

THE ECHO

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WSD names new diploma program for Matthew Gaines

Bryan J. Moore — ECHO Staff

A UNIQUE HIGH SCHOOL AT THE Ferguson Unit bearing the name Matthew Gaines will serve residents enrolled in the Windham School District (WSD). This momentous event may prompt many to wonder: who exactly is Matthew Gaines?

The Man:

Senator, Baptist preacher, ex-slave, Louisianan, and champion of African-American rights, Matthew Washington Gaines was born on Aug. 4, 1840, to a slave mother on the plantation of Bernardo Martin Despallier in Pineville, La. Her owner was widow Candida Grande Despallier, who was of Spanish descent. Gaines, like his contemporaries Booker T. Washington and Frederick Douglass, was a Reconstruction phenomenon. Post-Emancipation, Gaines was off and running. A leader by nature, he staked a high-profile position in politics the moment the playing field became accessible. Actually, Matthew Gaines was running even before the shackles came off, having unsuccessfully attempted self-rescue from captivity twice.



Gaines

The first attempt came at the tender age of 10 when he was sold to a man in another part of Louisiana and subsequently hired out as a laborer on a steamboat. Using a false pass, he fled for Camden, Ark. He departed Arkansas six months afterwards and made his way to New Orleans, where he was caught and brought back to his captor. Later, Gaines was sold to a Texas planter from Robertson County. Not one to give up easily, a teenaged Gaines made yet another escape attempt in 1863. His mind was on Mexico, but his

body only made it to Fort McKavett in Menard County where he was apprehended by the Texas Rangers. Gaines was taken back to Fredericksburg, Texas, where he worked as a blacksmith and a shepherder until the end of the Civil War in 1864. Thankfully, the Emancipation Proclamation ended the necessity to pursue freedom by way of boldness and cunning.

The Leader:

Post-Emancipation, Gaines settled in Burton, Washington County, Texas. Through the power of impassioned oratory, he emerged as a leader in the African-American community, both as a minister and a politician. During Reconstruction he was elected as a senator to represent the Sixteenth District in the Texas legislature. From the outset, Gaines diligently guarded the rights and interests of fellow African Americans. The primary issues he felt required immediate attention were: education, prison reform, the protection of African-Americans at the polls, the election of more African-Americans to public office, and tenant-farming reform. Ironically, these are essentially the same issues that African-American politicians are grappling with in today's times.

Gaines instinctively understood the power of education, having learned to read by candlelight from books smuggled to him by a white child who may have actually been a young Blaz Philippe II Despallier, nephew of Alamo hero Charles Despallier.

GAINES continued on pg. 6 >

Theatre of change:

Quarantine, chaos and 'new normal' change history in Shakespeare's time

John Walter Flagg — ECHO Staff



Wikimedia Commons Image

Our world has been upended by the COVID-19 pandemic. We currently find ourselves at the crossroads of old and new: overwhelmed by public quarantine, new social rules of engagement and private anguish. Yet the perennial traits of resiliency, perseverance, integrity, courage and creativity remain — just as they

did in William Shakespeare's time. While COVID-19 is not the same disease as the bubonic plague, there were parallels in the consequences and challenges that face the modern world.

"Shakespeare lived his entire life in the shadow of the bubonic plague," writes Stephen Greenblatt, the John Cogen University Professor of the Humanities at Harvard. Greenblatt's article in the New York Times, "What Shakespeare Actually Wrote about the Plague" (May 7, 2020), inspired this examination of the defining events of Shakespeare's life and work.

Perhaps no other person has contributed more to our language, literature and culture than playwright William Shakespeare. With a scientist's

Shakespeare's story is no fairytale. His life was as turbulent and tragic as any of his plays.

curiosity, a philosopher's discernment and a poet's soul, Shakespeare created what has become the canon of art and drama in Western civilization for the past 400 years. His 37 plays, sequence of sonnets, and assortment of poems have formed the basis of instruction of a liberal education, from elementary grades to collegiate levels. Generations of people have absorbed his ideas concerning heroism, romance, loyalty, destiny and the nature of tragedy. Historical character portrayals in his plays have be-

come archetypal depictions: to this day, many people can only imagine Julius Caesar, Marc Antony, Cleopatra, Richard III and Henry V wholly through Shakespearean art.

How did he adapt, connect and thrive? What influences nurtured his genius? Shakespeare's personal story is no fairytale. In fact, his life was as turbulent and tragic as any of his plays. Many deeply traumatic events tore his life apart, and as happens time and again with creative individuals, out of tremendous pain came tremendous talent and art.

At the heart of Shakespeare's story was a timeless message of hope in the face of adversity, and the birth of dreams amid chaos and quarantine.

SHAKESPEARE continued on pg. 11 >

Success story

Tony Johnson: Engraving a new legacy

William Hill
ECHO Staff

TONY JOHNSON is living proof that one's past does not have to define who they are as a person or determine their future. Today, Johnson, a former Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) resident, is successfully employing the laser engraver operator skills he learned during his incarceration to carve out a new career and future. Before the 2020 coronavirus pandemic put a halt to visitors from outside entering TDCJ facilities, Johnson returned to the Wynne Unit to speak to an assembled group of residents at the unit's Sign and Plastics facility. He used to work with many of them, and he told them that there is hope for the future.

Every success story includes an obstacle that the subject must overcome. For Johnson, that impediment came in the form of a negative mindset that accompanied his being sentenced to 50-years in TDCJ for a robbery charge when he was 23.

JOHNSON continued on pg. 5 >

The ECHO seeks holiday submissions

Todd R. Carman — ECHO Staff

THE ECHO NEEDS YOU! We are looking for holiday-themed material for publication in our upcoming issues. Multiple submissions from the same author, aspiring chef or artist are welcome. Special recognition will be given to all whose work we use. We are in need of:

Holiday memories

Share with our readers your favorite holiday memory or memories. Submissions are not limited to Thanksgiving, Christmas or New Year's Eve; any holiday memory is fair game. Don't have a favorite memory? Create a fictional story of a holiday experience you wish you had! Your work need not be lengthy — tell your tale in a

paragraph or two, if that's all it takes.

Holiday recipes

Tell our readers what you want to whip up over the holidays as appetizers, main courses and desserts, using commissary-provided items.

Holiday artwork and illustrations

Artists: here's your chance to shine and be published. We want to use your work in pen, pencil, colored pencil or watercolors (although it will be printed in grayscale). Submissions can be anywhere in size from small up to an illustration board.

Submission guidelines

All work should be appropriate for publication — if you wouldn't want your family to see it, then we probably wouldn't use it. By sending your work you give *The ECHO* and WSD permission for use as needed or desired. No work will be returned to the author or artist, whether used or not. Send your submission via truck mail or regular mail to:

The ECHO
c/o WSD Admin. Bldg.
P.O. Box 40
Huntsville, TX
77342-0040 ★

Coming in November:

2020 ECHO writing contest results and winners!

- Letters to the Editor..... Pg.2
- Dear Darby..... Pg.2
- Woman's Perspective Pg.3
- Crow Hound..... Pg.7
- Sudoku..... Pg.7
- Help Wanted..... Pg.9
- Creative Corner..... Pg.10
- Sports..... Pg.12



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.

Commissary director retires

On Sept. 30, 2020, Eric Johnston retired as the director for the Commissary & Trust Fund Department. He had been in the Commissary Department since 1993 and moved through several positions in the department until becoming the director in 2010. He has provided some commissary history from his time in the department:

WHEN I FOUND A POSITION IN TDCJ THAT NEEDED retail experience, correctional security background, and an accounting degree, I knew I had found my place. I've seen a lot of changes since I arrived and wanted to cover some of the highlights.

COMMISSARY continued on pg. 4 >



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

To the editor,

I'd like to put a recipe on how to make a cake of mine in *The ECHO*. How do I make this happen? Everyone loves my cake, so I'd like to share the know-how.

**Thank You,
Leroy Lamas**

To the reader,

We look forward to publishing your submission! Recipes, along with other submissions, can be mailed via truck mail to:

**The ECHO
c/o WSD Admin. Bldg.,
Huntsville, Texas**
or regular mail to:

**The ECHO
c/o WSD Admin. Bldg.,
P.O. Box 40
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040.**

To the editor,

First of all I would like to commend you on such a well-written and insightful newspaper. It is easy to forget the many talents locked away

behind bars. I found myself looking in empty lockers for older *ECHO* issues. Upon my release in the next year or so, my dream is to open up a sober living home. I've been on the other side for so long that I want to give back — not only for myself, but also to help others, so they don't come back. I see so many residents not have an exit plan upon release and then re-offend. I've tried to be of help, to understand their position and also be a positive influence.

The C.H.A.R.M. ministry is what motivated me to write you. They seem to have a successful formula in getting these men back on their feet. I've been able to do a lot in setting structure, rules and programs, but I feel like I may be missing a spiritual aspect. I want to gain this in order for me to understand the residents' needs for a successful transition to the outside. I was hoping that you might find it in your heart to somehow get me in contact with its founder, Mr.

Trickett. Any help would be a blessing.

**Respectfully,
Paul Mussler
Holliday Unit**

To the reader,

Thank you for writing, and good luck in reaching your goals. You can write to Mr. David Trickett of the Christ's Hope and Reconciliation Ministry (C.H.A.R.M.) at:

**C.H.A.R.M. Ministry
P.O. Box 55548
Houston, TX 77255-5548**

To the editor,

A life without resolution is a life without success. As ants work daily to store food for the winter, so should people be smart enough to persevere until they attain their goals. If the goal is to be an author, study the mechanics of writing, learn from skilled writers, and write. If the goal is to improve self and character, read inspiring material, meditate on higher principles, and socialize with others who have like goals or stronger characters. In other words, persistently move towards the finish line and you

will definitely get there.

The average American often has the goal of being financially successful, but unlike those small ants, we do not work daily on that goal. We do not display the ants' physical stamina, determined mindset, and resilient devotion towards such resolution. If we did follow pursuit, we too would attain the success others have attained by using the same method of those clever insects. We would save and invest into our future, read about how to achieve finances legally, and diligently educate ourselves towards our aim. We would also keep moving around all obstacles or individuals who get in our path (as ants do). We would certainly attain goal after goal rapidly.

Since we are aware that we can progress with a series of firm effort towards our goal, it is my assumption that we often do not want success, nor wealth. It is not our true resolution. It is only a daydream. Webster dictionary reveals, "Resolution is the act or process of resolving." It implies all action words. It means go, advance, solve, and work to achieve.

Let's follow the examples of those small insect until we

attain success.

**Quincy Patterson
Beto Unit Reporter**

To the reader,

Thank you for your submission on ants and resolutions.

To the editor,

In a past issue of *The ECHO*, I came across information of interest to me. I would greatly appreciate if you could provide me with contact information for Mr. Brandon Warren at Lee College. Mr. Warren expressed his available assistance in regard to information on colleges and other information of which I am in need. Thank you for your time and assistance. Your publication is of utmost benefit to the incarcerated community.

