

# The ECHO

## TEXAS PRISON NEWS

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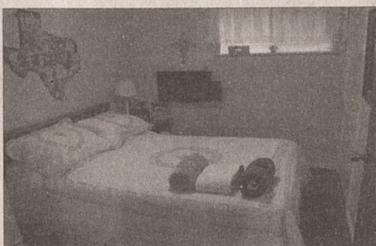
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Distributed Free to Texas Prisoners

## Huntsville Hospitality House serves families for more than 31 years

Nestled in a quiet neighborhood a few blocks north of the Huntsville "Walls" Unit is a very special dwelling place, dedicated to helping families. It's known as the Huntsville Hospitality House and is operated by Executive Director D. McCammon.

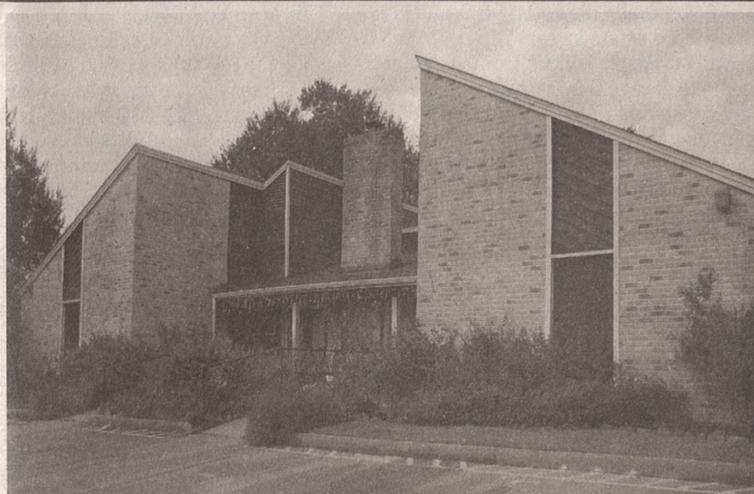


Specially decorated bedrooms that are safe and comfortable are offered to all guests spending the night.

"It's a place for healing to take place. It's a place to bring about healing in the families of those who are incarcerated. It's a place for them to be able to express themselves in a safe environment," McCammon said.

She tells the story of how many family members of offenders came to Huntsville for visits and other reasons, and they could not afford to stay in hotels. They ended up staying and sleeping in their automobiles just to visit loved ones who were incarcerated.

As the problem grew, the Texas Baptist Prison Family Ministry Foundation imagined building a facility to meet this need. In May of 1986, 270 male and female volunteers led by the Texas Baptist Men started building the dream facility. The basic 7,000 sq. foot building was completed in 24 hours due to the planning and



The Huntsville Hospitality House provides lodging, meals and many other services to the families who have loved ones incarcerated in Huntsville area prisons.

dedication of the volunteers. This past year, the Hospitality House celebrated its 31<sup>st</sup> year of operation.

The house currently has 17 private bedrooms that can sleep up to 64 guests each night. All bedrooms are decorated with themes and sponsored by church groups. It was designed to be a very functional

facility with a large living area, large food pantry, dining area, small library, play room for children and a prayer garden in the back yard. Two other buildings have been added through the years: an art classroom for children and a Santa's Shop for Christmas time functions.

HOSPITALITY continued on page 7 ➤

## K2 dilemma produces serious, dangerous health-related issues

A dangerous addiction appears to be sweeping the United States as more people have turned to what they perceive as a safe alternative to more commonly recognized illicit drugs, such as marijuana. Some users are turning to a category of substances known collectively as new psychoactive substances, which have been associated with a rising number of deaths.

These substances are products that contain a mixture of herbs, incense or leafy vegetation that have had synthetic cannabinoids applied to them. These substances are marketed to the public under several names, such as K2, Spice, Kush, fake weed, Joker, Black Mamba, Kronik, Yucatan Fire and Skunk. The natural substances they contain are used to promote the illusion that these products are all natural.

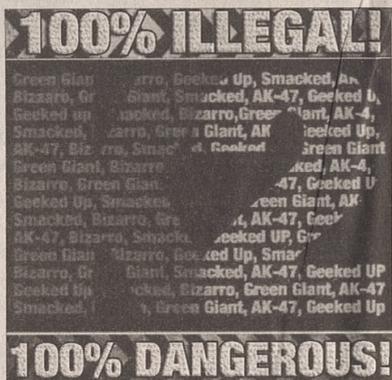
K2 is just one of these synthetic cannabinoids, or man-made mind-altering chemicals that are either sprayed on dried, shredded plant material so they can be smoked, or sold as liquids to be vaporized and inhaled in e-cigarettes and other similar devices. The chemicals found in these products are called *cannabinoids* because they are related to the chemicals found in the marijuana plant. Because of the similarities, these products are often marketed as "safe" and "natural" alternatives to marijuana. The truth is, the only natural parts of these products are the dried plant materials — the chemicals are actually manufactured in laboratories. For years, synthetic cannabinoid mixtures were easy to buy in drug paraphernalia shops, novelty stores, gas stations, and through the Internet, and they were usually sold in small, brightly-colored, safe-looking packages. Despite visible warnings on some packages suggesting the product is "not for human consumption," it didn't look all that dangerous

to some consumers. However, as of 2011, it is illegal in Texas to manufacture, distribute, possess or sell K2.

Many users of K2 refer to it as synthetic marijuana because it affects the same brain cell receptors as delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), the active ingredient in marijuana. However, K2 is not actually a similar drug. Unlike heroin and cocaine, these products are not made using just one chemical. Synthetic marijuana products can be made with nearly 100 different chemicals, and the amount and type of chemicals used varies widely from batch to batch. Because the chemical composition is unknown, the actual side effects may be dramatically different from what the user expects. Synthetic cannabinoid chemicals are likely to affect the brain much more powerfully than marijuana and may cause severe and even life-threatening side effects.

Some users tout the effects of K2 as improved mood, altered perception and relaxation. However, negative side effects include nausea, prolonged and severe vomiting, delusional thinking, confusion, hallucinations and extreme cases of anxiety and paranoia. Some of the even more dangerous side effects that affect users' behaviors due to the use of these drugs include aggression, manic rage, agitation and other forms of violent behavior, self-destructive behaviors, and homicidal and suicidal tendencies. The physical side effects of K2 include an increased heart rate, repeated vomiting, chest pains, heart palpitations, over-heating, excessive sweating, elevated body temperature, inability to speak, restlessness, strokes, kidney damage, seizures, and in some instances, death. K2 can also raise blood pressure and cause reduced blood supply to the heart. It may also cause kidney damage and seizures.

K2 continued on page 7 ➤



## Parole Board explains review process



The review process for parole and discretionary mandatory supervision occurs over several months and has several significant steps.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) determines the specific parole eligibility date for the offender based on applicable state laws. Once that date is determined, TDCJ will generate a "case pull" about six months prior to the parole eligibility date on the initial parole review. In cases where an offender previously has had a parole or discretionary mandatory supervision review, the case pull will occur about four months prior to the next review (NR) date.

At the time of the case pull, TDCJ also sends out notices to all trial officials involved in the offender's conviction and to any victims or victim family members who have registered with TDCJ-Victim Services. The notice provides time for those individuals to provide any information they wish to submit to the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) regarding the potential release of the individual under parole supervision.

PAROLE continued on page 7 ➤

### Child Support Corner

## Office of Attorney General provides Inquiry Form for Incarcerated Parents



Parents who are in jail or prison may not know how to get information on their child support case. To simplify the process, the Office of the Attorney General (OAG) provides the *Inquiry Form for Incarcerated Parents* to Texas Department of Criminal Justice law libraries. The form allows incarcerated parents to get answers to their child support questions. State and federal law limits the release of certain child support information; this form explains what the OAG can — and cannot — provide.

The *Inquiry Form for Incarcerated Parents* is for incarcerated parents who have an OPEN child support case with the OAG or want to establish paternity by opening a case. Parents can use the form to:

- find out which child support office is handling their case.
- request a case review to determine if the child support order can be modified.
- request an application to open a child support case to establish paternity (if the incarcerated parent was not married to the child's other parent).

Completing the *Inquiry Form for Incarcerated Parents* is a quick and easy way for incarcerated parents to inform the OAG of their current status. Information about a parent's incarceration may allow the OAG to "defer" the child support case during the parent's incarceration. Deferring a case means that the OAG will not pursue enforcement proceedings during the

period of incarceration.

The *Inquiry Form for Incarcerated Parents* can also be used in preparation for an incarcerated parent's reentry to determine the status of his or her case and the location of the child support office that is handling it. Parents who are less than six months from release and need information about their child support case can use the *Incarcerated Parents and Child Support Handbook* to obtain important child support contact information, such as office telephone numbers and the 24-hour payment and case status information line: (800)-252-8014.

To request the *Inquiry Form for Incarcerated Parents*, incarcerated parents can complete an I-60 request to get a form from their unit's law library or they can complete an I-60 to request access to the unit's law library. Staff at the law library will let parents read the *Incarcerated Parent and Child Support Handbook* to see if their child support questions can be answered. If additional information is needed, law library staff will offer the *Inquiry Form for Incarcerated Parents*.

