

Correctional Newsfront

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



2020 News ~ January to March

Week of March 23, 2020...

Quehanna Boot Camp Hosts Graduation, Change of Command

With friends, family and staff in attendance to celebrate, Quehanna Boot Camp hosted its second graduation of the year on March for 40 teammates. The graduates will now return to their homes after the six-month program that blended military training, education and treatment programs. One of the graduates—who completed the new masonry program—already has a job interview lined up on March 16.



The graduation was even more special for QBC as it began with a change of command for retiring Commander Mary Natoli, who passed the mantle of leadership to Maj. Frazer Blake. DOC Sec. John Wetzel, Executive Deputy Secretary Tabb Bickell and a host of DOC leaders and superintendents from across PA attended the event to celebrate Natoli's nearly 30 years of service.

Congrats to the graduates, and thank you for your service, former Commander Natoli!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Mercer Hosts Red Cross for a Blood Drive

On March 4, SCI Mercer partnered with the American Red Cross for a blood drive. Ten out of the 14 willing to donate were able to do so with the potential to save 30 lives.

During our lifetimes, 97 percent of us will know someone close to us who needed a blood transfusion to survive. This selfless act is so important and it touches the lives of nearly everyone! Mercer is appreciative for those that were able to donate, because the criteria one must meet to donate limits a large amount of corrections staff. Pictured below are Superintendent Melinda Adams and Deputy Superintendent of Centralized Services Shane Dady.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Marathon Runner's Advice on Managing Stressful Times

DOC Sec. John Wetzel has frequently said the COVID-19 situation is a marathon, not a sprint, so who better to get wellness advice from than a marathon runner? Check out the advice a runner had about managing stress:

- Pain is short term: push through even when you think you can't...it's ok to slow down
- You don't need to panic or respond to every twitch or ache as things will pass
- Stick to a simple schedule: hydration and pace can help push past limits
- Panicking and trying everything can be worse than staying the course
- Every race ends and we celebrate at the finish line!



Wellness is submitting resources to support staff, so be on the lookout for more information on maintaining your physical and mental health during this time. And don't forget to sign up for the PA DOC & PBPP Staff Wellness page on Facebook for more wellness resources and tips throughout the week!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Pittsburgh Police Trainees Graduate from Inside-Out Program

SCI Fayette was honored to observe the 7th Pittsburgh Police Department Academy Inside-Out graduation on March 6. This program is coordinated with Professor Norman Conti of Duquesne University, the Pittsburgh Police Department Academy and SCI Fayette. This one-of-a-kind program brings police cadets inside a state prison to study and complete a sociology class with inmates. All cadets in the Pittsburgh PD Academy must complete this course.



Pictured are Training Sgt. Colleen Bristow and Superintendent Mark Capozza with the graduation class.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Cambridge Springs Holds Lead-Based Paint Certified Renovator Class

SCI Cambridge Springs held its first Lead-Based Paint Certified Renovator initial certification class for inmates on Feb. 25-27. The class, instructed by Asst. Chief Kevin Tuite of the DOC Safety and Environmental Protections Division, consisted of training based on the Environmental Protection Agency's RRP Rule. The class was an 8-hour session that classified the inmates as 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. At the end of the day the inmates were given a written test in which all 23 inmates passed and received an EPA certification.

Superintendent Lonnie Oliver was appreciative of Tuite's instruction of this class at SCI Cambridge Springs and the DOC's support in providing this course to individuals within the female inmate population. The inmates were enthusiastic to take part in this class and took advantage of the opportunity to enhance their knowledge and skills.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Waymart Employees Enjoy Sweet, Salty Treats

On March 20, SCI Waymart held Employee Appreciation Day and celebrated by giving every staff member two donuts from Krispy Kreme and one pretzel from Philly Pretzel Factory. Every shift had the opportunity to enjoy these treats as the facility honored those who work in it.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Mercer Employees Celebrate Milestones

This month SCI Mercer celebrated several milestones for their staff. The following employees received certificates:

Corrections Stock Clerk Robert Fundoots celebrates 30 years of service. (Pictured with Business Manager Janet Molnar and Superintendent Mindy Adams)



Corrections Officer S. Bowser celebrates 25 years of service. (Pictured with Captain Robert Shroyer and Superintendent Mindy Adams)



Corrections Officer D. McGranahan celebrates 25 years of service. (Pictured with Captain Robert Shroyer and Superintendent Mindy Adams)



Facility Chaplaincy Program Director Joseph Kosarek celebrated his last day at Mercer as he is officially retiring from just over 10 years in the DOC. Rev. Kosarek retired as a Methodist preacher in the community in 2002. He started his DOC career at SCI Forest and has spent the last three and a half years at Mercer. His retirement plan is to frequent the YMCA, enjoy breakfast out and go from there! (Pictured with CCPM Lisa Graves)



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Quehanna Boot Camp Commander Natoli Presented with Senatorial Citation

In honor of Mary Natoli's 28-year career at the Quehanna Boot Camp, Andrea Schickling of Senator Wayne Langerholc's office presented her with a Senatorial Citation recognizing her many contributions to the success of the facility. Effective March 21, Mary is officially retired from the PA Department of Corrections. The staff of Quehanna Boot Camp shares Senator Langerholc's sentiments: She will be missed!



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Greene Honors Trio for Years of Service

SCI Greene Superintendent Robert Gilmore presented Robert Grogan, information technology generalist, with his 30-year certificate and pin. Gilmore also presented Carla Swartz, unit manager, and Denise Pepke, dental hygienist with their 25-year certificates and pins. The employees were recognized for their years of service and dedication to the PA Department of Corrections and to SCI Greene. Congratulations to all!



Left picture: Superintendent Robert Gilmore and Robert Grogan

Right picture (from left): Superintendent Robert Gilmore, Denise Pepke and Carla Swartz.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

22 Inmates Complete CPS Training at Camp Hill

In an effort to enhance mental health support services available to the inmate population, SCI Camp Hill is expanding its Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) program.

With their Unit Team's recommendation and institutional approval, 22 inmate candidates participated in mandatory two-week, 75-hour training held Feb. 24-28, and March 9-13, which allows successful completers to apply for CPS examination through the Pennsylvania Certification Board (PCB). The CPS applicant examination is developed from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Core Competencies for Peer Workers in Behavioral Health.

The certification process will afford all successful participants the opportunity to become a recognized CPS by the PCB and provide for potential employment in a peer setting after release from a state correctional facility. Currently, SCI Camp Hill has 22 certified CPS who provide individual and group support to inmates in both the General Population, as well as the Diagnostic and Classification Center. CPS are also regularly assigned to areas such as the Special Observation and Assessment Unit (SOAU), Psych Observation Cells (POC), Diversionary Treatment Unit (DTU) and Restricted Housing Unit (RHU).



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Dallas Character Council Program Studies "Trustworthiness"

By Imam Arvas

The Character Council Program (CCP) has been running at SCI Dallas since 2019 with the support of the administration, Superintendent Kevin Ransom, Deputy Superintendents Stacy Miller and Jeraldo Aponte, and Program Manager Michael Goyne. It is a five-week long program consisting of the Six Pillars: trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring and citizenship. Each week a short skit is performed with a moderator, followed by a discussion with the audience. The skit is written and performed by inmates, and the moderator is an inmate as well. With this format, the inmates are put into positions of responsibility for the skits and discussion groups. Last year the program consisted of a small panel, followed by a group discussion.

The week's activities began with a welcome speech and a background of the CCP, including a congratulatory message from the Deputy Superintendent. As of the date of this article, we have received permission to record the program and share our success on the inmate's tv channel and the rest of the Department of Corrections. If one wishes this program to be mirrored at their location, please speak to Dallas' administration.

Everyone in the audience received a copy of the "Six Pillars of Character" pamphlet. In the opening statement, the moderator shared part of our mission statement, "To live and learn based on the Six Pillars of Character and create an environment where we can respect and treat each other as human beings."

The narrator then gave an overview of the skit, which will evolve over the next five weeks to show the change in each character. He said the performance was not the focus; instead we should focus on the situation and how we see ourselves, our character and our willingness to perform these actions, regardless if we are the bystander or the actor.

The week's topic was trustworthiness. The skit was about Jeff, a new inmate who trusts his cellmate, and shortly after, Jeff's trust is taken advantage of. Bumpie, Jeff's cellmate, sets Jeff up to have all of his belongings stolen from their cell while they were out for lunch. Many men shared their experiences in a lively discussion that followed, some of the ones that stood out were:

- One older man with over 20 years inside felt everyone should be prepared for prison, based on the life they were leading outside "In the game".
- A young man, new to prison, admitted he was like Jeff when he came in (overly trusting) because he was leading a "normal life" on the outside, coming from a good family and a good environment. He made a bad decision to get high one night and killed someone. His first encounter with the law resulted in a long-term sentence for him. Being completely unprepared and knowing no one inside, he admitted that now with two years as an Inmate, he is looking for a good role model among long term offenders, so that he can learn, grow, and come out of here as better man (not a bitter man, or a "wolf").
- Another man stated that if we think we are of good character, and we see evil and do or say nothing, that we are part of the problem. People of good character should step in and say something. "We are a society here, everyone deserves to live in a peaceful environment, we have to find a middle ground. Just because we live in cages does not mean we have to live like animals." It should irritate any of us to see someone being taken advantage of.
- Another observation is that the older men can become attached to the way they have done things in the past, and do not think of looking for fresh approaches. However, that is how we fall behind, we have to keep up with the changes in our society and learn new ways of thinking from our interactions with both younger and older individuals.

- Another young man admitted in his past he was like the cellmate “Bumpie” as mentioned previously from the performance. Now being a long time offender, he hopes to change that way of thinking by participating in this program.
- One man who spoke said he was trustworthy. That was the point of this skit, to be better as men in this small society.

Lastly, a quote from one of the older men that stood out. “Real men will stand for something”; “Real men don’t do certain things.”

We can make this place a better community.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Parole Staff Speak to Edinboro Class

Parole Agent Gdanetz and Parole Supervisor Kernick spoke to Edinboro University Dr. Courtright’s Probation and Parole class. They spoke about the parole agent job and current trends including motivational interviewing (Supervisor Kernick is an MI instructor) and the use of assessments. Gdanetz and Kernick are Edinboro University Alumni.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Around the Centers...

Renewal Staff Members Attend Non-violent Crisis Intervention Training

On July 17, 2019, Jan. 16, 2020 and Feb. 19, 2020, approximately 55 Renewal staff members have been trained on the topic of Non-violent Crisis Intervention. Renewal, Inc.’s Manager of Security, Harold Leavy, facilitated these trainings as he has been a certified instructor since 2016. Leavy became a certified instructor through the Crisis Prevention Institute Inc. The curriculum is designed to teach: empathic listening skills; verbal intervention strategies; preserving relationships; limit-setting techniques to calm individuals; and much more.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

CTC Braddock Reentrants Continue Service

In an effort to continue strengthening ties in the community and broadening their support network, CTC Braddock reentrants participated in community initiatives on Feb. 29. The reentrants volunteered 34 hours of service to the Borough of Braddock conducting early spring cleaning at the vacant lot adjacent to the facility.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Scranton Reentrants Support The Kirby House

For the month of February, Scranton Community Corrections Center reentrants donated more than \$600 worth of items to the Kirby House located in Wilkes-Barre. The Kirby House is a shelter dedicated to helping families through difficult times.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Temple University, Kintock Group Begins First Inside-Out Course for Reentrants

The Kintock Group has partnered with Temple University to provide reentrants with the opportunity to participate in a college-level course with Temple University students. Classes for the first ever community corrections version of the Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program began on Feb. 18 at Kintock, with 12 Temple University (outside students) students and 12 Kintock reentrants (inside students). Temple Professor Juwan Bennett is conducting the class titled *Criminal Justice and Community Issues* for a full 15-week college course.



* During class, the inside and outside students are treated as equals and each set of students provide their own views and experiences with the criminal justice system. They are currently reading and discussing the book *Just Mercy* by Bryan Stevenson.

Current reentrant participants include:

Neftali Gonzalez-Crespo has attended each Inside-Out Program since the program started. He is also employed full-time at Burlington Coat Distribution Center. He has benefited from the early start time of the class so that he can attend the program while also maintaining full time employment. Gonzalez-Crespo is currently saving his money in order to obtain a home plan.

Terrance Brewington attends the Inside-Out Program each week that it is offered. Brewington works full-time at The Slick Experience Barber Shop. He wanted to ensure that he could continue to attend the Inside-Out Program while working full time, so he was able to adjust his work schedule so that he could be in the facility during class time.

**Due to COVID-19, the Inside-Out course was cut short as Temple University canceled classes. Kintock and Temple are planning to discuss continuing the program again next semester.*

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Safe Berks, GEO ADAPPT Honor Victims' Advocacy Month

On March 4, GEO ADAPPT participated in the preparation and serving of a meal for the outreach program at Safe Berks. Safe Berks provides ongoing support of counseling services that includes victim advocacy for domestic violence and sexual assault. The women reentrants from GEO ADAPPT were excited and honored at the chance to give back. It touched a special place in our hearts, thereby making it a humbling experience for all.

For one reentrant, it really hit home as she shared her personal experience of loss and domestic violence and the pain it caused in her life. She shared how this experience is giving her more motivation to make a positive change in her life for her and her daughter.



From left: Jessica Solomon, Latacha Sokol, Kristin Cottman, Clarissa Soto, Beth Diparlo, and Lyndsie Holderman



From left: Tara Anspach; Safe Berks Case Manager, Clarissa Soto, Latacha Sokol, Lyndsie Holderman, Kristin Cottman, Beth Diparlo, and Jessica Solomon

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Week of March 2, 2020...

DOC Reentry Staff Conduct Reentry Simulation for Students

On Feb. 26, Deputy Secretary for Reentry Kelly Evans, Executive Assistant Matthew Sheaffer, Parole Manager Melissa Repsher, Administrative Officer Bernard Avery and staff from the Bureau of Reentry Coordination facilitated a reentry simulation in Bucks County.



The reentry team—including Parole Managers Penny Sines and Javier Cintron; RPAs Amy Mammarella and Amy Ramiza; and CRPAs Tyrone Lacey and Mea Williams—worked with 10 reentrants from Center 2 in Philadelphia to host the event for Delaware Valley University criminal justice students, Bucks County Probation and Bucks County Domestic Relations.



There were 30 people who participated in the event. The reentry simulation shows participants what life is like during the first month after release from prison. For most that participate, they find the experience frustrating and confusing at times. This experience helps them to understand what a recently released individual may go through once released from prison, and understand that it can be very difficult to accomplish some tasks due to some barriers.

Delaware Valley University Criminal Justice professor Dr. Christi Smith said, "I could not be more appreciative of you for facilitating today's event. This was an amazing and eye-opening experience for the students, myself and for the county employees in attendance. Please extend my sincere gratitude to all involved".

