Corrections.

Mike grew up in Brooklyn, NY, and enjoyed playing football and baseball while growing up. He enlisted in the military (Army) in 1973 and was active duty from 1973-1976. He continued his military service by joining the National Guard from 1985 – 2004 and retired from the military in 2004. He drove a bus for New York City Transit for four years but eventually came to PA in 1986 while he continued to work in New York (i.e. driving a bus). He then transferred to a bus company in Allentown, PA.

He began his employment with the PA Department of Corrections in the summer of 1990 (several months after the Camp Hill riots). He remembers that the institution had only started to build one new housing unit at the time, but there were still parts of the institution that showed extensive damage from the riots.

One of the "lessons learned" from the riots was the need to change CERT, since the PSP were the primary responders during the riots. Joe Miller (retired major from SCI Frackville who started at SCI Camp Hill) played an integral part in the evolution of CERT. Mike remembers that the department started to make changes to improve CERT, and they had implemented a pilot program (statewide). Lt. Glenn "Bud" Cooney, one of Mike's mentors, and now Regional Deputy Secretary Tabb Bickell, were among the first pilot group for CERT. Mike recalls that Lt. Cooney approached him about joining CERT, so he tried out and has been on the team ever since 1991. He actually joined CERT as a Phase 4 trainee. He attended a CERT class shortly after the "pilot" CERT class.

Through the years, he has seen many changes not only in corrections, but also in the evolution of CERT.

“Back in the day, we used to have competitions among CERT teams statewide down at the Training Academy, once a year,” Mike said. They did weapons qualifications, PT courses, and other events, but it was “real competition” and “people went all out for this.”

He said that it was “very intense” and a highly competitive environment. He has also seen significant changes in CERT equipment, firearms, uses of force, etc., over the years, as well as individuals’ desire and commitment to the team.

“It’s not like it was years ago……people were waiting in line to join CERT. Now, it’s not like that,” Mike said.

When asked what made him stay an active member of the team for more than 25 years, Mike said, “I don’t know….I just liked it. I like the camaraderie. I like being able to still compete among my teammates, some of them half my age, and still be able to hold my own. There are times when my mind says to keep going, but my body is telling me no.”

Lt. Proce is a dedicated professional and exemplary role model and leader. SCI Camp Hill is extremely proud of his dedication to duty and commitment to excellence.

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FCPD’s Gather at Training Academy

Facility Chaplaincy Program Directors met at the Training Academy this week for a week of intensive training. The training, led by their peers, is a precursor to the training that all current correctional chaplains will receive in 2017 and which all subsequent new chaplains will receive thereafter.

Front Row: David Klink (LAU), Rafael Torres (GRA), Sylvia Morris (SMI), Debra Reitz (MUN), Tami Hooker (PIT), Darlene Johnson (CBS), Mehmet Arvas (DAL), Ulli Klemm (BTS)
2nd Row: Samuel Anyanwu (FRA), Glenn McQuown (FRS), Jabulani Sibanda (GRN), Frank Lewis (FYT), David Boyles (RET), Tyler Parry (WAM), Joe Kosarek (MER), Fatih Akdemir (CAM/BTS), O. Larry Mills (CAM) 3rd Row: Aaron Duncan (COA), Mobolaji Wojuola (HOU), Ralph DeCecco (ALB), Matt McCoy (BEN), Nelson Zeiset (MAH), James Akrong (CHS) Back Row: Kirt Anderson (PNG), James Stover (QUE), Darrell Wireman (HUN), Phil Maust (SMR), Tom Boldin (ROC)

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Hope In Handball Visits LAU

David Botero, who is the Community Policing Coordinator with Harrisburg Bureau of Police, recently visited SCI Laurel Highlands in October to participate in and guide an event called Hope In Handball. Several reentrants in the prison Transitional Housing Unit (THU) program participated with the volunteer handballers, David Botero and Andrew Reiersen, in a handball tournament.

Following the conclusion of the tournament, the "mentoring" portion of the event took place. It is quietly defined by the camaraderie, sportsmanship and respect that the players share on and off of the courts. With 'handball' as the common denominator – the players are able to discuss family issues, job explorations, coping strategies, faith, and just simply staying out of trouble.

One of the participating reentrants stated that "I think Hope In Handball is a very good resource for us who are struggling in our everyday lives."

Another reentrant added that, "Hope In Handball was not just about playing handball, it was about bringing people of all parts of society together."

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Week of November 7…

SCI Houtzdale Veterans Service Unit

As we prepare to celebrate Veterans Day this year, we wanted to provide you with an update on our agency's work in the area of inmate veterans.

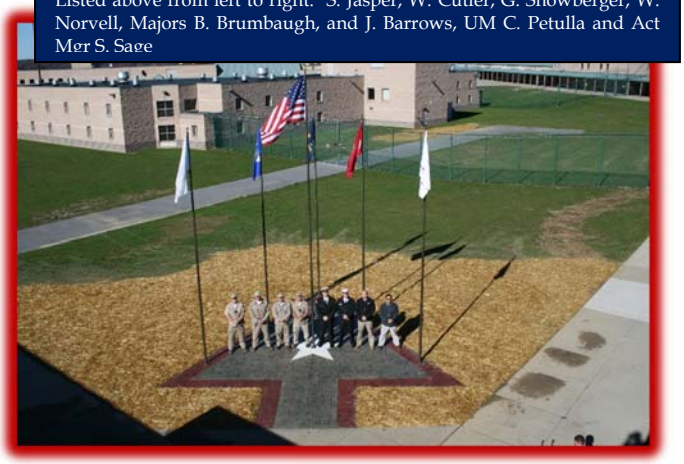
On May 23, 2016, SCI Houtzdale joined SCIs Dallas and Pittsburgh in operating a Veterans Service Unit (VSU). The VSU at SCI Houtzdale is located on G Unit, which is a custody level 2 housing unit that offers a max inmate capacity of 197. In order to better prepare our incarcerated veterans for reentry and to support their future success, VSU staff assesses the needs of the incarcerated veterans and helps them to identify and remove barriers that they will encounter as they re-enter society.

Listed above from left to right: Ricky Rafter, Chris Reed, Troy Hagen and Craig Petulla

Reentrant veterans participating in the VSU work toward overcoming the reentry challenges of finding employment, securing housing, obtaining healthcare and maintaining treatment. Various seminars, classes, workshops and other trainings are offered through trained facility staff, trained VSU incarcerated veteran facilitators and representatives from various outside agencies that have a community partnership with the VSU. Programs offered on the SCI Houtzdale VSU by trained facility staff include the following: Seeking Safety, Staying on Track and Parenting. Additional groups are facilitated on the VSU by trained incarcerated veteran facilitators. These include Character Development, Video Discussion Group, Life Skills and Veterans Day and Memorial Day Services. The SCI Houtzdale VSU also coordinates with several community partners that provide reentry services. **Real Colors** is a communication workshop that helps people understand human behavior. The workshop helps people recognize, accept and

learn to value the differences in others. It is a tool to increase understanding, empathy and communication. It is facilitated by the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole. **Living Under Supervision** is a parole education seminar geared towards near term reentrant veterans and is facilitated by a reentry parole agent. **CareerLink** offers a veterans program that assists reentrant veterans by providing a full range of employment services to assist veterans in their search for work. This service is facilitated by CareerLink representatives. **Supportive Services for Veteran Families** (SSVF) is a program facilitated by Community Action. The purpose of SSVF is to provide financial support to improve veteran housing stability. SSVF is facilitated by Community Action Representatives. **Office of Vocational Rehabilitation** (OVR) serves people that have disabilities that present a substantial impediment to their potential employment. Services are provided to individuals who can benefit from and who need assistance to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain employment. OVR Seminars are facilitated by OVR Representatives. **Vietnam Veterans of America** (VVA) provides incarcerated veterans with assistance in properly filing applications for service-connected disability claims. These workshops are facilitated by a certified Veterans Service Officer that is provided by the VVA.

