

Corrections Connections



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Message from the Director

Dear Colleagues:
Since coming aboard, I have spent a significant amount of time traveling the state visiting our correctional centers. It is clear to me IDOC employees are passionate, dedicated, and hard-working. This Thanksgiving, I am thankful for the opportunity to lead



Director Rob Jeffreys

this agency on a Journey to Excellence. This journey will not be easy, but it will be worth it. I am counting on each and every one of you to commit to making the Department the best it can be. We must get comfortable with the uncomfortable and accept that change is necessary to move this agency forward. By exhibiting professionalism, integrity, civility, transparency, accountability and responsiveness every day, you are contributing to the positive future of IDOC.

A career in corrections requires a great deal of sacrifice and that often means missing special events during the holidays. Please know your work and commitment to IDOC and the State of Illinois is noticed and deeply appreciated. As we move closer to a new year, I challenge you all to think big and set goals that align with our agency's vision. Never underestimate the impact you can make as agents for positive change.

Whether you will be enjoying dinner with your family or working alongside your IDOC brothers and sisters, I wish you all a very happy Thanksgiving.

Your Director,
Rob Jeffreys

An Attitude of Gratitude

In the spirit of the holiday, we asked these IDOC staff members what they are most grateful for this Thanksgiving.



“I’m thankful for my family and my job. God has blessed me with a great career with IDOC. Thanks

to this job I met my beautiful wife and have been able to provide for my family. Throughout my career I have had the honor of working with great people and making lifetime friends. I wouldn’t change a thing if I had the choice to do it all again, because IDOC has been great to me!” -**Correctional Officer Darrin Atkins, Stateville Correctional Center**



“I’m thankful for God’s perfect timing, I was blessed with a family, good job and a home. I am thankful for my

beautiful daughters and I am thankful for every moment I have with them. I am thankful for having true friends- people who love and support and cheer for me and who have my best interest at heart.

I’m thankful for my life, and everything in it. I’m thankful for the hard times as a single mom and all the lessons that I’ve learned along the way. I

am thankful for unexpected kindness and favor, which seems to be showing up more and more in my life. I am thankful for having found a nurturing, spiritual church home where I am challenged to do better, to be better and to raise my consciousness.

I guess I am grateful for the same things everyone else is thankful for — my kids, my family, my health, my home. But I am thankful for my new perspective on life. Since one of my students in my high school Sunday school class I teach was diagnosed with brain cancer earlier this year, I am even MORE thankful for those things because I realize how fragile life can be and how it can all change in an instant.

I find myself treasuring the little moments, dancing in the rain with my daughters or being snuggled up on our couch watching a movie together. I am thankful for every moment I have with my children, my family, and my friends. I notice the little things that used to bother me don’t bug me anymore. I used to get stressed when the house got dirty. Now I realize that a dirty kitchen floor isn’t worth getting worked up about. When your family faces a health crisis, you realize what’s really important in life. And I am thankful that I finally understand that. I am thankful that my student is now in remission. And I am thankful that so many talented people

are working toward finding a cure, which I firmly believe will be found in our lifetime.

And most of all, I am thankful for everything that God has given me this Thanksgiving.” -**Correctional Counselor II Erin Carter, Menard Correctional Center**



“I am thankful for my family and friends that have always supported me. I am thankful for all

the opportunities that have been given and the friends I have made during my time with the Illinois Department of Corrections.” -**Correctional Counselor II Katelyn Weaver, Logan Correctional Center**



“First, I am thankful for the opportunities that have been offered through my IDOC career. Second, I am

thankful for the bonds I have formed with my fellow brothers and sisters I walk alongside every day. Lastly and most importantly, I am thankful for my family, particularly my wife and children. They have stood beside and supported me during my best and worst days.” -**Sergeant Justin Dannehold, Western Illinois Correctional Center**

An Attitude of Gratitude



“I am thankful to the State of Illinois and the Department of Corrections for giving me the opportunity to have had an

amazing career for the last twenty-nine and a half years. I have worked with some amazing people during my career. From the frontline staff to the administrators, all these people are second to none. I am also thankful for my amazing wife Annie, our sons, and grandchildren. Their support of my career has been such a blessing. As we know in corrections our families have

to make just as many sacrifices as we do as employees. I couldn't have worked weekends, overtime, and holidays without their support.” -**Corrections Grounds Supervisor Jerome Thacker**, *Lawrence Correctional Center*



