

Corrections Connections

Illinois Department of Corrections | Monthly Newsletter

June 2021

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Message from the Director

Colleagues,

I am proud to be celebrating my two-year anniversary at IDOC this month! In this short time, our agency has overcome more challenges than any of us could have possibly imagined. From the tragic loss of dozens of our IDOC brothers and sisters to the colossal challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, together we weathered the storm. I am extremely proud of the resiliency of our staff and their ability to continue driving our agency forward during tough times. The accomplishments are truly remarkable:



Director Rob Jeffreys

- The Department revised the process under which Administrative Directives are reviewed, revised, and implemented.
- A new Re-Entry Division was created which develops re-entry pathways that start at reception. Efforts include an increase in cognitive behavioral programming, education and vocational training combined with workforce development and enhanced transitional housing options.
- IDOC implemented extensive restrictive housing reform and significantly reduced its restrictive housing population.
- As part of the Department's ongoing policy review effort, we are integrating standards from the American Correctional Association (ACA) into all our administrative directives.
- As the result of a robust education and communication plan, 41% of IDOC staff and 69% of the incarcerated population are fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

As we ease COVID-19 restrictions and move closer to normal operations, IDOC will continue implementing historic criminal justice reform. Reform that reflects our agency's values: Professionalism, Integrity, Civility, Transparency, Accountability and Responsiveness. Reform that is cutting edge and places Illinois in a position to be a national leader in the corrections field. Reform that ensures the health, safety and well-being of our staff while improving outcomes for those sentenced to our care. I am excited to continue leading this agency as we build on our current momentum.

Director Rob Jeffreys

Family Centered Environment Welcomes Visitors

After a difficult year with no visitors, the women at Logan Correctional Center were excited to revamp the visitation center as the State of Illinois relaxed quarantine guidelines. The visitation room at Logan had been remodeled a few years ago with a painted nursing nook area to allow mothers to bond with their infants. Under the direction of Chief Porter, Logan Correctional Center moved to highlight its mission of ensuring the facility and programs are family-centered.



The Women's Division has a core philosophy that during visits the number one objective shall be to facilitate family ties by strengthening the bond between the mothers and

their children. The concept of an improved visiting room was a partnership with community supporters and various departments. Women lent their artistic skills to the project, and some child-centered supplies were provided by Chaplain Sutton. Assistant Warden Cabarcas coordinated the various projects to bring a cohesive look to the murals. "This was truly the culmination of lots of hands and hearts to create this space," she said. "Warden Butler-Jones made sure we had a wide range of character depictions so all genders and ages could enjoy the art. When you enter the room, you can just feel the positive energy that this effort has created."

The Kewanee Re-Entry Center artists heard of the mural projects and sent painting supplies. Assistant Warden

Dillard wanted a children's play area with cubbies for toys and frames on the wall for the children to display their pictures after a visit. Logan's in-house carpenter, Jerod Ray, had a solution to make her vision come to life. "We repurposed a few oak church pews that had been salvaged a few years ago to create the cubbies and made frames from miscellaneous wood pieces we had," he commented. It was an opportunity for the carpenter apprentices to practice using their skills after the long delay created by pandemic restrictions.

"We are ready for all the phases of re-opening. We have coloring products that the children can take home when we move toward more interaction. There are toys! So many, in fact, that even after each visitation block, when the toys that the children played with are properly sanitized, there are many unused toys left in reserve. It's exciting to be a part of creating this experience for the children since they have missed seeing their mothers," commented Dr. Cabarcas, Assistant Warden of Life Skills ReEntry. Upon completion of the visiting room, Assistant Warden of Operations, NaTasha Dillard reflected, "Like-minded people are able to produce great things."



Behind the Badge

Correctional Officer Andrew Verstraete of Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center serves his community as Kewanee Park District board president. His responsibilities include oversight of the refurbishment and maintenance of the parks and golf course. Officer Verstraete has cultivated a strong partnership between his facility and the park district. Men incarcerated at Kewanee have built wooden Christmas decorations and painted a 12-by-16-foot mural for display at Northeast Park. Officer Verstraete has also been a volunteer football and baseball coach for the park district. "Serving on the park board allows me to continue the legacy of my grandfather who served as the park board president for many years, and ensure integrity, responsibility, and longevity for these valuable community assets," said Officer Verstraete.