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Sec. Wetzel Speaks at York County Employer Roundtable

Department of Corrections Secretary John Wetzel joined more than 30 business leaders and local legislators at York Container on Feb. 25 for a roundtable discussion hosted by the York County Economic Alliance. With employers struggling to find workers to fill their employment needs, Wetzel implored them to open up to second-chance hiring.

"We have a situation here where you have more jobs than employees," Wetzel said. "There's a bunch of people coming out of prison who deserve a second chance, and one third of all Pennsylvanians have a criminal record. If you're in the hiring business, you're in the second chance business already."

The event began with a tour of York Container's facility, where the family-owned business manufactures boxes to fill packaging needs throughout the mid-Atlantic. Wetzel told his hosts he will never look at a box the same way again after seeing how much work goes into creating and testing the cardboard.

Following the tour was a discussion with local leaders and employers about the workforce needs of the county and the more than 600 reentrants who came to York in 2019. Currently York reentrants hold 321 vocational certifications in HVAC, electrical, plumbing and more.

"A piece of reducing recidivism is giving people a chance," Wetzel said. "I'm not saying opening up for just anybody, but being smart and giving someone a chance."



Employers who have had success with second-chance hiring also spoke, including Jen Strobel from Flagger Force. DOC inmates have the opportunity to learn flagger skills, which has led to nearly 200 reentrants being hired by Flagger Force—including 14 who have received promotions, Strobel said.



Two successful reentrants shared their stories, including one who works for York Container and another who came to York to get away from his hometown and start fresh. He encouraged the business leaders to look beyond stereotypes and give reentrants an opportunity.

“There’s a lot of talent behind those prison walls,” he said. “Many just want to do better; some don’t. It’s hard weeding out the bunch, but please try not to go off stereotypes. Try to be like Lady Liberty. She has a blindfold on; she doesn’t see, only hears. Try to be like her when hiring.”

DOC Workforce Development Specialist Dorenda Hamarlund closed out the event by giving out resources and data to highlight the available employees with skills and training just waiting for an opportunity in York County. Hamarlund has also been featured on the DOC’s podcast, Lockup Lowdown, multiple times to discuss her work and how the DOC is preparing inmates to fit the needs of Pennsylvania employers.

“This is not a partisan issue,” Wetzal said. “We all want the same thing. We all want to give people the opportunity to work themselves out of poverty and into a better life.

“You have the power to transform lives by just giving people a chance.”

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Smithfield Hosts Teacher In-Service Training

The Education Department at SCI Smithfield hosted a Regional Act 80 Day on Feb. 27, for educators from SCI’s Smithfield, Benner Township, Somerset, Houtzdale, Forest, Rockview, Huntingdon and Camp Hill. Act 80 is a Department of Education-approved school day for teacher in-service training programs. There were 41 participants from the eight institutions that included academic instructors, vocational instructors and education guidance counselors. There were sessions presented in the areas of Excel for the Corrections Educator presented by SCI Smithfield Business Instructor Emily Wible; Educational Strategies for Coping with ADHD presented by SCI Smithfield ABE Teacher Crystal Gearhart; and The Impact

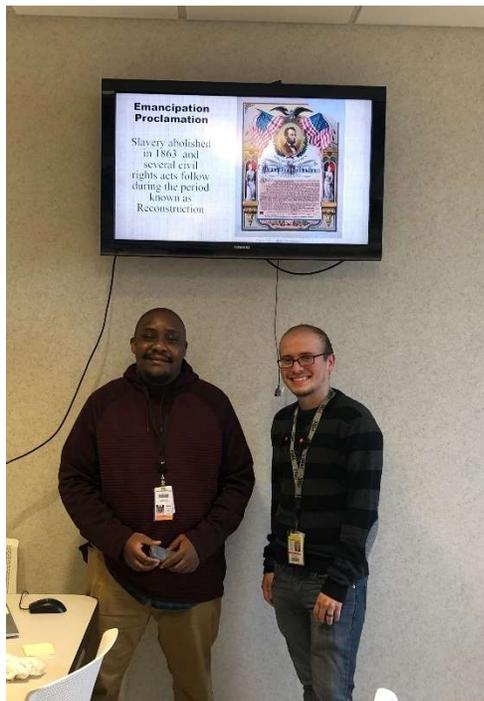
of Trauma on Our Students presented by Genesis Diaz, a Juniata College student majoring in Biological Neuroscience and Philosophy. The day also provided a time for the educators to network and tour SCI Smithfield.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Central Office Celebrates Black History Month with Luncheon

The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity office celebrated Black History Month with a luncheon and presentation at Central Office on Feb. 26. The nationwide theme this year was African Americans and the vote, so the presentation focused on African Americans' voting rights.

Everyone from Central Office was welcome to participate in the potluck luncheon and view the PowerPoint, which highlighted the progression of African American's voting rights from the Reconstruction era (1865-1877) to present day. IT's Keith Mutinda (pictured below, left) and Dominic Toro were very helpful with providing technical assistance to get the presentation running.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Smithfield Holds Annual Black History Program

By Rev. Sylvia Morris, Chaplain

SCI Smithfield held its seventh annual Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Living the Dream Black History Program. This year's theme was "Honoring the Black Woman."

Smithfield general population inmates had the opportunity to participate in three programs. Opening the day was the prison's Facility Chaplaincy Program Director Rev. Sylvia Morris and a group of men from the Smithfield Protestant Choir, who led the audience in the Negro National Anthem, "Lift Ev'ry Voice."



Assata Thomas, director of the Institute for Community Justice (ICJ), a program of Philadelphia FIGHT, spoke next. Her organization provides support, education and advocacy for individuals, families and communities who are impacted by incarceration. Thomas had the distinction of having been the first female president of the New Jersey Corrections Officers Training Academy.

She is a passionate advocate on behalf of those who have been affected by the system—such as the challenges faced by returning citizens, healthy reintegration back into society and the chance to (re)design their futures and destinies. Accompanying Thomas were Mr. Vaughn and Mr. Hamlet, former inmates who now work for and with Thomas and ICJ.

Retired superintendent John Thomas—who is now a volunteer with Ev'ry Man a Warrior—challenged the men to write to their daughters and families once a week.

He challenged them to not consider themselves expendable because they don't think of their daughters, wives and mothers being expendable and neither are they. He told them "don't go home and just get a job and be an island but go home and give back." Thomas told them they always have the opportunity to reset.

He told them to be like Harriet Tubman, "Keep Going," no matter what distractions you had/have, and "keep focused, keep going. If you are not going anywhere or have stopped doing, just start doing again. Do it with everything you have, remain focused and identify with what your purpose is in life. Take something from each of the speakers and put it in to practice."



All during the day was a wonderful presentation put together by Chaplaincy inmate aide Joseph complete with animation and special effects. The PowerPoint featured past and present contributions made by historical African American women.

The evening included 225 inmates coming to the gym and watching the movie "Harriet."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Rockview's Dog Handlers Now to Train with Canine Partners for Life

In Dec. 2019, SCI Rockview officially changed dog programs and is now working with Canine Partners for Life to train service dogs. The facility's first pups will arrive within the next two months to begin their training.

The Rockview program will be slightly different than CPL's other prison programs, as Rockview will use rescue dogs rather than in-house breeding dogs. Rockview's previous program was in training rescue dogs, like Fred (pictured), to become more adoptable. The staff is passionate about rescues, so CPL agreed to use rescues at Rockview for their training.

Fred—featured in a recent newsletter—now works at the facility as a "therapy" dog for mentally ill inmates, as well as the facility pet for staff and general population inmates.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Smithfield Security Office Awards Letters of Commendation

Congratulations to the following SCI Smithfield employees for being awarded letters of commendation from the facility's security office:

(Note: Acting Major Eichenlaub is included in each picture presenting the letters.)

Officer Horner received a letter of commendation for assisting the security office in identifying an internal threat to security. His identification resulted in the apprehension and removal of the threat.



Officer C. Jones received a letter of commendation for alerting the security office of inconsistencies in additions to an inmate visiting list. As a result, a plan to introduce contraband into Smithfield was thwarted and arrests by outside authorities were made.



Officer Husick's quick recognition of an inmate who was experiencing a serious medical incident was instrumental in getting him needed medical assistance and potentially saved the inmate's life.



Officers R. E. Miller and Biss were on an outside transport with an inmate whose behavior became suspicious in nature. Both employees recognized the behavior and worked as a team to address behavior. Upon return to the facility they provided a report to the shift commander. Their ability to quickly assess the inmate's behavior, work as a team to address it and then pass the information along to the shift commander not only kept their transport safe but also allowed for additional precautions to be taken to ensure upcoming transports with the inmate were safe and secure.



Officer M. McConaughey was scheduled to deploy with the U.S. Army for 18 months, and his last day at Smithfield was March 3. On Feb. 29, while working the search team, McConaughey discovered a homemade weapon on an inmate. His hard work and commitment to duty right up until his deployment are commendable.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Waymart FERT Trains with Lake Ariel Fire Company

SCI Waymart's Fire Emergency Response Team (FERT) trained at the Lake Ariel Fire Company in Wayne County. Members of the team worked on various training tasks including Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) reduced profile, patient rescue, down firefighter and firefighter self-rescue techniques. Waymart's FERT currently have 22 members protecting life and property at the institution.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Around the Centers...

Pittsburgh CCC Starts Pilot Program to Develop Housing Resources

On Feb. 12, representatives from Continuum of Care of Western Pennsylvania (CCWP) came to Pittsburgh Community Corrections Center (PCCC) to discuss a pilot program to develop housing resources for the reentrants of the CCC. Parole Agent Vincent Karabin, along with Rita Masi, Director of Customer Service, and Mallory McCune, Housing Project Manager from the Fayette County Community Action Agency, came to the Pittsburgh CCC to meet with personnel for an initial meeting to highlight the funding and program. The following overview was presented to Pittsburgh CCC personnel during the meeting:

- CCWP receives \$10 million per year through a HUD Budget Grant.
- Fayette County Community Action was awarded a \$170,000 grant to cover 22 counties in western Pennsylvania.
- Karabin is the chair of the subcommittee in charge of distributing the grant money, and CCWP wants to share these resources with the Pittsburgh CCC.
- They want to provide a resource for people who have had home plans denied and also a system to get housing to people right out of prison.
- The program is being designed to provide 10 months of rental support as well as a security deposit, first month rent, and even possibly assist with a reentrant's fines.
- CCWP will perform home/site visits.
- The program will also include a case management piece as well as wrap around services through Fayette County Community Action.
- State Drug Treatment Program (SDTP) cases would also be eligible in addition to parole cases.
- Pittsburgh CCC correction counselors Tara Marhefka and Michelle Niles are working with McCune and Masi to work out logistical details of the program, and a second meeting will be held in the near future at PCCC as we work together to develop the program structure and guidelines. A tentative date of March 12, 2020, has been set for the second planning meeting.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Wernersville CCC, PCI Pass ACA Audits

Great work by Wernersville Community Corrections Center and Pennsylvania Correctional Industries on passing their ACA Audits! Both will be reaccredited at the next panel hearing in August to officially receive reaccreditation. Wernersville received 100 percent on mandatory and 100 percent on non-mandatory standards, and the auditors mentioned how impressed they were with the staff's cooperation and professionalism and cleanliness of the buildings.

Great work to everyone who worked hard on these audits, including the Office of Standards, Audits and Accreditation!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Tomorrows Hope, Altoona Parole Hold Job Fair

Tomorrows Hope worked in collaboration with Altoona's parole office on a job fair on Feb. 26, for the community. Tomorrows Hope worked with on-site parole agent Deb Patton and had all of its job seekers attend the fair. This was a great event and many of the reentrants made several contacts with local employers. This collaboration is great to help reentrants gain employment and get their lives heading in the right direction. Tomorrows Hope and Altoona Parole will continue to work together in hopes to help those reentrants in need of employment.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

CTC Braddock Reentrants Continue Service

In an effort to continue strengthening ties in the community and broadening our support network, CTC Braddock reentrants participated in community initiatives Feb. 22-23. Reentrants volunteered 72 hours of service to the Borough of Braddock conducting early spring cleaning at a nearby park. Reentrants were tasked with scrubbing playground equipment and cleaning up the nearby parking lot.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

In the News...

Rockview Employee Featured in PSU Magazine

SCI Rockview Therapeutic Activities Service Worker was featured in Penn Stater, the official magazine of the Pennsylvania State University.

SPORTS

ROAD RUNNERS
Tom Sciabica has helped his former student Gregory Fleck experience the joy of competing in road races.

Two for the Road

A MOTHER'S REQUEST LEADS TO AN INSPIRATIONAL PAIRING ON DISTANCE RUNNING COURSES. *By Owen Newman*

TOM SCIABICA retired from teaching last June, but his influence on kids—and one, in particular—is far from over. Local residents in Bellefonte, Pa., and the surrounding communities often see the triathlete pushing a wheelchair designed for a 100-plus-pound teenager.

Sciabica '83 **H&HD** earned a degree in therapeutic recreation and then became certified to work with children with special needs. One day in 2015, Christine Fleck, the mother of his student Gregory Fleck, made a special request for Sciabica—a three-time Ironman finisher—to run a race while pushing her son so that he, too, could experience the thrill of wind rushing through his hair and crowds cheering him toward the finish line.

That request led to Sciabica, 60, and Gregory—confined to a wheelchair due to cerebral palsy—completing nearly a dozen 5K races and one full marathon. “One of my favorite memories is making it to the top of the last hill in the Steamtown Marathon,” Sciabica says, “seeing the finish line where at least 100 college students were cheering us on, and Gregory yelling, ‘faster, faster.’”

Gregory, now 19, graduated from Milton Area High School last June, marking the grand finale of a four-year adventure that created special moments and lifelong memories not just for the tireless twosome but for the community at large. Sciabica isn't finished. When he took on Christine's challenge, he immediately launched a fundraising campaign and raised \$6,000 to purchase a special needs racing wheelchair, specifically designed for Gregory. With Gregory now a student at Luzerne Community College, Sciabica has launched a second campaign on GoFundMe.com in hopes that others like Gregory can also experience the rush of racing—even just once in their lives.

Photo by **Carbond**

24 MARCH / APRIL 2020

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Week of February 24, 2020...

Somerset Pauses to Remember Sgt. Baserman

SCI Somerset paused Feb. 26 to remember the sacrifice made by Sgt. Mark J. Baserman two years ago. A memorial service was held in the chapel for employees, with the Somerset Honor Guard presenting the colors and a wreath in commemoration of Sgt. Baserman's End of Watch. Pastor Phil Maust offered a prayer, and Supt. Eric Tice gave an emotional speech on how Sgt. Mark Baserman's commitment to service was life-long. It was about how he served his country in the United States Army, he served his community with the East End Ambulance Service for many years and how he made the ultimate sacrifice in his service to the citizens of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the Department of Corrections. He spoke of the many condolences and words of encouragement from law enforcement and corrections agencies from across this great country, and how we cannot help but be humbled—and loved.



