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Dealing with COVID-19:

How do TDCJ's experience, efforts compare with those of other correctional systems?

Information provided by TDCJ Department of Research and Development

Events of the past months have been challenging, and it is understandable that many have concerns and questions about the COVID-19 virus and the pandemic it has caused worldwide. Loved ones and many others have been impacted, daily lives and routines have been greatly restricted and made uncomfortable, and there remains a great deal that is unknown about the virus and when there might be an effective treatment and vaccine.

As a result, everyone across the globe has had to rely on personal behaviors as the main approach to preventing the virus from spreading. For the readers of this newspaper, *The ECHO*, the need for information is understandably very important. On that note, TDCJ would like to share some information and

statistics that will hopefully shed some light on how TDCJ compares to other large correctional systems around the U.S. in terms of efforts to prevent the COVID-19 virus from overwhelming the system.

To be clear, it cannot be overstated how dangerous the virus can be. In some parts of the world, entire towns and communities have been devastated. For example, in Italy, there have literally been places where almost every person in the community caught the virus and large numbers of deaths have resulted. When thinking about correctional systems, there is an increased need to be careful about reducing activities that could lead to people passing the virus from one to another.

COVID continued on pg.5 ▶

Quarantine gets personal

William Hill
ECHO Staff

Editor's Note: *ECHO* writer Will Hill examines the isolation of the lockdown situation experienced throughout TDCJ during the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether you are currently on lockdown or quarantine—or not—his reflections and suggestions are valuable tools for dealing with the situation. These thoughts are delivered with humor, candor, and respect for those who have endured COVID-19 or lost their own lives or a loved one due to this illness.

April 3, 2020, was not the worst day of my life, but it is a date I will long remember. That is when the coronavirus pandemic ceased being an abstract concept seen on the nightly news and became a reality in my housing location. Literally overnight, my daily schedule went from being full of activities to having my temperature checked twice per day, eating mostly Johnnies. I would like to report that I accepted these changes with my usual sense of equanimity and aplomb, but that would not be true. No, I reacted by cursing the virus causing the pandemic and cursing what I wrongly perceived as wasted time.

After wallowing in self-pity for several days, I came to my senses. I realized that if I continued in this negative frame of mind, it would result in me going stir crazy. Not the quirky, humorous high jinks of comedy legends Gene Wilder and Richard Pryor, but certifiable insanity. It was then that I decided to focus on what I could control (my attitude) instead of those things I could not (the quarantine). With this new mindset I began to consider how I could turn a negative situation into a positive one. What follows are three ways that residents can weather this unusual period in our lives.

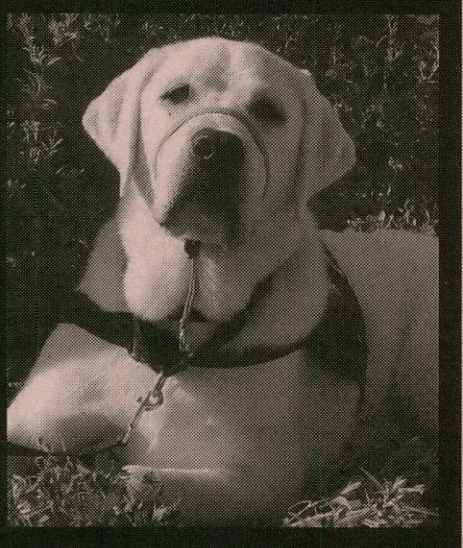
Stay active in body and mind

It's tempting to while away these weeks of quarantine by imitating a bump on a log. Even under the best of circumstance it is important to keep the body and mind active and engaged; however, during trying times it becomes vital.

REFLECTION continued on pg.5 ▶

Watch for our next issue featuring

Patriot Paws at the Boyd Unit



WSD delivers lessons at Plane State Jail



Boyd Unit students return to WSD classrooms

Windham School District provides distance learning despite pandemic, surveys students to enhance instruction, employment pathways

When COVID-19 coronavirus entered the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), the Windham School District (WSD) was forced in March to temporarily discontinue on-site classes for the safety of students. However, WSD teachers and administrators partnered with TDCJ and continued to work from homes and offices outside of units, preparing lessons and messages of encouragement to help students keep moving forward. WSD has since opened many classrooms using safety protocols, creating what has been called a "hybrid-model of instruction": this model is a combination of small-group classroom instruction and distance learning.

At the time of distance learning and restrictions, WSD reached out to students with two special surveys designed to enhance long-term school effectiveness. Along with delivery of education services and library books to housing areas, WSD conducted the statewide surveys among students. The surveys were designed to sharpen student focus on career training and to gain student feedback concerning the distance learning experience. The surveys were prepared, distributed, collected and tallied by WSD staff statewide to obtain student input for program improvement.

SURVEY continued on pg.4 ▶



Commissary Line

The Commissary Line will provide periodic updates in *The ECHO* on new products, availability issues; and any other items of interest that will keep you informed on how things are going at your store.

Problem Resolution

When you have a problem with a commissary and you need some help, the best way to proceed is through the commissary department. We have seven regional supervisors located throughout the state. Their contact information is posted on the bulletin board outside of every store. We have the right people in the right places to keep things running smooth on the units. These folks are our front-line problem solvers. Drop them an I-60 or letter if you need help with a commissary issue on your unit. If you cannot get things fixed at that level, feel free to contact the Commissary Department Director in Huntsville.

Commissary Items for the Johnny Sacks

When the first lockdowns were implemented, we did not know how long they would last or how many units would go on a lockdown. After a couple of weeks and the list growing by the day, we were asked to take some commissary items to the kitchen to add to each Johnny a couple of times a week. We have not received much feedback on the goodies added in, but this did give us an opportunity to do some new product testing. If you got any new items in your Johnny that you really like, let us know. We were testing some cereal bars, granola bars, graham cracker cookies, chocolate chip cookies and some small chips. Most of the items were chosen because they were healthier than other similar products (less sugar, fat, calories, etc.).

COMMISSARY continued on pg.4 ▶

Adapting to adversity: Bob Marley illuminates path to optimism

John Walter Flagg
ECHO Staff

My childhood was cosmopolitan, itinerant and ephemeral. I grew up in a military family that was stationed all over the world. We lived in places like Asia, the Middle East, and Great Britain, yet living in Hawaii is the most memorable location. I was young, but perceptive enough to absorb the enchanting environment: verdant mountains shrouded in mist; cascading waterfalls and an ocean seemingly without end. It was also in Hawaii where I first discovered Bob Marley.

In Hawaii, Marley is something of a folk hero—a spiritual innovator whose lyrics and melodies are hailed as mighty anthems falling somewhere between a sermon and a story. Some say they remind islanders of their ancestral integrity. You could see Marley's likeness adorning walls of buildings, t-shirts, skateboards and surfboards—even inked on skin. Many islanders wore their hair in traditional "dreadlocks" to emulate the Rastafarian style—myself included, to my parents' chagrin.

MARLEY continued on pg.9 ▶

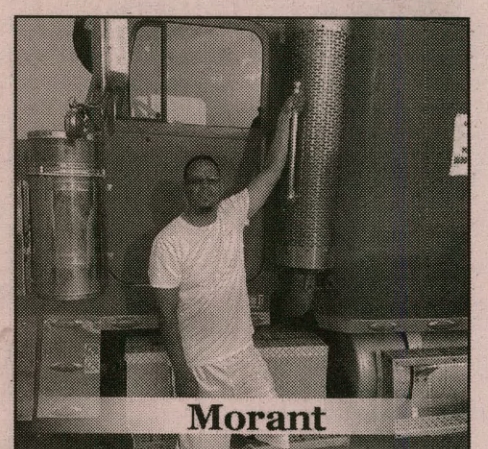
Delivering the story to TDCJ: Truck driver, company owner Morant returns to share hope, career advice

The *ECHO* thanks TDCJ's MAL Division for assistance with this article.

Former Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) resident Timothy Morant returned to the Stringfellow Unit in Rosharon on Feb. 4, entering not as an offender incarcerated within the TDCJ, but as the successful owner/operator of Milemarker Transport Company. He had been in and out of prison since the age of 17, with his most recent sentence being for 25 years beginning in April 2003.

During those years, education, job training, and work experience within the TDCJ helped Morant realize he enjoyed driving as a job—and he was good at it. He is still enthusiastic about his work and new life—and the chance to help others.

MORANT continued on pg.4 ▶



Morant

Hey Darbster,

How's it going? You always seem to have the most perfect, well-thought out answers.

(I'm trying to butter you up a bit so I can get a rise outta ya' and get one of your classic, very witty responses. So here goes.)

What do you think about those guys in the hallways who like to amble along like they're walking in slow motion and hold up traffic, even though they're plenty young and spry enough to move along at a normal pace? What should I do? Should I just stay stuck behind 'em? Should I pass 'em? Or should I say something real diplomatic, and if so, what? Maybe I should see if an extra lane can be put in. Help me out here, oh, wise one. I'm ready and willing to heed your sage advice.

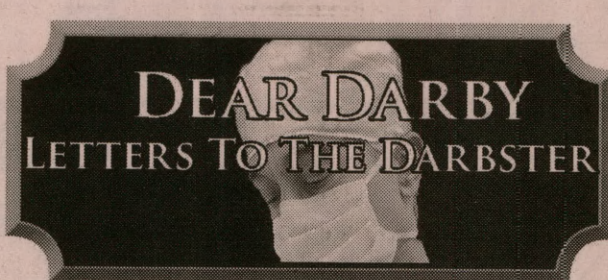
Trying to Get There, Beto Unit

Dear Trying,

Sounds like you're singin' the slow lane blues. You've gotta understand that those stuck in low gear are out strollin'. They don't have anything goin' on in their life, so doing a slow stroll is the highlight of their day. Once they get involved and start doing positive things, you'll find them motorin' down the hallway in a higher gear.

Dear Darby,

First off, thank you for your contribution to The ECHO. It, as with all other contributions, does pay off for others. To those who submitted "Lessons from a Mother's Love," "Jefito is a Word" and "The Last Goodbye": thank you for sharing them. By the time I got to reading "The Last Goodbye", I got a bit emotional. With all the world's COVID issues (food shortages, millions unemployed, as well as the millions who have passed away), and some of us losing our parents, as well as grandparents, many of us see how precious life is. However,



many don't fully know how lucky we are. I listen to others across my unit complain about the food or worry about commissary. Earlier this year, I got a set-off on my parole. Initially I was upset, angry, and questioned whether I could've done more, but I am grateful because I'm continuously learning patience and humility and to be thankful for what we do have. Out in the world, there are people fighting over food and toilet paper, etc., as if it's the last great toy for their kid or that giant screen TV the week of Christmas or on Black Friday. Some people still can't visit each other. So let us learn a little gratitude, patience, and humility, rather than descend into chaos. God Bless!

**Thank You,
Little Nicky
Middleton Unit**

Dear Nick,

Well said! The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all of us in some way — incarcerated and freeworld alike. Many, many of us are grateful for recovery and still missing those who were not so fortunate. The basic health protocol remains the same: Be safe, wash your hands, and don't touch your face — we will get through this!

Dear Darby,

First off, let me just tell you how much I cannot stand your column! What a waste of space that could be used for something positive or even informative. Why The ECHO has let your column

run on rough shod for all these years is beyond me, but please allow me to give you some truth, just in case you might not know it.

Your arrogance knows no equal. People ask you for heartfelt advice, and your go-to answers are almost always rude ("What, you mean to tell me you've been locked up three times and still have the nerve to complain about..."). Your job should consist of giving advice, not judgment.

The other issue I take with you is that you are downright unhelpful, which is an odd characteristic of an advice columnist. People write in with important questions because, for whatever reason, they trust you to give it to 'em straight, but all you do is poke fun, insult or shrug them off. The only question I have ever seen you answer helpfully was in March 2020 when someone asked you, in jest, how the word "Tewxas" made it into print. Who cares?

You could do so much better, if you choose. You have a platform to help and to inform, yet you choose not to. I hope The ECHO eliminates your column or replaces you soon. I know that you will never print this letter, and that's okay. I just hope you read it.

**Sincerely,
Melissa Self
Lane Murray Unit**

Dear Missy,

Au contraire, we will print this letter! I think you were a little hard on Ol' Darby. Calling me arrogant and rude — aren't you in a mood?! A little judgmental from someone who calls me judgmental, don't you think? There are kernels of wisdom in my column, once you get through the wit! If you really think you can do better, Missy, have one of your friends write a letter to Darb, you write the answer at the bottom and then send it in to The ECHO. If it's good enough, we'll make it the "Guest Darby" letter for the month. Good Luck!

