

Corrections Connections

Illinois Department of Corrections | Newsletter

Winter 2025

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Message from Leadership

Dear IDOC Staff and Stakeholders,

I am thrilled to announce the return of the "Corrections Connection" newsletter! We have listened to your feedback and decided to bring back this valuable communication tool to keep everyone informed and connected.

In addition to the revival of the newsletter, I am excited to share some highlights of the incredible accomplishments of our Staff Wellness Response Team. Over the last year, the team has focused on promoting physical and mental well-being in the workplace. From organizing wellness workshops to offering resources for stress management, they are dedicated to supporting the health and happiness of our staff.

We believe that by bringing back the "Corrections Connection" newsletter and highlighting the vital work of our staff, we can create a more informed and supportive work environment for all.

Our dedicated and hardworking Staff Wellness Response Team has made a significant impact on the well-being of our employees. I'm excited to highlight some of their key achievements from the last year:

1. **Podcast The 4th Shift: Mind, Body, Badge:** Our team launched a monthly podcast hosted by Luke Fairless and Jose Valentin, focusing on the eight dimensions of wellness to provide valuable insights and resources to our staff. It has been a great success in promoting overall well-being.
2. **"Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment" Course:** Over 2,000 employees have benefitted from this course, helping them combat fatigue and find fulfillment in their work. The impact of this initiative has been truly commendable.
3. **Corrections Family Wellness Workshop:** Our team pioneered the first Corrections Family Wellness Workshop in the nation, providing support not just for our employees but also for their families. This initiative underscores our commitment to holistic well-being.
4. **Peer-to-Peer Support:** Our team conducted over 10,000 peer-to-peer sessions, offering valuable resources and a listening ear to our staff. This support system is instrumental in helping staff navigate challenges and access the help they need.
5. **Promotion of Wellness:** From the executive level to the front-line staff, SWRT has been instrumental in promoting a culture of well-being across all levels of the Department. Their efforts have made a positive impact on our workplace environment.
6. **Listening Sessions:** Our team organized listening sessions for frontline staff to openly communicate with executive staff about wellness in a correctional setting. This open dialogue has helped us better understand and address the well-being needs of our employees.

I want to extend my heartfelt gratitude to our Staff Wellness Response Team for their outstanding efforts and commitment to supporting the well-being of our employees. Their work has truly made a difference, and I encourage all of you to take advantage of the resources and support they provide.

Thank you for your dedication, hard work, and support,

Jonathan Brown
Staff Wellness Program Administrator



Jonathan Brown
Staff Wellness Program
Administrator

Behind the Badge:

Spotlight on Sandy Seibert

With over two decades of dedication to IDOC, Sandy Seibert is a true asset to the department. Since joining in 2001, he has served in the Juvenile Division in Kewanee and now works as a Supply Supervisor at East Moline. Beyond his daily responsibilities, Sandy wears many hats—he's an active job recruiter, screener, and was a longtime TACT team member. He also served as the Northern Regional Coordinator for the Staff Wellness Team for three years and remains a passionate instructor for CF2F.

Outside of work, Sandy has been married for 10 years and enjoys traveling, kayaking, and golfing with his two dogs—Nellie, a Pit Bull, and Olive, a Pug.

Sandy is a strong advocate for increasing staff morale, believing that the hard work of IDOC employees deserves greater recognition and incentives. As a regional coordinator, he ensures his team members feel encouraged, supported, and informed.

His commitment to giving back extends beyond IDOC. Sandy is actively involved in community organizations and charitable causes, including raising money for Special Olympics through the Chicago Plane Pull and Polar Plunge, which he has participated in for the past five years.

A die-hard St. Louis Cardinals fan, Sandy's passion for his team is just as strong as his dedication to IDOC. If you see him, be sure to ask about his Cardinals memorabilia!

