

# Corrections Connections

Illinois Department of Corrections | Monthly Newsletter

November 2021

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## Message from the Director

Colleagues and Stakeholders,

The holiday season can be a difficult time for corrections employees. Because IDOC operates 24/7 facilities, thousands of staff miss out on special occasions with their families. Their sacrifice and dedication to protecting public safety is commendable.

For me, the end of the year is a time to reflect on both the achievements and shortcomings of the Department over the last 12 months. I am proud to say that in calendar year 2021, IDOC accomplished 15 different high-level goals across the agency. Some key reforms include:

- The rollout and implementation of pre-release Medicaid enrollment;
- Creation of a Re-Entry Resource Room at every facility;
- Implementation of an agency-wide risk and needs assessment;
- Completion of initial American Correctional Association (ACA) accreditation for Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center and Illinois River Correctional Center;
- And, we maintained and built on efforts to award more earned discretionary sentence credit.

The Department's recidivism rate has also decreased and is now at 38.5% (down from 41.3% the year prior). These accomplishments are the result of the hard work by IDOC staff whose resiliency is astounding. Even during an unprecedented global pandemic, our workforce overcame the challenges to continue our Journey to Excellence.

This Thanksgiving, I am overwhelmed with gratitude. I am thankful for each staff member who exemplifies our agency's core values every day: Professionalism, Integrity, Civility, Transparency, Accountability, and Responsiveness. Together, I am confident our agency will continue achieving more than anyone ever thought possible.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and your families.

Thank you,  
Director Rob Jeffreys



**Director Rob Jeffreys**

# Behind the Badge

## Central Illinois Vocalist and Performer Debbie Ross

Debbie Ross is the Librarian at the Decatur Correctional Center. She is also an accomplished singer and local area talent. Ms. Ross began singing at an early age in her local church. By the mid 1980's, she began performing at various events throughout central Illinois. In 1990, Ms. Ross formed the Debbie Ross Band. The band began actively performing locally, statewide, and even toured out of state. Her band has opened for many major headliners, has performed for three Presidents, and toured with a Vice President. The band is a 30-year staple at the Illinois State Fair. Ms. Ross has been invited to sing at the IDOC Memorial Wall Ceremony for several years. She continuously lends her talents to charity events throughout the state. Her 30-plus-year career in music shows no signs of slowing down and neither does Ms. Ross.



## 17 Days of Giving at East Moline

East Moline Correctional Center staff collected over \$480 to provide 26 Thanksgiving meal food baskets to Eagle Ridge School and their school food pantry in Carbon Cliff. Each basket contained all the ingredients for a Thanksgiving meal – turkey or ham, side dishes, dessert, rolls and drinks. The baskets were delivered by IDOC staff and distributed by school employees to families in need.

This is the third year for East Moline Correctional Center's "17 days of Giving" project. The facility chooses 17 consecutive days in October and November to

provide staff a list of items and collect food and monetary donations. The monetary donations are used to purchase anything additional needed and to create extra baskets. Office Administrator III, Heather House, initiated the project three years ago. House and Christine Noble, Human Resources Representative, coordinate it yearly to get the donations to a local school in the area and set up the delivery. Lieutenant Thomas "TJ" Francis secures donated hams and turkeys annually.



# An Attitude of Gratitude

## Counting Blessings in This Season of Thanksgiving

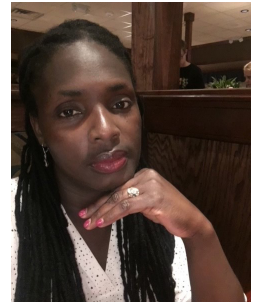


I am thankful to be a part of the Logan Correctional Center team. Logan is a place that stands tall whatever comes its way, and we go through it all together. It is truly a resilient facility, and I am thankful to be in a position to be a part of it. I am also thankful for my family and friends. I am thankful for everyone who believed in me and pushed me to grow and the continuous support they offer me daily. That's what I am thankful for.

**Tiona Farrington**  
Assistant Warden of Programs  
Logan Correctional Center

I am grateful to provide medical and nursing care to an underserved population. I am grateful for my Joliet Treatment Center team.