Listed above from left to right: S. Jasper, W. Cutler, G. Snowberger, W. Norvell, Majors B. Brumbaugh, and J. Barrows, UM C. Petulla and Act Mgr S. Sage



The SCI Houtzdale VSU offers three Certified Peer Support Specialists (CPS) which are all housed on the VSU. Each provides a variety of different services to incarcerated veterans participating in VSU programming. Additionally, the SCI Houtzdale Pup Program, better known as Relying Upon Furry Friends (R.U.F.F.), is also located on the VSU. The pup program has proven to enhance quality of life for incarcerated veterans at SCI Houtzdale in that it offers a calming effect for those residing on the VSU.

Project designed and completed by the SCI Houtzdale Maintenance Staff Listed above from left to right: MR2 S. Jasper, Msnry TI W. Cutler, FMM1 G. Snowberger and FMM3 W. Norvell

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SCI Coal Township Honors Volunteer of the Year

SCI Coal Township recently held its 21st Annual Volunteer Recognition Dinner. Facility Chaplaincy Program Director Reverend Aaron Duncan thanked all volunteers who selflessly donate their time to come in to the institution and make themselves available to the inmates at SCI Coal Township.

Reverend Duncan stated, "I know you could have been anywhere else, fulfilling your dreams and enjoying family and friends but you decided to put that aside for the ministry. Your sacrifice and time is greatly appreciated."

Robert Renn (left) with Coal Township Superintendent Thomas McGinley and Rev. Aaron Duncan.

All of Coal Township's 48 volunteers were recognized individually.

Robert Renn, a Coal Township resident, was honored as the Volunteer of the Year. As a member of the Prison Christian Growth Group, Mr. Renn visits the institution twice monthly to facilitate a Bible study group.

During his first group in 2013 he felt assured that this is what God wanted him to do. Mr. Renn states that "being a volunteer reminds me of my responsibility as a Christian to go and feed the hungry, help with the sick, and to visit the prisoners as mandated by God."

One of the things Mr. Renn learned is that given the opportunity everyone can change. This motivates him to continue to come back as he watches the inmates grow into "Men of God."

Of Mr. Renn, Inmate Richard said, "He is certainly a good role model to follow especially with his quiet demeanor."

Reverend Michael Comick noted that because of Mr. Renn's consistency in visiting the inmates, they appreciate him very much.

A delicious meal was prepared and served by SCI Coal Township food service staff and inmates working in the culinary department to all volunteers attending the banquet.

SCI Coal Township is always seeking religious and drug and alcohol awareness volunteers. Prison volunteers are trained in security awareness, Prison Rape Elimination Act and training associated to their specific vocation. Prospective volunteers can contact SCI Coal Township for information on the volunteer program.

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Huntingdon Names Goss EOQ for 4th Quarter

Michelle is very dedicated to her job, providing inmates with information and support to do their best. She works with staff throughout the jail to facilitate a team approach. She does this professionally and is always pleasant. She is also quick to help with questions and concerns that are brought to her attention. Michelle has been very influential in improving staff morale for over 5 years at SCI Huntingdon. She is a member of the Morale Committee, Social Events Committee and Empowerment Committee. As a member of the Morale Committee, she plays a huge part in the hoagie/sub fundraisers, sending cards to staff that are sick/hurt and gathers supplies for Toys for Tots, Salvation Army, Pittsburgh House. She helps in preparing for the annual Blow Out picnic that staff members look forward to at the end of summer. Every month she gathers items for the Themed Baskets that is given to a staff member. She serves as Vice President of the Social Events committee. Michelle has been picking up the "special food items" such as the meats and cheeses and delivers them to 2 Gate. Michelle always does this with a smile on her face and she spends a lot of her own time in gathering up all of these items in order to help put smiles on the faces of staff at SCI Huntingdon.

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Week of October 31…

DOC, DHS Secretaries Advocate for Quality Early Education as a Key to Future Success

In Scranton on November 2, Department of Corrections (DOC) Secretary John Wetzel and Department of Human Services (DHS) Secretary Ted Dallas today made the case for continued investment in early care and education as the route to future success.

Governor Wolf's 2016-17 budget provided an additional $200 million in basic education funding, as well as a $30 million increase for early childhood education, that preserves the number of admissions slots for proven early childhood education programs like Pre-K Counts and state-funded Head Start. It also includes a $20 million increase for special education, a more than $10 million increase for Early Intervention.

"Improving early childhood educational opportunities for children, especially in the most disadvantaged communities, is an investment with guaranteed returns – both fiscally, and most importantly, in the lives of thousands of young people," said Wetzel, speaking at an event at Marywood University. "Investment in pre-k education is critical to ensuring that today's children do not become tomorrow's inmates."

Studies show that children who participate in high-quality pre-kindergarten perform better in school, graduate at higher rates, and earn more throughout their working lives compared to peers that do not have access to early learning programs.

"We want to ensure that all Pennsylvania children, regardless of background, have a chance to develop, grow, and learn critical skills that will lay the groundwork needed to be successful for the rest of their lives," said Dallas. "We can invest in our young children now to help build the skills they need for success in school and beyond, or pay the public costs of remediation, public assistance, and corrections later when they don't reach their potential. I'd much rather invest in success than pay the public costs later."

Additionally, children who were previously enrolled in Pre-K Counts outperform their economically disadvantaged peers in third-grade math and reading.

Some studies further indicate that participation in high quality pre-k also helps lower the chance that high-risk youths will end up in prison.

Currently, Pennsylvania spends more than $2 billion annually—about seven percent of the state budget—to house about 50,000 inmates. Yet, only 30 percent of Pennsylvania children in families earning up to three times the federal poverty level – or $72,750 for a family of four – are enrolled in high-quality pre-k programs.

In Governor Wolf's first two years of office, he secured historic education funding increases totaling almost $640 million dollars, including $415 million in basic education funding, $60 million for early childhood education, and $50 million in special education funding.

The investment has created more than 6,000 slots for pre-k students statewide, but more must be done to provide expanded opportunities for Pennsylvania children to get a jump-start on their education.

Governor Wolf believes there is an immediate need to expand publicly funded pre-k and early care and education programs with the goal of universal pre-k for all children. There is also a need to revise Keystone STARS to make it possible for more child care and other early learning programs to earn high-quality STAR 3 and 4 ratings.

Early childhood programs only work if families, especially where children are most at risk, are aware of them and enroll their children.

