

Corrections Connections

Illinois Department of Corrections | Monthly Newsletter

April 2018

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Message from the Director

Spring is a time of transformation and renewal. In our own lives, the season can serve as a symbol of growth and inspiration. Change can be good, but it is not always easy. Trading familiarity for something new can make us uncomfortable, but it can also make us better. At the Illinois Department of Corrections, positive change is here. If we are all willing to adapt to change, together, we will move this agency forward.

This month, the Illinois Department of Corrections will open its first inpatient mental health facility, Elgin Treatment Center. The facility has a 44 treatment bed capacity for both male and female patients. It offers 24 hour psychiatric care and a multidisciplinary treatment team, which includes psychiatrists, psychologists, activity therapists, registered nurses, social workers, mid-level providers and security staff trained in the area of mental health/crisis intervention.

On April 16, the Department will open its second Reentry Center in Murphysboro. The facility is modeled after the Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center to help put offenders nearing the end of their sentences on a path to success. The IDOC remains laser focused on reducing recidivism. Since January 2015, the offender population has declined 14.8 percent.

It is a great honor to lead this team as we strive to be the finest correctional system in the nation. Always remember, the work you do matters. Thank you for your courage and commitment to your profession.



Director John R. Baldwin

Shawnee Correctional Center Implements Dog Training Program

On March 6, Shawnee Correctional Center's dog program, SWATT (Shawnee Wellness Assistant Therapy Training), received its first class of dogs from Project Hope, a no-kill shelter in Metropolis, Illinois. Over the next three months, the dogs will be trained on basic obedience skills, house training, and socialization. They will be taught and nurtured by offender handlers under the

supervision of volunteer program trainers. The program will provide offenders with an opportunity to interact with a living creature that will not judge, but will love and receive love in return. After completing the program, the dogs will be made available for adoption to military veterans that could benefit from a comfort animal.



Mission: To serve justice in Illinois and increase public safety by promoting positive change in offender behavior, operating successful reentry programs, and reducing victimization.

Pop Tabs for a Purpose

Bureau of Identification technician Sheena Ratliff-Thomas works at the Northern Reception and Classification Center. She has worked for Stateville Correctional Center for 17 years. Ratliff-Thomas began the initiative Pop Tab Palooza, in collaboration with the Ronald McDonald House, by collecting aluminum tabs from beverage cans. Thus far, she has collected over 41 gallons, the equivalent to an average of \$3 per gallon. Money raised allows Ronald McDonald House to

continue providing supportive services, while keeping families close as their children receive treatment at St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. "Most fundraising is asking for people's financial donation. This is simply just asking for a small piece of what someone is going to throw away or recycle," said Ratliff-Thomas.



Celebrating Black History Month

East Moline Correctional Center celebrated Black History Month with several engaging events. An ethnic meal was prepared for Offenders and Staff on each Wednesday of the month. An Essay Contest for offenders was conducted with the top three essays being awarded an extra commissary shop and a certificate. Our winning essays were:

1st Place: Offender Rudy Villareal (B40721) – “We the People....Ali the Champion”

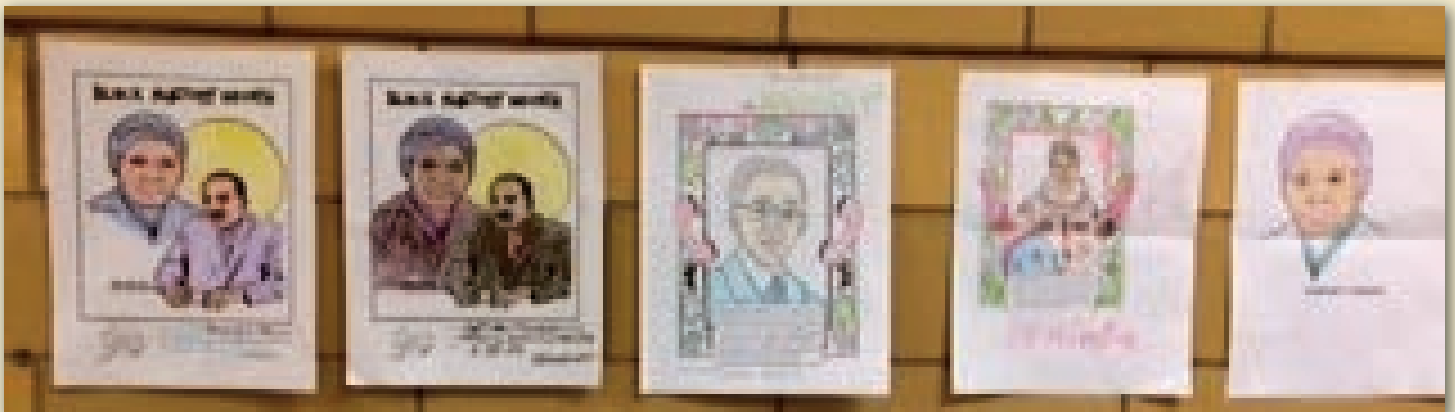
2nd Place: Offender Zyron Washington (N93092) – “Chicago Chicago It’s My Kind of Town”