Sincerely,

**Gustavo Sanchez
Ramsey Unit**

To the reader,

Thank you for writing. We appreciate the work done by Mr. Warren and by Lee College. You can contact Mr. Warren at:

**Mr. Brandon Warren
c/o Lee College
168-C Col. Etheredge Blvd.
Huntsville, TX 77340**

TEXAS PRISON NEWS

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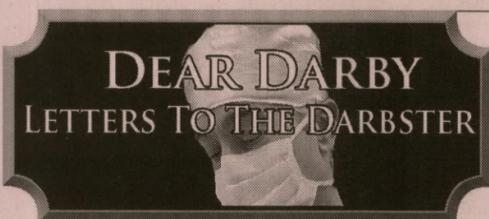
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Dear Darby,

I know that you above all mere mortals have massive sway with people in the know. Here is my problem, Darby: the unit here just doesn't seem to want to serve us pancakes enough. We only get them four or maybe five times a week. Tell me, Darby, what grown man can survive receiving pancakes only five times a week? No one — that's who.

**Pancake Jack
Beto Unit**

Dear Flapjack,

I detect just a smidgen of sarcasm in your letter. Prison isn't IHOP, with all the fancy pancakes with the various syrups and toppings, but we DO get our fair share of "wagon wheels." Pancakes are a cheap, easy and filling way to feed the masses, which is why you get 'em on a regular rotation in the chow hall. They can be tasty, though, especially if you get them fresh off the grill, where the edges are still a little crispy. Throw some butter on top, let it melt into a puddle, mingling with the syrup — yum!

Dear Darby,

Darbster, my name is Mike M. and I am no better than any one else. I committed a crime and I'm paying for it with my time. However, I find myself in somewhat of a dilemma. Two frustrating health challenges are taking place around me. First, I'm a 63-year-old guy who takes the COVID-19 situation seriously. Unfortunately, others around me don't — and won't always wear their masks properly, which helps with keeping others safe. In another situation, a fellow resident has tried to bring in a field mouse or rat as a pet. I feel that this is a health problem for us all. I've spoken to him to take it back out and release it to its natural habitat, but he just ignored me. What do I do next? I believe having a wild field mouse or rat is a health issue.

**Healthy Mike
Boyd Unit**



Dear Healthy Mike,

Rats! Critters can cause a conundrum, especially since not everyone looks at 'em the same way. I've seen many different types of pets in the pokie over the years, from spiders and scorpions to birds, lizards, cats... mice and rats! You obviously are not a Mr. Jingles fan (referring to the mouse from Stephen King's The Green Mile). Sounds like your Pied Piper friend has taken a shine to the little fellow. You have a point about rodents being a vector for some diseases, so field rodents aren't the best pet choice. However, some folks feel better with a pet — a little companion. Back in the day, I had a homeboy who would take his pet lizard everywhere he went. You could see its little green head poking out of his shirt pocket as he was goin' down the hallway! Anyway, if you don't like your buddy's style of pet, then stay clear of him. Unless he's your cellie, that shouldn't be hard to do, and if he IS your cellie, get moved to a different house if you can't fade his mouse.

The mask thing is a whole different can of worms — way more serious than the adopt-a-pet crew. Masks don't just protect you from COVID-19 — they protect those around you FROM you, should you be

an asymptomatic COVID-19 carrier. That stuff is no joke, and we all need to maintain good practices while we wait for a vaccine to come out. Keep demonstrating the right behaviors. Sometimes those who aren't properly masked up don't even understand the importance of wearing that mask consistently over nose and mouth. Keep educating them. Your brain is an important part of defending yourself (and others) against COVID-19. Use it.

Dear Darby,

I'm writing in reference to the June 2020 issue, wherein whomever is currently playing the role of "Darby" drops the ball regarding those of us who walk slower than others do.

The assumption that one doesn't "... have anything goin' on in their life, so doing a slow stroll is the highlight of their day," is a value judgement erroneously based on insensitivity to people who walk slower than others because of physical disability. Who cares how fast or slow somebody else walks down the hallway? The chowhall will be there whenever "Trying to get there" arrives. We all boogie down the boulevard at our own speed and it ain't nobody's business, anyway. It behooves us all to "do your own time," "know your roll" and "watch your mouth."

**Philip Branfield
Hughes Unit**

Dear Slow-School,

For someone who's now spending time in the slow lane, you sure are fast to pass judgement on ol' Darb. I wasn't talking about you or other folks who've been here a minute and are no longer running full-court basketball. You, sir, with as long as you've been down, have more than earned the right to motor down the boulevard in a lower gear. Instead, I was referencing the younger, rather fit folks who are out in the hallway, cruisin' like they're on the strip, kickin' it with their homeboys while lookin' for some action. Trying to maneuver around these strollers is quite a chore, especially in the more constricted areas of the hallway. These dudes are fit, not infirm, yet they form a roadblock for those tryin' to get from here to there and back again as quickly as possible so we don't miss any of the next episode of Judge Judy or Maury Povich!

Dear Darby,

I have a HUGE problem — two of them, to be exact:

1. Why do folks expect you to stop doing your task (i.e. writing, cooking, talking) to help them? I am willing to help, but can I finish helping me first? It's rude and childish, and it drives me insane. It is a constant on the unit where I reside.
2. Why do folks ask questions, and when you give them the facts (especially time questions and parole), they get upset and state what someone else told them, because the other person's response "felt good." Ugh!

Thanks, Darby!

**Please stop interrupting and ask,
Cheryl**

Dear CJ,

First let me stop doing what I'm doing (working on the layout of the next issue) so I can help you. Hmmm, interruptions

seem to be common here, too... oh, wait, I'm back — my boss interrupted me with a question that led to a discussion that ended up with me digging through a stack of correspondence... anyway, interruptions are a part of life. (Wait another sec — John Flagg has a question about where a file is stored.) People who interrupt you while you're doing something else may not be observant enough to see that you're occupied, or maybe they feel their interruption will be so short as to not be an inconvenience. Hang on, Bryan wants to know if we've typed up and run an article... Okay, where were we? Oh, sometimes, Cheryl, you have to go with the flow, accept that stops and starts are part of life and move on. In psychology they talk about how a stimulus, such as an interruption, can lead to two outcomes: desensitization, where it doesn't bother you (kinda like the drone of the exhaust fan in the back of your dorm that you no longer know you hear), or sensitization, where you become so locked in on something that you can no longer tune it out (which, for you, is interruptions). Get desensitized, Cheryl, so interruptions won't be a huge problem for you and you can live a stress-free life.

As far as your second question, many seekers are looking for the answer they want to hear rather than the truth (Does this shirt make me look fat? Is the commissary out of cream cheese pound cakes? Are most people making their first parole?). Others merely want conversation. Give it to 'em straight, Cheryl, and if they get upset with the answer, then that's on them. Oh, and about that shirt...

Dear Darby,

I've been in the system for a minute. I enjoy corresponding with my family and friends in the free. Instead of just writing to them on plain white paper, I like to spice things up a little bit and I buy/use the "thinking of you" cards and also the "25 design stationery" that is sold in the commissary.

That being said; there is always a new variety of "thinking of you" cards every week in the commissary, but the 25 different designs that are on the 25 design stationery have never changed since I began buying it many years ago. Why is that?

Now, as long as you have been in prison, you ought to have some connections in this system to fix this problem. Maybe a friend at Hallmark? I think we should "care enough to send the very best!"

Sincerely,

**Tired at Estelle
Andrew**

Dear Drew,

What's wrong with you? Twenty-five different designs weren't enough for you? The design paper, like the "thinking of you" cards, was created by the lovely ladies over at the Hobby Unit Print Shop. That "25 design" stationery was discontinued a while back, but thanks to your letter, the Hobby designers reading this know their efforts are appreciated! According to our Commissary info source, the Hobby Print Shop rotates the artwork and card text from time to time, so maybe you'll soon see other stationery to your liking. While you wait, break out those colored pencils gathering dust in the back of your locker and create your own. With all the COVID-19 limited movement going on, you know you've got the time!

Each month, *The ECHO* features articles from contributing writers within TDCJ, as well as from those who have been released and want to send hope and insight back inside. This page features a variety of columnists. Enjoy!

Law of the Jungle

John Pippen — ECHO Staff

Here Forward

GREETINGS, MY friends. I want you to do something. I want you to think

about the end. It's not hard to do, we've all done it, we're just gonna do it a little differently this time. You are at your own funeral, so what do you want 'em to say? I'm talking about the ones who matter to you—mother, father, brothers, sisters, wife, children. There are others—bosses, co-workers, longtime friends. How will they define you? The real question is this: How do you *want* them to define you?

What character would you have liked them to see in you? How would you like them to view your achievements, your contributions? This isn't about what other people actually think about you. This is an exercise, a search for answers about *you*, and the answers are very revealing, as well as very personal.

Do you know what you just did? You touched very briefly on your deep, fundamental core values. These are *your* values, not someone else's. These values are not necessarily who you are, but who you aspire to be. These are the things that *you* value. The things *you* find most important. The question is: are you working toward them, or away from them?

The Jungle

Every "old school" has a good story to tell that illustrates life in some manner. So like all good "old school" story tellers—I stole one from someone else. What're ya' gonna' do? Put me in prison?

You're the leader of a group who is cutting its way through a thick jungle. You've got all your workers with their machetes going ninety-to-nothing, just whackin' away at the undergrowth. You also have a group of managers along with them, making up work schedules, payment programs—doing what managers do. All are working together, cutting their way full speed through the jungle. Then you—the leader—climbs to the top of a tall tree and looks around. You make

your assessment, then yell down to everyone below—"We're in the wrong jungle." What? It can't be. After all this work? They yell back, "There must be some mistake; don't stop us now; we're making all this progress—putting in the work!"

You see where I'm going with this? You can put a lot of effort into the wrong jungle. You're working hard; making progress...or so you think. As it turns out, you're not actually making progress at all, your workin' against yourself. Away from where you want to

Just because there's a lot of work going on, doesn't mean there's a lot of progress happening.

be. Just because there's a lot of work going on, doesn't mean there's a lot of progress happening.

Begin at the end

What do you want 'em to say? How do you want to be remembered? Keep in mind, this isn't about them, it's about *you*. *Your* true values are reflected in how you want others to see you. These are the things *you* find honorable.

Stop. Right now: just stop. Climb down from the tree. You have already made your assessment, and you know what has to be done. Forget all the work and useless effort you expended before; it was meaningless. It's time to cut the losses and change direction. Find the correct jungle.

Here forward—it all changes. I may not be absolutely positive which jungle I'm supposed to be in, but I know for sure which one I'm *not* supposed to be in—this one. This is where the conditioning begins. Before I even start cutting my way through the next jungle, I want to be strong. I want to be prepared. It starts here. We begin now—with the end in mind.

You may say to yourself, "I don't even know how to begin my conditioning! What exercises do I do? What do I read for more information?" None of that matters—yet. What matters is that we, you and I, have determined that we are in the wrong jungle and we are

getting out!

Sunrise in the jungle

It isn't easy starting over in a new jungle. It may seem foreign at first. Everyone's already moving, working, way ahead of us. Doesn't matter! We are in the right jungle now and we have been preparing for this moment. We're ready to get moving. Our jungle may have changed, but the law that governs all jungles remains the same: we get in where we fit in.

All this talk about jungles is making me hungry. It's gotta be chow-time by now. I leave you with the final jungle analogy of the day.

When the sun comes up in the jungle, the antelope knows he must run. He has to be able to outrun, outmaneuver the lion so that he lives another day. He runs for his life—survival in the jungle. In that same jungle, the sun rises and the lion knows that he also must run. He has to catch an antelope so that he can eat, live and survive.

So when you find *your* jungle, the correct one, and you are ready to get to work—remember—it doesn't matter if you are a lion or an antelope. When the sun comes up in the jungle—you best be running. ★

* The "stolen" story was paraphrased from the book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People," by Stephen Covey. And if anyone writes me and tells me there are actually no lions or antelopes in the jungle, I'll change the numbers on all the Sudokus and render them impossible...just sayin'.