**Elizabeth English-Lindsay**  
Health Care Unit Administrator  
Joliet Treatment Center



I am thankful for my family and friends and all the love and support they give. They have stood by my side in good times and in bad. I am thankful for my five dogs, two horses, and two cats. I am also thankful for card nights once a week with my boyfriend, Grandma, and Dad.

**Jessica Huffman**  
Correctional Officer  
Menard Correctional Center

I am thankful for this life that God has blessed me with. I am thankful for my wife and the unconditional love and support she provides. I am thankful for my children and am so proud of the successful adults they have become. I am thankful for my job with IDOC. It has allowed me to provide for my family, and along the way I have formed some irreplaceable friendships with so many amazing people. I feel blessed to be a part of the IDOC family. Most say this is a thankless job but when I look back to 18 years ago, to where I was and where I was headed, I know I am where I am today because of my career with IDOC. So, although I may not get told "thank you" often, all I have to do is reflect on where I am today and that is enough for me.

**Tresa Robinson**  
Lieutenant  
Vienna Correctional Center



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I am thankful for my Savior who has blessed me with a loving family who has supported me and stood beside me through difficult times. I am thankful for a good job that provides me with finances to live a decent life, and I am thankful for the friendships that God has given me with a small number of truly amazing people who continuously reach out to others and strive to be positive in a world full of so much negativity, hate, division, and ugliness. Sometimes, just the smallest acts of kindness can completely turn around a person's day. Be kind. Be nice. Be courteous. Be respectful. Be the kind of friend that a friend would want to have.

**Erik Dudley**  
Sergeant

Dixon Springs Structured Impact Program

When most people think of gratitude, they think of all the positive things that have happened in their life. I like to think about everything that has happened in my life, good and bad, because each moment in life shapes us into who we are. When I was a young mother, I was diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Doctors couldn't tell me if any treatment would work. There was no "we need to do all of this." It was 100% a guessing game. My children were 7, 5 and just shy of 2 years old. It felt like being punched in the gut. 16 years later, and those struggles shaped the life I lead today. If I had not experienced cancer, I would've never left my "comfortable job" for Corrections or returned to college to obtain my degree. I would never have found a career that I am very passionate about. Throughout my time in Corrections, doors have opened, and doors have closed. When the bad days happen, it's not an easy thing to navigate in your mind. I try to think back to my diagnosis and remember that God has a plan for me. I am thankful that he knows which doors should open and which doors should close; his grace is what gets me through the hard days and makes me appreciate the good days. Gratitude is being positive in life when your life isn't all sunshine and rainbows. Its trudging through those bad days to become happier, better, and more at peace with the blessings that every day brings.



**Christine Noble**

Human Resources Representative  
East Moline Correctional Center

I am thankful for my husband, kids, family, career, and the friends/family I've formed since working for IDOC Parole. With everything going on in the world today, we need to cherish all of life's blessings and hold tight to the people that make life's challenges more bearable.

**Geri Arsenault**  
Office Associate  
Parole - Springfield





**Lt. Brian Hammond**  
Illinois River Correctional Center

For the better part of two decades, I have been a witness to the Native American culture. Being a spouse and a parent of 3 Native Americans has engulfed me in their culture. I have witnessed everything from several powows to participating in sweat lodges with the elders. All my children are enrolled in the Ponca Sioux Tribe and have had ceremonies receiving Native American names.

Native Americans are a very proud race. They have many traditions and beliefs that should be emulated and revered by all races. They put a lot of emphasis on a strong family network. They also respect and listen to their elders for support and guidance. It is definitely a culture that I have admired and proud to be a part of.



**MHP Patricia Lloyd**  
Illinois River Correctional Center

I had the opportunity to work on the Gila River Native American reservation as a mental health therapist when I lived in Arizona. That exposure and experience taught me a lot, both positive and negative. They are a very spiritual people, and many have become Christians over time. Their connection with the earth is to be envied. To see them perform their native dances, sing and play the flute along with other instruments helped me to understand their culture more than ever before. I had the pleasure of working with a social worker who was part Native American and would occasionally play her flute in her office during working hours which always gave me goose bumps!

Have you ever heard of Pima cotton? It began with the Pima tribe who grew cotton as one of their crops and made blankets and clothing out of it. Cotton was only one of the crops they grew as they were an agricultural society. While they raised a lot of their food such as squash, pumpkins and corn, they also ate plants and animals from the desert as they were also excellent hunters. For their crops, irrigation canals were dug connecting their fields to the rivers. After the Spanish brought horses to this continent, Native Americans were the first to tame them here and were used for travel and hunting.