Capt. Joseph Furman told of how the idea to create a scholarship in Sgt. Baserman's name came up during the planning of his memorial service, and from there how it grew and transformed from an idea into a reality. The fund has raised the \$50,000 needed to make this an endowment with University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown in a little over a year. Furman also reported that during the 2nd Annual Sgt. Baserman Color Run—to be held at UPJ on May 2, 2020—the first scholarship will be awarded.



In closing his speech, Tice reinforced that moving forward, we will always remember the sacrifice that Sgt. Baserman made. We will continue to honor him and keep his family in our thoughts, prayers and deeds as we know we have the strength, support and love of a community, state and nation behind us. We are thankful for those who came before us and will always honor the sacrifice of those whom we have lost. Today, tomorrow and forever, we will remember Sgt. Mark J. Baserman. Our hero maybe lost, but he is never forgotten.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Huntingdon Pups Serve as Support Dogs to Students Reeling from Tragedy

By Beth Linn, SCI Huntingdon Records Specialist

It would come as a surprise to no one to hear a story of the comfort and support that a dog has brought to a person in a time of stress or emotional need, through just their presence and unconditional love alone. Many of us have felt that calming effect ourselves when we struggled with a difficult time in our lives. I was reminded of this again recently, when I witnessed the amazing power of our canine companions to help bring healing, comfort and even a little joy to the lives of many who so desperately needed a break from the reality they were dealing with.

Our local middle school very recently suffered a tragedy in the loss of one of their own when a student died unexpectedly. Teachers, students and staff struggled to come to terms with what had happened; struggled to offer each other the support that they all so desperately needed; struggled to deal with their grief and confusion and sadness and every other feeling that they were overwhelmed by. While teachers and counselors worked admirably and diligently to put the needs of their students before their own need to grieve, it was understandably an extremely difficult time for everyone.



As I and other staff handlers here at SCI Huntingdon had been to the school for many visits with service puppies in training from Canine Partners for Life, I was contacted by the school counselor who asked if I would be willing to come in with a puppy as soon as possible. I, of course, went immediately with Able, not knowing exactly what to expect or what role we would play in this darkest of days at the school. The school had counselors in place in many locations throughout the school, where the children could come together to talk, sit quietly, share memories or thoughts, and just be together in their grief and confusion. Others were in their classrooms, trying to maintain a sense of normalcy. Able and I took most of the day to walk around to all of those classrooms and areas, providing adults and children time to hug,

pet and visit with Able. Able, in return, gave just what only a dog can give at times—quiet, calming strength; a moment or two of peace and comfort in the midst of turmoil; and even a smile, when no one felt like smiling. Whether while walking through the halls between classrooms or upon entering a room for a visit, those moments of briefly forgetting worries and troubles that Able provided by just being there, by a nudge of his nose, or a sloppy dog kiss, hopefully eased some of the pain that was being felt by so many that day.

As Able and I were preparing to leave, we were asked if we could return the following day to focus on the classroom that was feeling the greatest loss, where this student had spent the greatest part of his day. On our second visit, I was accompanied by Tillie. And like Able, Tillie was absolutely amazing in knowing just what was expected of her, and what her job was that day. After being available for all students during their lunch period, after many hugs and kisses and belly rubs, Tillie made her way to the classroom where she would astound me with her sense of understanding. As we walked into the room, Tillie walked right up to one student who she thought must have needed her the most, nudged her leg and sat down in front of her. The student dropped to her knees with a smile on her face and wrapped Tillie in a big hug. I watched with tears in my eyes as Tillie lay on the floor surrounded by this young girl and her friends. Tillie stayed there, quiet and content for an hour, as the students sat there around her talking, laughing and petting her.

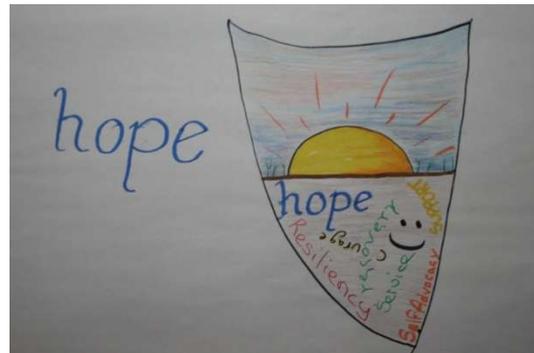


I've experienced numerous times the positive influences that animals have on our lives, the differences they can make. But I've never seen anything quite like what I was a part of this past week at our school. Able and Tillie, while not miracle workers by any means, certainly made a very big difference in the lives of so many, just when they were needed the most. I'm grateful to Canine Partners for Life and the inmate handlers for the work that they do to prepare these puppies for situations such as this, and to the PA DOC and SCI Huntingdon administration for allowing this vital work to continue. I'm grateful to the school district for inviting the puppies into the schools for the socialization that is an integral part of the puppies' training. I know that my words could in no way adequately describe the emotions and feelings surrounding the time that Tillie and Able and I spent with those students and teachers. I was, however, so proud of Tillie and Able for doing exactly what they were, and are, meant to do.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Houtzdale CPS Workers Participate in Team-Building, Design a Crest

SCI Houtzdale held a Certified Peer Specialists Team-Building Event. There was participation by 15 CPS inmates at the event. The Psychology Department and the unit manager currently in charge of CPS inmates at the facility facilitated the event. Activities consisted of non-verbal communication and team-building exercises. They also broke into small groups and formulated a crest that represents what being a CPS means to them.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Huntingdon CWP Inmates Complete Pesticide Training

On Feb. 20, several Community Work Program participants at SCI Huntingdon took their Certified Pesticide Applicator exams. These tests, administered by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, provide those who pass with official Pennsylvania licensure to spray pesticides to control invasive, unwanted weeds harming Pennsylvania's natural resources and agricultural operations.



Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources provided a five-week training course to help prepare the crew to take the exams as a part of the Riparian Forest Buffer program. Pesticide spraying is critical for riparian forest buffer maintenance to ensure weeds don't overtake the young trees and shrubs planted in forest buffers. These new skills will help CWP crews care for the riparian buffer planted at SCI Huntingdon in October and will help Riparian Buffer Program participants find jobs working with forest buffers or other conservation-related work upon release. They can even start their own buffer maintenance businesses!

Additional CWP crew members who participated in the training but elected to not take the certified applicator test will receive their Registered Pesticide Technician certificates, which will also aid them in finding a job with existing conservation, agriculture, or lawn-care businesses in Pennsylvania.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Meet Rockview Pup: Fred

Fred's background: Fred was rescued from a backyard breeder, along with 12 other St. Bernards. His previous existence was horrific enough that his former owner was criminally charged with animal neglect and abuse.

His likes: He *loves* sleeping, chasing skunks, graham crackers, snow and his handlers. He loves, with his handler by his side, to visit different blocks, especially the ones housing the mentally ill and mentally challenged. His presence has made a positive impact with those inmates, along with the general population. Fred and his handler also visit kids in the visiting room. Fred dresses up for those special visits by wearing one of his many bandanas.



His dislikes: Car rides, getting his picture taken, leaving his handler's side.

Fred is a low-maintenance (besides cleaning all the drool) gentle giant being trained by New Leash on Life USA!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Roesly Named Volunteer of the Year at Coal Township Luncheon

SCI Coal Township recently held a Volunteer Luncheon to show appreciation to its volunteers. Certificates of appreciation were presented to all volunteers for their services. Richard Roesly, a volunteer serving a Jehovah's Witnesses group, was recognized as Volunteer of the Year. Roesly was presented with a certificate and a gift from Central Office. Several administrative staff members attended the event, which took place at the institution's training room.



Pictured from left: Program Manager Linda Chismar; Volunteer Richard Roesly and his wife, Kimberly Roesly; Reverend Akinleke "Leke" Akinbode; and Superintendent Thomas McGinley.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mercer Hosts 5th Polar Bear Walk

The Inmate Activities Committee at SCI Mercer hosted its 5th annual Polar Bear Walk on Feb. 15. Forty-two participants walked nine laps on the brisk 18-degree morning, then came back into the gym for coffee, hot chocolate, coffee cake and a presentation on homelessness from Mr. Lasch, a current resident at Joshua's Haven, and Chaz Rice, the director of Joshua's Haven.



The event raised \$500 for the shelter.



Joshua's Haven, located in Sharon, provides on-site temporary, emergency shelter for homeless men in the community. Once they have met all clearances, they are offered a clean, safe environment where they can sleep, take a shower, get a hot meal and take advantage of supportive and spiritual services at the mission. The men's ministry staff and resident assistants are on site during all the hours of operation. They offer a bread program that gives free bread and other small items to those in need every Saturday and Sunday. The donation money will go towards sheltering and providing food for the homeless men.

Rice and Lasch, from Joshua's Haven, were present to accept the donation.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Former Commander Speaks at QBC for Black History Month



Former Quehanna Boot Camp Commander John Thomas stood before a group of 291 male and female Boot Camp and State Intermediate Punishment inmates on Feb. 20 to talk about Black History Month.

Thomas spoke about leaving a legacy. He told the group that right now is when you make your legacy. While incarceration is part of their story, it is not their legacy.

He went on to say that you are either part of the problem or part of the solution. It is easy to be a spectator and not take an active role. He reminded them that today's complacency is tomorrow's captivity—you are what you tolerate.

He encouraged the group to look at their current circle of friends and ask themselves what they represent. Look at people they could have been friends with but chose not to because they were nerds, unattractive, etc., and see where they are in their lives. Having a good circle of friends is important.

Thomas peppered his speech with the names and achievements of such historic figures as Garrett Morgan (invented a traffic light after



witnessing an accident between a horse-drawn buggy and a car), Lewis Latimer (patent draftsman for the lightbulb and telephone), Elijah McCoy (invented ironing board and a lawn sprinkler) and Harriet Tubman (freed 300 slaves through the Underground Railroad).

He ended by giving a homework assignment to think about who would make up a good circle of friends and to find a mentor to help guide them. It is never too late to change your legacy... what kind of legacy will you leave?

QBC thanks Thomas for his motivational and inspirational presentation.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

WNEP Visits Frackville for TV Show Follow-Up

A few days after being featured on Animal Planet's *Pit Bulls and Parolees*, SCI Frackville's dog program was back in the spotlight when WNEP visited to discuss the show. Frackville and SCI Mahanoy work with the DAWGS Prison Program to prepare rescue dogs for adoption.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

IUP Nursing Students Visit Pine Grove

Senior Indiana University of Pennsylvania Nursing Students toured SCI Pine Grove on Feb. 25. They visited C Unit and talked with an inmate who is currently in the Young Adult Offender Program. They visited the puppies on B Unit and then toured the medical department and talked with staff regarding their responsibilities as nurses.

Karen Facticeau, from the Office of Administration/human resources, talked with students regarding job opportunities with the Department of Corrections. Judy Smith, superintendent's assistant, and Lt. Weakland escorted the group.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Mercer Dog Program Shows Progress to CEO, Senator

On Feb. 18, Guardian Angel Medical Service Dog CEO Carol Borden and PA Senator Michele Brooks visited SCI Mercer to see how the German Shepard puppies are progressing in their service training. The pups are only 9 months old and did amazing through the visit with their demonstrations. Their down stays are solid and distraction training is progressing nicely. Even though there were a few bumps during the visit, both Borden and Brooks were very pleased with the progress the pups are making.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Coal Township's Lifeline Nearing \$24K in Funds Raised, Donated

Since the first sale in April 2017, SCI Coal Township inmate organization Lifeline has donated more than \$23,900 to local charities with proceeds from fundraising sale, including \$1,000 to Northumberland/Snyder Special Olympics, \$3,500 to the Mt. Carmel Food Pantry, \$500 to Marley's Mission, \$6,500 to the Greater Susquehanna Valley United Way, \$1,005 to Wreaths Across America at Ft. Indiantown Gap National Cemetery and \$11,400 to Kuapas Summer Camp associated with Mt. Carmel School District and Bucknell University.

Inmate organization Triumph, which also conducts fundraising sales, donates similarly to local and national charitable organizations as well. These sales are of great benefit and not just to the inmate population. Staff efforts and continued support allow this to happen!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Slippery Rock Students Visit Mercer

On Feb. 26, Slippery Rock University's Criminal Justice Professor Sarah Kuehn and 20 of her students toured SCI Mercer. Superintendents Assistant Nicole Franz, assisted by Activities Manger April Harvey, conducted the tour with the group.

After a security briefing, the students proceeded to A Block, Mercer's Intake Unit, where Unit Manager Randy Rickert and the Unit Officers described the daily operations of the housing unit and the institution. From there they progressed to the chapel where Chaplain Program Director Joe Kosarek explained the wide variety of religious services provided to the inmates and how his department fits into the overall function of the facility. While at the Chapel, they were informed of the history, demographics and available programs of the institution.

The last stop was on the Veteran's Service Unit, where VSU Counselor Aaron Diaz explained the advantages of being housed on the unit, along with the programs and services available to the inmates on this unit including Mercer's Guardian Angel Medical Service Dog program. The highlight of the afternoon came when the students were able to meet Guardian Angel dog Brock, his handler and an inmate peer assistant. Inmate Jason spoke about how the Guardian Angel program has made a huge impact in his life, and Inmate Peer Assistant Edward spoke about the programs that run on the block and the impact the VSU has had on him. Students were actively engaged throughout the entire tour and asking well thought out questions.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Around the Centers...

Scranton CCC Donates to Animal Shelter

For the month of January, the Scranton Community Corrections Center (CCC) raised and donated \$450 worth of dog food and various animal care products to Blue Chip Animal Shelter located in Dallas, Pa.! Pictured are Monitor Randi Nordfors, Counselor Kenny Jordan and three of the CCC's reentrants.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Green Named BCC Employee of the Quarter

The counselor vacancy at York Community Corrections Center challenged the facility in many ways over the last six months. While CCC Monitor Ed Green was in an acting counselor role this year, it did not go unnoticed that, despite his personal sacrifice to himself and his family, he gave the CCC his very best every day.

In honor of his dedication and hard work, Green was named the BCC Employee of the Quarter!

While he performed the duties of acting counselor, he kept his "monitor" hat on and never hesitated to jump in and assist with those duties when needed.

Even after he returned to his monitor post he continued to help and support as needed.

Thank you, Ed, for your outstanding commitment and support!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Adagio Meets with CTC Erie Leadership About Resources for Reentrants

Community Transition Center (CTC) Erie directors met with representatives from Adagio of Erie and discussed numerous ways the agencies can collaborate. Some of the services that will be available on site from the provider are Hep C, HIV and STD education, screenings, treatment and referrals; family planning, which includes long acting contraception; flu shots; immunizations; screening for cholesterol, colon cancer, diabetes, immunity and TB; and smoking cessation upon request. The staff of Adagio are willing to bring these service in building for our reentrants which will provide a better plan for continued wellness upon discharge. Adagio services are available across the state and have access to federal and state funds. This enables facilities to provide total care without a cost hindrance to any of the involved parties.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Week of February 17, 2020...