Rapid Results

Sheridan Correctional Center Dietary Smock Project

This project idea came from trying to solve two separate problems:

Problem 1: How can the facility provide white pullover smocks for Dietary incarcerated workers at a cost of \$25 each?

Problem 2: What could be done with the turned in slightly used Lt/Majors white shirts?

Corrections Supply Supervisor II Nina Eitenmiller, who oversees Sheridan Correctional Center clothing and clothing closet for the incarcerated, came up with an idea that solves both problems. CSS II Eitenmiller suggested that she teach her clothing workers to transform these slightly used white shirts into dietary pullover smocks.

This was accomplished by having our incarcerated workers in the clothing department remove all collars, blue lapels, pocket covers, as well as, all patches and buttons. Once buttons are removed the shirts are sewn up the front to mid chest. This turns the shirt into a pullover dietary smock.

The positive result of this Rapid Results project is that dietary has garments for workers to wear that they know are clean and ready to wear before preparing and serving food. The workers appreciate the fact that they are not staining their own clothing or having to do extra washing after work.

To date, the clothing department has provided 150 dietary smocks. This results in a savings of \$25 per smock for a total of over \$3,200 in only a few months.



The Farm at Menard Correctional Center

Construction of the Menard Farms building was completed in June 1933. Today, this building is simply referred to by staff as The Farm. All Illinois Correctional Industries (ICI) services for Menard Correctional Center are based out of this building -- the Recycling Center, Meat Processing Plant, Waste Management Service, Knit Shop, Broom Shop, and Cleaning Supply Shop. These six industries not only benefit Menard Correctional Center, but also other correctional facilities throughout the state, and many Illinois communities.

The Farm is home to the largest correctional recycling center in the state. Cardboard, paper, plastic, Styrofoam, aluminum, tin, and other metals filter through the Recycling Center daily. ICI workers sort recyclables from various correctional centers and the surrounding communities. All used cooking oil within IDOC is collected at The Farm to be sold for profit. According to Industries Supervisor Shaun Mulrooney, "In an effort to streamline operations, when a delivery is made to another state facility, the trucks do not return empty; they are filled with recyclables as a cost saving measure."

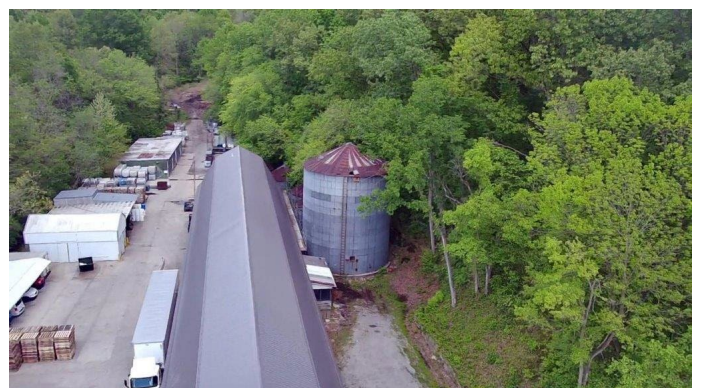
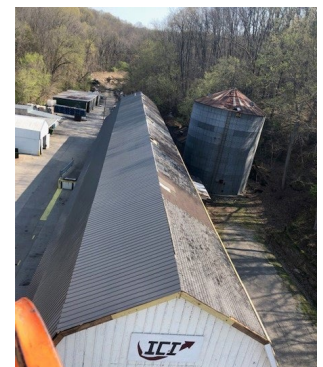
During the COVID-19 response, the Knit Shop at Menard Correctional Center mass produced masks and PPE that were distributed to each IDOC facility statewide. Also, during this time, the Cleaning Supply Shop became the statewide IDOC hub for production and packaging of required cleaning supplies and hand sanitizer. The men working in these areas have been applauded for their efforts.