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—MANAGEMENT—
 Kristina Hartman — Superintendent
 Bambi Kiser — Managing Editor
 Mary Partida — Graphics Consultant

—STAFF—
 Todd R. Carman — Staff Writer & Graphics
 John W. Flagg — Staff Writer & Graphics
 William E. Hill — Staff Writer
 Bryan J. Moore — Staff Writer
 John J. Phippen — Graphics
 Tim G. Scoggin — Graphics

—CONTRIBUTORS—
 Sergio D. Alvarez — Hightower Unit
 Lauren Aycock — Crain-Sycamore
 Laura Anne Cloy — Murray Unit
 Ashley Dack — Mountain View Unit
 Jim Dent — Polunsky Unit
 Greg Freeman — Allred Unit
 Robert Fridell — Neal Unit
 Joseph L. Fritz — Estelle Unit
 Joe Fernandez — Jordan Unit
 Lisa Jackson — Murray Unit
 Daniel P. Meehan — Darrington Unit
 Michel e Orduna — San Saba Unit
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 Roger R. Reister — Coffield Unit
 Tim Rovell — Dalhart Unit
 Bruce Ruckman — Ellis Unit
 Eva Shelton — Lockhart Unit
 Jennifer Toon — Released
 Raymond Trinidad — Powledge Unit
 Chelsey West — Crain-Riverside Unit
 Demon West — Released
 Michael Wiese — Luther Unit

—UNIT REPORTERS—
 Allred Unit — Kenneth Gardner
 Beto Unit — Kyle Bankston
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 Stringfellow Unit — John Stephens
 Torres Unit — Stephen Unger
 Woodman State Jail — Kathleen Miller

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Dear Editor,

In August of 1996 at the age of 15, I found myself in a situation my younger self couldn't think my way out of — and I committed the crime of murder. I was certified as an adult and sentenced to 50 years in TDCJ. When I came to prison, all I could think was, "Why me?" — and I hated the world. I wasn't exactly a model person. Disciplinary after disciplinary, encounter after encounter — I just didn't care. I was basically moving around without any sort of direction.

Every now and then, for a brief instant, a little bit of my old self would show and I earned my GED. I also learned a vocation, and it felt good to achieve those things.

As time went on, I realized that things weren't right, and instead of looking down all the time, I realized maybe things (though not ideal) weren't so bad. If I looked a little harder, I'd see the random act of kindness, the laughter and banter that's around.

So I decided to change. I started looking for new opportunities, and in doing so, I've earned various other certificates and OJTs that were available. Now I'm even a boiler operator, doing things that I never thought I'd be able to do. I may slip up every now and then, but I'll continue to get back up and look for new opportunities.

It's sad to see guys lose themselves in this environment, which is easy to do. They lose themselves to the TV programs and games, and do little to change themselves. They don't like participating in programs or education. They don't self-evaluate themselves to figure out what went wrong and how to stop it from happening again. They are always looking for the easy way out. They say that they want to get out to the freeworld, but don't take the time to create the habits that'll get them there and keep them there. Habits can be hard to break or create. Now is the time to do this. After all, all we have is time.

JQ

Dear Reader,

Your letter is raw and direct, outlining a story familiar to many readers. We are inspired by the self-realizations and intentional life changes you describe; those are not easy choices. Congratulations on using available programs to rewrite your story and build a positive attitude. This is personal strength and success; hang on to this. Thank you for writing.

Dear Editor,

In the remembrance of Imam



Shabazz, Muslim chaplain, passed away 4-23-2020 one day before Ramadan:

On behalf of the Muslim community at Wynne Unit, we send our sincere condolences to the Shabazz family, friends and co-workers. May Allah grant him all due rewards. Imam Shabazz, you are already missed.
**Wa Salaam (Peace)
 Abdul Hakeem, Ali Shabazz
 AKA Arthur Bass
 Wynne Unit**

Dear Reader,

Here at the Wynne Unit we are very sad concerning the loss of chaplain A. Shabazz. His friendly smile, words of kindness and constant service will be greatly missed by residents and staff for a long time. Wynne and other units are also grieving the loss of other TDCJ employees, officers, residents, and friends. Please keep them and their loved ones in your thoughts and prayers, and encourage them when possible.
 Thank you for writing.

Dear Editor,

I was just "blessed" with a copy of this paper! I didn't even know that this paper existed! I just want to say thank you from this inmate! The articles were good, the recipes, everything. With me being a writer, it's good to know that I have an outlet for my thoughts — and can work to possibly be published. You guys are a blessing. Please keep up the good work.
**Sincerely,
 Lunyea Stanley-Williams
 Marlin Unit**

Dear Reader,

Thank you for your kind words and contributions. Welcome to the ECHO readership. We are glad to have you reading, writing and sharing your thoughts.

Dear Editor,

I have never in all my years been so sad over what is going on, but COVID-19 has really done something to my old heart. I've been in TDCJ 25 years, and I haven't always been good concerning how I've acted in here. I am grateful today for being alive; I'm so very blessed by God. Most people in prison have a lot of emotional pain; it takes a lot to make it go away. I never liked myself growing up, but today I love who I am with God. ... My heart goes out to all the people who have lost a loved one. I want to thank all

the officers on all the units for doing their part in keeping us as safe as they can. I know a lot of people in here or in the free feel sadness about it all; it's a bad thing going on. All I want to say is, God is still good. We all need to be thankful, no matter what. We all need to show a little more kindness, compassion, patience and forgiveness. Thank you for your time,
**Lisa Stevens
 Lane Murray Unit**

Dear Reader,

Thank you for your letter. We too, are grateful you are well. We have received many messages expressing concern over the current pandemic situation and appreciation for those who are helping others in these tough times. We have tried to recognize some of these heroes and helpers in recent issues. And yes, kindness and patience are important to everyone for getting through all of this. Thank you for offering encouragement to all.

Dear Editor,

Hello, My name is Ruben F., and I am really interested in getting the most out of my time while I am incarcerated. The reason for me writing is because I want to see if I could receive some sort of information on all the vocational classes Windham offers. I am also interested in continuing my education while doing my time. I would really appreciate it if I could get as much information from you on all the programs that I can take and also how I could sign up to be on the waiting list for some of them. Thank you for your time.
**Ruben F.
 Middleton Unit**

Dear Reader,

Every success story begins with an intentional plan, so you are making a strong move in the right direction. Congratulations! This letter brings forth questions shared by many readers of The ECHO so we are glad you asked. The first step is to send an I-60 to the Windham School District education counselor at your unit to request an interview.

The counselor will then be able to discuss eligibility, review vocational programs, and place you on appropriate waiting lists, etc. Hopefully you will soon be receiving vocational training and possibly job training within TDCJ. By the time you leave TDCJ, you can be a very valuable asset to future employers.

Editor's Note:

Carry on!

Thank you to everyone who supports The ECHO

Dear Readers,

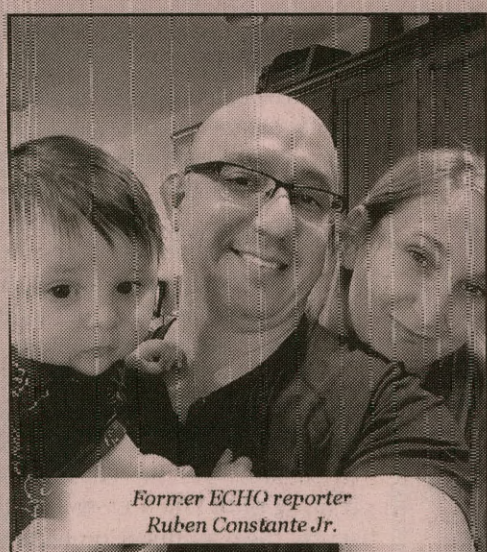
Despite the challenges imposed by the worldwide COVID-19 Coronavirus pandemic, this issue of *The ECHO* is still being delivered to you. It comes (slightly slower these days) to readers in TDCJ with news, important information, encouragement, and hopefully a bit of entertainment and positive distraction to those who may still be in situations of isolation or limited movement. We remain saddened by the loss of residents and staff—and family and friends. We are grateful for everyone who has recovered and survived the Coronavirus; we encourage everyone to remain diligent in practicing health and safety habits as much as possible.

With the *ECHO* office sometimes off limits due to safety and medical restrictions, I have been working remotely from home and satellite offices on many aspects and roles of production. *The ECHO* writers and graphic artists have been restricted by a very long and essential lockdown, unable to work as a physical crew, yet they have been able to contribute writings, thanks to support from the administration, correctional officers, and employees of TDCJ, the Wynne Unit and Windham School District—all over the state. This is the A-Team that supports every aspect of *ECHO* business without hesitation.

The pandemic situation has been an uphill climb for everyone, but we appreciate the above-and-beyond efforts supporters have provided to produce your newspaper. They take care of their own tasks while also helping us. These supporters have provided the necessary technical support, delivered your daily mail to us, helped deliver your newspapers to you, and have supplied photos, verifications, resources, approvals and other information when requested for production. WSD graphic designer Mary Partida has graciously provided invaluable layout assistance, and our printing team at The Huntsville ITEM has shown us support and grace with deadlines and delivery. Our readers statewide have never stopped sending letters, writings, poetry, art, ideas, questions, concerns and suggestions to fill the mailbox. Thank you.

We look forward to the days when everyone can resume roles similar to those we have filled in the past—and to the time *The ECHO* crew can all get back together on schedule for (lots) of work! Changes to daily protocols, schedules, practices and traditions are inevitable for everyone, but we remain deeply appreciative of the opportunity to continue providing you with this newspaper.★

With best regards,
Bambi Kiser
Managing Editor
The ECHO



Former *ECHO* reporter
Ruben Constante Jr.

IN 1999, AFTER a life-changing visit with his son in the Bexar County Jail's P.A.T.C.H. Program, Ruben Constante surrendered his life to God. Two years later, he led the Bible study group in a Discipleship II class at the Dominguez State

The Moment

Ruben Constante Jr.
ECHO Contributor
Released

WITH ALL THE concern over the global pandemic and social unrest, it's easy to get lost in the moment.

But remember, it's only a moment.

Not to invalidate the causes our society advocates or to diminish their worth, but we must admit that jumping on a bandwagon is easy to do when we forget about individual responsibility.

Hello, again. My name is Ruben Constante Jr. I served 18 years on a 20-year sentence. I've been out in society four

and a half years now, and, yes, I made a few mistakes when I was released. I lost focus. I got swept away in the moment of my failure. I was disillusioned by what I thought was supposed to happen once I was released.

I got lost in the moment. But by the grace of God, I was recalibrated. I was given a "heart check" by

You can take flight with the tempest in front of you, just as an eagle does when approaching a thunderstorm.

my setbacks out here, and I recalled in those moments what God had done in my life while I was locked up.

And now the vision I had for ministry and outreach has become a reality. *Blueprints for Living Ministries Inc.* is

About author Ruben Constante:

Still giving back after release

Jail. In 2005, he earned an associate's degree and began peer teaching cognitive intervention classes at the Torres Unit. In 2007, he co-founded the T.E.A.M. Program, a faith-based dorm initiative at that same unit, by writing the revised proposal which was approved by the senior warden, and he was entrusted with teaching, mentoring, discipling, and training men to lead lives of biblical integrity.

In 2011, Constante led a revival in that prison, helping men discover God's design for their lives. Thus, was birthed *Blueprints for Living Ministries Inc.* a Christ-centered platform which shares God's design for life. In 2016, he was released from prison, fueled with a desire to give back what

was given to him: hope

As an ex-felon, writer, Bible teacher, and public educator, he tells everyone he has experienced the transforming power of the Gospel and seeks to share God's design with others. Constante holds a consistent correspondence with men behind the razor wire whom he's trained and mentored, and he serves the incarcerated population as a volunteer chaplain. *Losing Control* is his first book to those in prison.

Constante offers a free distance mentorship program. Participants can sign up for it by writing to: *Blueprints for Living Ministries Inc.* P.O. Box 1465, San Marcos, TX 78666.★

make a positive difference in your life and in your community, then surrender your free will.

Give in to the moment.

Or, you can create a moment. You can take flight with the tempest in front of you, just as an eagle does when approaching a thunderstorm. Rise about the fray. Go higher than you've ever gone before. *Carpe diem.* Seize the moment and watch the very forces that stood against you elevate you to heights you've never seen before.

The moment is yours!★



Jennifer Toon
ECHO Contributor
Releasee

IREMEMBER THAT THE weekends were particularly hard on me when I was in prison. I found myself wondering back and forth between the dayroom and my cubicle. I often stared out the window with an immense feeling of loneliness. To be surrounded constantly by other people, but to feel incredibly lonely—what a paradox! It was a unique loneliness, though. Of course I missed my family and friends, but there was this sense that no one out there was thinking about us. It felt like nothing existed beyond those fences. I don't think I was ever alone in believing that besides our loved ones, no one cared about what happened to us.

Outside Looking In

You are not forgotten

I need you to know that no matter what it might feel like sometimes, you are not alone, and you are not for-

I was shocked when I first got out to see the level of advocacy for those who are criminal justice involved.

gotten. I was shocked when I first got out to see the level of advocacy for those who are criminal justice involved. The passion and commitment of the formerly incarcerated, organizations, legislators, and state officials all working together,

sometimes not perfectly, but looking for better outcomes, was a revelation. The challenging and unusual times we all face now have brought a new group into our space. A group of people I never dreamt would be interested in our quality of life: average citizens. The public. Society. They are listening in new ways and asking questions. I see a level of concern and compassion that I never thought possible.

So, I take the opportunities as they present themselves, and I try to be a voice that would make you proud. I may not be able to speak to every need or experience, but what I've learned is that in all differences there are shared emotions. These are



the driving force behind our ability to empathize and connect. I close my eyes and put myself emotionally and mentally back in that cubicle at Mountain View and allow myself to reconnect to our shared experience of emotion: the fears, the guilt, the remorse, the loneliness, the joy, the laughter, and the community. I offer that experience to others out here so they can relate. Once that happens—every time that happens—we are no longer our offenses or just numbers. We are humans.

Stay brave and committed to your well being as much as possible. And remember: you are loved; you are never forgotten.★

Meet challenges with positive mindset

A personal perspective by
Henry Molina
Wynne Unit

TODAY WE ARE being faced with many new circumstances and challenges, with formidable obstacles being placed directly in our path.