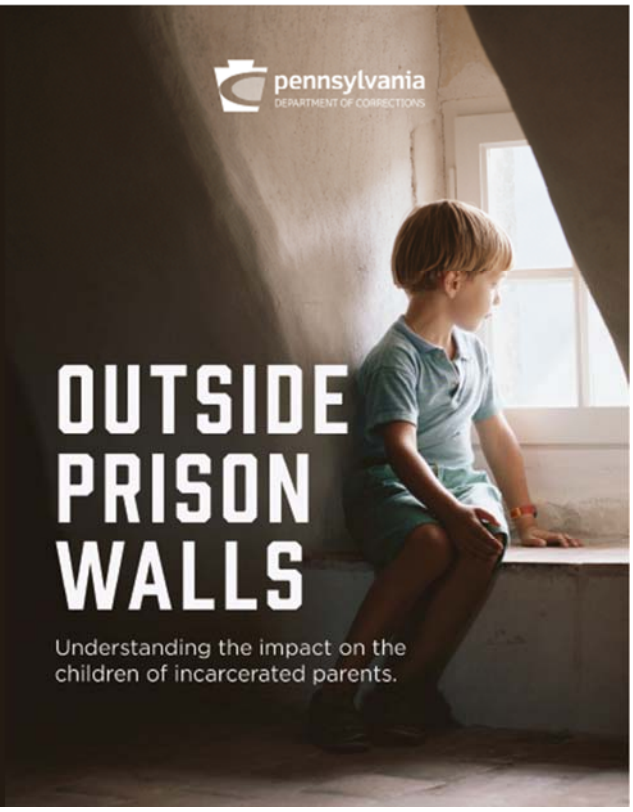
To that end, Secretary Wetzel and Secretary Dallas, along with Education Secretary Pedro Rivera, collaborated earlier this year to launch an initiative to help families of the more than 80,000 children with incarcerated parents get access to quality educational programs for pre-schoolers.

The Child Resource Centers now provide material at all 26 state correctional institutions help connect families with early learning services and programs throughout the state.

“”

SPEND THE MONEY BEFORE THEY GET TO US. ISN'T AMERICA ABOUT GIVING PEOPLE A FAIR SHOT? IF WE CAN MAKE SIGNIFICANT INVESTMENTS IN KIDS TO REALLY GIVE THEM A FAIR SHOT, WHY SHOULDN'T WE DO THAT?

- John Wetzel, Secretary,
PA Department of Corrections



OUTSIDE PRISON WALLS

Understanding the impact on the children of incarcerated parents.

THE CHALLENGE:

In Pennsylvania's prisons, tens of thousands of children live outside the walls. Few communities in the Commonwealth have been spared the crippling effects of fatherless and motherless homes. The astonishing numbers, combined with the impact on their lives, is a story that's only now beginning to be told.

A SNAPSHOT OF PENNSYLVANIA'S INMATES & THEIR CHILDREN

81,096
The number of children with a parent incarcerated in a PA state prison — 12,696 more than the seating capacity of Heinz Field in Pittsburgh.

75,747
Children of incarcerated dads.

5,349
Children of incarcerated moms.

A HARSH REALITY: INCARCERATION'S LONG SHADOW

"The arrest and removal of a mother or father from a child's life forces that child to confront emotional, social and economic consequences that may trigger behavior problems, poor outcomes in school and a disruption or severance of the relationship with the incarcerated parent that may persist even after the parent is released from prison." *(Hairston 2007)*

"I was able to access education from prison and, when I talked to my children regularly, they were excited about the fact that Mom was in school and that we had that in common. My ability to be in school while incarcerated motivated my children and me to work together on our separate educational goals." *(Nimsha, Amachi Pittsburgh parent)*

"Communities typically wouldn't look to the Department of Corrections for leadership in early childhood education. Yet parental incarceration often means both developmental and academic delays for millions of children across the nation. I am so proud that Pennsylvania is a forerunner in promoting early and significant investments in young children to increase their prospects for success in school and life." *(Anna Hollis, Executive Director of Amachi Pittsburgh)*

"Children with fathers who have been incarcerated are significantly more likely than other children to be expelled or suspended from school (23 percent compared with 4 percent)." *(Western)*

CREATING NEW REALITIES SOLUTIONS THAT WORK

1. **Expansion of Nurse Family Partnerships** — a one-stop prevention program for low-income, first-time parents and their children.
2. **Access Early Childhood Learning** — a broad range of education programs and environments for young children of incarcerated parents.
3. **Promotion of Personal Mentoring** — Relationships that build character, provide stability and offer real life guidance for work and education.
4. **Encouraging Regular Family Visits** — restoring and maintaining the vital relationship between incarcerated parents and their children.

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SCI Muncy Holds Second Annual Domestic Violence Awareness Day

On October 4, 2016, an event designed to draw attention to the impact of domestic violence on individuals, families and communities was held in the chapel and in the visiting room at SCI Muncy.

This Domestic Violence Awareness Event consisted of seven speakers and three presentations in the morning as well as four workshops in the afternoon. Over 80 inmates participated in the day's activities. Staff from Parenting, CK, Activities, Security, School, and DCC assisted in preparing for the event and several staff from various departments were in attendance for the morning speakers and presentations. Teri Woodling, corrections counselor 2/treatment specialist who facilitates the House of Hope inpatient and outpatient trauma treatment program, introduced the speakers and workshops. With the assistance of her two House of Hope Peer Assistants, Ms. Woodling planned and oversaw the important day's activities.

Among the speakers were Superintendent Robert Smith, Ms. Woodling, two inmate survivors- one House of Hope graduate and one House of Hope Peer Assistant and two survivors from the community—Nina and Christine—who in their healing journeys utilized support and guidance from Wise Options of Williamsport, Pa. and Transitions of Lewisburg, Pa. The four speakers, who identified themselves as survivors, inspired and touched the audience with their honest sharing about their past trauma and steps taken to heal and move forward in their lives. The women in the House of Hope delivered an empowering presentation, inspired in part by a poem written by one of its participants that included wearing the Clothesline Project T-shirts that they each designed as well as the use of visually striking masks that they each discarded as they committed to no longer hiding behind masks. The morning session ended with Ms. Woodling and House of Hope participants presenting donations, weaved blankets, to representatives of Wise Options and

Transitions to use at those facilities. The women of the House of Hope prepared the blankets. In addition, the women of the House of Hope expressed their appreciation to the two outside speakers by presenting crochet blankets that were made by participants. Lastly, Ms. Woodling and the women in the House of Hope presented Superintendent Smith with a blanket for his Administration's support of the House of Hope Program and of the Domestic Violence Awareness Day Event.

Following the morning's speeches and presentation, CK staff prepared a tasty lunch for participants, speakers, workshop presenters and others in attendance. During the afternoon, the participants were split up into four groups with each one attending all four workshops for approximately 25 minutes. Ms. Eckie Friar, Education Specialist at Transitions, presented a workshop entitled "CARE for Kids," which talked about ways to nurture the development of healthy sexuality among children. Ms. Heather Cattron and Tanner Widdowson led a workshop highlighting the services that OVA offers, including those that are available to incarcerated men and women. Another workshop involved one of the outside speakers, Christine, conducting a question and answer session as follow-up to her inspirational speech. Lastly, David Bever of OVA compared and contrasted the dynamics of healthy relationships with those involving various forms of abuse. Feedback from participants, outside guests and staff in attendance has been overwhelmingly positive.