Former Steelers QB Visits Mercer

Retired Pittsburgh Steeler Charlie Batch spoke to staff and the inmate population at SCI Mercer on Feb. 12. He talked about his time with the Steelers, his sister's death, how he kept motivated throughout his career and his nonprofit organization, Best of the Batch Foundation, where he is devoted to improving the lives of children and families from impoverished communities around southwestern Pennsylvania.



His NFL career began with the Detroit Lions in 1998, and he was picked up by the Steelers in 2002. After 15 years in the NFL, he retired after the 2012 season with two Super Bowl victories under his belt. His speech was well received by all.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Pine Grove Inmates Attend Clean Slate Workshop

Jessica Lynch of Laurel Legal Services, Inc., in coordination with SCI Pine Grove's Reentry Service Office, presented an informative workshop on Pennsylvania's new Clean Slate Law that went into effect on June 28, 2019. The first of its kind in the nation, the Clean Slate Law mandates automatic, computer-generated record sealing for certain kinds of criminal records. This act affects records of conviction for minor offenses known as summary



offenses, many misdemeanor convictions and charges that did not lead to conviction. Sealing is allowed after a 10-year period free of any misdemeanor or felony convictions as long as all financial obligations are paid. In addition to the information on Clean Slate, she shared information on expungements, pardons and petition based sealing processes. Lynch is also the director of PAI and Pro Bono Services. Reentry staff are grateful to her for taking the time to share her knowledge with the participants.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Greene Welcomes New Pup to the Pack

On Feb. 12, SCI Greene welcomed an 8-week-old Golden/Labrador Retriever named Ortley.

Ortley will join three additional puppies currently in training at the facility with Canine Partners for Life. A total of 26 canines have been trained since the program began in March 2014.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Frackville, Mahanoy to Be Featured on Animal Planet Show

SCI Frackville's and SCI Mahanoy's dog programs will be highlighted on this week's episode of *Pit Bulls and Parolees* tomorrow night (Feb. 22) on Animal Planet. Check it out to see Frackville and learn all about its puppy program!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Camp Hill Staff, Inmates Learn About Commutations, Clemency

On Feb. 4, Director of Standards, Audits, Assessments and Compliance Steven Burk and Parole Manager Shelly Watson conducted a commutation and clemency training at SCI Camp Hill for staff and inmates. Burk and Watson gave a detailed explanation of the process from how to properly fill out the application to what to expect if an applicant is granted a personal interview with the



Board of Pardons. Burk explained what factors were considered by the board during the evaluation process as well as what the difference was between a merit review and a public hearing and what could be expected at each event. Watson and Burk took questions at the end of the session and provided a packet of information for each attendee for reference. It was a very informative session for all who attended.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Coal Township Celebrates Valentine's with Ice Cream

SCI Coal Township's Employee Recreation Association hosted an "Ice Cream Day" for all shifts on Feb. 14 in honor of Valentine's Day. An ice cream bar with all the favorite toppings was provided in the in the ODR during all shifts. Happy Valentine's Day!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Albion Hosts Blood Drive, Staff Donate 28 Units of Blood

SCI Albion's Empowerment Committee hosted a blood drive at the institution on Jan. 29 in honor of National Blood Donor Month. At the end of the day 36 staff provided 28 units of life-saving blood, which means SCI Albion employees made an impact on the lives of approximately 90 patients in local hospitals. Great job everyone!



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Pine Grove Staff Enjoy Bake Sale

SCI Pine Grove's Empowerment and C.O.V.E.R. committees held a bake sale for staff Feb. 12. The donations will benefit the future regional empowerment symposium. The bake sale was well-received by staff. The Employee's Association provided free coffee for staff as well.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Visitors Receive Flowers at Pine Grove for Valentine's

Inmates at SCI Pine Grove were able to give a rose to their loved ones visiting during Valentine's Day weekend thanks to inmate organization Beyond the Fence, which provided the flowers. Even Zeke, one of the pups being trained by inmates and New Hope Assistance Dogs Inc., was gifted a flower!



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Facility Pups Celebrate Valentine's Day

Dogs in PA prisons throughout the state celebrated Valentine's Day in style!

SCI Somerset

SCI Somerset employees had the opportunity to participate in a kissing booth—staffed by the adorable pups from their Canine Partners for Life program! Employees could get a photo or personalized card printed for \$2 or \$5, respectively, with all proceeds going to CPL. The fundraiser raised \$142!



SCI Mercer

Meet the pups of SCI Mercer's Guardian Angels Medical Service Dogs program! These 9-month-old dogs just passed their Canine Good Citizen test and are now moving up to the next stage of training. Great work to the pups and their handlers!



SCI Frackville

Meet Sam and Tucker, two graduates of Frackville's DAWGS program who now work for the facility. DAWGS rescues pups from shelters who have been harder to adopt and trains them in obedience and socialization skills.



SCI Laurel Highlands

Meet Gunny, the newest addition to the Laurel Highlands program! Laurel Highlands works with Canine Partners for Life to train dogs to become service dogs.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Pine Grove Employees Participate in a "Sleepout"

Great work by SCI Pine Grove Corrections Officer D. Strotman and Sgt. G. Yurko for participating in the Veterans Parsonage Homeless Sleepout.

Board Members of the Veterans Parsonage and PTX Military Fraternity held a 24-hour "Sleepout" in front of the Indiana Wal-Mart to raise awareness and funds for the Veterans Parsonage in Indiana and to shed some light on the homeless veterans problem that plagues our nation. Strotman and Yurko, who are both Army veterans, were two of the participants in this great event. Superintendent's assistant Judy Smith stopped by to drop off baked goods and support her Pine Grove family.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Mercer's Kocherzat Wins Academic Award

SCI Mercer Licensed Psychologist Manager Dr. Kathleen Kocherzat was recognized for a proposal she wrote for a new academic course at Duquesne University. Her proposal was selected as one of the winning finalists and she was invited to an Award Ceremony in downtown Pittsburgh in mid-September. Nine student finalists won \$1,000 each, competing for the top award of \$5,000.



Here is a brief description of the proposal she submitted:

Animal-Assisted Intervention Studies, by Dr. Kathleen Kocherzat

Today's students and young people increasingly see the benefit of animals—e.g. service dogs for veterans, therapy dogs for students with emotional challenges—as a means to assist in ameliorating challenges on campus and in the work place. Inspired by the cutting-edge Animal Assisted Interventions Minor offered at Slippery Rock University, the current proposal supports creating a new 3-credit course at Duquesne University in Animal Assisted Intervention Studies. This course would use an interdisciplinary approach to offer students an opportunity to learn how to apply Animal-Assisted Interventions to careers in healthcare, psychology, education and even law. In this way, Duquesne students can share the love and comfort of animals with vulnerable populations in the community who are desperately in need of such succor and non-judgmental care. The final outcome would be a new course at Duquesne that is sustainable for years to come.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Federal Prison Officials Study PA DOC's Mail Procedures at Waymart

Federal Correctional Institution Beckley (West Virginia) employees came to SCI Waymart to look at the facility's mailroom procedures. Through Waymart's Community Relations Board Meetings with USP Canaan, Beckley staff heard about Waymart's mail procedures with Smart Communications. The visit was to review and learn how the DOC operates mail. The Federal Bureau of Prisons is piloting a program at USP Canaan and FCI



Pictured above are Captain Luke Mushensky; Associate Warden Paul Boulet, FCI Beckley; Donna Fry, mailroom inspector; Dan Reese, Vice President of Local 404; Joel Fernet, corrections systems officer; Lt. Barry Karwowski; Peggy Majdic, mailroom supervisor.

Beckley to mirror Waymart's mailroom procedures in order to make a safer environment inside their Facilities.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Huntingdon Pup Spends Valentine's Day Outside the Facility

SCI Huntingdon service-dog-in-training Tillie spent Valentine's Day with volunteer/handler Christi Gordon (accounting assistant). Tillie enjoyed a trip to Poochey Chef, the Logan Valley Mall for shopping, a game room and a trip to the dollar store, and she also spent time with the family cat.



Socialization is a vital part of their training and a great way to tell the community about the service dogs and the Canine Partners for Life Program.

"Being able to spend time and work with the dogs makes my day!" Gordon said. "Just knowing the wonderful things they may do to help out an individual some day is amazing!"



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

2020 Sgt. Baserman Memorial Fun Color Walk/Run Set for May 2

DOC staff, family, friends and the general public are all encouraged to participate in the Sgt. Baserman Memorial Fun Color Walk/Run (5K) and Basket Raffle on May 2, 2020, at the University of Pittsburgh Johnstown. All proceeds benefit the Sgt. Baserman Memorial Scholarship, and the first ever recipient of the honor will be presented the scholarship at this year's event.



Proceeds to Benefit the

Sgt. Mark J Baserman Memorial Scholarship Fund

Registration Starts At 8:00

Walk/Run Starts At 10:00

Everyone must be registered to participate

\$25 per participant – **includes a T-Shirt**

If Pre-Registered by 4/6/20 you are guaranteed a shirt

- *You can still register up to the day of the event -*

Groups of 10 or more please call for reduced pricing

Register online at Facebook.com there you can **Search**
for either the Baserman Fund Page and Follow the link to the Event
or the Baserman Memorial 5K Color Walk/Run Event itself
After Registering **Please** make sure to pay using the PayPal link

50/50 and Basket Raffle tickets will be available to purchase at the event
You do not have to be registered for the walk/run to purchase basket or 50/50 tickets.

Contact Caitlin Weigle with questions at 814-443-8100 x8487 or caiweigle@pa.gov

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Around the Centers...

Houtzdale Donates Boots to Tomorrows Hope

Tomorrows Hope received a generous donation from SCI Houtzdale for residents. Houtzdale donated 100 pairs of steel-toed boots for the residents, who are required to wear steel-toed boots at many of the jobs they get. It was greatly appreciated by all our working residents.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Braddock Reentrants Continue Service

CTC Braddock reentrants once again engaged in community beautification projects throughout the area.

Reentrants picked up 15 bags of trash along the Braddock Avenue corridor and assisted with the Family Dollar clothing drive. Through this effort they completed 36 hours of volunteer service to the community.

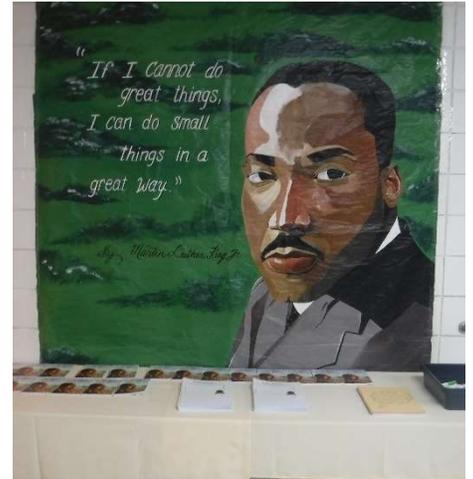
~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Week of February 10, 2020...

Chester Celebrates MLK with Children Visitors

During the month of January, kids who visited SCI Chester were able to write their dreams on a cloud and stick it on a wall with a mural of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. They were also able to leave with a book called "Who Was Dr. Martin Luther King?" which is a kid's book about his life and purpose. This initiative was part of the Empowerment Committee's monthly activity for the young visitors at Chester. Keep up the good work, Unit Manager Bourne and Counselor Neally!



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Phoenix Celebrates Mentoring Month with Hoagies, Pretzels

To celebrate January being Mentoring Month, and SCI Phoenix's Mentoring Committee hosted a Philly Pretzel and hoagie sale for staff. Committee members set up mentoring tables in both staff dining halls for the sales while lobbying for mentors and mentees along with sharing mentoring information. Both the sales and the information were a great success. All proceeds from the sales will be used by the Mentor Committee to give back to the staff by hosting an ice cream bash this upcoming summer.

The Heart of Mentoring: getting the most out of life isn't about how much you keep for yourself but how much you pour into others.

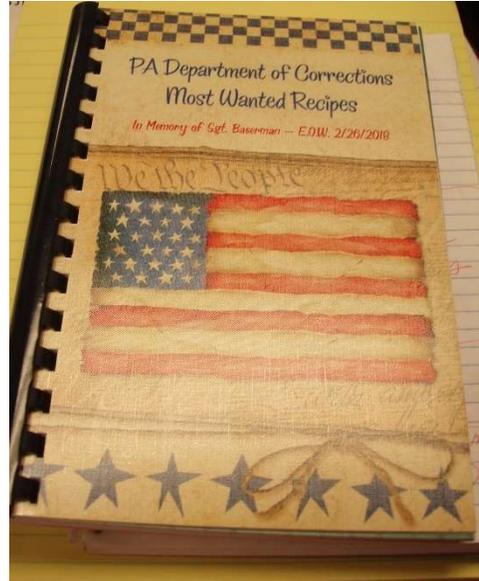
~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Somerset Raises Money for Sgt. Baserman Scholarship at UPJ with Cookbooks

At the beginning of 2019, SCI Somerset requested and received recipes from corrections employees across Pennsylvania. After collecting more than 300 recipes, Somerset put together a cookbook, and by October sold more than 450 copies!

Somerset wishes to send a “thank you” to everyone who not only donated their recipes for this fundraiser but also to those who bought a cookbook. Somerset was able to raise more than \$5,200 for the Sgt. Baserman Scholarship, which benefits students enrolled in the Criminal Justice studies at the University of Pittsburgh, Johnstown campus.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Lucas Named Employee of the Month at Mahanoy

Kimberly Lucas, clerk typist 2, was awarded the Employee of the Month award at SCI Mahanoy on Feb. 5. In addition to her administration being present when she received the award, her mother—who works in human resources—was also there and very proud. In addition to Lucas’ regular duties as the deputy superintendent for centralized services clerk, she volunteered to help other departments during Mahanoy’s recent audits. She was instrumental in centralized services having one of their best audit years ever. Lucas’ big smile and large personality brightens up the Deputy’s Complex, and she is very appreciated by her fellow staff.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Muncy Names Alexander Employee of the Month

SCI Muncy has named Melvin “Oak” Alexander as January’s Employee of the Month. Alexander started his career in Feb. 2006 as the Metal Working Occupations Teacher. He is a dedicated employee that maintains a professional attitude towards his job, peers and the community. Alexander takes pride in teaching his students trades that will benefit them upon release.



From left: Superintendent Wendy Nicholas, Melvin Alexander, Wes Persun

He has been involved with the Muncy Canine Partners for Life puppy program for seven years and has been an EMR for a local fire company for more than 10 years.