While discussing the workers in the areas supervised by ICI, Mulrooney stated, "These jobs serve as a catalyst for post incarceration employment. We offer a skill that could greatly benefit the men upon release from IDOC. For example, one waste management company currently has over 2,000 open job listings with a \$5,000 sign-on bonus. The best part is they will hire former ICI workers. Opportunities such as this would be life changing for these men." In all, over sixty men are employed under the umbrella of jobs overseen at The Farm.

For many years, staff have been working to replace the roof of The Farm building where all the operational elements of Menard ICI come together. The roof leaked, and the structural integrity of the building was soon to be compromised. Correctional Industries Superintendent Dana Opolka was successful in bringing this major project to fruition. Last month, union carpenters and Menard Correctional Center maintenance craftsmen

replaced the nearly 90-year-old roof of the building. Others working at The Farm also assisted with this project. Mulrooney commented, "A package of Ramen Noodles cost \$0.22 in the Commissary. Mackerel in a bag is a buck even. These ICI workers being taught how to properly install a metal roof by skilled union staff -- PRICELESS!"

Warden Anthony Wills discussed the challenges and successes of this large scale roofing project. "This has been in the works for a long time, and it took a lot of creative planning to make it happen. As with any project of this size, financing was an obstacle. Ultimately, using our own maintenance staff to do the work rather than contracting this out, created a substantial cost savings. We have a great team of skilled maintenance craftsmen who weathered storms, worked around large structures, and took pride in completing this project. I couldn't be happier with the finished product and the teamwork displayed between the ICI staff, Maintenance Department, and the ICI workers who assisted with this huge endeavor."



Get To Know IDOC's New Chief Inspector

What do you bring to IDOC?

I am a natural problem solver. I have experience evaluating evidence and training and leading a diverse team. I am committed to public service and to operating my office with integrity. I am dedicated to advocating for people whose rights may need the credence of authority. I look forward to bringing the best of my combined educational and lived experiences to help move the Illinois Department of Corrections forward.

What are your goals as the agency's Chief Inspector?

I will strive to create a statewide grievance system that provides for increased transparency, efficiency, and accountability within the Illinois Department of Corrections. I will provide oversight of the statewide grievance system by incorporating a data driven approach to guide decision-making. I want to streamline effective communication between the Department and family members and loved ones.

What does it mean to you to be part of the IDOC team?

I am honored to serve the people of the State of Illinois as a member of the IDOC leadership team. As a part

of the IDOC team, I am committed to serving all of the people of Illinois with compassion and fairness. To me, this means operating with integrity and doing what is right.

As a leader, who inspires you?

I am inspired by the life and legacy of Shirley Chisholm. Her dedication to public service and her refusal to accept the status quo despite the odds against her, inspires me personally and professionally. The memory of Shirley Chisholm's endeavors and accomplishments drives me to use my talents and knowledge to be of service to others.



Chief Latoya Hughes, Esq.

What would you like to share about yourself that cannot be found on your resume?

I am a vegetarian.

2021 IDOC Staff Awards

Photo From L to R:

IDOC Director Rob Jeffreys

IDOC Chief of Operations John Eilers

2021 Employee of the Year, Christine Noble, East Moline Correctional Center

2021 Correctional Officer of the Year, Albert Diaz, Fox Valley ATC

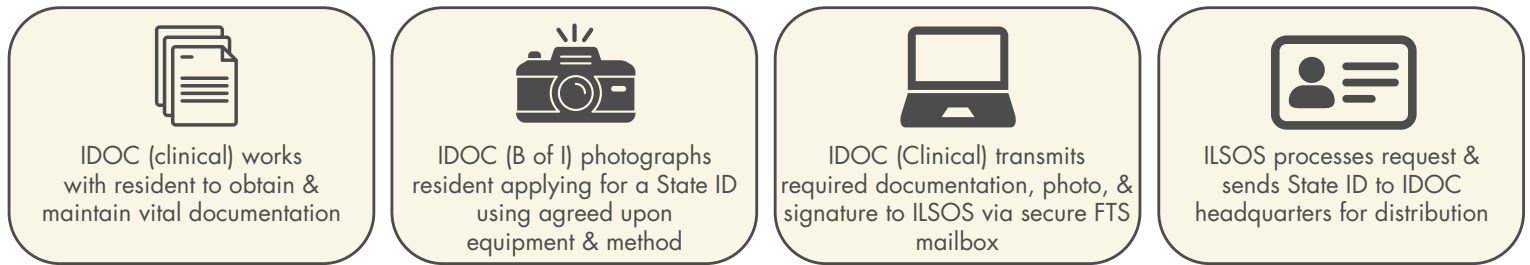
2021 Parole Agent of the Year, Andrew Zadlo, Sex Offender Unit

IDOC Chief of Parole Jason Garnett



Identifying New Methods For Successful Re-Entry Into Society – State of Illinois ID Cards

The Illinois Department of Corrections recognizes the importance of removing barriers for successful re-entry. Over the past year, IDOC implemented a series of initiatives to assist individuals preparing for release. The goal of the State ID Program is to ensure that individuals have a 5-year State ID upon release from the Illinois Department of Corrections. A State ID increases the likelihood of gaining access to employment and educational opportunities, safe and supportive housing, and eligible social and medical services. Representatives from several IDOC departments have worked in partnership with the Illinois Secretary of State, First Lady MK Pritzker, and Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton to implement an Illinois State Identification Card program for men and women in IDOC custody. These efforts were supported by the knowledge and experiences of the Michigan Department of Corrections, who successfully implemented their state ID program a few years ago. After multiple phone meetings with MDOC, the Illinois team went to work outlining a process for successful implementation and then agreed to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Illinois Secretary of State.



To be eligible for a State ID Card, individuals must have a birth certificate and Social Security card or an original copy of their U.S. Military Record in their Master File or Field Services File. This program would not be possible without the great work of the facilities’ clinical teams who assist in obtaining the vital documents and make sure that the documents are securely emailed to the Re-Entry Unit. The Bureau of Identification staff from Lincoln, Logan, Kewanee, and Lawrence work with the Secretary of State technical team to ensure proper picture quality and size and that the appropriate background is used in each photo. The LAN administrators ensure that shared drives are set up at each facility. Once the email is transmitted with the required documents, the Re-Entry Unit coordinates with the Secretary of State to pick up the ID cards. The IDs are logged for tracking and then returned to the IDOC facilities to be placed in the field service file until release. Logan, Lincoln, Kewanee, and Lawrence have assisted 48 people in obtaining their state ID through this innovative program. Each month, additional facilities will join the program until all IDOC facilities are providing this essential service. The State ID program is a note-worthy collaboration between IDOC and the Secretary of State and makes successful re-entry into society more attainable for newly-released individuals.

PLANNED PROGRAM ROLLOUT

April 2021	Logan (<i>Logan</i>) Lincoln (<i>Logan</i>)	November 2021	East Moline (<i>Rock Island</i>) SouthWestern Illinois (<i>St. Clair</i>)
May 2021	Kewanee (<i>Henry</i>) Lawrence (<i>Lawrence</i>)	December 2021	Illinois River (<i>Fulton</i>) Hill (<i>Knox</i>)
June 2021	Jacksonville (<i>Morgan</i>) Decatur (<i>Macon</i>)	January 2021	Western Illinois (<i>Brown</i>) Shawnee (<i>Johnson</i>)
August 2021	Pinckneyville (<i>Perry</i>) Vandalia (<i>Fayette</i>)	February 2021	Dixon (<i>Lee</i>) Big Muddy River (<i>Jefferson</i>)
September 2021	Taylorville (<i>Christian</i>) Graham (<i>Montgomery</i>) Vienna (<i>Johnson</i>)	March 2021	Stateville (<i>Will</i>) Pontiac (<i>Livingston</i>)
October 2021	Centralia (<i>Clinton</i>) Sheridan (<i>La Salle</i>) Robinson (<i>Crawford</i>)	April 2022	Menard (<i>Randolph</i>)

