Correctional Newsfront

The official newsletter of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, including the state prisons, reentry services, community corrections and parole supervision

2019 News ~ October to December

Week of December 30, 2019...

Mrs. Claus Visits Mercer

On Dec. 20 and 21, SCI Mercer hosted “Storytime with Mrs. Claus” in the visiting room. Mrs. Claus read stories to the children from 12:30-3 p.m. Stories included The Night Before Christmas and Santa Never Forgets. All the children had a great visit with Mrs. Claus.

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Smithfield Supports Local Food Bank

The SCI Smithfield Community Work Program assists monthly with the food bank in Dudley, Pa. Reentrants bag supplies in preparation for distribution by food bank volunteers the following day at the Immaculate Conception Church. Smithfield staff held a food bank collection for this cause during November and December. On Dec. 20, administrative staff and labor foreman, Mark Snyder, volunteered their time at the food bank with filling bags, carrying and loading bagged items into vehicles for the recipients.

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Agent Shares Holiday Donation Tradition with Altoona District Office

Parole Agent Jacquelyn Conners has collected and donated toys to Children’s Hospital of Pittsburgh since 2008—and for the second straight year, her colleagues have helped out.

The Altoona District Office collected and boxes full of toys for children in the hospital, and Conners (pictured, wearing Santa hat) delivered them just in time for Christmas. Conners has helped collect toys for children at the hospital for many years, because she had a sister who lost a long battle with cancer. As a child, her family spent many Christmases at the hospital.

Great work, Agent Conners and Altoona staff!

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Waymart Activities Department Plays Key Role in Bringing Christmas Cheer to Inmates

The SCI Waymart activities department, led by Activities Manager Troy Walsh, handed out holiday bags to the Waymart inmate population. In early October, Walsh, with the help of business office, purchased holiday bags filled with various snack items (chips, chocolate, wafers, etc.) through the Inmate General Welfare Fund. Dec. 23 was a busy day for the activities department as the employees brought in the more than 1,400 bags and separating them by housing units, with special diabetic bags going to those inmates who are diagnosed with diabetes. On Christmas Eve, had Walsh and his inmate workers delivered the holiday bags to each housing unit. Later in the evening, the bags were passed out to each inmate.

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Around the Centers...

Reentrants Continue to Serve in Braddock

In continued efforts to promote restorative justice initiatives for reentrants, CTC Braddock collaborated with the Braddock Borough Food Bank and Family Dollar in late December. Several reentrants volunteered their time to help set up the local holiday food and clothing drive. During the weekend event, CTC Braddock reentrants unloaded items and filled bags and boxes for delivery to community residents in need. Reentrants completed 46 community service hours with this project.

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Cambridge Springs Staff Participate in Angel Tree

SCI Cambridge Springs teamed up with the Cambridge Springs Helping Hands Organization again this year to provide Angel Tree Christmas gifts for children in the local community. Helping Hands works with the local elementary school, receiving names of families that need assistance. The children’s wish lists are passed on to the facility and numerous staff members generously purchase gifts. Cambridge Springs was fortunate enough to assist nine local families with a grand total of 25 children this 2019 Christmas season.

Pictured from left: Jay Acklin (Helping Hands) and Amy Boylan (SCI Cambridge Springs Superintendent’s Assistant) fill up a truckload of gifts for children in the Cambridge Springs community.

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Kids Paint Ornaments, Trees with Fathers at Rockview

On Dec. 12, SCI Rockview staff provided Christmas Tree Ornament Painting for children present in the visiting room from 1-3:30 p.m. Eight children and their fathers participated in the provided event. Engraved Christmas trees were provided, compliments of Rockview’s very own Correctional Industries wood shop.

Each child made two ornaments—one to take home and one to place on the institutional Christmas tree located in the visiting room lobby.

Each child was also allowed the option to have their portrait sketched by one of Rockview’s residential artist or to decorate a tree or stocking for their father to keep. The inmates and their children were very appreciative for the activity.

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Retreat Employees Association Holds Breakfast with Santa

The SCI Retreat Employees Association held its annual Breakfast with Santa at Montage Ski Resort on Dec. 15. Kids and adults had a full course breakfast buffet to enjoy, along with crafts and pictures with Santa and Mrs. Claus! The REA also gave each child a stocking with goodies and a gift card. A fun time was had by all! Thank you to those who went.

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Phoenix Staff Collect Gifts for Nearly 200 People

The SCI Phoenix Empowerment Committee sponsored the “Giving Tree” as the quarterly humanitarian project for the facility. Through this project, SCI Phoenix staff collectively assisted with gift donations for 199 children and adults with special needs in Montgomery and Philadelphia counties.

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PCI Recognizes Rook at Retirement

Pennsylvania Correctional Industries’ Sales and Marketing Representative Richard Rook was presented with a retirement plaque on Dec. 20. Rook, who served the commonwealth for 12 years in the PCI Sales Division, was presented with a wooden plaque that was made by inmates at the PCI Wood Shop at SCI Rockview.

We thank Richard for his service and acknowledge the fine craftsmanship of our inmate workers. Recognition plaques are a staple of this particular industry.

Pictured are Richard Rook and PCI Director Khelleh Konteh.

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Houtzdale Supports Opening of New Child Advocacy Center

Staff from SCI Houtzdale attended the ribbon cutting ceremony for the Clearfield County Child Advocacy Center. While at the ceremony, staff presented the center director, Mary Tatum, with a check for $500 from the inmate organization, Journey for Change, and also $1,250 from various staff organizations.

During the tour of the new facility, staff were able to view artwork that was previously donated to the center which was made by inmates.
Houtzdale Staff Support Angel Tree

Staff from SCI Houtzdale sponsored 50 children in the YMCA Angel Tree project this year. Presents were purchased in correlation to what the children asked for from “Santa.” A truck-load of toys, clothing and other wishes were delivered to the YMCA.

From left to right back row: Lt. James James and Corrections Activities Manager Shannon Sage. Front row: Records Specialists Terrilee Millard and Colleen Vingless.

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Wolf Administration Honors Nearly 14,000 State Employees Who are Also Military Veterans

Nearly 14,000 state employees have been honored since Governor Tom Wolf signed an executive order in June creating the Pennsylvania State Employee Service Recognition Campaign to annually recognize and thank commonwealth employees who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the United States, the Reserves, and National Guard. Those honored have received a lapel pin featuring our national flag and the commonwealth flag signifying their dual service status.

“This campaign is a fitting way to thank our dedicated state employees not only for their military service, but also for their continued service to the citizens of the commonwealth,” Gov. Wolf said. “It also allows us to help them better understand and access all of the state and federal benefits they may have earned through their
service. I look forward to continuing this tradition of recognition in the coming years with all new eligible state employees because we owe each and every one of them our gratitude.”

A total of 35 state agencies have held numerous recognition events across the state to make sure each honoree received his or her pin. A few of the larger state agencies are winding down their events.

"This campaign is an outstanding way to honor the one percent of our commonwealth’s population that currently serve as state employees and also served in our nation’s military. These great American patriots continue to give back to our communities as committed public servants," said Maj. Gen. Anthony Carrelli, Pennsylvania’s adjutant general and head of the Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, the agency managing the recognition campaign. “We also promoted this effort as another way to raise awareness about federal and state veteran benefits, to encourage registration in the Pennsylvania Veterans Registry, and to inform state employees about mentoring opportunities within our veterans' communities."

State employees who received their lapel pin have enjoyed the recognition and the comradery it brought about.

“As a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces and an employee of the commonwealth, I am extremely proud to be recognized for my service to this great country as well as the citizens of Pennsylvania,” said Kenneth M. McClain, a PennDOT employee who served in the Army National Guard. “The State Employee Service Recognition Campaign brought together members from my PennDOT organization and highlighted the importance of public service. This program provided not only a ‘thank you,’ but also served as a reminder to veterans that the DMVA stands poised to provide benefits to those who served. Our recognition event afforded me the opportunity to share stories and build a network of co-workers who are really part of a special subset of state employees.”

Employees who serve or have served in the Armed Forces of the United States: Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force, Coast Guard, as well as the Reserves and National Guard were eligible for program participation and recognition. Moving forward, the campaign will annually recognize all new eligible state employees with a pin.

Veterans, family members and people who work with veterans can register for the Pennsylvania Veterans Registry by going to [www.register.dmva.pa.gov](http://www.register.dmva.pa.gov).

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Phoenix PSS Awarded Inaugural Psychology Award

At this year’s 27th Annual Forensic Rights and Treatment Conference, hosted by Drexel University’s College of Medicine, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections’ Psychology Office presented the inaugural Dr. Lance Couturier Psychology Award to SCI Phoenix Psychological Services Specialist Robert Ladonne.

Ladonne’s contributions to psychology and the Department of Corrections have been immense. He has been employed for more than 20 years in Pennsylvania corrections, with 18½ years worked at SCI Graterford and at SCI Phoenix since its opening. A consummate professional, selfless teammate and a gentleman, Ladonne (pictured) has been adaptable and professional throughout his entire career, just like Lance. What makes this award special is that not only does Ladonne personify the qualities of this award, but he does so as a front-line Psychology staff member, working in the trenches, face-to-face, with the most psychiatrically unstable, clinically ambiguous and vulnerable individuals in our custody. Lance was a firm believer that Psychology staff within the corrections organization didn’t need to have prominence or a high-ranking title within the agency to be leader or to help someone adapt to a stressful situation, like incarceration.

The Psychology Office formally established the Dr. Lance Couturier Psychology Award in 2019 to not only memorialize and remember Lance’s contributions to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, but to ensure that his legacy, leadership, advocacy, excellence in professional psychology, responsibility, and service are highlighted and remembered amongst Lance’s peers and current Department of Corrections’ Psychology staff. As discussed at the conference by Dr. Lucas Malishchak, Director of the Psychology Office, the Psychology Office’s intention is to present this award annually into the future, to the DOC Psychology staff member that best exemplifies the above qualities, which Lance epitomized during his tenure with the department.

Joining in the honor and celebration of Lance’s contributions at the Forensic Conference were several of Lance’s surviving family members, including two of his children, Greg Couturier and Anna Simpson, Lance’s brother, John Couturier, Greg’s partner, Tracy Sanna, and Lance’s dear companion, Nancy Wieman. During the conference, the Psychology Office presented Lance’s family members with a replica of the inaugural award.

On behalf of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections’ Psychology Office, please join us in congratulating Robert Ladonne as the first recipient of the Dr. Lance Couturier Psychology Award, for his embodying of Dr. Couturier’s principles of
advocacy, excellence in professional psychological service, selflessness, responsibility, and professionalism.

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Eight Participate in Annual Cookie Swap at Waymart

SCI Waymart’s 11th annual cookie swap took place on Dec. 16 with 8 bakers participating. Bill Cordts, Michelle Griffin, Clara Spangenberg, Jessica George, Linda Meyers, Josh Zofcin, Stephanie VanLeuven, and Roberta Griffis baked confections to delight and tickle everyone's fancy.

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Mercer Staff Team Up to Make a Difference

There was a presentation at the DOC Leadership meeting in November on trafficking. That presentation was mainly focusing on trafficking that occurs within our prison systems, but did also discuss the problem as a whole. The professor leading the presentation made a comment that caught Superintendent Melinda Adams’ attention: there was a recent bad case of sex trafficking in Mercer County.

That comment led Supt. Adams to research the topic. She found that western Pennsylvania has one of the highest rates of human and sex trafficking in the country. She also learned that there is an organization located in her prison’s backyard that assists young victims of sex trafficking.

Upon speaking to the woman that founded and ran the organization, Supt. Adams found it disturbing that this organization currently has nine girls in their home, ranging from 15 months to 16 years of age. Supt. Adams also learned about some of the trauma these children have gone through and what the organization is doing to assist. They are currently licensed in nine states, but the majority of their residents, even those in other states, come from Western Pennsylvania. They have a home in a rural area of Mercer County where these children live with them and receive treatment and care to allow them an opportunity to hopefully live a normal life.
Project Restore’s success is based on donations. The staff at SCI Mercer held a collection and got an overwhelming response through the donations of hygiene products, cleaning supplies, clothes, slippers, blankets, snacks, books, school supplies and more than $750 in gift cards and money just to name a few. On Dec. 18, Supt. Adams, Superintendent’s Assistant Nicole Franz and Lt. Brain Mitchell took those supplies to a local drop off. There, they had the opportunity to meet with Executive Director Jess Padilla, whose gratitude was present with each box as the three unloaded the truck.

Superintendent Melinda Adams poses with the donated items.

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**Scranton Reentrants Support Toy Drive**

For November and December, Scranton Community Corrections Center reentrants collected $580 worth of toys for the Scranton United Neighborhood Center Toy drive.

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Scranton CCC Monitor Participates in Advisory Committee

On Dec. 13, Corrections Counselor Kenny Jordan was invited to West Side Vocational School for the Occupational Advisory Committee meeting. This meeting was a chance for local business leaders, law enforcement agencies and many other occupations throughout the Wyoming Valley to come together to share ideas that will contribute to their curriculum.

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Huntingdon Staff Support Salvation Army Campaigns

Staff at SCI Smithfield were very involved this year with the charitable endeavors of the Salvation Army of Huntingdon County. One project staff participated in was the Angel Tree Program. Christmas wish lists of 50 children in the Huntingdon County area were received and fulfilled. Staff purchased toys for all 50 children to help brighten their Christmas morning. Each child also received a coat.

The administration area was overflowing with gifts ranging from race tracks and trucks to punching bags! Many staff commented on how good they felt bringing joy to these less fortunate children who otherwise may have received very little or nothing at all. The smiles these children will have on Christmas morning is the best gift of all. The generosity of staff was phenomenal.

In addition, several staff stood in cold temperatures for several hours at Wal-Mart in Huntingdon to “ring the bell” in order to support the Salvation Army’s Kettle Program. The Kettle Program began in 1891 in San Francisco by Salvation Army Captain Joseph McFee in order to provide a Christmas dinner for the destitute and poverty stricken. The funds received through the kettle program are now used year-round and around the world to help those in need. It is estimated that 33 percent of the funds used by the Salvation Army come from the Kettle Program. Next time you pass by a kettle, please consider giving.
Chester DO Celebrates Retirement of Agent

The Chester District Office celebrated the retirement of Agent Michael Harris. Congratulations and best wishes, Agent Harris!
Reentrants Support School Food Drive

Throughout the month of November, canned goods were collected by reentrants and veterans of Tomorrows Hope in support of the Glendale Elementary School food drive. The collected food is to provide for families in need, who live in the school district. The drive at Tomorrows Hope generated more than 100 cans of food that were boxed, transported and delivered by Tomorrows Hope. This outreach, although unexpected by the community, was greatly appreciated. This community service activity provided participants from Tomorrows Hope the opportunity to reflect on the many blessings and opportunities they have been afforded throughout this year.

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VFW Supports Tomorrows Hope

On Dec. 13 Dubois VFW Post 813 made a very generous contribution to all of the residents here at Tomorrows Hope for the Holiday season. The donations consisted of various hygiene items and candy. The donations were greatly appreciated by both residents and staff.

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Chester Holds Toy Drive

SCI Chester held its annual toy drive during the months of November and December. This year, the staff collected more than 150 toys to be donated to the Wesley House.

The Wesley House is a homeless shelter for single women or families. The shelter has 17 rooms for guests and is typically at full capacity of 70 people on any given day. It serves an average of 240 individuals (75 households) per year. Wesley House has a state-of-the-art computer training room for clients to improve their computer skills, search for employment and secure permanent housing. Financial literacy (Money Smarts) classes are offered as well as the Catholic Social Services' Out of Poverty Program, enrichment classes, nutrition classes, medical assessments through Horizon House, respite care for needy children and toys during the holiday season.

The Inmate Improvement Organization (IIO) was also in the giving spirit. Inmates at Chester donated over $1,500 to purchase toys for over 60 children with incarcerated parents. The children were able to look through a “toy catalog” of the purchased toys and pick which item they would like to leave with at the end of their visit.

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Schmidt Named Volunteer of the Year at Chester Banquet

More than 200 volunteers attended the annual Volunteer Banquet at SCI Chester on Nov. 21. The event began with updated security and PREA training, then the volunteers escorted to the gym for a banquet in their honor. This is the 21st year that Chester has hosted the volunteer banquet. Stephen Schmidt (pictured), who has been coming in and teaching religious services since SCI Chester opened, was presented with the Volunteer of the Year award. Each participant received a certificate of appreciate as well as a small gift.

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Chester Holds Graduation for 75 Students

On Dec. 5, SCI Chester administration, staff, families, guests and peer supporters celebrated the achievements of 75 students at the annual education graduation. Recognition was given to students who earned GEDs, barber licensures, as well as certifications in building trades, business practices, HVAC, OSHA, and Flaggers. One student was honored for achieving his bachelor of arts degree through correspondence coursework. Two students were honored with certificates for the Mary Ann Williams award and valedictorian. In addition, the HVAC and building trades students of the year were honored by Vince Console and Mike Pieson of Associated Builders and Contractors. Three students were honored by John Yoast of WBYN for excellence in communications.

Keynote speaker Naomi Blount not only provided the graduates and audience with words of encouragement and hope for the future but also through the gift of song. Superintendent Marirosa Lamas and Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services
Mark Wahl shared words of wisdom and accolades to the graduates for their dedication, hard work, and perseverance to better themselves for their future and communities. This day would not have been possible without the dedication of the education department and assistance from all departments at Chester. Congrats to the graduates!

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**Chester Hosts a Blood Drive**

On Dec. 19, SCI Chester held its annual blood drive. More than 25 employees donated blood! Thank you to the Red Cross for coming to our facility and to all the staff who donated!

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**Somerset Receives Visit from “Santa”**

It seems that the Christmas spirit has visited SCI Somerset recently. Here, Superintendent Eric Tice, dresses up as Santa Claus:

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**Making the Season Bright**

SCI Laurel Highlands employees collected and delivered socks and cookies for veterans at the VA Medical Centers in Pittsburgh, Pa. Some of these residents are permanent residents and rarely receive visitors. The goal is to provide a small token of appreciation for their service and to make their Christmas just a little bit brighter.

Pictured are Kathy Pelesky and Gina Hinebaugh.
Camp Hill Hosts FOUR Holiday Concerts

The SCI Camp Hill Activities Department recently hosted four holiday concerts in December 2019. The band, Felix and the Hurricanes, performed classic rock on December 12th followed by the band, The Cure for Love, on Sunday, December 15th.

Local artist and Nashville recording artist, Ben Gallaher, performed his brand of country music on December 16th followed by the final band, Familiar Spirit, featuring Jackson Duane and “We are Family Tour” performing contemporary rock and roll, Motown hits, as well as top 40s on December 19th.

All of the bands’ performances were enjoyed by both staff and inmates.
Ornament and Tree Decorating at Prison

SCI Chester really got into the holiday spirit recently with an ornament decorating contest. Staff and inmates were invited to decorate ornaments that would then be placed on the 11 trees located throughout the facility. More than 180 ornaments were decorated which was plenty to adorn the trees.

Children in the visiting room also were invited to decorate ornaments while visiting. Their ornaments were placed on the tree in the visiting room, and they were even allowed to take some home. SCI Chester employees love celebrating this season with the families and wish everyone a lovely holiday and new year!

The Beginning of a New Tradition

SCI Camp Hill’s Employee’s Recreation Association (ERA) purchased more than 60 Christmas cards to send to local VAs, Legions and VFWs. This is a new endeavor the ERA sponsored this year, and they hope to make it an annual tradition. Prison employees were able to sign the cards as they entered the facility and wish our veterans a happy and healthy holiday season and thank them for their service.
**SCI Muncy Cares**

A Christmas tree with tags is set up in the Administration building every December as part of the annual SCI Muncy Cares program.

This year the community need was much larger than normal with more than 130 tags on the tree. Staff graciously rose to the challenge to make sure everyone on the tree received a gift this holiday season. SCI Muncy Cares program delivered gifts to 38 teens and adults with developmental disabilities in a local group home.
(Milton Developmental Services, Inc.) as well as 101 children in three local shelters (the Gatehouse, Haven Ministries and Women in Transition).

The program is run by Special Education Teacher Matthew Shively, Clerk Typist 3 Sandra Killian and Clerk Typist 2 Margaret Bitler.

Annual Wounded Warrior Hunt Held

SCI Muncy’s Annual Wounded Warrior Hunt was held Wednesday Dec. 11th. The hunt consisted of six community veterans and one veteran corrections officer, C.O. Funston. Hunters gathered pre-sunrise for donuts and coffee before heading out to their spots in a side-by-side; rented by the ERA from Best Line. A total of four doe were harvested. Hunters then gathered for a hot lunch and gave thanks for the event.
Friends of Veterans 2019

Over the holiday season, Friends of Veterans invited staff and their families from SCI Smithfield to join them at the Hollidaysburg Veterans Home to help spread some holiday cheer and spend some quality time with a veteran. Festivities that evening included the passing out of gift bags that included a variety of donations from SCI Smithfield employees. Residents also were handed blankets, clothing, winter coats and Christmas cards, along with a letter of appreciation to all who served.

Other organizations that participated were: The Venture Crew, Hollidaysburg YMCA, PSCOA and VFW Riders.
Week of December 16, 2019...

**Greene Staff Deliver Gifts to Hospital—And Come Away with One of Their Own**

There has been an enormous amount of generosity and giving throughout the DOC the past few months, and the following story from SCI Greene is no exception. SCI Greene Major M.A. Switzer shares the following story of what happened when staff personally delivered their generous gift to Children’s Hospital in Pittsburgh. It’s a good reminder of why the many fundraisers, drives and collections conducted by DOC staff are so important:

On Dec. 17, SCI Greene staff had the opportunity to present Children’s Hospital with over $1,800 in gift cards that were donated by the employees/families. The hospital was extremely appreciative and wanted to ensure that everyone here knew how thankful they were to receive this donation.

We also had the opportunity to visit with a young girl named Sophia. For the most part, Sophia is a normal young girl that enjoys all the things that every girl at her age does. However, Sophia has a heart condition that was diagnosed at birth and has required her to spend an exceptional amount of time at Children’s Hospital. Recently she has had complications that have required her to remain at the hospital for the unforeseeable future.

We presented Miss Sophia with a few gifts and, in turn, received the biggest gift back from her in return -- her SMILE. It’s times like these when you reflect and realize how precious life is, and how fortunate we are to have benefit to be at the receiving end of their appreciation. Thank you to all the SCI Greene staff for everything that you did to make this drive a success. These gifts may seem like a small donation, but they are truly appreciated from the recipients and the reward we receive back by a SMILE on a child’s face are absolutely PRICELESS.

Thank you again for everything you have done and continue to do, your efforts to assist others is what makes SCI Greene a very special place.

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**Meet William Penn Fellow Ebony Johnson**
While many who apply for the William Penn Fellowship target agencies like the Department of Education and Department of Agriculture, Ebony Johnson went a different route.

The Philadelphia native saw the Department of Corrections was looking for help with aging inmates, and she knew that was the agency for her. With a BA in psychology and MS in gerontology, Johnson was eager to work for the DOC.

"When I saw this opportunity, I hopped on and hoped for the best," Johnson said.

Johnson was selected and began on July 8, 2019, as the William Penn Fellow in the DOC Policy and Legislative Office. Her focus is on the medical parole bill and programs for elderly reentrants and inmates.

And it's a perfect fit for her.

"That's a passion of mine, the elderly," Johnson said. "We're living so much longer now. According to statistics, year 2020, older adults are going to outnumber those who are 18 and younger for the first time ever. With this increasingly aging population, they're going to need gerontologists to help be an advocate."

Gerontology is the biopsychosocial study of the aging process, which also includes issues faced by senior citizens. Whereas geriatrics focuses on the branch of medicine and the health care of the elderly, gerontology is concerned with all aspects of aging. Johnson's main focus is to assess the six dimensions of wellness of elderly inmates/reentrants which include: physical, spiritual, social, intellectual, occupational and emotional wellness to hopes of implementing age-appropriate interventions.

With no correctional experience or idea of what to expect from working with inmates, Johnson came in unbiased and optimistic as she visited various prisons to interview elderly inmates and learn about their wellness needs. And so far, it's been a positive experience.

Part of her focus has been on lifers and long-term offenders, since she found most programs are prioritized for short term offenders, or those who are ready to be paroled. She also has a focus on the elderly reentrants returning to society to help decrease institutionalized behaviors and increase more independency. Among her ideas for elderly inmates include senior yard time, senior peer support, senior
support groups, and personalized vitamins for elderly in commissary such as Centrum Silver 50+, senior yoga, and a senior reentry workshop.

"The aging population is often looked over," Johnson said. "Even in reentry, some of the [community correction centers] don't have much to offer in regards to resources and programs specifically for the elderly."

The other issue she's found has been the lack of focus on all-around wellness for elderly inmates.

"Most programs only focus on one dimension of wellness, but neglect the others," Johnson said. "If I could have programs that encompass all the dimensions of wellness, it would represent whole-person wellness. That is a philosophy that calls for a personalized nurturing of the mind, body and soul, instead of just one area."

Beyond the DOC, Johnson's long-term goal is to establish an inter-generational center where children, youth, and older adults can come together and support each other in all six areas of wellness. For example, older adults could teach children about life lessons they've learned (social wellness) while the children could help the elderly learn new technology (intellectual wellness).

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**Digby Presented with Award**

On Dec. 4, SCI Camp Hill Unit Manager Jennifer Digby was presented with the 2019 Pennsylvania Forensic Rights and Treatment Conference Award at an annual conference hosted by Drexel University College of Medicine, Behavioral Healthcare Education. The award is intended for individuals who work on a grassroots level, making a difference for persons with mental illness in forensic settings.

Digby, who was nominated for the award by her coworker, Danielle Tedesco, was nominated due to her serving as an amazing role model who serves the prison’s mental health population with fairness, dignity and respect.

As part of her work at SCI Camp Hill, Digby serves as an adjust instructor for case management, coordinates counseling services and case management audits, employs the Swift, Certain Fair modal, chairs the lifer’s group, is a key member of the prison’s intelligence committee, plays a leading role in the Critical Incident Stress Management team, participates in violence reduction initiatives and suicide prevention committees, and is a graduate of the DOC’s Corrections Leadership Development Program.
The awards presentation was part of a conference for individuals such as clinical and support staff, program managers, advocates, psychologists, counselors, social workers, nurses, educators and administrators working in all fields, including corrections, probation/parole, prisons/jails, specialized mental health facilities and specialized drug and alcohol facilities.

This year’s conference provided information about current approaches for juveniles, medication assisted treatment, risk-needs-responsivity in practice, as well as concerns for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities. It also consisted of workshops offering first-person perspectives, psychotherapeutic treatment and wellness.