It is important to remember that the OAG can only respond to child support questions on the inquiry form. The OAG cannot respond to personal letters, multiple requests for child support information or questions about closed child support cases. ➤

## Letter from the editor:

## Estate sale evokes memories

**M**y wife told me not to go, but I went anyway. I never paid much attention to estate sales until we lived in a neighborhood with lots of elderly people. They eventually die and their families eventually hold estate sales.

An estate sale differs from a garage sale in that a garage sale is on a small scale, usually consisting of basically unwanted items and/or junk. An estate sale, however, is usually done when the owners have passed away and the children are trying to get rid of all their leftover belongings.

This was on a Saturday, and an estate sale was being held six houses down the street. The elderly couple had passed away. Their children had divided up some things amongst themselves and hired an estate company to organize and conduct the sale of all remaining belongings. We knew the elderly couple very well and had become great friends with them over the years.

So on this morning, I told my wife I was going down the street to the estate sale. She told me I shouldn't go. Well, it was Saturday, and I wanted to go, so I went. Big mistake.

As I walked in the front door, I recognized the estate company people from prior estate sales I had visited. They welcomed me and invited me to look around. Then it happened: everything I saw reminded me of times with the elderly couple. I knew then I shouldn't be there.

As I went to the garage and saw the old fishing pole the man used when we went fishing—that about did me in. I am nostalgic to begin with, but all of this stuff was putting me over the edge. I had to get out of there.

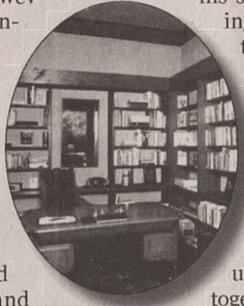
As I walked back through the house, one of the estate company representatives invited me to sit down with them at the checkout table where people were coming to pay for the items they had chosen to purchase. There were several people standing in line waiting to pay for little crystal glasses that used to belong to the lady who had passed away.

Then it happened. An older fellow with a baseball cap, Bermuda shorts and tennis shoes walked up. He was carrying an old automotive hood light that hangs from the inside top of the hood and plugs into a wall socket. It is a must for providing light while working on car engines in one's garage or drive way.

Well, needless to say, I almost lost it! Me and the elderly gentleman had spent many, many hours using that light to work on my car together! We had used it to change my battery, alternators, generators, fan belts and everything else a person needs to do in their driveways (or under a shade tree!). I was thinking, "You can't buy that light! It has too much important history!"

That was the last straw. I went back home. When I got home, my wife asked how the sale had gone. I told her it was terrible seeing all those things that brought back so many memories of that elderly couple. She said, "I told you that you shouldn't have gone down there!"

Moral of the story: material things bring us happiness, or at least we think they will. I would suggest that the time we spend with friends, while using material things, far outweighs the actual material things. I have learned to enjoy people more and more through the years. Things are ok, especially if two people can use them together to make great memories! ➔

LETTERS  
TO THE EDITOR

To the editor,

I have recently come to realize just how much the instability of my childhood has affected the way I live my life as an adult. I attended many different schools. One thing you learn being the new kid is how to make friends quickly, and how to say goodbye to those newly found relationships when you leave. Stability is a key to living a successful and more fulfilled life, but unfortunately, it is something that a lot of us who are incarcerated lack.

I say that if you desire a better life for your kids, think about how you can implement stability into your own life. One way to do that is by being constant. Consistency will give you stronger foundations, and your kids will grow up with structure that will give them stronger values and a chance at a better life.

**Christophe Larceniare**  
Briscoe Unit

To the reader,

Thanks for sharing some excellent ideas relating to children. Consistency in one's relationship with children while being incarcerated will definitely pay dividends in life and the lives of the children. Regular letter writing to children will always mean more to them than you will ever know. Keep the relationship strong and growing. Good luck.

## ••••• NOTICE! •••••

With this issue, we are happy to present you with a fresh look at *The ECHO*. A reduced availability of specific paper resources led us to redesign our format, but our content will still offer the same variety of informational, inspirational, and creative content from agency sources and our readership. Though we will now feature eight large pages instead of 16 smaller ones, we continue our 88 years of service to readers in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. Thank you for continuing to read, evaluate, reflect on, comment on, and contribute to *The ECHO*. Your support and input are always appreciated.

**HAPPY READING!**  
-The Editor

## The ECHO

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## Ideas should inspire hope

Jennifer Toon, Contributing Writer

**I** was told once that I crush hopes and dreams. My friend said this through some very angry tears. I did not know how to respond. What a terrible accusation! All because I laid out the logical explanation about the reentry phases. Her pass that day was part of phase one, the preliminary paperwork all parole offenders eventually complete. Her pass didn't mean she had made parole just yet. The more she resisted, the more I insisted. Finally, she told me she did not want to hear anymore.

I believe hope has amazing, life-altering powers. I talk about its positive effects frequently. Hope is a recurring topic of mine, but I keep in mind Red's advice from the Shawshank Redemption that hope is a dangerous thing. Isn't there a Greek myth about

Pandora's Box being opened and allowing the world's evils to come out, including one called Hope? What then were the Greeks and Morgan Freeman trying to warn us about? Unfulfilled and unrealized hope can crush the human heart to dust. I am sure we can all relate to that. So why would we willingly invest our hope in beliefs not grounded in some type of reality? To do so only ensures the crushing. That is why it is so difficult for me to hold my peace when I know (not merely doubt) that what someone is hoping for really is not possible.

Hope has to grow from a place of actual possibilities, no matter how small, in order to turn into the spirit-enhancing energy it is designed to become. Specific hopes have got to have a real chance. Everyone still breathing still has chances, and that is powerful

in itself, but we have to determine which chances are possible and which ones are simply attempts to disengage from reality to live in la-la land. That is not hope, but delusion.

I am trying to accept that others must come to their own terms. Someone close to me said in an affectionate yet teasing way, "I know you think it's your duty to tell people the truth about themselves, but it's just not." My intentions are to help others spare themselves deeper disappointment! I know my own life did not improve until I was honest about not only the realities of my problems but also of my hopes. I learned that successful plans depend on accurate assessments, whether it's what I want to hear or not. However, as a psychologist noted, "Truth can be tolerated only if you discover it yourself." I guess he might be right. ➔

## DEAR DARB

## LETTERS TO THE DARBSTER

Dear Darby,

How's it going, old man? It discombobulates me how people look at anything positive as "not cool" or too "out there." I constantly hear people talking about getting out and "getting back in the game." Some say that working a nine to five job is a waste of time, and the money that correctional officers make in a month on the job can be made in one day selling dope. But what about the repercussions, like watching your back 24/7, or the fact that you're now locked up away from family? This is my second time down in two different states and I'm only 24 yrs. old. When I get out, I'm going to be that person working banking hours, the one they call "square," but I'll be free. Doing something positive is what's up and is a very humbling experience that will instill good life lessons. Honestly, the best time in my life was when I held a normal job — I miss it!

**Ayrton "Hawai'i" Gishi**  
Gib Lewis Unit

Dear Hawai'i,

You have to wonder how successful some folks would be if they put the amount of energy they spend on NOT doing a regular job into legitimate work. They'd probably do quite well, but good luck on convincing them of that fact. Let

em play their game, and after they get tired of coming back to the pokey for the umpteenth time, maybe they'll figure it out! Good luck with your "square" life when you get released.

Dear Darby,

Hey! I'm writing to complain about the people who write just to complain. Man, there has to be some people in this joint that have something useful to say. Tell these people to send in some news we can use or at least some news that we can smile about. I remember some time ago a guy wrote to complain about people sagging. I have no idea if people are sagging or not, because I'm always looking up. Get your mind right and keep looking up cause that's where it all is! A shout out to everybody who's getting a diploma, taking a trade or winning a tournament.

**Lake**  
Wynne Unit

Dear Lake,

Yep, some folks like to cry a river over trivial things or situations over which they have no control. And yes, some fools like to walk around with droopy drawers. I've seen people in their 50s and 60s sagging like disgruntled teenagers. They have no idea how they look. And you're right about focusing on what's important — being positive and making your time count!

Dear Darby,

I would like to comment on the article in *The ECHO* about offenders being mad at their families when they don't write, or send cards or money. Life continues for them just like it does for us. The only difference is that they must pay for all the things that we as inmates receive for free as wards of the state. Meals, clothing and a place to sleep have to be paid for in the free world. I like when the writer of that article said, "get rid of the feelings of abandonment and anger." So what I'm saying is to stay focused on getting yourself together and keep your letters to them positive, because one day you too will receive the good news you're hoping for. Keep the faith!

**Tony B. Green**  
Lynaugh Unit

Dear Tony,

I agree with you on the positive attitude thing. Our lives in here may not be what we want in life, but we DO have blessings, even on this side of the fence. We also need to realize that while we're doing time, our friends and loved ones are doing a type of time too, with us being in here. It's hard on them, too! Lastly, life goes on out there — even those who care about us can get caught up in their world and sometimes forget to stay in touch. It's not that they don't care, it's that they're living life. Give 'em a break.