On the other hand, my education wasn't all positive information. The reservations both are for supporting the tribes but also create dependency which has caused damage to the structure of their community. There are few jobs on the reservations and education is not valued as it is outside of that community. Probably everyone knows that the white man introduced alcohol to them, and it has led to an epidemic of substance abuse. Our food has also been introduced which has led to a great increase in diabetes in their population. Did you know that when the white man came, we considered them incapable of raising their own children so took them away and they grew up in residential schools? Several generations passed without them being able to raise their own children which caused damage to the family structure.

The opportunity to work with Pima, Apache, Maricopa and other tribes was an honor and something that I will never forget. When I took an Ancestry DNA test a couple of years later I found that I have 1% Native American DNA. It was probably from my father who was adopted and had no idea of his heritage or family background.

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### Office Coordinator Jessica Murphy Illinois River Correctional Center

I did not know a lot about my Native American heritage because my mom was adopted. She dealt with a lot of discrimination because of our background. I have always tried to keep an open mind when communicating with people because I know how she was negatively affected by the discrimination. I have not only been researching and learning as much as I can about my Native American heritage, but I have been learning how to communicate effectively with people with diverse backgrounds. I feel my own diverse background will be a plus for me when I am communicating with staff and individuals in custody here at IDOC.

## Menard Correctional Center's Guetersloh Recognized by Governor and State Fire Marshal

*IDOC is proud to have Sgt. Guetersloh among its ranks and grateful for his commitment to the State of Illinois and all her citizens.*

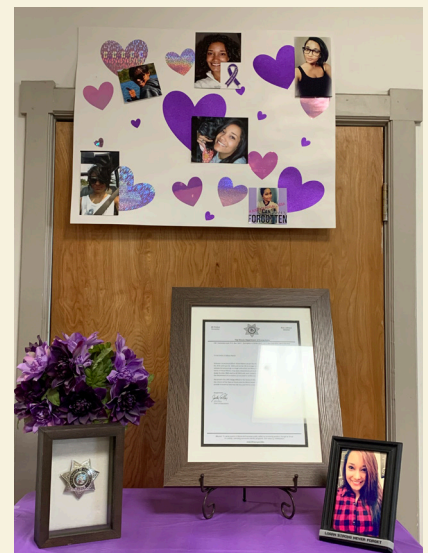
On September 10th, Governor JB Pritzker and State Fire Marshal Matt Perez joined firefighters to remember seven fallen members at the 28th Annual Fallen Firefighter Memorial and Medal of Honor Ceremony. During the ceremony, the Governor and Fire Marshall also honored firefighters who went above and beyond on the job, displaying courage, pride and honor while protecting communities across the state. Fourteen firefighters received the Firefighter Excellence Award for an act of service in the line of duty, demonstrating excellence and professionalism in service to their fellow Illinoisans. One of the recipients of this prestigious award was Menard Correctional Center Sergeant Ronald Guetersloh. Sgt. Guetersloh serves as Chief of the Gorham Volunteer Fire Department.



## Department Retires Badge of Fallen Logan Correctional Officer Allissa Martin

On Thursday, October 30th, the Illinois Department of Corrections retired Badge #9820, belonging to fallen Correctional Officer Allissa Martin. The badge was presented in a ceremony held at Logan Correctional Center to the family of Correctional Officer Martin along with a framed letter from the Department. This was made possible through the efforts of Director Jeffreys as well as the Chief of Operations and Logan Correctional Center Union President Shaun Dawson.

Logan's AFSME Local 2073 provided meals and desserts to all staff on all three shifts to commemorate the occasion and to honor Correctional Officer Martin.



# Answering the Call

As we honor our nation's veterans this month, we recognize our staff who answered the call to serve their country. We thank them for their bravery, sacrifice, and service.

"For me answering the call to service meant, honor, integrity, and pride! Knowing that so many other families, relatives and friends had served our country and fought to preserve and protect our rights for freedom, speech and religion and so much more. I joke and say often, but really, I am serious when I say no one can take your birthday! The truth is no one can take anything from you unless you're willing to give it up! Even though this mindset and terminology is seen more towards military or sporting events, it plays a major role in our everyday living of serving others. It is very crucial in today's social, political, religious and personal views, especially in history and current events. Such as those pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic where we all stand to battle a crisis that America has encountered and continues to fight."