Congratulations, Jennifer!

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**Mercer Holds First 5K Ruck March**

On Nov. 15, the SCI Mercer Veterans Service Unit—with the support of the Inmate Activities Committee—hosted its first 5K Ruck March to benefit the Liberty House in Erie. Twenty inmates from the VSU and general population at Mercer participated in the march. The participants gathered hygiene items to place in their pack; items could be purchased by or donated to the participant. One hundred and fifty pounds of hygiene items were collected with the heaviest pack weighting fifty pounds. Participants had one hour to complete the march while wearing the pack. Three cash prizes were awarded and one participant choose to donate his cash prize to the Liberty House. The inmate organization purchased clear backpacks for the event. The backpacks will be donated to a local school district to give out when a child is in need of a new backpack throughout the school year.
The Liberty House is a nonprofit organization that helps homeless veterans. Some of the inmate participants had received help from the Liberty House while on the street and were very happy to help return the favor.

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**Mahanoy Staff Continues Santa for Seniors Drive**

The 4th Annual Santa for Seniors Drive took place at SCI Mahanoy this December. Santa for Seniors is a program that was started in 2015 by Jackie Yanchulis, a clerk typist 2 at SCI Mahanoy, that helps the elderly at local nursing homes receive gifts for the holiday season because their family members are absent from their lives. Gifts such as blankets, socks, toiletries, crossword puzzle books, stationary items and more will be distributed to more than 100 people each season.

The 2019 Santa for Seniors drive were delivered by Jackie and Kim Minarchick, RNS at SCI Mahanoy (pictured), to Ridgeview HealthCare and Rehabilitation Center located in Shenandoah, PA, on Dec. 13. The gifts will be distributed to the residents at their annual Christmas party held on Dec. 20.

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Waymart Enjoys Country Concert

Nashville country artist and Camp Hill native Ben Gallaher treated SCI Waymart inmates to an acoustic country performance. This concert was even bigger than last year—when sign-up posters went out for this concert the request flew in like wildfire. With more than 140 inmates attending and nearing capacity, this concert has become one of the biggest draws for inmates. Activities Manager Troy Walsh brought Ben Gallaher back this year due to the high numbers last year, and the great responses he has heard the past year about Gallaher’s performances.

Last year was Gallaher’s first performance Waymart; in 2013, he entered into SCI Camp Hill to perform as an up-and-upcoming artist. When word got out to all the other institutions’ activities departments, he began performing at more and more institutions. His “barbed” tour, as it is now called, has Gallaher touring many of the SCI’s. Even as he is now a Sony recording artist, he still likes to come into the SCI’s and put on these concerts for the inmate population. Walsh and the activities department here at Waymart look forward to bringing him back next year.
Legislators, Local Officials Visit Pine Grove

SCI Pine Grove held their annual Legislative Tour on Dec. 12. The visit included a meet-and-greet with questions, then a tour of the facility including the YAOP (C Unit), program services and puppy program (B Unit).

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BTS Holds Therapeutic Community Experiential Training

On Nov. 19, the Bureau of Treatment Services (BTS) conducted a Therapeutic Community Experiential (TCE) training. The four-day training, held at the DOC Training Academy, was facilitated by Mike Edmonds (SCI Pine Grove, Drug and Alcohol Treatment Specialist), Jennifer Kelly (SCI Pine Grove, Corrections Officer) and Jaime Rauch (Quehanna Boot Camp, DATS Supervisor). The training is mandatory for Drug and Alcohol Treatment Staff but is also open to security staff and other interested institutional staff. TCE training is an interactive and educational forum that provides the skills and information needed to operate a Therapeutic Community (TC).
Class participants are immersed in the roles and processes of the TC, which allows everyone to experience what it is like to be on the receiving end of TC treatment. The training also unifies treatment and security staff in a collaborative endeavor. Facilitators examine the significance of both roles in the mission of the TC and emphasize the importance of communication and cooperative efforts in the management of TCs. The training concludes with a TC graduation, for which participants play an active role in the preparation and ceremony—complete with the traditional pomp and circumstance commencement and certificates. The training yielded positive comments such as “I like how the training gave a different outlook for the COs,” “Trainers were excellent,” “Well organized and a good experience,” “I enjoyed the interaction and teaching tactics used,” and “I liked sharing ideas with treatment staff and learning new approaches”. BTS values participant feedback, as it is vital to the content and structure of future training development.
Mercer Supports Local Children in Need with Gifts

SCI Mercer partners with Treasures for Children and the Sharon PA Salvation Army to provide gifts for less fortunate families. The institution provided gifts for more than 70 local children!

Superintendent’s Assistant Nicole Franz and Superintendent’s Secretary Amanda Bistransin assist members of the Salvation Army with loading the gifts.

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Rockview Participates in Annual Angel Tree Project

SCI Rockview employees participated in the Annual Angel Tree Project. Names of 40 children were received from Mifflin County Children and Youth Services, and, as always, the staff did an amazing job providing for each one!

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Albion Inmate Organization Donates $5,000+ to Food Pantry

On Dec. 5, the Northwestern Food Pantry received a donation in the amount of $5,500.00 from SCI Albion’s ANIVO (Albion New Inmate Visionary Organization). This money will be used to purchase Christmas gifts for the children of 94 less-fortunate families in the community. The remainder of the donation will then be used to provide food to those in need.

Pictured from left: Supt. Michael Clark, Activities Manager Dave Jackson, Steve Smith (Albion Food Pantry) and Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Paul Ennis.

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Waymart Opens Sensory Room in FTC

SCI Waymart is proud to introduce a cutting-edge program for the Forensic Treatment Center (FTC). In efforts to improve the care for the FTC patients, Waymart has implemented an innovative program. The H.O.P.E. (Healing, Overcoming, Peace, Endurance) Room is a sensory room, modelled after a similar program at Clarks Summit State Hospital to offer patients sensory stimulation and promote quality of life. The program will offer mindfulness
groups and meditation groups and will incorporate sensory stimulation activities designed to help reduce stress and anxiety and promote wellness, balance and other wellness coping skills. There will be daily groups offered which will be limited to a small group size to allow for the sensory experience and focus on developing new skills to reduce distressing feelings. Some items offered in the H.O.P.E. Room include weighted blankets, weighted plush, visual stimulation objects, murals, chalk board, tangles, gel pads, fidget gadgets, aromatherapy and meditation music. Patients will complete a sensory room pre- and post-wellness questionnaire to determine the effectiveness of the experience.

In addition to the H.O.P.E. Room there will be a correlating Wellness Toolbox on each of the FTC units. The Wellness Toolbox will offer patients space and time to use items to help reduce stress, frustration and anxiety while also promoting alternative means of managing difficult feelings or mental health symptoms when they occur. The toolbox will include stress balls, mini weighted blankets and other sensory stimulation items. Each of the three FTC units has a designated quiet dayroom where patients will be able to participate in a daily guided relaxation period using yoga mats, aromatherapy and guided meditation.

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**Somerset Staff Support Nearly 100 Local Children**

SCI Somerset employees spread Christmas cheer by donating toys, clothing, wrapping paper and more for 73 children involved in with Alternative Community Resource Program (ACRP) in Somerset.

In 1989, ACRP initially began working with youth through child welfare and juvenile justice, but there was an almost immediate realization that services needed to be provided to entire families. A grant for Family Preservation
Services made this possible. Next the agency began implementing programs in local schools. This led to the development and creation of an Alternative Education Program for youth who could not succeed in traditional school settings. ACRP now operates four alternative school sites that service more than 125 students in elementary, middle and high school and is an approved Alternative Education Provider through the PA Department of Education. ACRP expanded its programming into the mental and behavioral health system in 1997. ACRP is now licensed to provide a variety of outpatient, partial hospitalization, family and school-based programs. Through the years, ACRP has also expanded its coverage. Originally servicing clients in Johnstown, there are now 12 offices or schools covering Cambria, Somerset, Bedford, Blair and Clearfield counties, employing over 325 individuals and serving 4,000 clients, students, and families annually.

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Waymart Provides Gifts for Local Children

The Community Support Committee at SCI Waymart sponsored an “Adopt a Child” program. Waymart staff adopted children identified by Children and Youth Services, Mental Health/Intellectual Disability Program and Victims Intervention. A large number of the children identified are in placements and do not have any family support system and/or are challenged with ID and autism. Staff were very generous, as always, in providing the children with multiple (if not all of the) items on their wish lists.

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Pictured from left: Kristi Altemier, clerk typist 2; Heidi Fuehrer, PSSC/Community Support Committee Chairperson; Laurie Hess, corrections counselor 2; and Alice Emmett, records supervisor.
Dallas Dogs Visit Students, Veterans

On Dec. 12, the SCI Dallas American VetDogs, also known as Hounds for Heroes, visited Luzerne County Community College. The college was conducting stress-free week in conjunction with semester finals. Attending the event were Merli, Colonel Dave, Mary and Maxwell. The students and staff enjoyed the interaction with the dogs. Due to the dogs being on their best behavior, they were able to visit Santa! The Dallas staff hopes that this event will help encourage others to become Weekend Puppy Raisers.

The pups were also out and about on Nov. 22, when they visited the St. Francis Commons. In attendance were the students from the Pennsylvania Virtual Charter School in Scranton. The students learned more about St. Francis Commons and met with some of the veterans who reside at the facility.

Pictured from left: John Duffy, SCI Dallas Drug and Alcohol Treatment Specialist; Ryan Pollock, Commons Program Supervisor; Kim Duffy, teacher at PA Virtual Charter School; Eric Ferranti, America’s VetDogs; and Ann Verbyla, SCI Dallas unit manager. Also shown are service Dogs Mattis and Manny.

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Smithfield Continues Support of Shirley Home

For the sixth year in a row, SCI Smithfield staff sponsored residents of the Shirley Home for Aged, a non-profit, county-affiliated personal care facility in Huntingdon County. The home had 39 residents this year, all of whom received gifts. In addition to the gifts, staff provided snacks and drinks for a party that was held at the home on Dec. 13. Many thanks to staff that contributed and donated towards this project!
Somerset Pups Participate in Parade

The Canine Partners for Life Dogs from SCI Somerset attended Light Up Night in Somerset on Nov. 30. The event takes place in Somerset and includes a lighting of a Christmas tree and the arrival of Santa on a horse-drawn wagon. The pups walked in the parade and took part in all the festivities.

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Mercer’s Morale Committee Holds Holiday Luncheon

On Dec. 17, SCI Mercer’s Morale Committee conducted a Holiday Luncheon for all staff in the visiting room. The luncheon was available during all meal periods for all shift and departments. Fried chicken, meat/cheese trays and drinks were provided.

Staff were asked to supplement the menu by
bringing their favorite holiday dish, dessert or snack to share, but they were not required to.

A special thanks to the Morale Committee for taking the time from their busy work schedules to boost morale here at Mercer!

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**Huntingdon Hosts Suicide Prevention Presentation**

The SCI Huntingdon Suicide Prevention Committee was pleased to host representatives from the James E. Van Zandt VAMC on Dec. 17 for a one-hour presentation on suicide prevention. They provided information regarding suicide myths and facts, current statistics, risk assessment tools and postvention strategies for individuals, staff and community members. The presenters fielded questions from the staff members present, including guests from SCI Smithfield. The presentation was well attended by staff members who offered positive feedback.

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**Camp Hill Staff Meet with CPS to Improve Program**

On Dec. 13, the Certified Peer Specialists who work at SCI Camp Hill met with administrative staff to share any concerns they have about the program, ways in which the program is working well and to combine efforts with staff on improving and expanding the program.

Camp Hill currently has 22 trained CPS workers and are anticipating training an additional 25 inmates in the early months of 2020 to help boost the efforts of helping inmates with their mental health needs. The Certified Peer Specialist program is a great way for staff and inmates to work together for the better of the institutional community as a whole.

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**Camp Hill Holds Toys for Tots Drive in Honor of Late Sergeant**

For several weeks during the months of November and December, the staff at SCI Camp Hill collected toys to be donated to Toys for Tots. The collected toys were dedicated in honor and memory of Marine veteran Todd Lewis, who was a sergeant at SCI Camp Hill and recently passed away. Well over a hundred toys were purchased and donated by staff in honor of Sgt. Lewis. The toys were dropped off
at the donation center on Dec. 15 and were much appreciated by the Marines who received them. A big thank you to PSS Ortiz for organizing the toy drive!

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**Albion Staff Support Gifts for Kids Program**

SCI Albion employees enthusiastically participated in the “Gifts for Kids” program for the Northwestern Food Pantry, which is an annual tradition for the institution. Staff donated Christmas presents for 70 underprivileged children living in the community to ensure they all had presents under the tree on Christmas morning. Great job everyone!
Christmas Cheer at Somerset

The employees and inmates at SCI Somerset have added some holiday cheer throughout the institution. Enjoy a sampling of photos from the festive facility!
Around the Centers…

**Reentrants Continue to Serve Braddock**

CTC Braddock reentrants once again engaged in community beautification projects throughout the area. Reentrants picked up 18 bags of trash and volunteered 20 community service hours in the Braddock Borough Outdoor Workout Park on Dec. 7.

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**Local Church Treats Reentrants to Thanksgiving Dinner**

On Nov. 23, residents from Tomorrow’s Hope were treated to a Thanksgiving feast provided by a local church group. The dinner included all the fixings. This is a great way for the community and Tomorrow’s Hope residents to interact and enjoy the holidays together.

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DOC Honors Volunteers of the Year

The Department of Corrections held a banquet to honor each facility’s Volunteer of the Year on Dec. 9 at the DOC Training Academy in Elizabethtown.

“For you to spend time with our staff and inmates, it’s a big deal,” DOC Sec. John Wetzel said to the attendees. “What you do really counts. This is about you and recognizing you and the service you do.”

Honorees were joined by family and staff representatives from their facilities to enjoy a lunch provided by the Training Academy’s Culinary Academy inmates followed by a ceremony. Statewide Volunteer Coordinator Rev. Ulli Klemm served as the emcee of the event, which included DOC volunteer coordinators reading inmate testimonials on the importance of volunteers.

“Volunteers remind us that someone cares about us,” one inmate wrote.

Each Volunteer of the Year was called up to receive their award as Bureau of Treatment Services Director Tracy Smith read their profile. The profiles are now available on the DOC website at: [http://bit.ly/2scCvLV](http://bit.ly/2scCvLV)

This important event gave the DOC a chance to formally thank and honor volunteers who sacrifice their time to serve inside our facilities.

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**Parole Director Speaks to College Class**

On Dec. 3, Parole District Director Brian Helfrich was a guest speaker for an Introduction to Corrections class at La Roche College in the North Hills of Pittsburgh. His topics included descriptions of various reentry and specialized programs, specialized parole agent assignments and intermediate sanctions to maintain parolees safely in the community. He also encouraged interested students to apply for internships with the Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole.

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**Camp Hill’s Scibelli Named Employee of the Quarter**

Library Assistant Frank Scibelli has been selected by his peers as an outstanding employee and the most recent Employee of the Quarter at SCI Camp Hill. Frank was noted to be a hardworking, knowledgeable and dedicated employee who stepped up to the plate in the absence of a full-time librarian. His hard work has helped the library continue to run smoothly during this challenging time. Frank’s work ethic is to be commended and Camp Hill continues to value his commitment.

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CT/MRI Initiative Began at Benner Township This Fall

On Oct. 23, SCI Benner Township began a CT/MRI initiative. Each Wednesday, Correctional Diagnostic Imaging, Inc., arrives Benner Township with their CT scan or MRI equipment to perform testing. This initiative provides a cost savings for any male inmate throughout the state that would need such testing. Each Tuesday, inmates are transferred to Benner Township in order to complete their respective testing on Wednesday. On Thursday, each inmate will return to their respective home facility. Additionally, the CT/MRI Initiative saves each institution from sending their inmate population to outside facilities in order to have these types of tests completed. The inmate population will benefit by having their testing completed quicker. The CT scans and MRIs rotate every other week, and anywhere from 14-18 tests per day are completed.

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Waymart Celebrates Fall Inside-Out Class

On Dec. 4, a closing ceremony of the Inside-Out class was held in SCI Waymart’s auditorium. Nine students from Keystone College along with eight inmates met weekly for three months to learn from each other. In doing so, they deepened the conversation about and transformed their approaches to issues of crime and justice. The Inside-Out Program was reestablished at Waymart after a few years’ hiatus.

Superintendent George Miller spoke at the ceremony and shared his career path with the participants. He told them that the satisfaction in a DOC career comes, not from one’s paycheck, but from serving others and improving their lives. Classification and Program Manager David Gorman assisted Principal Michelle Lipko
in congratulating the participants. Professor Stacey Wyland from Keystone College
taught the course and presented the certificates to the students. She has years of
experience teaching Inside-Out at Waymart and county institutions, but believes
Waymart’s structure is best suited for both the students and the inmates.

Two students gave speeches reflecting on the experience. Both speakers expressed
gratitude for the opportunity and well wishes for their fellow classmates.

During the last class, students were asked to remark on the experience:

- “I believe all future criminal justice people who want a career in this field
  should do the Inside-Out program.”
- “If I could take this program all over the world, I would. This is something I
  will forever remember and will always think about the people in the class.”
- “I am grateful for this opportunity. It not only gave me the opportunity to
give back to the institution but the opportunity to change my perspective.”

Waymart’s administration and security made the delivery of the Inside-Out class
manageable. Lipko expressed her gratitude for their support of this unique and life-
changing educational experience.

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**Cambridge Springs Staff Ring Bells for Salvation Army**

Members of the SCI Cambridge Springs administrative staff and department heads
participated in the Salvation Army Bell Ringing within the local Cambridge Springs Community
on Dec. 6. This community project is something that staff enjoy participating in each year,
benefiting the Salvation Army and the good works that they do.

**Pictured from left: Suzanne Senz, unit manager, and Barbara Healy, superintendent clerk.**

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Fetterman, Flood Visit Smithfield

Lt. Governor John Fetterman and Pennsylvania Board of Pardons Secretary Brandon Flood recently visited SCI Smithfield to speak with inmates about the commutation process. They were joined by Doug Hollis, a paroled juvenile lifer, Larry Washington, from Sound Community Solutions, and Katelyn Rohrbaugh, intern with Sec. Flood’s office.

The guests spoke with 111 inmates and 30 staff members about the commutation process and updates. Fetterman and Flood explained their dedication to the commutation process and their mission to improve upon it for all inmate across the Commonwealth. They said that they intend on visiting all DOC facilities that house lifers. Inmates expressed their gratitude for the time out of their schedules to visit with them and were very appreciative of the facts and guidance provided in the information session.

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Community Corrections and Reentry Staff Support DHS’ Holiday Wish Program

Executive Deputy Secretary George Little’s Community Corrections and Reentry team participated for the first time as one unit this year in the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services’ Holiday Wish Program. This opportunity was the first for most of the excited board staff. The team was able to support 10 families, including a family of seven that DHS was unable to get anyone else to help with. The gifts were delivered to the Keystone Building on Dec. 11, and it required two trips in a large loaded down pick-up truck to deliver them all!
Great work, Community Corrections and Reentry staff!

Coal Township Inmates Support Vets Through Wreaths Across America

While watching the nightly news, inmates from SCI Coal Township’s Lifeline Organization saw a segment on Wreaths Across America, an organization that provides a wreath for every veteran’s grave at Indiantown Gap National Cemetery.

The organization was only halfway to their goal at the time—so Lifeline decided to step up and help. The inmates came together and donated $1,005 from Lifeline to sponsor 67 wreaths, which will be placed at the cemetery on Dec. 14.

Due to the timeliness of the event, the business office of Coal Township also stepped up. The deadline for the donation was Dec. 2, giving the organization and facility a short turnaround time to make the donation happen. Superintendent Tom McGinley signed approval for the funds at 9:15 a.m. on Dec. 2 and the organization had the donation by 11 a.m. Nancy Wilson and Ann Weikel were key in rushing this donation through so it could be used in time.

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Somerset Holds Graduation for Inside-Out Program

On Dec. 5, graduation was held at SCI Somerset for the Inside-Out Program. This is a partnership with the University of Pittsburgh, where 16 Pitt students attend class with 16 inmates. All 32 students received three credits for the class. Thank you to Dr. Chris Bonneau (University of Pittsburgh professor), Superintendent Eric Tice, Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Michelle Houser and Principal Jennean Newmyer for making this program a success.

SCI Somerset plans to continue this program for the spring semester with the addition of two more classes.

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Somerset Staff Enjoy Luncheon

On Dec. 10, the employees of SCI Somerset were treated to a Christmas Luncheon compliments of the SAT (Somerset employee’s association). The luncheon was catered in from a local vendor, and the volunteers from the SAT served all three shifts.

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Huntingdon Revamps Children’s Visiting Area

SCI Huntingdon completed an Inmate General Welfare Fund-funded redo of its visiting room toys for the children’s area just in time for the holidays. Katelyn Saylor, education counselor, Curtis Frailey, activities manager, and Lt. Anthony Eberling comprised the committee that completed the project and shopping trip. They are pictured with the revamped children’s area.

Thanks to all that helped us with this worthwhile mission.

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Pannebaker Named Employee of the Quarter

Annette Pannebaker was named the Reentry Employee of the Quarter for the 3rd Quarter of 2019. Pannebaker has been with the Reentry Bureau since 2016 as an ASCRA in the Altoona District Office and has recently been promoted to Parole Manager in the Altoona District. She has a passion for helping others and constantly seeks out community partners to assist in reentry efforts in her area. She has been instrumental in delivering reentry programs and services in the Altoona area; her energy and passion inspires others.

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Rep. Kim Visits Camp Hill THU

On Nov. 6, Pennsylvania Representative Patty Kim visited SCI Camp Hill for a meet-and-greet with inmates housed on the Transitional Housing Unit. Kim and her office manager also discussed resources their office can provide.

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DOC PREA Coordinator Speaks at National Conference

Earlier this week David Radziewicz, the DOC’s PREA coordinator, was a guest speaker at the 2019 Association for Justice-Involved Females and Organizations (AJFO) Conference in Georgia where he presented a workshop on PREA and Transgender Inmates.

AJFO is the only professional conference focused exclusively on women and girls involved with the criminal justice system. The conference was attended by corrections professionals working in adult and juvenile community supervision, community reentry, prisons and jails, representing various states including California, Michigan, Alabama, Tennessee and Pennsylvania.

Dave’s presentation included a review of the PREA standards that address transgender inmates and what minimum actions are necessary to develop compliant practices, understanding the framework to efficiently implement agency-wide ancillary support services to holistically meet the needs of transgender inmates and learning how to make objective placement and management decisions for transgender inmates.

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Forest Employees Raise Money for Angel Tree

The SCI Forest Employee Association held a Donut Day on Dec. 4 to raise money for Angel Tree of Forest County. They were given several names of children in need in the East Forest School District. Pictured with the donated gifts are Jennifer Reed (president) and Alyssa Meck (treasurer) of the SCI Forest Employee Association.
Around the Centers...

**Erie CCC Supports Toys for Tots**

Erie Community Corrections Center conducted its yearly Toys for Tots drive this year. Two boxes of new unwrapped toys were donated to the local Marine Corps reserve unit. These toys were donated by reentrants and staff alike and will be distributed to local children to help brighten their holiday. The collection was organized by CCC Monitor Joseph Mayo.

*Pictured from left: Marine Sgt. Victorio; CCC Monitor Nicholas Gardner; and CCC Monitor Anthony Velez*. 

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Four Reentrants Graduate Program, Earn Employment

On Dec. 4, Kintock’s Employment Resource staff members Melody Tingle and Kelsi Tausendfreundt attended the graduation ceremony at Uplift Workforce Solutions to see four reentrants graduate. Reentrants Nia Whitlock, Yvone Cheesman, Darlene Dorsey and Antoine Garrett all graduated from the program and will now begin employment at Shop Rites located throughout Philadelphia.

Uplift is a program that provides life skills training and technical training to reentrants and puts them to work.

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Braddock Reentrants Continue Service to Borough

In an effort to promote restorative justice initiatives, CTC Braddock reentrants continued to engage in community beautification projects throughout the Borough of Braddock. Last week, reentrants cleaned the 11th Street docks along the Monongahela River. Reentrants recorded 22 hours of community service solely dedicated to this effort.

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Week of December 2, 2019...

Phoenix Supports CHOP Through Toy Drive, Donation

SCI Phoenix’s Empowerment Committee, through the support of the staff, delivered toys to the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) on Nov. 25. The toys were donated to CHOP Child Life Foundation. In addition, T Macrosky, activities specialist, presented CHOP staff with a check for $1,000
from the LACEO inmate organization. The toy drive for Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia was a great success!

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**Coal Township Inmate Organizations Support Food Pantry, Special Olympics**

SCI Coal Township’s Lifeline Organization and Triumph Organization held their own donation drives to support the community in November.

Lifeline presented a $1,000 donation to the Mt. Carmel Food Pantry. They also donated $500 worth of socks, hats, scarves and gloves.

*Pictured: Coal Township Lifeline Moderators Unit Manager Kathy Biscoe and Corrections Counselor Jason Gatewood presented the donations to Jake Betz, director of the Mother Maria Kaupas Center/Mt. Carmel Food Pantry.*

Triumph presented a $5,000 check to The Northumberland-Snyder County Special Olympics. Triumph representatives presented the donation to Christopher Branda, father of Special Olympics participant Chris Branda. The elder Branda said the donation will provide the Special Olympics the funding necessary to allow athletes to participate in special events. Branda said the mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness. Olympians participate in thirteen different sports, including softball, bowling, powerlifting, bocce ball and swimming.

*Pictured: Deputy Superintendent for Facilities Management Bill Nicklow; Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Tony Luscavage; Christopher Branda; Chris Branda; Corrections Activities Manager 2 Mike Corbacio; Corrections Activities Specialist Paul Randell and a Triumph Organization Representative.*
Corrections Secretary at Employer Roundtable: Hiring Reentrants is a Smart Choice

Department of Corrections Sec. John Wetzel recently spoke to employers at a roundtable hosted by the Lebanon Valley Chamber of Commerce about the benefits of hiring reentrants from the state corrections system. The event, "Hiring: Second Chances Equal Smart Choices," featured a panel of corrections professionals speaking about the value of hiring individuals who were incarcerated.

"I can't tell you how important this issue is," Sec. Wetzel said. "Unemployment is at an all-time low, and employers need qualified people to fill jobs. We have a group of employable individuals who can make this a win-win situation for everyone involved."

Wetzel highlighted the valuable steps made by Governor Tom Wolf in criminal justice reform—most notably the passage of the Clean Slate Act, a first-in-the-nation law that seals eligible criminal records. Even with significant progress, reentrants still need opportunities offered by employers.