What are we to do? Should we complain and issues blame on others? Or do we take responsibility for all that we do have control over, as our perceptions attitudes and our humanity?

If we look for it, we can find an injustice in just about anything. Or if we practice empathy and understanding, we can also discover the positive view to any happenstance. Every soul inhabiting earth right now has to adjust to this new adversary that is attacking the human race: COVID-19.

If you listen, watch, or read the news, the fortitude of people can leave you awestruck. Heroes are emerging from never before seen places: truck drivers making more frequent and

During this challenging time, I learned that life is not just about me—me being comfortable and having all of my wants and needs satisfied.

longer hauls to provide life sustaining necessities, first responders working double and triple shifts to offer vital services, and grocery store workers battling to keep stores stocked, clean and accessible. I've seen amazing stories of parents donning

teachers' caps for their children's home schooling, and many other human beings stepping out of their comfort zone to help. I believe these individuals and more have always been heroes; they are just now are finally being acknowledged. From my standpoint, I have witnessed many people "stepping up" and helping out. Sacrifice after sacrifice, people are courageously combatting this pandemic.

I did not always see the positive side of circumstance. Even now, it can be a struggle, but I do embrace that I have control over my own actions, attitude and perceptions. I can be an atmosphere changer—a beacon of light in the fog of confusion. I can spread hope just by offering an encouraging word. That is how you conquer fear—with hope, faith and love. I know we have been "going through

it." But so has the entire world. During this challenging time, I learned that life is not just about me—me being comfortable and having all of my wants and needs satisfied. The important thing is all of us—humankind, pulling together to defeat an opponent we cannot even see.

So please, next time you hear negativity, find the good in your situation. A negative word can be the kindle to a flame, but an encouraging one is cold water to a parched throat. Edmund Burke said it best with these words: "All that is necessary for the evil to triumph is that good men do nothing."

This is important, not only now, but also for always. Who knows what trials we will face in our future? Have hope because we will get through this!★

WSD...not locked down by lockdowns

By Becky Haigler

Reprinted with permission from the TIFA Newsletter, April 2020

Editor's Note: This information was originally printed in April, and much of the Windham School District is now currently teaching in the classrooms while observing COVID-19 protocols of spacing, wearing masks, and limited class sizes. Those school campuses unable to serve students in the classrooms continue lessons and programs using distance-learning protocol.

During the COVID-19 crisis, the Texas Inmate Families Association (TIFA) has been encouraged to hear about the level of creativity and effort coming from the Windham School District (WSD) to support our incarcerated loved ones. WSD has been able to keep instruction going for students, especially those working on programs needed to satisfy parole requirements.

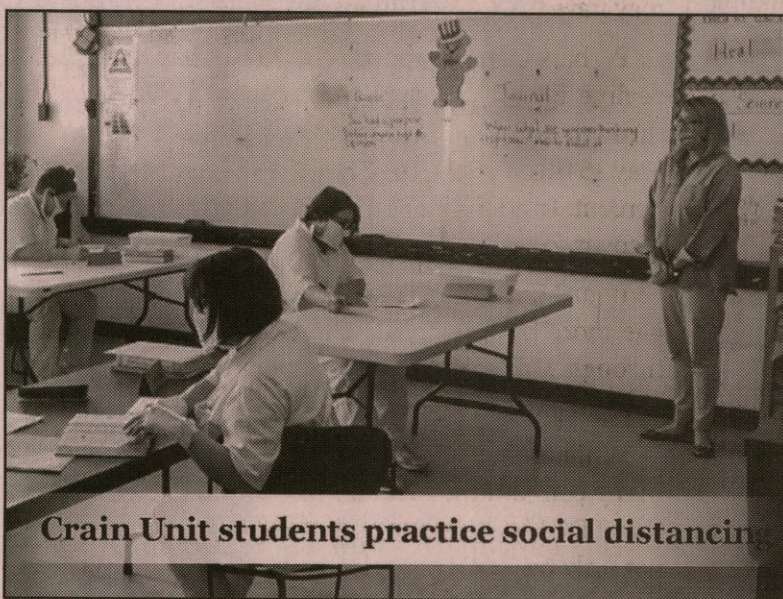
Beginning March 20, 2020, all academic courses, cognitive programs, and career/technical education except for hands-on sections, are being provided to students as individualized packets produced by teachers working remotely. Teachers send lessons to unit principals, who print them out and arrange for distribution and for the collection of lessons to be graded by teachers and returned with feedback to students. Principals have helped recruit peer tutors to help students with questions they may have while working through lessons on their own.

Understanding the importance of limiting idleness in the prison setting, WSD has worked to make library books available for all residents experiencing lockdown status and has provided materials related to individual health and wellness, including fitness activities to be performed in cells. Health and wellness was one of the weekly themes pursued by Windham during the virus crisis.

The district has not been content to get by with minimum effort during the COVID-19 crisis. Instead WSD has shown a high level of innovation and forward movement, including an increased level of technical application for employees, and a weekly focus on specific goals for the district. After initiating the distance-learning model, they encouraged new enrollments, as other residents saw Windham students working in their cells and wanted to take part. Seeing the success of the distance-learning model, Windham began a trial of offering coursework to residents previously ineligible because of their housing status. ...

In late April, the district focused on career preparedness in some new ways. First, a career interest inventory was distributed. Based on the inventory results, WSD provided a list of possible careers to students, who were then able to choose up to three possibilities for further exploration and study. The results of this survey and student feedback will help Windham in planning future course offerings.

Thanks to WSD Superintendent, Kristina Hartman, and her staff for their service to our loved ones. ★



Crain Unit students practice social distancing.



Boyd Unit Automotive Specialization Fundamentals

► SURVEY continued from page 1

In the Career Exploration survey, WSD teachers asked students to complete a career interest inventory, identifying each student's top three career clusters of interest. Career clusters are groupings of areas of training for future employment. The career cluster categories that came back with the highest results from WSD students were Manufacturing; Architecture and Construction; and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics.

Students were also able to review a catalogue of WSD Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses and indicate their top three course selections within career cluster choices. Students had the opportunity to also indicate career-readiness topics that most interest them. According to the surveys, some of the topics the students most request from WSD teachers are: training in resume writing and cover letters; Texas Workforce Commission information and locations; college locations in their county or region of release, and the job outlook in their area of release.

"This information is beneficial for our students because it helps us provide them with a career pathway they can work toward while involved in WSD programs," said WSD's Department Director of Instruction, Kevin Sawnick. "In addition, Windham teachers can then align instruction and activities with a student's choice of career pathway. The student is engaged and understands how current academic instruction supports personal career pathway goals."

Student surveys also asked students to indicate their programs of participation during distance learning, share the impact of teachers during distance learning, specify educational accomplishments during this time, and share questions and concerns about the experience. Students surveyed were involved in adult education and literacy programs, CTE courses, the Cognitive Intervention Program and the CHANGES program.

Some of the student survey comments involving reactions to the distance learning experience follow:

• "I have learned to think before acting [in Cognitive Intervention] so I won't come back. ... I enjoyed your time and lessons. I will use the steps to control myself."

— J. Hinojosa, Rudd Unit

• "Ms. Nuckles [in CHANGES 3] is a hard-working and caring teacher for all of her students, myself included, determined to help learning in any way she possibly can to make sure her students receive the best learning during these trying times."

— M. Cavazos, Ft. Stockton Unit

• "You can have some actual peace and quiet to learn [during distance learning]. ... Our teacher is a great person. During these times he is actually encouraging and motivating us, as humans – walking step by step through the course work, explaining [in written messages] how to reach progress. I think the WSD does a great job because they reach out to those of us that really want to learn something. I want to thank everyone who's made WSD possible for us in the TDCJ system."

— G. Molina, Robertson Unit

• "I've learned a lot of different ways to do math through the packets I was provided."

— S. Middleton, Henley State Jail

• "I have learned about fractions, decimals, and percentages, along with photosynthesis for science, as well as poetry and haiku. I learned about metric measures and how to properly use semicolons and commas. Ms. Ferrel impacted my learning by motivating me to strive for a better education. She has faith in her students, and she motivated me to believe in myself—and want to better myself."

— C. Smith, Middleton Unit

• "Our teachers have done such a great job of putting together information and lessons for us. They have given us a means to ask them questions and they communicate with us. They continue to encourage us as we all do the best we can with the current restrictions." ★

— R. Orr, Crain Unit

► COMMISSARY continued from page 1

With the kitchen adding some fresh veggies with the meals, we had some calls from commissary employees asking if they could drop some packets of ranch dressing in the Johnny sacks on veggie day. We thought that was a great idea and told them to roll on!

New Warehouse

When the agency opened the Garza units in Beeville, we were excited to drive down and look around the Chase Field Complex for a potential commissary warehouse site. We found a couple of buildings and have almost finished the renovations to open our third warehouse location. This facility will service the southern area units (about 20 percent of our total business) and will help these units get merchandise and supplies much quicker than waiting on a truck from Huntsville. If you are on a unit down south, the commissaries will not have to wait as long for a truck if they run out of something.

Trust Fund Deposits

Tentatively, on August 1, 2020, our third-party deposit vendors (JPay, TouchPay, Moneygram, Access Corrections, and ACE Cash Express) will begin sender verification for deposits made to an offender's trust fund account. Individuals who are not on an offender's approved visitation or call list may not send funds to an offender after June 30, 2020. This will also apply to anyone that has a monthly direct deposit set up. If you are receiving an Automated Clearing House (ACH) direct deposit, these deposits will be subject to verification. Please review your recent trust fund statement which included your visitor list, for correct spelling and report errors to your unit. ★

► MORANT continued from page 1

"I was very excited this year to return and go back to the unit," Morant says. "I just really enjoyed meeting the people where I used to work, letting them see what I accomplished when I got home, and trying to be an inspiration and encourager to the guys who were in my position at TDCJ."

Morant offered encouragement to the offender truck drivers at the Southern Region Freight Terminal located near the Stringfellow Unit. While discussing his experiences and providing insightful responses to questions, he emphasized the importance of taking advantage of vocational training and educational opportunities offered within the TDCJ. Morant says he completed an on-the-job training program as a production worker while working at the Huntsville Textile Mill and became certified in heating, ventilation, air conditioning, and refrigeration repair through the Windham School District. In addition, he earned an Associate of Science Degree from Lee College. In 2016, Morant also earned his Commercial Driver's License through Lee College.

Experience and knowledge acquired from working at the Southern Region Freight Terminal helped Morant succeed after release, enabling him to establish employment and eventually own his trucking company. He also told the drivers that perseverance helped him overcome obstacles and achieve goals.

"You have to formulate a plan and follow it through to completion," he says. "Put priorities where they need to be put, and stay positive even when things aren't going your way. I was patient and put my plan together while I was incarcerated."

"I then followed that plan: working for a company as a driver, understanding what the business is about, and talking to other owner/operators and learning about their experiences. I also asked them what they needed to maintain their businesses. I got a true understanding of the field I wanted to enter, and I followed my plan. You will continue to learn more as you prepare and enter your career."

While serving in TDCJ, Morant was assigned as a driver for the Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics (MAL) Division at the Southern Region Freight Terminal. During that time, he gained experience in pulling grain trailers, reefers, dry vans, low boys, and heavy haul trailers—all while logging 18,618 accident-free miles.

While working during his incarceration, Morant also performed duties such as shuttling of tractor-trailer rigs, pre/post trip inspections, tire-pressure checks, and over-the-road day travel. He says that was when he realized how much he enjoyed driving. He decided to one day become the owner of a trucking company after his release from the TDCJ.

Morant left prison in 2018 after serving 15 years of his sentence. Within one month of release, he landed a job with a trucking company in the Houston area. Working for the trucking company, he also began working toward the goal of owning a company. That dream became reality in December 2019.

Following his February 2020 visit to the Southern Region Freight Terminal, Morant obtained his Transportation Worker Identification Credential. This is the credential required by the Maritime Transportation Security Act for workers who are granted unescorted access to secure areas of the nation's maritime facilities, and it increases business opportunities for Morant and his company.

Despite the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, Morant says his business and truck driving have continued – "sometimes with real busy weeks; other times with less to do." As an owner/operator, he says his work is making good money and "a decent paycheck!"

"Timothy Morant is a true testament to what can be achieved through hard work and perseverance," says Sharon Albert of TDCJ MAL's Offender Work and Training Programs. "He is now on a new path of success and making plans to reach goals for a brighter future. His visit definitely left a lasting impression on the offender drivers and staff at the Southern Region Freight Terminal."

Morant says he remains happy to return to prison as a guest speaker and encourage others whenever the TDCJ requests his help.

"It gave me a lot of hope and faith when I was incarcerated to hear others who came back say, 'Man, look! You can do this; it's possible!'" Morant says. "I know success is attainable if you work hard and change your mindset. Never give up on your dreams. The sky is the limit!" ★



Morant shares his story

► REFLECTION

continued from page 1

This is the point where freeworld publications usually insert a legal disclaimer into their articles advising readers to consult a physician before beginning an exercise regimen. Consider yourself warned. This is not a how-to article on workouts, but simply a list of easy to do exercises that can be done inside of a cell or cubicle without excessive risk of injury.