Western Illinois Correctional Center Horticulture Class Has Ditched The Dirt

Western's horticulture class has found a couple new ways to grow plants – hydroponically and aeroponically. If we break down the word **hydroponic**, we get “hydro” and “ponic” which mean “water” and “work.” Hydroponic gardening goes back to 7th Century B.C. Babylon and its famed Hanging Gardens. All a hydroponic garden needs is a system, water, lights, seeds and nutrients. This method allows plants to be grown without soil – yep – no dirt. The plants receive the nutrients and oxygen that they need to develop through a water system.

The WICC Horticulture Class is using the Dutch bucket system. This system uses a group of buckets with a network of feeder lines that provide the water and nutrients to the plants. We also have timed lighting so that the plants can get the required number of hours of light even as they are being grown inside. The type of plant also impacts the longevity of its production. We are using inducement plants which have a longer production period. These plants can last up to six months before needing replaced.

Many different types of plants can be grown using hydroponics such as tomatoes, lettuce, spinach, and herbs to name a few. We are currently growing tomatoes, lettuces and basil. It won't be long until we have the makings of a great salad.

The second system we have begun to use is **aeroponic**. You might remember hearing about aeroponic back in 1990 when NASA grew bean seedlings in zero gravity on the International Space Station. Aeroponic is broken into “aero” and “ponic” which mean “air” and “work.” In aeroponic systems, plants are suspended, and their roots receive the necessary nutrients from a mist or spray.

The class is using a tube system where the plants are suspended in an upright tube. Water and nutrients are stored in a reservoir at the bottom of the tube. The solution is pumped up the tube, atomized, and distributed as a fine mist. It is released from the top of the tube which then allows the mist to cascade down the inside chamber of the tube. The roots absorb the nutrients and begin to grow. We also use a lighting system to regulate the amount of light the plants receive.

Plants that are vining tend to be the best for aeroponics. Plants such as tomatoes, bell peppers, herbs, and

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strawberries are ideal. We are growing Everbearing Strawberries in our aeroponic system. The berries require 12 hours of light to produce, and we have already enjoyed several berries this growing season. These plants will have a longer life cycle than those in soil.

In both of these systems, the pH level needs to be kept at 6.5 or below to keep the plants growing. If the pH gets too high the plants will not produce at their highest potential. The students measure and log the pH level daily. They are also responsible for measuring and regulating the nutrient levels in all the plants. These systems are designed to take up minimal space. Because the needed nutrients and light are regulated, these plants produce much longer, and the yields are higher.

There are many different ways to grow various plants and crops. The students in this class are seeing firsthand that plants can be very productive even when you “ditch the



“dirt.” Stay tuned to WICC and see how we are using worms to create organic fertilizer.

Written by Kim Watson – Business Administrator, WICC

BE WELL

Financial Tips for Couples

- Be honest and open about your finances with your partner.
- Be willing to compromise.
- Set time aside each month to discuss your financial situations together.
- Create a realistic budget.
- Help each other find ways to minimize waste.
- Make sure to allow a certain amount of discretionary spending for each partner.
- Make sure your budget allows you to save.
- Talk about how you plan to make financial decisions as a couple.
- Set some financial goals together.
- Begin planning the things you would like to achieve and decide what you need to do in order to meet these goals.
- When a one partner has a lot of debt, talk about it. It will be much easier to discuss now, rather than letting it get in the way of your plans later.
- Make debt reduction a priority. Your partner may be willing to pitch in.
- Keep emotion away from the money! Remember, it's only money.
- Avoid making money a control issue.
- Do not expect to “reform” your partner's habits.
- Communicate about your finances.
- As the relationship progresses, a discussion about money will become very important.
- So, when the time is right, have that discussion. It will be good for you and your relationship.

<https://www.cambridge-credit.org/financial-tips-for-couples.html>



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Illinois Department of Corrections



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