"Each year the DOC releases about 20,000 people," Wetzel said. "I guarantee you're going to run into one of them. We all have a role in reentry and that is to provide them with the skills to obtain successful employment."

The event began with a lunch catered by inmates in the DOC's Culinary Academy, one of the DOC's most popular vocational training programs. Inmates who graduate from the program earn a ServSafe certification and are qualified for in-demand
culinary jobs. Wetzel cited the Culinary Academy as an example of the DOC identifying a need in the community and creating a program to fulfill that need.

Pennsylvania Chamber of Business and Industry President Gene Barr spoke about his work with inmates and reentrants and stressed the importance of giving them a chance. He emphasized reentrants are often hard-working, loyal and appreciative of opportunities.

The bulk of the program included a panel featuring: Lebanon County Jail Deputy Warden Tina Litz; Lebanon County Probation Services Director Sally Barry; Murry's Inc Human Resources Manager Terri Emler; I Am Fit Owner and Reentrant Ernie Groff; DOC Deputy Secretary of Reentry Kelly Evans; and DOC Workforce Development Specialist Dorenda Hamarlund.

Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry Sec. W. Gerard Oleksiak closed the event by highlighting the work his agency and the Wolf Administration are doing to help employers hire reentrants.

"We need to give them opportunities," Sec. Oleksiak said. "It's not about charity—it's about sound business decisions."

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**Camp Hill Staff Support Food Drive**

Administrative staff from SCI Camp Hill teamed up in November to sponsor a food drive benefitting the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. A total of 472 pounds of food was donated by more than 40 Camp Hill employees. Camp Hill employees recognize how blessed they are during this time of year and were eager to share with those less fortunate in our community. A huge thank you to all who participated!

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**Retreat Staff Donate to Cori’s Place**

On Nov. 15, SCI Retreat staff visited Cori’s Place in Hanover Township to deliver donations they had collected. Cori’s Place is a non-profit agency that aims to help individuals with disabilities develop and maintain skills. Their mission is “Helping Individuals with Disabilities Create a Better Life.” They achieve this mission by offering a structured program that involves individual growth and learning opportunities. Retreat staff collected items such as paper products, board games and school and art supplies. Many thanks to the Retreat staff who donated!
SCI Retreat Staff pictured along with Cori’s Place participants: Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Laura Banta; Superintendent Bernadette Mason; and Susan Delescavage.

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Waymart Staff Collect Blankets for Shelter

The Community Support Committee at SCI Waymart sponsored a blanket drive to benefit Grace Episcopal Church’s shelter program. Forty blankets were collected from staff and purchased with money donated to the committee.

Pictured from left: Kristi Altemier, clerk typist 2; Alice Emmet, records supervisor; and Heidi Fuehrer, PSSC/Community Support Committee Chairperson.

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Coal Township Contributes to Shikellamy Middle School Career Day
Corrections Counselor Jason Gatewood participated in a Career Day at Shikellamy Middle School in Sunbury.

In a letter from School Counselor Jordan Rickert, she stated, “Our career day is being held to expose our students to individuals in the community who are working in careers that they have expressed an interest in pursuing. It is our goal to have students exploring careers now, so they can make informed choices on how they schedule classes for their high school years.”

The day’s format was to expose students to the five career pathways identified in the Career Education and Work Standards as adopted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

Gatewood presented information regarding the various Pennsylvania DOC careers and responded to questions from the students.

Coal Township participated in the Shikellamy School District’s Career Day for the past three years. The staff at Shikellamy Middle School expressed their appreciation for Gatewood’s presentation and stated that he did a fabulous job and the students loved him.

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Agent Speaks at Middle School Career Event

Parole Agent John Sand of the Norristown SO, Chester District, presented at the Lionvillie Middle School Career Symposium.

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Waymart Honors Lt. Zajaczkowski
SCI Waymart Superintendent George Miller and administrative staff presented Lieutenant Floyd Zajaczkowski with a Letter of Commendation for his PREA investigative skills, work ethic and attention to detail. His thorough investigations coupled with the techniques utilized to ascertain evidence and facts set the investigatory standard not only for PREA-related incidents but investigatory procedures as a whole. Zajaczkowski’s actions bring great credit to himself, SCI Waymart and the Department of Corrections. His professionalism and devotion to duty it is greatly appreciated.

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Dallas Pup Attends High School Veterans Program

On Nov. 8, SCI Dallas staff attended a Veterans Day Program at Valley View High School. In attendance were the middle school students who raised money for America’s VetDogs, which partners with Dallas to run the prison’s dog program. The guest speaker of the program was retired Army veteran Major Clyde Brown.

James Ferranti, who comes to SCI Dallas weekly to train the dogs, spoke to the crowd and demonstrated what inmate handlers teach the dogs. Pax, who attended last year as a puppy, is now moving on to Smithtown, NY, for further training. The staff made him a sign to remind any students that saw him as a puppy how much he grew. The students clapped and were excited to see him carrying the sign. Two students attended the program in wheelchairs. It was amazing to see how Pax interacted so gently with these two students. The students had the biggest smiles on their faces when Pax laid his head on their laps as trained.
After the program, the students were able to interact with the dogs. There were many hugs and kisses given to the dogs.

The students of Valley View High School donated a check for $1,500 to America’s VetDogs. The Dallas staff of Ann Verbyla, Tiffany Zoltewicz and Louise Cicerchia with James Ferranti accepted a check on behalf of America’s VetDogs.

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**High School Donates to Dallas Dog Program Partner**

On Nov. 11, SCI Dallas prison pup Merli—who is named for the Gino J. Merli Veterans’ Center in Scranton—attended a program at Tunkhannock High School with James Ferranti, who trains the dogs at SCI Dallas with the inmate handlers. The duo accepted a check from students for $350 donated to America’s VetDogs.

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**Camp Hill Inmates Celebrate Year of Giving Back**

The SCI Camp Hill Inmate Service Organization held its annual Pa. Prison Runathon Banquet on Nov. 24. This banquet is held each year to acknowledge all of the inmates who participated in the Prison Runathon on Sept. 8. The participants for the Runathon Banquet paid for a meal prepared by Camp Hill’s Culinary Department which included a turkey hoagie, chicken tenders, fries, pizza, cake, ice cream and a beverage. The top runners by age group were acknowledged and received a certificate.
Throughout the year, the charity committee of the ISO conducts a number of fundraising events to raise money to benefit local non-profit organizations. Some of the activities from which the funds were raised by the inmates at Camp Hill were the Runathon, Photo Project, Fantasy NASCAR, Fantasy Football and snack sales.

These inmates were able to donate a total amount of $3,362.23 for the Make-A-Wish Foundation and $3,423.12 for the Boys and Girls Club of Harrisburg. A representative from each of these charitable organizations was available at the banquet to receive their checks totaling more than $6,785.00. Ann Waltman represented the Make-A-Wish Foundation and said this money will be dedicated to granting a wish to a courageous child with life-threatening medical conditions. Mark Hawthorne from the Boys and Girls Club of Harrisburg said these funds will go a long way in help change the beliefs, behavior and attitudes of youth ranging from 6-18 years old to positively impact their future.

This year, the ISO sponsored a fundraising event selling protein cookies/bars to benefit the Hounds of Prison Education (HOPE) program, which is Camp Hill's dog training program. Dogs live with a selected inmates on P block housing unit where the inmates help train abandoned, lost, sometimes abused and/or runaway dogs with the help of dedicated outside volunteers. The ISO through their fundraiser event presented a check for $151.00 to the HOPE. These funds will provide snacks and toys for the dogs in the program.

The General Population inmates are to be commended for giving back to the local community and making a difference. Special thanks to the Culinary Department for preparing the meal. This was a job well done by all.

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DIU K-9 Visits School

As part of a unit on Working Dogs, St. John the Evangelist Catholic School third grade students had a few special guests: Sgt. Greendoner, Lt. Weakland and Kees of the DOC’s Drug Interdiction Unit.

The trio taught the students about their jobs, and kids were able to ask questions and learn about Kees, including:

- Kees has his own passport because he came from Belgium
- They train every day to keep up his skills
- He uses a passive response to alert Greendoner that he’s found something
- He is Keeshond and German Shepherd mix
- Kees loves his job and is rewarded every time he makes a find!

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2019 Regional Symposium at Waymart Is a Great Success

The 2019 Regional Symposium was held at SCI Waymart this year in the administrative building training room. Attendees from SCI Dallas, SCI Retreat and SCI Waymart enjoyed a Jeopardy-style game and learned from presenters who spoke about wellness in all aspects of life. Nine presenters in total were on hand. Lunch was prepared by Culinary Art teacher James Mitchell and his class. Door prizes were handed out, and everyone walked away with knowledge. The symposium committee looks forward to next year’s event!

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Erie Band Performs for Waymart Inmates

General population inmates at SCI Waymart were treated to a concert by The Familiar Spirits Band, a local band out of Erie.

Last year the band performed a concert at Waymart and Activities Manager Troy Walsh had heard such great responses from inmates that he wanted to bring them back. The response this year was even better with more than 130 inmates attending the concert. The band performed Motown and rhythm and blues covers. Earlier in the afternoon the band treated the FTC and ICU units to a concert as well with close to 30 inmates in attendance.

Quehanna Boot Camp Receives Senatorial Citation

On Nov. 22, Constituent Relations Representative Andrea Schickling presented Quehanna Boot Camp Supt. Mary Natoli and Captain Carter with a Citation from the Senate of Pennsylvania and Senator Wayne Langerholc’s office for receiving the Seven Seals Award.

The Seven Seals Award is presented in recognition of significant individual or organizational achievement, initiative or support that promotes and supports the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve’s (ESGR) mission, to include the efforts
of the more than 4,500 volunteers who carry out ESGR’s mission across the nation on a daily basis.

The Quehanna Boot Camp was presented with the Seven Seals Award because the boot camp program is centered around treatment, education and work with a focus on self-discipline, and it offers a variety of therapeutic groups, support meetings and academic and vocational education programs. QBC has developed a strong reputation for the highest quality of service throughout its history. By steady adherence to the principles of fairness, reliability and integrity, it has become a leader in the community and a model that is worthy of emulation.

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1998 Boot Camp Honor Graduate Returns to Quehanna

Jean White, a 1998 Quehanna Boot Camp Honor Graduate, returned to QBC on Nov. 22 to offer words of encouragement to current Boot Camp teammates. White has been sober for 20 years and attributes her success to AA meetings, surrendering to God and to the Boot Camp program.

In her speech, she told inmates that she does not know where she would be today if she had not been given the opportunity to participate in the Boot Camp program. She said that she remembers everything she learned while at QBC. She continues to attend AA meetings, PT’s, writes in her journal and makes a gratitude list at night.

After graduating from Quehanna, she felt as if her life was over and she had no hope. She paroled to her mother’s house and got a job in a deli. She began drinking and felt that she had control over her alcohol use. She quickly found out that she did not. She said that the best thing she did was to tell her Parole Officer the truth and admitted to needing help and went to rehab.

After rehab, she moved to Allentown, where she knew no one. She got a job as a telemarketer and enrolled in business school. She also decided to begin listening to
others who knew how to live sober, and her life began to get better. She was able to buy a car and wanted to further her education, so she enrolled in college and earned a degree in chemistry. She continued to want to do better and then began to do better and was able to purchase her own home.

She feels that with God, prayer and fellowship, anybody can do anything. She encouraged the listeners to go to meetings and said that if they take care of their bodies, their minds will follow. She finished by saying, “Always give back what somebody gave you.”

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**Around the Centers...**

**BCC Region 3 Stuffs Stockings Instead of Exchanging Gifts**

On Nov. 27, in lieu of a Region 3 Holiday gift exchange, several of the employees got together and filled 16 stockings with food items including oatmeal, tuna, popcorn, fruit snacks and more. The stockings will be delivered to Beinhauer’s Funeral Home to be either shipped overseas or distributed to local military veterans in Pittsburgh. Included with each of the stockings was a holiday card with a note inside for each soldier or veteran. This is the second season that the Region 3 office has decided to participate in this event.
Department of Health Brings Hepatitis A Vaccines to Johnstown CCC

On Nov. 22, the Pennsylvania Department of Health (DOH) came to the Johnstown Community Corrections Center to provide Hepatitis A vaccines to the reentrants and staff. This service was set up by Center Director Matthew Helsel and was free of charge. Some of the reentrants were already vaccinated when they were committed to the various SCI’s; many others, however, did get the vaccine. The employees from the DOH will return on Dec. 20 to vaccinate anyone that is new, if they are interested, as well as anyone who thought about it but didn’t do it in November. This will be a monthly event at the JCCC and will continue to be free of charge.

CREATE House Reentrants Cook Turkey, Celebrate Thanksgiving

Reentrants at CREATE House cooked their own turkey for Thanksgiving dinner. While the rest of the food was catered, the reentrants took on the challenge of baking their own bird. And overall, it was a huge success!
Final DOC Reentry Career Fair of 2019 Held at Benner Township

SCI Benner Township held its annual Reentry Career Fair/Vocational Advisory Committee Meeting on Nov. 20. Reentrants from the Vocational Programs (plumbing, electricity, custodial maintenance, business program); Pathway to Success; and Reentry Services Office participated in the event. Outside agencies provided resources to 184 inmates.

Inmates were provided community resources from the following agencies:

- Flagger Force
- Penn State University Certified Recovery Programs
- Philadelphia FIGHT’s Institute for Community Justice
- Freedom Opportunity Center
- Liberty Ministries
- AmeriHealth Associates
- Reentry and Outreach Specialist
- Sound Community Solutions
- Career Link
- Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Centre County DRS
- It’s About Change
- Parole
- Community Health
- GEI HUD Fresh Start
- Family Circle Ministries – Friends Over Fences
- HOPE (Heroin and Opioid Prevention and Education)
- Gaudenzia Programs and Services by County
- County Veteran’s Affairs
- Prison Mentoring
- Financial Literacy
- Child Support
- SAP Concur
- CenClear Mental Health and Drugs and Alcohol Division
- RISE Reintegration Services

Inmates were given the opportunity to network with outside agencies, collect literature and ask specific questions of the visitors. The more resources provided to those individuals returning to our communities, the greater their chances for success!

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DOC Employees Volunteer with Mock Interviews

Staff from SCIs Albion, Cambridge Springs and Mercer participated in mock interviews with seniors at Conneaut Area High School (CAHS) on Nov. 19. Mock interviews were scored using a rubric to help students prepare for obtaining jobs after graduation. Staff reviewed resumes and offered tips on the interviewing process.

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22 Donate Blood at Pine Grove

Great work to the staff of SCI Pine Grove for exceeding their goal in a blood drive on Nov. 21! The goal was for 20 donors, but 22 employees stepped up and donated blood—with zero deferrals. The next drive is being scheduled for April 2020.

Pictured: SCI Pine Grove COT Mack

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Forest Celebrates 15-Year Anniversary

SCI Forest hosted its 2019 15-year Anniversary Symposium on Nov. 14, 2019. The day began with Superintendent Derek Oberlander discussing the “History of Forest” along with a slideshow of staff during the first 15 years of the prison.
Breakout sessions included painting; gardening; basic home improvement; SERS, PSECU, SEAP and Deferred Compensation; K-9 Unit demonstration with Major McMahon; “Getting the Life You Want” with Gary Lester; and “Thriving in Your Career and Security Concerns” with Bureau of Investigations and Intelligence Director James Barnacle.

Lunch was provided for those attending and staff were encouraged to participate in activities in the gym.

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**Pine Grove FSI Shares Yield Theory**

SCI Pine Grove Food Services
Instructor Travis Williams shared with administrative staff the Yield Theory by Dr. Christian Conte: An Evidenced-Based Theoretical Approach to Change. Williams was selected to attend the training at the DOC Training Academy in October led by Dr. Conte. Williams explained to the staff:

Yield Theory is comprised of three core actions and seven fundamental components. The three core actions (listen, validate, explore options) are the observable behaviors that you will learn to implement, and those core actions will be driven philosophically by seven fundamental components. The overarching goal of Yield Theory is to use compassion and the conscious education to confront conflict head on, but to do so in a way that circumvents people’s fight-or-flight
responses, so that information can be presented in the most effective way possible. This theory can be used with inmates as well as in our own personal lives.

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**Hazelden Rep Visits Camp Hill OUDTC**

On Nov. 20, John Hartman from the Hazelden Publishing, part of the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, visited SCI Camp Hill to get an overview of the facility’s Opioid Use Disorder Therapeutic Community (OUDTC). Camp Hill orders some of its treatment center program materials from Hazelden Publishing. Previously, Hartman was a Hazelden clinician for several years. He was interested in seeing how the materials are utilized in Camp Hill’s drug and alcohol programs. During his visit, he met with staff and discussed the program curriculum and how the Hazelden materials supplement the programming needs of the inmates in the OUDTC.

The Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation is a world-renowned drug and alcohol treatment provider.

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**Smithfield Staff Send Cards to Veterans**

On Nov. 13, SCI Smithfield staff held a Holiday Card Drive for military service members. Staff members signed more than 250 holiday cards that will be sent to deployed United States service members and veterans spending the holidays away from their families. Smithfield’s C.O.V.E.R. group is generously providing the postage to send the cards.

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**PCI Honors Supervisor with Service Pin, Clerk with Employee of Quarter**

Pennsylvania Correctional Industries Director Khelleh Konteh and Assistant PCI Director Richard Gaul visited SCI Mahanoy on Nov. 21 to present John Roxby, Mahanoy CI Supervisor, with his Military Service Recognition Pin to honor his public service in the military and in our Commonwealth.

Konteh and Gaul also presented the PCI Employee of the Quarter award to SCI Mahanoy’s Corrections Stock Clerk Denise Zawada, who was selected for her dedicated service to the Commonwealth for the third quarter of 2019.

Correctional Industries at Mahanoy is a regional commissary distribution center serving nine institutions in the eastern part of Pennsylvania that supplies a variety of items for the inmate population to purchase. They include food, health and beauty, clothing, footwear and electronic items. Mahanoy's CI currently employs approximately 90 inmates on one shift.

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**Smithfield’s First Meditation Session with Chief Monk Bhante**

By Rev. Sylvia Morris, Chaplaincy Director, and Caroline Cuff, Juniata College Intern

“Meditation is mental, yoga is physical”

“We cannot see in muddy water. When it is clear, we can see reality.”

These were the words of Chief Monk Venerable Chandrawansa Bhante to a group
of 30 inmates gathered in the SCI Smithfield chapel. For that evening the chapel became a place of meditation and mindfulness. Some men took Bhante’s suggestion and sat comfortably on the floor, while others chose to go through the session seated in their chair.

Bhante, who was born in Sri Lanka, said he had a calling to become a monk at the age of 7 or 8. His mother supported him while his father did not. At the age of 14, he realized his dream by entering a Buddhist Monastery as a novice Buddhist monk. He later received his higher ordination as a Buddhist monk in 2008, and from that time on he has continually led the life of a Buddhist monk and teaching Buddhism and meditation. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in Buddhist Philosophy from the University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. He is fluent in English.

At the age of 24 years old, he started his practice. He gives much credit to his teacher, a Myanmar Monk. Bhante told the inmate group that in Buddhism, Buddhists have their own perceptions and teachings. Bhante’s states that he himself is still seeking the truth, and his mind still gets entangled after all these years. It doesn’t matter where we are. When the realization is within us, we can find happiness, and from there we find wisdom.

The four foundations of mindfulness that he teaches are: 1. Meditation on body, 2. Feeling, 3. Consciousness and 4. Phenomena. In response to a question from an inmate wanting to know the difference between Contemplation and Meditation, he replied, “Contemplation is stillness, and meditation is cultivating that stillness.”

“Meditators become strong when they don’t move their body position (something that is mastered by practice). It is impossible to control our mind,” he said. “Meditators closely watch their minds working, and ‘watch the process’. We watch sensations arise, they come to a peak, and then they go down.”

He stressed to the men don’t give up when having trouble focusing or concentrating.

“You must not dwell on the lack of focus/concentration but acknowledge it and let it go.”

After the talk, Bhante led the group through their first Meditation Practice.

Following are the steps:

- Close your eyes
- Maintain your position, keep still and relaxed
- Lower your head
- Be mindful of your body
  - Forehead, nose, face,
  - shoulders, neck, chest, hands
- Feel your heart beats
Feel the rise and fall of your abdomen
If there’s any feelings/pain in your body, be mindful of them
Scan your body from your head to your toes, from your toes to your head
If there is a thought, recognize it, come back to the body
  o Don’t cling to unkind thoughts
If it’s possible, see your breath, be mindful of your natural breaths
If you hear sounds, be mindful of them, don’t dwell on them
There is no judgement or comparing within yourself
If you’re are thinking, label the thoughts as “thinking” 3 times
  o To refocus, count 10 breaths
  o Be mindful of the rise and fall of your abdomen
Don’t let your mind tangle in memories of the past, or the future
Recognize wondering mind, thinking mind, and planning mind
If you feel an unpleasant feeling, don’t move, just notice the sensation
Be mindful of the appearance and disappearance of thoughts

Chaplaincy Director Sylvia Morris said of the session, “We had a very enlightening and engaging Art of Meditation Session last night.”

Morris was very surprised at the interest level and question asking of the men to Chief Monk Bhante and Patti Hall. Men of all faiths including Muslim, Christian, Native American, Jewish, Rastafarians and Buddhists were in attendance.

Some men in attendance already had some type of experience and knowledge of meditation prior to coming to the session. Chaplaincy Intern Caroline Cuff said she noticed that many of the men want to incorporate meditating into their life and you could feel the energy in the room.

Bhante and Hall are interested in coming to Smithfield on a weekly basis as volunteers to teach a 1½ hour session that would include: 30 minutes of practicing meditation, 30 minutes of discussion and 30 minutes of question and answering. Bhante said to get the most benefit out of meditation and mindfulness it should be taught on a weekly basis and thus becoming a way of life and constant state of being mindful.

For the men that were unable to attend the session, they will be able to watch it on the television in-house channel.

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**Houtzdale Staff Donate to Food Bank**

Staff from SCI Houtzdale collected canned goods and other items to donate to the Westover Food Bank. These donations were collected in time for Thanksgiving. Staff took special attention to donate food for the children of this area so that they could get a few snacks while visiting the food bank.
Greene Staff Donate to Food Bank

On Nov. 25, employees at SCI Greene donated 418 pounds of non-perishable food items to the Corner Cupboard Food Bank in Waynesburg. The Holiday Food Drive was coordinated by the Human Resources Department to help those in need during this holiday season.

**Pictured from left:** Tammy Koratich, employee relations manager; Maria Traficante, human resource analyst; and Tina Walker, field human resource officer.

Benner Township C.O.V.E.R. Sponsors Food Drive
SCI Benner Township’s C.O.V.E.R Committee sponsored a food drive for the month of November. Food insecurity and hunger are community-wide issues that Benner Township staff graciously stepped up to combat and address. All food donations will be shared between Faith Centre Food Bank and Saint Vincent De Paul. Benner Township’s C.O.V.E.R Committee wishes to thank the staff for participating in this worthy cause.

Pictured from left: C.O.V.E.R committee members J. Rossman and J. Dean

Fayette Honors Two for Service

SCI Fayette Superintendent Mark Capozza presented Corrections Officer George Dove with his 30 years of service certificate and Registered Nurse Supervisor Ken Randolph with his 40 years of service certificate. Thanks to both for your decades of service!
Fayette Staff Donate to Food Bank

SCI Fayette participated in a Holiday Food Drive, and staff donated 492 pounds of food to the Washington County Food Bank! The food bank was so grateful for Fayette’s generosity and wanted to pass on their thanks to all of the facility’s great staff.

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Students from CCAC, PSU Visit Fayette

SCI Fayette hosted a pair of college visits during November with criminal justice students coming from Penn State Fayette and Community College of Allegheny County South.

The students from PSU were escorted by Fayette staff members and toured a housing unit, Correctional Industries, commissary and program services. The students from CCAC toured a housing unit, restricted housing unit pod, K Block (where the dog program is), education and the gym to name a few places. The professor sent a thank-you to Fayette and said the students talked about the tour the whole back to the school. The note added it was the best tour they have ever been on.

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Fayette staff is always ready and pleased to show off the institution!

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Philadelphia West Division Spreading Holiday Cheer

For the past month, the parole agents of the Philadelphia West Division have been gathering the names of their reentrants in need. ASCRA Nailah Johnson has been working with a local donor who supplied 10 families with Thanksgiving dinners with all the fixings. The dinners were picked up on Nov. 22 and delivered to each of the families. The reentrants and their families were so appreciative of the dinners and were surprised that they were delivered by parole agents. The West Division Agents are now gathering the names of needy reentrants with children. The children will receive anonymous gifts, which will be mailed to their homes for the upcoming holiday season. Acts like these build positive relationships with the reentrants and communities in which the agents work.

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Agent Speaks to College Class

Parole Agent Michael Ward-Evans spoke at Widener University on Nov. 25 to students attending a criminal justice pre-internship class.

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Gov. Wolf Signs Governor’s Advisory Council on Veterans Services Executive Order

On Nov. 4, Governor Tom Wolf signed the Governor's Advisory Council on Veterans Services Executive Order, updating the original order from 2013 that established the Commonwealth’s first interagency collaborative approach to serving veterans. Pennsylvania is home to nearly 800,000 veterans, and this advisory council will continue to break down silos and improve collaboration not only among state government but with federal government and community partners. This update is
more inclusive and recognizes contributions of the veterans’ community and other agencies while improving the services provided to PA's veterans and their families.

Background: The Governor’s Advisory Council on Veterans Services (GAC-VS) was established in 2013 to review, evaluate and assess state veterans’ programs in collaboration with senior staff from state agencies and commissions to increase information sharing, ensure program fidelity, coordinate complementary programs and facilitate meaningful enhancements in service accessibility to veterans’ benefits and services within the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The GAC-VS has grown to include several Commonwealth Departments and Agencies, committees and non-governmental entities not included in the initial Executive Order, which have been instrumental in collaborating, improving veteran programs and expanding services. This updated executive order is more inclusive and recognizes the contributions of current and active participants making additional administrative and clarifying updates. Among the various GAC-VS committee members present were Judiciary Chair Ryan Yoder (PADOC) and Judiciary member Richard Podguski (PADOC).

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**Around the Centers...**

**Reentrant Graduates Apprenticeship Program**

On Nov. 21, reentrant and former juvenile lifer Kenneth Bryant graduated from a six-month apprentice program at Goodwill of Southwest PA. As a result of this completion, he has been hired on with Goodwill's retail services in a full-time capacity. Kenneth was successfully released from Renewal, Inc. over one year ago, and he continues to make positive progress in his reentry.