We thank Alexander for the dedication in serving staff and inmates within the institution and for his services outside of the institution.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Adams Named Employee of Quarter at Pine Grove

Congratulations to Robert Adams, SCI Pine Grove Safety Manager, who received the Outstanding Employee of the Quarter award. This institution has benefited from the organization skills Adams possesses. He has independently created uniformity throughout the institution with housekeeping plans. Departments are compliant with fire drills and safety equipment due to his continued tracking system. He is a true professional and conducts himself as such.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

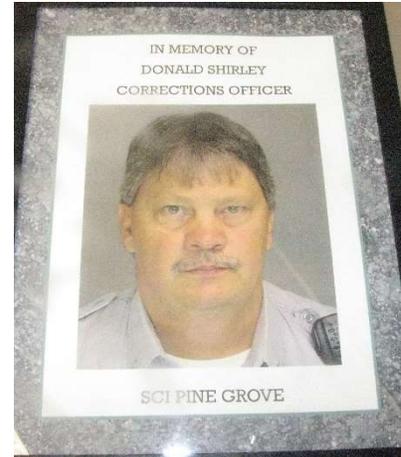


From left: Susan Bergey, corrections health care administrator, nominated Adams for the award; Robert Adams, safety manager; and Lee J. Estock, superintendent.

Pine Grove CO Succumbs to Cancer

It's with a heavy heart that SCI Pine Grove announces Corrections Officer Donald Shirley succumbed to leukemia on Jan. 11, 2020. He was employed at SCI Pine Grove from March 10, 2008 until his passing. Please keep his family and friends in your thoughts and prayers during this difficult time.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Officials Participate in Criminal Law Symposium

On Feb. 7, Secretary John Wetzel addressed the Allegheny County Bar Association's Criminal Law Symposium, where he spoke about the First Step Act, life without parole sentences and the PA Pardons Board's inmate commutation process. He also spoke about medical parole, probation and bail reform, Justice Reinvestment Initiative, mandatory minimum sentences and the DOC/PBPP merger legislation.



DOC Secretary John Wetzel.

Also participating in the symposium were Lt. Governor John Fetterman, PA Board of Probation and Parole Chairman Ted Johnson and Sentencing Commission Executive Director Mark Bergstrom.



Fetterman, Johnson and Wetzel.



Mark Bergstrom.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Inmates Produce a Drama at Dallas

By Imam Mehmet, SCI Dallas Chaplain

On Jan. 22, a very select group of inmates at SCI Dallas presented original dramatic work for an audience of their fellow prisoners. This was the premier presentation of the first performance created by the character council program (CCP). The CCP is supervised by Imam Mehmet Arvas, the Islamic Chaplain at the prison, but the CCP is a non-religious program, intended to provide a means of creatively addressing real world issues of character.

The play involved about a dozen actors, who performed characters and dialogue which the inmates in the program wrote. Many of the actors were among the writers, and a fellow inmate held the role of Director. Due to prison regulations that limit the use of inmates' identities in press releases, the participants will not be named here.

The play involved a hypothetical situation in which Stan, an inmate, was accused by another inmate of being a snitch. There was very little backstory offered, but it was not necessary to the production. The revelation was made in the form of a rumor, passed among a small group of men. Those hearing the rumor questioned the man offering it, but of course he had little supporting evidence. He was simply repeating a story he had heard. Some of the listeners accepted the rumor, while others challenged it.

Through a progression of scene changes (involving changing groups of actors, speaking in different locations on the Chapel stage), various characters discussed their opinions on the rumor's credibility. At times, "Stan" was involved, and he denied being a snitch, but of course he had no more proof than the rumormonger. At one point, the rumormonger told his interrogators that it was "Stan's" duty to provide documentation to show his innocence, not his obligation to document guilt. "Stan" generally held the position that he was about to come up for parole, so even though he felt threatened (presumably for being a snitch), he did not want to take any action in his own defense which would jeopardize his release.

**WELCOME TO
THE CHARACTER COUNCIL**
THE FIRST PERFORMANCE ARTS
PRESENTATION



**AFTER PLAY THERE WILL
BE A DISCUSSION**

Values:
The Six
Pillars of
Character

-  **Trustworthiness**
-  **Respect**
-  **Responsibility**
-  **Fairness**
-  **Caring**
-  **Citizenship**

Stan who has been working hard to gain his release because he wants to take care of his family. Everything was going good until a guy name Corey arrived.



- Corey began to spread rumors about him saying **Stan is a snitch.**
- Now Stan has to deal with it, but **one bad decision can destroy everything.**
- **What will Stan do?**

The play was presented in the everyday language of the urban culture, which was the targeted audience. Many aspects of the street and prison culture were not discussed by the actors, because they were well known to the entire audience. For example, in many different cultures snitches are held very low in the social order, and in their position they are often victimized by others. They may find themselves beaten, stabbed, or even killed, simply so another can count coup to build up his

own reputation as a tough and ferocious person. Sometimes, the attack of a snitch can even be the initiation ritual for a new member of a gang. Because the reputation of being a snitch can literally be lethal for a person. He is expected by others to prove his innocence by attacking his accuser(s) in self-defense. Facts matter very little. What people care about is the appearance presented by either party, and the toughest man will prevail. "Stan's" reported verbal assault implied that he had not been accused, but also was cast out for having been labeled a snitch. Among certain social structures, his failure to respond with similar violence would be taken as proof of the accusation itself, as well as a mark of "Stan's" relative cowardice. It was not necessary to tell the audience any of this. It is known and understood among inmates as cultural background.

When the actors were finished performing, they had never made any particular judgment call on the actions of any character. Instead, several inmates took seats in a semi-circle and began a group discussion with the audience, seeking either question and answer, or comment on the subject. Several men from the audience had strong opinions to share, and several of the participants offered personal facts that related to their own experiences in such matters. The most prominent message, it seemed, was that all men should present themselves in their own true image. This non-judgmental message was accepted by most of the audience of 50 or 60 fellow inmates, which included the guilty and the innocent, men nearing release and lifers ineligible for parole, and the religious and the non-religious.

As a first time event, the production had understandable glitches. There was some difficulty managing the sound system, with a few mics not working well at all. At one point, there was an outburst of unrelated loud laughter heard from backstage, which disrupted the performance going on. The scene changes, announced inconsistently by an unseen narrator, were seldom clear, and the characters of the play were poorly introduced by the dialogue. However, the writing and performances were authentic, and clearly included the heart-felt ideas of the inmates who wrote the play. The scenario was one that could be easily imagined by any audience member. Overall, the performance was well received, and the play has been widely discussed in the prison.

At the end of the event, Imam Arvas took the stage and described his Character Council Program. He intends the program to address the following aspects of character in some depth: Trustworthiness, Respect, Responsibility, Fairness, Caring, and Citizenship. This particular event had intended to address Responsibility in particular. The Imam intends to hold 5 panel discussions among inmates in the near future, addressing character overall. He also hopes to extend his CCP to the outside community, including afterschool outreach for children in the region (particularly those at risk of falling into criminal patterns of behavior due to drugs, poverty, and poor education). This initial presentation was generally considered a success, and the inmate population looks forward to the programs future efforts.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Week of February 3, 2020...

Forest Dedicates New Correctional Industries Plant

State and local officials participated in a formal dedication of a new Pennsylvania Correctional Industries (PCI) Vehicle Restoration Plant at SCI Forest on Jan. 30.

At the event, attended by more than 40 guests, officials spoke about the new Correctional Industry that is expected to become operational in early 2020 to train inmates for a career upon reentry in their communities.



"Our mission is to reduce criminal behavior by providing individualized treatment and education to inmates, resulting in successful community reintegration through accountability and positive change," SCI Forest Superintendent Derek Oberlander said. "This industry is going to provide meaningful employment opportunities for inmates housed at our facility, provide them with a marketable skill set when they leave and provide a needed service for other government entities."

Construction began in January 2019 and lasted just over one year and involved approximately 270 contractors at a cost of \$10 million. Funded by Pennsylvania Correctional Industries, which is a self-sustaining operation through the sale of items to non-profit entities, the 48,672-square-foot plant will employ eight full time staff members and approximately 100 inmates. The plant will house a 2,232-square-foot drive-through sand blast booth, a paint and dry booth, a wheel refinishing system, welding and grinding equipment, and a fabrication area to service large vehicles.



Additional speakers at the event included DOC Deputy Secretary Christopher Oppman, Regional Deputy Secretary Trevor Wingard, SCI Forest Retired Superintendent Michael Overmyer and Correctional Industries Director Khelleh Konteh.



"This project is one of the most important ventures we have engaged in since I came on board three years ago," PCI Director Konteh said. "Upon our visit to SCI Forest, the superintendent took us to an empty building and asked if there is anything we could do with it since it has been there for so long. As soon as we saw it, we knew that it would offer a great opportunity to refurbish snowplows."

Konteh also said he expects this new plant to provide meaningful jobs, training and experience for inmates in the foreseeable future, with a goal of reducing recidivism.

Inmates employed in the area will learn vocational skills which they will use to repair and maintain snowplows, tire rims, message boards and other heavy equipment vehicles for state and county governments. Additionally, a vocational welding program recently commenced at the facility to prepare inmates for employment in the plant. Upon completion of this 14- to 16-month program, the 30 class participants will receive the following certifications from the National Center for Construction Education and Research: NCCER Core, NCCER Welding Level 1, and NCCER Welding Level 2.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Phoenix Hosts Deer Hunt, Charity Food Drive

SCI Phoenix recently hosted five deer hunts. These hunts were for staff, veterans, first responders and members of the general public. A lottery drawing was conducted and those individuals who were selected to participate in the hunts were asked to bring canned goods or non-perishable items on the day of their scheduled hunt. This campaign, organized by Phoenix staff, generated more than 3,000 pounds of food donated to the Philabundance Organization.



The Philabundance Organization provides food to 90,000 individuals each week and is a proud member of Feeding America, a nationwide network of food banks leading the fight against hunger in the United States.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Opening Ceremony for the New Reentry Service Office at Houtzdale

Deputy Secretary for the Office of Field Services Kelly Evans had a vision, and it involved changing how the reentry process is handled at the SCIs. Evans wanted an environment open to any inmate who needed information, guidance, education and a solid plan for returning to their communities. When she restructured the Bureau of Offender Reentry, she put staff to the task of making her vision a reality.



Superintendent Barry Smith volunteered to be the first SCI to collaborate with reentry staff and develop the Reentry Service Office based on the new model. Smith was so supportive and open to the idea; he dedicated a room and resources immediately. DOC and parole staff worked together to get everything ready for celebrating the official opening.

On Jan. 15, staff gathered at SCI Houtzdale and heard from DOC Secretary John Wetzel, Executive Deputy Secretary for Community Corrections and Reentry George Little, Evans, Smith, Director Reentry Operations Missy Repsher and Parole Manager Pannebaker. Everyone was invited to tour the new RSO and ask questions of Reentry Parole Agent Tanja Hayles and Social Worker Ashley Mackey.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Greene Food Service Manager Retires

On Jan. 24, SCI Greene celebrated the retirement of Corrections Food Service Manager 2 Mike DeCarlo. Since Jan. 1994, DeCarlo dutifully served the PA Department of Corrections at Greene with honor and distinction. His commitment to his duties as a loyal DOC employee is recognized, and he truly earned an exceptional reputation amongst his Greene coworkers and the inmate population.

DeCarlo has always been a team player, amicable with his fellow staff, yet never afraid to express his professional opinion. His lead-by-example work ethic, support of staff and diligence to duty has positively affected many of his coworkers and led to his leadership responsibilities as a Vulnerability Assessment team member/trainer/leader for the agency.

DeCarlo has led his department with impeccable integrity. He has always been willing to help and encourage others and assist them in achieving and maintaining very high standards, in which he worked so hard to establish.

While Greene celebrates and applauds DeCarlo's career successes and congratulates him on his retirement decision, his colleagues will surely miss his conscientious efforts and trustworthiness as SCI Greene's Food Service Manager 2.

Congratulations, Mike, on your DOC retirement!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Benner Township C.O.V.E.R. Supports Veterans' Home

At the end of 2019, the SCI Benner Township C.O.V.E.R. committee, with support from the Benner Township Employee Association, collected donations for residents of the Hollidaysburg Veterans' Home. Items collected included new/gently-used clothing of all sizes, art supplies, batteries, headphones, seasonal decorations, note pads and hygiene items. Members of the C.O.V.E.R. committee delivered the donations to the home and helped to run a "Country Store Auction" with the residents.



All residents were given 20 "dollars" to bid on items, with each bid beginning at \$1. Residents, veterans' home staff and members of the committee all had a wonderful time and enjoyed fellowship with one another.



This was the first community outing for the SCI Benner Township C.O.V.E.R. committee, with the intent to find a way to free our minds from the everyday stressors of work and life, while positively contributing to our community.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Benner Township Dentist Serves the Under-Privileged in Haiti

After 30 years in private practice, Rick Lines became a contract dentist at SCI Benner Township a year ago this month. He has been a big help to the team at the prison and all of the inmates he has worked with.

But during that time, Rick has also continued mission trips to Haiti, where he provides dental care to many who have never been to a dentist in their lives.

"My first trip was Sept. 2018, and the most recent trip of eight days was my fourth trip," Lines said. "I am providing emergency dental care, extractions, in multiple locations, while also training some local care providers."

The conditions Lines works in usually include no electricity and no running water. He's treated several hundred patients, with less than 10 showing any evidence of prior dental care.

"So, my purpose is to provide care and education for individuals who otherwise have no options while starting to train some local providers to be able to provide care when I am not there," he said.

Lines travels to LaGonave, Haiti, 17 miles off the coast with a population of over 100,000 and an unemployment rate of about 90 percent. He first met a pastor from LaGonave at a conference in April 2018.

As for why he does it, Lines said it comes from his faith.

"I am a Christian believer and had been blessed to have had a couple people who helped me tremendously to start dental school," Lines said. "I truly believe to whom much is given that much is required, and I love meeting new people while being able to give back. As long as I am able, I will continue to empower the people of LaGonave!"



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Around the Centers...

Reentrants Support Curwensville Golden Tide Basketball

Reentrants from Tomorrows Hope wanted to give back to the community by providing snacks to the Curwensville boys basketball team, who was traveling out of town. Tomorrows Hope provided the items for the reentrants to package. Each player received Gatorade, a bottle of water, granola bars and fruit. The snack bags were delivered to the team by Security Supervisor Lonnie Miller. The team was very appreciative and thanked the guys for their effort.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Green Named BCC Employee of Quarter

Congratulations to Community Corrections Center Monitor Edward Green for being named Bureau of Community Corrections Employee of the Quarter! Green was selected after stepping up to be an Acting Counselor while the York CCC was short-staffed.

Green's impact was immediate and effective. He demonstrated his willingness to go above and beyond during his tenure in this position by learning the GPS system and being an outstanding team member. His constant willingness to help in all areas was noticed by his fellow staff and by Center Director Lisa Faulkner who nominated Green.