**-Senior Chaplain D. Shreve, Graham Correctional Center**

"I served 12 years in the U.S. Army and started out as Military Police and switched over to Ranger Battalion. I have been deployed to Grenada, Panama, Bosnia, Kuwait, Iran and New Guinea. To me serving in the Military gave me pride to follow the footsteps of my father who also served in the Military with the Marines. My Father was in the Chosen Reservoir in Korea and after hearing stories of what he went through I knew that I needed to carry the torch."

**- Sgt. E. Bergee, Jacksonville Correctional Center**

"Service in the military is being a part of a large family. Selfless, patriotic, honest, motivated, team-players, exceptional, and by far the absolute most amazing people to surround yourselves with day-in and day-out. It is the culmination of these core shared values, goals and experiences that are developed when we serve side-by-side and stays with us the rest of our lives. We all live by these words: Integrity, Service before Self, and Excellence in all

we do. It is engrained into your every action. It is a true inspiration and honor to have spent 12 years of my life serving amongst those who share my same values. I honor each airman, soldier, seaman and marine who choose to place the flag of our country above personal interests."

**- Major D. Adams, Jacksonville Correctional Center**

"Early in my life, my father taught us to protect those who could not protect themselves. I believe this inspired me to join the Marine Corps. 'Honor, Courage, and Commitment' is a way of life, not just words."

**-Assistant Warden Victor Calloway, Lincoln Correctional Center**

## **How Do You Measure a Soldier's Sacrifice?** by Kelly Roper

How do you measure a soldier's sacrifice?  
Is it by the number of friends and family left behind?  
Is it by the months or years given in service?  
How do you measure a soldier's courage?  
Is it by the number of objectives completed,  
Or by the number of bullets dodged or missions served?  
How do you measure a soldier's honor?  
Is it by the duty he or she volunteers for,  
Or by the number of medals earned?  
The simple truth is that these things are immeasurable,  
As is this country's debt to all who serve,  
And pay the price for freedom in this land.

# Hill Correctional Center School Supply Drive

Hill Correctional Center was once again able to give back to their community. The facility held a School Supply Drive throughout the month of August 2021. All Hill employees were encouraged to donate items that would help benefit the children and students in the Solutions Program at the local Knox County YMCA. A donation bin was left at the facility's main gate which allowed staff to conveniently drop off items when arriving for work. Some of the items that were donated included: notebooks, crayons, markers, glue, folders, paper, pens, pencils, erasers and much more. The Knox County YMCA Solutions Program is a year-round, intrusive enrichment program designed for at-risk teens in the community. The Solutions Program is currently serving approximately 200 students in Galesburg at the local Junior High/Middle and High Schools. Hill Correctional Center and its staff members take pride in helping support such a vital organization. This successful event not only meant a lot to the staff involved, but also to the director, volunteers, and students of the Solutions Program. Providing school supply donations is one way to help ensure that the students have what they need to succeed in school. Staff at Hill hope that by continuing to support the community, specifically the Solutions Program, it will help encourage kids to flourish in whatever they want to do. Hill Correctional Center's CLAS II, Meg Ryan, looks forward to continuing this event annually and making it successful for the children and students it benefits.

Hill Correctional Center

# BACK to School

## SUPPLY DRIVE

Items will be collected from  
**August 6 - Aug 31**

**Supplies May Be Left In The Blue Barrel At The Main Gate And Will Be Donated To Community Area Schools.**

**Contact: Meg Ryan**

What's Needed:  
Pencils, pens, paper, folders, binders, back-packs, highlighters, crayons, markers, glue, tape, calculators, notebooks, erasers, rulers, sharpies, composition books, scissors, etc.

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# IDOC and Lake Land College Join Forces in Remote Learning

Lake Land College and IDOC took a step into the future. Using video equipment obtained through the CURE (Coronavirus Urgent Remediation Emergency) Act grant, and in collaboration, once again, with the Illinois Department of Corrections, a virtual Lake Land College biology class began for 29 men and women in custody from Kewanee Life Skills Re-Entry Center, East Moline Correctional Center, and Logan Correctional Center. If this pilot educational program is successful, the partnership expects to expand it.