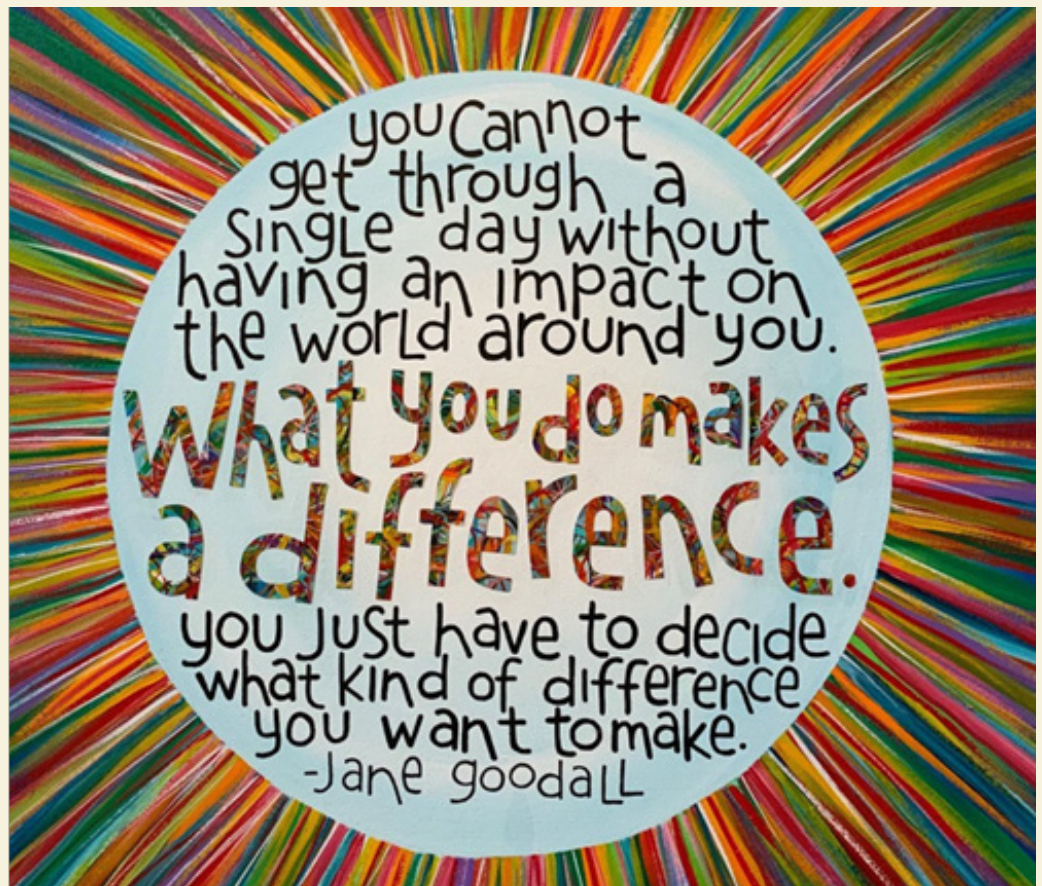
Thank you, Sandy, for your hard work, leadership, and commitment to IDOC and the community! You truly deserve the spotlight!



Sandy with Ellie, a therapy pony from White Horse Ministries LLC at the Mendota Police Department.

Motivational Quote of the Month

courtesy of Chaplain Lambert-Goheen



Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center and Illinois River Correctional Center Earn ACA Re-Accreditation

Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center and Illinois River Correctional Center recently achieved re-accreditation from the American Correctional Association (ACA), demonstrating their ongoing commitment to excellence in correctional operations. ACA accreditation requires facilities to meet rigorous standards across all aspects of operations, including safety, security, healthcare, dietary services, programs, and administration.

The re-accreditation process included on-site surveys— Illinois River's took place October 7-10, 2024, and Kewanee's followed on October 28-30, 2024. The final step was a panel hearing on January 11 at the ACA Winter Conference, attended by IDOC Chief Compliance Officer Michael Crum and Jon Fatheree, Manager of the Office of Administrative Directives Standards.

After the conference, Wardens Carothers and Jones accepted their accreditation certificates, which were presented by Chief Crum at January's Wardens Meeting.

This achievement highlights the dedication and hard work of facility staff and the Office of Administrative Directives Standards Unit, reinforcing IDOC's ongoing commitment to maintaining the highest standards in correctional operations. Congratulations to both facilities on this well-earned recognition!



Pontiac CC Spreads Holiday Cheer Through Angel Tree Program

In the 2024 holiday season, Pontiac Correctional Center proudly partnered with the Salvation Army to support the Angel Tree program, bringing joy to local families in need. Staff members generously fulfilled tags from the tree, while individuals in custody contributed donations, recognizing the program's impact on their own families over the years.

Together, Pontiac CC donated nearly 100 gifts and raised \$2,000 for the local Salvation Army, making a meaningful difference in the community. Thank you to everyone who participated in making the holidays a little brighter!



Dimensions of Wellness: Environmental

Greetings to the IDOC family. I am going to talk about the 8 Dimensions of Wellness. If you attended an “All Things You” class, then you already know about them. If you did not, then this article is for you. The 8 Dimensions of Wellness includes: physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, environmental, occupational, social, and intellectual. These are independent wellnesses, and all are very important for great health, but they also work together. Just ignoring one can throw many, if not all down, with that one dimension you do not work on.

This article, I am going to talk about environmental wellness. This one has many different sides to it. It has to do with the environment and how your behavior can impact the earth, but it also has to do with who you surround yourself with and how it affects you emotionally, the way you act, and the way you live your life.