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**CTC Braddock Reentrants Clean Around Borough**

In a continued effort to promote restorative justice initiatives for its reentrants, CTC Braddock collaborated with the Borough of Braddock Nov. 16 volunteering their time to help clean around the local Food Bank and in alleys throughout the Borough footprint. Reentrants completed over 25 hours of community service with this initiative.

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Week of November 18, 2019...

**Participating in a Reentry Simulation**
By Susan McNaughton

About a week ago, I was attending a DOC Leadership meeting at the DOC’s Training Academy. As I was ready for several days of conversations and presentations, I wasn’t ready for what I would learn by participating in the “Reentry Simulation.”

In April 2019, Deputy Secretary for Reentry Kelly Evans and Director of Reentry Operations Missy Repsher traveled to Kentucky’s DOC to learn about their reentry efforts. While there, Evans and Repsher were introduced to the reentry simulation concept.

Back to the leadership meeting. The room was transformed from a huge square layout needed for the overall meeting to tables around the perimeter of the room and groupings of chairs inside that perimeter of tables.

We each were given a packet. Inside each packet was information about who we were as a reentrant. For example, I was “Nadine” and was now on parole from an aggravated assault sentence. I lived with my parents and had a degree in accounting.

Also inside the packet was a card that showed the various things I was required to do each week over a four-week period – with each week being somewhat different. I had to get a job, go to treatment, have my urine tested, etc. I also was provided with several transportation tokens that I would have to use to get from station to station during each week.

The stations. Remember I mentioned the tables along the perimeter of the room? These were “places” I had to go each week to be a successful reentrant. The “places” were: giving plasma (which you could get paid for if you tested negative for drugs), attending treatment (which you had to pay for), buying tokens, paying rent, the food bank, NA/AA, the probation/parole office, the grocery store, the employer, a pawn shop, the courthouse, etc.

I started off my first week doing pretty well. I knew that I needed a job, so that’s the first place I went to – and of course handed over my token. Once there I had to fill out an application. Once that was done I picked from a pile of cards only to find that there were no jobs for me this week. At least I tried to get a job.

Next, I decided I better get to treatment. I spent another token getting there, where again you pick from a card to determine whether you attended treatment or missed it, the latter of which wasn’t good. I was able to participate, but then I also had to pay for the treatment.

After that I needed to have my urine tested. That cost me another token and money. Now things are getting tight money-wise for me, but I’m proud that I’m doing what needs to be done.
Time’s up. Everyone returns to their groupings of chairs. The parole agent comes around and checks us. For being good I was given a few extra tokens.

Simulation participants return "home" following the first week of parole.

Now we’re moving into week two. I check my card to see what needs done this week. I realize I need money. I use a token to get to the plasma center where I test negative and can give blood. I am paid $25. I’m so excited that I now have money, but I need tokens. You can’t get anywhere without tokens. I go to the token station only to be greeted by a long line of parolees waiting ahead of me. This is frustrating. There’s a lot of bartering going on in the line of parolees. I observe.

I continue through my week. I can’t find a job still, and money’s running low and I’m getting worried. I go to NA/AA station because maybe there are some free donuts there. I also go to the food bank and ask them for help, but they couldn’t help out with money or tokens. At the plasma station, I see a parolee ahead of me get special treatment, so I pressured the "employee" to allow me to test negative so I can get money for donating. When this second week is up, we all return to our chairs.

On my chair is a card that says it’s my dad’s birthday and I need to buy him a $25 birthday gift. This is crazy! How can I buy him a gift and still do what is required of me?

We’re now starting week three. I go to the plasma station first only to find that I’ve tested positive for drugs. Now I can’t donate, and I’m out a token. I try to find a job again, but nothing’s available for me, and again, I’m out a token. I friended the staff there and gave him my phone number so we could develop a relationship. He slips me two tokens.

Eventually I am now out of tokens and find myself standing in the middle of the room looking at my card and wondering how I’m going to complete my items. I look down and find a token on the ground! This kept me going, and got me on the right track. I also, at one point, had an excess of tokens and sold them to other parolees for a profit. I never did buy my dad that gift.

During the fourth week, I learned that I now had a speeding ticket and needed to pay $100 on top of everything else I had to do! I used a token to go to the
courthouse to pay my fine. I had $30. I asked if I could pay a part of the fine, but was told I needed to pay the entire fine. Again, I’m out a token, and hadn’t paid my fine. I asked if I could have my token back, but they said no.

"Parolees" worked their way through various stations, often finding long lines delayed or hindered their progress.

I am now really frustrated. I was lucky so far that my parole agent hadn’t sent me back to prison, but many others participating in this reentry simulation were sent back.

At the end of the simulation, I felt defeated. Transportation was an issue and an expense. Paying for treatment and urine tests nearly broke my bank each week. While I started off good, as each week progressed, it became more difficult to comply with my parole rules.

In the end, I think I had a better understanding of what parolees experience. Reentry is difficult. Luckily for me, in my scenario, I was living at home, so I didn’t have the added expense of paying rent while being unemployed.

I found the reentry simulation to be very enlightening. If you have the chance to participate in such an activity, please do so. It’s a really educational and eye-opening experience.

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Greene Donates to Veterinarians for CPL Program

On Oct. 30, SCI Greene Superintendent Robert Gilmore and Kayla Shaner, the Canine Partner’s for Life (CPL) program administrator, presented the Waynesburg Animal Hospital with monetary donations that were collected by staff and inmates. The veterinarians provide an array of services for the puppies that are trained at the institution to become service dogs as part of the CPL program.

SCI Greene inmates donated $550, the prison’s inmate organization matched the $550 donation and also held a fundraising event which collected an additional $500. In total, $1,600 was donated to the animal hospital. The organized fundraisers expressed gratitude and appreciation to the local veterinarians for their service and dedication to the animals and the CPL program.

Waymart Inmates Donate to Zipper Junction

SCI Waymart’s inmate organization, WINGS, donated $300 to the Zipper Junction Project. The money will be used for the organization’s holiday toy drive in Wayne and Pike counties that will benefit 700 children this year.

In 2019, WINGS donated a total of $1,200 to Lackawanna, Wayne and Pike counties.

Zipper Junction, which will be located on approximately 350 acres in Northeast Pennsylvania, will be a creative enclave of innovation, technology, teaching, and learning that is surrounded by, blended into, and bound together by sports, fitness, theaters, arts, music, food, and entertainment; all operating within a mutually beneficial, outside-in town environment, a literal and physical open source community.

Craig Merkel, activities specialist and staff liaison for WINGS, presents a donation to Cheryl Duquette, a representative of the Zipper Junction Project.
Camp Hill Work Crew Returns to Volunteer at Lions Club

On Oct. 23, SCI Camp Hill’s Community Work Detail (CWD) volunteered its time at the Marysville Lions Club. The CWD stripped and waxed floors for upcoming events. The CWD volunteers assist the club throughout the year in anticipation of events hosted at the facility.

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Phoenix Honors Veterans

On Nov. 11, SCI Phoenix commemorated its 37th annual Veterans Day Service (dating back to SCI Graterford).

State Senator Pat Browne, Admiral Stephen Yusem, Esq. (retired) and Admiral Joe Sestak (retired) spoke at the service. Three awards were presented throughout the event: The Jeff White Integrity Service Award was presented to Unit Manager Baker for his devoted service and commitment to the veterans of SCI Phoenix. Dorothea DiGiovanni was awarded the Recognition of Service award for her 20 years of volunteering with the Vietnam Veterans of America. Lastly, inmate Donald was given the President’s Award for his effort to arrange the Walk-a-Thon which raised money for the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

On Nov. 8, SCI Phoenix held another Veterans Day Program, this one to honor military members who gave their all to ensure the United States’ safety and freedom. Sgt. Major Kevin Bittenbender was the keynote speaker for this event, which included the unveiling of the Veterans Employee Board by Officer M. Kemp. A Certificate of Appreciation from Representative J. Webster’s office was presented in
honor of Veteran Employees Recognition, which recognizes the vital contributions of the veterans currently serving the commonwealth as staff and administrators.

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**Breast Cancer Awareness at Phoenix**

SCI Phoenix employees wore pink to honor Breast Cancer Awareness month in October. All non-uniform staff were encouraged to wear pink in support of those who are fighting, have fought or have lost someone to breast cancer.

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**CART Teaches Staff, Inmates Canine First Aid**

On Nov. 13, the Somerset County Animal Response Team (CART) provided SCI Laurel Highland’s staff volunteers, community volunteers and inmate handlers with a CPR and First Aid training. Following the training, the Canine Partners for Life handlers awarded CART with a monetary donation.

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**Edinboro Students Visit Albion**

On Nov. 13, Edinboro University students from Professor Kevin Courtright’s American Corrections class braved the frigid temperatures and snow to tour SCI Albion. Students toured several different areas of the prison, including Correctional Industries, education, housing units and food service. Throughout the tour, students also listened to presentations from Albion unit managers, correctional counselors, prison administrators and inmates. Students also heard from four lifers who spoke about their crimes and their personal experiences of serving life sentences. The students were grateful to the staff at SCI Albion for this unique opportunity.

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Parole Staff Participate in Career Fair

Parole Agent Jackie Conners and Supervisor Adam Henderson attended a Career Fair at Greater Johnstown High School. Other community agencies attended, including the Johnstown Police and Fire Departments, the Army National Guard, local banks and a local grocery chain.

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Smithfield Staff Compete in Wing-Off

On Nov. 13, SCI Smithfield employees participated in a Wing-Off, which was sponsored by Smithfield Association for Employees (SAFE). Numerous employees made their original sauces, and the employees voted on the best sauce. The sauces provided include the following: Teeters’s Gold Digger Sauce, Deputy Rivello’s Complete Domination, Davino’s Golden Elk, Matney’s 542 Sauce, Hartman’s Honey Hole and Dreibelbis’s Mild Asian BBQ. Teeter’s Gold Digger Sauce received 57 votes and won the contest. Congratulations, Teeter!

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Muncy Inmates Participate in Domestic Violence Awareness Day

On Oct. 23, SCI Muncy’s House of Hope organized its annual Domestic Violence Awareness Day. Treatment Specialist Jennifer Engel invited several guest speakers, and survivors, Rachel Farrow and Jaime Gatusky, provided powerful presentations to the inmate population. The keynote speaker, Heather Cattron of Office of Victim Advocate, spoke on OVA’s responsibility, victims’ rights, the Apology Bank and Inmate Victims of Abuse Rights.

The House of Hope is an inpatient abuse program, and its community members displayed their t-shirts as part of the Clothesline Project.

From left: Jennifer Engel, treatment specialist; Rachel Farrow, domestic violence survivor; Heather Cattron, Office of Victim Advocate; and Jamie Gatusky, domestic violence survivor.

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DOC William Penn Fellow Meets with Elderly Inmates at Pine Grove

On Nov. 14, DOC William Penn Fellow Ebony Johnson traveled to SCI Pine Grove to inquire about the current programs and existing resources for both the aging inmates within the DOC and post-release/reentrant individuals. Johnson focuses on different wellness dimensions (spiritual, social, emotional, physical, occupational and intellectual) and utilizes focus groups to receive feedback regarding met and unmet wellness needs. At Pine Grove, Johnson conducted a focus group with 25 elderly
inmates in the chapel and five PORTAL program inmates. PORTAL is a step-down unit for inmates in segregation.

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**Benner Township Honors Veterans**

On Nov. 13, Benner Township held a veterans ceremony as an expression of gratitude for all veterans of the United States Armed Forces. Marine Corps Sgt. Dean Bowman was the keynote speaker. Bowman enlisted into the Marine Corps on his 17th birthday and served a distinguished career, eventually retiring as a sergeant in 1995. Since then, he has worked as the assistant team leader of the DOC’s Honor.

In addition to the Veterans Day Ceremony, the Benner Township Employee Association purchased food items and, with the help of Culinary Staff, staff enjoyed a special meal.

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**Greene, Fayette Staff Participate in Veterans Job Fair**

On Nov. 13, SCI Greene and SCI Fayette staff participated in PA Senator Camera Bartolotta’s Veterans Resource and Job Expo at the Washington County Fairgrounds. Human Resource Analyst Maria Traficante, SCI Greene Lt. Bowlen and SCI Fayette Lt. Matiyasic represented the DOC at the event. More than 50 exhibiting organizations participated in this event.

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Waymart’s Miller Recognized for 35 Years of Service

SCI Waymart Superintendent George Miller was honored for 35 years of service. Regional Deputy Secretary Michael Wenerowicz presented Miller with his certificate.

Miller began his DOC career as a corrections officer at SCI Muncy. He transferred to SCI Retreat where he rose through the ranks serving as sergeant, shift lieutenant, security lieutenant, shift commander and intelligence captain. He was promoted to SCI Coal Township as major of the guard, then acting deputy for facility management (DSFM) and also centralized services (DSCS). He then went on to SCI Frackville as DSFM and then acting superintendent for several months. He transferred to SCI Dallas as DSCS, and then became superintendent of Waymart in April 2019.

Superintendent Miller also served four years in the U.S. Marine Corps, 17 years in the U.S. Army and retired from the U.S. Army Reserves after serving 21 years.

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Suicide Prevention Task Force

Did you know that there is a Suicide Prevention Task Force and that members are hosting public listening tours across Pennsylvania through November?

The Suicide Prevention Task Force brings together leaders from the departments of Human Services, Health, Corrections, Aging, Education, Military and Veterans Affairs, and Transportation as well as the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, the Pennsylvania State Police, elected officials, and mental health and suicide prevention organizations. The public listening sessions are an opportunity to learn about how suicide impacts the lives of Pennsylvanians across the board and develop prevention efforts that reflect the diverse needs of individuals and families across the state.

The listening sessions allow Pennsylvanians to speak directly to the task force, and their voices will help shape and strengthen a plan for Pennsylvania to do more to prevent suicide, reduce stigma around mental health and suicide, and address healing and recovery for loved ones.”

For more information on the task force and upcoming meetings or listening sessions, visit www.dhs.pa.gov/citizens/suicideprevention.

If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health crisis or is considering suicide, help is available. Reach out to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or contact Crisis Text Line by texting PA to 741-741.

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Rockview Inmates, Kids Bond at Turkey Decorating Event

On Nov. 14, SCI Rockview interested inmates and their children were able to decorate turkey-shaped pieces of wood that had been carved by Correctional Industries inmates.

Employees provided the decorating supplies, such as glue, glitter and markers.

Together in the visiting room, six inmates and their children spent their visiting time participating in this fun project.

At the conclusion of the visit, the children were able to take their decorated turkeys home.

The inmates and their children were very appreciative of the activity. Another decorating activity is planned for December 12.

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Rockview Honors Veterans with Luncheon

On Nov. 12, the SCI Rockview Employee’s Association hosted a meatball sandwich luncheon in honor of Veterans Day. The luncheon was held in the visiting room, which was decorated in various military memorabilia. Employee names were drawn randomly to win prizes, such as a flag and Yeti tumbler.

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An Inspirational Story of Teamwork, Camaraderie and Endurance

SCI Cambridge Springs Sgt. Lukas Wise Completes the 240-Mile Endurance Run in Moab, Utah

By Amy Boylan, SCI Cambridge Springs PIO

Lukas Wise has served the Department of Corrections for 11 years. He is a well-respected sergeant with a professional, calm and humble way about him. Sgt. Wise is known for his admiration of running, having completed several races during his tenure at the facility. Just this year alone, he has accomplished 50-mile races, a 100-mile race, The Beast on the Bay and the Barkley Fall Classic. These races were just stepping-stones to prepare him for his biggest race thus far.

Last month, Wise conquered the 240-Mile Endurance Run in Moab, Utah. A total of 129 runners from across the country signed up for this challenge: 20 people did not start the race and an additional 23 people attempted but did not finish the race—and Wise wasn’t one of them.

Sgt. Wise completed the course in 84 hours and 25 minutes placing 18th overall. When asked about this tremendous achievement, he modestly stated, “I am just an ordinary guy. Really anyone could do this.” Wise expounded on why he decided to tackle this challenge (which is equivalent to almost 10 marathons in one race) and
said, “When I am running, it reminds me of how lucky I am to be able to do this physically and mentally.”

Wise expressed the importance of being on top of nutrition and hydration and how one cannot afford to mismanage these two core factors in a race such as the Moab 240 Endurance Run. Additionally, a runner has to listen to his or her body, which is what Wise did well during training. He consistently ran every day, topping off at around 92 miles per week. Wise did not have the luxury of devoting his undivided attention to training for the Moab Run as some of the other participants did. He still worked full-time (to include some expected mandates that come with the job), as well as being a family man and father of two teenage boys and a toddler son, who coincidentally took his first steps upon arrival in Utah preparing for the race. It was this excitement and support from his family and friends that drove him to success and he states, “The people around me make me better.”

When interviewing Wise, he wanted to bring special recognition to his friend and fellow SCI Cambridge Springs Sergeant, Kirk Riddell. Sgt. Riddell got into running about three years ago and yes, you guessed it – Sgt. Wise inspired him to start. Wise was permitted to have a pacer run with him after the 78th mile of the race and he asked Kirk if he would be willing to do this with him. The plan was for Riddell to run with Luke during the nighttime hours to help motivate him during a time when he might be feeling the effects of sleep deprivation and mental fatigue. Riddell was honored to step up and perform this task for his friend. In fact, Riddell ended up running just under 70 miles in the three nights he accompanied Luke as his pacer, which was a great personal accomplishment for him!

When asked about one of their most interesting moments that stood out during this race, both spoke about running in the middle of the night on one of their toughest terrains, the steep La Sal Mountains. The particular area, known as Geyser Pass Trail, was known for free
range cows, and they were on the lookout for these animals in the Utah darkness. Wise spotted a cow in the dark wooded area by the mountain with his headlight, but Riddell spotted a rather large black bear close to the cow, about 12 yards away. The rules about no sudden movements and how you should not run when you see a bear went completely out the window. Riddell said that this pair of PA prison sergeants “ran like Olympic sprinters” when they saw the bear run toward the cow. Needless to say, they were on their guard watching out for each other as they continued on that mountain trail throughout the darkness in the cold, 20-degree temperatures, which was typical each night in Utah.

Wise averaged about 1½ hours of sleep per night and was able to take a short break, get some food, tend to his body and see family at the aid stations between check points, with the furthest mileage between aid stations being 25 miles. His friend and pacer, Riddell, was extremely complimentary of Wise’s demeanor when he came into each aid station. He said that many of the runners were demanding and selfish when they came in for their break; however, Wise came in asking how the other runners were doing, providing them encouragement and never broke down.

Wise and Riddell encountered an unfortunate hurdle during the last leg of the race – they took a wrong turn and went 1½ miles off course before they realized their mistake. They had to go back that same 1½ miles to the race route. Wise was mentally tough the entire race, but he admitted that this additional three miles of running when he had already ran well over 200 miles was difficult for him to accept at that particular moment in time. Regardless of the hindrance, Wise and Riddell were able to make it to the finish. The finish of this race was in a U-shape, and Riddell cut across the U to the finish line to join Wise’s family so they could all see him finish the race together. Riddell wanted the spotlight to be on Wise and his celebration of this monumental accomplishment, which occurred on Oct. 14: Wise’s 39th birthday. These coworkers and friends took about two weeks off from running to recuperate from this race, but there is no doubt that the finish line in Moab, Utah is just the beginning of a completely new race!
There was tremendous support from the SCI Cambridge Springs family during this event. Wise wore a GPS tracker for safety purposes, but this also enabled friends, family and co-workers to track him throughout the course. Wise received various congratulatory text messages and a warm welcome when he returned to the facility. Everyone was very proud of him and he was extremely touched at the show of support by so many people. Wise also recognized two additional Cambridge Springs staff and friends that train and race with him: Lt. Eric Burns and Officer John Murphy.

Congratulations to Lukas Wise and Kirk Riddell! This event exemplified teamwork, camaraderie and endurance and these men deserve to be commended for taking on this physical and mental challenge!

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**DOC Leaders Honor Veterans at Riverfront Office Complex**

DOC Secretary John Wetzel, Executive Deputy Secretary George Little and Pennsylvania Victim Advocate Jen Storm presented lapel pins and thanked veterans at the DOC Riverfront Office Complex on Nov. 14.

The pins are part of the State Employee Military Service Recognition Campaign, which came from an executive order signed by Governor Tom Wolf during the summer. The program is to honor commonwealth employees who serve or have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, and they will be allowed to wear the "I Served" pins while working in the DOC.

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Pine Grove Inmates Randomly Selected for Census Survey

Ten inmates at SCI Pine Grove’s B Unit were randomly selected to participate in the American Community Survey. The survey was conducted by the Census Bureau to provide data to help community leaders plan more effectively.

IUP Nursing Students Visit Pine Grove

Eleven students from the IUP Nursing program visited SCI Pine Grove on Nov. 19. The students met with inmates and staff, visited C Unit, the program services building, the medical department and pups in the dog program on B Unit.
Week of November 11, 2019...

Veterans Recognized Around the DOC

At Central Office, DOC Secretary John Wetzel and Executive Deputy Secretary Tabb Bickell presented lapel pins to military veterans in Central Office on Nov. 12.

The pins are part of the State Employee Military Service Recognition Campaign, which came from an executive order signed by Governor Tom Wolf during the summer. The program is to honor commonwealth employees who serve or have served in the U.S. Armed Forces, and they will be allowed to wear the “I Served” pins while working in the DOC.

On Nov. 6, Kory Auch, the special advisor for veterans programs in the Office of Administration, visited SCI Pine Grove to present the lapel pin to Karen Facteau, a human resource analyst. Facteau served more than eight years in the U.S. Air Force. Facteau and more than 400 other Office of Administration employees were honored for their services.

Auch also visited SCI Albion to present pins to Aaron Mead, employee relations manager, and Ira Doubet, human resource analyst.

This fall, more than 14,000 employees within the commonwealth will receive pins. Each facility will present the pins to the many veterans working within the DOC.
State Prisons Celebrate Veterans Day

Albion

For Veteran’s Week at SCI Albion, the Empowerment and C.O.V.E.R. Committee came together to recognize and honor veteran staff members through presentations, food and gift cards. Twenty-two staff with 212 years of combined military experience participated in a PowerPoint presentation which was shared with all the employees. Veterans who participated shared their information, including pictures of them in uniform, in order to represent their branch and department. All week, staff were authorized to wear ball caps that support their military branch of choice. On Nov. 11, several large veteran cakes were prepared and delivered for employees to enjoy. For those who are not cake lovers, a food truck visited on Nov. 13, with a great selection of food items to choose from. Lastly, employees had a chance to win a gift card during the gift card giveaways happening throughout the week.

Frackville

SCI Frackville had a Veteran’s Day Service on Nov. 12, to honor all of its veterans. Each veteran received the State Employee Military Service Recognition Campaign lapel pin presented by Supt. Brittain, Dep. Gourley, Dep. Meintel and Major Wynder.
Mercer

SCI Mercer held a Veteran’s Day cookout in the gym. All three shifts were fed hamburgers, sausage with peppers and onions, tater tots, mac salad/pot salad, ice cream and cookies and cakes. Deputy Superintendent for Facilities Management William Woods brought in homemade cookies for all three shifts as well.

Smithfield

At SCI Smithfield, employees honored veterans with a special meal for staff and inmate veterans. The meal consisted of a cheeseburger, tater tots (fresh-cut fries for staff), and chocolate cake with frosting. The employee association sponsored ice cream and toppings, and a special cake was made to honor staff veterans. The commissioned officers handed out military service recognition pins to staff veterans. This recognition was part of Gov. Tom Wolf’s Executive Order 2019-03.

In addition, the facility’s C.O.V.E.R. committed hosted a U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs veterans outreach program on Nov. 12 and 13. The outreach program provided information to veterans on applying for veterans health care and eligibility requirements, applying for disability ratings, care giving
for veterans, education benefits, points of contacts, priority groups and copays for medications and services, action plans for various issues such as anxiety, depression, smoking chronic pain, insomnia, sexual trauma and suicide prevention.

SCI Smithfield Superintendent Jamey Luther thanked the men and women for their brave service to this country.

Somerset

SCI Somerset celebrated Veterans Day this year by serving a special meal in the Officer Dining Room and by decorating the room and baking special cakes. Prison employees also created a video and a wall display to celebrate and recognize employees that have served the country.

“We are proud of and thankful for not only the men and women on our staff that have served our country but all veterans,” said Superintendent Eric Tice.

Waymart

On Nov. 8, a Military Appreciation Day was held in the Auditorium for all staff in honor of the upcoming Veterans Day at SCI Waymart. The honor guard commenced the service with Superintendent George Miller giving opening remarks following a sermon by Deacon Lorent and Guest Speaker Brian Delaney. Cake, made by our culinary students, with coffee and water was served. After the service, honoring all who gave, a private laying of the wreath was held at the Pugliese Memorial Site.

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More than 100 Graduate at Mahanoy

SCI Mahanoy held its 26th Annual Graduation Ceremony on Nov. 6. There were 104 graduates who completed either the GED, Commonwealth Secondary Diploma, automotive, barber, business, CDL, or warehouse courses. Henry Wimbush, CEO of Recovery Institute in Harrisburg, served as the guest speaker, and Principal Brandon Daynorowicz spoke at the ceremony. Approximately 49 family members and friends came together to celebrate the event.

Congrats, graduates!

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Bloomsburg University Students Tour Coal Township

On Nov. 6, Bloomsburg University Professor of Sociology Dr. Brandon Lang and a group of students studying criminal justice and sociology visited SCI Coal Township. The students and Dr. Lang visited the special needs unit, the gym and education department, as well as the training and visiting area. This group asked meaningful questions and experienced what it’s like to live and work behind bars.
Huntingdon Holds Open House for Staff, Guests

On Sept. 24, 307 staff members and guests attended SCI Huntingdon’s open house. Held every other year, this popular and fun event brings in numerous staff members and their guests. Huntingdon’s Fire Emergency Response Team, Hostage Negotiation Team and Canine Partners for Life handlers joined the event to answer any particular questions.

Forest C.O.V.E.R. Welcomes Guest Speakers, Donates to Veterans Home

SCI Forest hosted its second C.O.V.E.R. event on Oct. 16. The theme was titled “Taking Care of Each Other,” and the speakers included the following: Ken Montrose (Greenbriar), David Delvaux (Clarion Psychiatric Center), David Grey (Dubois Vet Center), Shelly Hartle (Edward Jones Investments) and Capt. Virgil Meyer (SCI Dallas).

The speakers highlighted the theme’s significance from each prospective field. Through various fundraisers, the C.O.V.E.R. committee donated $600 to Veterans Miracle Center Erie. Before the event concluded, Chuck Turner accepted the donation on behalf
of Veterans Miracle Center Erie and provided a summary of what the non-profit offers to veterans and active military members.