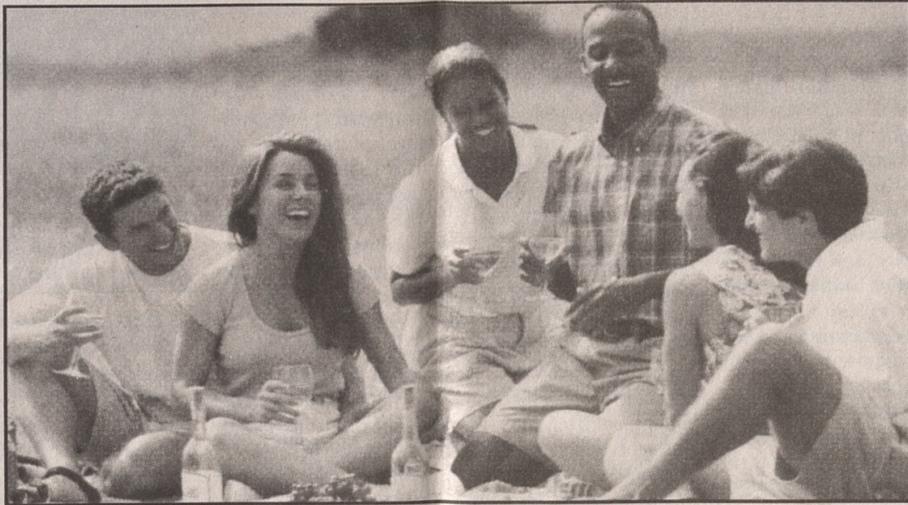
# Family reunion

William Hill  
Staff Writer

I got to thinking about the experiences I've had at various family reunions I attended as a kid. I don't know about anybody else's family, but my mom and dad were big on family reunions. We went to several of them every summer. It seemed to me that we must have been related to half the people in the world.

Growing up my family didn't have a lot of money. My dad was a dairy hand and my mom was a stay-at-home mom. Don't get me wrong. I loved my childhood and wouldn't trade it for anything. We just didn't have much money, and that's the way it was. I think the fact that we didn't have a lot of money is one of the reasons that my parents went to so many reunions. We didn't have the ability to go visit each person, so we went to family reunions to catch up with how others were doing — and to gossip.

Neither of those things mattered to me as a kid. Reunions were all about two things for me: fun and food. I grew up in the country, and there weren't many kids my age to play and hang out with. Going to reunions, I knew there were going to be other kids present. Our reunions were usually held in a city park in whatever city



happened to be the closest for the majority of people. There were wide open spaces to run and play football and baseball, playground apparatus galore, and best of all — a swimming pool. I always had a blast!

As I became a teenager, the focus changed from playing with the other kids to hanging out with the menfolk talking about the weather, how the crops were doing and what kind of harvest they were expecting. The teenage girls went with the womenfolk and talked about babies and about who was getting married to whom. Like a lot of guys in the early 80s I began wearing my hair a little longer than

was the norm in my family. I remember one reunion in particular when one of the 'old men' snidely asked me, "When are you going to get a haircut? You look like one of those damn hippies." This garnered a few smiles and chuckles but not nearly as many as my response: "I just got one. They took almost one-fourth of an inch off, and it almost feels like I'm bald." What made this funny — at least to me — is that this guy was as bald as a cue ball and tried to hide it with a very bad toupee. When he realized that he was the one being laughed at, he blurted out the old favorite of every old man: "Don't sass me boy! In my day children knew

their place. They knew not to speak to a grownup unless they were spoken to." It was at this point that my dad interjected, "My boy knows his place. You asked him a direct question, he answered it, and your ego couldn't handle being laughed at." My dad hated me wearing my hair long as much as anybody, but he showed me right then that family always come first.

The one thing that never changed for me about family reunions is the food. I was blessed to be born into a family of great cooks, with my mom being the best. Not only was she a great cook, but she also loved to cook. I know that I really enjoyed

eating whatever she cooked. According to both her and Dad, I was really good at it. I believe the phrase they used to use about me was "eating them out of house and home."

There was always so much food there was no way a person could eat some of everything — but I always tried. I developed my own strategy. Instead of getting stuck in the long lines for the main courses, I went straight to the dessert table. I got a plate full of cookies, pies, cakes and pastries, then went to the main course line eating as I waited. You should have seen all the jealous looks I would get from all the other men whose wives wouldn't allow them to eat the desserts first.

As great as those memories are, that's all they are — just memories. I will probably never get the opportunity to attend another family reunion — at least not in this life — because of the bad choices that I made. There is a reunion that I am looking forward to more than I looked forward to the ones I used to go to in my childhood. That's the reunion when I will see my mom and dad again in heaven. When I will hear the sweetest words ever spoken: "Welcome home, son." ♣

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## The Association of X-Offenders Inc. (TAX) offers assistance to parolees

Paroling to the Houston area? We want to help you stay straight and stay out.

*"It's a cinch by the inch."*

- We are an ex-offender and parolee lifeline in Houston.
- We have support group meetings, referral services, counseling and good connections.
- We meet at the First Baptist Church Heights, 201 E. 9th St., Houston, every Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

Contact: Dennis Kelly, President

P.O. Box 230384

Houston, TX 77023

(832) 882-5895

### CRIME STOPPERS

## Missing Person

### Tara Suzette Breckenridge



Tara Suzette Breckenridge was 23 when she went missing. She was born on Sept. 30, 1968, and she is a white female, five feet four inches tall, weighing 115 pounds, with brown hair and brown eyes. She was last seen on Aug. 4, 1992, in Houston, Texas. Ms. Breckenridge has a small scar under the left side of her lower lip, a scar under her left arm, a scar on her left side, and her two upper front teeth are discolored in the middle. She was known to keep her fingernails long and painted red. She wears contacts or glasses and wore a Del Rio High School ring engraved with Class of 1981. Ms. Breckenridge was last seen leaving her place of employment wearing blue shorts, a light-colored top and sandals. Her red 1986 Pontiac Fiero

was found abandoned. Dental records are available upon request.

If you have any information on the above missing person, or any other missing person or homicide, please contact the TDCJ Crime Stoppers Office at P.O. Box 1855, Huntsville, TX, 77340. Crime Stoppers will pay from \$50 to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest, filing of charges or indictment of a person or persons that committed a felony crime (or is a wanted fugitive). Crime Stoppers guarantees your anonymity.

### Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman (2015 revision)

In 2007, the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) Ombudsman was established by the 80th Legislature (Texas Government Code §§501.171-178) and was appointed by the Texas Board of Criminal Justice (TBCJ). The PREA Ombudsman office was created to provide offenders, family and friends of offenders, and the general public with an independent office to report sexual abuse and sexual harassment occurring in Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) correctional facilities. The PREA Ombudsman also provides a confidential avenue for offenders to report sexual abuse and sexual harassment and ensures impartial resolution of complaints and inquiries related to allegations of sexual abuse and sexual harassment. The PREA Ombudsman reports directly to the TBCJ Chairman and may be contacted at the following address:

PREA Ombudsman P.O. Box 99 Huntsville, Texas 77342

TDCJ has a "zero tolerance" for all forms of sexual abuse and sexual harassment of offenders. Offenders knowledgeable about offender-on-offender or staff-on-offender sexual abuse or sexual harassment that occurs within a TDCJ correctional facility are encouraged to immediately report the allegation to the facility administration, PREA Ombudsman or the Office of Inspector General. Offenders may remain anonymous upon request.

### Acta de Eliminación de Violación en Prisión Ombudsman

En el 2007, el Acta de Eliminación de Violación en Prisión (PREA) Ombudsman fue establecido por la 80a Legislatura (Código de Gobierno de Texas §§501.171-178) y fue nombrado por la Junta de Justicia Criminal de Texas (TBCJ). La oficina PREA Ombudsman fue creada para proporcionar a los ofensores, familia y amigos de ofensores, y al público en general con una oficina independiente para reportar el abuso sexual y el acoso sexual que ocurre en los establecimientos correccionales del Departamento de Justicia Criminal de Texas (TDCJ). El PREA Ombudsman también proporciona una vía confidencial para que los ofensores reporten el abuso sexual y acoso sexual y asegura resolución imparcial de las denuncias y consultas relacionadas con las acusaciones de abuso sexual y acoso sexual. El PREA Ombudsman reporta directamente al presidente de TBCJ y puede ser contactado en la siguiente dirección:

PREA Ombudsman P.O. Box 99 Huntsville, Texas 77342

El TDCJ tiene una política de "cero tolerancia" para todas las formas de abuso sexual y acoso sexual de ofensores. Ofensores con conocimiento acerca de un abuso sexual o acoso sexual de un ofensor u otro ofensor, o de un empleado a un ofensor que ocurre dentro de un establecimiento correccional de TDCJ se les recomienda hacer inmediatamente la denuncia a la administración de la unidad, PREA Ombudsman o a la Oficina del Inspector General. Los ofensores pueden permanecer anónimos al solicitarlo.

# Coffield Unit hosts Cardinals of Trinity Valley Community College

Roger Reister, Coffield Unit Reporter

The Coffield Unit recently hosted the Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC) basketball team for an exhibition match against a team of their own — one that was chosen exclusively from the offender population.

"This was a cooperative effort between TVCC and the Coffield staff, specifically Warden Catoe and Warden Cooper," said Dr. S. Hurley, associate vice president of Correctional Programs at TVCC. "We consider this a community service and a show of goodwill, bringing campus activities to the students in TDCJ."

Despite the amount of advanced planning and coordination that this type of event required, it was still a complete surprise to the TVCC basketball players.

"We didn't tell them where they were going to play until they got on the bus," confided Coach G. Furr, who after being an assistant coach for 10 years, is now in his first year as head coach of the Cardinals, taking them to an impressive 12-3 record.