How can you change your environmental wellness, so it doesn't only affect you but those around you? Think about it. Do I add to the wellness of the earth or is what I am doing not only hurting the world around me but also those who all live in it? If you realize that you are not putting forth effort towards helping the environment, then here are a few simple things you can do to start.

The first thing you can do is start recycling. I am guilty of this one. It is so easy to just throw everything away or burn it just to get rid of it. Once we become aware of how we are not contributing to the wellness of the environment then we can start by recycling. Find out if your community has a recycling plant or if there is a committee that collects recycled items. Once you find out where you need to take your recycled items, then you can get started. You will add a few more tubs to your garage, but it is well worth it.

Another way is to start conserving resources within your own house. Conserving water is a great way to contribute. Only use what you need. When you are brushing your teeth shut the water off in between brushing. This will save millions of gallons of water over the years. You can also conserve energy. If you are not using it, then turn it off. This goes for not only the tv but lights throughout your house. Not only does it help the environment, but it also helps your wallet each month. Learn about chemicals in the house and how they can affect you and your family. So many things we use daily are not safe for us, from cleaning supplies to hygiene. You would be amazed at what you are exposing your body to every single day. Once you see what you should not be using then replace them with



all natural items by purchasing them or making them yourself. If you deplete your life of chemicals, you would be amazed how you feel daily.

Last, we will talk about those around you. My grandmother always said that if you roll around in trash then you become trash. I didn't understand what she meant by that until I got older. Those we surround ourselves around are who we become. You may not realize it at first but gradually you will start to blend in with your environment whether it is friends, family, co-workers, or acquaintances. Humans are like a nice new sponge. If you take this sponge and throw it in a puddle of mud, oil, bacteria, and spillage then that sponge is going to absorb it. If you take another new sponge and throw it in a beautiful sparkly puddle of water, then you will absorb that instead. If you find yourself stuck in the puddle of mud, then you need to figure out who you need to eliminate from your environment or how you can eliminate yourself from the toxic environment.

You can start by hanging out with people who you feel happy with. Those who don't bring you down but praise your accomplishments. Those who help you achieve all your goals or support you in bettering your life. Be around those who are smarter than you because you will absorb that intelligence. Those who make you feel good about yourself and push you to live a healthy lifestyle versus a toxic one. Eventually the toxic ones you used to be around all the time will disappear, and you will be living your best life like you should have been living all along.

Stay positive even when you feel down, smile when you are sad, and laugh when you want to cry. Challenge yourself so you can be grateful for your accomplishments and feel meaning in your life. You will be amazed at how life changes for you when you just start making a few or all these environmental changes that I mentioned in this article. There are many more you can do in the future, but small steps are a great way to start.

From Cadet to Educator: My Journey with IDOC

by Jennifer Morgan

I became an Educator for IDOC in July 2015 at Pinckneyville Correctional Center, where I was hired to teach Mandatory Adult Basic Education. When I heard that the Murphysboro Life Skills Re-Entry Center would be opening, I anxiously awaited as callbacks were made to Educators who had worked in Murphysboro's last facility. Then, the Educators at PNKCC were called in order of seniority. When I received the call, I immediately said, "Yes!" I began teaching at the Murphysboro Re-Entry Center with an amazing group of Educators in February 2018 and have been here since.

The road to becoming an Educator for IDOC was not smooth, nor was it downhill. I faced many obstacles. I began applying as an Educator for IDOC in 2007, with a Master of Education in Curriculum and Instruction and teaching experience "in the world" but never got an interview. In 2014 I took my husband's advice and started applying for any IDOC position to get my foot in the door. I was called in August 2014 to interview for an Office Coordinator position at Centralia Correctional Center. At the same time, I was called to begin COT training for Pinckneyville Correctional Center. I didn't know which one to choose, but PNKCC was closer to my house and the CO position started with a higher wage. So, in September 2014, I left my three-year-old son, my husband, and my two stepsons at home and left for the academy on a Monday morning.

Based on the stories I have heard, the current training academy is not like it was back in 2014. You could not take your cell phone; you were allotted ten minutes per evening during your scheduled time slot to call home. Each day I looked forward to calling my family. I was afraid my son would not remember me, and I was also afraid that he would think I had deserted him. I looked forward to heading home on Friday, trying to remind myself that it was only six weeks. Those six weeks of training were a real struggle. At forty, I was older than most of the other cadets. My body did not adjust well to learning to fall flat on my back on the concrete gym floor. Toward the end of the training was the worst. We had to hold our eyes open while OC was sprayed on our faces. They made it feel like a blessing that they were only spraying it in one of our eyes... needless to say, it hurt... a lot!