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**Secretary of Health Discusses Current Opioid Crisis in Pennsylvania, Next Steps for the Opioid Command Center**

On Nov. 13, Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine met with students at the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown to discuss the current status of the opioid epidemic in Pennsylvania and the ongoing efforts to help Pennsylvanians fight the crisis.

The Wolf Administration’s work to address the opioid crisis focuses on three areas: prevention; rescue and treatment. During the event, Dr. Levine highlighted the collaboration among state agencies and local, regional and federal officials that has resulted in substantial action to address the opioid crisis. Local experts representing drug and alcohol programs and school districts also shared how they are fighting the opioid crisis at a local level while working with state and federal partners.

The commonwealth continues to make sure that warm-handoff processes are in place to get those struggling with addiction the medical care they need and directly into treatment. Warm handoff summits, being held regionally across the state, are increasing collaboration and communication between all parts of the warm handoff process. In addition, naloxone continues to be available for first responders at no cost through funding provided in the state budget. Naloxone is available for a low cost or for free at many pharmacies with an individual’s insurance.

The Opioid Command Center, established in January 2018 when Gov. Wolf signed the first opioid disaster declaration, meets every week to discuss the opioid crisis. The command center is staffed by personnel from 16 state agencies and the Office of the Attorney General, spearheaded by the departments of Health and Drug and Alcohol Programs.

Data shows that in 2018, more than 4,400 people died from a drug overdose. This represents a nearly 18 percent decrease in drug overdose deaths from 2017.

Efforts over the past four years, working with state agencies, local, regional and federal officials, have resulted in significant action to address the opioid crisis. Recent efforts include:

- Distributing more than 7,000 kits of naloxone to Pennsylvanians in September 2019 and another 7,000 kits in December 2018.
• The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program has reduced opioid prescriptions by 30 percent and has virtually eliminated doctor shopping.

• The Opioid Data Dashboard and Data Dashboard 2.0 is providing public-facing data regarding prevention, rescue and treatment.

• The waiver of birth certificate fees for those with opioid use disorder has helped close to 3,260 people, enabling easier entry into recovery programs.

• A standing order signed by Dr. Rachel Levine in 2018 allowed EMS to leave behind nearly 1,155 doses of naloxone.

• More than 6,000 health care professionals have been visited and provided training on how to prescribe opioids cautiously and judiciously.

• 813 drug take-back boxes help Pennsylvanians properly dispose of unwanted drugs, including 482,000 pounds of unwanted drugs in 2018.

• The Get Help Now Hotline received more than 29,000 calls, with nearly half of all callers connected directly to a treatment provider.

• The state prison system has expanded their Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) program, which is viewed as a model program for other states.

• More than 100 licensed physicians or prescribers have been disciplined for wrongful practice over the past two years.

• Several agencies have worked together to collaborate on the seizure and destruction of illicit opioids across Pennsylvania.

• The coordination with seven major commercial providers has expanded access to naloxone and mental health care, while also working to make it more affordable.

• Naloxone has been made available to first responders through the Commission on Crime and Delinquency, with more than 25,000 doses made available and more than 4,500 saves through that program. In addition, EMS have administered more than 28,200 doses of naloxone.

For more information on Pennsylvania’s response to the opioid crisis visit www.pa.gov/opioids.
Pumpkin Decorating Activities for Inmates and Their Children

On Oct. 31, SCI Rockview employees provided pumpkin painting activities for inmates’ children who were visiting inmates. Five families and their inmate fathers participated in the program, where pumpkins were provided thanks to the Inmate General Welfare Fund.

While in the prison’s visiting room, the fathers helped their children paint the pumpkins and decorate them by putting glue on the pumpkins and sprinkling them with multicolor glitters. The children were allowed to take the pumpkins home, which made for a great memory with their fathers. They also decorated pumpkins for the visiting room.

The inmates and their children were very appreciative of the activity and wanted to know when the next program was going to take place. Officials are planning a Thanksgiving-related activity for Nov. 14.

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Rockview Recognized for Holding Annual Turkey Hunt

VFW Post 3 of Altoona, Pa., recognized SCI Rockview Superintendent Mark Garman for hosting the Annual Spring Veteran Turkey Hunt.

SCI Rockview hosts an Annual Turkey hunt for veterans. Each hunter is guided by an SCI Rockview employee. Fundraisers are held throughout the year to provide the monies for this event.
An Aging Inmate Population

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections defines “elderly” inmates as those who are 50 years of age and older. As of November 2019, more than 10,600 of the DOC’s 45,412 inmates are elderly, and this segment of the prison population has been growing over the years. In fact, only 10 years ago, the number of inmates who were age 50 and over was just more than 6,949; and in 1999, that number was just over 3,404.

Realizing that older inmates require specialized medical care and face increasing accessibility issues as they age, the DOC has been focusing on ways to provide the graying prison population with ways that allow the inmates to play a role in maintaining their health, which in the long run could be a cost savings for taxpayers. Research suggests that the availability of inmates’ self-care strategies and self-management of chronic conditions contribute to pursuit of good health (i.e., staying positive; managing diet/weight; engaging in physical activity).

The DOC is considering developing interventions that will enhance health promotion for older inmates, through the assignment of a William Penn Fellow who is focusing on aging and geriatric inmates and their needs and costs to the system.

Ebony Johnson, who began working with the DOC in 2019, has visited every institution and has worked to identify ways to improve the system to assist this specific population subsection. She holds a Bachelors in Psychology and a Masters in Gerontology, which is the study of aging. Before coming to the DOC, she was employed at Wellspan Philhaven as a clinical case manager and helped individuals with a mental health diagnoses develop smart goals for their treatment plan to improve their quality of life.

Johnson has held focus groups with DOC inmates discussing social, physical, occupational, intellectual, emotional and spiritual needs of these inmates to identify areas and issues that need to be addressed. One focus group discussed the fact that elderly inmates tend to be isolated. Others report that there is no outlet to share and process their feelings or to talk about common experiences, such as a senior support group. Another group believed they would benefit from more mentally stimulating activities, such as puzzles, books on aging, along with other ways.

Through her work, Johnson will identify ways to enhance current policies and procedures, and she also will work with BetaGov to further investigate new ideas/concepts. BetaGov -- which is a non-profit entity that works with corrections leaders to develop and test ideas all with the goal of helping leaders implement ideas/concepts that are proven to work -- will help the DOC to pilot – or test – these concepts to determine their validity and performance.

DOC officials see the potential for great work in the area of older inmates, and Johnson is leading the way.

Johnson Visits SCI Rockview
By Nicki Paul
On Nov. 1, 2019, Ebony Johnson, appointed William Penn Fellow working for the DOC, visited SCI Rockview. Her main objective is to focus on the increasingly aging inmate population. Specifically, different wellness dimensions (spiritual- social- emotional- physical- occupational- intellectual) regarding elderly inmates both while incarcerated and post-release/reentry. Since starting this project in July, she has visited and toured several community corrections centers and various state correctional institutions to inquire about the current programs and resources that exist for our aging inmate/reentrant population.

While at SCI Rockview, Johnson had the pleasure of meeting with a focus group of elderly inmates to get an idea of their met and unmet wellness needs. From this feedback of the elderly inmates she will try to compile some ideas that could potentially be implemented.

Johnson holds a focus group with elderly SCI Rockview inmates.

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Incarcerated Veterans Honored at Mahanoy

The Resident Betterment Organization (RBO) at SCI Mahanoy sponsored a Veteran Inmate Breakfast on Nov. 12, to honor the service of incarcerated veterans. The RBO officers, in conjunction with their advisor (Brett Matukewicz), have been planning this event for several months with the aid of the SCI Mahanoy Veterans Coordinator Unit Manager Bill Beck. Fifty-five of the approximately 150 veteran inmates housed at SCI Mahanoy participated in this breakfast. The RBO is hoping to make this an annual event. The RBO currently sponsors a Veterans Game Night annually in conjunction with Memorial Day, which has had great success, and it
continues to explore event options to honor the veteran inmates assigned to SCI Mahanoy.

Pictured: Unit Manager Bill Beck, veterans coordinator; Brett Matukewicz, RBO advisor; Deputy Superintendent for Centralized Services Lori White, veteran; Deputy Superintendent for Facility Management Luke Cronauer, veteran; and Facility Maintenance Manager Chris Marhelko, veteran.

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IUP Students Tour Pine Grove

Twelve students from the IUP Crime/Pre-Law class toured SCI Pine Grove on Nov. 13. They were able to visit C Unit and talk with an inmate about the YAO programming here at SCI Pine Grove. The students toured the Program Services Building and then visited with the puppies and their inmate handlers on B Unit. Ms. Dunmire, from HR, spoke with the guests after the tour regarding employment opportunities throughout the state.

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Sinkovitz Named Volunteer of the Year at Frackville Banquet

On Nov. 7, Frackville held its Annual Volunteer Banquet. In attendance were Dep. James Meintel and CCPM Kelly Sheluga. The Volunteer of the Year was Marcia J. Sinkovitz. She is from Leading Inmates in Faith and Education.

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Inmate Veterans Honored at Mercer

Incarcerated veterans at SCI Mercer were honored in a special ceremony on Nov. 8. Retired U.S. Army Sergeant Major Charles Beattie and Retired Army and Guardian Angel Dog recipient Dustin Schneider, with Spangle, were both present to speak. Approximately 130 inmates and 20 staff were present.

This event was decorated by Activities Manager April Harvey, who also decorated the Veteran’s Day Ceremony for staff and the Veteran’s Day cookout, organized the
Ruck the Bay event and completed the training course for the Guardian Angel dog program. Great work, April!

Wetzel Encourages Employers to Hire Reentrants, Support Investment in Education

On Nov. 13, Secretary John Wetzel served as the keynote speaker at the York County Economic Alliance’s Economics Club Breakfast recently in York. His message to the approximately 50 business leaders covered how smart investing can prevent incarceration, how education is key to pre-entry and reentry, and why hiring reentrants is good for business and Pennsylvania.

“When people really need an opportunity, often they’re going to be your best employee,” Wetzel said. “There are 2,000 (reentrants) in south central Pennsylvania. You’re going to run into them. It really makes sense for companies to invest in people.”

While the DOC focuses on the back end of criminal justice, Wetzel encouraged the audience to support “pre-entry” efforts on the front end that keep people out of the criminal justice system. The best pre-entry tool available is education, Wetzel said, as 41 percent of those entering state prison don’t have a high school diploma.

A key to improving the prison system and keeping people out of prison is reinvestment into local services.
“When you talk about reentry and pre-entry, investments are better made in the community,” Wetzel said. “The whole push of Justice Reinvestment Initiative 2 is to take money out of the prisons and invest it locally. The key is reinvesting smartly.”

York County employers need employees, and incarcerated individuals are reentering society at historic levels eager to work and with freshly learned skills and trades. Wetzel told the employers about the CDL simulators and other trades being taught inside the prisons, and he also teased future educational programs to better equip inmates with the knowledge and skills to be employable when they reenter society.

Sticking with his push for education inside and outside of prison, Wetzel told the audience about the DOC’s superior GED pass rate: Inmates in Pennsylvania state prisons have an 86 percent pass rate whereas those in the general public only have a 73 percent pass rate.

“Our teachers do a fantastic job, and our students are very motivated,” Wetzel said. “Education during incarceration is key.”

The event closed with a question-and-answer session, and questions were focused on what employers can do next to hire reentrants and fill their employment vacancies. Wetzel highlighted the county work release programs as a great opportunity to try working with incarcerated individuals, and he also recommended reaching out to a few employers in Pennsylvania who are already hiring reentrants and finding success. He also highlighted federal bonding programs which add insurance to employers hiring individuals with criminal records.

Wetzel will attend another business leaders’ event at a roundtable discussion in Lebanon on Dec. 3.

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**Pardons Board Releases Video on Streamlined Pardons Process**

Lt. Gov. John Fetterman continues his mission to overhaul the clemency process in Pennsylvania, announcing today the release of a new video created to help people who are applying for pardons.

The 10-minute video includes a welcome from Fetterman, followed by a review of frequently asked questions and an explanation of the pardon application from Secretary of the Board of Pardons Brandon Flood.

Fetterman earlier this year appointed Flood as secretary, encouraging Flood to use his own pardons experience to help make the process smoother for others.

Fetterman said the video, which provides instruction and explains the application in simple terms, is one more method of removing obstacles that might stand in the way for Pennsylvanians who deserve a second chance.
A pardon is first step to expungement, through which an offense is removed from a person’s criminal record. Expungement allows people to more fully participate in their communities and in the lives of their children through, for example, volunteer work. Schools and many other organizations don’t allow people to participate in programs if they have criminal records.

“I don’t believe you should be judged on the worst mistake you may have made in your life, maybe decades ago, and this is an opportunity to free yourself from that,” Fetterman said.

The video will be featured on the Board of Pardons website, www.bop.pa.gov, and on the pardons page of Fetterman’s new official website, https://www.ltgov.pa.gov/pardons/Pages/default.aspx.

Flood emphasized that there are currently no minimum eligibility requirements for a pardon.

“If I was able to receive a pardon, I would say that the vast majority of Pennsylvanians would be able to do the same,” Flood said.

The lieutenant governor chairs the five-person Board of Pardons, which hears cases and votes on whether to recommend the cases to Governor Tom Wolf. The governor makes the final decision to grant or deny clemency.

The Board of Pardons hears two types of requests for clemency: pardons and commutations. People who are not currently incarcerated are eligible for a pardon. Those who are in prison and want to request a reduction of sentence are eligible for commutation.

Fetterman has taken numerous steps to improve the clemency process in Pennsylvania, including rewriting the pardons application to make it more user-friendly and reducing the required application fee to zero dollars.

In addition to hiring Flood, who is a pardon recipient, Fetterman hired commuted former life-sentence inmates George Trudel and Naomi Blount to help inmates apply for commutation. Trudel and Blount will help to minimize the application backlog that had delayed their own cases.

At Fetterman’s direction, the pardons board is also expediting review for sentence commutations for the more than 700 lifers who are age 65 or older; and expediting review of pardons requests from people with nonviolent marijuana convictions.

In September, the Fetterman-led Board of Pardons sent Gov. Tom Wolf nine recommendations for sentence commutations. That’s the highest number of commutation recommendations since the early 1990s.

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**Around the Centers...**

**Scranton Reentrants,**
**Staff Support Soup Kitchen**

During the month of October, Scranton CCC donated $690 worth of Thanksgiving-related food items to St. Francis Soup Kitchen, in Scranton, Pa.

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**Reentrants Clean Clearfield County Roadways**

Tomorrow’s Hope Reentrants have been volunteering with PennDOT and cleaning litter on the roadways near Coalport in Clearfield County. A PennDOT representative provides the reentrants with vests, gloves and bags during volunteer hours. The reentrants gather trash, bag it together and place it alongside the road for the PennDOT workers.

In May 2019, Tomorrow’s Hope completed a spring clean-up as well. Tomorrow’s Hope plans on making this experience an annual service to the community.

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Reentrants Help Beautify Braddock

CTC Braddock reentrants regularly engage in community beautification projects throughout the area. On Nov. 2, reentrants cleaned the Braddock Avenue corridor and the parking lot of the Braddock Senior Living apartments. During this one-day clean-up event, reentrants recorded 30 hours of community service solely dedicated to serving the community.

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Wernersville CCC Key in Supporting Veterans Center

When DOC leaders delivered donations to Mr. Sandy’s Homeless Veteran’s Center last week, the donations came from a few offices within the DOC—including the Wernersville Community Corrections Center.

The facility is proud to support many worthy charitable causes, and staff and reentrants stepped up once again to support the veterans shelter.


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DOC Leadership Serves Central PA Communities

Being a good leader often means being a good servant, and the DOC leadership team proved just that.

In the midst of a three-day leadership summit at the DOC Training Academy, DOC leaders spread out in the local community and served.

Superintendents, executive staff and Sec. John Wetzel and his deputies all rolled up their sleeves to serve in Harrisburg, York and Hershey. They split up and focused on four projects:

- Planting 51 trees at Harrisburg city parks, including 17 at Italian Lake
- Winterizing Harrisburg’s Allison Hill neighborhood, including removing trash, leaves and other litter
- Stocking food and providing meals for children at Cocoa Packs in Hershey
- Delivering donations, cleaning the facilities and preparing food at Mr. Sandy’s Veteran’s Helping Hands Center in York and Robert M. Jackson Veteran Center in Harrisburg

For the veterans centers, the plan was originally to support the York facility. Wernersville Community Corrections Center, York CCC, Pennsylvania Correctional Industries, DOC Central Office and the Riverfront Office Complex gathered and donated items to Veteran’s Helping Hand, a non-profit founded by Vietnam veteran Sandy Walker. Walker created the center to provide emergency shelter, food, clothing and transportation to homeless and Veterans in need within York County.

Throughout October, the DOC facilities collected hats, gloves, scarves, non-perishable foods, toiletries and more for the center. They packed suitcases full of donations for the home and its patrons.

When all the items were gathered, it was apparent there was enough to support two facilities, so the decision was made to also support the Robert M. Jackson Veteran Center in Harrisburg. DOC leaders spent time at both facilities organizing the donations, cleaning the facilities and preparing food for Veteran residents.

Enjoy a sample of photos, and be on the lookout for more posted to the DOC Facebook page in the near future!
Smithfield Honor Guard Marches in Parade

SCI Smithfield Honor Guard represented the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in the annual Veteran’s Day parade in the community of Huntingdon on Nov. 2.
Camp Hill Breast Cancer Awareness Month Pink Bake Sale

By Emily Koontz, DOC Intern

On Oct. 29, SCI Camp Hill held a Breast Cancer Awareness Pink Bake Sale for its staff members. The event was orchestrated by Mary Lou Law, a breast cancer survivor and a clerk typist for the medical department at Camp Hill.

All staff members were encouraged to show support and donate “pink” themed baked goods and snacks for the sale. Numerous volunteers joined together to sell cookies, brownies and little snacks. The proceeds from the bake sale went to the Pennsylvania Breast Cancer Coalition (PBCC), a statewide organization located in Lebanon.

PBCC helps women combat breast cancer and supports those who lost their loved ones to this disease. The PBCC assisted Law when she battled breast cancer. In fact, the PBCC lifted Law’s spirits by gifting her a tote bag filled with goodies.

“From information on breast cancer websites, to a hat after hair loss, the PBCC’s care package was a nice surprise after receiving bad medical results,” Law said.

In total, Camp Hill raised $717 for the Pennsylvania Breast Cancer Coalition. Think pink and fight for a great cause!

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60 Inmates Graduate at Retreat

On Oct. 30, SCI Retreat held its annual graduation ceremony for 60 inmates. Three speakers were present during this year’s ceremony. Ms. Kearney was the guest speaker and spoke about her transformation from being a former inmate to helping veteran reentrants through her two non-profit programs. Ray Krone spoke about his experience being an inmate on death row for 16 years before his conviction was overturned. Lastly, William McCorkle highlighted his time in federal prison and the importance of positivity in all situations.

At the ceremony, 20 inmates received Commonwealth Secondary Diplomas (CSD), 13 inmates received General Education Diplomas (GED), five inmates received
Barber Licenses, one inmate received a Barber Manager License and 47 inmates received vocational diplomas in the following trades: National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) Certifications, Auto Mechanics Program Certifications and Business Education Program Certifications.

Diplomas and degrees were also issued for college correspondence courses. Representatives from Stratford Career Institute and International Christian College and Seminary issued the diplomas to two inmates.

The ceremony was held in the gymnasium, where the students could share this important milestone with family and friends. Congratulations, graduates!

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Pennsylvania Senators, Representatives Visit Camp Hill

By Emily Koontz, DOC Intern

On Oct. 21, SCI Camp Hill Superintendent Laurel Harry, and Deputy Superintendent for Diagnostic Center Shawn Kephart welcomed Pennsylvania Senators Camera Bartolotta and Art Haywood, as well as Representative Joanna McClinton and their staff assistants to SCI Camp Hill. Both Harry and Kephart provided this group with an informative tour of the facility explaining both security practices and treatment programs implemented at SCI Camp Hill and throughout the DOC.

Bartolotta, Haywood and McClinton are devoted to social and criminal justice reform within the state of Pennsylvania. Having an insider’s look into Camp Hill provided this group with the opportunity to learn more about the multi-faceted realm of corrections.

Pictured left to right: SCI Camp Hill Deputy Superintendent for Diagnostic Center Shawn Kephart, SCI Camp Hill Superintendent Laurel Harry, PA Representative Joanna McClinton, Staff Assistant Bitner, PA Senator Camera Bartolotta and PA Senator Art Hayward.

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SCI Pine Grove’s Beyond the Fence Inmate Organization hosted its second annual Run-A-Thon on Oct. 14. A total of 127 inmates participated in the event, which consisted of three categories: Open, Over 50 years of age and Physical Limitations. A total of 1,754 laps were completed. Through an entry fee, a fundraiser and a donation from the inmate organization, $2,500 was raised for Beyond the Fence Inmate Organization. This organization plans to donate the money to Indiana County Community Action Program, which provides programs with the resources to help low-income families and those attaining self-sufficiency.

Pictured from left: Billie Heide, deputy superintendent of centralized services; Ryan Garland, activities manager; Michele Faught, Indiana County Community Action Program; and Josh Tikey, activities specialist.

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Pine Grove Hosts Lean Awareness Training

By Jillian Deiley, DOC Lean Lead for Eastern Facilities

SCI Pine Grove hosted AnneMarie Swanlek, the Department of Corrections (DOC) Lean Lead for Western Facilities, Jillian Deiley, the DOC Lean Lead for Eastern Facilities and Beth Andreoli, The Governor’s Office of Performance through Excellence (OPE) DOC Lean Facilitator for a Lean Awareness Training on Oct. 31.

The Lean Awareness training is an introduction to Lean Theory. Lean theory stems from the manufacturing world and is used today to reevaluate processes in order to make them faster, more efficient, and more effective for the people performing the process while optimizing value of the product for the stakeholder. The Lean awareness training helps participants understand how Lean can help them address everyday inefficiencies they may experience in their jobs and will aid them in tackling backlogs, improving workflow, and increasing work quality. The training is meant to empower employees to identify waste and look for ways to improve their own work processes.

The origins of Lean date back to the 1450s in Arsenal Venice; however, the first person to truly Lean an entire production process was Henry Ford in 1913. Ford combined consistently interchangeable parts, standard work, and a moving conveyor system on the production of the Model T to create what he called flow production, which is otherwise known as the assembly line. Ford’s assembly line was used by Kiichiro Toyoda and Taiichi Ohno of Toyota following WWII, but they reexamined the process and discovered that turning the focus from manufacturing individual machines to the full product flow through the total creation process would ultimately lead to lower costs, product diversity, quality products, quick production time, and better information and data management. Thus the Toyota Production System, which Lean theory truly hails from, was born.

Essentially, Lean is a mindset that answers the question, “How can we make our services better for our stakeholders?” A stakeholder can be any person who receives the final product of the process at hand, or is involved in the process itself. Often times, through Lean it is discovered that by making changes to a process in order to make them more efficient or effective for the process owner the value of the product is amplified for the stakeholder as well.
The LeanPA initiative was established by Governor Wolf last year and OPE is working with all state agencies to pursue continuous process improvement by helping agencies understand what Lean is and how to implement “Lean” practices. To date, the Central Office Lean Team has conducted Lean Awareness Trainings at SCI Huntingdon, Dallas, Frackville, Mahanoy, Waymart, Pine Grove, and Mercer, and trainings will be held at Greene and Albion next week. By the end of the training participants will have a better understanding of the following:

- Why Lean is Important to the DOC and Pennsylvania as a whole.
- The basics of Lean.
- How to start “thinking Lean.”
- The individual’s role in Lean.
- How to Apply Lean in your everyday work life.

The staff at SCI Pine Grove enjoyed the training and many of them have already started to implement Lean practices. If you would like to host a Lean Awareness Training at your institution or would like to host another Lean Awareness Training please contact the Central Office Lean Team.

**DOC Lean Coordinator:** Nikki Bell – nbell@pa.gov

**DOC Lean Lead for Western Facilities:** AnneMarie Swanlek - aswanlek@pa.gov

**DOC Lean Lead for Eastern Facilities:** Jillian Deiley - jdeiley@pa.gov

**OPE DOC Lean Facilitator:** Beth Andreoli - bandreoli@pa.gov

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**Coal Township Gets in the Halloween Spirit**

SCI Coal Township’s Employee Recreation Association (ERA) was in true Halloween spirit. The Halloween tradition started four years ago and has continued throughout the years. When Coal Township staff walked through the corridor to work on Oct. 31, they were greeted with delicious treats from the ERA. Happy Halloween!

*ERA members pictured: Kathy Biscoe, unit manager, Nicole Tasker, psychological service specialist, and Amie Newman, accounting assistant.*
**DeSousa Retires from Norristown Sub-Office**

On Oct. 25, Parole Supervisor James DeSousa celebrated his retirement with the Chester District staff in the Norristown Sub-Office. DeSousa retired after 24 years of service. He said he’s excited for the next chapter of his life, and he will be missed by all who had the pleasure of working with him.

![DeSousa Retires from Norristown Sub-Office](image)

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**Albion SNU/RTU Holds Annual Olympic Games**

On Oct. 15, SCI Albion held its third annual SNU (Special Needs Unit) and RTU (Residential Treatment Unit) Olympics. This event has become a new tradition at the institution and each year, inmates eagerly await the competitions and courses. Last year, the Olympics were held inside due to inclement weather; however, this year brought forth shining sun and perfect temperatures!

The SNU and RTU inmates all met in the yard for friendly competition. Activities workers facilitated various sprints on the track, team relays, softball toss, long jump and an agility course. Inmates that generally skip the yard attended the event and actively participated. The inmates showed support for one another and came together as a team.

![Albion SNU/RTU Holds Annual Olympic Games](image)
Throughout the afternoon, various staff members showed their support by cheering for the inmates. There were numerous comments about how some of the more reclusive inmates were excited and animated, showing a different side of themselves than what is usually seen.

The SNU and RTU staff and inmate population would like to thank everyone who made this year’s Olympics a success. There are so many aspects involved when holding an event inside an institution. From approvals, to staffing and gathering the necessary supplies, each participating unit appreciates all of the efforts made to support this yearly tradition.

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**Camp Hill Awards 3rd Quarter Fire/Safety and Sanitation Award**

The SCI Camp Hill Safety Office has implemented a program for fire safety and sanitation that is designed to recognize an individual department or personnel who go above and beyond the call of duty in fire safety and sanitation. The program selects one person or department quarterly who has shown outstanding performance in maintaining a clean and safe working environment for staff and inmates who work and live at Camp Hill. The program was implemented in January 2017 with the intent to show appreciation for their hard work and true concern for the environment that we all live and work in on a daily basis.