This unexpected choice of location and opponent received a mixed response from the players; some were quiet, while others were really excited. But there was one thought that loomed in every player's mind: "How dangerous is it, Coach?"

The answer to that question didn't come until after they entered the doors of the correctional facility and were behind the red brick walls and razor-wired fences. That was when they were given a rare tour of the largest prison in Texas by Senior Warden J. Catoe. While talking about the importance of education and personal growth in a young person's life, he showed them both the general population

and the administrative segregation living areas.

"I wanted them to see what it was like to live here and what happens if you waste your chances at life," Warden Catoe said. He drove this point home by closing a couple of the players into a cell, and giving them a unique opportunity to see life from an offender's perspective...if only for a moment.

After a quick bite to eat in the unit dining facility and a peek at the TVCC classrooms located in the Education Department, the team was escorted to the gym where the exhibition game was to be held.

As they entered, decked out from head to toe in Cardinal red and looking exactly like the collegiate basketball players they were, one of their opponents, dressed in offender white, was heard saying, "That could have been me" — a comment that surprisingly was echoed by a couple of the TVCC players.

There was very little mingling as they warmed up, with both sides scoping out the competition, content to stick to themselves. Even when the tallest man from each team (6'11" for TVCC and 6'5" for Coffield) met at the center of the court for tipoff, there was only the obligatory "good luck" before the game began.

But the moment the ball was tossed into the air, all of the tension and nervous energy disappeared. The mistakes of the past and the hopes for the future faded into the background as those two groups of men played a game that they knew and loved.

Three pointers were missed.

Jump shots hit nothing but net.

Acrobatic layups were made.



Trinity Valley Cardinals and Coffield Unit offenders challenge each other in a game of basketball. Much was learned by all players on both teams.

Shots were blocked.

After each play, you could see the respect and camaraderie building between these two teams, and when the final whistle blew, the visiting team was ahead 53-41. In that moment, when the game was over and all of the missed shots were already fading in memory, the spectators saw a scene that could have been played out in any gymnasium or on any basketball court around the world. They witnessed a bunch of friends congratulating each other, making plans for a rematch.

The major difference from freeworld matches was the armed guard tower that could be seen out of the window. It served as a reminder of the past and a warning for the future.

When the players in red gathered up their gear and headed out the door, going home to their families and friends, C. Stratton, a Coffield Unit reporter, was heard saying, "That is our hope and our future."

That is a sentiment shared by TVCC, TDCJ, and all of the surrounding communities. ♣

## Free fan from TX-CURE

If you have been indigent for six months or more, you may qualify for a **FREE** fan from TX-CURE. Follow these simple instructions to apply for a fan:

### Inmate Trust Cure Fan

1. Write an I-60 request to: **I would like to get a fan from TX-CURE.**  
**TDCJ-CID TRUST FUND**  
**P.O. Box 60**  
**Huntsville, TX 77342**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 TDCJ# \_\_\_\_\_  
 Unit \_\_\_\_\_

2. The Trust Fund will then forward the request to the TX-CURE Fan Project. Your request must be dated Jan. 1, 2017, through June 30, 2017.

3. Wait patiently. The Fan Project works from donations only. If you do not get a fan this year, you can request one next year if you are still indigent.

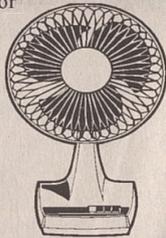
4. You may request a fan between Jan. 1, 2017, and June 30, 2017. No earlier, no later. The rule is one fan per prisoner, even if yours gets broken, stolen, confiscated or if you received a fan under a previous TDCJ number. TDCJ keeps accurate records, so please don't apply for a fan if you've received one in the past. Protect your property papers. Report a malfunctioning new fan to unit property. If you do not receive a fan this year, try again next year.

Mike Jewell, Director

Cheri Ledbetter, Fan Project

Joan Covici, Secretary

Dallas Office (214) 893-0784



## The ECHO requests submissions

The ECHO attempts to reflect positive values to fulfill the expectations you have placed on our prison newspaper. We request that **YOU** consider writing quality articles, commentaries, etc., to be published. All submitted articles will be appreciated and considered.

Please do not send anything more than 1,000 words (five pages handwritten, or three pages typed and double-spaced typed). Publication is not guaranteed, and it may take a few issues for an article to appear.

### Suggestions:

**Article:** An article is an objective discussion in an informative manner on any number of topics, such as health, history or legal issues. New and detailed facts need to have cited sources.

**Commentary:** A commentary is a discussion of any number of topics, but it is based upon the opinions or experiences of the writer.

**Book Review:** A book review details the subject, style and key plot elements of the book and generally concerns relevant topics of the day. Opinions about the book are welcomed.

**Extras:** Extras refer to letters to the editor, letters to Darby, puzzles, recipes and short stories, to name a few.

**Poetry:** Poetry is a piece of writing chosen and arranged to create a specific emotional response through meaning, sound and/or rhythm. (The ECHO already has more than 100 poems approved for publication and always has an abundance of poetry submitted, but if you have a really great poem, go ahead and send it.)

When submitting any of the above, write a heading at the top of the first page with your name, number, unit of assignment and the type of submission you are sending. For example:

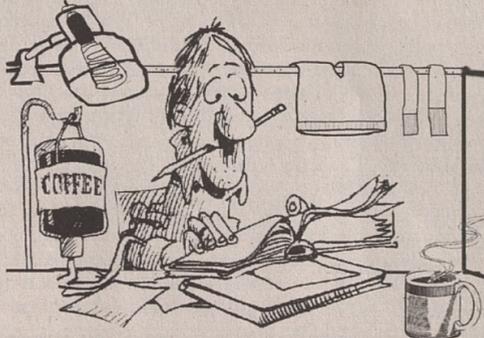
John Doe, #1234567

Huntsville Unit

Letter to the Editor

(or article, poem, etc.)

Don't hesitate to send us your work — even if you are not a professional writer. We will edit your submissions for clarity and effectiveness. Thank you for your continued support of *The ECHO*. ♣



## Reflections on his father's wisdom

Lion M. O'Neil, Staff writer

Since the beginning of our existence, man has sought the secrets and meaning of life. He has looked to the heavens and pondered on his purpose and the reason for his being, often succumbing to the paralysis of self-analysis and the uncertainty caused by life's mysteries. Reflecting on our purpose can be a healthy way to give definition and structure to our lives. It was at a crucial point in my life, as a young man, that my father shared some wisdom with me that helped guide my decision-making process and shape the characteristics that changed a little boy into a free thinking man.

The wisdom that my father shared revolved around the concept of seven year life cycles. From infancy to the age of seven is the first cycle in which, as a child, I was allowed to learn and grow. All of my needs were provided for by my caretakers, who made sure that I was clothed, fed and sheltered from the potential harms of the world. I was taught effective forms of communication and manipulation to acquire the things that I wanted or needed. When I was hungry, sleepy or needed my diaper changed, I cried to get the attention of my caretaker, thus my verbal communication manipulated others into providing the service I desired. I was given boundaries to protect me from harm, but was allowed to play like a child and explore the sheltered confines of the world around me so that I could learn on my own and experience life as a kid.

The second cycle, age seven through 13, is when overstepping the boundaries was established and I was given consequences. During the early years, I faced forms of discipline to help instill a sense of responsibility and accountability for my independent actions. During the latter years of the second cycle, my father increased my responsibilities to encourage maturation and spawn independence. This is the period that I was most moldable, seeking out influence and roles to model. Positive roles to model could have prevented me from venturing outside of moral boundaries into negative behavior. I can attribute my negative and positive behavior to the guidance, or lack thereof, of my father during this period of my social development. He wasn't as active in my life as I would have liked, and this created a vacuum that was filled by negative influences. I got involved in extracurricular activities to help me develop the socialization skills needed to form strong relationships. Those cycle years are when I began forming the relationships that extended into young adulthood.

The third cycle, age 14 through 20, contained formative years in which, as a young adult, I began to customize my own identity. The relationships that I established were a strong indication of the path that my life was on. Most offenders can attest that the third cycle is when bad relationships become the primary cause of poor decision-making, such as

drug and alcohol abuse, street gang affiliation, teenage pregnancy and a disinterest in formal education, leading to higher dropout rates. Unhealthy relationships often coincide with the unethical anti-social behavior that led to our criminal thinking and the criminal acts that sent us to prison.

The fourth cycle, age 21 through 27, represented the years when my worldview expanded and I began to see life in a different light. All my experiences up to this point were the foundation for what I would later become. Even as an inmate, the principles by which I structured my life still influenced how I made decisions. My father told me that now, more than ever, was the time for me to choose my friends wisely and not let unwanted friends choose me. The fourth cycle is when my social circle began to dwindle and encompass like-minded individuals. My friends became more reflective of how I saw myself and how I wanted others to see me.

The fifth cycle, age 28 through 34, was the time where I really began a self evaluation to determine if I was pleased with where my life was going. After experiencing the street life, college, corporate America, entrepreneurialism, addiction and criminal justice, I had to assess my position in life and prioritize my wants and needs. I decided, with the advice of my father and because of my life's experiences, I should go back to school and get my degree.