The traditional calisthenics that most everyone remembers from school, such as push-ups, sit-ups and jumping jacks can be tweaked to increase or decrease the level of difficulty to match an individual's level of fitness. For those whose work out before quarantine was limited (or nonexistent), walking in place for 30 minutes a day may be a good place to start. When that becomes easy, either increase the duration of the session or advance to a slow jog. I know there are incarcerated individuals whose physical condition prevents them from doing any of those, but they can still stay active by stretching.

For individuals who want to take it to the next level, impromptu weights can be made by filling commissary bags with books, or you know, items purchased from the commissary. Be advised, however, that gorging down a package of duplex cookies after lifting the tasty treats may reduce the effectiveness of the workout. As always, be respectful of cellies and those living around you and do not workout while they are trying to sleep.

While sweating to the oldies, do not neglect the brain—the body's largest and most important muscle. As important as physical activity is to the health of the body, mental exercises are even more so for a healthy mind. Reading, writing and even doing word finds are great ways to get those neurons firing. Remember all those great books you wanted to read but could never find the time? Guess what, you have plenty of time for it now.

Tired of reading the same claptrap that poses as literature these days? Here is a novel idea (pun intended): write your own. Have a great idea for a science fiction thriller? Then set your phaser to write and get to it. Think your life story would make for an interesting read? I believe you, so why are you procrastinating? Don't want to tackle such a time-consuming project? Then consider penning an article for *The ECHO*. Want to get things off your chest but don't want anyone else to read it? Chronicle your thoughts and feelings in a journal. The great thing about journaling is that you can review what you wrote at a later date and see how much your thinking has changed.

Still not sure? Here is a little-known fact from the world of literature to motivate you to get started: William Shakespeare, the English poet and playwright, wrote the narrative poem "Venus and Adonis" and reportedly the play "King Lear" all while in quarantine during the plague. If Bill could write all of those classics with nothing but a feathered quill and parchment, imagine what a creative person such as you can accomplish.

It is not about how much or how long you workout or what you write, it is about staying active and engaged during a depressing time.

Be grateful

Quarantine inside a prison is a difficult way to do time. When the carefully constructed routines prison created to help us stay sane through years of incarceration are disrupted, it poses unique challenges to the residents of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). However, no matter how bad our situation may be, there is always someone dealing with worse. To see the truth of this, all one has to do is read the latest newspaper or listen to a newscast.

In only a few months since the first case of COVID-19 was reported in the United States, millions of Americans have lost their jobs or livelihoods. Businesses, large and small, have been forced to file for bankruptcy protection or have had

to shutter their doors for good.

Unfortunately, the economic downturn is only one small devastating aspect of the coronavirus pandemic's impact. Historically, the Memorial Day weekend is the time we as a nation remember the men and women who gave their lives for defending our freedoms. Sadly, this year it also marked when the death toll in America for COVID-19 exceeded the 90,000 threshold. Each one of these statistics represents real people. They are parents, sons, daughters, siblings and friends. Every nationality, race and socioeconomic class, including TDCJ staff and residents, are included in those sobering tallies.

When viewed from this vantage point, having to eat Johnnies instead of hot meals for a few weeks does not seem like such a sacrifice if it helps to keep us all safe. Instead of focusing only on the few things you can no longer do in these circumstances, be grateful for the things you can. If you are reading this article, you woke up today. Please remember, there are many who did not.

Be the light

When the entire world is enveloped in fear and uncertainty, it is easy for us to feed into the negativity if we are not careful. Each of us has the ability to be a beacon capable of shining light into the darkness of the unknown. How much influence can a resident of TDCJ realistically hope to exert in the face of such a global catastrophe? Quite a bit, actually.

Everyone, staff and residents alike, are concerned about the effects of the coronavirus. When one recognizes this truth and allows understanding to govern how they interact with others, it can have a tremendous impact. One person may not be able to change the culture of the entire unit, but they can positively affect another person and those with whom they interact.

This is also a great time for many of us to divest ourselves of the fallacy that showing compassion to another person somehow makes them weak. In fact, it is precisely what makes us human.

Another way to make a positive impact in a specific person's life is by creatively doing something to benefit them. One way to do that is by tutoring a student in Windham School District (WSD)'s High School Equivalency (HSE) and CHANGES programs. If you are one of those math savants who know a cosine from a tangent, take the time to tutor someone who may be struggling in the subject. Two things to keep in mind when tutoring: first, do NOT do the work for the person you are helping. Instead, teach them the concepts involved so they know how to solve the problem. Second, if you are like me and believe that X should limit itself to the alphabet and stop butting into math's business, then please do not tutor anyone in math. Direct them to that math geek who can actually help them to learn.

The biggest impact that any of us can make is to remember the financial struggles that many of our families are experiencing. This is the perfect time for us to step up and help them by not asking for money and Ecomm packages. Sure, I know that your family may be willing to continue supporting you financially even as they struggle to pay bills and put food on their table. After all, making sacrifices for each other is what families do. However, if we were honest with ourselves, we would have to admit that they have given far more than their fair share for us. Now is the time for us to return the favor and give a little bit back to them.

Be courageous

Finally, do not lose heart. The human race is a resilient species that has overcome challenges in all shape and sizes since time immemorial. This coronavirus pandemic will not be the last obstacle we will overcome; it is simply the next one in line.

Blake Crouch, a New York Times bestselling author, says it much better than I ever could:

"I know that things feel hopeless to you in this moment, but this is just a moment, and moments pass." ★

► COVID continued from page 1

In terms of size, Texas has the second largest correctional population behind the federal correctional system. The only state systems that really compare to Texas in prison population are those of California and Florida. As of June 15, TDCJ has tested 85 percent of its population. By comparison, California has tested 22 percent of its correctional population, Florida has tested 17 percent, and the federal system has tested 11 percent—so TDCJ has been much more aggressive in trying to know who may have the COVID-19 virus.

Perhaps most importantly, TDCJ has seen the number of new positive cases decline for almost two straight months. To put this in perspective, from April 16 through May 15, TDCJ averaged 48 new positive symptomatic cases per day. From May 16 through June 15, TDCJ averaged 14 new cases per day. That is a decline of 71 percent. In addition, TDCJ has started to see many people diagnosed with COVID-19 recover from the disease.

In just the last week of reporting, the total number of offenders who have recovered has more than doubled. The total recoveries from the beginning of the pandemic through May 31, 2020, was 1,493. By June 15, 2020 the total number of recoveries had grown to 4,719.

While the trends for TDCJ have been moving in a positive direction, the trends in the communities around Texas have been moving in a negative direction. The fact that TDCJ is doing better than the state as a whole reflects on the efforts being taken not only by TDCJ, but also by those who are reading this newspaper. The sacrifices you have been making to your comfort levels and normal routines are making a major difference and helping slow down the rate of infection—ultimately saving lives.

The virus is still very much alive and existing in the state, so our continued efforts to be careful about behaviors and efforts to prevent the virus from spreading are just as important now as they were one or two months ago. Together, we will continue to protect one another and defeat this pandemic.

Period	Total New Positives:	Average Daily Number in Hospital:	Total Recoveries:
March 16 -April 15	284	1	0
April 16 - May 15	1,628	84	452
May 16 - June 15	5,533	80	4,267

Note: The data reflects the specific 30-day periods identified and is not cumulative across the rows. ★

Ramsey Unit proactive against COVID-19

Paresh Patel
Ramsey Unit Reporter

As the world deals with the COVID-19 virus, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) suspended visitation [earlier this year] as well as volunteer-conducted programs within the prison system. Following free world school districts and educational institutions, Windham School District (WSD) also changed education and vocational class formats to distance learning.

COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that created a worldwide pandemic. The flu-like virus causes fever, cough, and other symptoms that take place in the upper respiratory tract, which includes the nose, mouth, larynx, and bronchi. Symptoms such as dry cough, shortness of breath, fever, and muscle pain are comparable to the flu. This is also the period of "viral shedding"—the ability to infect those within six feet through [respiratory] droplets. The virus can also be transferred by touch: physical, surfaces or objects. The most vulnerable to the illness are those who are elderly, have underlying health conditions, asthma patients, and those with compromised immune systems.

Ramsey Unit administration, led by Senior Warden Pittman and Assistant Warden Demerson, has taken unprecedented proactive measures to protect incarcerated individuals and staff and keep COVID-19 from entering Ramsey Unit. All staff are checked and monitored for symptoms prior to entering the gates. They are required to wear mask and gloves. Furthermore, with fear and concern for loved ones on every resident's mind, Warden Pittman said, "I answer or return every call or e-mail from a resident's loved ones, and address their concerns." Warden Demerson added, "Our efforts for staff and resident safety and well-being include measures of cleanliness and reducing mental stress."

To ease tension, anxieties, and stress, the warden extended recreation and dayroom hours. For those who are unable to use the resident telephone system, they are given an opportunity to call their loved one through the administration phone process by submitting an I-60. Access may vary at other facilities depending on what phase these units are in and how many housing areas are on medical restriction.

TDCJ resident work crews are constantly sanitizing common areas (dayroom, chow hall, etc.) with bleach several times a day. For the safety of all, recreation, dayroom, commissary, and other unit activities are taking place in stages.

Likewise, WSD assessed the situation and posted its plan during this pandemic. WSD Superintendent Kristina J. Hartman stated, "We understand the immense value and necessity to keep individuals engaged and productive by providing the ability to progress in and complete programs, some of which may impact parole decisions. This means ... instructional programs accessible through unique delivery methods." Principal C. Myers of WSD's Ramsey Education department initiated this delivery method through Distance-Learning curriculum for GED and CHANGES students. Officer Anzaldua tirelessly distributed and collected the Distance-Learning Packets on a weekly basis.

Chaplain Spears has been proactive for incarcerated individuals who are worried about their loved one. She personally calls their loved ones, and then informs the residents of their well-being. Because of the limited movements and large group gathering restrictions, she has taken the initiative to play videos of the various denominations in the place of religious services. She has also been tier-walking and addressing religious functions where possible. Furthermore, despite the limitations, Ramsey administration and the Chaplaincy department has made accommodations for Muslims to observe the month of Ramadan.

COVID-19 virus has changed life for the entire world. Ramsey administration prioritized safety and has taken measures to protect staff and incarcerated individuals. Practicing social distancing, washing hand, and avoid touching face and eyes are some basic steps that should be practiced by all.

Editor's Note: The experiences described by *ECHO* reporter Paresh Patel illustrate the COVID-19 experience of the Ramsey Unit, while also representing practices and changes that happened throughout TDCJ. ★

CONTROL YOUR RISK STOP COVID-19

Traffic Trade
By stopping that, you are protecting yourself and those around you.

Where You Live
Keep your living space clean

Hygiene
Wash Your Hands, Wear a Mask, Don't Touch Your Face

If you are sick: Seek Medical Attention
If you feel ill: Stay on your Bunk

Tea Time With A Tot

Submitted by Daniel Crippen, Hughes Unit

My youngest daughter was about three years old when I was left to watch her while her mother took the day off of her 24/7 job: "Mother". As I have five other kids, I thought I could do this blindfolded.

I put in one of my day-off movies, "Lonesome Dove", and let my little girl play in her room. Right about the time Newt was making his first appearance in the movie, I thought I best go and check on my own tadpole. She was in her room having a tea party with a big fat teddy bear and one confused monkey, who was wearing a tutu on his head.

Satisfied with what I saw, I went back to the movie. I'm guessing my little one thought I could use a drink of her tea because she brought me a tiny cup. Not wanting to be rude--and get back to my movie--I drank down the tea "water." This brought a big smile to her face; she was bringing her daddy tea! Now this went on for quite some time. I must have drunk 10 cups of her tea.

About the time my wee baby girl was bringing me my umpteenth cup of water, her mother came in the door to grab something she must have left behind. She asked me what we had been doing, and I told her about the movie and the tea party. I also told her about the many, so many, glasses of water our sweet daughter had brought me.

The look on the face of my precious little daughter's mother's face was indescribable. She asked me how many glasses I had drunk, so I told her. With a big smile, she asked, "Don't you know she ain't but two and a half feet tall?" I said, "Yes!"

Then she asked, "Don't you know she can't reach the sink?" I was a bit confused, but said, "Yes; sure! I know!"

Then she took a step back, pointed out of the room and said, "The only place she can reach to get water is the toilet bowl!"

Looking down at my daughter with her big smile, I knew that there weren't any more words to say. I went and brushed my teeth, swished some mouthwash, and went back to my movie. It

is times like

these we

may have

taken for

granted.

Even though I

drank toilet water,

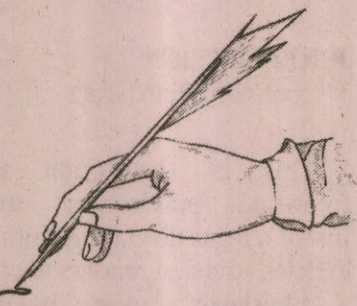
this is still a happy

memory of a great day. ★



Letter from

The EDITOR:



COVID-19 situation postponing selection of writing contest winners

Dear Readers,

The ECHO appreciates the overwhelming collection of entries submitted for our 2019-2020 writing contest. Writers in TDCJ, you did your part — very well! We just haven't finished ours!

The ECHO staff began sorting, reading, and judging entries in various categories, but the coronavirus is no respecter of life, economy, schedules, or contest announcements. Judging was stopped mid-stream this spring when ECHO staff members had to leave the office to enter protective lockdown at the Wynne Unit as the illness spread.

At press time, the ECHO team is still not all back in the office. It will be a while before we can re-organize and fairly judge your entries, but please bear with us as we craft new solutions. We will make this happen in 2020 — but the waiting is the hardest part.