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SCI Muncy Holds Breast Cancer & Domestic Violence Awareness Walks

On Friday October 14, 2016, SCI Muncy employees had the opportunity to participate in the fundraising efforts. They could pay $1 to dress down and walk laps on their lunch break around the inner circle of the Institution. The Muncy Inmate Organization paid 50 cents for every lap completed. Staff also had the opportunity to make additional monetary donations. Staff donations totaled $214.40, and they walked 75 laps, earning an additional $37.50.

On Saturday, October 15, 2016, 546 Inmates attended the Breast Cancer and Domestic Violence Awareness Walk. The Muncy Inmate Organization paid 50 cents for every lap completed. In addition to walking, Inmates had the opportunity to learn more about Breast Cancer and Domestic Violence through informational and interactive tables set up throughout the yard. Inmates walked a total of 5,968 laps, earning a $2,984.00 donation from the MIO.

To date, the fundraising efforts have reached a total of $3,235.90. However, there is still a very large additional portion from the Inmate fundraiser that is yet to be determined. Final numbers will be distributed soon.

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SCI Muncy Holds Retiree's Luncheon

1st row, left to right: Esther Eiswerth; 2nd row: Ella Barkley, Donna Casselberry, Karen Robenolt, Ron Robenolt, Mary Gray; 3rd row: Ginny Rooker, Ed Jatko, Linda States, Shirley Kinley; 4th row: Ed Pickett Jr., James Zaccarelli, Richard Shuler, Karen Kemp, Dale Wertman, Kay Burgett, Christie Mann; Back row: Randy Kemp, Ed Fritz, Ken Kazar, Jeff Karschner.

On October 19, 2016, SCI Muncy hosted a Retiree Luncheon and Tour for past employees. Response was good with individuals attending the function, held in the institution's visiting room. Current staff participated in preparing a program regarding recent changes and historical facts about SCI Muncy. Superintendent Robert Smith, administrative staff and committee members were available to welcome and talk with past employees. Lunch was served and a tour of the institution was given. Retirees were also given the option to tour the areas in which they previously worked. Many retirees, took advantage and returned to their old work site. At the conclusion of the event, current and past employees were

provided with an opportunity to reflect on the past. Past and current staff enjoyed the opportunity and are looking forward to the next luncheon.

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SCI Benner Township Holds Employee Open House

On October 19, SCI Benner Township held an open house for employees and their families. The event was hosted by the Employee Empowerment Committee.

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Benner Township Names EOQs

Superintendent Tammi Ferguson recently announced that Corrections Officer 1 Joshua Emerick and Clerk Typist 2 Laurie Mann were named Employees of the Quarter for the fourth quarter.

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Fazio Represents DOC in National Reentry Discussion

DOC's Bureau of Correction Education Director Terri Fazio participated, on October 28, in "Reconnecting Justice: Pathways to Effective Reentry though Education and Training." This event, held by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), was the second forum in a series on criminal justice, which included a keynote address by Nicholas Turner, president of the Vera Institute of Justice, as well as expert discussions connecting policy trends in correctional education and training with reentry opportunities that promote economic success. Approximately 150 people attended the event, while 600 more attended the live-stream webinar and others viewed it on C-SPAN.

According to information on CLASP's website:

> Incarcerated individuals are disproportionately people of color as well as adults with low educational attainment. More than 650,000 ex-offenders are released from prison each year and recent research shows that two-thirds of those prisoners will be rearrested within three years of release. However, research also shows that access to correctional education can significantly reduce recidivism. If we're serious about breaking the cycle of incarceration, it's essential to invest in robust education and training opportunities for incarcerated people and to connect them to continued education and employment opportunities once they rejoin society.
>
> Providing these opportunities is cost-effective for states and has significant community and economic benefits. For individuals and families, coupling education and employment with reduced collateral and systemic barriers leads to economic self-sufficiency and improved life outcomes. CLASP's forum will examine promising policy options as well as lessons from state and federal initiatives.

Director Fazio participated in a panel discussion titled "Bridging Opportunities: Connecting Systems for Successful Reentry." Joining her on the panel were:

- Rev. Vivian Nixon, Executive Director, College and Community Fellowship;
- Will Heaton, Director of Policy and Public Affairs, Center for Employment Opportunities; and
- DeAnna Hoskins, Senior Policy Advisor for Corrections and Reentry, U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance.

Fazio talked about the Career Pathways grant along with the opportunities offered to all PA DOC inmates, special programming for inmates under 21, and her agency's increased focus on reentry.

Who is CLASP: The Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) is a national, nonpartisan, anti-poverty organization advancing policy solutions that work for low-income people. They offer nearly 50 years of expertise, a knowledgeable staff, and a commitment to practical yet visionary approaches to opportunity for all.

CLASP's mission is to advocate "for public policies and programs at the federal, state, and local levels that reduce poverty, improve the lives of poor people, and create ladders to economic security for all. We identify and seek to tear down barriers that hold people back due to their race, ethnicity, immigrant status, or geography, as well as low income. We look for large-scale opportunities to improve federal and state policy, funding, and service systems, and we work back and forth between levels of government to achieve maximum impact, bringing state and local innovations to the federal level and translating federal legislation and regulation into ambitious game plans for state and local change."

The link to the video and agenda can be found here:
http://www.clasp.org/issues/postsecondary/pages/reconnecting-justice-pathways-to-effective-reentry-through-education-and-training

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Inmate Work Crew

SCI Cambridge Springs' inmate work crew cleaned vehicles at the local Cambridge Springs Fire Station.

If you are a non-profit organization or county, state or federal agency, contact your nearest PA state prison to see how our inmate work crews can assist you.

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Happy Howl-o-ween!

SCI Cambridge Spring's pups wish you a Happy Howl-o-ween!

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Week of October 24…

SCI Fayette Inmates Donate to Domestic Violence Organization

The annual SCI Fayette inmate run-a-thon was held on October 13. Inmates paid a $3 entry fee, and in the month leading up to the Run-a-thon, a “Healthy Snack Package” sale was held to raise additional money for charity. A total of $1070.30 was donated to the inmate-selected charity – the Domestic Violence Services of Southwestern PA. Two representatives from the Domestic Violence Services were in attendance. There were 272 inmate participants and 31 committee members. Four employees participated all day with a few others doing a few laps here and there throughout the day to show their support. For entertainment, there was music playing all day. Gatorade and fruit was available for participants, and a bag lunch was provided at mid-day. All in all, the event was a success.

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Suicide Prevention

SCI Graterford Superintendent Cynthia Link said that her prison joined with the Montgomery County Suicide Prevention Organization (part of county services). They provided a meaningful and free 2.5 hour training for staff across all classifications on QPR; Question, Persuade, Refer.

“They gave us valuable resources and training on how to support our co-workers, family and friends should we see signs that may lead us to think someone is in danger of a critical life ending decision,” Supt. Link said.