The 3rd Quarter certificate of excellence for fire safety and sanitation was awarded to Officer King who is assigned as the Main Gate Officer. We would like to thank Officer King for a job well done. Her hard work, dedication and commitment is greatly appreciated. Thank you, Officer King, for being a positive role model at Camp Hill and for the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

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Angel Tree Preparations Underway at Waymart

For several years, SCI Waymart has implemented the Angel Tree Program within its institution. The Angel Tree Program provides incarcerated parents the opportunity to give a Christmas gift to their children.

Angel Tree posters are placed on every housing unit, making it simple and user-friendly for inmates to complete the required form. First, inmates contact their families to find out what their child, or children, would like to find under the Christmas tree. After hearing back from family members, inmates have the opportunity to choose from a gift guide with toys, puzzles, books, jewelry and other ideas provided by Angel Tree. Once the form is completed, the inmates’ counselor examines the application and makes sure each inmate qualifies for the program.

This process does not happen overnight. In July, a member of the Angle Tree team contacts SCI Waymart to receive the number of supplies needed for the program. Waymart looks at its numbers from the year before, examines the new applications and sends the totals to the Angel Tree Program.

The Angel Tree Program not only provides children with a present during the Christmas season, but it connects and serves to restore relationships between fathers and their children.

“After being a part of this wonderful program for several years, I see some of the same names every year sending gifts to their children,” said Kay Ross, clerk typist 2. “Although their father cannot be there in person, I believe this his child or children knows that they are there in their hearts.”

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Around the Centers...

TLC Participate in Trunk or Treat

On Oct. 26, Transitional Living Centers staff and reentrants had fun at a Trunk or Treat event hosted by Growing Awareness, Inc., a local non-profit who helps build a sensory-friendly play space for the local community. This play space meets the needs of children with diverse abilities. The TLC team decorated a vehicle and passed out treats to kids participating in the event.

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CTC Erie Carves Pumpkins, Enjoys Treats

The inpatient units worked in groups of three and carved pumpkins on Oct. 26. This activity was supervised by staff members and the pumpkins were placed along the entranceway. Clinical staff members dressed up on Halloween and inpatient reentrants were given candy to celebrate the holiday. Overall, both activities were positively received and brought some Halloween spirit to CTC Erie.
**Benner Township Celebrates Dog Program, Named Foster Home of the Year**

On Sept. 5, SCI Benner Township held a celebration for the six-year anniversary of A Dog’s Tale From Jail, the facility’s dog program. Benner’s kitchen and staff catered pizza and cake for the anniversary party, and participants gathered together and reminisced about their favorite dogs and dog moments. Toni Duchi, of Nittany Greyhound, Inc., presented the 2019 Foster Home of the Year award to SCI Benner Township K-9 Handlers.

A Dog’s Tale From Jail was founded by Pam Graci, Benner Township’s current Canine Handler Trainer. The program partners with Nittany Greyhound & Rondout Kennels (New York) to find adoptive homes for the rescues. Nittany Greyhound rescues retired and injured Greyhounds from the racetracks. The greyhounds come to the prison program to be socialized and trained for life in a home. The majority of them have never been anywhere but the racetracks and are completely unfamiliar with basic home living. For example, the inmate handlers have to physically teach them how to walk up and down stairs, with one in front of the dog and one behind the dog, moving their paws step by step for the first time. The Greyhounds typically stay for six weeks and then are picked up by their adoptive families.

Rondout Kennels sends hard-to-place dogs to the program. These dogs are typically ones that have been adopted and returned and/or have been at the shelter for significant periods of time. They come to the program and remain until adoptive homes are secured. A Dog’s Tale From Jail has had nearly 90 dogs come through the program in its six years.

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DOC Represented at PSU Career Day

On Oct. 9, a number of criminal justice experts participated in panel discussions at a Criminal Justice Informational Career Day, held at Penn State’s Berks Campus. DOC participants included Bureau of Community Corrections Director Daniel McIntyre and SCI Phoenix Captain Walter Grunder.

Also participating in the day’s events were Berks County Jail Warden Janine Quigley, Berks County Juvenile Probation Assistant Chief Bill Keim, Children’s Home of Reading Program Resource Assistant Keri Evangelista and Berks Connections Reentry Housing Coordinator Lindsey Hessmiller.

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Jalongo Named Pine Grove Volunteer of the Year

On Oct. 17, officials at SCI Pine Grove held a banquet to honor 30 volunteers. This year’s Volunteer of the Year was Dr. Mary Renck Jalongo. Since 2014 Dr. Jalongo has assisted the prison’s dog training program by sponsoring dogs and by teaching skills and techniques to the inmate handlers.

“I feel privileged to participate and have thoroughly enjoyed working with the service dog training program.”

Several inmates attended the program and spoke favorably about Dr. Jalongo and the other volunteers. They also presented wooden plaques, each engraved with personal messages of thanks.

This year’s program was coordinated by Facility Chaplaincy Program Director Rev. Kirt Anderson.

Pictured, left to right, are: Deputy Superintendent Billie Heide, Drug and Alcohol Treatment Specialist Christina Smith, Dr. Mary Renck Jalongo and Superintendent Lee Estock.

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DOC Employee Serves in Blue Star Mothers Group

Belinda Nester, who serves as executive assistant to Executive Deputy Secretary for Community Corrections and Reentry George Little, served with her fellow Blue Star Mothers of Central PA 10 by packing 42 boxes of supplies to send to service members currently deployed. The boxes contained a variety of snacks and meal items, hygiene products, magazines, playing cards, blankets, thank-you notes from first graders and a letter from the Blue Star Mothers.
Blue Star Mothers of Central PA 10 are mothers, stepmothers, grandmothers, foster mothers and female legal guardians who have children serving in the military or who are veterans. The group aims to support each other and their children while promoting patriotism. For more on the group, visit its site: http://www.bsmcpa10.com/

Belinda (second from the right in the above photo) lost her youngest daughter, Aereyelle Dominique Dubois, three years ago. Elle, as everyone knew her by, joined the Army and was a staff sergeant with the 257 Engineering Company of Johnstown. Elle is described by Belinda as a beautiful, courageous, intelligent, kind, spunky soldier and nurse, who was a friend to everyone she met. She counseled victims of rape and abuse, having lived through those same horrors with her biological family. The Nesters took Elle in and raised her as their youngest daughter. Belinda said that going to these meetings and working with these other women helped ease her sorrow following Elle’s death in YEAR and has allowed her to know that they can still make a difference.

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Triumph Set to Hold Charity Competition at Coal Township

Under the direction of staff advisor Corrections Activities Specialist Paul Randell, the Triumph Inmate Organization at SCI Coal Township is offering a Double Elimination Charity Indoor Bowling and Beanbag Toss Tournament. Through a special fundraiser, the inmates have the opportunity to purchase Nike Air precision sneakers, t-shirts, Koss headphones and address books. The proceeds will go to the Northumberland and Snyder County Special Olympics.
Since the first sale in April 2017, SCI Coal Township’s Lifeline Organization has donated $17,600 to local charities with proceeds from their fundraising sales. Donations include $1,000 to Northumberland/Snyder Special Olympics, $2,000 to the Mt. Carmel Food Pantry, $500 to Marley’s Mission, $6,500 to the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way and $7,600 to Kuapas Summer Camp associated with Mt. Carmel School District and Bucknell University.

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**Greene Holds Full-Scale Exercise**

On Oct. 23, SCI Greene was locked down and suspended normal operations to simulate an emergency exercise. Within the facility, staff and specialized teams, as well as Fayette County Regional Hazmat, Greene County and Pennsylvania Emergency Management and Pennsylvania State Police, responded to the simulated emergency. The exercise allowed staff and responding agencies the opportunity to train and facilitate emergency plans.

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Smithfield, Huntingdon Hold FERT Training

The Emergency Management Agency and Bucks County Community College partnered for SCI Smithfield and SCI Huntingdon’s FERT training. In the morning, Kevin Hogan from Bucks County delivered a presentation on hazardous materials, decontamination and personal protective equipment (PPE). The afternoon session consisted of practical application where FERT members utilized their PPE and simulated cleaning up an identified illicit substance.

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Albion Celebrates Staff with Appreciation Day

On Sept. 9, A.C.E. (Albion Correctional Employees Association) sponsored a staff appreciation day for the staff on all three shifts. Smith’s foot-long hot dogs were served with Greek, chili and cheese toppings as well as fries, chips and drinks. The administrative staff donated cookies for dessert. The staff enjoyed themselves and appreciated this nice break from their daily routine.

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**Smithfield Holds Graduation for 66 Inmates**

On Oct. 23, SCI Smithfield held its annual graduation ceremony and recognized the accomplishments of 66 graduates. Credentials were earned with 25 GEDs (General Education Diploma), 21 CSDs (Commonwealth Secondary Diploma), one Pennsylvania State Barber License, eight TPC Certificates (Technical Publishing Company for Custodial Maintenance) and 11 NCCER (National Center for Construction Education and Research). Tim Goodman, a retiring adult basic education teacher, addressed graduates, family and friends as the keynote speaker. He challenged everyone to follow “Where is Your Heart?”

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**Retreat Holds a Halloween Party for Kids**

On Oct. 20, SCI Retreat held its second annual Kids Halloween Party at Party Here in Nanticoke. The party included a costume contest for prettiest, scariest and most creative costumes. Kids played on an assortment of jump houses, along with a virtual reality room for the older kids. The day ended with pizza, cupcakes, and a gift pail. Special thanks to spooky guest, Michael Myers (Sgt. Phillips). A spooktacular time was had by all!

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Pine Grove Pack Welcomes New Pups

On Oct. 2, SCI Pine Grove welcomed the next round of puppies to the TAILS program. Zeke, Zak, Freedom and Tony came from New Hope Assistance Dog Program. They marked a first for Pine Grove as Freedom and Tony are golden doodles, which have never been trained at Pine Grove before. The handlers are excited to see how training them compares to Labradors.

While the puppies are much anticipated and welcomed, it was also a sad day as Wizard, Wrangler, Winston and Watson said goodbye to the handlers and staff to return for their secondary training with their respective clients.
Training Academy Hosts Mentoring Training

On Oct. 24 and 25, local mentoring coordinators from around the state and parole gathered at the DOC Training Academy for their yearly meeting. Attendees heard from Dr. Bonnie Green, founder and principal analyst for Illumin Analytics, who discussed the benefits of mentoring relationships in facilitating individual growth within organizations. DOC Mentor of the Year Matt Shively and his mentee, Lauralee McIntyre, also presented to the group about the bond that occurs within a mentor/mentee relationship. Everyone in attendance left inspired and recharged to return to their respective institutions.

Left: Dr. Bonnie Green speaks to the mentor coordinators about how to implement and evaluate a mentorship program.

Below: This year’s Mentors of the Year from Parole and DOC, Tammy Makin (District Direct for Parole from the Altoona Office)
**Staff at Benner Township Go Donuts for SECA**

In addition to staff’s personal SECA donations, SCI Benner Township staff held a fundraiser in an effort to collect additional money for their overall SECA campaign. Benner Township enjoyed Donut Day, where staff could purchase donuts with proceeds benefiting SECA. Pictured is Benner Township’s SECA Representative B. Karabinos.

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**Students Tour Huntingdon**

High school students enrolled in the Public Health and Safety program at the Huntingdon County Career and Technology Center toured SCI Huntingdon on Oct. 29. Their instructor is Crist Fellman, a former corrections officer at SCI Huntingdon.

This is the fourth year Huntingdon has hosted this group. As part of their studies, the students are learning about all aspects of the criminal justice system. This is the third tour for some of the students, and, according to Fellman, they look forward to visiting every year. Staff members met with the group after the tour,
and there were many questions about mental health treatment, gangs in prisons and restricted housing procedures.

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**Somerset Pup Visits Frontier Girls**

The Frontier Girls Troop 213 from Gallitzin received a special visit from Michelle Houser, SCI Somerset deputy superintendent of centralized services, and Rayne, a service-dog-in-training. During the visit, the girls learned about the Canine Partners for Life Program and the inmate’s role in training the puppies, as well as the role of a service dog. As a requirement for their Dog and Dog Training Badges and a thank you to Deputy Houser and Rayne, the girls made toys and treats for the puppies. DOC parents and troop leaders representing SCI Somerset, Benner Township and Pine Grove were present to welcome Deputy Houser and Rayne.

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Waymart Pups Participate in Transition Expo

On Oct. 22, SCI Waymart staff associated with Paws for a Cause participated in the Transition Expo 2019 held at Ladore Lodge. Four high schools attended: Honesdale, Western Wayne, Wallenpaupack and Forest City. It is a great opportunity for students with disabilities to learn about the different options and resources available to them.

Presenters assembled into breakout sessions for attendees and spoke to the group for approximately 20 minutes. Service-dogs-in-training Zyla and Zee participated with Jody Smith, unit manager, Kathy Millard, clerk typist 2, and Maria Losapio, counselor. Smith explained how the dog program works and its purpose and then answered questions. The students who attended were then introduced to the dogs and able to pet them. The pups loved the attention, and the students loved petting them.
**Coal Township Employees Donate to Local Food Pantry**

SCI Coal Township employees collected pantry items for the annual food drive which benefits a Shamokin charity, Manna for the Many. Several boxes of various food items will be delivered to Manna for the Many, 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. Jodi coordinated SCI Coal Township’s food collection since it began years ago.*

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**Phoenix FACT Program Holds Commencement Ceremony**

On Oct. 19, the Father and Children Together (FACT) Program at SCI Phoenix held the annual commencement ceremony and certificate presentations for program participants. Community partners for this program were in attendance and included: Barry Johnson, Uplift Solutions; Phillip Hammond, Family and Community Engagement (FACE); and Dominque Young, Crayola Company.

There are currently 82,000 children in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania who have a parent incarcerated in a criminal justice system. During the FACT experience, children spend time with their fathers and grandfathers to engage in activities and workshops that assist the children in addressing issues that they encounter on a daily basis, to include the challenges presented by having an incarcerated father or grandfather. The program also
provides the participants skills that are utilized to strengthen family relationships that may have become strained due to the incarceration.

61 Graduate at Somerset

SCI Somerset held its 2019 Graduation Ceremony on Oct. 30. Sixty-one inmates received certificates in various curriculums and trades, as well as one receiving an Associate of Science Degree.

The guest speaker was Dr. Chris Bonneau, professor of Political Science at the University of Pittsburgh. Family of the graduated inmates were invited to fellowship and partake in cookies, cake, sandwiches and coffee after the ceremony.
Mahanoy Staff Participate in Fundraiser for COT

A fundraiser was held to benefit an SCI Mahanoy corrections officer trainee battling a life-threatening condition. The event was held at the Frackville Elks Lodge and featured live entertainment, raffles, door prizes, food and more. All proceeds from the fundraiser are going to the COT’s medical bills.

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DOC Pilots Staff Member’s Lean Idea to Make Mental Health Services More Accessible at Work

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PADOC) piloted a new phone line to allow staff to speak directly with mental health services behind the walls.

The pilot allows corrections employees within SCI Albion to call a State Employee Assistance Program (SEAP) counselor directly through a designated phone number without having to go through the institutional operator/switch board. SEAP is a free assessment and referral service for commonwealth employees and their families to aid in resolving problems like substance abuse, mental health, family issues, financial issues, legal issues and medication. Before this pilot, employees had to access SEAP through the website, a personal phone, by HR referral or with an outside phone line within the institution by dialing the operator. Now an internal restricted phone line at SCI Albion will be able to dial four 3’s (3333) to directly access the SEAP Hotline.

Direct and immediate access to mental health counselors and services is crucial for individuals who work in corrections as they are exposed to high levels of violence and stress making corrections an emotionally demanding career. Mental health illnesses such as anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) are increasingly high among people in corrections. A 2018 report published by the UC Berkeley’s Goldman School of Public Policy on the health and wellness of more than 8,000 criminal justice personnel in California concluded the following about the lives of Corrections Officers (COs):

- COs experience violence at roughly the same rates as military vets.
- 48 percent of COs fear they will be injured on the job.
73 percent of COs have seen someone be seriously hurt or killed on the job.
1 out of 9 actively working COs experience suicidal ideation and 1 out of 7 retired COs experience suicidal ideation.
1 out of 3 COs have experienced at least one symptom of PTSD, which is higher than the rate combat vets experience PTSD (1 in 7).

(Lerman).
The risk of suicide is dangerous and far too prevalent for corrections employees. A 2017 study run by the Council for State Government (CSG) Justice Center found the risk of suicide is 39 percent higher for people working in a corrections field as compared to a non-corrections job field (Fryer). For this reason, it’s imperative the PADOC offer mental health services that are easily accessible to staff but are also effective.

Although the PADOC offers assistance through peer support programs and SEAP, not all PADOC employees have taken advantage of these services due to the “stigma” around asking for help and the fear of experiencing repercussions in the workplace.

This stigma around reaching out is common among corrections employees across the country. UC Berkeley’s 2018 report also found: “only 18 percent of criminal justice employees reported ever having used the California Employee Assistance Program (EAP), and only 3 percent say they have made use of the Peer Support Volunteer program” (Lerman). Through this research Berkley found the number one reason individuals who work in corrections or criminal justice did not reach out is because they were worried about privacy.

The goal of this pilot is to maintain the privacy of outreach. By doing this the PADOC hopes to help more corrections employees feel comfortable enough to utilize SEAP. Within the first month of the pilot the amount of calls being made to SEAP from inside SCI Albion increased by 20 percent.

This service was proposed by SCI Albion’s Chad Martini, through the PADOC IDEA Program. IDEA stands for Innovate, Develop, Experiment, and Adapt and the program is a suggestion box where PADOC staff members can submit ideas about how to improve a process or outcome in their jobs or the PADOC as a whole. Submissions are analyzed by the PADOC’s Innovative Practices Committee and assigned to Lean or BetaGov. Lean focuses on improving an overall process in order to make it more efficient while BetaGov focuses on improving overall outcomes through randomly controlled trials. All submissions made to IDEA are considered. Martini’s submission was assigned to the Lean track because it adapts the actual SEAP contacting process making it more efficient and more appealing to the staff members who need it.

“We are just beginning to understand the huge range of mental and physical health issues that can result from exposure to violence and untreated toxic stress in the workplace. Agencies around the country are starting to look for ways to better support personnel” says Amy Lerman, the author of the UC Berkeley’s 2018 criminal justice personnel study. Many criminal justice agencies and organizations
across the nation are beginning to recognize the importance of staff wellness and they are putting programs and policies in place to help their staff. The PADOC values the health and wellbeing of every employee and the PADOC strives to continue to improve the overall work environment and services provided to staff every day.

Sources:
Fryer, Ashleigh. “‘We're Human’: A Corrections Officer's Struggle with the Stress of the Job.” CSG Justice Center, Council of State Government, 14 Aug. 2017

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Around the Centers...

Kleeman Named BCC Employee of the Quarter

Ann Marie Kleeman is the Bureau of Community Corrections’ Employee of the Second Quarter for 2019. She is the glue that holds the Scranton Community Corrections Center together. She provides assistance anytime help is needed: ACA files, electronic filing, scheduling appointments, ensuring the movement report/count is correct, PREA audits and inspections. She knows when reports are due and keeps everyone accountable to ensure nothing is missed. She has a vast knowledge of computers and can assist most of us when we have issues.

Ann Marie is always a professional, enthusiastic staff member and attempts to maintain high staff morale in this stressful line of work. Her qualifications are above her position, yet everything that is asked of her is done with a smile and grace!

Thank you, Ann Marie, for all you do for us and for being you!

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Dallas Inmates Earn Ribbons at Bloomsburg Fair

By Emily Koontz, DOC Intern

This past month, SCI Dallas’ horticulture program participated in the Bloomsburg Fair. A handful of inmates crafted unique arrangements, ranging from zinnia, celosia and marigold baskets to floral topiaries!

Before the fair, each student learns proper plant structure and floral designs. After paying the $2 entry fee, students send their creations to April Gromel, SCI Dallas horticulture teacher, who delivers the arrangements to the Bloomsburg Fair and collects the winning ribbons. This year, multiple students earned first place! Inmates earned the following:

- 1st place (Best Zinnia Basket)
- 4th place (Best Zinnia Basket)
- 1st place (Best Celosia Crested Basket)
- 1st place (Best Celosia Plumed Basket)
- 2nd place (Best Marigold Basket)
- 2nd place (Elderberries)
- 3rd place (Topiary Floral Arrangement) (Monarch butterflies)
- 1st place (Creative Floral Arrangement) (Wreath)
- 3rd place (Creative Floral Arrangement) (Cornucopia)
- 4th place (Arrangement Depicting a Holiday) (Thanksgiving turkey made from a butternut squash)
Since the fair is broadcasted, students watch the day unfold through the inmate circuit channel.

SCI Dallas’ horticulture program not only allows its students to participate in the Bloomsburg Fair, but also promotes community outreach projects. From delivering poinsettias to nursing homes, to working with Wreaths Across America, an organization that places wreaths on heroes’ graves, this horticulture program brings inmates together and positively impacts the community both inside and outside prison walls. In fact, just this year, students within the horticulture program has grown more than 2,105 pounds of food for inmate meals.
Each year, students encourage one another when crafting and submitting their projects. It is a team-building experience for the students and teaches life skills, the importance of hard work and meeting personal, education goals.

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**Greene CWP Prepares Museum for Annual Festival**

Inmates in the Community Work Program at SCI Greene completed landscaping and general clean-up maintenance at the Greene County Museum in preparation for the 48th Annual Harvest Festival held October 12 and 13. The ground preparations assisted with the demonstrations of the Colonial and Civil War reenactments and encampments that were performed.

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Flagger Force Presents at Altoona District Office

On Oct. 21, the Ebensburg CareerLink crafted a presentation on Flagger Force for the Altoona District Parole Office. Flagger Force is a certificate program used in temporary locations for traffic direction and road crew safety. While incarcerated, inmates can obtain a Flagger Force certification.

Flagger Force was invited by the Altoona District Parole Office ASCRAs to present a workshop on their company. They taught about hiring, certifications and their mentoring programs for new hires. Every reentrant is paired with a mentor who guides them through their daily work routine. The mentor offers rides, explains company procedures, work rules and regulations. Mentors serve to answer questions and guide the reentrants. The workshop was attended by: reentrants, supervisors, agents, institutional staff from the education departments, social workers and RPA’s. Reentrants had the opportunity to fill out job applications and ask questions, too.

The Altoona District Parole Office exchanged contacts with the Flagger Force representatives and agreed to contact SCI staff to present this workshop in institutions. Flagger Force is hiring in Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, Virginia, West Virginia, Indiana and Ohio. They hire all across Pennsylvania in numerous counties. This was a wonderful collaboration between the SCI’s and the field staff to better serve the re-entrant population.

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Greene Holds Graduation Ceremony for 68 Inmates

SCI Greene held its annual graduation ceremony on Oct. 16 and recognized the accomplishments of 68 graduates. Credentials were issued for the following educational achievements: General Education Development (GED) diplomas (13), Commonwealth Secondary (CSD) diplomas (6), National Center for
Construction Education and Research (NCCER) vocational certifications (43), post-secondary college diplomas (4), and Pennsylvania State Barber License (2). This year’s graduation theme was “Success is the sum of small efforts, repeated day in and day out.” Pastor William Sukolsky was the keynote speaker and 45 family members attended the event. Congratulations, graduates!

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**DOC Staff Members Complete Motivational Interviewing Instructors Course**

Ten individuals from the Department of Corrections have recently been certified as Motivational Interviewing Instructors. Congratulations to Richard Podguski, Luis Resto, Tim Hollsopple, Gale Sherrid, Ed Yescavage, Keith Fenstemaker, Wendy Hoerner, William Hepner and Jeffrey Wilson!

These individuals are now certified to deliver fundamental and advanced instruction in Motivational Interviewing techniques. Motivational Interviewing is a directive, client-centered, evidence-based counseling style that helps inmates and reentrants change their behavior and resolve ambivalence. Compared with non-directive counseling, directive counseling is more focused and goal-directed. Although the Bureau of Treatment Services (BTS) has hosted Motivational Interviewing trainings previously, the most recent Motivational Interviewing trainings include the most up-to-date interventions, which were created by the Center for Strength-Based Strategies. Within the coming months, Motivational Interviewing trainings will be conducted in the Commonwealth. This training is a requirement for all treatment specialists.
The first Motivational Interviewing training was conducted at the Department of Corrections (DOC) Training Academy on Sept. 23 and Sept. 24, 2019. The trainers were Richard Podguski, Luis Resto, Tim Hollsopple, Gale Sherrid, Ed Yescavage and Keith Fenstemaker. The training was successful, and various staff participants look forward to utilizing a variety of Motivational Interviewing techniques they learned.

For questions regarding Motivational Interviewing, contact Cheryl Horner, Chief of Treatment, BTS, or Richard Podguski, Chief of Reentry Programs.

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**Highlights from Waymart’s Education Department in 2019**

By Michelle Lipko, SCI Waymart School Principal

It’s been a productive and exciting year for the students and staff of SCI Waymart’s Education Department.

Our academic students used AZTEC software to prepare for the GED Ready and GED Exams. Weekly usage not only increased their knowledge in reading, math, social studies and science, but it allowed the students to gain computer skills such as keyboarding, navigating a mouse and advancing screens. Students received immediate feedback and, as a result, teachers were able to provide targeted remediation. Using computers to prepare for a test administered on a computer is a win-win for everyone!

This year, Waymart had its first licensed cosmetologists. Thus far, three students have passed the State Licensing Exam in Cosmetology for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. After completing the required 1,250 hours of class and clinical, students regularly met study groups in the library. Students that had already passed the exam gave study tips to those preparing to take it.

Waymart’s Pathway to Success (PTS) students had the opportunity to hear from many speakers from outside agencies such as CareerLink, The Wayne-Pike Workforce Alliance and the Scranton CCC Director Jeffrey James. Waymart staff from reentry, parole and the CEVC also spoke to the PTS students.

Vocational teachers Tami McCollum and James Mitchell serve on Occupational Advisory Committees at Lackawanna Career Technology Center. As teachers, they are able to network with other career and technical educators and devote needed time to current events.
Entrepreneurship students developed business plans that used current workforce data provided by the Commonwealth of PA. Students analyzed demographics, industry needs and start-up expenses. These business plans are the students’ “intellectual property” and remain with the students when they leave SCI Waymart. Developing business plans increased the students’ literacy, data analysis and public speaking skills. Students presented their plans to their classmates and presenters were questioned on the feasibility and other aspects of their plan. They were as good as the contestants on “Shark Tank!”