We've done a lot of reading already, and we are amazed at what you have created and shared. In fact, it is a shame to make everyone wait to read these special pieces! Pandemic or not, we will publish great works for you — even before the winners are named or notified. We will include choice selections from the 2020 contest in ECHO issues for the rest of the year. This does not indicate a win, loss, consolation prize or contest placement; it is simply an effort to share great writings with you — without the wait.

Please enjoy reading along with us until a proper future recognition of winners can take place! Thank you for your patience. And always, practice your best health strategies and stay safe and well. Read on!

ECHO 2020 Writing Contest Entry

The Man Behind the Movado

Donald Wayne Sullivan Jr.

Wynne Unit

The sound of soft rain pattering against the window pulls me away from deep and wondering thoughts. It is getting close to time for us to leave; today marks one of the saddest days of my life. Downstairs I can hear my wife, mother, and sisters gathering up the little ones. It's time to go, but at the same time no one wants to leave.

I finish knotting my tie and look in the mirror, and my eye catches the flash of the gold watch clasped on my left wrist. Alas, I am lost again in the memories shrouding the man who wore this watch for 70 years. This timepiece is a living memoir enmeshed with tales dating back to its purchase in Saudi Arabia in 1948. Man and time narrowly survived the Korean War of the 1950s, and the watch remained on proud display as he became one of the greatest pipeline welders to ever live. Now the watch sits on my left wrist, and stories from the man's rich life flood in as the rain outside continues to fall softly. I take the sign of rain as a sympathetic nod from God that He, too, is weeping today for the man we lost and the angel He gained.

Aboard a cargo plane in the year 1947, a spry and precocious young man named Harold Gene Wells sits alongside his brother, Mutt. The excitement from the adventure awaiting them has their Texas mouths as dry as the Middle Eastern sand 30,000 feet below them. Their plane's destination is Saudi Arabia. Even in their late teens, Mutt thinks nothing of reaching over and taking and holding his brother's hand. They are products of being raised in a demonstratively loving family, who regularly hugged, held and kissed one another, brothers and parents alike.

Nervous and scared, the boys prepared for what lay ahead: wonderful and high paying jobs as pipeline welders. The trouble is, neither have ever welded a day in their lives! They had lied to get the job: "Welders? You bet we are!"

Luckily, it came naturally to both of them. They learned the trade, trial by fire, there in Saudi Arabia. One time while on break from work, the boys were shopping in Riyadh and H.G. saw a beautiful gold watch in the store window. As expensive as the Movado Rado was, he had been working hard and saving for such a prize possession. He had never owned anything this nice in his life, and knew he had to have it. This watch represented the hope of a long and prosperous life he yearned for as a pipeline welder.

Time passed and as the '50s began, the boys returned home to America. Having just missed World War II, serving his country had always pulled at H.G.'s heart. When word of the Korean War broke out, he hastily signed up in the army. After boot camp he was quickly shipped to Seoul, South Korea to be inserted into the fray. As a member of the 9th Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Division, he was sent to Wendengi on September 13, 1951 to engage in what would become a gruesome month-long fight, known as The Battle of Heartbreak Ridge. Although the result was a U.N. win, we lost many good soldiers and H.G. caught a bullet in the lower leg during one of the skirmishes.

Unable to move efficiently, he was shipped back home in late October; his war was over. His gold watch never left his pouch the entire time during the war. It served as a constant reminder of the life waiting for him back home state side, and the love of a woman that also waited. Her name was Patricia Sue Wren and she was a strong, beautiful and determined young lady from a little town outside of Hope, Arkansas. This irony was not lost on my Papa, who not only "hoped" to marry this woman, but also was also certain of the long and joyful life they were to have together. He was, after all, a "Wells boy" and love came most natural to them.

H.G. caught his gal and they were married in the summer of 1952. His gold watch can be seen adorning his left wrist in the wedding photos. They immediately began having babies and Pat, as my grandmother was lovingly titled, kept a tidy home while H.G. shot back into the oilfield to do what he was gifted by God to do: weld.

As the 50s rolled into the 60s, the young Wells' family had a total of five children: Rebecca, the eldest; then Jeff, Meliane, Dawn, and lastly, little Leslie. Papa welded nonstop and traveled all over the world from Russia to Turkey to Greece, with even another stint in Saudi Arabia. He worked down in the lower

Americas and countries like Peru, Venezuela, Panama and Mexico, and went as far north as Alaska. The watch never left him. When it came to welding, it served as a golden reminder of the golden tier into which he had now separated himself. My Papa was now one of the most sought after welders in the world.

When he traveled around the states, often his little family would travel, too. Pat was always the strong and supportive wife Harold Gene needed. Although things were not always perfect, they loved each other something fierce. Through the ups and downs, for 70 years they never left each other's side, unless Papa was under the hood of his welding helmet. In all, he welded pipe in 49 states, Hawaii being the only exception. He was a humble, loving, and doting—a man who never met a stranger. I often reflect on what his watch would say if it could talk. Perhaps slightly less humble in its regal and golden state, its audience would be privy to the exciting details Papa always seemed to play down so candidly. After all, that was our Papa.

I splash water on my face. For a brief moment, the remnants of an acid stench of gunpowder and burning welding rods left from Papa's stories seems to linger in the air. I give one last look in the mirror; I see my grandfather's eyes looking back at me. The wrinkles from my smile lines are his wrinkles and his smile lines. I go downstairs where the elders of my family somberly usher the great-grandchildren out the door and into awaiting vehicles.

The services will be held at my Uncle Jeff's church. Papa exuded pride every time he affectionately gazed at any of his children, but especially his only son—loving the eternal, soul-saving Pastor he had become.

I stare out the window as we drive; something about the rain seems to only make the day more beautiful. I chuckle to myself, no doubt; Papa never cared for the rain. Rain meant no one could weld, and that meant no work. Today it doesn't matter though, because everyone H.G. had known in his long and lustrous life is making the trip down for his funeral, his celebration of life. Hundreds and hundreds will be packed into Jeff's church. It will be standing room only, and many will have to view the service from the televisions in the lobby—a testament to the caliber of man Harold Gene Wells was.

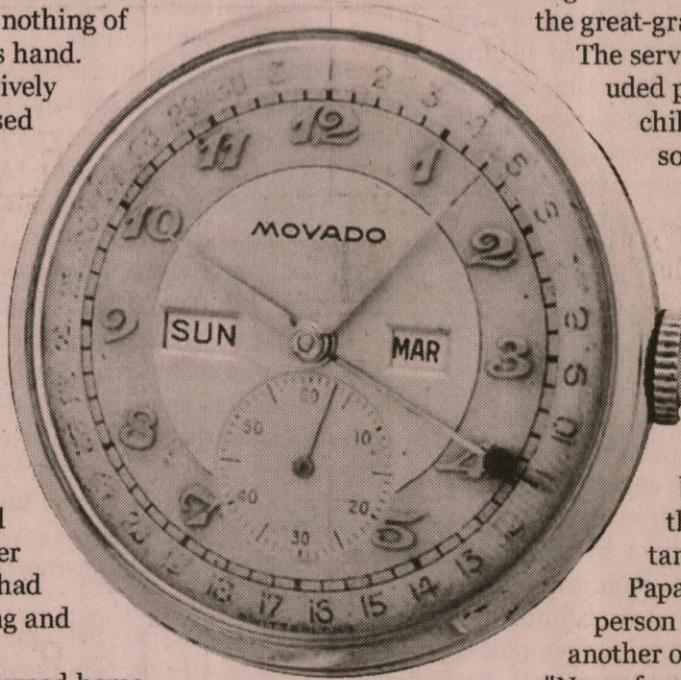
Papa never forgot a single name; he made each and every person feel special every time when they spoke with him, another one of his gifts from God. I have tried to do the same. "Never forget a name," he would say, "and always treat everyone with the same respect you want them to treat you with." I long to make my Papa proud and live by these words. Many nights I have prayed to God in the still moments before sleep comes, calling, "Please Lord, let me be half the man my Papa is." I am still a work in progress, but a little better each day.

My son's laughter breaks my concentration as he is playing with his cousin in the backseat. I look fondly at Teddy and see the hope of the Wells' family legacy resting upon his little unknowing shoulders—on the shoulders of all H.G.'s great grandchildren, whom he adored so much. Teddy will wear this watch some day—with the same amount of pride with which I wear it now.

"This watch belonged to one of the greatest men I ever knew," is what I can imagine him saying to his own grandchildren one day.

I am to be one of the key speakers at the funeral today. I have no idea what all to say or what not to say about the man who did it all. Will I even be able to speak? What stories should I remind the congregation about? Will it be stories about countries far and away? Or about a war, so bravely fought? Certainly I must honor him for being one of the first welders ever inducted into the Pipeliners Hall of Fame. Tears roll down my cheeks as rain rolls down the windshield, and we pull into the church. Today most likely I will mimic my family's patriarch: when in front of a big crowd, he was a man of few words—which is not like me. Getting through this day will be one of the hardest things I have ever done.

I look down at H.G.'s watch, knowing it will help give me the strength I need to make it through. Scientists have long said time machines could never exist. This watch is a direct testament to the falsity of that statement. As it traveled through H.G.'s future, earmarking time for him, today on my left wrist, it seems to only be capable of rewinding time for me. I wipe the tears away as I step out of the vehicle. The rain falls softly. God, too, is weeping. ★



SUDOKU

Oh, Mama Mia!

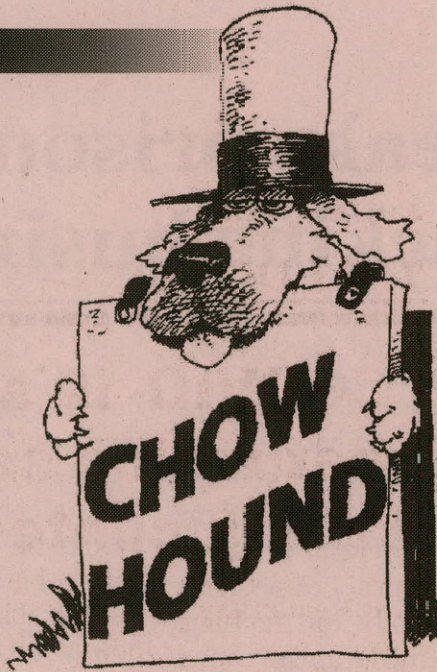
Submitted by Lily Archuleta
Murray Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 orange juice, can
- 1 Big Red soda
- 1 Lemon lime sports drink
- 2 packets sweetener
- 1 spoonful of non-dairy creamer
- 1 hot pot insert cup

Directions:

Mix 1/2 can orange juice with 1/2 can of Big Red soda in a hot pot insert cup. Next, mix in 1/2 of the lemon lime sports drink and sweetener. Then comes a 1/2 spoonful of non-dairy creamer. Mix well in the hot pot insert. The leftover ingredients are for the other serving (makes two servings). Enjoy!



Blue Lagoon Juice

Submitted by Lily Archuleta
Murray Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 cranberry juice, can
- 1 Blue Lagoon drink
- 1 fruit stick, finely crushed
- 1 spoonful non-dairy creamer
- 1 hot pot insert cup

Directions:

Pour 1/2 of cranberry juice and 1/2 of the Blue Lagoon drink into a hot pot insert. Add 1/2 of the crushed fruit stick and 1/2 spoonful of non-dairy creamer. Stir or shake well. Use remainder of ingredients for second serving. Enjoy this treat on a hot summer day!

Chicken Quesiladas

Submitted by Danny Murrell
Allred Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 Chunky Chicken pouch
- 1 Chicken Chili pouch
- 1/2 cup of rice
- 1/2 cup of refried beans
- 2 spicy vegetable soups
- 1 pkg. flour tortillas (1 pk.)
- 2 pkgs. Jalapeno peppers
- 1 squeeze cheese

Directions:

Cook the rice first. When the rice is done, cook the soups and then the beans. Add these three ingredients together and make a paste out of them. Take the unopened chicken pouch and squeeze it in your hand until you have most of the chicken chunks mashed. Then open the pouch and add it to the beans, rice and soups. Mix very well. Take a tortilla and put a line of cheese down the middle. If you want, you can spread the cheese out over the entire tortilla. Add a couple of spoons of the paste and roll up the tortillas and put them into a bowl. One bowl holds four rolled tortillas perfectly well. When these are finished, pour the chicken chili over the top, along with any extra cheese that you might want. Dice up the jalapeno peppers and sprinkle over the top. Bon appetit!

Natural oatmeal mask for refreshing skin

Submitted by Lily Archuleta
Murray Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 pkg. oatmeal (unflavored)
- 1 tbsp. of salt
- 1/2 spoon hot water

Directions:

Mix all ingredients in a bowl and apply generously to your face and neck in a circular motion. Leave this mask on the skin for 15 minutes then rinse off. This natural mask can help clean, scrub and refresh skin.

Big money Frito pie

Submitted by Jimmy Wayne Jr.
Hughes Unit

Ingredients:

- 1/4 bag of corn chips
- 1/4 bag of kosher chili beans
- 2 packages of cream cheese (heated)
- 1 shredded beef with barbecue sauce pouch (heated)
- 1 jalapeno (diced)
- Hot sauce (optional)

Directions:

Place corn chips in a bowl and set aside. Prepare the chili beans by carefully adding water, ensuring a thin consistency. Drizzle one package of cream cheese over corn chips, and then top mixture with the chili beans. Next, pour shredded beef on top of the chili beans/corn chips. Finish dish by topping off with the rest of the cream cheese and diced jalapenos.