“I am thankful for my amazing family, my dear friends of over 25 years, and my work family that

continues to grow each day. IDOC has given me the opportunity to meet so many amazing people from all over

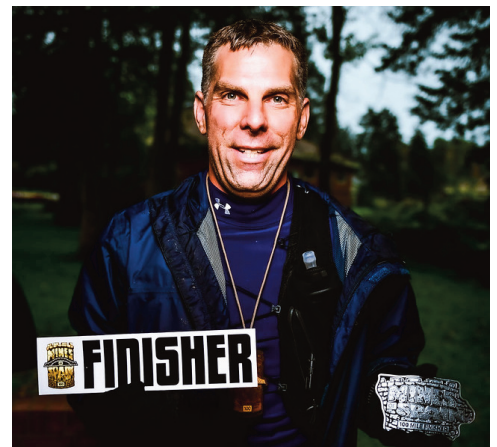
the state of Illinois. Even on the worst days we have, our IDOC family continues to show each other that no matter what we go through, we will always be there for one another. Being able to add a smile to someone face each day is the best gift we can give to each other. I continue to learn something new from our staff daily, and I will forever be grateful for the lessons learned. I hope everyone has a wonderful Holiday Season and remember to be kind to one another.” -**Office Associate Cassie Withrow**, *Taylorville Correctional Center*

IDOC Lieutenant Completes 100-Mile Race

Lieutenant Brian Burke of East Moline Correctional Center is celebrating the completion of the Mines of Spain, a 100-mile race!

On Friday, October 18 at 8:00 AM, Burke joined dozens of other runners to start the race at Louis Murphy Park in Dubuque, Iowa. They completed five loops of 20 miles through the Mines of Spain Recreation Area. The trails range from dirt and grass to rock. Each loop had 2,800 feet of elevation gain and loss for a total of 14,000 feet of gain and loss over the course. “I did not sleep at any point during the race, only stopping to change clothes and eat to replace the over 13,500 calories I burned,” said Burke. He fueled his body by eating pulled pork, mashed potatoes, pizza, ramen noodles, and potato chips. Burke finished the race on Saturday, October 19 with a time of 32 hours and 14 minutes.

Burke has been a runner for 27 years and has completed a number of marathons and Ultra races. The Mines of Spain was his second 100-mile race. “This was by far the toughest to date. It took many months of training and countless people during the race in order to complete,” Burke said. “However, I loved every minute of it.”



Pontiac Staff Save One of Their Own

On August 12, 2019, Marci Batterton and Daniel Hobart were reporting for duty at Pontiac Correctional Center when they witnessed a vehicle drive into the facility's main parking lot and strike a parking block and sign. Without hesitation, Batterton attempted to illicit a response from the driver, a veteran correctional officer, while Hobart notified the Armory of the situation and requested an ambulance. Steven Renner called for all available staff to respond.

Tyler Ledbetter and Jeremy Vinson arrived and conducted a sternum rub. When it

became evident that the sternum rub was not working, Ledbetter and Vinson removed the officer from the vehicle. At that time, the officer appeared to be in full cardiac arrest. Paul Thorson and Steven Bernhard arrived and immediately began conducting CPR. Bernhard started with chest compressions while Thorson delivered rescue breaths until the ambulance arrived.

Due to life-saving measures performed by each of the following staff, the officer is alive and recovering:

Marci Batterton
Switchboard Operator
Daniel Hobart
Food Service Program Manager
Steven Renner
Correctional Lieutenant
Tyler Ledbetter
Correctional Officer
Jeremy Vinson
Correctional Officer
Paul Thorson
Correctional Lieutenant
Steven Bernhard
Correctional Officer

These extraordinary staff members were each recognized as Pontiac Correctional Center's October "Employee of the Month."

GrahamVets Provides Support for Incarcerated Veterans

GrahamVets began in December 1990 as a semi-organized gathering of incarcerated veterans supervised by Correctional Officer Mel Durbin (retired IDOC Lieutenant). Durbin is a highly decorated Vietnam veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps. His initial goal was to discover what motivated veterans to commit crimes resulting in incarceration. GrahamVets became more structured and now focuses on a 'self-help' approach towards rehabilitation and recidivism reduction. GrahamVets has developed community awareness and outreach through the sponsoring of charitable food and fund

drives. To date, GrahamVets has raised thousands of dollars for disaster relief funds and other community food drives and fundraisers.