Contentment in solitude

Deidre McDonald — ECHO Contributor, Released

AS I SIT ON MY FLOOR, CONTENT WITH BEING ALONE and in my own little world, I reflect back to a time in my life when alone meant lonely. Not only did I deal with the stigma of being a loner (which made me feel even more rejected and lonely), but I lived in a state of "sad passivity", spending much of my alone time sleeping, eating, and sometimes crying. I feared solitude—but why?

When I think about the woman who stays awake by herself all night after lights out or the one who sits outside on the rec yard all by herself staring into the razor wire, I wonder if the contentment with being alone was birthed of conditioning, or an automatic response? Then I observe others who never spend time alone. They stand at the end of their cubicles all day long either talking, gossiping, trying to impress, or just feigning social interaction. Are they afraid that being alone may make them lonely? Do they even know of the possibilities that a "creative solitude" can bring forth?

A positive reaction to loneliness includes overcoming it through reading, listening to or writing music, creative writing, coloring or card making, studying, or planning. People who choose to spend time creatively when alone are learning to

deal with solitude, and in the process, they begin to feel more calm and happy.

One must also be secure with themselves before contentment in solitude can be obtained. A main problem however, is that our socialization periods in youth and adolescence were primarily spent in the company of others. As a result, we came to depend on them for happiness. It isn't until we are forced into "solitary confinement" (i.e. locked up, displaced, or abandoned by a loved one) that our self-confidence is tested.

A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE

When I was sentenced to prison, I knew this meant a lot of alone time and I didn't want to constantly eat, sleep or cry, so I took my sentence as a challenge and opportunity to discover myself. I found out what I wanted to be, where I wanted to go, and what gives me pleasure. What I found after looking inside myself is that I'm a great writer and communicator and want to help others improve themselves.

When we look inward, the opportunity is there to understand ourselves better and also better understand those around us. I understand why a certain woman stays up all night making cards and writing. The proof of her contentment in solitude

lies in the inner self confidence of her creativity. Catching her smiling by herself at night when I pass by for a restroom break confirms it.

Being in touch with your inner self creates a true sense of identity and a feeling of security in knowing who you truly are. By knowing your true self, you can teach your outer self how to better interact with others. Mastering the art of being alone, however, does not mean turning into a misanthropic recluse. We must also have healthy, enriching, mutual experiences with others. It is the best counter weight to self-preoccupation. We often have to get that focus off ourselves by warding off loneliness through caring for others, for life, and for everything around us. Being altruistic can help one lose themselves in others. The process can block out depression, make one less aware of personal inadequacies, and help to surmount one's personal problems. Caring is an antidote to loneliness. When one maintains a pattern of caring, whether for fairness, justice, other people, or even the stray cats on the unit, it is a protection against despair and in the process, one lives a more healthy and happy existence whether alone or in the company of others.

In the past, I did everything in my power to avoid solitude by running the streets and hanging out in places I shouldn't have been. Over time I grew to where I couldn't wait to dip below the walls of my cubicle and allow creativity to flow by pulling out all my books, papers and pencils. I was ready for hanging out with me, myself and I—alone but not lonely! ★

Out of darkness

POWERLESS! IT IS ONE OF THE MOST LIBERATING AND frightening feelings when you finally accept that there are only four things you control: what you think, what you say, what you feel, and what you do. Letting go of everything else is when you finally begin to find peace and serenity. Ironically, letting go is one of the requirements to being a coffee bean.

On Monday, Aug. 24, my area of Southeast Texas prepared for the arrival of Hurricane Laura. After the devastation of Hurricane Harvey in 2017, most in this area evacuated for higher, more inland ground. In fact, TDCJ was among the most proactive, mass evacuating thousands of residents ahead of the fleeing masses of civilians. It was, without a doubt, one of the most helpless feelings (outside of being incarcerated) to leave my home and pretty much everything else behind, not knowing if it would be there when the week ended. Personally, I came to peace with it when I fled with my family and pets to the town of Bellville. Looking around, I saw that the most important things in my life were safe; the rest was just "stuff."

It was impossible to not reminisce on prison and doing time while I evacuated. I thought about all the lockdowns, when you have to pack every possession you own into a few commissary bags or bundle it all in a sheet, walk it down to the gym or rec yard and, finally, return to your cell.

I thought about the times of uncertainty going on in the world right now, and how difficult it must be for all of my brothers and sisters in white to deal with seeing America being torn apart by the coronavirus, racism and destructive politics, while being *powerless* to do

anything for their loved ones in the freeworld. Doing your time is difficult on the best of days.

On Thursday, Aug. 27, my family and I returned from our evacuation to Bellville with the loss of power as our only inconvenience. We were so incredibly grateful to be spared the destruction that our neighbors in Louisiana were waking up to that day because a slight turn of Hurricane Laura to the east at the last moment meant the difference between salvaging our home or running a portable AC on our generator.

The next day, Aug. 28, our power came back on about the same time I received a text from a friend, a retired warden who had been employed at the Stiles Unit when I served time there. Living in Southeast Texas, where I served my time, I frequently see correctional officers and TDCJ staff at places like the grocery store, the gym and local restaurants. Having been a coffee bean in prison, I have only had positive interactions with every TDCJ employee I have encountered outside of the walls.

The former warden and I became friends after he retired from prison. The former warden respected the way I live my life now as a coffee bean. In turn, I respected the way he treated inmates with humanity. Make no mistake, he was a firm warden on following the rules, but he was also very fair.

My former warden friend inquired how my family was doing and if our home had any damage. I responded how blessed we were and then asked how he and his family were doing. Unfortunately, he said where he lived still had no power and that it was going to be out for at least five more days. When I read that text, I knew exactly what I was going to do next.

Within an hour, I arrived at the former warden's



THE COFFEE BEAN
Damon West is a former TDCJ resident and best-selling author of "The Change Agent" and "The Coffee Bean." He shares a motivational column with *THE ECHO*.

house with a generator and portable AC. After his home again had lights and began cooling down, he and I both had to step back for a second and realize the gravity of the moment. Here was a former warden and a former inmate from the same unit, whose unlikely friendship had grown after prison. Now, the former inmate and friend were able to, literally, pull the former warden out of darkness after a natural disaster.

It goes to show you that none of us in society should be put into categories and labeled. We all have the ability to grow, overcome obstacles, prejudices, and stereotypes. All of us—officers and residents—have the power inside of us to show the world that anything is possible if we are just willing look past what the world would sometimes have us see—and view each other through the lens of grace, humility, empathy and compassion.

We all have the power to **be a coffee bean!**

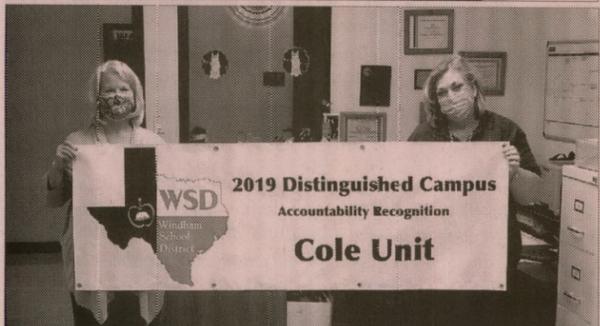
Please use my P.O. Box below to write me. The only rules with letters are *no legal requests, no favors and no harm*. Remember, I am on parole the rest of my life. As such, I follow *all* rules in society. What this means is do not send me something that puts you, someone else or me in any danger or threat of freedoms. What I'm saying is that you cannot expect confidentiality when you write me.

Damon West, P.O. Box 1451, Nederland, TX 77627

Be A Coffee Bean! ★

2019 Distinguished WSD Campuses

Superintendent Kristina Hartman, bottom right, and Director of Instruction Jon Lilly, top center, honor Windham School District's top campuses, highlighting achievement of faculty, staff and students.



WINDHAM SCHOOL DISTRICT

Schools in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice

September 28, 2020

To: Current and Future Windham Students

From: Superintendent Kristina J. Hartman, Ed.S.

I would like to take this opportunity to provide an update to our Windham School District (WSD) students regarding instruction during COVID-19 and a few initiatives that are planned for the new school year. In addition, you should know that I am so proud of both students and staff for the hard work and progress that each of you has committed to making this year!

Over the past two months, I have visited 10 WSD campuses within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. I have been pleased, that in accordance with public health guidelines, staff and students are wearing cotton masks that cover both the nose and mouth fully, maintaining social distancing and sanitizing hands and work areas. During my visits, I wear an N-95 mask and maintain the health protocols to minimize risk for all--we are all in this together!

I am appreciative of your patience as WSD implemented a hybrid small-group instruction and assessment model, along with remote study, at facilities that are not on restriction. During my campus visits, I have asked for, and received, important feedback from students on what WSD is doing well and ideas for enhancing services. Some of the best ideas that I receive are from students, and as I visit your campus, please take the opportunity to pose questions and make suggestions.

During the next year, WSD will be piloting several programs with the hope of future expansion. The first is a family literacy program for incarcerated parents to play active roles in the education of their children, to include remote participation in parent-teacher conferences. We recognize the positive impact that you can have by encouraging academic progress and future career readiness for your children. In addition, WSD will be piloting some exciting, secure technology - more details to come in a future ECHO!

Again, thank you to all WSD students for putting forth the effort to better yourself during these unique circumstances. I am proud of you and wish you success during the school year!

Sincerely,
Kristina J. Hartman,
Ed. S. Superintendent

P.O. Box 40•Huntsville, Texas 77342-0040•936 291-5300

► COMMISSARY

continued from page 1

The commissary warehouse (Boyd Distribution Center) had been expanded in Huntsville on the Byrd Unit in 1992 and we outgrew it quickly. We found some warehouse space in Snyder and opened that warehouse in 1996. The expansion of the prison system in the 1990s took its toll on our resources and we moved off the Byrd Unit to a larger warehouse in Huntsville in 1998. That space has kept pace with our shipping volume until a few years ago when we found some space in Beeville near the Garza units. It's taken some time to bring that project to the finish line, but it was completed in September and will begin operations in the coming months.

My first visit to a commissary from the inside and not the window as a customer was an eye-opener. I worked as a correctional officer at the Huntsville "Walls" Unit and depended on the commissary to get me through my shift if I couldn't get a break. The manager, who was not real nice to anyone at the window (and particularly mean to me a time or two), opened the back

door and told me I couldn't come in. When I told him that I was now an E&R auditor, he changed his tune. From that day forward, I tried to encourage the commissary employees to do their job and not be "that guy" at the window.

Coming from a free-world retail management job, I was expecting a fancy sales system for the commissary department. What I saw was a disappointment, to say the least. We went to a bar coded point-of-sale system in 1998 that really made a difference in inventory management for the stores and warehouses. The system in our warehouses uses bar codes and wireless scanners to track the inventory from the time it is received until it's loaded on a truck headed for a unit. Offenders working in the warehouse can acquire a great set of job skills; they are using state of the art inventory management equipment that could help them land a job when they get out of TDCJ.

Our purchasing went through a change in 1998 when the Education & Recreation department changed from a Local Fund to a part of the General Revenue Fund. This meant

all our purchasing processes had to follow what the state was doing for every other department. Prior to this, our purchasers would call three vendors for bids on a truckload of an item and the low bid won. We would call the low bidder, they would ship an order to us, and we paid the bills. Now we process all our orders through the Comptroller's office in Austin and get the best price through open market bidding. It's complicated, but it works.