Susan Shaffer, director for The Stourbridge Project, presented multiple times to the business classes. She discussed entrepreneurial opportunities in northeastern Pennsylvania, as well as integrating a growth mindset instead of a fixed mindset. The class read and discussed Clifton Taulbert’s “Who Owns the Ice House? Eight Life Lesson From An Unlikely Entrepreneur.”

Becky MacDicken, an outreach specialist for the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities, presented to our business, PTS and vocational students. Students learned how to request a credit report, how to be financially responsible as an incarcerated offender and as a reentrant. MacDicken is returning to Waymart to speak with both staff and students.

After a few years in hiatus, The Inside-Out Program began again in the fall of 2019. Criminal justice majors from Keystone College meet weekly with inmates, receive first-hand accounts of the logistics of the criminal justice system and understand the mission of the DOC.

Students in both academic and vocational classes that earned above 90 percent in classes 3rd semester were invited to an achievement ceremony. Certificates were presented to the students and some students were recognized for excelling in multiple subjects. The culinary students made a delicious treat, and everyone enjoyed the celebration. Some students commented that they never made honors in high school or even graduated high school. Achievement ceremonies will be held each quarter.

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Phoenix Hosts First Hispanic Heritage Program

The Empowerment Committee at SCI Phoenix sponsored the first annual Hispanic Heritage Program on Oct. 10, focusing on this year’s theme of “A History of Serving Our Nation.” SCI Chester Superintendent Marirosa Lamas was the keynote speaker for this event that included presentations by staff and musical selections by the inmate choir.

Phoenix Staff Support 5K

SCI Phoenix’s Empowerment Committee, through the support of the staff, made a monetary donation and was a sponsor at the “Annual Dragon Run for Courage 5K.” This was possible due to the staff’s willingness to participate in the projects and fundraisers of the Empowerment Committee throughout the year.

The Dragon Run for Courage is just one of the many ways to support two local non-profit foundations, Jake’s Dragons Foundation and The Conor McKenna Foundation. Both are dedicated to the funding of pediatric cancer research along with helping affected families deal with the enormous financial burden of this disease. In addition, there is a scholarship awarded every year to a well deserving senior graduation from the Spring-Ford Area High School.
Cambridge Springs Staff Supports Local Community Police Camp for Kids

Veronica Gambill-Harden, administrative officer at SCI Cambridge Springs, collaborated with Thomas Lennox, Erie police officer and director of PALs (Police Athletic League), to recruit kids in the Erie community to participate in a local Police Camp. The kids interacted with Erie Police Officers, while the officers worked as counselors during the day. The focus of the camp was to build positive relationships with kids in the community. The week involved a variety of different athletics each day, structured correctional half-day workshops, and one-on-one interactions.

Robyn Cleckley, corrections officer at Cambridge Springs, has sent her daughter for the last two years and contributed her expertise in the correctional workshops this year. This year all of the participants were surprised with a free bicycle. This program was a joint effort by the Erie School District, Gannon University and local businesses in the community.

Pictured: Daniel Spizarny, Erie Chief of Police; Mike Chacchione, Erie Police Officer; Veronica Gambill-Harden, Administrative Officer at SCI Cambridge Springs; Robyn Cleckley, Corrections Officer at Cambridge Springs; Kimora Cleckley, CO Cleckley’s daughter; Thomas Lennox, Police Officer & Director of PALs; and Jennifer Nolan, Erie County Detective.

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Newman Named Employee of the Quarter at Coal Township

SCI Coal Township Superintendent Thomas McGinley recently announced the Employee of the Quarter recipient for the third quarter of 2019: Amie Newman!

Newman was recently promoted to an accounting assistant position. Prior to her promotion, Amie worked in the superintendent’s office area. Working side-by-side with the superintendent’s assistant, Amie diligently took on the inmate grievance system, which is a job all by itself! Amie was eager to learn all aspects of the position and did a great job! Part of Amie’s nomination said, “Amie’s efforts in everything she has done for this office is greatly appreciated and she is dearly missed.”

Amie served as the Employee Recreation Association president. During her tenure as president she steered the ERA to be a reputable association, displaying “appreciation” to all employees and providing opportunities for many “family-oriented” events. Amie currently serves on the ERA board and often dedicates/volunteers her time outside of the institution to ensure the ERA events run smoothly. Amie coordinates the facility’s American Red Cross blood drives and often volunteers at a local shelter providing low-cost animal care.

Congratulations, Amie!

Pictured from left: Trisha Kelley, superintendent’s assistant; Amie Newman, accounting assistant; and Thomas McGinley, superintendent.

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**Staff Donate Blood at Cambridge Springs**

SCI Cambridge Springs hosted an American Red Cross Blood Drive at the facility on Oct. 15. Kudos to the staff donors for their participation, which will assist the community with this constant need.

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**A Look at Waymart’s HNT**

SCI Waymart’s Hostage Negotiations Team has 13 members, and they train approximately 64 hours per year. The HNT is there in case of emergency. Their job is to deescalate any situation so that use of force is not used. On Oct. 16, the HNT was training with the Eastern Region HNT and practicing negotiating scenarios.
98 Graduate at Camp Hill

By Emily Koontz, DOC Intern

On Oct. 17, family, friends and staff honored 98 graduating inmates from SCI Camp Hill’s educational and vocational programs. SCI Camp Hill congratulated 36 inmates on completing their Adult Commonwealth Secondary Diploma and 11 inmates on completing their General Education Program. In total, eight inmates earned their barber license, and another eight inmates graduated from the Business Education Program. Two inmates completed their ICDL. The Culinary Arts Program graduated 15 inmates and nine inmates graduated from the Graphic Arts Program. Lastly, eight inmates completed HVAC, and one inmate earned his diploma through the Hadley Institute for the Blind.

Principal Bruce Elliot and Superintendent Laurel Harry gave opening remarks and Office of Administration Secretary Michael Newsome was the keynote speaker. In addition, all educational staff played a significant role in preparing for graduation and should be recognized for their efforts. After the ceremony, families and friends joined the graduates for refreshments and fellowship.

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Mercer Employees Attend Lunch and Learn About PEBTF

On Oct. 16, SCI Mercer held its second Lunch and Learn for interested staff members hosted by the local C.O.V.E.R. committee. The focus this month was on Pennsylvania Employee Benefit Trust Fund (PEBTF) benefits and changes for 2020. Erika Swaney from the Office of Administration led the videoconference for two sessions. There was a total of 31 attendees that benefited from this training opportunity right in time for open enrollment starting on the 23 of the month.
A local food truck, Mule Train Smokers, was on site to deliver delicious meals for all staff over the lunch hours, which many staff took advantage of.

Next month will also be a popular topic: retirement planning. The Lunch and Learns have been well-received so far and the C.O.V.E.R. committee is looking forward to bringing more positive opportunities to staff at SCI Mercer.

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**Smithfield Inmate Organization Thanked for Donations**

Through daily sales of ice cream, tea and snack items and the annual Run-a-thon, SCI Smithfield’s inmate organization has been a big supporter of Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County. Last week, the facility received the following letter thanking and commending the organization for its generosity:

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[Image of a letter from Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County]

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Albion, Mercer, Cambridge Springs Support Veterans with Ruck the Bay

On Oct. 13, C.O.V.E.R. teams from SCI Albion, SCI Mercer and SCI Cambridge Springs came together to support EUMA’s Liberty House in Erie PA for the 2019 Ruck the Bay 10K. The EUMA Liberty House is the only transitional housing available for homeless veterans in Erie County. Each institution worked together to provide an amazing amount of suitable donations that were taken on a ruck to observe memorials of fallen military heroes and to help end veteran homelessness.

SCI Mercer Activities Manager April Harvey was one of two participants in the march that was a Comrade in Arms, which meant she donated a generous amount and was one of the leaders of the step-off to begin the march.

Top left: SCI Albion Corrections Counselor 2 Paul Szallar

Top right: SCI Mercer Deputy Superintendent of Facility Management William Woods and Activities Manager April Harvey

Left: SCI Cambridge Springs Custodial Maintenance Repairman Kenneth Hulings
Forest Celebrates 15th Anniversary

SCI Forest staff enjoyed picnic and prizes as the facility celebrated its 15th anniversary on Sept. 26. Forest leadership cooked and served lunch for the staff.

Volunteers Honored at Mercer

On Oct. 16, SCI Mercer hosted a volunteer banquet to thank all of those who donate their time to the prison. The 17 guests that attended started their evening off with a meal prepared by the dietary department in the staff dining hall. Fall was in the air as you walked into the dining hall.
hall with beautiful table arrangements prepared by Activities Manager April Harvey. After the volunteers were done enjoying their meal of roast beef braciola, mashed potatoes with gravy, carrot broccoli medley and a chocolate cream cake snack, they braved the cold rain as they all traveled to the chapel for a ceremony.

Chaplain Program Director Joseph Kosarek opened the ceremony in prayer. Protestant Chaplain Validia Giddens then introduced the Protestant choir whom sang for the volunteers. Deputy Superintendent of Facilities Management William Woods then spoke, sharing with the room his memories that he’s acquired over the past 20 plus years from the volunteer banquets at the State Correctional Institutions of Pittsburgh, Albion and Mercer. Inmates, from various groups led by the volunteers, then spoke on behalf of their groups, thanking the volunteers for all they have done. Steve Leapline was then awarded Volunteer of the Year. Steve have been volunteering and sharing his faith nearly every Monday night for the last three years at SCI Mercer. The ceremony was closed by Chaplain Kosarek by thanking everyone for all that they have done and continue to do.

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Somerset Honor Guard Participates in Blue Mass

SCI Somerset’s Honor Guard participated in the Blue Mass at St. Vincent Cathedral in Latrobe on Oct. 13. A Blue Mass is a Catholic service for those in the public safety field. The guest speaker was an officer from the Pittsburgh Police Department who was the first on the scene at the Tree of Life shooting.

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Around the Centers...

Non-Profit CEO Visits CTC Erie

On Oct. 16, Michael Hooks visited the CTC Erie Center and spoke to the Phase One residents. Hooks is the president and CEO of Michael Making Lives Better (MMLB), a non-profit agency based in Erie.

Hooks is well recognized for “haircut day,” MMLB’s primary community action event. The event provides food, school supplies and haircuts to more than 1,000 inner city children. They also have a Thanksgiving dinner for underserved families and a popular 5K run. Hooks shared his inspirational story of being an underprivileged youth, receiving a substantial prison sentence and completing college. Hooks has also operated successful businesses and assisted Erie’s inner-city residents.

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Week of October 14, 2019...

Waymart Welcomes New Pups: Zyla, Zetta and Zee

By Kathy Millard, Clerk Typist 2

Meet Zyla, Zetta and Zee, three new lab puppies, who arrived at SCI Waymart on Sept. 20, 2019, to commence their training to become companion dogs to veterans and children with special needs. They are 4 months old, have lots of energy and are certain to be a big hit with everyone who is lucky enough to meet them. (Remember, do not pet the puppies if they have their vests on.)

Staff members and inmate trainers were on hand to welcome the three new pups, as well as members of the Paws for a Cause Committee, who could not give them enough attention and make them feel welcome to their new homes It's amazing how three little pups can brighten one's day!
Zyla sitting at attention for a treat.

Zetta, Zee and Zyla meeting staff members.

The new pups were introduced to the other two dogs, Winter and Wanda, and they enjoyed running around in the yard together.

Fun in the Yard with Winter & Wanda
Bidding Farewell to Wanda and Winter

We miss Wanda and Winter so much. They have returned to New Hope Assistance Dogs to get their Master’s Degree and graduate the program with honors. Wanda and Winter will make great companions to the veterans receiving the labs. They have sweet dispositions and are very obedient. Staff who took them home for weekend socialization wanted to keep them.

Kudos to Tracker, one of our very first pups.

He is now residing with a veteran and accompanies him to his office each day. Tracker provides unconditional love and companionship. New Hope Assistance Dogs reports that he fits in perfectly; hats off to you, Tracker! We knew you would be the very best from all the rest.
Our Paws for a Cause Program is one of the most rewarding experiences for both staff and inmates. We feel lucky to partner with New Hope in this training program.

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**Smithfield Staff Learn About Shaver’s Creek**

SCI Smithfield’s Empowerment Committee hosted a lunch and learn on Oct. 8 on the topic of the Shaver’s Creek Environmental Center, located between Huntingdon and State College. Shaver’s Creek Environmental Center, a non-profit program, is part of Penn State’s outreach mission of instruction, service and research. Through quality programs, Shaver’s Creek teaches, models and provides the knowledge, values, skills and experiences that enables individuals and communities to achieve and maintain harmony between human activities and the natural systems that support all living spaces. Shaver’s Creek provides a mix of education and recreational opportunities for families, schools, corporate groups and PSU students.

Staff received the opportunity to learn about the animals within the animal program. An interesting event coming up at Shaver’s Creek soon is an enchanted Halloween Trail and Festival on Oct. 26 and 27. The environmental center is typically open for visits seven days a week from February to December from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Individuals have the opportunity to hike, enjoy a picnic, investigate the amphibians and reptiles within the discovery room and observe the raptor aviary—which is home to hawks, owls, eagles, vultures and falcons). Shaver’s Creek has numerous activities for the whole family to explore and a fun place to learn about nature. For more information, visit their website at [www.shaverscreek.org](http://www.shaverscreek.org).

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Mahanoy Library Wins Eisner Graphic Novel Innovation Grant

By Jeri-Lynne Stewart, Mahanoy Librarian

Did you ever have a teacher tell you to stop reading graphic novels? Well, times have changed!

Now, graphic novels are seen as a serious form of literature, one that boosts vocabulary, encourages reluctant readers and involves the brain neurologically more than reading text. In an effort to capitalize on this new opportunity, the SCI Mahanoy library sought out ways to build its graphic novel section.

Earlier this year, the library was named a recipient of the coveted Will Eisner Graphic Novel Grant for Libraries—one of only three libraries to receive it and the only one in a prison. The Eisner grants are highly competitive. The grant award includes $4,000 which will be used for attending the ALA Annual Conference, holding more educational programs and buying new graphic novels. The grant also includes a donation of more than 200 graphic novels—the collected works of Will Eisner as well as all the titles nominated for Eisner awards in 2019. The grant is given by the Will and Ann Eisner Family Foundation and is administered by the American Library Association (ALA).
The grant proposal was “Doing Time Doesn’t Have to Mean Behind the Times: Visual Literacy in a Non-Internet Population.” Thanks to the grant, Mahanoy held Act 48 training for teachers, attended by SCIs Retreat, Dallas, Camp Hill and Frackville as well as Mahanoy Education Department staff. The training taught educators on how to use graphic novels to boost vocabulary, foster involvement and encourage reading. Three ABE teachers will be using classic fiction in graphic novel form next semester, with books purchased as part of the grant.

A second program will be a research study open to 20 inmates to assess if reading graphic novels improves their visual literacy. The inmates will be given a brief course on how to read graphic novels. They will also be assigned titles to read and answer questions on those specific titles. Finally, they will take part in a book club discussion once a month during the 5-month project.

A special recognition event was held to acknowledge the grant in August. Dr. Claire T. Lawrence, professor of literature and creative writing at Bloomsburg University, attended the event and conducted the training on Using Graphic Novels in the Classroom.

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Smithfield Celebrates Start of SECA with Pizza

On Oct. 9, SCI Smithfield kicked off the SECA campaign with a pizza party for staff on all shifts. The Empowerment Committee and S.A.F.E. (Smithfield Association for Employees) donated pizza and soda. Also, the kitchen donated cookies for the day.

Last year, 157 Smithfield staff members at Smithfield donated to SECA and raised $26,961. Smithfield’s goal is to not only meet that goal, but exceed it! Thank you to the employee organizations that made this day possible for Smithfield staff. Also, thank you for the staff for their generous donations in helping hundreds of charities and individuals.

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Reentrant Returns to Thank Parole Agent

Jermaine Woods reached his maximum expiration date on Sept. 24, yet he returned to the Chester District Office to thank Parole Agent Michael Harris. Woods suffered a stroke and was hospitalized for several months, and Harris conducted the home visits at the hospital. Woods was so appreciative of Harris’ professionalism and positivity during that rough period that he wanted to return and thank Harris for everything. Great work, Agent Harris!
Dallas Dogs Participate in Fundraiser

On Oct. 4, the SCI Dallas staff associated with the Hounds for Heroes Program attended a fundraiser at the University of Scranton. It was for the American Vet Dog Organization, which is conducted by the inmate population at Dallas under the direction of Acting Unit Manager Louise Cicerchia, CCPM Mike Goyne and Unit Manager Ann Verbyla. The undergraduate students of the Occupational Therapy Group piloted this fundraiser. The event was titled "Pet a Puppy" and each student donated a dollar to pet a puppy.

Dallas staff took four puppies to the event: Pax, 14 months old; Merli, 8 months old; Mary, 4 months old; and brothers Colonel Dave and Maxwell, 5 months old. The puppies and staff helped the group raise more than $500 for the Pet the Puppy Project. All proceeds benefitted the American Vet Dog Organization. The Dallas Hounds for Heroes participate in this bi-annual event each year. Pictured below are the staff, students and weekend puppy raisers involved in the program.
Cambridge Springs Staff Conduct Mock Interviews for High Schoolers

SCI Cambridge Springs Captain Kevin Ace and Field HR Officer Theresa Croll participated in mock interviews with the seniors at Maplewood High School on Sept. 24. Students came prepared with resumes and questions about future career opportunities. At the end of the class period, there was a time to share feedback with the students on how to improve their interviewing skills.
Guest Performer Presents to Laurel Highlands Inside-Out Class

The Pitt Prison Education Project brought Lacresha Berry, a New York City actress, director, writer and teacher to SCI Laurel Highlands. For the Inside-Out course, “Imagining Social Justice,” Berry performed a snippet of “Tubman,” her one-woman show. “Tubman” highlights what would happen if Harriet Tubman was a student in a Harlem public school today. The play was followed by a high-energy discussion with the students in which Berry answered questions about the play, shared writing techniques and worked with inside students on performing their writing.
Quehanna Boot Camp Holds “Financial Reality Fair”

On Sept. 19, a unique partnership of public agencies and private partners hosted a “Financial Reality Fair” for individuals currently incarcerated at the Quehanna Boot Camp in Karthaus (Clearfield County). Forty-three community volunteers and Boot Camp staff used hands-on exercises to help inmates learn how to address a major barrier facing reentrants as they return home from prison: the lack of knowledge about and access to financial services.

A total of 15 stations were set up in the gymnasium. Inmates were given a form that recorded potential earnings based on their occupation and then were expected to visit each station to determine how much they would need to budget for each living expense. The first 13 stations addressed costs for housing, food, transportation, furniture, clothing, insurance, cell phone, credit union loans, TV/internet, entertainment, pets, nails/hair/spa and gym/fitness. The next to last station was a “Wheel of Reality” that the inmates were required to spin that would yield either unexpected income or unexpected expense. Based on their spin, they were expected to decide how best to apply any unexpected income or how best to pay any unexpected expense. The final station allowed the inmates to sit down with a financial counselor and see how they did with budgeting their money. This was a good learning tool as all inmates successfully completing the Boot Camp Program will be returning to the community 6 months after starting the program.

Quehanna Boot Camp School Principal Kevin Fortuna worked with the Pennsylvania Department of Banking and Securities to orchestrate the event. Mr. Fortuna said, “The Financial Reality Fair was well received by the Quehanna Boot Camp population. It was a powerful reentry simulation that allowed participants to experience firsthand what occurs after an individual is released from prison and attempt to reintegrate back into society.” He expressed his thanks to the Wolf administration, the Pennsylvania Department
of Banking and Securities, the Pennsylvania Credit Union Foundation and all volunteers for making the event a success.

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**More than 100 Inmates Graduate at Laurel Highlands**

With friends and family in attendance, 106 inmates graduated at SCI Laurel Highlands on Oct. 9. Graduates received GED’s, CSD’s and certificates for business education. Following the ceremony, graduates celebrated with their families, friends, staff and everyone enjoyed refreshments and visiting. Congrats to the graduates!

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Greene Honors Four for 25 Years of Service

SCI Greene Superintendent Robert Gilmore presented CO2 Jason Walters, CO2 Ezra Young, CO2 Andrew Grandas and CO1 Thomas Kulik with their 25-year certificates and pins. The employees were recognized for their years of service and dedication to the Department of Corrections and to SCI Greene. Congratulations!

Pictured from left: CO2 Ezra Young; CO2 Andrew Grandas; CO1 Thomas Kulik; and CO2 Jason Walters

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Mercer Holds Inmate Graduation for Academic, Vocational Programs

On Oct. 8, SCI Mercer held its inmate graduation for 96 inmates. Graduates earned GED’s (4), Commonwealth Secondary Diplomas (22) and certifications in the following: professional barber (4), NOCTI Accounting Basic (5), automotive (13), custodial maintenance (20), building trades (19) and Certified Peer Specialist (9).

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**Around the Centers…**

**York CCC Counselor Helps York College Students**

On Oct. 8, York Community Corrections Center Counselor Nelson Polite went to York College to conduct mock interviews with the criminal justice students. The mock interviews helped students prepare for real-world job interviews and the students asked questions about the criminal justice field. Polite participates in this event every semester and he has been able to recruit numerous interns for York CCC over the years.

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**Reentrants Earn Graduation Packs**

Tomorrows Hope reentrants who are close to graduating from the program may participate in community service work for local community members and or local churches. The work consists of landscaping and general clean-up of properties, local churches/organizations. This work gives the reentrant an opportunity to earn certain items they may need upon graduation from the program. The items donated for reentrants to earn are: small appliances, hygiene products, cleaning supplies, laundry pods and more. The items are requested by the reentrant with help from their case worker, and upon graduating they will receive the items for all their hard work. This program is set up for those who are in need.

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York CCC Reentrants Support Homeless Shelter

During August and September, York Community Corrections Center reentrants collected donation items for the Bell Family Shelter which provides services to homeless families. They were in desperate need of toiletries and were thrilled to receive the donations.

From left: CFC Millet, CC Polite, CD Faulkner, RD Ulrich, CCCM Minnich

Week of October 7, 2019...

Fayette Holds Graduation for Vocational Programs

SCI Fayette’s latest inmate graduation presented the facility with a good problem to have: there were too many graduates.

To accommodate the graduates and their families, Fayette split its 15th inmate graduation by honoring vocational graduates on Oct. 1 with academic graduates being honored in November.
There were 107 vocational graduates that were invited to participate in the ceremony, of which 70 of those participated. The 107 graduates included the following: 26 carpentry graduates, 50 custodial maintenance graduates, 10 electrical graduates, 11 HVAC graduates and 10 welding graduates.

Pam Snyder, a member of the PA House of Representatives, was the guest speaker at this graduation, to which she spoke on the theme of “Nothing Builds Self-Esteem and Self-Confidence like Accomplishment.”

Friends and family members of the graduates were invited to participate in the ceremony. It was a special occasion for the graduates, and staff members, family, and friends showed their appreciation to the graduates’ hard work to earn their certificates and diplomas. In addition to staff members, friends and family, Pennsylvania Senator Pat Stefano joined Fayette in this celebratory event.

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**BetaGov Interviews Sahd About Innovations in the DOC**

The Sept. 2019 newsletter for BetaGov featured an interview with Special Assistant Deb Sahd about the innovations she has seen in the DOC, especially recently with new trials suggested by staff. The following is the interview in its entirety, but don’t forget to submit your own ideas for innovation and wellness with in the DOC through IDEA on the intranet.

**You’ve been with the Department for 31 years—you must have seen some big changes. What is the biggest change you have seen?**

Because change must be encouraged by top leadership, we are fortunate that Secretary Wetzel is innovative and progressive. One of the biggest changes I’ve seen is the Secretary’s perspective that innovation should start with frontline staff; if staff own the idea, they will help to ensure its success. Secretary Wetzel has invited staff to take ownership of ideas for improving the DOC, including staff outcomes. In the past, the agency was also very policy- and procedure-based without the frontline staff input for innovation. An important part of this new perspective is to allow for, and even build in, a margin of error. That is, let’s try something new but allow for the possibility that it may not happen as we expect. The option of creating a margin of error recognizes that we may have to adjust the plan or change our expectations as we move forward. This way of thinking makes it safe to pitch an idea, test it, and there is no judgement when it either fails or succeeds. This way of thinking is in line with BetaGov—every idea tested gives us information about the way we should be progressing.
Given efforts to make improvements and innovate, what kinds of changes have been implemented?

Recently, we recognized the importance of addressing wellness—both in our staff and in the people we serve. This is an important component of how the department wants to move forward. In the past, we have addressed the hardscape of our environment but now we need to focus on softscape skills in order to address the areas needing change in the corrections culture. We recently had an opportunity to visit and imbed staff in prisons in Scandinavia, including Denmark, Sweden, and Norway. The focus at these facilities is on wellness and they have created serene spaces to encourage a peaceful mindset and communication skills, which is their greatest violence-reduction tool. We want to replicate/customize this system at one of our facilities. In our quest to facilitate wellness, we have also conferred with other agencies. For example, we learned that the Oregon Department of Corrections has already implemented mindfulness and virtual reality for staff as a method for addressing wellness. Although we recently completed a mindfulness pilot for staff, we have not yet incorporated the option of using virtual reality into our staff-wellness initiatives. We are planning chill spaces for corrections and parole staff, which will include VR. We are planning on testing more ideas for staff wellness as they evolve.

How have staff responded to these changes?

In general, staff seem pleased with the opportunity to have a seat at the table and suggest and even test new ideas. Feedback indicates that staff are encouraged that they have more of a voice.

What challenges have you faced in some of your recent projects?

The challenge with most of our trials to test new ideas is the coordination of efforts and the logistics of making things happen. We need to line up efforts and procedures. We need to provide a clear explanation of what is being proposed and how it will be tested. We need to ensure that we have staff buy-in so that we don’t experience barriers to moving forward. A recent example is our plan to test therapy dogs for central-office staff to see whether staff-dog interaction can reduce anxiety and make people feel better. To get this off the ground, we needed to get approval from the facility owners, the unions, human resources, and from legal. The preparation stage to get all the pieces lined up may take a lot of effort, even for a small idea, and may take a lot longer than expected. However, it is worthwhile on many levels.

What are some of the most rewarding changes that you have seen?

One rewarding change is how staff have more ownership in their work because they are invited to have a seat at the table. They are more engaged as they see positive outcomes, such as the results of the trial called Swift, Certain and Fair which more efficiently addressed misconducts on the blocks, giving staff more control and inmates immediate information to know their outcomes. With BetaGov's help, they
can suggest a new idea or innovation and develop a way to test the idea and can even lead the efforts to test the idea. In giving staff a voice, they also learn that it is safe to identify problems, to disagree, and to find that their solutions may not be as beneficial as they expected. Although it may be scary to think about talking with experienced researchers about your idea, BetaGov's team are always encouraging and helpful.