During the sixth cycle, age 35 through 41, I went back to college. I had accumulated some college credit hours at a free-world university and also while in the criminal justice system during my fourth cycle. I enrolled at a community college and receiving an associate's degree in 18 months. My bachelor's degree was acquired two years later, and my master's was completed over the next three years. The mental and physical discipline required to finish school was gained from the experiences garnered during the previous cycles. The sixth cycle was a product of the first five cycles and would be a period where I would have an opportunity to apply what I'd learned to complete a personal goal. Nothing that I had experienced was in vain, and everything I had learned over the years is now being applied for practical purposes.

My father's wisdom is infinite. He provided me with a symbolic gauge and compass by which to measure and guide my life. In retrospect, as I reflect back on my life cycles, I can see how each cycle prepared me for the next phase. The lessons learned during the cycles are perpetual and the knowledge is transferable to every aspect of my existence. The choices that I make are all guided by the wisdom gained over the course of my life's experiences. My father is no longer here to give me advice in real time; however, I will apply the wisdom of life's cycles to make sure my father is with me in spirit for the rest of my life. ♣



# Tips for the prevention and recognition of heat illness



Due to the rising temperatures, offenders and staff are encouraged to be aware of the types of heat illnesses.

**Conditions causing higher risk for heat illness include:**

- Being newly assigned to a job
- Receiving psychiatric medications or certain other medications, or having certain medical conditions
- Being elderly
- High temperatures and humidity
- No significant breeze

**Prevention of heat illness includes:**

- Increasing frequency of fluid intake when working in hot environments. Supplemental water will be made available.
- Taking a break every 30-60 minutes
- Decreasing intensity of work under extreme conditions
- Access to cold water showers
- Access to respite areas
- Allowed fans for all offenders
- Following preventive measures on heat posters for heat related illness

**Types of heat illness**

**Heat Cramps:** Can be painful and intermittent, involving involuntary muscle spasms following hard physical work or exercise in a hot environment. Cramps usually occur after heavy perspiration and typically occur in the abdomen, arms and legs. The cause is inadequate replacement of electrolytes (sodium and potassium).

**Heat Exhaustion:** The most common form of heat illness is caused by depletion of water and salt. Symptoms include weakness, anxiety, fatigue,

dizziness, headache, and nausea. Signs include profuse perspiration and rapid pulse and breathing. Confusion or loss of coordination may also be present. Heat exhaustion, if not treated, may lead to heat stroke.

**Heat Stroke:** While it may be preceded by signs of heat exhaustion, the onset of heat stroke is often sudden. Symptoms include diminished or absent perspiration, and hot, dry and flushed skin. Other conditions that may be present include increased body temperatures, delirium, convulsions, seizures, rapid pulse, weakness, headache, mental confusion, dizziness, extreme fatigue, nausea/vomiting, and incoherent speech progressing to coma. Medical care is urgently needed. Death may result if left untreated.

**Treatment:** Seek medical attention as soon as possible. Move the person out of direct sunlight into an air conditioned environment if possible, remove clothing while maintaining modesty, and provide water to drink if conscious. Liberally apply cold water on them, and if possible, fan them if there is no breeze.

**Access to Respite areas:** During times of extreme temperatures, offenders must be allowed access to respite areas. Employees and offenders will be trained to be compliant with heat precaution procedures including knowledge of respite area locations and offender access. The location of each respite area is also posted in offender housing areas and other common areas on the unit. Please consult unit staff regarding directions to the respite areas if needed.

**Report all incidents of heat related illness to a staff member immediately!**



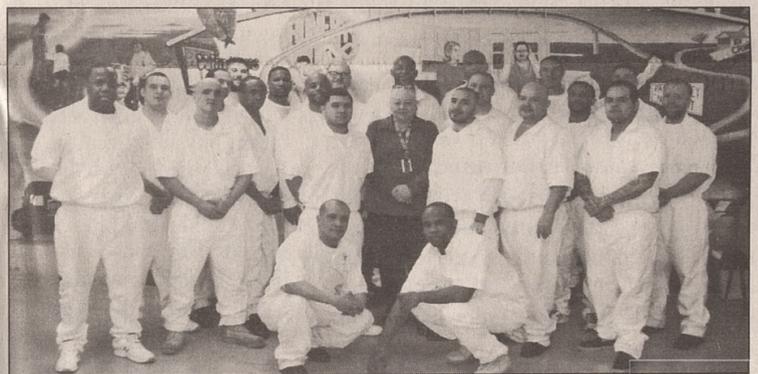
Allred Unit High School Equivalency program graduates are C. Davis, J. King, R. Reyes, E. Shellmen, K. Briley, D. Hall, A. Sierra, E. Cantu, J. Jimenez, A. Mitchell, R. Gonzalez, J. Stephenson, C. Mapps, B. Blacknall, R. Boswell, P. Mitchell and C. Wahl.



Ferguson Unit Culinary Arts class bakeoff winners with Path Finder - themed cake are T. Ebanks, S. Sanchez, and B. Richardson



Daniel Unit CHANGES III graduates are J. Reed, J. Valentinis, M. Ochiltree, A. Gomez and L. Beard.



Beto Unit Cognitive Intervention Program graduates are K. McGowen, C. Tennison, J. Felipe, C. Williams, M. Smith, K. Yarbrough, S. Sims, F. Cook, C. Wideman, M. Oavis, R. Meador, G. Woffard, W. Cain, M. Gusman, S. Johnson, T. Swearingen, M. Rosales, C. Zambrone, A. Suarez, G. Vasquez, R. Soto and D. Angel, with instructor S. Carter.



Middleton Unit Faith-Based Dorm graduates are M. Cano, S. Maples, C. Morley, J. Suniga, C. Leverett, D. Ferem, D. Puente, G. Castorena, C. Petty, J. Thomas, S. Gallegos, M. Landon, C. Cooper, J. Denton, M. Macias, C. Washington, M. Maldonado, J. Davis, D. Perales, K. Bland, J. Thurmond, J. Alva, T. Emanuel, R. Schaefer and J. Herbig with chaplain M. Bey (not pictured: F. Eisenmenger, J. Mundell, P. Ruiz, D. Kalnbach, A. Lucas, J. Robinson and D. Green).



Stiles Unit High School Equivalency Program (HSEP) graduates are F. Bell, D. Burns, R. Dillard, J. Freeman, E. Gonzalez, C. Johnson, D. Jones, J. Jones, A. McKoy, R. Morin, M. Polk, B. Ricks, J. Salmeron, A. Santos, M. Torres, J. Tunsel, C. Watson and G. Moffett.



Dalhart Cognitive Intervention Program grads are R. Goates, D. Velasco, C. Clay, O. Omoruyi, M. Alexander, B. Hernandez, G. Cisneros, B. Chavera, J. Swilling, D. Chandler, V. Palomino, J. Shelton, D. Walker, E. Pierce, M. Pipkin, M. Shakur, M. Wesley and A. Groves.



Beto Unit vocational electrical graduates are L. Harris, S. Johnson, M. Bradshaw and Q. LeeChong with instructor R. Page.

## Kairos program builds family

Stephen Unger  
Torres Unit

They have a saying in Kairos on the Torres Unit: "Kairos is more than just a cookie." The Prison Fellowship celebrated its sixth year with a graduation unlike any ever seen. Yes, there was pizza, cookies, and ice cream; however, there was no pomp and circumstance, no pictures of graduates, and no outside visitors. The caps and gowns were missing as the entire Prison Fellowship family gathered in a small room to celebrate the achievements of nine of their brothers. Rev. Culpepper, the 2016 Field Director of the Year in the southern region, spoke words which resonated through the room. He said they are one family founded on the success of each other.

To graduate, participants attend class three to four times a week for over a year. During this time, they participate in mock interviews, train for service, study basic etiquette, join a Men's Fraternity, fellowship in the "upper room" and discover the heart of Father God. This graduating class included J. Allbritton, J. Reece, E. Colomb, P. Montoya, J. Collier, P. Wall, Y. Pruitt, D. Robinson, and J. Lopez. These nine men relaxed with friends, enjoying the casual atmosphere filled with laughter only found at the dinner table of the most intimate households.

Preparing for the future was the message of Director Culpepper, K. Hyland and Rev. W. Williams. As their family snacked on pizza and ice cream, the three mentors fell into a comfortable round table filled with teasing and testimony. Hyland began by letting everyone know that not even a heart attack would keep him away from them. Culpepper patted his back, and began sharing testimony of how lives can change with the truth and power of Jesus Christ.

"Look up here. Look up here," Rev. Culpepper said as he directed the eyes of his family forward. "In front of you are men who have been drug addicts, homeless, in and out of prison with time spent in Leavenworth. How come you can't figure out God can do the same for you?"

The message of the night was clear: graduating is a perk, but family, brotherhood and the truth of the Word of God are eternal. ➔

## Education encourages student to restore honor of Father's Day

Quincy Patterson  
Beto Unit Reporter

In April 2011, my father died, and so did my ignorance of fatherhood — I had just completed "The Middle Way Parenting Program" provided by Windham School District. The program revealed many profound lessons about parenthood. These lessons encouraged me to forgive and honor my dad before he passed. In addition, I cultivated a relationship with my daughter, who I had not written in more than 10 years. Now she acknowledges me each Father's Day.

Father's Day is the special day set aside to recognize and honor fathers, but only few receive such recognition. Accordingly, only we can restore the anticipation, honor and significance to such a day.

Here is a small list of things in our power to do to help us better relate to children and restore the honor to Father's Day:

1. Windham School District (WSD) libraries have

books on parenting. Take advantage of these free resources.