Lily's sweet summer tea

Submitted by Lily Archuleta
Murray Unit

Ingredients:

- 5 tea bags
- 1 1/2 spoonfuls strawberry preserves
- 3 pkg. sweeteners
- 1/4 Sprite soda

Directions:

Prepare tea bags by steeping in hot water in normal fashion. Drain tea bags and dispose of them. Using two insert cups, add in the strawberry preserves, then the Sprite soda and lastly, the sweeteners. Top off with cold water, but just a smidge. Enjoy, ya'll!

Easy 1

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Easy 2

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Novice 1

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Intermediate 1

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Challenging 2

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Tough 1

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Hot Shot: Keidrain Brewster

Former Windham student breaks prison cycle, owns, operates successful trucking business

Reprinted with permission from the "Windham School District Annual Performance Report: Traditions & Transitions, School Year 2018-2019".



Keidrain Brewster has a message he'd like to share with the rest of the world.

As a convicted felon who spent more than a decade in Texas prisons, Brewster knows his words won't go far with everyone. He hopes that some like him—people who are paying a high price for making serious mistakes—will listen.

"Change is possible," Brewster says proudly. "Change is possible, but you've got to want it for yourself."

Brewster's life certainly changed in the last few years. A light bulb flashed on during a lengthy sentence in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). That light continues to shine brightly in Brewster's mind today.

"Getting my GED through the

Windham School District (WSD) was the beginning of my rebirth," Brewster says of the High School Equivalency certificate he earned while in prison. "Getting my GED may seem small, but it sparked a fire in me to learn everything I could in preparation for my new life."

Thanks to the lift he received from WSD, Brewster is now the proud owner of Brewster Logistics LLC, a small, but growing trucking company based in Dallas. The "hot-shot" company hauls small, but sensitive loads to locations throughout Texas, and sometimes across state lines.

"Brewster Logistics gets the goods where they need to go," Brewster boasts. "We safely deliver the goods to the places where they can be sold." The company he started a couple of years ago as the lone driver currently has five vehicles and five employees. "We grossed six figures last year," Brewster says [describing 2018], "and projected at half a million for this year. Hopefully with our continued growth and hard work we can reach our first million within the next couple of years."

Brewster's amazing transformation started in WSD classrooms. That's where he decided to try something different. He eagerly jumped off the path that took him to TDCJ and started looking for another way to live.

"I would like to tell people that your mind-set is what will determine your success," Brewster says. "As a kid growing up, I was in and out of juvenile centers. When I ended up in TDCJ, I was 17 years old and didn't

get out until I was 30. During my incarceration, my mother died of a drug overdose, one of my younger brothers was shot and killed, and my youngest brother went to prison to do a 10-year sentence. I came home to basically nobody, or nothing, but my wife. I made up my mind while incarcerated that I would do everything in my power to break the cycle of prison and crime in my family and become a success."

I made up my mind while incarcerated that I would do everything in my power to break the cycle of prison and crime in my family and become a success.

Brewster applied himself in the Windham classrooms. He learned all he could about running his own business. He also took to heart the lessons he was taught about how to cope with life in the free world.

"It helped me by teaching me the life skills I would need to be able to run a successful business," Brewster says of the wide-ranging Windham curriculum. "The education provided by WSD showed me how to think effectively to accomplish the things I needed to."

"I like to attribute my success to hard work, dedication and believing in myself," he adds. "Applying the knowledge and information that I learned while I was in prison was the biggest key. I obtained my commercial driver's license, and

now I have the freedom to be my own boss," he says proudly.

Brewster has even found time to write a book. Titled "From the Rec Yard to the Streets," Brewster's book details his time in prison, some of the valuable lessons he learned, and how he turned his life around while incarcerated in Texas.

Education tops the list of lessons Brewster learned while in prison. His life started changing dramatically when he tuned in to the teachers in the WSD.

"Educate yourself," Brewster stresses to others who find themselves behind bars. "Do not leave prison the same way that you went in."

"It's amazing," Brewster reflects on the changes that have occurred in his life.

"Sometimes I still can't believe how far I have come," he says. "I recently enjoyed a trip to Cancun with my wife and was in awe with the fact that my business was still running efficiently without me being in the country."

"I also get invited to do speaking engagements for all kinds of events. I recently spoke at a Telford Unit graduation, which was one of the highlights of my career," Brewster adds. "I have met with important officials for criminal justice reform, such as Bishop T.D. Jakes from the Potter's House and Senator John Cornyn."

"I am sharing this [story] because I want people to understand, particularly the ones like me with a rough background, that change is possible. You just must want it for yourself." ★

Our loss, heaven's gain:

Thank, you volunteer P. Taylor

Robert Fridell, Contributing Writer — Neal Unit

The month was November, the year was 2000, and I stepped out of the Blue Bird bus onto my first TDCJ Institutional Division unit. Not knowing that I would be there in TDCJ for almost the next 19 years, I shuddered at the sight of my new location. Coming from the professional realm of the medical field and being associated with a church environment in free society, I found myself in a world I did not understand.

After the various adjustments of arriving on a unit, I learned of chapel services and began attending. The Telford Unit's chaplain's preaching

was good, spiritual and powerful that night—exactly what I was accustomed to in the world. Later learning that he wasn't the chaplain and that he was a volunteer named P. Taylor, I asked what they meant by volunteer. They told me that he came in on his own dime. He volunteered his own time, money and livelihood to come be with us and to help us—and he doesn't get a paycheck for it. I knew something about volunteer status, for I had an uncle that was a volunteer, and later my mother and stepdad would be a part of this group of people.

I was told this man, P. Taylor, had already been attending and holding

services for several years before my arrival. I guessed that for maybe 24-25 years he gave of his time for us. And along with this time, he shared his sound equipment, musical instruments, and study literature with us through his ministry. Financially he was not a wealthy man, but he was a spiritual tycoon. This man, this volunteer, had a burdened heart for the "men in white." He taught us that God would always provide a way—and He did. Mr. Taylor was a rock and foundation for many of us over the years. He was quick to tell us that he wasn't any better than us and then point us to "The Rock", which was his foundation.

Like most volunteers, he came in once a month. The last decade or so of his ministry, he came once a week for medium-custody services and then once a month on Sundays. Then the last two years or so of that time, he was adding an 'all day' Friday setting for two classes and an "hour of prayer class."

Through the years, Mr. Taylor endured many health issues. Working for years in a factory that had him inhaling bad things into his lungs, he often had trouble breathing. Once, having a blood clot in his leg, he told us that he lay in the hospital bed telling the Lord he felt his time was complete. We, along with Mr. Taylor, learned that God had other plans.

Throughout these years, up until November of 2019, I was allowed to be neck deep in music and preaching ministry. Most of it happened under a former chaplain, Chaplain T. West, and the volunteer, Taylor. Brother Taylor would become a Certified Volunteer Chaplain's Assistant (CVCA)

They told me that he came in on his own dime. He volunteered his own time, money and livelihood to come be with us and to help us...

and even considered applying for a chaplain's position. On Dec. 27, 2019 we lost our CVCA Bro. Taylor as he battled esophageal cancer and passed from this world to his reward. This time his mission was complete.

I cannot begin to describe the awesomeness of this man of God who sacrificed endlessly for us. I felt the need to try my best to pay every to this CVCA, to a minister of God, to a brother and to a friend. He always took me by the hand, looked intently in my eyes, and told me, "Robert, one day we will shout on streets of gold together!" Well...he is there now. And he is waiting. The Telford Unit lost a mighty warrior.

A month before his passing, I was sent to my current unit. A few weeks before that, I had talked with him for what would be the last time. Bro. Taylor wrote a song, which he said the Lord had given him straight out of Isaiah 61:1. The end of the chorus says, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me... to set the Men in White free."

The Telford Unit has a lot of great men and women volunteers; other units do, too. Let this article honor and thank all the CVCA's, chaplains, and volunteers who work tirelessly with men and women in white. Residents, thank them and honor them every chance you get. For before you know it, they may be gone. ★



CRIME STOPPERS

Cold Case

Samuel Jones

On March 27, 2010, Austin Police Officers responded to the apartment complex at 909 Reinli St., Austin, Texas, on a check-welfare call. Upon arrival, officers discovered the decomposed body of a male, later identified as 55-year-old Samuel Jones. The victim had sustained a gunshot wound. The Travis County Medical Examiner's Office ruled this death a homicide.

The victim was known to use drugs and alcohol. Witnesses told homicide detectives they had heard a gunshot at approximately 3 a.m. Two black male subjects were seen running away from the victim's apartment. A witness stated he saw a "busted up" Monte Carlo leave the apartment complex.

If you have any information on this crime, please contact the TDCJ Crime Stoppers Office at P.O. Box 1855, Huntsville, TX 77342-1855. Crime Stoppers will pay from \$50 to \$1,000 for any information leading to the arrest, filing charges or indictment of a person or persons that committed a felony crime or is a wanted fugitive. Crime Stoppers guarantees your anonymity. ★

► MARLEY continued from page 1

Remembering Marley, I found that even in these uncertain times when calamity seems ever-present, the power of positive energy and the resilience of the human spirit could overcome negativity and ignorance. Of course, maintaining composure is easier said than done. Oftentimes this requires an example to follow—and singer Bob Marley can exemplify a wellspring of stability and positivity.

Born Robert Nesta Marley (1945-1981), yet known as Bob Marley, this singer is one of the most recognizable figures in the world. Rising up from the worst kind of poverty in Jamaica, Marley was propelled to the heights of fame through creative brilliance and fearless integrity. His music has inspired millions of people for more than 50 years, from Shanghai to Sao Paulo to San Francisco. Marley ranks as one of the best-selling music artists of all-time, with estimated sales of more than 100 million records worldwide. His greatest hits album, "Legend", was released in 1984 after his death,

and became the best-selling reggae album of all-time. In 1994 Marley was inducted posthumously into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame. But how did he overcome his limitations? What gave him the poise to sing in the face of adversity? Why was he remembered years after his death? Exploring the life and career of Bob Marley may provide inspiration for others facing difficult life situations.

Know the rhythm

In 1950s Jamaica, adversity was the norm for a vast majority of the population. Three hundred years of British rule had long deprived the Jamaican people of participation in the political or economic development of their homeland. Economic depressions and civil strife were constant woes. For generations, Jamaicans would express their struggles through music, and in 1962, when Jamaica won its independence from Great Britain, the people suddenly had reason to sing. Triumph and creativity blended into a new musical trend that was fast on the rise. It gave the

people a medium by which they could express their strife and ease the sting from memories of hardship, and it was called "reggae" for its ragged beat and hypnotic cadence. As a young and impoverished Kingston boy, Marley was immediately enamored by this invigorating sound. Recognizing the rhythm of the moment, Marley was able to give voice to personal struggles in a storytelling form through reggae music. Untrained musically and entirely self-taught in a variety of instruments (guitar, percussion, vocals) Marley summoned these new sounds from his soul.

Likewise, men and women incarcerated in the TDCJ can observe a positive rhythm in their daily lives. Rhythm comes in all shapes and sizes: great and small, slow and fast, hard and soft, positive and negative, and those that stand out in the front of a situation and those that fall into the back of a scene. Appreciating those rhythms of life, as Marley learned, is indispensable to gaining clarity—and perhaps maintaining one's health and safety.

Memories as steppingstones

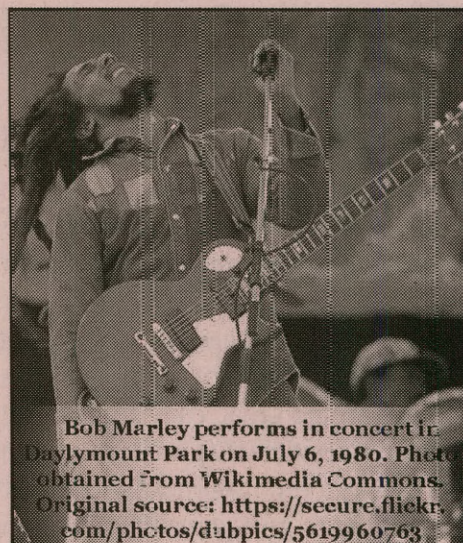
When Bob Marley sang of oppression, racism, illness and belly-bloating hunger, he was actually recounting his memories. His father was white, a captain in the British Royal Navy, who abandoned Marley's mother while she was pregnant with the future music icon. The crushing social stigma of his parentage would haunt Marley for the remainder of his days. Using the painful imprint left by his memories as a source of new creativity, Marley had an endless supply of inspiration. He revolutionized and veritably shattered all conventional modes of musicianship across various genres. Many residents possess painful memories as result of their own foolish choices or possess lingering sorrow leftover by tragedy. However, learning to let go of painful memories is a tremendous challenge that is not cured in a day. Striving to view the past as only a temporary setback enables one to successfully rebound from an adverse situation and move forward with renewed boldness. Now more than ever, we need to set the pain of the past to a tuneful sound, as Marley did, in order to transform memories into steppingstones of inspiration.