A second rewarding change that I have seen over my time with the DOC is the increasing numbers of women in our ranks. Research shows that women have different communication styles, and this is positive for the department as it increases transparency. Additional female staff, and in leadership positions, provides for female role models that can be impactful to the department.

Another impactful change is the consolidation of the Pennsylvania Department of Probation and Parole (PBPP) with the Department of Corrections. This was a huge undertaking to coordinate the shift and address all the nuances of consolidating two distinct departments. Staff were open and dedicated to making a smooth transition and it has been a really positive experience due to a great team. Out of that the Consolidation Committees were born to align and make efficient our practices to better serve our staff, the population, and the taxpayers. We are looking forward to more innovation trials launched on the PBPP side of the house.

**What advice do you have for others who may be hesitant to effect change in their organization/agency?**

Change is necessary. Why not embrace change and find the best ways to make things better? If our efforts to improve are done using thoughtful, empirically validated methods, what is the worst that can happen? Even if the idea isn't successful, we have still learned something important, and the staff member was empowered to submit the idea, which will encourage others to do the same. We think that if a promising idea for improvement isn't illegal or unethical, is financially sound and won't hurt anyone, then we should consider testing it.

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**Flood Presents to Benner Township Inmates**

Brandon Flood, Secretary of the Board of Pardons, presented the clemency process changes to the inmate population of SCI Benner Township. There were approximately 200 inmates in attendance. The presentation was followed with a question-and-answer session. Basym Hasan from the PA Prison Society and Lamont Jones from
Sound Community Solutions were also in attendance. Flood’s presentation was recorded and will be played on the inmate dedicated channel.

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**McKeown Honored for 30 Years of Service**

Hearing Examiner Charlie McKeown (SCI Dallas) received his 30-years of service certificate and pin at the annual hearing examiner training at the DOC Training Academy on Oct. 4.

Charlie McKeown has served all 30-plus years working within the DOC. He began his career as a corrections mail inspector and was promoted to mail inspector supervisor at SCI Dallas. He was promoted to administrative officer 1 at Central Office’s Security Division in 1998 and later administrative officer 2. He also served as co-chair of the DOC’s Technology Transfer Committee.

He has worked as a hearing examiner since Jan. 2002 assigned to SCI Retreat and Waymart. In 2007, Charlie returned to Dallas where he serves as the hearing examiner assigned to Dallas, Waymart and Cambridge Springs.

Charlie’s seamless transition with regard to coverage changes, outstanding communication ability, positive approach to each workday, and never falling short of getting the job done without complaint are just a few of his qualities what have served him well as a hearing examiner.

*Pictured from left: Deputy Chief Counsel Tracey Tubbs, Acting Chief Counsel Tim Holmes, Hearing Examiner Charlie McKeown, Chief Hearing Examiner Zachary Moslak.*

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Phoenix, Trio of Employees Honored by ESGR

On Sept. 27, SCI Phoenix Major Gina Clark, Unit Manager Jeffrey Baker and Superintendent Tammy Ferguson were presented with awards by Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR). The award recipients were nominated by Paul Jokiel, Captain (U.S. Army) and Corrections Counselor 2 (SCI Phoenix). Staff and veterans in the inmate population were invited to the ceremony.

ESGR is an office of the Department of Defense and promotes support for Guard and Reserve service by advocating relevant initiatives, recognizing outstanding support, increasing awareness of applicable laws, and resolving conflict between employers and service members. Former Adjutant General of the Pennsylvania National Guard and Pennsylvania Chairperson for ESGR, Major General (Retired) Wesley E. Craig, presented the awards and was the keynote speaker for this ceremony.

The ceremony was a collaborative effort of ESGR and the SCI Phoenix Activities, Chaplaincy, Culinary, and IT departments and the SCI Phoenix Honor Guard.

The award presented were:

Above and Beyond Award – SCI Phoenix

Seven Seals Award – Gina Clark, Major

Patriotic Supporter Award – Jeffrey Baker, Unit Manager
Patriotic Supporter Award – Tammy Ferguson, Superintendent

“I cannot think of a more humbling experience than being recognized for our support of the United States Armed Forces and the servicemen and servicewomen who continue to defend our freedoms,” Ferguson said. “To be nominated and recognized for these awards by one of our own servicemen is truly an honor. As Capt. Jokiel makes his final preparations for his third deployment overseas, please keep him and his family in your thoughts and prayers.”

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Quehanna Boot Camp Staff Addresses Erie County Judicial Group

Major Frazer Blake, Corrections Classification Program Manager (CCPM) Jim Stover and Captain Scott Carter traveled to the Erie Courthouse on September 26, to give a presentation to a group of judicial representatives. The group was comprised of judges, district attorneys, public defenders, private attorneys and the county victim advocate.

Nicole Sloane, a public defender, initially contacted Quehanna Boot Camp to request the presentation. Ms. Sloane said, “I felt there was a need for some education about the Boot Camp program in Erie County.”

CCPM Stover began the presentation by giving a general overview of the program and statistics of completion and recidivism. Next, Major Blake discussed statutory eligibility and the waiver process. Captain Carter rounded out the presentation by providing a vivid description of a typical day for a Boot Camp teammate and encouraged some audience participation.

The presentation was well received and has resulted in an increase in the number of inmates made Boot Camp recommended at sentencing in Erie County. In 2018, Erie County referred 20 potential candidates to the Boot Camp ranking them in the top 10% of participating counties.
According to the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections and the Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission, the Boot Camp program is an effective and efficient alternative to standardized incarceration. The Quehanna Boot Camp appreciates the opportunity to provide this educational session.

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**Correctional Industries Inmates Fill Orders for DMVA**

The Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs includes the PA National Guard and serves all veterans in the state—including by operating six veterans homes throughout PA.

When Delaware Valley Veterans Home in Philadelphia needed furniture to renovate their “Main Street,” DMVA hired the inmates in Pennsylvania Correctional Industries. Inmates in the wood shop at SCI Rockview produced the following furniture:
When all the items are completed by PCI, the home will hold a dedication ceremony to celebrate.

Inmates also created furniture for DMVA’s headquarters at Fort Indiantown Gap.

DOC Leaders Join Employers at BCPS Event

By Debra Sahd, Special Assistant

BCPS (Berks County Pre-trial Services) hosted the Connecting with Talent Tri-County Employer Roundtable comprised of employers and potential employers along with supportive agencies from Berks, Lancaster and Lebanon counties.

Berks County Commissioner Kevin Barnhardt and Pennsylvania Senator Judy Schwank welcomed the gathering of interested attendees. Rebuilding Reentrants and Reading – R3 - A Model Registered Pre-Apprenticeship Program was shared by Kerry Kerschner, BCPS DOC reentry director, along with those who have participated successfully in the program.

Two panel discussions comprised of employer/employee and reentry professionals shared their experiences as DOC Secretary John Wetzel moderated the event and provided the keynote address.

The Employer Roundtable was developed to promote the hiring of reentrants addressing the barriers to hiring while sharing best practices, challenges and outcomes as education of employers and community will provide a more seamless path. In particular, transportation has been a critical impasse. The passing of Act 95 has aided in scaling that barrier as a remarkable first step. The Berks County Pretrial Services (BCPS) provides cognitive behavior training which the employers found beneficial and provided an advantage over community applicants. The
overall consensus from the employer panel is there is virtually no difference between hiring reentrants or someone from the community with outcomes and challenges being similar. Increased income is equated to greater citizenship and self-esteem. Wernersville benefited with $100,000 in tax benefit to the community due to the reentrant employment by one company, so tax benefits should also be stressed. Additionally, there is a labor shortage, and these people are an incredible talent pool with training in place much of the time or they have the drive and the ability to receive the training and become successful with sustainable wage jobs for their families, the employer and the community. It is a win-win for the employee, employer, community and tax-paying citizens to hire people with the opportunity for a second chance through “smart chance” decision-making.

Craig Pool, General Manager of the Double Tree by Hilton, and host, closed the meeting with his positive experience noting that they are the number one under 250-bed Hilton in the world and attributes this accolade to the staff of which over 75 percent have experienced the criminal justice system. Treating people with respect, kindness and empowerment, while requiring responsibility, have been some of the keys to their success and replication by Hilton throughout their organization.

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MAT Coordinator Supports Federal Bureau of Prisons

Recently, at a Medication Assisted Treatment Symposium in Lexington, KY, the PA DOC MAT Statewide Coordinator Steven Seitchik provided technical assistance to the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) regarding the implementation processes for providing medication assisted treatment inside correctional settings. Receiving so much positive feedback, the BOP has asked Steve to lead the discussion at several more symposiums with very similar agendas.

Pictured from left: Michael Long (BOP), Tami Rodriguez (BOP), Stephanie Anderson (Indiana DOC), Steve Seitchik (PA DOC), TeCora Ballom (BOP), Rosemarie Martin (Brown University), and A. Martin Johnston (BOP).

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Benner Township Staff Commended for Saving Inmate’s Life

On Oct. 2, staff at SCI Benner Township used their training and job expertise to revive an inmate who collapsed to the ground and became unresponsive after delivering block supplies to a housing unit.

Due to the quick-thinking, calmness under pressure and contributions of these staff members, this gentleman’s life was saved. Employees received a letter of commendation for their efforts and an SCI Benner Township Challenge Coin.

Pictured: LPN Nastazia Stallman, CFMM3 David Smead, CISM Michael Bell, CMF Kyle Gavlock and CMF David Pittman.

Not pictured but also receiving coins: RN Theresa Balum, RN Meagan Snowberger, RN Nicholas Davis, CMF Patrick Podrasky and CMF Kevin Corman.

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Around the Centers...

GEO Scranton Supports Ruff Dog Rescue

On Sept. 27, staff and reentrants from GEO Scranton volunteered at Ruff Dog Rescue Northeast in Thompson. While they were there, reentrants walked the dogs, cleaned the kennels, collected and stacked firewood and completed roof work. The reentrants will return at the end of the month to continue work on the property.
New Corrections Contracted Facility Opens in Bethlehem

CREATE House in Bethlehem opened its doors on Sept. 18, 2019. The employees were excited to receive their first clients and fill up their facility. They are excited to share the resources available in the Lehigh County area with reentrants and are already motivating them for employment and housing opportunities.

Week of September 30, 2019...

Waymart Inmates Complete Lead-Based Paint Renovator Class, Earn Certification

On Sept. 16, SCI Waymart held the first Lead-Based Paint Certified Renovator initial certification class for inmates. The class consisted of training based on the Environmental Protection Agency’s RRP Rule. The 8-hour class classified the inmates as Lead Based Paint Certified Renovators. The certification is valid for five years through
the EPA. In the 8-hour day, inmates received classroom lecture instruction along with practical application skills in renovation, repair and painting of lead-based paint surfaces. In the picture below, inmates are sealing off critical barriers. At the end of the day, the inmates were given a written test in which all 10 inmates passed and received an EPA certification.

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**Second Lady Fetterman, New Puppy Program Highlight
Busy Week at Mercer**

September 23 started a busy week at SCI Mercer. On Monday, Pennsylvania’s Second Lady Gisele Fetterman, wife of Lt. Governor John Fetterman, accompanied by Western PA Regional Director Julie Strickland-Gilliard and Special Assistant to Secretary Wetzel Deb Sahd, visited the State Correctional Institution of Mercer.

Following a short meet-and-greet with the prison’s administrative staff, the guests went on an escorted tour throughout the institution.

First stop on the tour was the Veteran’s Service Unit (VSU). While on the unit, Mrs. Fetterman was able to speak with several staff members that work directly with the inmate veterans and learned about the various services offered at SCI Mercer.

From there, Mrs. Fetterman was escorted to Building 14 where she met Building Trades Instructor Jason Dunkleberger and learned of the courses inmates have available to them to better their future. Mrs. Fetterman’s face was glowing with excitement and honor as Dunkleberger then presented her with a cutting board that the students in the Building Trades Class made for her out of repurposed wood.
While still in Building 14, the tour dropped into the class of Mercer’s newest Veteran’s Program: Guardian Angels Medical Service Dogs, Inc. (GAMSD). Founder and Chief Executive Officer Carol Borden was actively teaching the veteran inmates their duties as certified trainers. This new program allows inmates to earn college credits (thanks to a partnership with Slippery Rock University). Inmates in this program have the ability to earn apprenticeships, which will help them to earn a living wage once released from prison.

The escort then proceeded to building 3-A, the Tertiary Infirmary Unit. Here, RN Dave Marker explained the care provided on the unit. Inmates from institutions in the region that are discharged from the hospital and not ready to return to their home institution are temporarily housed here until they are ready to do so.

From here, Mrs. Fetterman was then escorted a short way down the walk to a fenced-in area where the C.A.R.E. dogs were working with their trainers. The C.A.R.E. (Corrections Adoptive Rescue Endeavor) Program is a partnership between SCI Mercer and Strayhaven Animal Shelter in Greenville, PA. Strayhaven provides the shelter dogs, and 16 inmate handlers provide obedience training for them, ultimately helping to make the dogs more adoptable. Strayhaven also employs a certified dog trainer from The Canine Campus Training and Wellness Center who holds weekly sessions with the handlers and their dogs. After approximately 10 weeks of training, the dogs graduate from the program and are placed in homes as companion animals. Thirty-two dogs graduated from the CARE program in 2018, and 30 dogs graduated in 2019. The total graduates from the CARE program is 196.

To conclude her visit, Mrs. Fetterman’s last stop was in the visiting area. Here she spoke with staff about inmate visits and got to check out the children’s play area.
Just two days later, SCI Mercer was busy again as it hosted a media event announcing the partnership with the previously-mentioned Guardian Angel Medical Service Dogs, Inc. (GAMSD). The event had many dignitaries in attendance, including DOC Secretary John Wetzel, Pennsylvania Senator Michele Brooks, Brigadier General Mark Schindler (Deputy Adjutant General – Army for the Pennsylvania National Guard), retired Pittsburgh Steelers star Rocky Bleier and representatives from both the Governor’s office and local representatives.

The media event welcomed both print and TV media and occurred on the VSU. Here, Veteran Corrections Counselor Aaron Diaz introduced the unit’s honor guard with presenting the colors, followed by the introduction of Mercer Superintendent Melinda Adams. Supt. Adams thanked everyone for their presence and acknowledged Sen. Brooks for initiating this program into SCI Mercer’s VSU. If it weren’t for the collaboration between Sen. Brooks, Carol Borden, and Sec. Wetzel this program would have never come about. Borden shared with the assembly statistically what this program has done for struggling veterans. Twenty-two veterans commit suicide each day. Since the implementation of the Guardian Angel Dog Program, Carol has paired over 300 dogs and there have been zero suicides and only one divorce amongst the pairs.

Sen. Brooks, Brig. Gen. Schindler, Bleier and Sec. Wetzel all spoke to the group, and the assembly concluded with the retrieving of the flags by the unit’s honor guard.
The dignitaries then mingled amongst the unit speaking with staff and inmates. Bleier, a retired Pittsburgh Steeler and veteran, even took time for photos with staff and autographs with inmates. During that time, the media went into a separate room with Guardian Angel Dog recipient Dustin Schneider. Schneider spoke of what his dog, Spangle, has done for him, and said, “When it’s easy to doubt yourself and it’s easy to get sucked into the nightmares and it’s easy to get sucked into the depression, she just looks at me and I go, ‘OK, I can change my comprehension.’”

Dustin suffers from severe PTSD and nightmares. At the onset of a nightmare, Spangle moves into action, waking Dustin and usually placing a ball in his hand, hovering atop him. The bond that the two of them share is immeasurable.

SCI Mercer is the company’s first program to be initiated outside of their Florida training headquarter and the first program of its kind to be initiated specifically for veterans in a correctional facility. The currently-enrolled 12 inmates are military veterans who will train dogs specifically for use by veterans in Pennsylvania. GAMSD’s motto is “Together, we can unleash the power to heal.”

The first round of dogs will be five months old. The German Shepherds are scheduled to arrive at SCI Mercer on Friday, October 4, 2019. Carol Borden and the SCI Mercer staff are hoping that one of the dogs from the first training class will be placed locally so we will be able to have regular updated visits.
Parole Staff Meet with Delegation from Tunisia

A Tunisian delegation of judges, prosecutors, correctional administrator, diplomats and probation officers visited with parole staff to discuss probation and parole field services. Deputy Secretary for Office of Field Services Christian Stephens, PBPP Eastern Region leadership staff and Philadelphia County Probation Leadership staff presented and discussed the functions of parole and probation in Pennsylvania.

The group met on Sept. 19 to discuss the various strategies the DOC employs to promote a successful reentry for inmates and the parole system in PA. The Tunisian government hopes to expand the pilot of their first probation office in Tunisia as the U.S State Department encourages the Tunisian Ministry of Justice to establish an effective alternative to their current incarceration system. They will utilize whatever information they gather from this visit to assist in their undertaking, which includes implementing seven new probation offices throughout their country.

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Training Academy Hosts Blood Drive

The American Red Cross conducted a blood drive at the DOC Training Academy in Elizabethtown on Sept. 3. The drive was part of the Red Cross’ “Power Red” campaign to increase the donation of much-needed red blood cells.

Throughout the afternoon, Training Academy staff and Basic Training Class #1906 students combined to donate 21 pints of blood. The Red Cross points out that one pint can save three lives. The Training Academy may have donated enough blood to save 63 lives.

Power Red donations is a process that increases the amount of red blood cells given during one donation session. A machine separates and collects two units of red cells, then safely returns the remaining blood components back into the donor’s arm. This process takes about an hour and a half, which increases the importance of finding donors who can devote the time to give blood. However, two units of red cells can be safely donated during one donation.

In particular, red cells are given to trauma patients, newborns, those needing emergency transfusions, people with sickle cell anemia and anyone suffering blood loss. O positive, O negative, A negative and B negative are the ideal blood types for this process.

Whole blood donations were also given, which includes all the blood components—including white cells and platelets suspended in plasma—not only red cells.

Staff and students were generous with their time and blood to make a difference. If you’re interested in donating blood, contact the American Red Cross at 1-800-RED-CROSS or visit RedCrossBlood.org.

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BCC’s Taylor Honored for 25 Years

Bureau of Community Corrections Capt. Brian Taylor was presented his 25-year of service certificate by Maj. Laura Hoffman. Congratulations, Capt. Taylor!

Cambridge Springs Honors Food Service Workers

In recognition of Food Service Worker’s Day, SCI Cambridge Springs hosted a lunch celebration for food service instructors and supervisors. Both the a.m. and p.m. staff came together, shared a meal and were honored for the hard work they do every day.

Kudos to all food service workers at SCI Cambridge Springs and across the state for a job well done!

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**Klink Named Chaplain of the Year**

Rev. David Klink, facility chaplaincy program director (FCPD) at SCI Laurel Highlands, was honored as the 2019 State Correctional Chaplain of the Year by the Pennsylvania Prison Chaplains Association at their annual conference in Carlisle on Sept. 18. Klink was selected from a host chaplains who were nominated for their exceptional chaplaincy work.

Pictured from left: Regional Deputy Secretary Trevor Wingard; Char Klink; Rev. David Klink; Mardi Vincent, retired Regional Deputy Secretary; and Rev. Ulli Klemm, religious services administrator.

Klink’s journey with the DOC began in 1996. Prior to that, Klink served as a residential services aid at the Somerset State Hospital. When the state hospital was converted into SCI Laurel Highlands, David, like the vast majority of state hospital employees, was offered a job as a corrections officer. After four years as a CO, David exchanged his handcuffs for a hammer and joined the maintenance staff. His prior experience as the head of maintenance for Snyder’s Potato Chips made him a natural selection for this new post.

It wasn’t until Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Scott retired as the FCPD in 2004 that David assumed this post. His security consciousness, licensure as a Methodist pastor and caring attitude made him the perfect selection.

“David is one of the most caring correctional chaplains I have known,” said Rev. Ulli Klemm, DOC religious services administrator. “I have been amazed by the natural and heartfelt way that David interacts with everyone with whom he has contact.”

Whether gently grasping the hand of and praying with a dying inmate, welcoming security’s presence in the chapel for a routine search, interacting with concerned
inmate family members over the phone or knowing each volunteer by name, Rev. Klink has excelled in his compassion for those in his care.

Former Laurel Highlands Superintendent Jamey Luther said, “There is nothing any staff would ask of Rev. Klink that he would not do. Every staff person loves him. While it is sometimes hard for chaplains to mix with and earn the respect of officers, he is able to adapt to any personality and situation and earn their respect. He is the best.”

“(When I was Superintendent), Rev. Klink somehow knew the right time to stop by my office to check in on me,” said former Laurel Highlands Superintendent and former Regional Deputy Secretary Mardi Vincent. “It was always the right time.”

Regardless of the faith or lack thereof with which inmates identify, inmates commended Klink for treating each with the utmost respect, consideration and fairness. One inmate said, “When I think of Rev. Klink, I think of the saying: ‘It’s not how much you know, but how much you care.’ He cares that much.”

Upon receiving this honor, Klink said, “I have the awesome privilege to assist inmates and staff along their spiritual journey. I try to instill in each inmate the idea that this period of their life is just that—a period of time. It does not define who they are nor what their life can be during and after incarceration.”

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Chester Parole Team Meet with City Council

Chester District Office Leadership attended a recent Chester City Council meeting to discuss various issues regarding reentrants in the city.

One of the addressed concerns was the new parking meters placed at the Chester DO and its effect on the reentrants and office staff.

**Pictured below: Deputy District Director Freddie Joe (who is also pictured above); District Director Michelle Rivera; Mayor Thaddeus Kirkland; and ASCRA Tyrone Lacy.**
Smithfield Staff Volunteer for United Way Day of Caring

SCI Smithfield staff participated in the United Way’s annual Day of Caring in conjunction with the American Red Cross. Staff volunteers went door-to-door in the Three Springs, PA, area and installed smoke alarms in homes who needed them, replaced batteries in existing alarms and provided fire prevention and safety education.

In 2014, The American Red Cross launched a home fire campaign. They report that seven people die every day in homes that lack smoke alarms. Children and elderly disproportionately lose their lives in home fires. The work of the American Red Cross and 30,000 volunteers nationwide, just like SCI Smithfield staff, have saved 638 lives, installed 1,915,555 smoke alarms, 793,343 households made safer and 1,470,325 youth have been reached through the campaign.

It is recommended that you check your smoke alarms on a monthly basis, install new batteries immediately when the battery warning alarm sounds, clean smoke alarms regularly by vacuuming them with a brush attachment, place them on the ceiling if possible (or if wall-mounted they should be hung four to twelve inches from the ceiling and at least four inches from the nearest wall) and be sure to replace smoke alarms every 10 years for optimum performance. In the event of a
fire, be sure you talk to those in your home to ensure that everyone knows at least two escape routes. If you have elderly family members or friends who live alone, take the time to look at their home alarms and educate them. There are bed shaker alarms available for hearing-impaired individuals.

SCI Smithfield staff have participated in the United Way Day of Caring for a number of years and have had the opportunity to install smoke alarms over the last two. It is a worthwhile community event and a great opportunity to represent the facility and the Department of Corrections.

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**Sec. Flood Visits SCI Albion**

On Sept. 25, Secretary of the Pennsylvania Board of Pardons Brandon Flood and Prison Society member Basym Hasan spoke with inmates at SCI Albion regarding the recent changes to the clemency process.

There was an overwhelming response to his visit as approximately 250 inmates attended. Flood provided clarification to numerous questions from the inmate population which gave them all a sense of hope. This presentation was also recorded and will be played on the inmate channel for those inmates who were not able to attend.

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Forest Inmate Organization, SNU Team Up to Help Keep the Community Warm this Winter

Psychological Services Specialist Weible delivered several boxes of hats, scarves and blankets to DuBois Salvation Army for their Project Bundle Up—all of which were made by inmates on the Special Needs Unit.

SCI Forest inmate organization HOPE for Change purchased the yarn, and during the last year the inmates on the SNU have been busy crocheting various items to be donated. The program is really a win-win for everyone: It fulfills Hope for Change’s mission to give back to the community, allows inmates on the Special Needs Unit to participate in a calming activity and learn a new skill and helps keep community residents warm.

**Pictured from left: Jeff Peterson, DuBois Salvation Army and PSS Weible, SCI Forest PSS and crocheting program coordinator.**
Somerset Honor Guard Participates in Homecoming Game

SCI Somerset’s Honor Guard presented the colors at the Rockwood Area High School’s homecoming soccer game on Sept. 28.

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Messenger Visits Albion Inmates, Shares Personal Story of Perseverance

R.J. Messenger, an Erie native, is the owner of Iron Empire clothing, does marketing for Underdog Barbeque, has appeared in movies such as “The Warrior” (starring Tom Hardy) and was most recently featured in the Discovery Channel’s hit show “Undercover Billionaire.”
Messenger visited SCI Albion on Sept. 27 to speak to Albion’s Business Education and Pathways to Success students. He offered his story of how he overcame his past, hurdled various obstacles and how he persevered through adversity and struggle to successfully own his own business and be able to branch out into other areas. He works and lives in Erie and is always looking for opportunities to share his story, to give back, to motivate and to serve as an example of an underdog being able to persist and succeed.

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**SECA Begins in Sweet Fashion at Somerset**

SCI Somerset kicked off the SECA Campaign with an Ice Cream Sundae bar sponsored by the SAT committee on Oct. 2, a special “Kick-Off” Meal on Oct. 3, and a beautiful cake baked and decorated by the inmate kitchen staff.


Around the Centers...

Scranton Reentrants Support Shelter, Park

Scranton Community Corrections Center collected $500 worth of various items that were donated to Ruth’s Place Women’s Shelter located in Wilkes-Barre. Ruth’s Place is a 25-bed shelter that has helped homeless women and children in Wilkes-Barre for the last eight years. They are also an evacuation shelter site for Wilkes-Barre during crisis situations.

Pictured from left are Scranton CCC employees Kenny Jordan, Rainy Boyle and Gabby Frigano.

Scranton CCC reentrants also donated their time to help Scranton City clean up Nay Aug Park!

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Philadelphia Reenetrants Collect School Supplies for Local Students

Throughout the months of July and August, Community Corrections Center 2 (Philadelphia) reentrants donated school supplies for students in the area returning to classes.

The items collected in July went to the Boys and Girls Club in Philadelphia, and the items collected in August were donated to the students at John H. Taggart Elementary School. There were hundreds of dollars’ worth of items donated each month. The reenrant population at CCC2 enjoys sending donations to the youth within the community as a way to give back.

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