The two-week commissary spends have gone through a lot of changes also. When I arrived in 1993, the spend had just increased to \$60 every two weeks from \$50. We have since increased the amount several times. Although we have been at \$95 for several years, we have increased purchasing power by making some items non-spend. I received several letters asking to make the OTC medications non-spend recently, and I thought, why not!

We have tried to keep a variety of new items in the product line over the past few years. We are still seeking healthier items that are lower in calories, sodium, fat, etc., and we hope to keep bringing new

items to the stores. Cooling shirts and towels were ideas from our staff that said, "Hey, I'll bet these would sell in the commissaries." We have received input from the inmate population for years with ideas that were really good. I appreciate all the I-60s and letters through the years that I received with new product ideas.

For the past 15 years, I have attended family group meetings across the state. I would load the trunk of the car with a typewriter, a pair of tennis shoes, a hot pot, a fan, and several snack samples from a local commissary to share with the group. To me, it was important to meet the family members and answer questions and let them know what we do in the commissary department. I have truly enjoyed working in this department and will miss the people and the business once I'm gone. ★

Editor's Note: Congratulations and best wishes to Eric Johnston on his retirement from TDCJ. His work with the agency and support for The ECHO is greatly appreciated. Thank you for sharing the "Commissary Line" updates!

CRIME STOPPERS

Unsolved homicide

Unidentified male



An unidentified male between the ages of 25 and 50 was found in Fort Bend County on Aug. 27, 2007. His estimated date of death was Aug. 23, 2007. The individual was a white male with brown hair and brown eyes, weighing approximately 150 pounds to 165 pounds, 5 feet to 5 feet 4 inches tall. The victim has a tattoo on his right bicep of the word "Rush" inside a circle. He has three orthopedic screws in the left knee, several dental fillings, and right-hand fingernails painted blue. The victim was located in a railroad car at a power plant in Fort Bend County, Texas. The train left Wyoming and made three stops in Colorado and two stops in Texas before making the final

stop in Fort Bend County. Please note that the picture is a facial sketch depicting what the victim may have looked like, and not an actual photograph of the victim.

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. ★

Have a criminal record?
Under community supervision - parole/probation?
Been released from prison or jail...
or about to be released?
Need assistance getting connected to the services and
resources that are right for YOU to help YOU move forward
toward a future of self-sufficiency that is crime free?
Transitioning back into the community isn't easy...
but, it is possible with the proper guidance and tools!

UNLOCKING DOORS CAN HELP!

Let Unlocking DOORS® navigate you through the many opportunities
that are available to you!

Contact us today or upon release to meet with your
personal Reentry Broker™ and begin your positive
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Dallas, Texas 75243
Website: www.unlockingdoors.org

Unlocking
DOORS®

Unlocking DOORS® is a nonprofit organization based in Dallas, Texas, where it serves individuals with criminal backgrounds.



Tony Johnson visits the Sign Shop laser engraving room.

► JOHNSON

continued from page 1

“When I first came to prison, my mindset was that I was going to die in here,” Johnson says. “I felt like there was no way that I could do that much time.”

As Johnson explains, the impetus for him to change his attitude came one day during mail call.

“When my grandfather died, my family sent me a copy of his obituary and everyone was saying so many wonderful things about him. It made me stop and think: If I died, what would people say about me? I didn’t like what I thought

they would say. I wanted to leave a legacy where the people who knew me could say, ‘Look at the transformation that has come over his life.’”

While motivation plays an important role in a person’s conversion, true and lasting change comes only through hard work. Although Johnson earned a certificate of completion in data processing while assigned to a different unit, it wasn’t until TECJ transferred him to the Wynne Unit that he became serious about pursuing his education.

What really opened the doors of opportunity for Johnson was the presence of various Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) on the unit. Johnson

worked in both the Tag Plant and the Wynne Unit Graphics Facility; however, it wasn’t until he went to work at the Sign and Plastics facility that he found a vocation about which he became passionate — laser engraving. Johnson went to work every day learning more about the capabilities of the equipment he used while developing his own burgeoning set of skills.

“I knew that this was something I could do on the outside because I had learned so much about using lasers right here in prison. I fell in love with it!”

Johnson credits his success on the outside to several important aspects of the job that he learned while in prison.

“The number one thing, obviously, is knowing how to operate the laser, but just as important is knowing how to troubleshoot the system if something goes wrong. Usually it is only a minor issue, but you still need to be able to correct it. The other thing is learning and being proficient in using the Corel program. I was amazed when I applied for the job that I now have. When I walked into their laser department, I saw that that they use the exact same set up I operated for 20 years in prison.”

Another important habit that Johnson believes every incarcerated individual should develop while in prison is caring

about the quality of their work.

“I took great pride in my work here [in TDCJ]. I made sure that the work that came from me was the very best that I could do. The same mentality I had in here, I have taken out there. This is where it’s got to start. That’s why I always tell the guys I talk to, whether it’s in a setting like this or when I come in and speak at a chapel service, you can’t wait until you get out to decide to do this. You have got to start right now because whatever you do here, you’re going to take it out there with you.”

As important as his success is to him, Johnson wants to share his story with other incarcerated individuals in an effort to help them become successful.

“When they told me that I made parole, I said to myself, ‘Okay, now I’m going to make another promise: I’m going to come back into the prison when I get out and I’m going to encourage other guys and let them see that it can be done.’”

Whether you call him a role model, mentor or an influencer, one thing that is clear about the man known on the Wynne Unit as “T.J.”: he cares about the men and women incarcerated within TDCJ.

Editor’s Note: A special thanks to TDCJ TCI and Communications for sharing information for this story. ★

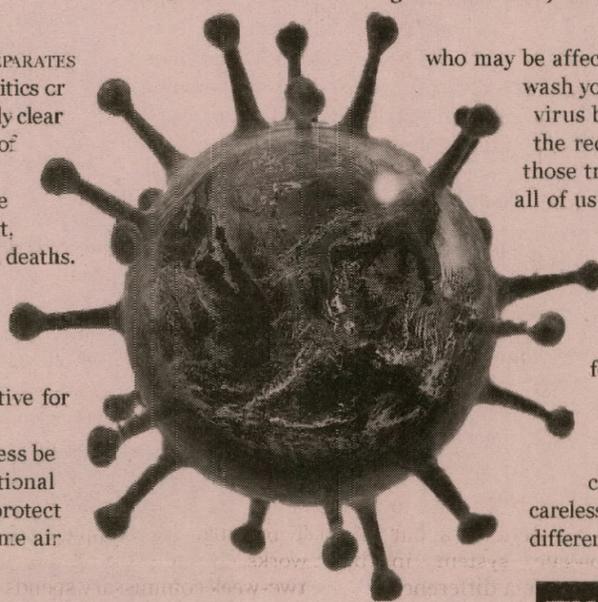
A resident’s reflection: A time for community

Lisa Jackson — Contributing Writer, Murray Unit

REGARDLESS OF WHAT WE FEEL SEPARATES us, be it age, gender, religion, politics or skin color, it has become extremely clear that COVID-19 is no respecter of persons.

Facilities caring for the elderly and those needing specialized care have been hard hit, resulting in large numbers of infection and deaths. Those between ages 25-40, falsely feeling confident they are impervious to the virus, are filling hospital beds in record numbers. Even infants age one and under have been discovered to have tested positive for the virus.

It is at this critical time that all selfishness be shed and we begin to think and act as a national community. Don’t just wear a mask to protect yourself; think of those breathing the same air



who may be affected should you be an asymptomatic carrier. Faithfully, wash your hands so that the public surfaces you touch are not a virus breeding ground. Whenever possible, distance yourself the recommended six feet apart from one another. Do it for those trying to survive to see their loved ones again. Do it for all of us who still have goals and dreams to fulfill. It is said it takes a village to raise a child. I say it takes a unified nation to beat a virus.

When was the last time any of us thought of our neighbor before ourselves? I’m convinced there is something inside all of us that could perform a kindness for a stranger. That takes a huge leap away from self and into the arms of the human race. Are we not the UNITED States of America? What better time for us to put aside petty differences and selfishness to band together for the common good than now? Let’s not lose another life out of carelessness or indifference. Instead, let us embrace the many different ways we are one community. ★

Have you ever wanted change?

Henry Molina — Wynne Unit

YOUR CURRENT LOCATION AT THIS VERY moment in time is only relevant when compared to your level of ambition.

If you are happy and content and have no desire to change, then you are fine.

If you are seeking something different, then pursuing new things is for you.

We all go through rough spots in our lives, but we can change. Our behavior, attitude, perceptions, can all change very simply. We make that choice to better ourselves, accept responsibility and do right.

Stuck in a rut:

Sometimes we do things because it’s all we know, or we have been doing it for so long that the repetition of it has become the accepted. Whether you are sitting on close custody, medium custody, segregation or general population — or the freeworld for that matter — the decision remains yours if you want to change. I want to encourage you to pursue “something different/positive.” You will encounter fulfillment, and you will grow in areas you thought did not exist within you. Inside you, you have what it takes. We all do.

Goal setting:

A good way to start is by setting goals. Actually write them down. Be specific. Here is an example:

- A six-month goal: lose 10 pounds by working out four times a week.
- One-year goal: finish a vocational course.
- Two-year goal: enroll in a college course, earn an on-the-job training certificate.

There is a poster that I saw in a Windham School District (WSD) classroom expressing elements that can help one to prioritize goal setting. It was the acronym: S.M.A.R.T., which means:

- S: Specific
- M: Measurable
- A: Attainable
- R: Realistic
- T: Timely

Education:

We know that the world is in a constant state of advancement. Technology, software, laws, supply and demand — these things are evolving all the time. So we must stay current with all these many changes. We can learn skills in here and develop a work ethic that can be exercised and refined, now

and upon release. In the world, almost every job requires a High School Equivalency (HSE). You can start there if you have not obtained one. I know a lot of people who possess awesome “hands-on skills”, so add the HSE and/or some college level instruction to that, and you, too, will be evolving in your knowledge and education. Windham School District, Lee College and other colleges offer premier education in academics, vocational trades and certification courses. I am writing this because I hear many residents ask the questions: What now? How do I prepare for the world?

It can be daunting to feel like you are up against a fast-paced, constantly evolving, high tech workforce. But by equipping yourself now with the right tools, you can be a force in your career of choice.

When:

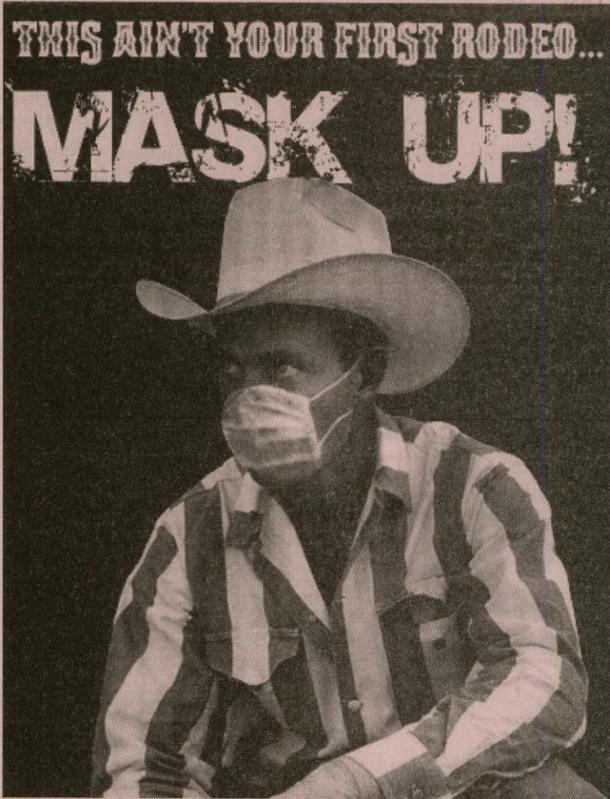
The best time is now. It is easy to put things off for tomorrow, or next week. If we are capable now, then we should apply it now. We do not have to wait to “get released” or for something else to pass. The only thing passing for sure is time — and maybe your opportunities.