3rd Place: Offender Carmen Farmakis (R33448) – “Harriet Tubman, The Moses of Her People”

In addition, a coloring contest for offenders’ minor visitors ages 2-12 was held. Three age groups were able to color a pre-printed coloring page depicting a person from Black History. Completed coloring pages were displayed on the walls in the Visiting Room. The



offenders whose visitors are winners of the coloring contest will be allowed to choose an extended or extra visit with them.



Food Banks Reap Benefits of Harvest Now Program



In September 2016, the IDOC partnered with the Harvest Now program, which provides seeds for facility gardens. The gardens are maintained by offenders and the produce is used in dietary and donated to local food banks. During the harvest season of 2017, eight IDOC facilities participated in

the program and donated a total of 26,029 pounds of produce to food banks in their communities. Harvest Now is inviting other facilities to come on board for spring 2018.

Graham Officer Awarded Corrections U.S.A. Medal of Valor

One of IDOC's own received a prestigious public safety award for performing an act of extraordinary bravery. Graham Correctional Center officer Ignacio A. Castillo was awarded the Medal of Valor from Corrections U.S.A. on February 7, 2018 in Las Vegas, Nevada. He has been employed with the Department since June 2016.

Castillo demonstrated bravery and heroism when he was faced with a life-threatening situation last May. The Correctional Officer was at an outside hospital when he heard loud yelling coming from an

emergency exam room. Upon entering the room, Castillo saw that an offender from the county jail had a hold of a sheriff's captain by the collar. He sprang into action by removing the offender's hands and restraining him.

"I was the right person at the right time. Any of the officers here at Graham would have done the same thing," said Castillo.

Corrections U.S.A. narrowed the field of more than 300 nominees to just 20 who were awarded the Medal of Valor.

Castillo was nominated by a fellow officer and selected by Corrections U.S.A. for going above and beyond the call of duty to protect the safety of the public.

"It's humbling to be a part of it. You realize the sacrifices the award recipients have made; several officers were killed in the line of duty," Castillo said.

"Officer Castillo's tremendous act of courage and selflessness exemplifies the quality of our staff at IDOC. The Department is proud to have an officer of such high-caliber on our team."

Corrections U.S.A. is a not-for-profit corporation formed by correctional officers in 1998 to provide national recognition for correctional officers. The organization was the first to give out the Valor Award to correctional officers who have helped make the image of correctional officers better through their brave acts.



Pontiac Warden Michael Melvin Retires

Warden Michael Melvin's entire 24-year career in corrections was spent at Pontiac Correctional Center. He began his career with the Illinois Department of Corrections as a correctional officer in 1994. Over the years, he promoted to a number of positions,

including correctional counselor, superintendent, assistant warden of programs and warden. Warden Melvin leaves behind a legacy of commitment and professionalism that won't be forgotten.





Vandalia Chickens Serve Multiple Purposes

In April 2017, Vandalia Correctional Center Staff, including the “Revitalizing VCC Committee,” came together to fundraise and purchase approximately 90 chickens from a local farmer. Maintenance crews converted an unutilized hog barn at the facility into a functioning chicken coup. The chickens are now free range during the day and return to the coop each night. Each day the eggs are gathered, approximately 50 eggs in the winter and 90 in the summer; the eggs are then used in multiple dishes in the Officer’s Kitchens. As additional benefits, the chickens assist with the disposal of multiple bags of food scraps/waste each week, as well as recycling shredder paper waste in the bedding of their roosts.

Baking a Fresh Start

Workers in the Illinois River Correctional Center ICI Bakery have the opportunity to participate in an Office Manager/Administrative Services or Baker apprenticeship program.