At training, we all learned to self-monitor. If you were on red, you were on high alert, which is too nervous if nothing was wrong. Yellow was alert, but not too relaxed. Green was too relaxed. The first day that the other COTs and I entered the walk at PNKCC, I immediately went to red, because I realized that I was too relaxed, too "on green"! I felt safer walking around the prison than I felt at the high school where I had previously spent five years teaching "out in the world".

Although we had finished training at the academy, the real-life training began that first day at PNKCC where I shadowed seasoned Correctional Officers and tried to pay close attention to what they were saying and doing. I followed so closely that the first officer I shadowed had to tell me, "Morgan, I'm just going to the bathroom. Go find something to do!" I was so embarrassed!

After training, I was blessed to draw S/S off on the day shift. Of course, I was soon bumped. First to F/S, day shift, then to R/F day shift, and so on, until I was finally bumped to second shift. From the beginning, I worked all of the overtime that I could. Since my husband was an officer at Centralia CC, and there were three children at home, if he got called first, he took the shift. If I got called first, I took the shift.

In June 2015, I was able to promote laterally to an Educator position, where I stayed until the MLSRC opened. The biggest financial blessing of being an educator is being able to work overtime as an officer, as a last resort, of course.

Currently, I am halfway to retirement. I have ten years with IDOC as of September 2024. Although it was a struggle getting here, and some days are harder than others, overall, it has definitely been worth it. Even though Educators at IDOC do not get summers off like public school teachers, the pay is good, I have weekends off (unless I work overtime, which I usually do), and I know that I am safe because I have been through the training that the officers here have been through.

Finding Balance:

Navigating the Challenges of IDOC Life

Staff Viewpoint By Anonymous

I've been working for IDOC for just over two years. When I first started, my co-workers would ask if I had transferred from another state job. My response? "No, I worked in the public school system." That response was often met with an extended, "Ohhhh!" along with a head nod. I felt like the one word and the head nod were acknowledgement of me not knowing what I'd signed up for! I would then explain that I may be new to IDOC, but I'm not "green." In my role in the public sector, I worked with at risk high school students, some of whom had already experienced time with IDJJ. I've said on more than one occasion that it wasn't a huge shift to go from that population to this one!

Then there is the fact that my parents both retired from IDOC about six years ago, after 20 years of service. They worked in the central region and were heavily involved with the drive to have a Super Max built in the area in the mid-90s. Tamms eventually won out, and a work camp was built near their location, instead. Because of their involvement in IDOC, I learned the ropes as best I could from the perspective as a child of an IDOC employee. I learned the terms of the day like 'kite', 'seg' and when the language shifted from inmate to individual in custody. I was also lucky enough to be hired as a summer intern, fresh out of high school. That summer, I worked with the education and timekeeping staff, shuffling papers and learning as much as I could. What I didn't expect to learn was the amount of stress that is involved in working in a facility.

My parents kept a pretty tight lid on the big things: staff assaults, riots, and the like. But as a kid, I was not immune to the stress my parents sometimes exuded from their pores, even though they hardly said a word in front of my brother and me. Looking back, I can see why.

Even in my short time with IDOC, I can see the stress that this job has on my co-workers. In my role, I don't deal with housing unit issues, shakedown, and yard fights. I'm on the fringe, and I'm ok with that. (So are my parents and children, by the way!) But even in my daily tasks, I must consider every move I make, the daily schedule I keep – things I never considered 'in the world'. It really has made me hypervigilant when out in public. My head is constantly on a swivel. I don't think I'm jaded to the public, as some IDOC staff can become...at least not yet! I hope I don't get that way!

I guess my point here is that by knowing all these things about IDOC, or at least how it CAN be, albeit from a former outsider's perspective, I have worked hard in my personal life to not let those day-to-day stressful events affect my relationships with my family and friends outside of work. My husband and I make sure we have a weekly date night where the daily grind is seldom a topic of conversation. We enjoy trap and

other similar outdoor sports and make a conscious effort to participate as often as we can. I make an extra effort to visit with my kids, even when it's been 'A DAY', and ask them to tell me things about their day.

I have found, as of late, that I am less prone to the public scene these days! After work, I'd rather hang out at home with my chickens and goats than be around people. I think the work environment is directly related to that shift in my otherwise quite social personality. To be honest I hadn't noticed that shift in my personality until I recently attended CF2F.

It was there, during some conversations with other IDOC staff, that I REALLY realized the toll that this job was taking on me without even knowing it! Throughout the two days, I began to understand that I needed to really be aware of my inner health as much as my outer health. Although SWRT is a relatively new thing in the vast history of IDOC, I'm glad that it's around. I think everyone should take the opportunity to attend CF2F. In my opinion, the training really hits home on two major things: 1. there are others who feel just like you do in your work and home life – regardless of what that is! 2. the situations discussed, and the suggestions offered do make you realize that this job CAN have a negative impact on all parts of your life, but only if you let it!