During the training, employees learned that it is ok to ask people if they are considering suicide and then what to do if the answer is "yes."

“I encourage others to look and see what resources their respective counties may offer to help support you in the effort of suicide prevention,” Link said. “This training opened a new level of discussion between us as employees and brought forth a true drive to be part of the solution to this terrible issue.”

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SCI Coal Township Employees Donate to Local Food Pantry

SCI Coal Township employees donated pantry items for the annual food drive which benefits Manna for the Many, located in Shamokin. Various food items were delivered to Manna on October 28th. Manna for the Many is a local food pantry established through the Shamokin Area Ministerium to serve those in need in the Shamokin/Coal Township area. Manna opened its doors in 2000 and is supported entirely by private donations and staffed solely by volunteers.

Pictured with some of the donated items is Jodi Britton, who has coordinated the food pantry collection for more than 10 years.

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Chester Holds Juvenile Lifer Reunification Day

On October 19, 2016, SCI Chester held a Juvenile Lifer Reunification Day.

The vision for the day was to provide a stronger support system for the juvenile lifers and families.

This event allowed the family members the opportunity to receive the necessary information pertaining to the process of resentencing and to show the collaboration with PA Department of Corrections, Probation and Parole and Community Corrections in preparing them for the resentencing journey.

From Left to Right: Major Jeraldo Aponte, Regional Reentry Administrator Lacosta Mussoline, Deputy Superintendent Kenneth Eason, Center Director Jackie Rupert, Regional Deputy Secretary Michael Wenerowicz, Bureau of Community Corrections Deputy Director Daniel McIntyre, K-9 Addie, Staff Assistant Dan Yingling, Administrative Officer Mandee Quinn, Institutional Parole Director Garth Walls, Deputy Superintendent Mark Wahl, Superintendent Assistant Louisa Perez, ASCRA Agent Adrienne Jones and Corrections Counselor 2 Ryanne Piorko.

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Huntingdon Holds “Day of Responsibility”

SCI Huntingdon’s Lifers Association, in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Prison Society, sponsored a Day of Responsibility project in the prison’s visiting room on October 19.

A number of dynamic speakers presented topics discussing the impact of crime, incarceration and the effect of negative behavior on families, victims and the community. An important part of the discussion was how to become a part of the solution instead of part of the problem. The program included small group discussions, and all guests had the opportunity to share their thoughts and impressions about their experiences and the program.

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LCCC Students Visit SCI Retreat

On October 26, 2016, Superintendent Vince Mooney welcomed 10 criminology students from Luzerne County Community College (LCCC). Students from the Intro. To Corrections Class had the opportunity to tour some areas of the institution, talk with staff regarding their job classifications in corrections, and they also had the opportunity to meet three inmates.

Parole Supervisor Jack Aversa discusses the Parole Process.

LCCC students pictured with their professor and DOC DATSS Jeff Dengler (left).

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Retreat Names Employee of the Quarter

Employees of SCI Retreat's Mailroom have been selected as Employees of the Quarter because they have been integral in the discovery of numerous attempts by inmates to have contraband, specifically SUBOXONE, introduced into the facility. In addition, their work with the Security Office is above no other. They provide a very valuable service on a daily basis for the Security Office in identifying and providing information pertinent to initiating investigations. It is through their diligence and desire to intercede that investigations have been started and introduction attempts are thwarted.

From left: Carin Ives, Catherine Mackin, Theresa Shibilski, and David Popek

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Two Officers Recognized for Reaching 20-Year Mark

From left: Major Stetler, Superintendent Mooney, CO1 Grebeck, CO1 Miller, and Deputy Kerschner

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Week of October 17…

Testing Concepts to Reduce Violence and Use of Restricted Housing

Since the fall of 2015, DOC employees of all classifications have been meeting to address the need to reduce the use of administrative segregation (known as restricted housing in Pennsylvania). The DOC is committed to doing this while reducing the incidents of inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-staff assaults.

For nearly a year, employees have been assigned to and working on committees that look into a variety of issues.

The DOC also has joined forces with BetaGov, a non-profit organization that helps agencies take concepts and put them into workable and measurable concepts.

DOC employees suggest concepts and BetaGov helps put the concepts into action. Many concepts are now being piloted (or tested, in other words). Some concepts may prove useful, while others may not, and that's what makes the piloting of those concepts so important. We'll try something and if it works we'll implement it. But if we try something and it doesn't work, we move on to another concept to test.

Since the DOC partnered with BetaGov, DOC employees have submitted more than 100 ideas or concepts for trials … all meant to reduce the need for the use of administrative segregation and all done while working to reduce inmate-on-inmate and inmate-on-employee violence in our state prisons.

Some concepts that are in some form of being tested include:

Swift, Certain and Fair (SCF) Pod – UNDERWAY, BEING EXPANDED
SCI Somerset

SCI Somerset has taken a new approach to managing inmates' behavior through the use of Swift, Certain and Fair (SCF) responses to misconduct.

This began on January 1, 2016, when inmates assigned to one custody level 4 general-population housing-unit pod were given a list of nine behaviors that would no longer be addressed through the established misconduct process. Instead, the pod was informed that these behaviors would be addressed by staff on their unit, including the corrections officers, the unit sergeants and the unit manager. Certain behaviors would be handled through the SCF process.

The inmates were also informed of the consequences of these behaviors. They were given a progressive-discipline scale that provides for sanctions ranging from "reprimand and warning" to "cell restriction," which could be for the remainder of that day and up to the following five days, with several steps in between. These sanctions are

certain (i.e., specified) with respect to how many times a specific behavior is observed in the previous 365 days.

A preliminary review of results 90 days after the pilot began shows promising results.

The SCF pod has had fewer misconducts, infractions and grievances compared with other pods at SCI Somerset. Somerset leadership notes that staff are reporting positive interaction between the unit staff and inmates, reduced stress levels and an increased sense of security in their work environment.

Based on the early positive results, SCI Somerset has been granted approval to extend the pilot for 90 days and to begin another SCF pilot on another pod in the facility. External researchers are conducting a formal evaluation of SCF at SCI Somerset, and the DOC has decided to extend the pilot to 12 other state prisons.

Limited Privilege Housing Unit (LPHU) - UNDERWAY
SCI Laurel Highlands, Pennsylvania

Are segregation alternatives effective at producing desired behavioral changes in non-violent inmates? A groundbreaking pilot program at SCI Laurel Highlands will test that question by creating a new step in the facility's disciplinary process.

Instead of being placed in segregation, inmates with non-violent misconduct infractions who do not pose a security risk will be put in the facility's Limited Privilege Housing Unit (LPHU). Unlike inmates in segregation, LPHU inmates will be permitted to leave their cells every day without restraints for scheduled activities such as meals, showers, programming and time in the segregation yard with an additional inmate. All movements will be controlled and observed by the unit control center, and inmates will be subjected to weekly review by unit staff.

Other conditions typical to restricted housing units, such as intake property processing and suicide risk assessments, will remain the same. When not participating in scheduled activities, inmates will be in their cell with the door secured.