A passage from Father Alfred D’Souza was quoted by Arianna Huffington in her book “Thrive,” which resonated deeply with me. I would like to share it here:

“For a long time it had seemed to me that life was about to begin real-life. But there was always some obstacle in the way. Some thing to be gotten through first, some unfinished business, time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.”

For those who have already begun the journey of positive change, it is commendable. It lifts me up when I witness fellow residents carrying school books, discussing math problems, and using the time we have to be constructive, productive, reaching for a goal and implementing the plan to achieve it. This is not to say that some are not making a difference in our current position, because some are. I, too, once sat and asked this question: “What can I do now to better prepare myself for today and the future?” I took action and never looked back.

Do not allow your life opportunities to pass you by. Embrace the fact that right now you can change, do better, and improve your present and future life. ★



STOP COVID-19

HOW ARE YOU FEELING?

FEVERISH?

COUGH?

SHORTNESS OF BREATH?

TELL YOUR SUPERVISOR

WASH YOUR HANDS!

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Cover all surfaces of your hands and rub them together until they feel dry.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

KEEP SURFACES CLEAN

- Clean AND disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily. This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE

6'

Put distance between yourself and other people

► **GAINES** continued from page 1

Additionally, to encourage both educational and religious groups to work in unison toward educational improvement in their communities, Gaines sponsored a bill that called for

This led to one of Gaines's greatest and yet little-known accomplishments: the creation of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, more popularly referred to as Texas A&M, under the Land-Grant College Act of 1862, also known as the Morrill Act.

exempting such organizations from taxation. Buildings and equipment used for charitable or literary associations were also to be exempted. This bill was successfully passed into law on June 12, 1871.

Through his prison reform campaign, Gaines was responsible for the passage of a bill authorizing his district to levy a special tax for construction of a new jail.

It was Gaines's feeling that if African-Americans were granted protection while exercising their Fifteenth Amendment-provisioned right to vote, they could make a difference at the polls. For that reason, Gaines waged an unrelenting Senate war for the passage of the Militia Bill, which created a state police force to combat lawlessness and to protect against voter intimidation. Bolstered by the Militia

Chairman O'Daniel reported that WSD will pilot a standard high school diploma program beginning in the fall of 2020 with a high school named in honor of Matthew Gaines.

Bill's successful passage in 1870, Gaines made a concerted, but ultimately fruitless effort to drum up support to elect an African-American Texan to the United States House of Representatives

Texas A&M begins:

At a recent meeting of the WSD Board of Trustees, Chairman Patrick O'Daniel said, "Senator Matthew Gaines passionately supported the forward movement that established the first public school system for all Texans." According to Texas A&M University's Division of Student Affairs, "The first African-American state senator from Washington County, Gaines was instrumental in the 12th Texas Legislature's passage of Senate Bill 276." This led to one of Gaines's greatest and yet little-known accomplishments: the creation of the *Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas*, more popularly referred to as **Texas A&M**, under the Land-Grant College Act of 1862, also known as the Morrill Act.

Another major issue Gaines tackled was tenant-farming reform. He was one of the few blacks serving in the legislature from 1870 to 1900 to voice an opinion in opposition to the Landlord and Tenant Act of 1872. As such, he proposed a law promoting farm tenancy, which,



Members of the first Gaines High School class meet at the Ferguson Unit in October.

had it passed, would have given the tenant the first lien on the crop. To encourage educational and religious groups to work toward educational improvement in their communities, Gaines sponsored a bill that called for exempting such organizations from taxation.

Despite having been elected to a six-year term to the Senate, Gaines served only four years because his seat was challenged when he was convicted on a false charge of bigamy in 1873, and he consequently relinquished his post. The charge was overturned on appeal, and he was reelected, but the Democratic white majority seated his opponent. Gaines nonetheless continued to be active in grassroots politics and made his political views known in conventions, public gatherings, and churches. Having exhibited consistent, unfaltering commitment to the plight of his fellow African-Americans throughout his career, Gaines died in Giddings, Texas, on June 11, 1900.

The high school:

What lives on, however, is Gaines's continuing impact on the quality of education in Texas. Chairman O'Daniel reported that WSD will pilot a standard high school diploma program beginning in the fall of 2020 with a high school named in honor of Matthew Gaines. This program establishes a method for eligible incarcerated students to earn a high school diploma and an industry-recognized certification in an environment that meets the needs of the learner.

"Because of his service to the Texas state legislature, support of civil rights, work in prison reform, and championing of education, the name Matthew Gaines is a powerful reminder of the result of perseverance and commitment — an expectation that will hold true to the students of Windham's aptly named high school program. Some say pride comes before a fall, but the Matthew Gaines High School seeks to reverse that saying: After a fall in a high school education, pride comes," O'Daniel said.

Chairman O'Daniel also said that the high school program will address the needs of eligible learners in adult correctional facilities and improve their quality of life by providing academic and career and technical education courses leading to a standard high school diploma.

The program will offer:

- Career exploration leading to postsecondary education and training opportunities or employment.
- Industry-recognized certifications, and Special Education and Title I services for eligible students.

Initial enrollment in the high school will consist of 40 male students age 26 and under, with priority given to students under the age of 22. A standard high school diploma program for incarcerated women is currently offered by WSD at the San Saba Unit through a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mullin Independent School District. Another for men at the Hughes Unit is offered by WSD in partnership with the Lometa Independent School District.

"WSD's program will allow for an accurate assessment of student success in a program that emphasizes career and technical education competencies in addition to core courses," O'Daniel said.

"Student enrollment in either the standard high school diploma program or the high school equivalency program will be a multidisciplinary team decision that will include the student and considers the number of credits needed to graduate with a standard diploma," O'Daniel said, the student's remaining time on sentence, age and custody level will also be considered. Priority will be placed on the options that will most likely result in completion and award of a diploma (standard or equivalency) and industry-recognized certification. This is done to prepare the students for immediate employment or postsecondary education enrollment following release from incarceration."

The Matthew Gaines High School is located at the Ferguson Unit near Huntsville in Midway, Texas. ★

Portable Wisdom

C. Ruth — Wynne Unit

"For some, it's about fancy cars, a big house, or a top notch education. Truth is, success is different for everyone; no matter what your success looks like, it will all take sacrifice, dedication and hard work."

Preparing for inclement weather:

Recognition of cold-related illness, injury

Editor's Note: The following information was provided by TDCJ Risk Management.

Frostbite

Not only can wind chill cause a rapid body heat loss, it also can cause frostbite, the freezing of body tissues. Frostbite can occur in 15 minutes or less at wind chill values of 18 below zero or lower. Offenders can be at an increased risk to frostbite because of factors such as exhaustion, hunger and dehydration, which further lower the body's defenses against cold.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a condition occurring when the body loses heat faster than the body can produce it. With the onset of this condition, blood vessels in the skin constrict (i.e., tighten) in an attempt to conserve vital internal body heat, thus affecting the hands and feet first. Hypothermia, the severe or prolonged loss of body heat, begins when a person's body temperature falls below 95 degrees. Because the temperature drop may be gradual, and an early symptom of hypothermia is mental confusion, the victim may not know a problem exists. If one's body continues to lose heat, involuntary shivers begin. This reaction is the body's way to produce more heat and is usually the first real warning sign of hypothermia. Further heat loss produces speech difficulty, forgetfulness, loss of manual dexterity, collapse and finally death. Some offenders can be at an increased risk to hypothermia if they have predisposing health conditions or take certain medications. Some of these conditions include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, poor physical condition, poor diet, and/or advanced age.

▼ Watch for the following symptoms of frostbite:

- ◆ cold, white and hard skin;
- ◆ pain;
- ◆ itching;
- ◆ loss of feeling in the affected area;
- ◆ spots or blotches on skin;
- ◆ swelling and blistering;
- ◆ skin becomes red and blotchy when warmed; and
- ◆ tissue loss, depending on the severity of the frostbite.

▼ Watch for the following symptoms of hypothermia:

- ◆ confusion;
- ◆ drowsiness;
- ◆ slurred speech;
- ◆ a drop in blood pressure;
- ◆ shallow breathing; and
- ◆ a pinkish tint to the skin.

Report all incidents of cold-related illness to a staff member immediately. ★

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 administrator, PREA Ombudsman or the Office of Inspector General. Offenders may remain anonymous upon request.

Acta de Eliminación de Violación en Prisión Ombudsman

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

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

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

Fat boy nachos

Angel Lopez
Holliday Unit

Ingredients:

- 2 bags nacho cheese chips
- ½ bottle jalapeno squeeze cheese
- 1 jalapeno, diced
- ½ bag rice
- 5 turkey bite pieces, sliced
- 1 ranch dressing
- 1 bag chili w/beans
- ¼ bag instant chili beans (substitution: refried beans)
- Garlic powder, to taste
- Onion powder, to taste
- Barbecue sauce (optional)

Directions:

Heat the chili pouch in a hotpot while preparing the other ingredients. Pour nacho chips in a bowl. In a separate bowl, pour in rice, turkey bites, jalapenos, garlic and onion powders. Add very hot water to rice—only enough to barely cover ingredients. This will make the rice thick. In another bowl, pour instant chili beans (or refried beans) and add just enough very hot water to cook—you want this thick, too. Add a good squirt of cheese to bean mixture when cooked. Pour rice over nacho chips, followed by the beans, chili pouch, cheese, ranch and barbecue sauce. Makes one fat boy serving!

Delicious pasta salad

Inzi Shifflett
Murray Unit

Ingredients:

- 2 pkgs. soups, any variety (save seasoning packets)
- 2 heaping green spoonful of sandwich spread
- ¼ bag pork skins, crushed
- 1 pack ranch dressing
- 1 green spoonful squeeze cheese
- 2 spoonful diced pickle
- 1 packet sweetener (optional)
- Salt and pepper (optional)
- 1 white bowl to mix in

Directions:

Start by heating up your hotpot full of water. While it's heating, dice your pickle with your spoon and also crush your pork skins. When water is hot pour over noodles, let sit until fully cooked. In a white bowl pour in cooled and drained noodles; add sandwich spread, cheese, seasoning, pork skins, sweetener, salt and pepper. After all mixed, serve it up and top with ranch. Enjoy!

Apple cinnamon rolls

Cariné Y. Flores
Planz Statz Jail

Ingredients:

- 1 bag cinnamon square cereal
- 1 pkg. vanilla cream cookies
- 2 pkgs. apple cinnamon oatmeal
- ½ cup of warm water
- 4 dry mixing bowls
- 2 pieces of white typing paper

Directions:

First, grab bag of cinnamon square cereal and pour about half the bag into a dry mixing bowl. Next crush cereal down to small grain crumbles and set aside. Repeat step with the entire pack of vanilla cream cookies after removing cream filling; set aside in separate bowl. Mix crumbled cinnamon cereal and vanilla cookies together in a bowl with the two packages of apple cinnamon oatmeal. At this point, you have the three dry ingredients mixed together in one bowl. Now remove eight spoonful of this dry mixture and place in a separate mixing bowl. Now carefully add



one spoonful of the warm water at a time to the mixture, kneading it as you go. Once you have added five to six spoonful of warm water, the dough should have the right consistency.