In March 1994, GrahamVets was incorporated under the laws of the State of Illinois as a not-for-profit corporation. This charter is still maintained today at the expense of the head coordinator. Over the years, GrahamVets has been overseen by multiple coordinators. Currently, the position of head coordinator is held by chaplain of Graham Correctional Center, Daniel Shreve. Shreve is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps and the U.S. Army and worked as an

IDOC correctional officer prior to becoming chaplain. With the assistance of outside volunteer, retired Marine Capt. Wilbur 'Webb' Cunningham, Shreve developed GrahamVets into a peer-facilitated program with indirect supervision by IDOC staff.

On September 11, 2016, GrahamVets began raising and lowering the colors on a daily basis within the institution. The flag pole, flags, and surrounding memorial site was erected at the cost of approximately \$2,000 with funds raised by GrahamVets and outside veteran organizations. The area

surrounding the flags was designated as the “Mel Durbin Veterans Memorial Park” in 2018 and includes a plaque on a large stone near the flag.

In January 2017, a veterans housing unit was created at the facility. This housing unit has had fewer disciplinary issues than all the other housing units at the facility.

This proves GrahamVets hold themselves to a higher standard and respect the authority that is placed over them.

GrahamVets, under their own initiative, began teaching peer-to-peer facilitated cognitive behavior therapy classes within the Veterans Housing Unit in February 2018. These classes include “Controlling

Your Anger,” “Rising Above the Convict Mentality,” and “Effective Communications.” These classes are between eight and 32 weeks in length. Although they receive no benefit from taking these classes except the knowledge gained from doing so, the men take great pride in completing the programs.

SWATT Dog Program Fosters Healing



The SWATT Dog Program at Shawnee Correctional Center began in March 2018 through a partnership with Project Hope Shelter in Metropolis. Men incarcerated at the facility spend 90 days training the dogs to become comfort animals for military veterans. They learn basic obedience and socialization.

In the past year and a half, 24 dogs have been trained and successfully adopted. Most of the dogs have been adopted by veterans, and some by people with special needs. One of the SWATT dogs was adopted by a social worker

and is used to calm patients. Project Hope waives the adoption fees.

SWATT provides incarcerated men an opportunity to learn responsibility, teamwork and compassion. The goal is to support and foster healing for

the dogs, the offenders, and veterans

Community outreach is major component of the SWATT Dog Program. Staff have taken the dogs to a number of events, including Honor Flight welcome home celebrations in Marion, Veterans on Parade, a veteran’s luncheon at

The Haven, various visits to the Illinois Veterans Home in Anna, and the Vietnam Moving Wall in Paducah, Kentucky.

The University of Illinois College of Veterinary Medicine has taken an interest in the SWATT Dog Program. Students occasionally visit the facility to teach the dog handlers more about canine grooming, behavior, health and dental care. They even donated nail trimmers, hypoallergenic conditions, toothbrushes and more!



Kewanee Recognizes Patriots' Day with Special Event



On September 7th, 2019, a small group of military veterans from the Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center saw to fruition an idea born out of a veteran-specific trauma group. They sought to give back and support the veterans who had gone before them by hosting an event to raise money for the Honor Flight of the Quad Cities, which sends veterans to Washington D.C. to see the monuments built in their honor.

Prior to the event, the veterans group commissioned a painting beautifully rendered by a man incarcerated at Kewanee. The painting, which was raffled in the community, generated not only a large part of the fundraising effort, but also a great deal of chatter in the community about the event and the philanthropic efforts of the

facility. On the day of the Patriots' Day celebration, there were 72 participants in attendance. From the offender population, 20 individuals volunteered their time and talents to make the day a success. The Patriots' Day event included teambuilding games focused on communication, problem solving and physical fitness, a scavenger hunt that pushed individuals to think creatively, and a 5K race in which 34 runners participated. Additionally, a color guard from the American Legion Post 875 presented the flags. The keynote speaker for the event, retired United States Marine Corps Colonel Gary Miller, made an inspiring presentation about patriotism, rehabilitation, and redemption.

In addition to the money raised by the raffle of the painting, offenders who wished to participate donated a minimum of \$5 and, in many cases, much more. The event raised a total of \$625. This money exceeds the total amount needed to send one veteran to Washington D.C., making the day a spectacular success.



Rapid Results

Sheridan Hosts Rapid Results Tour

On November 6, 2019, Sheridan Correctional Center hosted a tour for the Association for Manufacturing Excellence (AME). 30 visitors from all over the world learned about IDOC's Rapid Results initiative. Sheridan has saved significant taxpayer dollars through various lean and sustainability initiatives. Visitors talked with the facility's engineering department, which is spearheading a plan to convert to low-flow shower heads and change all exterior/perimeter lighting to LED. The clinical service and records departments shared how they have eliminated excess paperwork and streamlined filing processes.