2. Reflect on your father's mistakes and make a conscious effort not to make them yourself.
3. Forgive your father, knowing that you have failed, also.
4. Most unit chapels have programs like "Day with Dad", "Quest for Authentic Manhood", and other programs. Request information or counseling.
5. Do your part as a father by making a constant effort to communicate with your children to build and nourish the relationship.
6. Sign up for a class on parenting, like those offered by WSD.
7. Instead of being selfish by expecting a Father's Day card or a gift, this day could be an opportunity to reach out and honor your children. Then, Father's Day will have actual significance. Honor will follow. ➔

## Darrington Unit celebrates first G4 graduates

Paul Gillette  
Darrington Unit Reporter

Thirty G4 custody participants graduated from one of three classes now being offered to the Darrington Unit's medium custody level offenders. These three classes include Voyager, Overcomers and Authentic Manhood. Those interested in improving themselves signed up and attended the weekly training sessions. Two field ministers, who graduated from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (SWBTS), along with three SWBTS students and one chapel leader, taught the classes.

Two of those instructors were S. Crump and D. Sam, who facilitated the Voyager course. It is designed for personal development and improvement and began with 12 students.

"Before our class started, we asked the students to make a commitment to finish their voyage. We had 10 of the 12 follow through with those commitments," Crump said.

"I'm all about bettering myself, because for the majority of the time in TDCJ I was doing stupid stuff and I stayed a G5 (close custody). I finally made G4 a year ago and then got shipped to Darrington. As soon as I heard about the classes, I signed up for them," graduate N. Williams said.

"I took Voyager to try

and learn more about other people, and I learned how to identify people's personalities. This has helped me deal with others. After my first five classes, I became a G2 and was moved back to general population and was able to continue coming to the class. I have now graduated," Voyager grad, J. Bangmon said.

The Overcomers class was taught by M. Lewis and R. Nash. Each student is taught to guard their mind and spirit through daily prayer and Bible study, while practicing positive behaviors and attitudes to avoid returning to the control of a negative lifestyle.

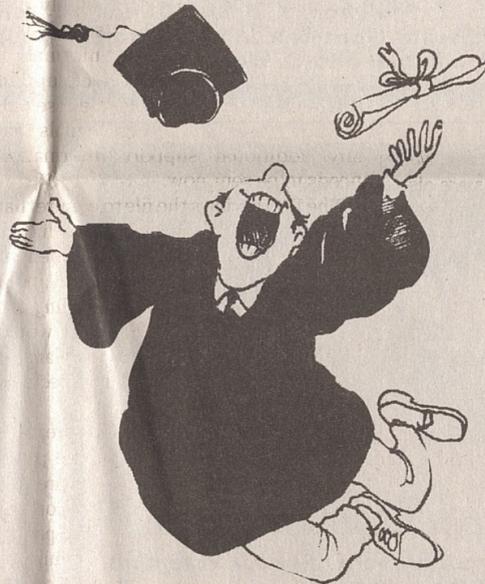
"The goal is to help the students

make good decisions and overcome addictions through the power of God's word," said Nash.

Authentic Manhood's curriculum teaches that an authentic man is known as one who loves God, his family and his work. T. Solley and K. Taylor taught this course with the main thrust to help the students realize how they are created to be men of God with gifts and talents to use to glorify Him. They can become the men God meant them to be.

Solley added that two of his students became G2s, yet continued attending the class and graduated with the others. C. Nious is one of the original G4s who received his G2 status a few months earlier and continued his class. Nious shared that he chose Authentic Manhood first because he was about to go "back to the house," and he thought that this would help him change his ways as a man and learn how to better himself in life.

Each G4 graduate received ITP credit for their commitment and efforts and also received a certificate making their graduation official. All were treated to watch the inspiring movie War Room, illustrating the importance of prayer. Many more graduates indicated how good it felt to finish something. Sam pointed out that these men are realizing the importance of taking it upon themselves to learn and grow, "which is a really good thing." ➔



### It doesn't mean...

Submitted by Amber Shoop  
Released

It doesn't mean I don't love you,  
because I send you somewhere to stay.  
It simply means I love you too much  
and can't stand for you to see me this way.

It doesn't mean that I'm angry,  
because sometimes I yell.  
It's myself I'm really angry with  
for putting you through so much hell.

It doesn't mean I don't miss you,  
or I don't want to hear your voice.  
Just the sound makes my day better.  
I should have made a better choice.

It doesn't mean I'm sad,  
because sometimes I cry.  
It's just hard when I remember  
that I didn't get to tell you goodbye.

It doesn't mean I don't miss you  
just because I'm not around.  
I'll be thinking of you every single day,  
from the moment my feet hit the ground.

It doesn't mean I'm happy  
when there's a smile upon my face.  
It's just easier to pretend  
that I'm in another time, a better place.

It doesn't mean I'm not sorry  
for all the lies that I have spoken.  
I desperately long to regain  
all the trust that I have broken.

It doesn't mean that I'm ashamed.  
I can speak freely of my addiction.  
I just wish that I could go back  
and give you every bit of my attention.

It doesn't mean this is over.  
In fact, it's just the beginning now.  
Recovery is a constant uphill battle,  
but to give it my all is my solemn vow.

### The heroin phase

Submitted by Carla Cochran  
Plane State Jail

The land of far, far away  
is where I'll stay,  
now that I know the vicious games you play.  
The day I met you, your grip was tight,  
and overwhelmed at times  
it seemed useless to fight.

The days went on with you and I,  
staggering around in a destructive high.  
It seems as though you put on a show,  
presenting yourself as an everyday Joe..

Your deliberate deception has no end,  
a life filled with a never quenched thirst and  
meaningless sin.

You prey on the weak  
and dine on the strong,  
you do not discriminate  
nor prolong.

In a vulnerable state I took your hand,  
you led me to hell  
with a gentle  
wedding band.

The devil danced  
when I held you so tight,  
losing all control  
and much of my sight.

I thought I'd love you until the end,  
until you took away  
my dearest friends.

There once was a time you made me feel strong  
and secure,  
I'd never dream of this hatred so pure.

You really dug deep under my skin,  
collapsing veins and dreams within.

You took from me  
all the things you once gave,  
slowly but surely  
I became your slave.

The toxicity once polluted my mind,  
a piece of paper states  
my soul was assigned.

A self-imposed death sentence  
is what it would be,  
if I kept up my end of this insanity.

You've taken me to places  
I never thought I'd see,  
but not the places in romance novels  
or my dreams.

I still bear the scars  
from your noose  
so snug,  
spilling the pills  
and sweeping  
under the rug.

The truth of it all I'm the one to blame,  
for I let you eat at me  
and put me to shame.

The freedom is lost, the glamor is gone,  
but today I sing a much better song.

I've cast you aside and out of sight,  
I pick up my sword and fight the good fight.

You destroyed so much  
and numbed my heart,  
piercing my flesh like a poisonous dart.

Who is the one I speak of today?  
The devil himself, the heroin phase...

**HOSPITALITY** continued from page 1

"Our primary responsibilities are to love, listen and labor," McCammon said. Hospitality House is open seven days a week and provides vital services: no cost overnight lodging, offender release orientation, execution orientation, spiritual and family ministry (informal counseling and prayer) and a "media free shelter," which prohibits free world media representatives from contacting family members. Families are also supported through an open pantry policy (where visitors are allowed to take food home), school supply distribution, a Christmas toy give away and an art program for visiting children.

The home is available to accommodate various types of family visitations, including weekend visitation, daily offender releases, execution process, marriage ceremony, death row visits, funeral services and hospital hospice visits.

"It would be impossible to do this ministry without the volunteers," McCammon said.

Approximately 14,000 volunteer hours are donated annually, and approximately 3,300 people are served each year.



An art workshop building and classroom are provided for children of visitors. Art classes are provided by volunteers.

Hospitality House is operated by the two full time staff members, a part time staff member, one live-in volunteer, a Sam Houston State University (SHSU) college intern and approximately 40 volunteers. McCammon's husband J. McCammon serves as the facility's chaplain and performs services as a volunteer.

Hospitality House provides for those families who have loved ones incarcerated in the 16 TDCJ facilities in the Huntsville area within a two-hour drive of Huntsville. Advanced overnight reservations are preferred by telephone or website. Reservations need to be made two or three weeks in advance of the required dates of use, and walk-ins are accepted when possible.

Two of the newest additions are projects for the children who come to the Hospitality House. The art building classroom offers a place for volunteer SHSU art professors to come and work with the children of offenders. Also, the Santa Shop offers a place to collect donated toys for children during the year, so toys are dispersed to children of offenders during the Christmas season.

"It is very rewarding to work here at a non-profit organization, especially with the art program and Christmas projects," SHSU intern M. Jordan says. "I especially like the experience of working and dealing with the children in these projects."

Donated funds from individuals and churches support Hospitality House since it is not connected with TDCJ. There are no state or federal funds involved in financing this effort.

Guests of the Hospitality House express gratefulness for its loving support: "Everything about this situation [having to visit a loved one in prison]



Outside sitting areas offer an environment of peace and solitude for visitors.

is so negative, but coming here is so positive. It's wonderful! It really makes you feel better," says one.

"You have amazing games for children. You make me feel at home. Everything is amazing. Ya'll are just super amazing to me. I will be back soon!" says another.

"Thank you for easing the burden and lessening the anxiety of this journey," says still one more guest.