Now, spread out the typing paper, get a handful of the eight spoonfuls of dry mixture you set aside earlier, and sprinkle it all over the paper. This step keeps the dough from sticking to the paper, makes the dough easier to work with, and facilitates quick cleanup! Now get golf ball size chunks of dough and place them on the paper and press them into circular shapes. Repeat until all of the dough is used up. Next, get the vanilla cream cookie filling and add to the package of cream cheese and blend them together. Spread this icing all over the cinnamon rolls. Sprinkle leftover dry mix on top of cinnamon rolls. Serve and enjoy! Recipe should make six to eight good size cinnamon rolls.

Devon's chicken Alfredo

Tanga Lewis
Sgeamorz Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 pkg. chicken chunk (keep bag)
- 1 pkg. chicken soup seasoning
- 2 pkgs. cream cheese
- 1 pkg. ranch
- ½ bag of shells
- ½ cup creamer
- 1 spoonful garlic powder
- 1 spoonful onion powder

Directions:

1. Pour chicken in white bowl and smash the chunks.
2. Add chicken season, cream cheese, ranch, creamer, garlic and onion powder and mix.
3. Add 1/3 cup of water and mix. The desired consistency is that of a sauce. If it is too thick, add small amounts of water until the correct consistency is reached.
4. Pour all of the contents from the bowl into the empty chicken chunk package and place in hot pot for a minimum of one hour. The longer it cooks, the better the flavor.
5. Once the Alfredo sauce is ready, cook ½ a bag of shells.
6. Place cooked shells in two separate bowls with an equal amount in each bowl.
7. Pour ½ of the alfredo sauce over the shells in one bowl and then in the other—and enjoy!

Uncle Lance's awesome sauce

Janey Burress
Huntsville Unit

Ingredients:

- 1/3 bottle horseradish sauce
- 1/3 bottle strawberry preserves
- 2 jalapeno peppers, diced fine
- 1 ranch dressing
- 1 cream cheese
- 1 heaping spoonful mustard
- 1 heaping spoonful barbecue sauce

Directions:

Mix all ingredients in an empty jar. Goes well on just about anything!

SUDOKU

Easy 1

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

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Intermediate 1

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

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Challenging 1

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

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Tough 1

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

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Super Tough 1

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

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Insane 1

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

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Easy 2

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

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Intermediate 2

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

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Challenging 2

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

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Tough 2

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

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Super Tough 2

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

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Insane 2

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

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Working in prison

John Pippen — ECHO Staff

SEE THESE HELP WANTED ADS IN *THE ECHO*, AND I WOULD LIKE TO say a few words about working in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). We all have our own opinions on this subject, but I find that most fall into two camps: the “working for free/working for the Man” camp and the “this is how I do my time/ work satisfies me/ honing my skills for the world” camp.

Before I got this *ECHO* job, I worked in the Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) for nine years. I don't have a lot of space here, so let me give you my big take away — not all value is measured in dollars. I hope to talk more about this in issues to come, because work is an integral part of our lives here in prison. I know the coronavirus has had an impact on our working schedule, and things are far from back to normal. That's one of the reasons I thought it a good time to bring this up. As men we tend to let our work define us, not to go into whether that's good or bad. It's just fact.

There are some who might think we would be glad for a break — not have to go to work for awhile. From my view, that doesn't seem to be the case. A lot of the guys I talk to are tired of sitting around; they are ready to get back to work. I'm sure it differs from place to place and job to job.

I've lived on cellblocks and dorms where guys come in and discuss their jobs, and various details of things they had to contend with during the workday, just like someone



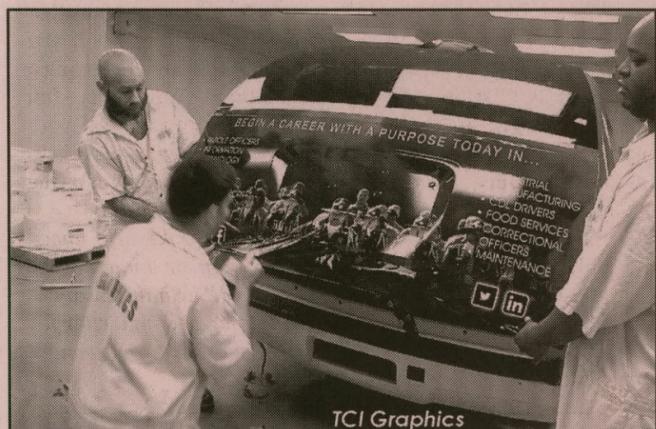
might do in the freeworld. It's what we do. I've seen them stay up at night drawing out solutions to problems they encountered the day before. Sometimes in groups or sometime alone, I have also observed the other side, where every attempt is made to avoid the job assignment. Not making a judgement either way, I'm just saying that in my experience I've noticed groups of guys who take their jobs quite seriously and look at them as a way to prepare for the future.

Not all value is measured in dollars.

If you are one of those, *The ECHO* would like to hear from you. Do you work in TCI? What about one of the support jobs such as kitchen, laundry, or maintenance? What's your job title and what do you do? What do you plan to do when you get out? Do you also see groups of guys who enjoy their jobs and get a little aggravated when they miss work? It's kind of the opposite of what a lot of folks might think, and I want to know if my experience is unique or if there are others out there. This prison is like a mid-sized city. I would like to know my fellow citizens' take on the subject. My work/life balance in prison has been for the most part a positive experience. My supervisors in TCI not only gave me the chance to learn — they made space for me to experiment and learn.

The job market in the freeworld is all about competition. Myself, I use this opportunity to stay in shape. Getting up at a certain time, scheduling around work hours — this is where we practice, my friends. This is where we get ready. This is part of the conditioning.

If you would like to comment on this subject send your letter to *THE ECHO* and at the top of your letter write **Working in Prison**. Your input is welcome. ★



Sudoku Solutions

Easy 1

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

Easy 2

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

Intermediate 1

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

Intermediate 2

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

Challenging 1

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

Challenging 2

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

Tough 1

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

Tough 2

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

Super Tough 1

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

Super Tough 2

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

Insane 1

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

Insane 2

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

HELP WANTED

Manufacturing Agribusiness Logistics

Agricultural Operations is seeking outside trusty workers for the following positions:

Farm equipment mechanic I and automobile mechanic:

Job Description:

- » Diagnoses, repairs and maintains all diesel and gasoline farm equipment, machinery and vehicles.

Skills/Qualifications needed to apply:

(Previous experience is preferred but not required)

- » Knowledge of repair of various engines, transmissions and their components.
- » Knowledge of general maintenance and small repairs (breaks, seals, cylinders, spark plugs, shocks, and filters, etc.).
- » Knowledge of diagnosing and repairing motor driven equipment for efficient operations.
- » Knowledge of tractors with ability to operate and repair tractor drawn implements.

Must be able to understand written and verbal instructions, have basic math skills (add, subtract, multiply and divide).

Applicants must meet minimum following requirements:

- » Must be classified as an Outside Trustee or G1.
- » No medical/work restrictions.
- » No major disciplinary within past year.

If interested, send an I-60 with all experience to: → **MAL HQ/OWTP**
Please, specify position and unit of interest.

UNITS WITH POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Buffalo Ranch	Ellis	Scott
Clemens	Ferguson	Ramsey
Coffield	Hilltop	Telford
Darrington	Luther	Wynne
Eastham	Pack	

General farm /livestock worker

Job Description:

- » General daily farm operations, cares for livestock/poultry, horse riding, and fence building.

Skills/Qualifications needed to apply:

(Previous experience is preferred but not required)

- » Knowledge of daily farm operations.
- » Knowledge of working and tending livestock and/or poultry.
- » Knowledge of planting and/ or harvesting crops.
- » Knowledge of fence building.
- » Knowledge of trucks and tractors with ability to operate tractor drawn implements.

Must be able to understand written and verbal instructions, have basic math skills (add, subtract, multiply and divide).

Applicants must meet minimum following requirements:

- » Must be classified as an Outside Trustee or G1.
- » No medical/work restrictions.
- » No major disciplinary within past year.

If interested, send an I-60 with all experience to: → **MAL HQ/OWTP**
Please, specify position and unit of interest.

UNITS WITH POSITIONS AVAILABLE

Buffalo Ranch	Eastham	Pack
Clemens	Ellis	Telford
Coffield	Ferguson	Wynne
Darrington	Hilltop	

PUZZLE ANSWERS

6	2	3	1	4	5
5	6	2	4	1	3
3	5	4	6	2	1
4	3	1	2	5	6
2	1	5	3	6	4
1	4	6	5	3	2

6	7	1	4	0	2	0	0	1	4	6	9	3			
3	5	0	5	7	8	5	1	8	7	6	5	4			
7	8	4	9	9	1	3	6	9	8	4	3	1			
7	0	4	0	4	7	9	0	3	9	0	5	5			
6	4	1	1	5	1	4	1	1	1						
					2	4	5		6	9	0	4	8		
4	3	1	4	2	3	2	4	1	1		2	8			
5	4	7		4	9	7	6	8	6	3	9	3	3		
6	3	2		9	3	7	4	3	2	0	7	4	8		
2	8	8	3	7				3	0	6					
					9	0	1	3		5	8	0	1	4	2
2	8	4	6		3	9	2	7	7		7	3	2	0	
5	3	8	7		5	4	2	4		8	9	6	2	3	
3	8	7	5		2	7	7	2	2	2	2	6	9		
0	2	1	8		4	2	6	3		4	4	3	0	6	

Z	O	Q
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► SHAKESPEARE

continued from page 1

Act I:

A fractured world

The real story of a person's life begins before they are born. It is our family, environment and current events that shape our values, perspectives and folklore. Within an English society rife with religious conflict and class warfare, the story of William Shakespeare begins.

When Henry VIII divorced Catherine of Aragon and severed ties with Catholic Rome, he implemented a Protestant Reformation that shook the foundations of English society. After Henry's death, his three children — Edward VI; Mary ("Bloody Mary"); and Elizabeth — would successively inherit the throne, unleashing a fury of destructive forces upon English citizens. Civil war would pit Catholic against Protestant, kin against kin, town against town and would rage on for decades. Many terrible things were done in the name of God on all sides.

Shakespeare was born into this fractured world on Apr. 26, 1564, to John Shakespeare, a prosperous municipal officer and glove-maker of Stratford-on-Avon, and Mary Arden, who descended from an ancient aristocratic family of considerable social standing in Warwickshire County. The playwright's siblings soon arrived: Gilbert, Joan, Richard, Edmund and Anne. Medieval towns and counties were populated with families deeply rooted in Catholicism. Queen Elizabeth's Protestant reign brought persecution to these last bastions of the Old Religion, and it was only a matter of time before this machine of terror touched the Shakespeare and Arden families.

The playwright's uncle, two aunts and four cousins met their end with an executioner's axe. Public disdain and a steep financial decline would tarnish these families for years to come. Shakespeare's father accumulated debts and was sued by his creditors, forcing him into financial ruin. Land and other properties held by the family had to be sold for their continual subsistence.