Adult Coloring Books – UNDERWAY
SCI Mahanoy

SCI Mahanoy is currently conducting a trial to examine the effectiveness of an individual art program using adult coloring books to reduce anxiety and depression while inmate are in restricted housing.

Inmates held in restricted housing units for extended periods of time are often subject to exacerbated psychological stress. (Metzer & Fellner, 2010). The heightened stress experienced by these inmates can result in an outbreak of violence, suicidal attempts, and psychological disorders which jeopardizes the safety of prison staff and inmates.
Art therapy has been associated with a decrease in negative behaviors. As a therapy tool, use of adult coloring books may calm anxiety and elevate mood. Although coloring books in one's cell is not art therapy guided by a therapist, the outcomes may be similarly positive.

The RHU Coloring Trial started on September 12, 2016. Stage 1 will end on October 12th (30 days). Stage 2 will end on November 11th (60 days). If there are any remaining subjects from the baseline measurements, 90 day measurements will be collected on December 12th.

The Blue Room - UNDERWAY
SCI Laurel Highlands

It is well-known that segregation can have deleterious effects on inmate mental health. Research suggests that a natural environment, even if only simulated, can help reduce stress. Inspired by related work done at other institutions, SCI Laurel Highlands is seeking to transform its restrictive housing unit by creating a "Blue Room."

Aptly named, the Blue Room contains a television screen and chair so that RHU inmates can watch nature images and listen to tranquil natural sounds, such as a streaming river. The room's walls feature a soothing ocean mural; artificial indoor plants complete the scene. RHU inmates will be sent to the Blue Room for one-hour increments. Officials at SCI Laurel Highlands hope that this intervention will reduce tensions, violence, and noncompliance among inmates while also having a positive effect on their mental health.

Restricted Housing Unit (RHU) Tablets – UNDERWAY
SCI Smithfield

On May 1, 2016, SCI Smithfield began examining the use of a mobile kiosk and personal tablet devices as an incentive for good behavior for inmates housed in the restricted housing unit (RHU). The goal of this trial is to determine whether it reduces misbehaviors.

Inmates who have demonstrated a positive adjustment over a set period of time while housed in the RHU are eligible to use their previously purchased tablet or use the kiosk (if they don't already own a tablet device). The kiosk and the personal tablet allows the inmate to retrieve e-mail messages, submit internal paperwork and access approved music. While an inmate can compose messages on the personal tablet, the message cannot be sent without being connected to the kiosk. Tablets and kiosks are used daily by general population inmates, but RHU inmates are not permitted these items.

When criteria is met and approval is given for this privilege, if the inmate owns a personal tablet, it will be issued to him from his property and he will retain it in his RHU cell. All approved inmates with or without a tablet may then request to use the kiosk unit. The inmate submits a "Request For Use" form, and access is granted on a first come, first served basis. The inmate is then escorted to an individual treatment unit and secured inside. The portable kiosk unit is placed in front of the unit for the inmate to use for a 15-minutes.

The program has shown good potential as a useful tool for RHU and administrative staff at Smithfield. Grievances, misconducts and use of force incidents have all been on the decline. Not all of the reductions can be contributed solely to this program, but it is and has been an effective tool in some scenarios.

Crisis Intervention Teams in Residential Treatment Units – UNDERWAY
SCI Greene

SCI Greene is currently hosting a trial to examine the effectiveness of Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training for staff members working on the Residential Treatment Unit's (RTU's). During this trial CIT-trained staff work one pod of the unit while non-CIT-trained staff are assigned to the other.

Inmates housed in the RTU often experience emotional crises. This trial will measure the effectiveness of CIT-trained staff for improving mental health outcomes for those housed in RTU's.

The RTU is designed to provide structure, consistency and support for inmates diagnosed with a serious psychiatric disorder and/or serious impairment to psychological functioning.

Data to be collected during the trial incudes medication compliance, misconducts, program attendance, POC placement, self-injurious behavior and Diversionary Treatment Unit placement. The trial began August 1, 2016, and will last four months.

Medical Unit Mural - UNDERWAY
SCI Laurel Highlands

Vivid pops of bright yellow, hints of hot pink and strokes of electric blue immediately catch the eye, framing the mysterious shadow of a sunken ship in the distance. Orcas glide serenely through clear blue depths as gleaming rays of sunlight dance weightlessly in the water. Sharks swim past a school of fish, left undisturbed to graze in a coral reef.

This scene is not located in the Caribbean, but in a Pennsylvania prison. Officials at SCI Laurel Highlands have had the walls of the facility's medical unit painted in order to learn more about how changing spaces transforms human behavior. While art and nature therapy have been used successfully in a variety of contexts, the use of artwork in prisons is a relatively new concept. Gazing at the mural, one might not even notice the secured doors, meal tray slots and concrete blocks over which it is painted.

Aromatherapy – UNDERWAY
SCIs Frackville, Pittsburgh and Retreat

Prisons house hundreds of people who are all confined to a unit comprised of numerous cells that serve as all-in-one bathrooms, bedrooms and eating areas. As you can imaging, these areas have their own unique aromas.

While it may seem obvious, bad odors, like that of feces, can elicit a negative feeling, while good odors, like peppermint, can elicit a positive feeling. How we associate an odor directly influences our

mood, and our mood directly influences cognitive thinking and behavior.

Research findings show that people exposed to odors widely accepted as pleasant—like baked cookies or fresh coffee—were more likely to act kindly towards others than those who were not exposed to the pleasant odors (Herz, 2002).

SCIs Frackville, Pittsburgh and Retreat volunteered to test whether exposing inmates to pleasant odors reduces anxiety and increases productivity and prosocial behavior.

Frackville conducted its trial in the prison's behavior modification unit in July 2016. Results haven't shown a positive effect, but officials also noticed an issue with the delivery of the aroma. Therefore, another month of testing will be conducted.

SCI Retreat launched a lavender/eucalyptus aromatherapy trial on September 26, 2016, in its secure residential treatment unit. The trial is presently underway and will conclude on January 30, 2017. There are two diffusers on the unit that dispense lavender/eucalyptus scents.

SCI Pittsburgh is in the process of developing its trial.

Fish Tanks – ABOUT TO BEGIN
SCI Waymart

Two personal care units at SCI Waymart will participate in a trial to determine whether the placement of fish tanks in certain housing units reduces anxiety and increases overall well-being.

Studies suggest that environment has major effects on people, which can alter behavior for the better and for the worse. An unpleasant environment increases one's stress levels, which in turn can have negative psychological and physiological effects. Living in an isolated environment, like prison may cause feelings of depression and anxiety that can worsen over time, leading to a range of feelings from irritability to full blown rage (Shaley, 2008, p. 16). In efforts to reduce levels of anxiety, which can directly affect the safety of staff and other inmates, it is important to address any improvements that can be made to better prison environments.

There is a lack of extensive research relating to the benefits of aquariums; however, their appeal has been noted by divers, aquarium visitors, documentaries and people who own their own fish tanks. Introducing fish tanks into prison environments will add a natural component to the confinement of the built surroundings, which may aid in providing 'soft' fascination for inmates, drawing their attention away from their daily stressors. Lower anxiety levels may lead to reduced feelings of frustration and anger that can lead to violence.