The tour also included the recycling area, clothing closet and kitchen. AME presented Sheridan Correctional Center with an award for its commitment to eliminating wasteful practices and developing innovative solutions.



Be Well

Staying Healthy during Flu Season: Tips from the Illinois Department of Public Health

Every year the flu sickens millions of Americans, hospitalizes hundreds of thousands, and kills tens of thousands. Catching the flu can be as easy as standing in line next to someone who has flu symptoms. Fortunately, protecting yourself against the flu is easy. Getting vaccinated is the single best way to prevent getting sick with the flu. To avoid infection, you should also wash your hands frequently and avoid close contact with people who are sick.

Everyone six months of age and older should get the seasonal flu vaccine. The vaccine is available in either a flu shot, or in a nasal spray. Talk with a health care provider about what type is most appropriate for you.

In addition to getting your flu vaccine, IDPH recommends following the 3 C's: clean, cover, and contain.

Clean – clean your hands frequently by washing your hands with soap and warm water.

Cover – cover your cough and sneeze.

Contain – contain your germs by staying home if you are sick.

Flu viruses spread when people with flu cough, sneeze, or talk. Flu usually comes on suddenly. People who have the flu often feel some or all of the following symptoms:

- fever or feeling feverish/chills
- cough
- runny or stuffy nose
- muscle or body aches
- headaches
- fatigue (tiredness)
- vomiting and diarrhea (more common in children than adults)

Many studies have found that in addition to lessening the duration and severity of symptoms, antiviral drugs can prevent flu complications.

FIGHT THE FLU



THE 3 C'S

COVER

Cover your cough and sneeze

CLEAN

Frequently wash your hands with soap and warm water

CONTAIN

Contain your germs by staying home if you are sick



Be Well

Maintaining Professional Boundaries

Maintaining sound professional boundaries is mission-critical in corrections. Professional boundary violations harm not only the individuals involved, but also entire systems. Boundary violations give the public image of the corrections profession yet another black eye. They compromise the security of operations, as policies are broken and self-interest overtakes public interest. And they demoralize coworkers.

Disillusionment and disgust follow after staff learn that staff they trusted or looked up to violated professional boundaries. Examples are when employees discover staff they considered to be role models and even mentors violated policies, ranging from employee sexual harassment to inappropriate relationships with employees to inappropriate interactions with offenders. Such behaviors are experienced by coworkers like “bubble-bursting” personal betrayals, and many of them have difficulty trusting or respecting fellow staff again. What may be baffling to staff is that the perpetrators may have been “shining stars” or staff who performed reliably and

honorably for years. Then, seemingly suddenly, they make unethical and perhaps illegal choices.

The root of unethical behavior is usually traced to the pursuit of self-gratification outside of what is allowed professionally. (Some people would say that such behavior is motivated by greed or lust.) This happens when basic urges, which drive us to need satisfaction, win over professional ethics.

Boundaries exist to protect staff’s effectiveness in carrying out professional duties; to safeguard staff’s career, reputation, and self-respect; to safeguard the quality of social interactions in corrections settings; and to protect staff’s health, and even their very lives.

Pro-social thinking, self-honesty, and self-discipline are needed to remain ethical in corrections. The only way to avoid getting hooked is to not play with the bait.

Spinaris, C. G. (2016). Professional Boundaries. In *Staying Well: Strategies for Corrections Staff*.

From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™

From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™ (CF2F) is a course that uses evidence and data to explain the psychological dynamics behind the negativity of the corrections workplace and its costly consequences. CF2F analyzes the causes and signs of corrections fatigue and provides strategies for professional fulfillment and self-care. **To enroll in a CF2F class, ask your warden to place your name on the facility’s waitlist.**

AFSCME Illinois Personal Support Program

The professional staff of the AFSCME Personal Support Program (PSP) is ready to help you or a member of your family with personal concerns or problems, whether they occur at home or at work. The PSP offers services statewide through a network of licensed professionals who are specially trained to provide confidential assistance on a wide variety of concerns and problems, including stress, marital/partner problems, parenting, grief, and elder care concerns.

You can reach the PSP from 8:30 AM through 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, at 1-800-647-8776.

Story ideas, feedback and comments can be submitted to
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State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Corrections