Further currents of intrigue would ensnare the playwright's family in later years. The Gunpowder Plot, which took place on Nov. 5, 1605, was a plan to blow up Parliament. The plot was thwarted and the culprits were found to be family and friends of the Shakespeare's and Arden's. Fresh recriminations were brought against them as a result. Robert Catesby, the mastermind and moneyman, was Shakespeare's cousin. But it was Guy Fawkes, a notorious Jesuit mercenary, who was caught, literally red-handed, with a burning fuse held in his palm. In England, every Nov. 5 is celebrated as Bonfire Day, where effigies of Guy Fawkes are burnt with great fanfare and enthusiasm.

Gradually, however, the Shakespeare and Arden families set aside their Catholic past, and strode into the brave new Protestant future. With a foot in both worlds, Shakespeare the playwright would become a bridge between the old and new, and the dramatic revolutions in faith and ideology would provide raw material for his imagination. The theme of religious conflict runs through many of Shakespeare's works.

ACT II:

Coping with plague times

Just months after Shakespeare was born, bubonic plague afflicted the denizens of Stratford and the nearby countryside, killing people with impunity.

"The stench of the dead was inescapable. Bodies littered the streets or were piled high in back alleys. Dogs and vultures devoured the awful remains. Church bells rang, but there was no one left to hear the sermon," wrote a 16th century vicar of the Holy Trinity Church in Stratford, where Shakespeare and many generations of his ancestors were baptized.

Fortunately, the plague spared the life of the infant Shakespeare and his family. They moved from village to village, finding sanctuary in the countryside and observing measures to separate themselves from social situations. Plague appeared with no warning, spreading rapidly from family to family, and famine soon followed because there was no one to work the fields.

"With the help of strict quarantines and weather changes, the plague epidemic would slowly wane, and life would resume its normal course," Greenblatt writes.

Yet after an interval of a few years, the plague would return. Bubonic plague was a constant backdrop feature for Shakespeare. Throughout his life, other particularly severe outbreaks of plague occurred in 1569, 1574-76, 1580-82, 1592, 1594-95, 1597, 1603-04, 1606, 1608-10 and 1612-13.

A spirit of acquiescence engulfed the people of England, and the plague became just another inevitable feature of ordinary life.

"Extreme suffering from the plague at this time had become so familiar that it was banal," Greenblatt says.

Undaunted, the Shakespeare family developed coping strategies amidst plague-times that would enable them to endure agonizing fears and hardships. Later, epidemic disease would figure prominently in Shakespeare's plays, surfacing in poignant soliloquies and vivid metaphorical expressions of rage, disgust and, unfortunately, submissiveness to the foul plague.

ACT III:

Street theatre education

Young Shakespeare received a solid education at various country grammar schools. Students studied the Bible and Latin: the core of a Tudor education. Instruction started at dawn and the regimen was strict, involving intense memorization and followed by a heavy-handed birching to propound the lesson. Debate and rhetoric were employed to improve a student's Latin. Here is where Shakespeare was first introduced to ancient writers such as Cicero, Ovid, Plautus, Seneca, Terrence and Virgil. These classical titans would have a significant impact in his artistic vision and imagination. Constructive habits of mind were formed, too, that became valuable tools for an aspiring actor. Familial devotion, civic-mindedness and good manners were also drummed into pupils.

Book-owning families in Stratford were still a rarity in those days, and the wide countryside was primarily an oral culture. Telling stories was the key; hearing them was the first stage in a child's instruction. Therefore, the street theatre was a common experience for a child in Tudor England, and here is where we find the origins of Shakespeare's dramatic upbringing.

Acting and orating were at the heart of English culture, and each year the streets of Stratford hosted many pageants and folk plays. The great plays of the day were held up as models of courage, constancy and virtue. Christian folk drama in particular would have a tremendous dramatic and spiritual influence on the future playwright. The enactment of New Testament tales taught Shakespeare about the deepest human feelings: love, passion, betrayal, terror and pathos.

As a playwright, Shakespeare would mingle these elements with legends from Spain, France, the Near East, Italy and the ancient world. He would develop the innovative brilliance for renewal and embellishment, for making twice-told tales seem original. Shakespeare's penchant for observing the world near and far, and seeking to explain it through art and drama, guided him to the heights of renown.

ACT IV:

Marriage & family

Shakespeare's first step into adulthood was to marry Anne Hathaway, a young woman from Stratford with a flair for Latin and the occasional lyric poem. Shakespeare was 18 years old; Anne was 24. They wed at a quiet little country chapel, with family and friends in attendance. Three children were soon to follow this starry union: Susanna (b.1583); and twins Hamnet and Judith (b.1585).

He provided for his family by working in his father's glove-making shop in Stratford. With his well-rounded command of Latin, he became a clerk at a law office. At the age of 20, Shakespeare was the family's main breadwinner, and his ambitions and responsibilities were simple: he would work hard to restore family fortunes. In the years to come, he would purchase land and properties in Stratford and become a shareholder in theatre companies. Prudent investments later in life and his good reputation would enable him to leave his heirs a solid estate.

Tudor marriages were based on partnership, but many of Shakespeare's poems and sonnets reveal there was real affection between husband and wife. Though in time they did live apart, Anne was forever the rock on which he relied all his life. She took care of not only their children, but all of their business affairs. Nevertheless, the pastoral family life was not for young Shakespeare. Sometime in the year 1586, he took to the road to London to pursue his dreams of being an actor, poet and playwright — and he never looked back.

Act V:

Fame & glory

London was considered the raucous mecca for theatre artists, comedians, musicians and adventurous playwrights and audiences. Fueled by vice and crime, the theatre buzzed with bigotry, racism and royalist chauvinism — but it was also exploding with artistic genius and elevated ideas. In this wild environment Shakespeare began his self-education. He lived at times from hand to mouth, working menial jobs with various theatre companies. He started out by guarding horses for wealthy patrons to holding dialogue scripts for actors on the stage.

He voraciously devoured the works of all the important Elizabethan dramatists and rhetoricians that he could find: Thomas

Wilson, Arthur Brooke, George Peele, Thomas Nashe and Edmund Spenser.

Yet it was the stormy intellect and electrifying personality of Christopher Marlowe that would set fire to Shakespeare's imagination. His dramatic plays, filled with vivid metaphors and brilliant imagery, were Shakespeare's first great inspiration. Marlowe was considered a fabulous trendsetter who had mass appeal. Unfortunately, his audacity, narcissism and sensitive subject matter caught up with him: he was murdered by a gang of degenerate actors and theatre men in 1593.

While the dazzling stars of Elizabethan theatre were focused on recycling old myths, Shakespeare opted for an alternate route: highlighting the virtues and vices of the human condition and exploring the nature of tragedy. Shakespeare seized the popular stories of the day and sought to explore the human condition through dramatic interpretation.

Soon, his plays were the showstoppers across London. Theatre company owners were vying to sponsor him. Rival playwrights began to emulate his style. He joined numerous theatre companies (Berkeley's Men, Strange's Men, Queen's Men and King's Men) and played at memorable venues (Red Lion, Cross Keys, the Globe and Blackfriars). Most theatres were half-timbered, three-story lath and plaster buildings, with tiled roofs and two external staircases, although some were courtyard theatres patterned on the open-space and tiered amphitheatres of ancient times.

By dedicating his plays to everyday truths, Shakespeare was able to draw attention to underlying tragedies that rose between characters and circumstances, ultimately bringing them together in a dramatic collision with catastrophic results. He was unsparing and fearless in his writing. Things alien enchanted Shakespeare. His plays abound with references to distant lands, foreign commodities, strange artifacts and exotic cultures. He employed elevated literary devices and classic trappings — such as chorus and verse dialogue — that helped to illuminate the protagonists struggle with persistent human problems. All of these threads would run through his work until the end.

ACT VI:

The new normal

Plague always returned to Tudor London with a renewed ferocity.

"It was recognized early on that the rate of infection was far higher in the densely populated cities than in the country," relays Greenblatt.

Civic officials in London and across England took measures to institute what we currently call "social distancing." Data from parish registers was collected to monitor the weekly plague-related deaths and to follow any thread of contamination, in a tactic akin to what we now term "contact tracing."

However, many preventative measures adopted by the public were mostly useless (e.g. burning old shoes and inhaling the fumes) or ludicrous (e.g. killing of dogs and cats in London that were suspected of being carriers; they were actually the enemies of the true carriers of the plague: rats).

"In the streets, people walked about sniffing oranges stuffed with cloves, which was thought to help clear the air of infection. Pressed firmly against the nose, perhaps this functioned as a kind of mask," writes Greenblatt in his article.

As plague fatalities mounted, large gatherings were banned due to fear of contamination. This included assemblies, feasts, archery and jousting contests, and, alas, theatres. According to Greenblatt, Shakespeare had to grapple with these repeated closures throughout his career.

"Public theatres in London — which brought together two or three thousand people in an enclosed space — were routinely ordered shut by authorities. It would take many months before the theatres were allowed to reopen."

Despite these setbacks, Shakespeare learned how to transform quarantine lethargy into a prolific articulation of creative energy. It was during quarantine when Shakespeare wrote and produced some of his greatest plays, such as "Comedy of Errors", "Richard III", "Titus Andronicus", "Romeo and Juliet", "A Midsummer Night's Dream", "King John", "Macbeth" and "Antony and Cleopatra."

ACT VII:

A dramatic exit

Tragedy shadowed Shakespeare like the hounds of Fate from ancient mythology. First, in the summer of 1596, he lost his primary benefactor and friend, Lord Hundson. London authorities threatened to close the theatre. Then a series of calamities struck as he lost family to the plague: first his father, then his mother and two siblings, and the heaviest blow of all — his young son, Hamnet.

Pain and grief enveloped him, and he discovered an inward universe of creativity: many of his great tragedies were written during this mournful phase,

for example "Hamlet", "King Lear", "Henry VIII", "Pericles", "The Winter's Tale" and "The Tempest." Shakespeare expertly plumbed this well of darkness, transferring his inner turmoil through his quill onto the pages before him.

Shakespeare's influence on the literary culture of the modern world cannot be refuted. His works have helped shape the literature of all English-speaking countries. He drew on many traditions to animate his world. His plays, poems and sonnets represent a living continuance of the past that is still meaningful to this day.

Shakespeare left the stage of life with one final dramatic exit: he died on his birthday, Apr. 26, 1616. He was 52 years old.

Like the characters in Shakespeare's plays, we find ourselves walking into an unknown future; however, instead of being mere actors on the stage, we can strive to write the script, participate in the theatre of change and direct our lives to a more meaningful purpose. By harnessing the strength and wisdom of the moment, and learning to adapt and persevere amid these troubling times, we can ensure that this "new normal" will become a "better normal." ★

Sources:

- "What Shakespeare Actually Wrote about the Plague," by Stephen Greenblatt; *The New York Times* (May 7, 2020).
- "Shakespeare," by Michael Wood; 2017.