Colored Bed Linens – ABOUT TO BEGIN
SCI Fayette

Prisons can be simple and mundane, with most cells having a basic, metal toilet and a bunk bed made of metal. Colors are generally very neutral. Studies show that inmates undergo psychological changes as they adapt to the prison surroundings and institutional routines. The dull palette of prison cells can increase stress experienced by inmates, which often can result in heightened aggravation that leads to violence. Changing the atmosphere through simple means could reduce inmate anxiety and increase psychological wellbeing.

SCI Fayette's pilot of this concept will begin on October 27, 2016, and will run through December 27, 2016, after which results will be reviewed to determine whether this should be expanded to additional prisons for further study.

Visitor Notification Letter – ABOUT TO BEGIN
SCIs Camp Hill and Pittsburgh

SCIs Camp Hill and Pittsburgh will host trials that study the effects of visitor notification letters. Beginning late-October or early-November, one group of visitors will receive letters informing them only of their addition to an inmate's visitor's list. The second group will receive letters of the same and also will include documentation outlining visiting policies and that emphasize consequences of bringing contraband onto prison premises.

The two groups at the two prisons will be studied to see if the number of contraband incidents occurring both in the parking lot and during visitation, along with associated inmate misconducts, are reduced.

Soothing Sounds – ABOUT TO BEGIN
SCI Benner Township

A trial to examine the effectiveness of noise generators on reducing misbehaviors, reducing violent assaults, and reducing psychiatric crisis will be conducted at SCI Benner Township in units that have both inmates with mental and behavioral issues.

One night of disrupted sleep can lead to one feeling unrefreshed and irritable, while frequent nights of disrupted sleep can impose poor health outcomes, impaired memory and cognitive ability, decreased alertness and productivity, increased stress and agitation and an overall poor quality of life.

Evidence states that "reducing sleep elicits psychotic experiences in non-clinical individuals, and that improving sleep in individuals with psychosis may lessen psychotic experiences. Anxiety and depression consistently arise as (partial) mediators of the sleep and psychosis relationship," (Reeve, Sheaves & Freeman, 2015).

Better management of inmates' chronic sleep deprivation is of utmost importance in ensuring the safety of staff and other inmates, and, in the longer run, the safety of our communities, since many inmates will eventually be released back into society.

White noise generators have been a go-to tool for aiding sleep. In simple terms, these sound machines mask out unwanted and disruptive sounds with other specific sounds (Nave, n.d.). It might seem counterintuitive to add noise to an already noisy environment; however, the sound emitted from the generator blends with other background noise, allowing the mind to no longer distinguish specific, disruptive sounds but instead blur all sounds together, which allows

inmates the ability to fall asleep quicker and maintain uninterrupted sleep. The National Institution of Safety and Health recommends that noise levels should not exceed 85 decibels for a maximum of 8 hours to reduce the risk of induced hearing loss. This recommendation has been applied to noise machines to prevent damage to infants' hearing.

For some, the typical static sound of a white noise generator can be more irritating than helpful. However, other sounds such as rain, crickets, and waves crashing can be pleasant and soothing, encouraging a calmer atmosphere in which to fall asleep.

Introducing white noise generators into units housing inmates with behavioral and mental problems may help to drown out the annoying and disruptive sounds during sleeping hours for inmates trying to fall asleep. The soothing sounds can serve as a meditating and mindfulness tool to relax inmates' anxiety and excessive and disruptive outbursts, resulting in an overall calmer environment. An achieved tranquil atmosphere can improve inmates' quality of sleep, which may reduce feelings of anxiety and depression, and aggressive behavior. The desired outcome of this trial is for inmates to experience a higher level of satisfaction of sleep quality and amount of sleep, while co-occurring a reduced amount of misconducts.

Canine Therapy Aides – IN DEVELOPMENT
SCI Waymart

The two open dorm Intermediate Care Units (ICU) at SCI Waymart will participate in a trial to determine whether the placement of a dog in one of housing units reduces anxiety and/or depression and also increases inmate compliance with mental health treatment and improves their overall well-being.

As with the fish tank proposal, studies suggest that "environment" has major effects on people, which can alter behavior for the better and for the worse.

Animals that have been introduced into other isolated environments, such as nursing homes, have been reported to have many beneficial results with the residents. Introducing dogs into prison environments will add a natural component to the confinement of the built surroundings, which may aid in providing 'soft' fascination for inmates and draw their attention away from their daily stressors. Lower anxiety levels may lead to reduced feelings of frustration and anger that can lead to violence. We are also hopeful that we will see an improvement in interaction with peers among the inmates, increased compliance with medication regimen, enhanced social skills, and improved compliance with recommended programs.

“Chill Plan” - COMPLETED
SCIs Cambridge Springs and Muncy

According to a number of studies and articles, female inmates are more prone to experience higher rates of mental health problems, and research suggest that treatments and programs help female inmates to reduce depression and anxiety, thus mitigating psychiatric disorders.

A concept being tested at the DOC’s two female prisons is called a “Chill Plan.”
This strategy equips inmates with crisis management plans as a coping mechanism that allows them to manage their emotional breakdowns and to prevent a mental crisis from occurring.

The Chill Plan help inmates to identify triggers and signs of escalating emotional crises and provides personalized strategies for calming themselves before emotion completely takes over and negative consequences ensue. Also with this information, staff can make earlier detection of an escalating emotional crisis and prompt the personalized strategy.

The Chill Plan encourages targeted inmates to take actions in dealing with their frustrations and negative feelings. It empowers inmates to learn how to manage emotions preemptively with proper tools, rather than powerlessly waiting for being disciplined after an infraction occurs.

During the trial, when a participating inmate experiences increasing emotional response, she will inform staff and request use of a self-managing tool listed on her “chill” plan. Staff will provide the inmates with requested resources to an attempt to “chill.” This could include quiet time, music, back-in-cell time or other activities that the inmate has identified as increasing the likelihood of being able to step back and chill out. The Chill Plan will be implemented with on-site staff’s support and suggestions.

The aim of this trial is to examine whether the Chill Plan results in a reduction in misbehaviors by empowering self-management. Using administrative data, the primary outcomes are the numbers of formal and informal misconducts recorded during the 60-day trial period. Secondary outcomes include types of infractions and inmates behavior performance reported by staff in the housing units.

The preliminary results from the Muncy trial indicate that another group of inmates – other than those in the DCC – may be more appropriate to participate, so a new round of tests may take place at Muncy in the near future.

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Planning for the Future

Representatives from a number of colleges and universities will visit with SCI Huntingdon officials for a tour of the prison and to meet with administrative staff. Sponsored by CareerLink, the get-together is intended to discuss the types of jobs available at the prison and the skills and education required to obtain those jobs. Participating in the meeting will be officials from Juniata College, Greater Altoona Career & Technology Center, Saint Francis University, Mount Aloysius College, Penn State Altoona, Penn Highlands Community College and University of Pittsburgh-Johnstown.

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Pittsburgh CCC Leads Way in Aiding West Virginia Flood Victims

The Pittsburgh CCC recently joined forces with the Riverside CCC to collect and donate much-needed items to victims of the historic and devastating flooding that occurred in southern West Virginia in June. Hundreds of people lost their homes and 44 counties in the state have been declared national disaster areas. The effort to assist the flood victims was initially proposed to Center Director Richard Dotson by Pittsburgh CCC Clerk Typist Missy Hill.