Facility History :

Menard Correctional Center Overview

Welcome back to Corrections Connections' first installment of facility histories! Let's get into the long history of the 145-year-old prison – Menard Correctional Center. Currently, Menard consists of three components – the main prison, the Medium Security Unit, and the Reception & Classification Center – under the leadership of Warden Anthony Wills.

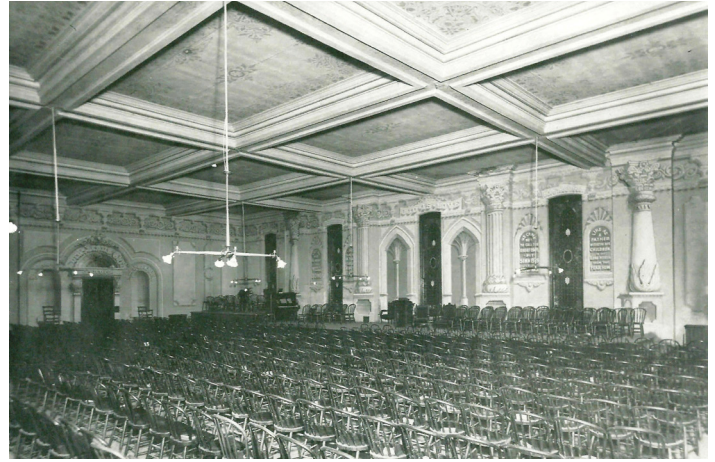
Prior to becoming Menard CC, the facility had three other names. In 1877, when the facility was authorized to be built due to overcrowding in the Illinois State Penitentiary at Joliet, it was named Southern Illinois Penitentiary at Chester. When the first 200 individuals, including 6 females, were transferred from Joliet in March 1878, the facility was under the direction of its first warden, John C. Salter. Menard housed up to 20 females in 1885 before its female housing ended in 1889. In 1933, the facility's name changed to Illinois State Penitentiary, Menard Branch. Finally, in 1970, it was changed to what we call it today – Menard Correctional Center in honor of Pierre Menard, the first lieutenant governor of Illinois.

The facility was constructed using a Gothic architectural style and featured limestone walls, which gave it a distinctive appearance. Menard's architectural significance has made it a subject of interest for historians, researchers, and the public. In 2018, the Administration Building, a 56,178 square foot, four-story building with an addition constructed in 1878 and 1888 respectively, and the Cold Storage Building, a 14,620 square foot, two-story building constructed in 1937, were demolished.

Menard's main facility opened in March 1878 and has the capacity to house approximately 2,389 individuals. As one of the state's largest maximum-security prisons, it totals more than 2,600 acres, with 41 acres enclosed by fences, and is comprised of 155 buildings totaling 1,294,000 square feet. The center of the prison consists of five housing units, a receiving and orientation unit, restrictive housing unit, a health care unit, and a Medium Security Unit. To put into perspective, that's three times the size of Illinois River CC! At the main facility, programs are offered such as ABE, GED, Special Education Services, job preparedness, and correspondence classes. Menard is another facility with opportunities for individuals in custody to work in industries. Menard's industries include meat processing; janitorial and cleaning; knitting and sewing; and waste removal and recycling.

In May 1996, Menard added a Medium Security Unit with an X-house design and bedspace for 442 individuals. With programs similar to the main facility, Menard's MSU offers ABE, GED, Lifestyle Redirection, Parole School, Trac 1 Program, work crews, re-entry summits, and more.

In July 2004, Menard added a Reception & Classification Center, which houses 51 individuals in custody as of June



2023. Newly admitted individuals in custody are placed into reception status and housed in a center like this one. During the reception process, various tools are used to determine appropriate placement for the newly received individual in custody. These tools include, but are not limited to speaking to a counselor, mental health, medical, substance abuse screener interviews, and criminal history.