The class is taught remotely by Lake Land instructor Lance Neal. Mr. Neal has been teaching, inside and outside the criminal justice field, for nearly 18 years. He has taught ABE and GED classes at Kewanee, Hill Correctional Center, and East Moline, where he currently teaches for Lake Land. Lake Land's Northern Dean of Correctional Programs, Jennifer Billingsley, spoke about the program, "We are truly grateful to the wardens and other leaders at these institutions. They are great partners! We hope to have more of these classes in the future."



# IDOC Special Operations Group Receives Award from Illinois State Police

Between May 30, 2020 and June 9, 2020, the Illinois State Police (ISP)/Crowd Control Teams (CCT) were activated to deploy to numerous locations throughout the State in response to civil unrest resulting from the civilian protests over the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota on May 25, 2020.



The ISP requested assistance from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC)/Special Operations Group (SOG) to provide vans and drivers to enable the ISP/CCT personnel to move quickly in urban areas to address these incidents of civil unrest.

Over the course of those 11 days, IDOC/SOG personnel responded with their transport vehicles to multiple locations at varying times of day or night to transport ISP/CCT personnel. Many times, these locations/times were given with little to no notice, yet IDOC/SOG personnel always responded on time and with the requested equipment without fail.

During each day of the activation, IDOC/SOG personnel were requested to transport ISP/CCT personnel to locations that were frequently experiencing violent civil unrest and were not secure. These IDOC/SOG personnel risked their own personal safety to ensure ISP/CCT personnel were able to quell the civil unrest. This process was repeated daily throughout the detail.

Without the assistance provided by the IDOC/SOG personnel assigned to this detail, the ISP/CCT would not have been able to accomplish the mission and protect the rights of the citizens of Illinois by dispersing riotous individuals and restoring peace and calm.

# BE WELL

## An On-the-Spot Strategy to Shift Out of Negativity

*Beth Kurland Ph.D.*

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-well-being-toolkit/202111/the-spot-strategy-shift-out-negativity>

Imagine if whenever you encountered emotions such as irritability, frustration, impatience, and the other emotions that feed stress, you could shift. Instead of getting stuck in those emotions you could experience something more renewing. How might that impact your day, your week, or your life?

We have a brain with a negativity bias. What this means is that our brains are wired to attend to and learn from negative information more than from positive information. This mental habit makes it easier for us to hold onto negative things that happen throughout the day, and miss the small, positive moments that are right in front of us.

- **See** what is happening.
- **Hit** the pause button. (Even just a few seconds will help!)
- **Investigate** with curiosity and friendliness.
- **Find** something to focus on that is more renewing.
- **Take** a moment to “wire” this in.

### **See what is happening.**

As soon as you notice irritability, frustration, or negativity arising, name it. Imagine that you were carrying around a flashlight with you throughout the day that allowed you to see more clearly when these moments are occurring.

Example: I hit unexpected traffic and start going into a stress reaction. I remember to pull out my flashlight. I suddenly see what is going on and I name it: “This is a moment of irritability and frustration. I notice I am starting to spiral.”

### **Hit the pause button.**

Example: Just the noticing slows me down. I take a conscious breath and catch what is happening as if I am watching it from a half step back.

### **Investigate with curiosity and friendliness.**

The task here is to bring some kind attention to what is happening, to get curious in an open way (rather than judging yourself or criticizing yourself).

Example: I think, “Oh, this is what irritation feels like in my body. Isn’t this interesting how I immediately start breathing more shallowly and my muscles are tensing. My mind is starting to fill with negative thoughts, and I can observe how this makes me feel (and it doesn’t feel good).”

### **Find something to focus on that is more renewing.**

Example: I realized there was nothing I could do to change the situation, but I could shift where I was focusing. I started to notice the beautiful yards, shrubs, and flowers that had been tended to with great care. I noticed the children tossing a frisbee to one another with joy and playfulness. I saw the two rocking chairs on the porch and wondered who might sit side by side one another in companionship on a warm summer night.

### **Take a moment to “wire” this in.**

Allow any positive emotions to be felt in the body.