On July 24th, Hill, her son, and a friend drove a truckload of supplies to Webster County, West Virginia -- 4 1/2 hours away -- and delivered the supplies to the town of Camden On Gauley, which was totally destroyed by the flooding. The town of Camden On Gauley lost 55 homes alone, and many people were, and are, in need of food, clothing and shelter.

The supplies were donated by the reentrants and staff members of both Pittsburgh and Riverside CCCs, and the kindness and efforts of both reentrants and staff were greatly appreciated by the mayor and citizens of Camden On Gauley. Hill was greeted upon her arrival to Camden On Gauley by Mayor Lisa Prather.

Pittsburgh CCC Reentrants and staff will continue to collect and donate supplies to the citizens of Webster County, West Virginia, in an effort to help the people who lost everything as they work on trying to recover from the devastation they encountered as a result of the flooding.

Hill continues to have frequent contact with Webster County Emergency Services to keep updated on what particular items are most needed as the recovery efforts continue and will continue for quite some time.

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King's College Visits RETREAT!

On October 13, 2016, SCI Retreat Superintendent Vincent Mooney welcomed nine students from King's College. The students who participated in the tour had different majors, and all of the students had the opportunity to tour some areas of the institution, talk with staff regarding their job classifications in corrections, and they also had the opportunity to meet two inmates. The students asked questions of the staff and inmates pertaining to the inmates' daily lifestyle and available educational opportunities/programs while incarcerated. The group was so fascinated by the prison's Geese Dog Program and they asked if Joy could be in their group picture!

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Huntingdon Holds “Blowout”

Employees at SCI Huntingdon recently enjoyed their 5th annual end of summer “blowout.”

The tradition was started by Regional Deputy Secretary Tabb Bickell when he served as the prison’s superintendent and has carried on through to the current Superintendent Eric Tice. This year, at the suggestion of Supt. Tice, a chili cook off was added. Loren Wilkins (Wilky), electrical trades instructor, won the trophy and bragging rights this year.

The prison’s employee committees provided hamburgers, hot dogs and wings, and staff brought in their favorite dishes for all the shifts to enjoy.

Supt. Tice, Deputy Superintendent John Thomas, Major Curtis Grice, Classification and Program Manager Christian Garman and Unit Manager George Ralston stayed until 2 a.m. flipping burgers and cooking wings for the third shift.

Employees had the chance to win several different themed gift baskets. Planning is already underway for next year’s blowout and another great chili cook off.

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Rockview Holds Inmate Runathon

Forty-four SCI Rockview inmates participated in the annual runathon on Oct. 8. The inmates walked nearly 560 miles and collected $663, which will be donated to Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Centre County.

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Muncy Holds Deer Hunt

On October 8, SCI Muncy's Employee Recreation Association (ERA) hosted an archery deer hunt on the institution grounds for Team Red, White and Blue (RWB).

Team RWB's mission is to enrich the lives of America's veterans by connecting them to their community through physical and social activity. Team RWB provided 10 hunters, while SCI Muncy provided 10 guides. The ERA provided a "meet and greet" meal at the Muncy Legion and provided lunch for the hunters and the guides.

Although only one deer was harvested, all of the hunters were thankful for the opportunity and the experience. SCI Muncy also sold regular and pink camouflaged shirts with the Team RWB logo on it. Through this fundraiser, the prison's employees were able to donate approximately $200 dollars to Team RWB.

A Team RWB member sits in a tree stand during a recent hunt on Muncy prison grounds.

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Mahanoy Holds Reentry Fair

The fifth annual Reentry Fair was held at SCI Mahanoy on October 5, 2016. Principal Chester Beggs chaired the event which was well supported by the entire institution. Jason Kowalski, Alice Cole and Ann Marie Kushwarra helped Principal Beggs prepare for the event.

Thirty-five representatives from 22 organizations attended the event. They represented Dauphin, Lebanon, Luzerne and Schuylkill counties. Two hundred twenty-five inmates had the opportunity to view displays and speak with the representatives from employment, health care, mental health, education and ministry services.

Participants and represented organizations included:

Aerotek
AHEED
Berks Connection
Career Link
Clinical Outcomes Group
Employment Opportunity Training Center
IMPACT SERVICES
Jubilee Ministries
Lehigh Carbon Community College
Liberty Ministries
Lifelong Learners
Luzerne County Community College
NEPA Manufacturers and Employers Council
Parole
Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole
SAM, Inc.
SARRC
SCI Camp Hill
Veterans' Administration
Veterans' Employment
Wyoming Valley Alcohol and Drugs
Yokefellowship Ministry

SCI Mahanoy's staff received positive feedback from the participants who were extremely impressed with the operation of the facility and how safe they felt while visiting.

"Our mission is to help educate and prepare reentrants for transition back to their family and reentry to the diverse and ever changing world," said SCI Mahanoy Superintendent Theresa DelBalso. "This Reentry Fair is just one way we can help to

increase public safety, improve the health of communities, sustain families and improve the welfare of children and lower costly criminal justice expenses."

DelBalso said that the Reentry Fair also gives the institution the opportunity to educate the public about the valuable education programs available to reentrants and the national, international and Commonwealth certification programs offered which include auto mechanics, OSHA, warehousing, electronics, business and barber.

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Waymart Begins Dog Training Program

SCI Waymart has begun working with True Friends Animal Rescue out of Montrose, Pa., for its new dog-training program called “Furever Frends.” The program trains dogs to be more adoptable.

Pictured with “Ralphie,” a two-year-old terrier/bull mix, are Unit Manager Bobbie Bassett and Deputy Superintendent Ronda Ellett.

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Week of October 3…

Coal Township Names EOQ

Amy Kluck-Leonowicz, psychological services specialist, was recognized as SCI Coal Township's Employee of the Quarter for the Third Quarter of 2016. Amy was nominated by her supervisor.

Amy's supervisor stated that she consistently provides services that are above those required of her position. Amy's been integral in trouble shooting problems within the mental health aspect at the prison since her transfer to the facility. She frequently offers solutions that are "out of the box" and has been fundamental in ensuring the prison exceeds standards indicated in policy.

Superintendent Thomas McGinley commended Amy's job performance and presented her with the award as Employee of the Quarter at a recent Administrative/Department Head meeting.

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SECA's Underway

The 2016 State Employee Combined Appeal – the annual workplace charitable giving campaign for commonwealth employees – is underway! For over 30 years, SECA has enabled employees to support their favorite charities through flexible and convenient giving options. To raise awareness, interest and funds, facilities hold their own "kick offs." SCI Waymart recently did so with a cookout.

At the cookout, employees were able to purchase and enjoy hamburgers and hot dogs with all the fixings, cold beverages, macaroni salad and potato salad. Employees volunteered to cook and serve the picnic fare. All proceeds from the event were donated to the SECA campaign.

Pictured, from left to right: Dennis Cush, Kristina Quinn, Roberta Griffis, Michelle Griffin, and James Mitchell.

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