Menard has an extensive and complex history. In 1891, the Illinois Asylum for Insane Criminals was built just south of

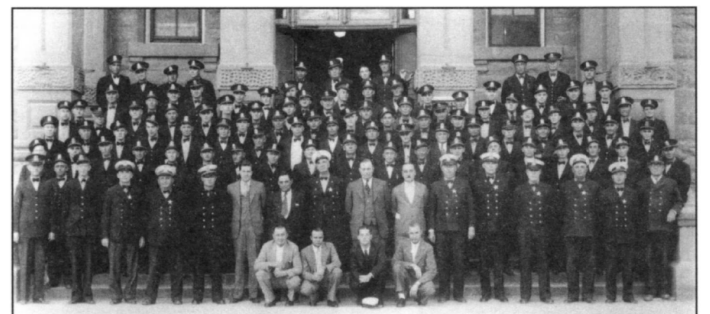
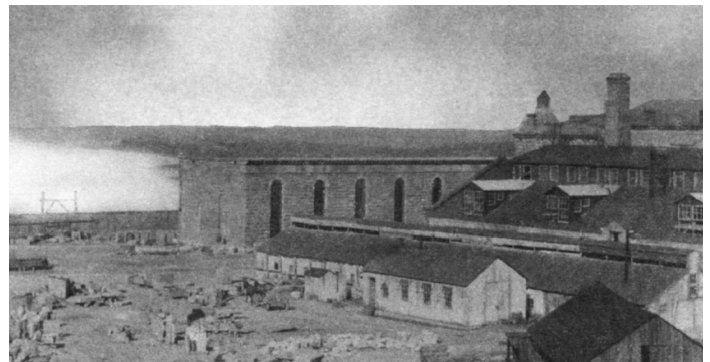
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the facility on its grounds. According to the Illinois Historic American Buildings Survey, it was the first facility of its kind, housing thousands of individuals with mental and developmental disabilities until 1976. Between 1976 and 1996, Menard utilized these former asylum buildings for restrictive housing. By 1931, Menard was also one of only three sites in Illinois where executions were carried out by electrocution. In 2003, the Condemned Unit closed when then Governor George Ryan granted clemency to all individuals on death row in Illinois. In the early days of the facility, according to 'A Historical Survey of the Penal Institutions of Illinois' by Robert Franklin Beals, industries included rock quarrying, foundry, fruit growing, raising cattle, brickmaking and knitting. This report also notes that stripes at the prison were abolished by Warden Smith in 1912, who was also the first warden who attempted to grade individuals in custody. According to the Library of Congress, beginning in 1934, individuals in custody at Illinois State Penitentiary, Menard Branch, published the Menard Time a bi-weekly newspaper, which went monthly in 1949 with 'America's foremost prison newspaper' under its masthead. Notably, in the 1952-53 school year, staff from Southern Illinois University met with staff at the Illinois State Penitentiary to discuss setting up vocational training for individuals in custody at Menard. In 1962, SIU embarked upon an expanded "college program" at Menard and a number went on to study further at SIU and other institutions according to a report 'The University's Role in Prison Education' in a 1966 issue of the Nebraska Law Review.

For those interested in viewing historical documents from Menard, the registry of those incarcerated at Southern Illinois Penitentiary from 1860-1909 are available in the collection 'Register of Illinois Prisons' on the Illinois Digital Archives website at www.idaillinois.org. Materials in that collection are made available by the Illinois State Archives.

Like many long-standing prisons, Menard has experienced tragic incidents during its history, some of which are memorialized every year during the Memorial Wall Ceremony. Over many years, Menard updated its facility to provide better safety to staff along with many changes to daily operations. Menard Correctional Center is one of those prisons that you drive past and just know that it is full of history! Thank you to AWO Kevin Reichert at Menard Correctional Center for providing additional historical information on the facility.



Menard staff photo, about 1933 to 1935. Warden Joseph E. Ragen (with vest and spotted tie) is front center. Source: Illinois State Historical Library.



Department Updates

Update from Deputy Director of Human Resources, Mandy Page:

Human Capital Management (HCM) has been implemented and will be the new electronic personnel system for all staff. The platform went live in February 2024 however has been delayed for users until all data is corrected. More information to come in the near future on how staff will be able to utilize the new innovative way to capture personnel information.

Updates from Chief Compliance Officer, Michael Crum:

Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Update:

The Illinois Department of Corrections is fortunate to have Ryan Nottingham serve as the Agency PREA Coordinator. Ryan is recognized as a subject matter expert, serving as a member of the National PREA Coordinators' Working Group. He will represent the Department at the 6th Annual PREA Coordinators Conference and works tirelessly to assist all IDOC facilities in compliance initiatives.

The Taylorville Correctional Center completed a successful Department of Justice (DOJ) PREA Compliance audit. The facility is 100% compliant with all PREA standards and received an "Exceeds" score for Standard §115.11 – *Zero Tolerance of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment*; PREA Coordinator. The "Exceeds" score is rarely awarded and demonstrates the highest level of compliance. A huge kudos to Taylorville's PREA Compliance Manager, Jennifer Potts and the Agency's PREA Coordinator, Ryan Nottingham.