From left: York CCC Center Director Lisa Faulkner, CCC Monitor Edward Green and BCC Director Danny McIntyre

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Renewal Reentrant Grad Succeeding in Reentry

Nate King, manager of Renewal CCF's workforce development and GETPAID programs, recently had contact with the facility's first GETPAID employee for the Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership power washing project from three years ago. Renewal took over PDP's night-time pressure washing program, which involved cleaning sidewalks in the downtown area.

Ramon Valazquez is still doing really well and enjoying life incarceration-free. He went through both workforce and housing while he was at Renewal. He is currently a manager for K7 Parking, and he and his girlfriend just bought a house in Glassport. He also bought a new car as well.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Local Business Donates Bike to Reentrants

Coalition for Appropriate Transportation (CAT) in Bethlehem offered six bikes to reentrants of CREATE House.

Thanks to this new partnership, CAT will teach the reentrants how to fix and rebuild bikes, then give them a free bike for their use—thus giving the reentrants mobility and the chance to get to work.

Pictured is the second reentrant to get a bike: Joseph Miller. He is so happy to finally have a way to move around that's not by foot. He is struggling financially so this helps him a lot.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

CCC#2 Earns ACA Reaccreditation

Congratulations to Community Corrections Center #2 for passing their ACA Reaccreditation! Bureau of Community Corrections Director Daniel McIntyre delivered the center's Accreditation Certificate to CCC#2 Center Director and Acting Regional Director Jackie Rupert.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Braddock Reentrants Combine for 68 Hours of Service Over the Weekend

CTC Braddock Reentrants once again engaged in community beautification projects throughout the area. On Jan. 25 and 26, reentrants volunteered 68 hours assisting the St. Peter and Paul Byzantine Church with their neighborhood clean-up.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Week of January 27, 2020...

15 New CPS Graduate at Waymart

On Jan. 23, SCI Waymart hosted a Certified Peer Specialist (CPS) Graduation ceremony for their successful class of 15. In attendance were Waymart's administration, treatment staff, education staff, existing CPS team, Gina Calhoun of The Copeland Center and our two new CPS puppies, Bella and Buddy. Kait Simon, SCI Waymart's CPS supervisor, conducted the ceremony, and Principal Michelle Lipko gave an uplifting speech.



This class served as the inaugural participants in the DOC's new CPS curriculum, designed by The Copeland Center. They will also be the first class to sit for the Pennsylvania Certification Board Exam. Waymart now has 33 Certified Peer Support Specialists helping throughout the institution!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Albion Hosts Empowerment Symposium

SCI Albion's Empowerment Committee hosted a local symposium "Fit for the Future" on Jan. 15. Staff from SCIs Mercer, Cambridge Springs and Forest and the Erie Community Corrections Center attended. Several workshops were offered throughout the day which



included "Financial Fitness," "Emotional Wellness," "PSECU: Tips & Tricks to Eliminating Debt," "Mindful Meditation," "Practical Self-Defense for Every Day Life," and even an "Introduction to Tai Chi & Qi Gong." Participants learned practical tools that they can implement today to make 2020 an awesome year!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Pine Grove Receives Accreditation

SCI Pine Grove received the American Correctional Association and the Commission on Accreditation for Corrections awards Accreditation. Pine Grove had its audit in September 2019. This certificate is in recognition of the attainment of excellence in the operation of an Adult Correctional Institution.



From left: Dan Yingling, classification and program manager; Rod Chism, deputy superintendent for facilities management; Lee Estock, superintendent; Leslie Bradley, clerk typist 3; Judy Smith, superintendent's assistant; Trevor Wingard, regional deputy secretary – western region; and Billie Heide, deputy superintendent for centralized services.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

BCC Names 2019 Employee of the 3rd Quarter Award

Erie Community Corrections Center Director Jamie Harmon presented Center Monitor Christopher Miller with a certificate recognizing him as the Bureau of Community Corrections' Employee of the 3rd Quarter in 2019. Miller was selected for his efforts coordinating and supervising the quarterly Adopt-A-Highway project in Erie.



Miller takes out multiple reentrants, and on just one occasion had more than 15 reentrants from Erie CCC that created over 50 hours of community service. Miller realized he had more than enough volunteers for the highway clean-up project and therefore decided to clean-up three parks along the way.

This is a beautification effort from Erie CCC staff and the reentrants that allows the local community as well as visitors to enjoy the clean bayside waterfront. Erie CCC has been a long-time sponsor of the Adopt-A-Highway along the Bayfront.

Thank you for your continued community support!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

DOC Holds Diversity and Inclusion Training for Supervisors and Managers

Creating an inclusive environment is the responsibility of every employee at every level, so the DOC Training Academy created a course for supervisors and managers at Central Office focused on diversity and inclusion.



The four-hour course was developed for supervisors and managers working in public safety agencies as part of the Governor's initiative to promote diversity and inclusion. The goals of this course are to educate participants on what diversity and inclusion mean and why it is important in the workplace; to understand the role of leadership in creating an inclusive environment; define and identify unconscious bias, and identify behaviors that promote respect. Participants

will be able to apply the information they learned and develop strategies to create and maintain a diverse and inclusive workplace.

The first three sessions took place on Jan. 22, 23 and 24, with the final three opportunities available Feb. 4, 5 and 6.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Reentry News

DOC Leadership Updates Reentry Agents Title

Effective Jan. 2, 2020, to simplify and make the position more in line with its job description, Assessment Sanctioning Community Resource Agents (ASCRAAs) have been renamed to Community Reentry Parole Agents (CRPAs). This action streamlines both the institutional reentry parole agents with the community reentry parole agents, reducing the silo between the two positions and reinforcing the team concept in the agency's reentry initiatives.

Sheaffer Named Executive Assistant to Reentry

In September, Matt Sheaffer was named executive assistant to the deputy secretary for reentry.

Sheaffer has been with the PA Board of Probation and Parole (PBPP) since 2012. He worked as an ASCRA in the Harrisburg District and a mental health agent in the Harrisburg District Office. In 2015, he was promoted to parole manager in the Central Region where he supervised ASCRAAs in several districts in the Central and Western Regions. Sheaffer has been the acting western region reentry administrator since March 2019. Prior to being employed with PBPP, he worked as a corrections officer at SCI Frackville until 2010, when he took a position as the federal social services coordinator at Capitol Pavilion in Harrisburg. Sheaffer graduated from the Pennsylvania State University in 2010 with a BS in criminal justice, and he also completed master's degrees in criminal justice in 2014 and in public administration in 2016 from the University of Phoenix.

"Matt has been instrumental in moving the agency's reentry initiatives forward and we're looking forward to utilizing his knowledge and skills in this new position," said Deputy Secretary for Reentry Kelly J. Evans.

Reentry Administrator Position Redefined

The DOC's two regional reentry administrator positions have been merged into one executive assistant position. In this position, Lacosta Mussoline is now responsible for providing technical assistance to Reentry Service Offices and Transitional Housing Units; Medicaid/Medicare and Social Security Administration benefits; centralized clearances; maintaining the reentry policy, coordinating reentry job fairs and special projects such as DHS case

management, BCC services contracts, commutation reentry support and the partnership with the PA Department of Banking and Securities.

Mussoline has been with the DOC since September 2002, when she began as a corrections counselor on a pre-release unit at SCI Coal Township. Since then, she has broadened her work within the department through various positions within the Bureau of Community Corrections, SCI Muncy and Central Office. She has served as the State Intermediate Punishment Coordinator for BCC Region 2, the Diagnostic and Classification Center unit manager at Muncy, acting BCC administrative officer and deputy, business process expert in the development of IOCMS/CAPTOR, staff assistant to the executive deputy secretary, and most recently as the regional reentry administrator for the eastern region.

Her experience within the PA DOC and exposure to Parole Board efforts, through IOCMS/CAPTOR, Act 122 and other initiatives will assist her in identifying ways to collectively recognize and refine interagency efforts as we work toward a common goal.

BCC Now Part of Reentry Office

The DOC's Bureau of Community Corrections (BCC), which operated as its own entity since its creation several decades ago, now is under the Office of Reentry, which is a new office created thanks to the memorandum of understanding between the DOC and the PBPP. This realignment continues to streamline reentry efforts and increase positive outcomes.

Workforce Development Specialist

Workforce development work over the past several years was performed by an individual whose job was funded by a multi-year grant. Now that the grant has ended, and seeing the vital role workforce development plays in inmate education and reentry, the agency now has a Workforce Development Specialist position that is funded fulltime by the agency. This position is overseen by the Office of Reentry and remains filled by Dorenda Hamarlund. To learn more about workforce development, you can contact Dorenda Hamarlund at dhamarlund@pa.gov or listen to related podcasts here: <https://www.cor.pa.gov/About%20Us/Newsroom/Pages/Podcasts.aspx>

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Waymart Welcomes New Additions to the FTC

SCI Waymart welcomed a brother and sister duo who will be "working" in the Forensic Treatment Center (FTC). Through a partnership with SCI Chester, Waymart now is a loving home for the two puppies! Waymart continues to create innovative programs to promote quality of life for the FTC patients. This addition to the FTC milieu will boost morale, positive energy and promote a sense of community.

Bella and Buddy are from a litter of nine that were found as strays in Georgia. They were rescued by Wags and brought to Pennsylvania. These pups were the last two left and sent to SCI Chester to be housebroken before coming to SCI Waymart

Bella and Buddy will be handled on the units by two certified peer specialists and two other handlers, and they will be available throughout each day. Recently, one of the dogs came for a visit, and the response from the FTC patients was overwhelming joy. Introducing pets to a therapeutic environment has shown to have benefits such as increased communication, increased self-confidence, increased physical activity and an overall happier mood. Pets also reduce symptoms of anxiety or depression, boost morale and give staff and patients something to look forward to. Waymart would like to extend a huge thank you to SCI Chester for their unending support and efforts to bring this program to our staff and patients.



Pictured from left: Lynn Patrone, forensic mental health program administrator; Madeline Quinn, SCI Chester superintendent's assistant; Buddy and Bella, lab mixes; Bobbie Bassett, deputy superintendent for forensic services; and Dave Chapel, unit manager.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Huntingdon Pups Visit Local Middle School

On Jan. 16, 2020, SCI Huntingdon's Beth Linn (records specialist) and Connie Green (superintendent's assistant) took the Canine Partners for Life dogs, Stormy and Tillie, on an outing to a local middle school. The children were ecstatic to see the dogs as you could see their faces all a glow. The puppies also enjoyed their time with the children and all of the attention they received. It was a beneficial time for both the children and dogs.

Socialization is a vital part of training and the development of the dogs. It also helps to spread awareness to the community about the program and the wonderful things the dogs will do some day to help an individual who may need them.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Greene Staff Donated Boots to Mission

On Jan. 27, SCI Greene donated approximately 130 pair of gently-used Timberland Boots to the Washington City Mission. The City Mission shelters, heals and restores the homeless to independent living—without discrimination. Its program addresses both short-term needs including food and shelter, and long-term needs, including drug and alcohol counseling, mental health and medical treatment, legal aid and employment training. The Mission helps each man, woman, mother with children or veteran who walks through its doors to become a healthy, productive member of society. The City Mission's work is only possible by the community and businesses of Southwestern Pennsylvania's generous donations. Regardless of the items donated, the Mission makes use of each and every item. Mission Director of Operations Jason Johnson expressed his sincere gratitude for the donation of boots and said they will knowingly assist the residents within their program.



Pictured from left: Ron Balla, stock clerk; Ramont Small, warehouse supervisor; and Jason Johnson, director of operations at the City Mission

The boots were collected from inmates at SCI Greene when it was determined they were no longer permitted.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Quehanna Boot Camp Offers New Masonry Vocational Program

By Melissa Billotte, Superintendent's Assistant

Quehanna Boot Camp began a masonry vocational program in June 2019. This 200-hour program provides students with the skills needed to enter the workforce as an entry-level mason and is open to both Boot Camp and State Intermediate Punishment (SIP) inmates.

The course is comprised of six modules: 1) Intro to Masonry; 2) Masonry Tools and Equipment; 3) Measurements, Drawings, and Specifications; 4) Mortar; 5) Masonry Units and Installation Techniques; and 6) Masonry Safety.

Once all classroom requirements are met, it is time for hands-on application.

The first step is to learn to mix the mortar:



Then learn to apply the mortar, install concrete masonry units, and place the brick throughout a series of different projects:



Once the basics are mastered, the next step is to review the specifications and work on the final project to complete the course:



Here is an example of the finished project:



After the project has been evaluated and approved by the instructor, everything is torn down, bricks and blocks are cleaned, mortar is screened down to a fine consistency, and the cycle begins again:





The pride these inmates take in learning this skill is palpable when you observe a group.



Once an inmate passes the final exam, they assist others who are just beginning or those who may be struggling.

Since June 2019, 12 inmates have successfully completed the program. Building Trades Teacher M. McCullough does a fantastic job keeping everyone on task and providing every opportunity to his students. He has arranged for a representative from an outside company to speak to his class about employment opportunities. A recent Boot Camp graduate contacted the facility to advise that he was able to secure an entry-level mason position with the certification he received while at QBC.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Reentry Success Shared Over Open Waters

Dave Roberts, a former DOC employee, was on a cruise in January 2020. He shares his recent experience while on that cruise:

"I was on a cruise this past month and had a Penn State shirt on which caused a man to strike up a conversation with me. He told me that he was a roofer and asked me what I did. I told him I was retired from the state prison system.

He told me that he had done time in SCI Rockview in the mid-80's. He further stated that he had gotten clean in prison and that he had taken the bus back to Philadelphia the day he was released from prison.

In the bus station he saw this really big guy with a gold chain on his neck. He asked him if he had played for Penn State, and the guy said he did. He also asked him if he could talk to him, and the guy agreed, and they talked on the whole trip. He told the guy about his addiction that started as a teenager and that he always wanted to play football.

In the course of the trip, the player pulled his game jersey out of his bag and said he was going to give it to his nephew, but gave it to him instead. He told him when he felt like using to put the jersey on.

Today is the 34th anniversary of him being clean. So, I would like to give a huge congratulations to Danny M. and thank you to Mike Russo, starting defensive tackle on the 1986 National Championship team, for your concern and kindness to another human.

It gave me another reason to be proud of my university and the dedicated men and women of corrections and parole."

Dave Roberts started his Commonwealth of Pennsylvania career as a parole agent with the PA Board of Probation and Parole. He then transferred to the Department of Corrections, where he served as a counselor, psychological services associate, unit manager, inmate program manager, director of the then-Bureau of Inmate Services (now Treatment Services) and finally as deputy superintendent.