Get up, stand up

Surrounded by violence, poverty and pestilence—day in and day out—has the potential to overthrow the mental and emotional framework of most people. Yet Bob Marley had a steadfast belief in the power of music, which was what he needed to pull himself out of negativity and hardships. In his youth, Marley was drawn to a criminal lifestyle, but he changed his course before he fell into any real trouble. But the magnetic pull of criminality and corruption was ever-present, yet Marley surmounted this with his music. There were many obstacles in Marley's path to success—Jamaican street gangs, corrupt record producers, spiteful family members—but he never allowed them to undermine his aims and goals. Similarly, residents can believe in their own ability to change thinking and behavior while not permitting external forces to unseat positive intentions. Belief is the first step in self-improvement.

Do the best you can

Bob Marley emerged from a disadvantaged background but this



Bob Marley performs in concert in Daylmount Park on July 6, 1980. Photo obtained from Wikimedia Commons. Original source: <https://secure.flickr.com/photos/dubpics/5619960763>

didn't discourage him from adapting to adversity. In his impoverished youth, when he had no access to instruments, Marley simply incorporated whatever he could find: tin cans, wooden buckets, and coconuts. Marley was well aware of the limitations levied on his resources, knowledge and skill. Yet he never yielded to the reality of these deficiencies. He simply did the best he could with what he had. As a result of Marley's brilliant fusion of Jamaican folk music, pulsating guitar chords and heart-wrenching vocals we have such soul-stirring classics like "No Woman, No Cry" and "Redemption Song".

Incarcerated residents face harsh realities such as financial difficulties, the loss of loved ones, depression, and social stigmas brought on by the consequences of one's criminal past, and others. It is easy to lose focus on personal strengths. Recognizing limitation is one thing, but to be defeated by it is another. Consider the frontline responders who have been diving headlong into the battle against COVID-19: some of them are entering the fray with little or no resources, saving lives as they risk their own. But they are doing the best with what they have, supported by sheer grit.

Don't rock the boat

The landscape of the world was often dreadful to behold in Marley's day. Civil war, class struggles, racial hatred, famine, pestilence and environmental catastrophes abounded. Yet no matter how ugly the world seemed, Marley saw the optimism in everything. He was able to wrench from the depths of human misery gorgeous melodies, layering them with stunning lyrics that narrated the common woes of humanity, or lifted the listener onto higher ground with inspiration, joy and wonder.

Comparatively speaking, today's world is full of similar uncertainties and challenges. As COVID-19 changes the nation and world, people from all races, ethnicities and cultural, social and economic backgrounds unite to combine resources and ingenuity to combat the virus. These are the helpers. Their extraordinary qualities fill headlines with heroism, courage, self-sacrifice, compassion and unwavering faith.

Focusing on his strengths, Marley did the only thing he could do: he made music. And through his music an entire world of creativity unfolded. Likewise, residents must focus on the strengths they possess and the goals they can reach. Finding and sharing optimism creates an environment and melody of hope and perseverance. We can all sing it. ★

Sources:
 The World Book Encyclopedia, 2018, Vol.13 (M), "Marley, Bob"
 The World Book Encyclopedia, 2018, Vol.16 (R), "Reggae"

TOO HOT TO HANDLE?

LEARN HOW TO SPOT, PREVENT, AND TREAT HEAT-RELATED ILLNESS AND INJURY.

Tips for prevention and recognition of heat illness

Due to the high temperature, residents 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 residents
- 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 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 resident access. The location of each respite area is also posted in resident 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!

SUDOKU ANSWERS

Easy 1	Easy 2	Novice 1	Novice 2
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Intermediate 1	Intermediate 2	Challenging 1	Challenging 2
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Tough 1	Tough 2	Super Tough	Insane
2 4 8 3 6 9 1 5 7 5 6 1 5 4 7 9 2 8 7 9 5 2 8 1 3 6 4 8 7 4 1 9 5 2 3 6 6 1 9 4 3 2 7 8 5 5 3 2 8 7 6 4 9 1 4 5 3 7 2 8 6 1 9 1 2 6 9 5 4 8 7 3 9 8 7 6 1 3 5 4 2	2 6 7 3 5 9 1 8 4 5 9 8 7 4 1 2 6 3 3 1 4 6 2 8 7 5 9 9 4 5 8 3 2 6 1 7 1 8 2 9 7 6 4 3 5 6 7 3 5 1 4 8 9 2 7 5 6 2 8 3 9 4 1 8 3 1 4 9 7 5 2 6 4 2 9 1 6 5 3 7 8	3 4 9 1 6 2 7 5 8 6 5 1 3 4 7 2 6 9 2 7 6 8 5 9 1 3 4 7 1 8 5 3 6 9 4 2 5 6 2 9 7 4 3 8 1 9 3 4 2 8 1 5 7 6 6 9 7 4 2 3 8 1 5 4 2 5 7 1 8 6 9 3 1 8 3 6 9 5 4 2 7	2 4 8 7 1 6 9 5 3 1 5 3 9 4 2 7 8 6 6 9 7 5 3 8 1 4 2 4 7 2 8 9 5 6 3 1 3 6 5 4 2 1 8 7 9 9 8 1 6 7 3 4 2 5 8 2 9 3 6 7 5 1 4 7 3 4 1 5 9 2 8 6 5 1 6 2 8 4 3 9 7

Letter from TDCJ Veterans Service offers thanks, support to veterans:

To My Fellow Veterans,

SO MANY OF YOU have given so much in the name of Service. To you, I must say thank you for your commitment and your sacrifices for this country and our freedom. The words do not exist to express my gratitude. Veteran Programming as you see it today will most likely have a different appearance as time goes on. It is a living thing grown from a simple idea. It has a message and each of you have given it its voice.

There are no greater heroes than those of you who served and were willingly ready to make the ultimate sacrifice. Be proud; those sacrifices will forever live on in the memories of your loved ones and the grateful. It is because of you, the men and women who take the oath to defend this country and willing to give your life at a moment's notice, that we all can enjoy the freedom you vowed to protect. Freedom is not free — someone has paid the price. For those of you who have fought for it, freedom has a price the protected will never know.

Today, proudly, I honor all of you from all branches, from all wars, who have served. Your courage and sacrifices will forever be appreciated. During these trying times I know it is easy to feel forgotten and unheard. I would like to say to those of you who feel they no longer have a voice to be heard, I am here, listening and willing to sacrifice all I can to provide you the support you need. In times like this, nothing matters more than giving my fellow brothers and sisters a helping hand. As your Veterans Services Coordinator I provide education about VA benefits and services available during and upon release from incarceration, assistance with VA Application for Health Care, compensation claims, ordering military documents, individual assessment, restarting benefits 60 days prior to release, links to resources, and reentry services to eligible veterans incarcerated in a TDCJ facility. I am an Army Disabled Veteran, and I have a strong passion for what I do. I want to inform you that I will assist you at the highest possible level I can.

Sincerely,

Eric Pichardo

Veterans Services Coordinator



"The best way for incarcerated veterans to reach out to me is by submitting an I-60 to the Reentry Case Manager located at the unit," Picardo said. "Make sure to annotate somewhere on the I-60 that the [communication] is veteran-related."

Residents can also write to:

Eric Pichardo
Veteran Services Coordinator
Texas Department of Criminal Justice
Reentry and Integration Division
4616 West Howard Lane St 200
Austin, Texas 78728

A Thousand Worlds

Submitted by Jamelle Peterkin, Hobby Unit

A picture's worth a thousand words;
Today my mind is in a thousand worlds,
And I just took a trip.
I attended my son's dinosaur party,
Then we went on a Disney cruise ship.
Pictures take me away.
I'm far gone like a blimp
'Cause reality's too much to bear,
So I'd rather be anywhere,
But here.
Now I'm at grandma's jamrock estate
And the attendee of Jamie's wedding.
Jai and I are in NaNa's bed
A California King with royal heading.
My birthday at the CPS office—
And a trip to the Houston zoo.
Pictures of my family,
Each of us in royal blue,
Take me there once more—
Even if I've never been once before.
Pictures free my mind
While I'm still inside walls.
I just pull out my photo albums,
And reminisce on life again.

COVID-19 Haiku

William Langley, Michael Unit

Author's Note: I'm sending a little something now because this COVID-19 declared war when it messed with my family. I know I'm not the only one. —W. Langley

Together apart
This virus attacked us all
Battles make us strong

You and I as one
Virus as the enemy
COVID has no friends

U.S. Department of Education announces Second Chance Pell Grant expansion

Second Chance Pell available in 42 states and DC once programs begin

The U.S. Department of Education announced the expansion of the Second Chance Pell Experimental Sites Initiative to provide need-based Pell grants to people in state and federal prisons. Currently, there are 63 colleges that teach in 26 states participating in Second Chance Pell; this second cohort of 67 new schools will bring the total to 130 colleges in 42 states and the District of Columbia.

The vast majority of incarcerated people will one day return home, and providing access to post-secondary education in prison means that these individuals are far less likely to recidivate and are better equipped to play productive and positive roles within their communities. Access to post-secondary education also improves prison safety for both incarcerated people and corrections employees alike.

The Vera Institute of Justice has been providing technical assistance to the participating colleges and corrections departments since the initiative's inception, working to ensure that the programs provide quality higher education in prison and post-release.

"This expansion of Second Chance Pell will improve lives and strengthen communities," said Nick Turner, president and director of the Vera Institute of Justice. "The expansion is also a tes-

tament to the fact that broader access to college in prison is a strategy that works—to improve safety and expand opportunity in our country."

"I've had the pleasure of visiting several Second Chance Pell institutions and have seen firsthand the transformative impact this experiment has on the lives of individuals who are incarcerated," said U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos. "By expanding this experiment, we are providing a meaningful opportunity for more students to set themselves up for future success in the workforce. The stories I've heard from students and institutions engaged in the experiment are very encouraging, and we look forward to seeing how this expansion will help even more students achieve a better future."

Colleges serving students in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice and included in the Second Chance Pell initiative are Cedar Valley College, Lamar State College, Clarendon College, Lee College, Trinity Valley, and University of Houston – Clear Lake. ★

Information from TDCJ's Rehabilitation Programs Division and Vera Institute of Justice's press release (April 24, 2020).

Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman

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 a 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.



★★ Editor's Note ★★

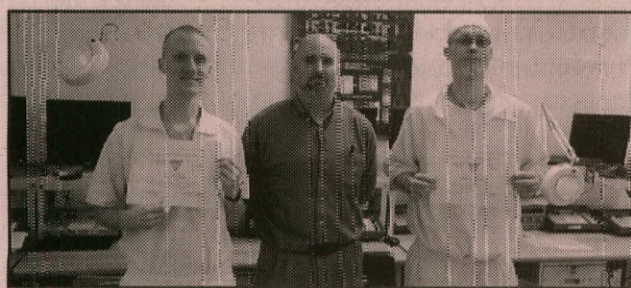
This month's *Lace Up* highlights include happenings from the past few months. Publication of some of this information has been delayed due to Covid-19 challenges, but the accomplishments remain significant. Please note: Many of these photos (and others in this issue) were taken before mask and distancing protocols were implemented—thus the un-masked faces and close proximity of participants! WSD classes and unit activities are now conducted using strict protocol regarding masks, and physical distancing of participants.

BETO

TVCC graduates earn national certification

Professor R. Herod of Trinity Valley Community College (TVCC) encourages each of his high-scoring graduates at the Beto Unit to take the national certification exam for electronics technology. Herod voluntarily tutors these graduates for the national exam.

"It is an honor to instruct the men," Herod said. "They have achieved and received their associate level certification through the International Society of Electronics Technicians (ISCET). These men have successfully completed the TVCC Electronic Technology course and excelled beyond the requirements, taking the ISCET associate exam and completing with a 75 percent or higher score on the question exam."



TVCC students P. Phipps (left) and D. Conaway thank Professor Herod for helping them earn national certification in electronics technology.

Reported by Quincy Patterson

FORMBY, WHEELER, TULIA

WSD students exercise creativity with cultural research



Participating students at the Formby, Wheeler and Tulia units utilize Windham School District (WSD)'s library resources (and safely delivered craft materials) in a distance learning activity to research countries around the globe. Teams of students studied several aspects of other cultures and created tri-fold presentations for display. Some of the participating students and their projects are shown.



GOODMAN

Goodman Unit hosts February graduation event



WSD honors High School Equivalency (HSE) and Career and Technical Education (CTE) graduates in February at the Goodman Unit. Valedictorian K. Donovan was recognized, and two students tied for the honor of

salutatorian: A. Alexander and P. Alcantar. Commencement speaker was Chaplaincy volunteer Willie Lane, who encouraged listeners to lean on God and family and to also use their time productively. Other graduates were J. Adams, K. Hadnot, J. Sentena and J. Villarreal.

GURNEY

Gurney Unit hosts 2020 Scrabble Tournament



First place winner J. Steinwachs and second place winner C. Christenson take honors and are awarded ribbons at the Gurney Unit's Health and Wellness Scrabble Tournament.



The top four contestants also included M. Warren and G. Allen.

HILLTOP



Hilltop Unit honors graduates in Gatesville

Hilltop Unit WSD commencement ceremonies in February honored HSE and CTE graduates. Regional Recruiting Manager Brian Robinson (back row) was the event's special guest from The Industrial Company (TIC).

MIDDLETON



Middleton Unit sponsors checkers tournament

Middleton Unit's 2020 Health and Wellness Checkers Tournament brought together eight competitors and resulted in three top winners. Residents Douglas (first place), Knight (second place) and Williams (third place) walked away with the ribbons and honors, and Coordinator R. Staggs said the event was a fun time for the players.