Example: I not only notice or think or see the things as noted above, but I take in a genuine feeling of open heartedness, appreciation, or care for the scenery around me, the children playing, or for the person on the other end of the phone line trying to assist me. I imagine breathing these feelings into my body and letting them settle there.

The next time you come up against negativity, try to SHIFT. It may not change the circumstances you are dealing with, but it likely will help you manage them with greater ease and experience greater choice about how you respond.

# IDOC Employees of the Month

## October 2021

Facility	Name	Title
Big Muddy River	Nancy Taylor / Lori Simmons	Executive Secretary I / Office Associate
Centralia	Amy Corzine	Account Tech I
Danville	Mark Flynn	Sergeant
Decatur	Deven McBride	Correctional Officer
	Alyson Martin	Correctional Counselor II
Dixon	Mark Morris	Correctional Officer
East Moline	Danielle Kanzler	Office Associate
Graham	Crystal Flint	Sergeant
	Ann Kozik	RN1
Hill	Abby Jones	Correctional Counselor II
Illinois River	Susan Robinson	RN
Jacksonville	Amanda Lewis	Correctional Counselor II
Kewanee Re-Entry	Robert Flagg	Sergeant
	Amy Wirth	Administrative Assistant II
Lawrence	Tobey Rice	Correctional Supply Supervisor III
	Lt. Jordan Tye	Lieutenant
Lincoln	James "Bryan" Cardwell	Account Tech I
Logan	Anthony Swarts	Sergeant
Logan	Rachelle Buse	Office Administrator III
Menard	Scott Ebers	Lieutenant
	Scott Carter	Supply Supervisor
Murphysboro Re-Entry	Andrew Kirby	Correctional Officer
Pinckneyville	Mac-Shane Frank	Lieutenant
Pontiac	Michelle Jones	Account Tech I
	Wyatt Miller	Correctional Officer
Robinson	Sean Rice	Correctional Officer
Shawnee	Matthew Morse	Correctional Officer
Sheridan	Timothy Booker	Maintenance Craftsman
Southwestern Illinois	Robyn Baker	Administrative Assistant I
	Danyella Robertson	Correctional Officer
	Delonda Sawyer	Wexford RN
Stateville	Jason Abbott	Correctional Sergeant
Stateville	Syntynese Gray	Correctional Clerk III
Taylorville	James Craig	Correctional Officer
Vandalia	Brady Torbeck	CFSSII
	Tracey Ulmer	Correctional Officer
Vienna	Brett Oxford	Sergeant
Western Illinois	Patricia Forster	Correctional Officer

# Illinois Correctional Association Annual Conference

More than 100 participants, vendors and presenters assembled during the annual Illinois Correctional Association (ICA) conference in Bloomington, Illinois on October 20-21, 2021. Illinois Department of Corrections staff led presentations, made substantial participant contributions, and networked with other prison and jail employees throughout the state. IDOC presented two workshops during the conference with both being very well attended and received.

Director Rob Jeffreys and Chief of Operations John Eilers engaged attendees during their discussion on **Critical Incident Management** and explained how using an Incident Command Structure standardizes organizational operating procedures when managing staff and resources during unusual incidents in a correctional setting. Staff Wellness Program Manager Stephanie Rawlings and Operations Coordinator Chuck Mattmiller, who is also a counselor at Centralia Correctional Center, presented **For the Love of Staff: Building a Comprehensive Staff Wellness Program**. Both concepts presented by the Department were key elements of the Department's COVID-19 response. Chief Eilers and IDOC Statewide Recruiter Brittany Ott and Confidential Assistant to the Director and ICA Vice President, Shelith Hansbro, participated in the panel discussion on staffing, recruitment, and retention.

Opening keynote speaker, Coach Papa (Tim Steward), led an interactive presentation on **True Leadership Simplified**. Other workshops included **Restrictive Housing, The Bio-Physiology of Trauma,** and **Managing and Defusing Conflicts with Communications**.

For more information on ICA, please visit the ICA website at [Illinois Correctional Association \(illinois-correctional-association.com\)](https://www.illinois-correctional-association.com)



State of Illinois  
Illinois Department of Corrections



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Story ideas, feedback and comments can be submitted to  
Lindsey Hess at [lindsey.hess@illinois.gov](mailto:lindsey.hess@illinois.gov)