The Office Manager/Administrative Services participants are required to complete two years on the job training with attainment of 4,000 hours of related instruction in areas ranging from basic computer skills and accounting processes to inventory control and payroll preparation. At the conclusion of the program, offenders shall have thorough knowledge of all office procedures of the bakery.

The Baker apprenticeship program participant term is three years with attainment of 6,000 hours of

supplemental related instruction. Offenders are instructed on topics ranging from proper cleaning, care of equipment, oven use, following recipes, mixing ingredients and baking goods. They also learn inventory control principles pertaining to receiving raw materials and inventory of finished goods. The areas of instruction are vast and varied and each offender who completes the program acquires thorough knowledge of all aspects of the bakery production process.

Once complete, each offender is awarded a certificate for completion of the apprenticeship program from the Department of Labor and is considered a journeyman in their respective area of concentration.



Calling all runners!

The Law Enforcement Torch Run is the single largest year-round fundraising movement benefiting Special Olympics Illinois. The Torch Run has two goals – to raise money and to gain awareness for the athletes who participate in Special Olympics Illinois. The IDOC is looking for runners to help carry the Flame of Hope June 11-15. The Department will begin its leg of the run in Marion and finish in Normal. The Flame of



Hope symbolizes Special Olympics' bright vision: shining a light on the talents and abilities of people with intellectual disabilities. If you're interested in participating, please contact your facility's Law Enforcement Torch Run coordinator.

Be Well

Families in Corrections

Family members are usually in the dark about what corrections work entails and how it may affect others. Educating them on the subject facilitates communication and strengthens the staff member's support system at home. Here are some suggestions:

1. Educate your partner slowly and patiently
2. Talk about the workplace, focusing on your feelings about situations rather than factual technicalities.
3. Ask your partner how he or she is impacted by your sharing.
4. If you come from a faith perspective, pray together about both your work and home environments.
5. After you share with your partner, deliberately choose to focus on the present at home. Laugh, play, and relax together. Do something engaging with the kids.

Source: To Talk or Not to Talk © Caterina Spinari, Ph.D., 2006



Treasure Hunt Raises \$2,074 for Special Olympics

On Friday, February 23, Lawrence Correctional Center held its final drawing for a Treasure Hunt cash drawing. Second Shift Correctional Officer Marlin Ray Markwell was the grand prize winner! He received half of the proceeds for the raffle, which totaled \$4,148. The other half benefits Special Olympics Illinois! This was one of the most anticipated fundraisers Lawrence Correctional Center has held so far. Many employees participated and enjoyed the drawings every Friday.

FREEZIN' FOR A REASON

15 IDOC facilities participated
in Polar Plunges to benefit
Special Olympics!



LAW ENFORCEMENT
TORCH RUN[®]
FOR SPECIAL OLYMPICS
ILLINOIS

Special Olympics Wins Big at Wrestling Show

It was an exciting evening of good versus evil at the Rampage Championship Wrestling Show, benefitting the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics! Jacksonville Correctional Center partnered with MacMurray College for this family-friendly event on March 17. The show consisted of a number of matches, including the women's match and the

“Over-the-Top Battle Royale.” Nearly 300 people turned out to watch more than two-dozen wrestlers go head to head. A 50/50 raffle, merchandise, and even some commentary by IDOC's own Chief of Staff, Bob Bowen, were all a part of this awesome event. Special Olympic athletes from Pathway Services and students from Waverly Elementary School attended the event free of

charge. The handshakes, hugs, autographs, photo ops and smiles made this event extra special for all involved. A special three-hour Rampage Championship Wrestling show will take place in Jacksonville on June 24. Again, proceeds will benefit the Law Enforcement Torch Run for Special Olympics Illinois!



Registration Open for Tactical Challenge Benefitting Special Olympics

Challenge will consist of:

- Physical Fitness
- Tactical Skills
- Shooting

Teams can be made up of 5 tactical team members from each facility.

First Round will be done regionally. Then, regional team winners will compete against each other in the Final Round.

First Round

Central Region @ Taylorville CC on April 17th

Northern Region @ Illinois River CC on April 19th

Southern Region @ BMR CC on April 20th

Final Round will be at Taylorville CC on May 2nd.

Each team will have to raise a minimum total of \$150 per team and each team member will receive a t-shirt.

For more information and a registration form, please contact Robert Brown, Robert.L.Brown3@illinois.gov.