McCammon stresses that the more families can be together, the stronger the family bond can become. The Hospitality House of Huntsville is committed to assist in building and strengthening family bonds with loved ones who are incarcerated.

"It is such a joy to be here and be available to minister to families as they go through extremely difficult seasons in their lives," McCammon says.

**For more information contact:**

**Ms. D. McCammon**  
**The Hospitality House**  
**912 10<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Huntsville, TX 77320**  
**(936) 291-6196**  
**Email: director@thehospitalityhouse.org**  
**Website: http://www.thehospitalityhouse.org**

**K2** continued from page 1

Even occasional use of these substances is life threatening. Scientists confirm that K2 stays in a person's system for a lengthy time, although the long-term effects of the drugs have yet to be fully determined. Experts debate how addictive these drugs are, but there seem to be indications that continued use results in addictive behaviors and withdrawal symptoms upon cessation of use. Some of these symptoms include a loss of appetite, extreme sweating, insomnia, depression, loss of motivation, psychotic episodes, and suicidal thoughts. These substances are also often referred to as zombie drugs, as users may experience side effects so damaging that while they are still physically alive, they are left brain dead.

K2 continues to be a growing problem in society with serious consequences for long-term physical and mental health. Effects of synthetic marijuana vary among users. While one user may not experience violent behavior after using the drug, another may not be so lucky. According to authorities, it only takes one bad batch of the product to cause serious and permanent damage, or even death.

**Resources:**

- **American Addiction Centers** "The Effects and Dangers of K2."
- **Health on the Net; Healthline Media; Healthline News:** "K2 Poisonings Show Dangers of Synthetic Drugs." July 20, 2016.
- **National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institute of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:** "Synthetic Cannabinoids." November 9, 2015.
- **https://www.dea.gov/druginfo/drug\_data\_sheets/K2\_Spice.pdf;** Drug Enforcement Administration; U. S. Department of Justice: "Drug Fact Sheet, K2 or Spice."
- **https://healdove.com/mental-health;** "K2 Side-Effects: The Dangers of 'Spice' and Synthetic Marijuana" April 30, 2017.
- **https://www.ktre.com/story/14482455/texas-outlaws-k2-spice-and-other-synthetic-marijuana-products;** "Texas Outlaws K2/Spice and Other Synthetic Marijuana..." April 2017.

**PAROLE** continued from page 1

The case pull itself results in the entire offender TDCJ file being sent to an institutional parole office of the BPP. That file becomes part of the workload for the institutional parole officer (IPO) to whom it is assigned. If family and friends have not already sent letters of support or a packet of information about an offender's network of support upon release under parole, the case pull starting the review process signals that any additional support information needs to be sent now.

The IPO reviews the file to ensure that all appropriate documents are included. The IPO then interviews the offender to obtain additional information about the offender's situation, including the location to which the offender would hope to parole and any other plans or opportunities the offender expects to pursue upon release.

After the interview, the IPO prepares a case summary for the parole panel that will vote the case. The entire file, including any letters of support or protest and the information packet provided by the offender's family or friends, or in some cases, an attorney, is sent to the designated Board office for review and for parole panel vote.

Once the case arrives at the BPP office, it is assigned a lead voter. By state law, the lead voter must interview any victims or victim family members in person, by telephone or by videoconference, if the victim requests such an interview. Requests for interviews by any other individual



prior to the parole panel's vote are at the voting members' discretion.

After reviewing the case summary, the file, and conducting any interviews, the lead voter will cast the first vote and send the file to a second parole panel member. If the second vote agrees with the first, in most cases, the decision is made since the two votes create a majority of a three-member panel. If the second parole panel member's vote differs from the first, the case moves to the third parole panel member.

For certain offenses, the full BPP must vote and a two-thirds majority must approve release under supervision.

Once a decision is reached, a letter is sent to the offender with the decision. The IPO makes certain that the letter is delivered to the offender.

If parole is denied, the decision letter will specify the timing for the next review.

If parole is granted, the BPP may also specify certain programs that the offender must successfully complete prior to being released. TDCJ then takes over the process of preparing the offender for release, including entry into any pre-parole programs the offender may have to complete. The IPOs also assist in releasing certain offenders.

**SOLUTIONS**

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	5 3 4 6 2 1 8 9 7	2 3 6 9 7 1 4 5 8	
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	9 5 3 1 4 2 7 8 6	3 6 8 5 2 4 7 1 9	
	6 4 2 8 7 5 1 3 9	4 9 5 3 1 7 8 6 2	

**Delicious Recipes**

**POTATO SALAD**  
 Kortni Ruckman  
 Marlin Unit

**Ingredients:**  
 1 pkg. cheese potatoes, sandwich spread (to taste), jalapenos diced, (optional) pickles diced, (optional).

**Directions:**  
 Make desired amount of potatoes and mix in mustard and sandwich spread to desired taste. You can add jalapenos and pickles if you like, but is great as is. Enjoy.

**ANGRY REDHEADED CHEESE NACHOS**

Thomas R. Harris  
 Polunsky Unit

**Ingredients:**  
 1 chili flavored soup  
 1 squeeze cheese  
 1 jalapeno pepper  
 1 mustard  
 1 habanero

**Directions:**  
 Break soup into four equally sized pieces and lay the parts on top of opened soup package spread out for a plate. Separate the four layers to make eight single-layered pieces. Break the eight pieces in half to make 16 bite-sized pieces. Arrange them in rows on the makeshift plastic plate and sprinkle both sides of each piece with chili seasoning. Squeeze a quarter-sized amount of cheese on top of each piece. Put a nickel size amount of mustard on each piece. Place drop of habanero sauce on top and an optional slice of jalapeno pepper on each piece. Enjoy.

**THAI PORK ON NOODLES**

Ussarin Sathanant  
 Leblanc Unit

**Ingredients:**  
 1 hot and spicy vegetable soup  
 1 hot and spicy vegetable seasoning  
 1 tablespoon peanut butter  
 1 tablespoon grape jelly  
 1 tablespoon sriracha sauce  
 1 sweetener packet  
 1 bag of pork skins  
 1 salted peanuts or cashew mix packet  
 1 1/4 lemon lime electrolyte (optional)  
 2 cups hot water  
 1/2 cup cold water

**Directions:**  
 Bowl 1: break up the noodles and put in bowl. Add 2 cups of hot water (do not add seasoning packet). Let cook. Bowl 2: add 1 spoon peanut butter, 1 spoon grape jelly, 1 tablespoon of sriracha sauce, 1 sweetener packet, 1/2 cup cold water, and hot and spicy vegetable seasoning packet. Stir slowly until mixed well. Add pork skins to bowl and break any large pieces in half. Mix pork skins for 3 minutes until they're covered with sauce and become soft. Add salted peanuts or cashew mix packet to the bowl and mix well. Pour bowl 2 of pork skins on top of bowl 1 noodles. Optional: sprinkle 1/4-lemon lime electrolyte for gourmet taste. Serves one. Enjoy!

## ATTENTION!

We are seeking workers to work in an environment creating a newspaper read by more than 150,000 offenders. Applicants should have a positive attitude and work well with others. The ECHO prefers workers to have experience in similar/related work in the free world or in TDCJ.

**Graphic Designer**

Job duties include page layout, photo scanning and editing, art creation and performing general clerk responsibilities.

**Preferences:**

- Experience with Adobe InDesign or Page Maker, Illustrator and Photoshop.
- The ability to type 40 words per minute is preferred.

**Requirements:**

Applicants must meet the following requirements — those who do not will automatically be screened out.

**Offender must:**

- Be classified as a G2 custody status.

## ECHO Graphics Workers Needed

- Be willing to relocate to the Wynne Unit in Huntsville, Texas.
- Have no history of convictions involving aggressive sexual acts.
- Have no history of convictions involving kidnapping.
- Have no history of institutional disciplinary cases involving aggressive sexual acts.
- Have no major disciplinary infractions within the past 12 months.
- Have no history of security precaution designators.

Interested applicants may send an I-60 with qualifications to:

**Managing Editor**  
**The ECHO**  
**Windham Administration Bldg.**  
**Wynne Unit**  
**Huntsville, Texas**



# Library Corner

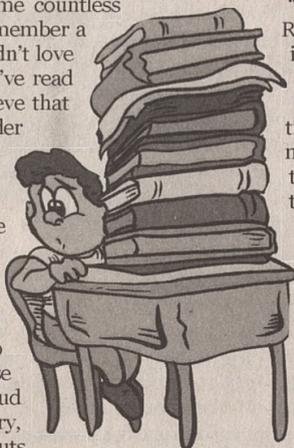
*"To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all miseries of life."*

— Samuel Maugham

## Robertson Unit library offers relief from prison life

C. Williamson, Robertson Unit librarian

For my entire life, books have been extremely important—reading books to myself and aloud to others, hearing someone read to me, and collecting my favorite books have made my life richer and given me countless special moments. I can barely remember a time when I couldn't read and didn't love to share what books or authors I've read most recently. That is why I believe that a librarian *must* like to read in order to be successful. I read constantly to learn which authors and book series would be interesting to add to the library collection. Over the years that I've been a librarian in a public school, a county library branch, and now in a men's prison, I've become convinced that reading is an essential key to success, contentment and purpose for people of any age. Reading aloud to a child, taking the child to a library, and even giving the child books puts him or her on an amazing path to success.