Editor's Note: While writing this article, we reached out to Dave Roberts about how he is not only proud of Penn State, but also how he is proud of the DOC and parole. He said:

"Absolutely! He (the former inmate) said that you guys helped people. Recovery is complicated, as you know. He said prison helped him reach rock bottom. He also said that there was a terrible thunderstorm and that it felt



Dave Roberts

like the prison was going to explode. He said he got on his knees and prayed to get over his addiction and made a commitment to stop using."

Finally, Dave said that he posted this information on "Nittany Nation," A Penn State Football site. So far, more than 1,500 people viewed it, with 140 comments being posted.

We wish Danny M. continued success!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Week of January 20, 2020...

Waymart Staff Commended for Saving a Life

On Jan. 1, an SCI Waymart patient assigned to the Forensic Treatment Center inflicted serious self-injury by fashioning a noose around his neck. A code 55 was called, upon arriving on scene, immediate action was taken to help remove the noose and place the patient in the recovery position ensuring safety of the patient.

Staff were commended with a certificate for their immediate response. Their actions prevented the potential of more serious injury. They were thanked for a job well done at the clinical review meeting!



Pictured from left: Deputy Superintendent Joe Grillo, Major Jeffrey Gibson, Unit Manager Dave Chapel, Lt. John Hidalgo, and Corrections Officer Shea O'Connor. Staff unable to attend the clinical review thus absent from the picture include: Tara Watkins Buchanan, Thomas Mills, Sharon Czubowicz, Jotanna O'Connor and Donna Wade. (All six staff received letters of accommodation from the superintendent.)

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Closing Ceremony of Pitt Literature Course Held at Laurel Highlands

On Dec. 9, 2019, SCI Laurel Highlands held the closing ceremony celebrating the successful completion of an Inside Out Literature course entitled “Imagining Social Justice,” led by University of Pittsburgh faculty member Prof. Shalini Puri. Deputy Superintendent for Facilities Management Robert Snyder, who delivered some closing words, as well as Principal Martha Boyer and several teachers in the GED program, were present at the occasion.



Thanking Laurel Highlands’ administration, Prof. Puri said: “We are grateful to everyone who has helped realize the vision of the Inside Out Prison Exchange Program, a space where we invite one another to be our best selves, and to honor and develop those selves; a space where we learn the spirit of the post-apartheid South African legal concept Ubuntu: that our own humanity is intertwined with that of others.”

Students reflected on what they had learned about reading literature and about writing and on the value of taking a course with a group they would ordinarily not meet. As one inside student put it, “This course has given me the opportunity to rekindle a relationship I thought I lost a long time ago—the relationship with myself.”



During the term, students conducted interviews, explored gun violence and practiced representing different points of view. They read a play on apartheid and studied a film about global water scarcity and water privatization. At the closing ceremony, a few students shared a monologue and some haiku poetry. Each student also recited a couplet from a collaborative poem to which every member of the class had contributed. Students spoke of their newfound confidence in writing and focus on education as well as their renewed commitment to social justice. They expressed appreciation for the visitors who had worked with them on writing, public speaking and performance: New York City actor and director Lachresha Berry; poet Gretchen Primack; and Pitt’s CB Chernomoretz.

A major highlight of the ceremony was when Pitt outside students reported on the public performance by Pitt students of writing by inside students from SCIs Laurel Highlands, Somerset and Fayette. It was the first time the Pitt Prison Education Project had presented the work of inside students to a public beyond Pitt. The performance took place on Dec. 4, 2019, at the City of Asylum in Pittsburgh, a major center of the arts in the city. More than 150 people attended. At the closing ceremony students heard some of the City of Asylum audience's enthusiastic responses to their writing.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Coal Township Employees Participate in "Secret Santa"

Northumberland County Children and Youth Services "Secret Santa" Christmas program provides services to hundreds of children each year. Since 1996, employees at SCI Coal Township have participated in the program organized by volunteers who dedicate their time and energy to collecting and distributing the Christmas gifts to children.

Prison Human Resource Assistant Grace Piaseczny coordinated the event for the prison every year since 1996. In 2017, Clerk Typist Cathy Dapra took the lead from her sister to organize the event at SCI Coal Township. Grace

said, "SCI Coal Township employees are good, kind-hearted, people. We could not accomplish this without them. Cathy and I thank them tremendously!"

Special thanks were extended to Coal Motor Crue, an employee motorcycle club, for its generous monetary donation which will also be presented to Northumberland County C & Y to purchase additional items that are needed for the families of Northumberland County at Christmastime.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



SCI Coal Township HR Assistant Grace Piaseczny is pictured with many gifts collected for the Northumberland County Children and Youth Christmas Gift Program.

Corridor Paintings with a Purpose

SCI Waymart's Education Department believes that learning can occur on your way to class as well as in the classroom. The walls of the education corridors are almost completely covered with quotes that staff selected to instruct and motivate their students.

For the past eight months, an inmate painter has used various painting techniques to beautify the education mods. Students and staff read and smile as they admire his work. Quotes are representative of the subjects taught in each classroom.



The inmate took artistic license and painted a diploma in the Mona Lisa's hands. The lines in that painting, according to him, represent the various paths that one can take after graduating. Clearly, he has the critical thinking skills needed to be a successful reentrant!





The staff and students are grateful to have a bright and inviting learning environment.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Inmates Share Benefits of Trade Unions at Huntingdon

Reentrants leaving state prison often have a difficult time finding employment. If they do, it can be low-paying or not steady work. Trade unions are an option to help reentrants find employment with good wages, health insurance and steady income.

SCI Huntingdon inmates who were members of trade unions prior to incarceration and those who have maintained good standing within the union and are planning on returning to their union job once released have been running an apprentice/trade union seminar to those interested. This program has been running once a month for eight months. Group attendance has between 15 and 25 inmates. They provide information on which trade unions are available. Also, they provide example letters to write to the union halls trying to secure employment upon release. They also provide directions on how to read a tape measure, as this a primary skill for most trades.



Since the program began, many inmates have received letters back from different trade unions either offering them employment or an interview upon their release from SCI Huntingdon.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Optical Lab Begins New Recycling Program

The SCI Cambridge Springs Correctional Industries Optical Lab continues with its recycling efforts with a new program. Mr. Rentz, Correctional Industries Lab Supervisor, learned of Costa, a Daytona Beach-based sunglasses manufacturer, launching the "Kick Plastic Lens Recycling Program." Costa recognized that the disposal of optical lenses created a large amount of plastic waste being disposed of every year, which takes more than 400 years to decompose. Although just a small portion of the waste is generated at this facility, the Optical Lab wanted to do its part in helping with the recycling efforts and have since started collecting lenses from inmates when they receive new prescriptions. So far, the facility has collected approximately 50 pounds of lenses that will not be going into the U.S. landfills!



Rentz, his staff and the inmate workers are proud of these efforts to help the environment and they will continue to promote the importance of recycling to inmates, giving them the option to donate their old lenses.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Somerset Honors National Mentoring Month

In honor of National Mentoring Month and National Mentoring Week, SCI Somerset celebrated with a sundae bar and this awesome cake that was made by the facility's dietary department.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Employees Compete in Somerset Chili Cook-Off

SCI Somerset held its Third Annual Employee Chili Cook-Off on Jan. 18. The event was sponsored by Somerset's Empowerment Committee. Eleven employees entered their best chili recipes in the competition, and employees could also enter drawings to win prizes.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Deore Retires from Fayette After 30 Years of DOC Service

Staff at SCI Fayette celebrated the retirement and bid farewell to COI George Deore following his 30+ years of dedication to the DOC. George began his correctional career at SCI Pittsburgh and has been at SCI Fayette since the opening. Staff enjoyed a luncheon with Deore and wished him a long, prosperous and healthy retirement.

Congratulations George!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Around the Centers...

CTC Braddock Continue Community Service

On Jan. 11 and 12, CTC Braddock reentrants participated in numerous community service projects within the Borough of Braddock and surrounding municipalities. During this community beatification initiative, reentrants volunteered 84 hours of service.



Residents of these areas approached the reentrants, thanking them for their service. A few residents made it a point to contact the center to say how grateful they were for those that volunteered. This service shows the center’s dedication to serving the Borough of Braddock and to give back to the people that live there. This also always gives the reentrants a feeling of acceptance in the community.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Veterans Donate to Tomorrows Hope

Veteran James Strickland and his son, Noah, collected donations for Tomorrows Hope in memory of their father who recently passed away. His father was a Marine stationed at Guantanamo Bay during the Korean War. Their family said they are proud to support the efforts at Tomorrows Hope and the service provided to not only the veterans but to all the residents at the facility.



Tomorrows Hope, which is located in Coalport, Pa., provides transitional housing and services for veterans. Its goal is to provide residents with safe comfortable room and board, healthy meals three times a day and snack from their full-service cafeteria. It also provides transportation and rehabilitative and recreational activities. Individuals are assessed on a case-by-case basis, and the average length of stay per individual averages 60 to 90 days.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Week of January 13, 2020...

Greene Celebrates Mentoring Month

January has been designated as National Mentoring Month. To celebrate the power of relationships, SCI Greene's Mentoring Coordinator Lieutenant Brian Hayes and Brittane Bowen, Employee's Association president, provided coffee and breakfast pastries for staff. Pamphlets and brochures for mentoring, C.O.V.E.R. and SEAP programs were also distributed. Join SCI Greene in celebrating mentoring month and the positive impact it has on people as well as promoting staff wellness.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Burke Named Frackville Employee of the Year

SCI Frackville Superintendent Kathy Brittain announced SCI Frackville's Employee of the Year for 2019 is Corrections Refrigeration Mechanic Trade Instructor Edward Burke.

Burke has performed his duties in an admirable manner, consistently doing more than his fair share and going above work requirements. His commitment to maintaining high job standards and his extra efforts have been a positive example for others to follow. His quality job skills and professional demeanor best exemplify the qualities that this award is intended to represent.

Congratulations, Edward Burke!



Pictured from left: Joe Winhofer, Facility Maintenance Manager 1; Edward Burke; and Superintendent Kathy Brittain.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Camp Hill ERA Holds Annual Christmas Parties

On Dec. 16, the Employee Recreation Association (ERA) at SCI Camp Hill held its annual Christmas parties for children and adults. The children's party was held in the morning and was attended by 55 families, including 114 children. Breakfast was served and fun activities were held for the children. Each child also got to visit with Santa and received a gift from him!

In attendance at the adult party that evening were a total of 276 staff members and guests. These parties have been an annual tradition for well over 15 years at SCI Camp Hill and grow in attendance every year. A special thank you to the ERA for holding such special events.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Barber Shop Cosmetology Tool and Equipment Initiative

SCI Retreat officials, working with the prison's Community Development Organization—The Junior Chamber of Commerce—entered into an initiative to provide paroling inmates with tools to help them obtain employment upon release from prison.

"The Barber Shop Cosmetology Tool and Equipment Initiative" began thanks to a conversation between Vocational Barber Instructor Christopher Serge and Parole Supervisor Jack Aversa. Each recognized how difficult it is for a reentrant to show potential employers the skills they have learned without having the tools of the trade.

They approached the prison's Community Development Organization and asked them to pay for the purchasing of a barber tools/equipment kit that would be given to a reentrant who would be paroling. It was decided to give the kit to a paroling individual (rather than someone maxing out) so that the parole agent could offer support to the individual throughout the length of his parole



supervision. This also holds the reentrant accountable for the equipment, guaranteeing it would be used as intended.

The first recipient of this initiative was Reentrant Joel Kenkelen, who was paroled and picked up the tool kit from the Chester District Office.

"I feel inspired to give back to my community and show my gratitude," Kenkelen said. "I appreciate all of the people who recognized and cared enough to give me such a wonderful gift. I intend to offer free haircuts within my community. Again, I am very grateful and thank you so much."



Pictured from left: Parole Agent Latrice Jarvis; Reentrant Joel Kenkelen; Parole Supervisor Colin Kelley; and Deputy District Director Freddie Joe.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

2019 SECA Campaign Results

In 2019, as part of the State Employee Combined Appeal (SECA) Campaign, Department of Corrections employees donated more than \$501,500. Over the past seven years, employees donated more than \$3.6 million to SECA charities.

SECA is the commonwealth's annual charitable giving campaign, through which state employees may donate to any of approximately 1,000 participating non-profit agencies. The valuable services these agencies provide range from conserving our natural resources to providing assistance to the elderly, finding a cure for cancer, or providing shelter for a needy family - in Pennsylvania, across the nation or around the world.

The campaign runs for eight weeks each fall and gives employees the opportunity to donate via recurring payroll deduction, one-time payroll deduction, or check or money order.

SECA and its participating charities are registered with the PA Department of State's Bureau of Charitable Organizations. Charities are reviewed for financial and program accountability.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

DOC Welcomes New Clinical Dietitian

Anne Brown has been appointed the DOC's clinical dietitian and will begin her DOC career later this month. Brown replaces DOC Clinical Dietitian Margaret Gordon, who is retiring Jan. 24, after more than 20 years of service. Best of luck, Margaret.



Anne Brown

Brown is a Pennsylvania native who received her degree in nutrition and dietetics from Messiah College. She has been practicing as a registered dietitian for more than 14 years and has had the opportunity to experience a wide array of practice settings and types of work that have helped her to hone a variety of skills as they relate to food and nutrition. Brown started her career in clinical nutrition and has consistently been employed in healthcare settings ranging from long term care facilities to large teaching hospitals. Her most recent tenure was as the clinical nutrition manager for a regional hospital in Indiana.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Quehanna Boot Camp Holds Staff Holiday Meal

As a thank-you to all Quehanna Boot Camp staff, the QBC Empowerment Committee hosted a holiday meal for all three shifts on Jan. 8. A delicious meal of stuffed chicken breast, ham, scalloped potatoes, baby carrots and green beans almandine was catered by Catering by Paulette and an assortment of desserts was donated by staff. On the 0600-1400 shift, the meal was served by Captain Carter and Major Blake.



Margaret Gordon



Retirees were invited to participate as well. With the treacherous weather conditions that day, only seven retirees were able to make it. It is always wonderful to spend time with our retirees! The meal was excellent and everyone enjoyed the camaraderie.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Training Academy Hosts Medical Marijuana Workshop for DOC Staff

Parole field supervision staff attended the Medical Marijuana: What You Need to Know workshop at the DOC Training Academy on Jan. 14.

The training was conducted by John Collins, the director of medical marijuana at the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The training was coordinated by Parole Office of Field Services due to requests from agents in the field to learn more about medical marijuana. Approximately 100



individuals attended the training from parole, DOC, BCC, community providers and County Corrections and Probation Departments. Deputy Secretary of Parole Field Services Christian Stephens opened the workshop with an overview of the Commonwealth's Medical Marijuana Program. Collins reviewed topics such as the Medical Marijuana Act, the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, how patients, caregivers, and physicians access the program, the production, distribution and acquisition of medical marijuana, regulatory requirements for product packaging, labeling and ID card production, and how research is provided for under the law.