The Jacksonville Correctional Center also received a 100% compliant PREA audit. The facility accomplished this, while welcoming a new Warden and PREA Compliance Manager. Jon VanWinkle serves as the PREA Compliance Manager for Jacksonville, as well as the facility ADA Coordinator. He is a valuable resource for the facility and the Department. Congratulations to Warden Stempinski and his team!

The East Moline Correctional Center and Illinois River Correctional Center also received 100% compliant reviews during their PREA audits. Both facilities overcame many obstacles, including staff transition, to meet the extremely stringent DOJ standards. Congratulations to Warden Williams and Warden Jones, as well as their respective teams.

Office of Administrative Directives Standards Update:

The Office of Administrative Directives Standards recently held their annual Facility Review Control Officer (FRCO) meeting in Springfield. During this meeting, the team reviews common compliance findings, updates the group on upcoming review items, and recognizes excellence amongst the review team. I want to recognize all of the Facility Review Control Officers

for all of their hard work and dedication toward compliance.

The following staff members were awarded the FRCO of the year for their region.

- Max Blackburn (Dixon Correctional Center), Northern Region
- Schuyler Lauderback (Jacksonville Correctional Center), Central Region
- Julie Sullivan (Big Muddy River Correctional Center), Southern Region

Update from the Office of Health Services:

Medication for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD)- Following guidance from the US Department of Justice and the Americans with Disabilities Act, IDOC is working to make medications (buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone) available to individuals in custody who are in recovery from opioid use disorder.

We'd like to shout out Logan and Decatur Correctional Centers for rolling out successful MOUD pilots in their facilities last summer! Now we are learning from the experience of the Women's Division, and from medical, behavioral health, and correctional experts across the country, as we plan to roll out MOUD across the men's facilities. Medical staff have been trained in MOUD, and education for nonmedical staff is in the pipeline. A Working Policy was just released, providing instruction for the first phase of the MOUD rollout, which is to ensure that any individual in custody transferred into our facilities who has been prescribed MOUD will continue the treatment and that it will not be stopped or unnecessarily delayed.

MOUD is a major project that involves medical, security, clinical, and other staff across our facilities. We thank you for your role in this initiative that keeps IDOC in compliance with federal guidelines, and protects individuals in custody from overdose, death, and hospitalization.

Sincerely,

Dr. William Puga, *Chief of Psychiatry*

Dr. Steven Bowman, *Agency Medical Director*

Lisa Johnson, *Office of Health Services Central Region Coordinator*

Dr. Kimberly Birch, *Deputy Chief of Health Services*

Susan Griffin, *Agency Director of Nursing*

Sophia Manuel, *Policy Advisor for Reform Initiatives*

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Updates from the Office of Adult Education and Vocational Services (OAEVS):

IDJJ Collaboration

OAEVS has been collaborating with the Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) in aiding the potential student population between the ages of 18 and 22 housed in IDOC custody. IDJJ offers high school credit recovery through interactive educational services. The educational platform provided to the population is called Connexus. IDOC has encouraged and enrolled eligible students in the IDJJ pilot program. Individuals that have not completed their high school diploma now have the opportunity through pilot programs at Illinois River and Shawnee Correctional Centers to finish and earn their high school diploma through IDJJ School District #428. While each student is screened for enrollment, transcripts are evaluated by IDJJ, and their individualized education plan is developed and implemented by IDJJ support staff while housed in IDOC custody. IDOC has assisted with supervision, guidance, and monitoring of the population's educational outcomes. IDJJ has provided the educational platform, support services and is working towards hiring full time staff to transition the pilot programs into a full IDJJ program within the IDOC facilities. The expansion of IDJJ within IDOC facilities will open door for all youth to attain their high school diploma from IDJJ School District #428 while in IDOC custody.

Committee Implementation

OAEVS has recently implemented multiple committees. These committees are made up of the members of OAEVS and are designed to use their unique training and skillsets to improve the services offered by the office. Our team at OAEVS is made up of a vast array of backgrounds. We have highly educated and trained professionals who specialize in things like curriculum, counseling, educational leadership, technology, and special education among many other areas. These professionals bring thousands of years of experience with hundreds of years of training at the masters, professional, and doctoral levels. It was our belief that we could use the tools right at our fingertips to begin to build something even better. Currently, we have implemented the following committees: Professional Development, High School Equivalency, Employee Recognition, Reports, TABE, and the AEL committee. These committees are made up of staff from all job titles in the education area that were selected to provide insight from their areas of expertise. Our hope is that we can improve our programming, our policies, our training of new and seasoned staff, and provide a better service to the population we serve.