My goal is to create a library that is as inviting as possible, because it is one of the only places in a prison that looks like a free world place. Making displays, creating special sections for genres, and arranging shelves that beckon others to look through the books, is also part of what I do to show others how amazing books can be. I do 'book talks' to classes or lay-in sessions. I try to ask other readers for suggestions and ask them to spread the word about which books have been their favorites.

A few months ago I asked offenders in one lay-in session, "What does reading or the library mean to you?" The responses those men gave were amazing, so I share them with you.

"This unit library at French M. Robertson is incredible, and the librarian is awesome. I mean, if there's a book you may want to read, and it's not listed or available in the library, C. Williamson tries to make the book available. To me personally, reading books exercises the brain and gives another avenue of thinking — always in a positive aspect. So I would encourage others to take advantage of the opportunities that the library has to offer. You never know what you'll discover."—Offender T. Bowman

"I really appreciate being able to come to the library to check out books to read. Reading allows me to escape from the prison I have placed myself in. [Because of the library] I have traveled all over the world and to the past and the future. I have lived in space and on far away worlds. Without the library, my mind would be in prison along with my body. Getting into reading has really opened up my eyes and mind. I thank C. Williamson for giving me a chance to read books that I enjoy."—Offender D. Shannon

"I never learned to read when I was young, maybe due to an undiagnosed learning disability or because I was hyperactive. I quit school in ninth grade. I was always honest with people about not

being able to read or write, and they always helped me. The library is very important to me. My first cellie started helping me. He gave me the seven Harry Potter books. It took an entire year for me to finish reading them the first time. I still can't spell very well but I work at it. It takes me an entire week to read a 300-page book, but I'm getting better. Don't ever think you can't learn to read. I love to be in another world while I read."—Anonymous

"The unit library exists for me as an escape. Every week I'm paroled into worlds of fantasy, transported into lands of limitless intrigue, and released to the freedom that can only come through the pages of a good book. Although my body remains, my mind is free to explore. My hopes are lifted. Without the unit library and the access to the freedoms that it so freely provides me weekly, I would no doubt lead a less enlightened, more tedious and somehow more imprisoned imprisonment."—Offender M. Johnson

Reading has the ability to change lives in ways that very few other activities available in prison are capable. Your unit library is there to offer you the opportunity to engage in an activity that is not only fun but rewarding. You never know what type of trip or where in the world, (or universe in some cases), you will go when you open the cover of a book. One thing is for sure, however; your mind will not stay where it is. ♣

## Book review:

### 'Ready Player One' by Ernest Cline

James Weeks, Jordan Unit



I've occasionally read a novel I wished wouldn't end. "Ready Player One" isn't one of them. No, this is the first one, out of thousands, that I wanted to read again, right away. And I did. I can think of no higher praise, though I tried.

Imagine a world society in the 2040s that develops an implausible fixation on late-twentieth century geek culture. Now make it plausible by imagining one of the world's richest people (who just happens to be an uber-geek from the '80s) dies, leaving his vast fortune to the first person who can win a computer-based quest steeped in '80s lore. Finally, imagine all of this taking place in the OASIS, a simulated reality everybody uses for education, work, business and pleasure ... everything. The rest is just details. And how!

The deceased multibillionaire created the OASIS. He also happens to own the majority of the company that runs it, so the OASIS is up for grabs. And, no surprise, the quest takes place in the OASIS.

The quest itself is for an Easter egg. An invention from '80s computer games, Easter eggs are objects hidden in a game's graphics. They are usually found

by players who obsessively check every nook and cranny, and discolored pixel, of a game. Once found, they often unlock some inaccessible, sometimes unknown part of the game.

While telling the story of the Easter egg hunt, the author presents factoids from yesteryear geek — true. Trivia is presented as part of character definition and story development. Props and settings from 70s, 80s, and 90s video games, TV shows, movies, music, novels and comics abound.

Movie lines and song lyrics are weaved into the story on multiple levels. Most of the quotes are blatant: One character recites them to another in context-appropriate dialog. Others are presented to the reader by the narrator as he tells his story. The most interesting are those that are such a natural part of the dialog that the reader may not even recognize them. In other words, the story has its own Easter eggs!

The plot is driven by the competition to find the Easter egg. An evil corporate empire is bent on owning the OASIS and commercializing its every

aspect. It uses brawn to gain every advantage it can in the quest. The good guys, the narrator included, use brains.

And this leads to the story's one weakness. Brains, not brawn, engage in planning and careful execution, and brains aren't known for creating nail-biter-narratives and edge-of-your-seat scenes.

The story's true power of attraction is one I haven't seen used with such great effect since Forrest Gump. Remember Gump's run across America? "Have a nice day" and the smiley face? John Lennon's "Imagine" and his appearance on The Tonight Show? All iconic images from the book that harken back to actual phenomena from the '60s, '70s, and '80s.

That nostalgic brew made it so easy to love the story. "Ready Player One" is Forrest Gump for geeks. The author zings so many trivia darts, the reader is guaranteed to suffer from a nostalgia overdose. There's more to the story than that, though.

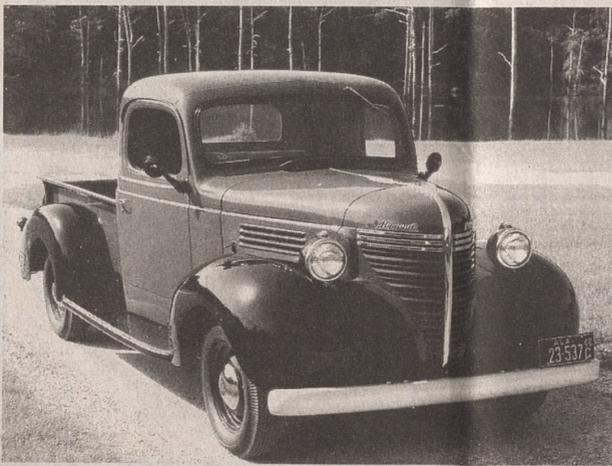
Taken all together, this does something magical: It absorbs the reader like a sponge. Get ready to get your geek on. Repeat as necessary. ♣

## Memories with Dad

William Hill, Staff Writer

It was the summer before my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday and I was head over heels in love. The first time that I saw those sensuous lines and graceful curves I fell madly in love. It was not a young lady that had caught my attention; it was a 1940 Plymouth pickup truck.

Dad and I would spend our evenings and weekends of the summer working to restore the rusted relic to its former glory. This was a major undertaking as the truck had spent many years relegated to the back corner of a pasture of a former owner. Dad began working on the interior of the truck and assigned me the task of loosening the bolts of the engine mount so that we would be able to pull the worthless engine out the next evening. I grabbed the necessary wrenches and went to work. I discovered that the years of exposure to the elements had not only rusted the exterior and wreaked havoc on the interior they had also rusted nuts onto bolts to never budge. In my 15-year-old mind, there was only one remedy: a cutting torch.



"Where do you think you are going with that torch?" asked my father when he saw me pushing the cart towards the front of the truck.

"I think I'm going over to the truck to cut those bolts loose," I said rather smartly.

"There's no reason to use that torch. Get a can of WD-40 and use some elbow grease."

"But Dad, those nuts are too rusted to take off like that. I can't even budge them," I whined.

"That's because you didn't use enough elbow grease. Hit it with that lubricant and

really put your weight behind it and they should come right off," Dad replied.

I coated the nut with a liberal coating of lubricant and tried to remove it, but to no avail. After working up a good sweat, I announced to my Dad that there simply was no way that engine was going to come out without using the cutting torch.

"Let me see that wrench, and I'll get 'em started for you," Dad said with a trace of irritation in his voice.

Dad began wrenching on the nut putting all of his weight into it as he tried to

apply enough torque, but it was to no avail. Looking at the nut, Dad announced that the problem was that I had not applied enough WD-40. Dad emptied the entire can of lubricant onto the stubborn nut and once again tried to remove the nut as I watched. After several minutes of futile attempts to remove the nut, Dad finally admitted defeat.

"Bring that cutting torch over here and we'll go ahead and take the engine out tonight."

I watched as Dad put on his safety goggles then adjusted the oxygen and acetylene levels before igniting the torch; fine tuning the levels until he got the flame that he desired. When he lit the torch a question suddenly occurred to me.

"Dad, is WD-40 flammable?" I asked as I reached for the discarded can lying on the floor so I could read the directions.

"No, I don't think so." Dad replied as he bent over the front fender to cut the engine mount.

Suddenly the interior of the shop was aglow with light from a fireball that shot out

of the open engine well like flames from the mouth of a fire breathing dragon. I could only look on with shock as Dad looked at me from behind the safety of his goggles and asked if I was okay. I numbly shook my head yes.

"Well, son, it appears that our evening hasn't been a total waste; now we know that WD-40 is indeed flammable."

"Yes sir," I agreed. Then I asked the obvious question that occurred to me as I stared at my Dad's singed face. "Will eyebrows that are burned off grow back?"

"I sure as hell hope so, son, I sure as hell hope so," Dad answered.

This is just one of the many times spent with my dad that are part of my memories of him. I wish that I could verbally tell my father what those times that he chose to spend with me mean to me now, and I rely on the telling of these stories to keep his memory alive within me. For those of you who still have the opportunity to tell your fathers how much they mean to you, I urge you to do so before it's too late.