Parole agents have been directed to treat medical marijuana as they would treat any other prescribed medication, and this training just further educated them on the topic.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Department of Corrections Submits SCI Retreat Final Report to Governor, Legislative Leadership

Department of Corrections Executive Deputy Secretary Tabb Bickell announced that the Department of Corrections submitted its SCI Retreat final report to Governor Tom Wolf and the minority and majority leaders of both the House and Senate. That final report recommends the closure of the facility.

A final decision will be forthcoming. The final report is available on the [DOC website](#).

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Collection of Fines, Costs and Restitution Rate Increased

Per an update to Act 84, the DOC is now legally required to deduct money from inmate accounts to satisfy any debts inmates owe for fines, costs or restitution. The new law requires the monetary deductions be at least 25 percent of deposits made to inmate accounts.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Veteran 'X' Begins at Huntingdon

On the third floor, in a brick building, some men are taking seats at tables set up in a U-shape. They are there attending a relatively new veterans' group being offered at SCI Huntingdon. The meeting is called to attention, everyone stands up and they start with the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America. Then they read from laminated cards together a "Veteran's Creed." Ages range from 26 up to 70 years, and they come from both urban and rural backgrounds. The room they are in has large screen TV at the head of it, with an 18-slide slideshow going along with the format the group is supposed to follow.



From left: Veteran X Founder Thomas Pratt; Facilitator Sherri McGhee-Brenneman; Master Trainer Cary Adkins; SCI Huntingdon CO1 Cupp; and SCI Huntingdon CC2 C. Banks

This "new group" is called Veteran 'X' and has only been offered to incarcerated veterans at SCI Huntingdon for just a few months. There are patriotic murals on all the walls to help with the atmosphere. Veteran 'X' itself is not exactly a new group—Thomas E. Pratt, a Peer Specialist at the Hampton VA Medical Center in Hampton, Virginia, founded it in 2009. Since its founding, it has enrolled more than 3,000 voluntary participants at the Hampton VA Medical Center alone and has expanded to include a Veteran "Hope" program (female-only version). It has also grown to include dozens of other Veterans' Affairs facilities from the Carolinas to Pennsylvania, and as far out west as Colorado. Initially, it was founded under a Recovery Model for substance abuse treatment, but it is currently in the process of becoming an evidence-based treatment program under a suicide prevention model. The format of the Veteran 'X' group allows it a wide range in the way it can help any one participant. It can be an educational class, a support or therapeutic group, and even a veteran organization depending on how the veteran participating views it. The truth is that it is a blend of all of those. It can also be a reentry class.

Though the Veteran 'X' program has existed for 10 years, it has just started this new chapter for incarcerated veterans at SCI Huntingdon. It has crossed from being offered at and by the VA to being offered within the Pennsylvania DOC by Huntingdon staff. This new setting has provided a challenge though; the version of the group that existed previously (operated at VA medical centers) could not be

operated in the exact same way within a correctional setting. The VA trained DOC staff facilitators worked diligently with Veteran 'X' Master Trainers and the Veteran 'X' Implementation Team to make the transition as smooth as possible. The main goal is to offer as close to the same group within a correctional setting as is offered at dozens of VA facilities around the country. Ideally, any reentrant who would participate in the Incarcerated Veteran 'X' should be able to go to a VA Veteran 'X' upon their release and have them correlate directly.

On Jan. 7, SCI Huntingdon hosted Veteran 'X' Master Trainer Cary Adkins, Veteran 'X' Facilitator Sherri McGhee-Brenneman and Veteran 'X' Program Founder Thomas Pratt for a certifying visit. As a result, SCI Huntingdon has just been certified as the first Incarcerated Veteran 'X' group in the nation. That means that this century-old building can continue to offer a brand-new veterans group.

Comments from the certification team: "SCI Huntingdon is noted to be one of best Veteran 'X' programs observed throughout Veterans Affairs and community-based programs nationally."

"SCI Huntingdon staff facilitators are some of the most professional, most dedicated, and most engaged."

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Around the Centers...

CTC Braddock Reentrants Continue to Serve

A total of 15 CTC Braddock reentrants participated in the Braddock Borough Beautification Initiative in early January. CTC Braddock reentrants volunteered more than 30 community service hours to the Braddock community.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~



Week of January 6, 2020...

New Opportunities for CIT Training in BCC, Parole

The Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) program is a community partnership of law enforcement, mental health and addiction professionals, individuals who live with mental illness and/or addiction disorders, their families, and other advocates. It is an innovative first-responder model of police-based crisis intervention training to help persons with mental disorders and/or addictions access medical treatment rather than place them in the criminal justice system due to illness-related behaviors. It also promotes officer safety and the safety of the individual in crisis.



Above: BCC Crisis Intervention Team Officers

Below: CIT Allegheny Group Photo

CIT is a program that provides the foundation necessary to promote community and statewide solutions to assist individuals with a mental illness and/or addictions. The CIT model reduces both stigma and the need for further involvement with the criminal justice system. CIT provides a forum for effective problem solving regarding the interaction between the criminal justice and mental health care system and creates the context for sustainable change.



Research shows that communities that prescribe to the CIT Program model, have higher success rates in resolving serious crisis situations. The basic goals of the CIT program are to improve officer and consumer safety and to help persons with mental disorders and/or addictions access medical treatment rather than place them in the criminal justice system due to illness related behaviors.

In 2017, the DOC received a Justice and Mental Health Collaboration grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance

to implement "CIT for Community Correction Centers" in three counties (Berks, Mercer, Allegheny). In Allegheny and Mercer, the DOC worked with local partners to build on existing frameworks, including participating in CIT trainings hosted in those counties.

CIT Training was provided in Allegheny County the week of December 16, 2019. Participants included various members of Law Enforcement, Pennsylvania Board of Probation and Parole, Pennsylvania Department of Corrections-Bureau of Community Corrections (BCC), reentry staff as well as various Treatment & Behavioral Health Organizations. CIT is more than just training. Participants learn that successful diversion requires accessible crisis services. True collaboration can occur only when law enforcement, correctional staff, behavioral health agencies, and families and advocates have a clear understanding of and respect for each other's roles in a CIT program. Participants (Photographed L to R, 2nd Row) Renewal Inc. MH Case Manager Matt Sloan, Renewal Inc. Intake Coordinator Bailey Frisco, Renewal Inc. Clinical Supervisor Chris Denard, DOC Parole Supervisor Robert Fassinger, DOC Parole Agent 2 John Michelli, were presented Certificates of Completion by Pittsburgh/Allegheny CIT Coordinator Dr. Patty Poloka (Photographed Center, 1st Row). In addition, they were provided the official PA DOC BCC & PBPP CIT Pin acknowledging them as CIT Officers by DOC BCC, CIT Coordinator-Region 3 CFC Danielle Steele.

The federal grant supported efforts to develop CIT trainings in Berks County, where DOC hosted two 40-hour CIT trainings at the DOC Training Academy in July and November 2019. These trainings were held for BCC and parole employees as well as community partners.

In August of 2019, DOC BCC Corrections Evaluation Specialist Sara Breen, DOC Counselor Jim Kehoe and CFC Steele participated in the CIT International Conference held in Seattle, WA (pictured below). All three completed the CIT Coordinator Certification Program and had the opportunity to network with various law enforcement/correctional staff from throughout the US and beyond.



The CIT International Conference will be held in Pittsburgh, PA August 24-26, 2020. The Official Host is Dr. Patty Poloka. To register for the conference or to become a sponsor please go to: <http://citinternational.org/events>

More CIT trainings will be held for BCC and parole employees in Berks, Mercer, Allegheny in 2020. Please contact Sara Breen (sabreen@pa.gov) for more information.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Food Pantry Thanks Albion CWP

The Northwestern Food Pantry sent the following letter of appreciation to the Community Work Program at SCI Albion:



Northwestern Food Pantry
1 Robb & Powell Ave
Albion, PA 16401-1501



December 31, 2019

SCI Albion CWP Program
C/O Ashley Tatman
10745 Rt 18
Albion, PA 16475

The Northwestern Food Pantry Board of Directors wishes to express our sincere appreciation for all the support that we have received in the last year from the CWP crews, Ashley Tatman and your administration. Without your CWP program we would not be able to provide adequate transportation for the large amount of foods from the Second Harvest Food Bank in Erie to our pantry facility. The CWP supervisors and the inmates are always courteous to our volunteers and helpful in moving the delivered product into the pantry and placing it wherever we want it.

This summer the team leader Rob Harvey and several inmates assisted us in painting the entire pantry floor with several coats of paint and did a professional job for us.

Your program was also able to get assistance from SCI - Cambridge Springs to transport special Thanksgiving and Christmas food deliveries on the Friday before our Saturday food distributions which was extremely helpful.

Our volunteers are elderly so we greatly appreciate the help from the CWP crew with moving the heavy cases of product inside the pantry.

As an example of the number of families we serve, in December we served 240 families representing 722 individuals so your support is helping many community lives.

The scripture from Proverbs 19:17 best reflects this donation; "He who is kind to the poor lends to the Lord and he will repay them for their deed."

Thank you again for your support,



Steve Smith – Pantry Director

The Northwestern Food Pantry is a 501C3 non-profit organization

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Erie Parole Agents Participate in Shop with a Hero

Agents from the DOC Erie District Office participated in the Shop with a Hero program. This is coordinated by Pennsylvania State Police Troop E, and all law enforcement agencies in Erie and Crawford Counties are eligible to participate. Money is raised and eligible children get to shop with one of the law enforcement personnel and have a budget to spend on their families for Christmas. Agents Lori Kline, Chuck Page, Shannon Pietrasiewicz, Mike Davis, Kelly Sweny, Beth Servidio, Karen Johnson, Jennifer Hart, Daniel Bowen, Mindy Davis and Marnie Sommers participated. The agents split up so that Parole had participation at 5 different locations.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Retreat Employees Organize Neighborhood Clean-Up

On Jan. 4, a clean-up effort sponsored by employees of SCI Retreat brought more than 45 volunteers out to several areas of Alden Mountain in Newport Township. The employees partnered with the Eastern PA Coalition for Abandoned Mine Reclamation, New Roots Recovery Support Center and the Nanticoke Conservation Club for these efforts. Nearly 90 illegally dumped tires were picked up from several unnamed tributaries to the South Branch of Newport Creek, as well as other areas along the roadside.



An entire porch with lead-based paint was removed from the North Branch Land Trust entrance road to the Alden Mountain Conservation Property, a hot tub, front ends of several cars, a box spring and a coiled mattress, a kids' plastic playset table, a toilet and an estimated 60 bags of trash were collected. Retreat Employees Association and Pennsylvania State Corrections Officers Association donated funds to provide water, coffee and donuts for all of the volunteers, as well as a hot lunch of pizza and wings following the clean-up. This was a great way for SCI Retreat staff to thank the local community for all of their support.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Rodriguez Named Employee of the Quarter at Coal Township

Superintendent Thomas McGinley recently announced SCI Coal Township's Employee of the Quarter recipient for the 4th quarter of 2019: Corrections Officer Art Rodriguez.

McGinley commended Rodriguez for consistently performing his duties as a true corrections professional and said Rodriguez does an exceptional job wherever needed on shift. Also, as the Ion Scan Officer working in the administration building, he is one of the first employees a visitor will come in contact with.

"Officer Rodriguez always treats visitors with respect while maintaining a professional and positive attitude," McGinley said.

Rodriguez also serves as Coal Township's CERT Leader.

"His leadership in this role is second to none," McGinley said.

Rodriguez ensures that CERT is maintained at the highest level in DOC training. Training Coordinator John Gregorowicz said Rodriguez is truly an asset to the training program at Coal Township, setting an example and always willing to assist others when needed. Congratulations, CO Rodriguez!

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Albion Inmates Participate in Mental Health First Aid Training

On Dec. 11, 2019, Steve Krivonak and Samantha Schaupp, representatives from the Erie NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) presented Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) training for inmates at SCI Albion. This training was sponsored by the Suicide Prevention Committee as part of Albion's endeavor as an institution to decrease suicide and increase knowledge of mental health issues in general.

Mental Health First Aid training focuses on educating people on the first steps to take when someone may be facing a mental health crisis or dealing with an ongoing mental health diagnosis. It also educates people on the characteristics and traits



Pictured from left: Keith Trip, Major of the Guard; Thomas McGinley, Superintendent; Art Rodriguez, CO1; Renee Foulds, Major of Unit Management; Bill Nicklow, Deputy Superintendent for Facilities Management.

associated with a plethora of mental health diagnoses. Suicide prevention is also a component that is covered during this training. This training is the exact training that all DOC employees are required to have.

Given research indicating that an inmate is more likely to approach another inmate as opposed to staff when considering suicide, it was decided that this training would be extremely beneficial for the inmate population. There were 25 inmates who attended the training, and each was nominated by his unit teams. The inmates received workbooks and official certificates from NAMI following completion of their day-long training. Each participant showed respect, motivation and a true desire to learn new material as it relates to suicide prevention and mental health in general. Additionally, the inmates had the opportunity to participate in many group activities related to the material. Following the training, the representatives from NAMI thanked the inmates for their participation and emphasized that they had been the "best, most attentive and respectful audience we have ever had." Kudos to NAMI for their willingness to come to our prison and present such a valuable training opportunity for the inmates. Moving forward, NAMI has agreed to come back to Albion and train additional inmates.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Camp Hill RTU Inmates Fold Cranes for Hope

Throughout history, birds have been viewed as animals of special value and have been laden with meanings often derived from legends and stories that have survived over many generations. In Japanese, Chinese and Korean tradition, cranes stand for good fortune and longevity because of their fabled life span of a thousand years. The powerful wings of the crane were believed to be able to convey souls up to paradise and to carry people to higher levels of spiritual enlightenment. Over time, the crane has also evolved as a favorite subject of the tradition of paper folding: origami. It is said that a thousand folded cranes, one for each year of its life, makes a wish come true.



Today this practice of folding 1,000 cranes represents a form of healing and hope during challenging times. Cranes are often given to someone suffering from illness,

as a prayer for their recovery, as a wish for happiness, and as an expression of sympathy and peace.



In following the tradition of the legend of the crane, the SCI Camp Hill RTU is folding cranes to fulfill wishes for peace, hope and recovery for those who have been affected by suicide or those who are presently living with mental illness.

~ ~ ~ ~ ~

Around the Centers...

Church Provides Christmas Party for Reentrants

On Dec. 21, residents from Tomorrow's Hope were treated to a Christmas party provided by a local church group. The church group provided pizza, salads and many homemade desserts. All the residents participated in the many activities, including group singing of favorite Christmas songs and raffles for prizes. This was a great turnout and all the residents seemed to enjoy themselves. This was another great way for the community and Tomorrow's Hope residents to interact and enjoy the holidays together.



~ ~ ~ ~ ~