ROACH

Literacy student creates class weather instrument

WSD literacy student Z. Williams was recognized for creating an anemometer during a science project at the Roach Unit. Williams created the anemometer using straws, cups and a



push pin and this instrument can be used to measure wind speed and direction

Roach Unit sponsors Scrabble competition



Scrabble champions M. Vaidez (first place) and J. Matz (second place) display winning ribbons after the Roach Unit's Scrabble tournament.

Roach Unit graduation makes dreams come true



As WSD students walk into graduation ceremonies to receive honors, their families, friends and school faculty welcome them with smiles, tears and applause.

"I've never had an experience like that," landscape program graduate J. Lucero said. "Having everyone there to congratulate us felt surreal. There were a lot of days I didn't feel like completing the task I set out for, but seeing the look on my family's faces made it all worth it." Thanks to all WSD staff for making our dreams and goals come true."

Reported by Jose Martinez

SANCHEZ

Three CTE classes, HSE program celebrate at Sanchez State Jail



Culinary Arts; Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) and HSE graduates were honored in February at the Sanchez State Jail in El Paso. Commencement speaker was Assistant Warden Michael Feazell.

STILES

Stiles Unit recognizes Bridges to Life completers



The Bridges to Life program at the Stile Unit provides a way for offenders to gain introspection concerning their victims and crimes. Participants gain new perspectives regarding criminal behavior and empathy for others, and they work on transforming their own lives. In this photo, D. Mitchell, G. Briggs, A. Sterns, G. Martinez and J. Resendiz are recognized as completers.

Reported by Arthur Sterns ★

The Sports View

Heading and healing The role of a father

William Hill, ECHO Staff

Editor's Note: ECHO sportswriter William Hill again shares personal observations and knowledge of the sports world. His viewpoints do not represent official opinions of The Texas Department of Criminal Justice or of The ECHO; however, in this issue Hill offers a unique reflection on a universal sentiment. Enjoy!

There certainly is no shortage of storylines from which to choose for sports columns these days. They range from the detrimental effect the coronavirus pandemic continues to impose on every level of sports to the increasing number of today's athletes engaging in social activism. However, sometimes a person needs a break from all of the doom and gloom stories—just a little good news. That's the reason for this belated-Father's Day selection: an account of my favorite sports-related memory, which is also about my father.

Growing up, I wanted nothing more than to be like my dad in every way. I would carefully watch him and try to mimic his mannerisms, including how he walked and talked. When he would shave, I'd spread his shaving cream over my face and pretend I was shaving, also. One day I even snuck out some of the grated coconut mom kept in the refrigerator and stuck it in my cheek like dad did his tobacco. Needless to say, Mom was less than pleased when she discovered me sitting in dad's recliner, spitting coconut "tobacco" juice into his spittoon. Surprisingly, she seemed to be more upset at dad than at me. It was the only time I remember her yelling at him in the same tone of voice she used when I was in trouble. I was confused; did this mean that dad, my hero, also got into trouble?

My favorite thing to imitate was his ability to rope, as Dad was the best roper in the county. This was not only the biased opinion of a son, but also that of the people against whom he competed. I often heard neighboring ranchers say he could have been a big star on the Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) tour—if he had instead chosen that life.

The biggest event on our small rural county's social calendar was an annual fall festival and professional rodeo, accompanying a countywide party. Every year Dad entered the steer roping and team competitions, challenging PRCA competitors half his age. Dad's partner in the team-roping event was always our neighbor, Pete "Speedy" Johnson. Ironically, Speedy was the slowest-moving person I have ever seen—except for the time one of the bucking bulls got out of his pen and charged him. Speedy then lived up to his nickname.

When I was 13 years old, Speedy had back surgery shortly before the start of the festival, so pulled out of the competition. In a moment that can only be described as a bout of temporary insanity, I asked my Dad if I could be his partner that year. Apparently, insanity—like the common cold—is contagious, because that is the only logical explanation for why Dad agreed.

When the big day finally arrived, I was nervous as a long-tailed cat in a room full of rocking chairs. By the time that we got to the arena, the butterflies that had been fluttering in my stomach all day morphed into a rollercoaster, complete with loop-de-loops.

As we unloaded our horses from the trailer, I asked Dad why he had never tried to compete full-time on the PRCA tour. He said the life of a professional cowboy just was not for him and that he was happier where he was. Not knowing when to shut up, I continued by saying that if he had, he could have certainly been somebody. That comment stopped him dead in his tracks.

"What do you mean I could've been somebody? I am somebody: I am the husband of a beautiful, loving wife. I am the father of four wonderful kids," he stated.

"But you have five kids!" I added.

"I know, but the fifth one just implied that I was a nobody," he said.

Although he used his stern tone of voice, he still smiled, letting me know he was not completely serious. I knew that my impertinence had just created unintended hurt for him.

"I didn't mean it like that; I meant that you could have been rich and famous," I explained.

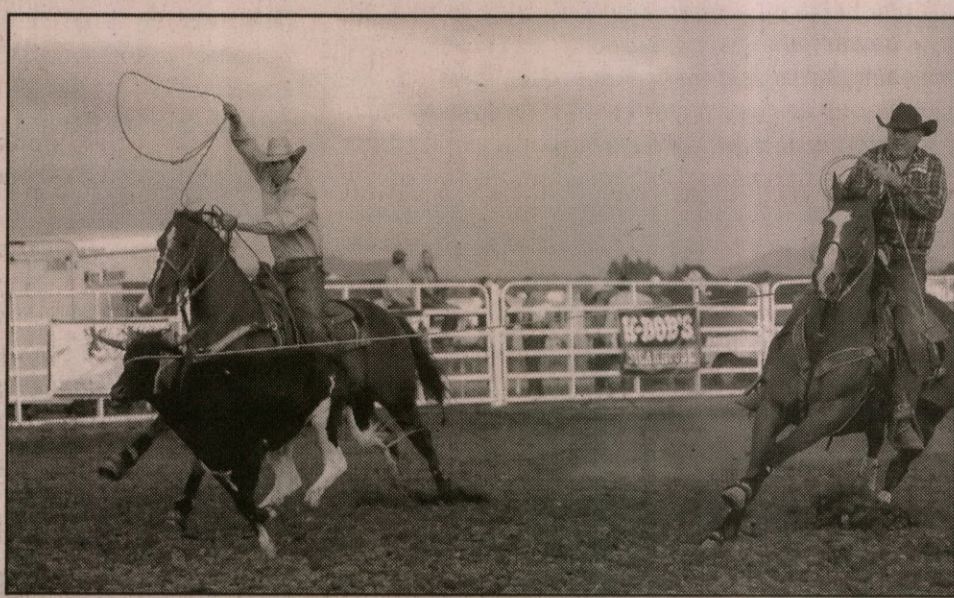
"Money and fame are overrated," he said. "There are plenty of rich and famous people who are absolutely miserable, and there are people who don't have two nickels to rub together who are completely content. Success is not measured by the size of your bank account. Understand?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Good. Now let's get ready to go win some money, Partner!" dad said, laughing.

The steer roping competition was first, and Dad placed second to a young cowboy from East Texas who competed regularly on the professional tours. The steer wrestling competition followed, and then it was time for team roping. For those who are not familiar with the events of rodeo, this contest consists of two ropers, the header and the heeler, who work together to rope the animal in the fastest possible time. The header, obviously, is responsible for roping the steer's head, turning the animal at an angle that allows the heeler to rope the animal's two hind legs. Nothing to it—except when there is.

When our turn to rope came, we backed our horses into the stalls on either side of the chute. With an almost imperceptible nod under his Stetson, Dad initiated a series of events that would be the talk of the town for months to



come. With a burst of speed borne from a desire to escape from captivity, the steer erupted from the chute only to discover Buttercup, Dad's Appaloosa horse, right on his heels. Taking only one practice swing of his lariat, Dad shot out a loop that settled softly over the head of the steer. I doubt the steer even knew he was caught. Knowing that I had to be quick for us to post a fast time and be in the running, I rushed my throw—and missed badly.

Dropping the end of the rope, I quickly untied the length of latigo, securing my length of lasso to the saddle and shaking out a second loop. Once again, Dad perfectly maneuvered the steer to give me a second chance. This time, I overcorrected and waited too long to make my throw, missing yet again. Since I did not have another rope, I figured that was it; I had cost my hero a chance to win. Dad, though, had other ideas. Before I knew what was happening, he had unloosed his backup loop and gave it to me along with the advice, "Don't think. Just rope!"

Under normal circumstances, a team would not be given so much time, but because everyone (except me) understood what Dad was trying to do, they gave him a little extra leeway. I would love to be able to say that inspired by my father's words, I rose to the occasion and successfully roped the steer's hind legs as the crowd went crazy.

Yeah, not so much.

I tried to forget about all of the people sitting in the stands and approached my last throw as simply another practice session. Once again I got my horse in position as Dad turned the steer for the third time—and I let loose a perfect sloop. It sailed through the air with just the right amount of backward tilt. I watched as it landed perfectly—at the junction of the steer's back and neck.

The fans sat in stunned silence, not sure what they had just witnessed. I glanced over at dad and shrugged as if to say, "Sorry, Dad." It was a sentiment I would express often over the coming years. For his part, Dad just smiled and winked.

As we rode out of the arena, the crowd finally came to life. Some of the people gave polite thank-you-for-trying claps, while others openly jeered and laughed.

Exiting the arena riding side by side, Dad flicked his reins to get my attention, saying, "Follow me." Instead of heading toward the lot where the truck and trailer were parked, we rode away from the bright light of the arena and into the darkness.

During that ride, Dad did most of the talking. I did most of the listening. He said that whenever a person takes a chance to be great, there are going to be those who criticize every little mistake. He said the critics are usually the same ones who always play it safe and never risk defeat. Yet they also never experience the exhilaration of winning.

Dad also talked about how not everything would always go according to plan. He said if we know about certain things before going into a situation, we could be prepared to adapt to continue to meet the challenges. He also said that when things do go wrong (as they will according to some guy named Mr. Murphy), we should never give up. Most importantly, he said that he was proud of me.

Back then, I thought he was talking about sports, but now I realize he was preparing me for life. For this reason, and far too many others to list in this column, Dad is my hero.

For those reading this who still have their fathers in their lives, call them or write them and tell them you appreciate what they did for you growing up. For those of you who are fathers, know that these prison walls do not stop your ability to influence your own children. Set them up for success; let them know you are proud of them. Head them in the right direction. ★

Making A DENT

Pain, pandemic and pigskin predictions

Jim Dent, Contributing Writer—Polunsky Unit

Editor's Note: Writer James "Jim" Dent is an author and sportswriter whose writings include "The Junction Boys," a New York Times best-selling book about Bear Bryant's Junction Boys "Twelve Mighty Orphans: The Inspiring True Story of the Mighty Mites Who Ruled Texas Football," and "The Kids Got It Right: How the Texas All-Stars Kicked Down Racial Walls." Dent covered the NFL's Dallas Cowboys as a sportswriter for 11 years. He is working on an autobiography, and has also been a generous contributor to The ECHO since 2018. Opinions expressed in this column are those of Dent, and they do not represent official statements by The Texas Department of Criminal Justice or The ECHO.

The football season is coming regardless of pain or pandemic. The National Football League (NFL) never thought twice about blowing up the balls and calling out the cheerleaders. The NFL is bigger than life in America, so the games must go on—even with COVID-19 and economic tribulations.

All of this is not surprising. What is a bit shocking is the cavalier attitude of college football.

Months ago, the Southeastern Conference (SEC) said it would be playing football in 2020, until heck freezes over. Truth be known, the SEC could play an entire season inside its boundaries. The SEC is the conference of Nick Saban—CNC—and it's just not right to question The Man. If Alabama wants to play Vanderbilt in the SEC Championship game and declares planet mastery, then strike up the band, buddy! Wait a minute! There will be no band in the stands this season.

When I realized that college football was going to put on a show this season, two words came to mind: amateur athletes. You mean to tell me that

young men not getting paid will be encouraged to punch each other in the nose and bleed in the name of John Heisman? What are the lawyers going to say?

If college football plays this season—and most people expect this will happen—it will be utter chaos from start to finish. Some teams will start their schedule on time and others a month later. The Big 10 and the SEC will leave the starting blocks in September while California teams might not be able to play until October.

Penn State coach James Franklin, who ranks with Nick Saban for sheer arrogance, said the Big 10 can't afford to wait on a team like Rutgers that might be held back by the State of New Jersey. The biggest problem with all of this scattered thinking is there is really no governing body of college sports any more. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) was once a powerful institution that ruled with a snap of its fingers. No more. SEC commissioner Greg Sankey now wields a bigger stick than the NCAA's Mark Emmert.

As a result, the SEC and the Big 10 raid other

conferences for new blood about every five years. Selfishness now outweighs the good of the game.

My personal opinion about college football is that the product in the stadium is better than that of the NFL. The game is fresher and faster and much more fun to watch. Unlike the NFL, college players don't lean on each other the first month of the season. If football chooses to start leaving the little guys behind, it will begin to look like the NFL and that is not good.

A better idea to my eye would be postponing the college football season until February and finishing in June. Start in the snow and play the bowls and the playoffs in the early summer. Hopefully, coronavirus would have run its course by then. If not, punt the season and move on.

If college football is played September through January, I will still watch. Of course, the bigger story during those months will be the imminent possibility that COVID-19 will strike again. With that possibility hanging over its head, college football will not have as much to cheer about.

Maybe it's time to unbuckle those helmets. ★