Plague Facts:

- The earliest known description of the plague is a Biblical reference to the Philistine city of Ashdod, c. 1000 B.C.
- Thucydides, the fifth century B.C. Greek historian, documented plague outbreaks in his masterful "Chronicle of the Peloponnesian War."
- The sixth century A.D. Byzantine historian Procopius wrote that Constantinople (now Istanbul) was laid low by the plague, killing as many as half of the population.
- Historians have called the plague outbreak that swept across Asia and Europe (1300-1400 A.D.) the first worldwide pandemic, which killed 30 million people in its destructive path.
- The human disease of plague is acquired through the bite of a flea, specifically *Xenopsylla cheopis* (X. cheopsis, for short). This flea typically infects rodents who become the vectors or transmitting agents of the disease.
- X. cheopsis, however, can infect more than 200 species of wild rodent, such as prairie dogs, meadow voles, ground squirrels and jack rabbits.
- The common Old World house rat, known as *Rattus rattus*, that is the most significant transmitter of plague throughout history.
- Humans become involved in this rodent-flea cycle by either hunting animals that have become infected by the fleas, or by the spread of rodent infections in close proximity to dense sprawling urban areas.
- The bubonic form infects the bloodstream, causing the telltale swellings of the lymph nodes at the groin and armpit, called buboes, from the Greek word *boubón* for "groin." Internal hemorrhages soon follow while the more lethal and communicable pneumonic form enters the respiratory system. High fever, rapid pulse, headache, body aches and weakness develop unrelentingly. Death, often in great agony, inevitably follows. Seldom did anyone afflicted survive more than five days.
- Physicians during Shakespeare's time wore specially augmented masks that could hold large amounts of oxygen and myriad dried herbs thought to purify the air. Made of fruit-wood or cork, the masks were shaped like a birds beak, with glass-covered slits for eyes and a subtle groove for a mouth carved in a permanent grin. The overall appearance was rather frightening to behold. Generally, if a patient saw a plague doctor in full macabre regalia, death was near.
- Today, plague occurs occasionally throughout the world, with up to 2,000 cases reported annually. The bacterium mainly flourishes in rural areas, including the United States, central and southern Asia, Africa, South America, and nations bordering the Caspian Sea.

Sources:

- "Viruses, Plagues and History," by Michael B. A. Oldstone; 2018

Making A DENT

Jim Dent, Contributing Writer
— Polunsky Unit

Sportswriter and author Jim Dent's comments represent his own opinions and not those of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice or The ECHO.

WHAT HAPPENS when the vaccine arrives and COVID-19 becomes part of our unhappy past? Will the world of big-time sports return to its former arrogant self? Will fans be hesitant to spend that kind of money from bank accounts where the

What comes after the vaccine?

commas and the period have been moved to the left?

Money is not as disposable in America as it used to be with millions applying for unemployment month after month, even the affordable seats might go empty. Even the fat cats with Fortune 500 companies' have watched wealth go through the floor. With the Dow rising through the lean months, most didn't go broke. But can they continue to make payments on luxury suites at the local stadium and meet lease arrangements on new Jaguars?

I know the fans in Tampa Bay are anxious to see Tom Brady in Buccaneer orange, but can they afford \$75 stadium parking (the going rate now) or that \$8 beer that would cover the

price of three whoppers and a large Coke at Burger King? The financial bubble of sports might be ready to burst. Major League Baseball as we know it might not survive.

The National Football League (NFL) is not invincible, and it is certain to take a few hits. Professional football is such a huge part of America's psyche that fans will not go away. They would rather give up that brand new car or truck every two years.

Will fans care that the performances of National Basketball Association (NBA) players were a little stale during bubble basketball? I doubt it. How could anyone get fired up to an empty arena?

I predict that the remainder of 2020 and '21 will be challenging years for all sports — college and pro. The same can be said for the movie industry. Where will the entertainment dollars go?

Will America's eyes stay glued to Prescott and Mahomes and LeBron and Leonard? If all goes well and the vaccination works, the answer is yes. It might take time, but the country that invented Mickey Mantle and Michael Jordan is not about to turn its back on its greatest passion. Prices, no doubt, need to come down. The common fan will surely need some TLC, so maybe the Cowboys or the Lakers can roll out the \$3 beer or bring back the dime — more like the dollar — beer night.

Those exorbitant parking

prices will have to go. If the fans go away, the first to suffer will be the players. You can be sure that the free agent market will collapse in baseball first.

It wouldn't hurt for the players to be a little more fan friendly. This attitude is working for the NBA and the NFL.

I suggest that the players create funds to help attract lower income fans to the stadiums. Buy them tickets and make some friends. As sports sociologist Harry Edwards said 40 years ago, "Sports is the opiate of the masses."

Now we have the perfect opportunity for sports owners and the wealthy athletes to give back. Talk about building a strong America. ★

Sports View

SW

Will Hill

ECHO Staff

The opinions expressed in this column are those of sportswriter and fan Will Hill and do not represent official viewpoints of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice or The ECHO.

THE OCTOBER ISSUE OF *The ECHO* marks a slight divergence from the usual format for the Sports View column. Instead of taking a micro look at only one aspect of the world of sports, it's time for a macro view of relevant happenings in the sports we love. Part of the reasoning for this alteration is due to the daily, heck sometimes-hourly, changes that are occurring during these unique times in which we live. Another part of the rationale is to help keep sports fans in TDCJ up to date on new developments. Here goes:

Major League Baseball (MLB)

Let's start with the two changes that are Sports View approved, beginning with the addition of the Designated Hitter (DH) in the National League (NL). Finally! Someone came to the realization that no one wants to see pitchers batting — most of all the pitchers. Don't even think about giving me that rigamarole about the DH ruining the integrity of the game. Please! Want to talk about the integrity of the game? It's ruined every time an NL pitcher steps up to the plate and watches three fastballs zip across the middle of the plate without even taking the bat off his shoulders.

Kudos also goes out to whoever changed the rule that managers can no longer make pitching changes after every batter. The games were becoming an endless parade of relief pitchers, but that is no longer happening. When a pitcher now enters a game, he has to face a minimum of three batters, except for in the case of injury or the end of the inning.

Now consider the changes that do not garner the Sports View seal of approval, such as extra innings beginning with a runner on second base. For the love of Babe

Changes abound in sports, life

Ruth, why? This rule does nothing but lead to the creation of yet another useless statistic that I have to keep track of (and yes, I'm one of those stat geeks) — the leadoff, walk off, two-run home run. Think I'm kidding? I've heard it used already, and yes, my head did almost explode.

However, the most asinine change is the switch to seven-inning doubleheader games. Excuse me, but is this the Major Leagues or the Little Leagues? Even as I wrote the previous sentence, I could feel the late great Ernie Banks, Mr. "Let's Play Two!" himself, rolling over in his grave.

National Basketball Association (NBA)

Consider this: a baby born in 1995, the year the Rockets won the second of back-to-back titles, would today be 25 years old. In the aftermath of yet another disappointing playoff loss, the Houston Rockets and their fans need to ask three questions: Is Coach Mark D'Antoni's offensive system capable of winning

All-Star should trade in his cowl and Batmobile if he wants to win a championship. He couldn't get it done in Oklahoma City with a stacked roster that included Kevin Durant, and he hasn't delivered in Houston. Like Taylor Swift and all of her relationship issues, maybe Harden needs to look in the mirror and finally acknowledge: maybe it's me.

Football (College)

College football is more than the games, electrifying touchdown passes, and devastating tackles — and even more than wins and losses. It's the cries of "Hook 'em Horns" in Austin, "War Eagle" in Auburn and even "Boomer Sooner" from that school north of the Red River. It's the precision of the Grambling State marching band, the frenzied cadets who stand for the entire game in the student section at Kyle field in College Station, Texas, and stadiums filled to capacity with loyal fans all flying their favorite teams' colors.

College football is the Red

At least, that's what college football used to be before everything changed in 2020. Now its coaches, namely Scott Frost of Nebraska and James Franklin of Penn State, acting like temperamental two-year-olds and threatening to take their football and go play elsewhere, instead of being the adults in the room. It is three of the Power Five conferences, Atlantic Coast, Big 12 and Southeastern examining the same medical information as the leagues that postponed their seasons and deciding that it is safe for them to play football this fall. God help them if they are wrong.

I confess, I don't know whether there are long-term dangers to COVID-19, but neither does Lincoln Riley, the head football coach at the University of Oklahoma, or as I call it Zero U. Riley recently said that his program would treat cases of the coronavirus as "any other injury." What? The virus that's caused a worldwide pandemic is going to be treated like an ankle sprain or a skin rash? Speaking as someone who

I am not the one having to make that call.

Game of Life

Sadly, no matter how much things change, some things always stay the same. One such constant in life is that people die. In just the past few weeks, the world of sports has said goodbye to several legendary sports figures, including Lute Olson, John Thompson Jr. from the world of college basketball, and Tom Seaver, the original Tom Terrific, from baseball.

A good coach makes a good player better; a great coach makes a good player who is also a good person. When no basketball program was willing to offer Allen Iverson a scholarship due to off court issues despite his prodigious talent, Thompson did. When Iverson was inducted into the James Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame, he thanked Thompson by name, not for the chance to play college basketball or for making him a better player, but for, as he said in his acceptance speech, "saving my life."

I am glad that the sports loved by so many of us are back, despite a myriad of changes. Sports have always had the ability to unite people, and that is something that our nation desperately needs right now. The locker room is an amalgamation of people from every background, race and creed, all working together for a common goal. I wish that everyone could experience what it feels like to be a part of a special group like that, at least once in his or her life.

Here are my questions to you, the reader: What would our woefully divided and fractured country be like if every person exhibited the same mindset as the members of a sports team committed to a common goal, and even more importantly, what action can you do to foster that attitude in yourself? ★

Author's Note: Since the writing of this article, the Big 10 conference has decided to resume its football season on the weekend of Oct. 24, and Mark D'Antoni, former head coach of the Rockets, has decided to seek a championship elsewhere.



a championship? His lengthy history of playoff losses, not just during his time in Houston, says no. Maybe it's time for Houston owner Tillman Fertitta to look elsewhere. Can anyone say Sam Cassel? Is Rockets' General Manager Daryl Morey capable of building a championship roster? Again, history says no. Despite making the splashy offseason deals that generate headlines, his wheeling and dealing has done nothing to move the team closer to competing for a championship. Finally, is James Harden the right person to be the Rocket's Alpha male? The history of his career says that James is better suited to playing the role of Robin to another player's Batman. There is no shame to being a second fiddle — just ask Scottie Pippen, who made it into the James Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame by playing Michael Jordan's sidekick. It may be painful to his ego, but the perennial

River Rivalry played during the State Fair of Texas, Bedlam in Oklahoma and the spectacle of patriotic pride that is the Army-Navy game in Philadelphia. It's the Tyler Rose and Roger the Dodger cementing their status as gridiron greats and an undersized runt named Rudy persevering through four years at Notre Dame University before playing his first snap in the final minutes of the final game of his college career.

College football is Bevo, the University of Texas Longhorns mascot scaring the stuffing, so to speak, out of Uga, the bulldog mascot of the University of Georgia, prior to the Sugar Bowl a few years ago. It's Ralphie, the Buffalo, dragging his Colorado handlers all over the field before a home game. It's the Army cadets from the United States Military Academy stealing Billy the Goat, the Naval Academy's mascot, on the eve of their annual game.

has made a career out of making bad decisions, the gamble these schools are taking with these athletes' lives seems reckless at best, if not downright negligent. If the decision to play this fall results in long-term health issues or, heaven forbid, the life of a player, it seems to be an extremely high price to pay just to play a kids game for a few hours on Saturdays.

Except — everyone knows that college football is much more than a kid's game — it is a business — and a very lucrative one at that. The revenue generated by the football program pays for many of the general academic scholarships and even the salaries of professors and administrators. In addition to benefiting the university's bottom line, the economy of many of these college towns rely on the increased income generated on game days to survive. I admit it's a tricky situation with no easy answers, and I'm glad that