Professional Development Committee- This committee is focused on improving the development of our staff. In one of its first actions, the committee has scheduled regional staff in-service trainings for the northern, central, and southern

regions. These currently scheduled to take place twice annually and will offer training sessions that were developed through communication with our staff about the resources they felt they needed. The training will bring in outside specialists as well as our own IDOC professionals from various areas of the agency to provide the insight our staff feels they most need to be effective.

TABE Committee- The Test of Adult Basic Education (TABE) is the primary evaluation tool for OAEVS. This test determines what programming students qualify for, and it is used for EPSC evaluations. This committee has already been in the facilities working with our staff at improving our TABE testing process. The committee is made up of tech savvy individuals who are very familiar with the Administrative Directives and TABE policy. They are helping use O360 to make our screening process more thorough. The work being done by this committee will drastically increase our efficiency across our evaluation process. This committee hopes to help in the process of fully digitizing the TABE test in the future.

HSE Committee- The High School Equivalency (HSE) committee was formed to help prepare our HSE staff for the constantly changing world of high school equivalency. It is a group that can be leaned on by those around the state for their knowledge base and experience. The committee ensures that our GED guidelines are aligned with the requirements set at a federal and state level. Other goals include streamlining the program around the state to make it a system that allows for successful completions for our individuals who transfer for various reasons as well. This committee will help bring the latest technology and teaching trends to the IDOC HSE classrooms.

Employee Recognition- This committee was formed to give our staff the opportunity to recognize their peers for outstanding performance. Each quarter an academic educator, vocational educator, library staff, and office coordinator are awarded from each region. All the regional winners for the year are then evaluated and one outstanding staff member from each class is named employee of the year for that class. While we acknowledge we have so many outstanding staff members, it is important to take time and recognize staff members who are consistently performing at a high level.

Reports Committee- This committee was our first in action. They were able to successfully merge many of our mandatory reports. All the necessary data is still reported, but in a much more efficient means. The group also developed a system that allows for all reporting in OAEVS to be done through Microsoft Teams. The system allows for instant saving of data and reduces the need of transferring the data repeatedly.

AEL Committee- The Adult Education Literacy (AEL) Committee is a committee focused on the AEL grant and the specialized work that goes with that grant. This grant secures significant funding for our adult education programs in IDOC. The grant requires special reporting and testing compared to the standards IDOC education programs. The groups focus is

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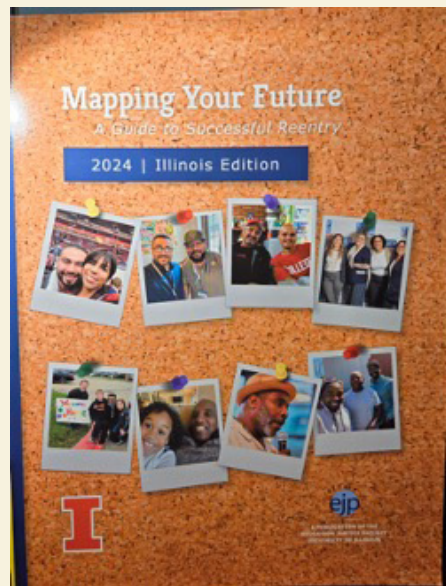
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to ensure that our staff is compliant and has all the necessary training to make this program run successfully. It gives our experienced AEL educators and those who have experience in these programs outside of IDOC a place to share their knowledge and expertise with the next generation of IDOC educators.

Update from the Parole Unit:

Agent Hallie Lardi from the Champaign Parole District 3 office took it upon herself to reach out to the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and request a list of resources that Parole Agents can utilize when referring individuals on Parole for services. The University of Illinois was very happy to not only provide us with an abundance of resource information, but they donated a box of their recent publication called "Mapping Your Future; A Guide to Successful Reentry" (2024 Illinois Edition). This has helped Parole Agents to compile a list of resources that they can provide to their parolees such as how to navigate the DMV processes to acquire their ID's and Driver's license when they have suspensions and fees to pay. The resource guide helps them to apply for benefits and navigate the employment field. The resources also include education, health, trauma, mental health, substance abuse,

transportation, technology, legal matters, finances, voting, veterans, and LGBTQ information. Having this information has helped Parole tremendously. We have a guide ready to provide services and accommodate the needs of the population we supervise in the Champaign area.



East Moline CC Supports Shop With a Cop

East Moline Correctional Center staff once again demonstrated their commitment to the community by participating in this year's **Shop With A Cop** event held at Walmart in Silvis. Their support helped bring holiday joy to local children, reinforcing the importance of positive connections between law enforcement and the community.

Thank you to all the staff who contributed their time and effort to make this event a success! Your dedication to making a difference is truly appreciated.



State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Corrections



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Story ideas, feedback and comments can be submitted to
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DOC.staffwellnessresponseteam@illinois.gov

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