From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment: Staff Reviews

The purpose of the course *From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™ (CF2F)* is to educate corrections professionals on the nature of Corrections Fatigue, its facets and its precursors, and to present strategies for deterring it and for boosting staff well-being and professional growth, resulting in Corrections Fulfillment.

Melody Vogler
Office Associate
Vienna Correctional Center

I recently attended the From Correctional Fatigue to Fulfillment (CF2F) course as part of the Staff Wellness Response Team (SWRT). I have worked in corrections approximately seven years, and enjoy what I do. I have had a few different positions within the Department, and have spent most of my career with direct offender contact. I must also include that I am married to a 21-year correctional officer as well.

I consider myself to be a fairly happy person. That being said, everyone...and I mean everyone...has those moments that can take us to a gloomy place. It may be while at work, while at home, or in the middle of the night. Stress builds up, life begins to look bleak, and the temptation to give in to those feelings can be really overwhelming.

CF2F is an exceptional program that helped changed my outlook on my career, as well as my personal life. The first portion of the course is more than a wake-up call. It deals with all of the “darker”

aspects of being a correctional employee...the stress, the danger, the impact that our jobs have on our personal lives and our own psyche. I learned a great deal about what to look for in myself, in my co-workers, and even in my own husband. And I have to say, I saw things in myself that I didn't even know were there. I can now see things within my own behaviors and within others that can truly be attributed to correctional fatigue. That is so important...if we know what to look for, we know how to help, both ourselves and those around us.

The second portion of the course is completely opposite of the first. It teaches you coping strategies and skills, how to manage your stress both inside and outside the facility, and identifies ways to combat what we all have come to know as “burnout.” It helps you identify your strengths and your weaknesses. And let's face it, we all have both! This course assists you in getting to the core of what it is we want from our career and how to get there in a more uplifting and fulfilling way!!! Do your colleagues, your family and yourself a favor...give CF2F a shot. You won't regret it!

Major Jonathan Brown
DuQuoin Impact
Incarceration Program

Being a part of the Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment class was a great experience. This is an aspect of corrections that has been needed for a long time. Gaining a better understanding of how corrections changes people, and what can be done to offer a means of support is invaluable as a supervisor. Bringing this awareness to the Department and its employees will prove to be a great asset on many levels. The physical, mental and emotional strain of working in corrections is very real, and everyone, from our Wardens on down, will benefit tremendously from this class.

Heather Cloe
Executive Secretary
Vandalia Correctional Center

I recently attended the Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment training conducted by Chuck Mattmiller, Derek Flatt, Kristy Wuest, and Greg Korando, which I enjoyed tremendously. I have been employed by the State of Illinois since November 1, 1994. I spent 17 and a half

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years as a Telecommunicator Specialist with the Illinois State Police before being laid off for 14 months due to consolidation. I was recalled to Corrections December 1, 2013 to the Vandalia Correctional Center and that is where I still work. I have also been a dispatcher for over 25 years, so I went into this training not just as a secretary for IDOC, but also a long time veteran of law enforcement. Due to some discussions in other trainings and meetings, I was sold on the idea of corrections fatigue before we started day one of training. However, I had no idea just how much I was feeling impacted by the condition. The first day was a room of IDOC employees of varying rank, areas of assignment, facility security designations and strong personalities. As we listened to the definition of corrections fatigue, we all began to share stories and

feelings. I feel we all came to the realization we were more on the same page as any of us could have ever imagined we would be. I also think some of us realized that even though “we are fine” – maybe we aren’t. Day one was an impactful day of harsh realizations, self-reflection and affirmation that we are certainly not alone. Day two helped us all to realize that there is hope for ways to regain ourselves, our compassion and our sense of pride that we do make a difference to someone in some way every day. That evening, I went home to my 20+ year correctional officer boyfriend and my 20 year old correctional officer trainee son. I sat them both down at 9:00 p.m. on that Friday night and went over every part of my notes with the two of them until 1:00 a.m. My C/O needed to hear it because he is very obviously in burnout mode. My COT needed to hear it so that

if/when he starts experiencing some of these thoughts or behaviors, he knows why and can reach out for help. I know that the training has also helped me to realize that I need to be more aware of coworkers who are exhibiting signs and reach out to them if just to lend a listening ear or encourage them to sign up for the two day training. We need each other personally and professionally whether we want to admit it or not.

**Story ideas, feedback and comments can be submitted to
Lindsey Hess at lindsey.hess@illinois.gov**

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