

# The ECHO

## Texas Prison News

Published Since 1928

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Distributed Free to Texas Prisoners

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See  
‘Crossing  
paths  
with  
Billy  
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Kid’  
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## Windham School District gives inmates a shot at academic success

By Cody Stark

Published in *The Huntsville Item*,

March 8, 2014

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HUNTSVILLE-When inmates enter the Texas Department of Criminal Justice system, they often have a history of academic failure and low self-esteem and function at a sixth-grade learning level.

Windham School District offers offenders the opportunity to turn things around and develop skills to help themselves once they are released from prison.

Last weekend, a graduation ceremony was held for 26 inmates who earned their General Educational Development, or GED, diplomas while serving their sentences in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice’s Estelle, Ellis and Eastham units in Walker County.

Barbara Cargill, chair of the State Board of Education, was the guest speaker at the Estelle Unit last weekend. The offenders’ families were invited to the graduation ceremony.

“We have a lot of very proud parents and grandparents who attend the graduation because for a lot of these fellows, this is the first time they have ever accomplished anything,” said F. Spiller, who has been the Windham principal at the Estelle Unit since September.

“With them being in prison, there is a negative light cast on them and this is something positive that not only can they brag about, but their families can as well.”

When inmates enter TDCJ they are tested to determine their academic level. They are placed in Windham programs based on an Individualized Treatment Plan,

which outlines educational services for the offender based on age, program availability, projected release date and need for academic, vocational and life skills programs.

“We have a lot of offenders who come into the system who are almost illiterate — emergent readers — and we put them through a series of literacy classes,” Spiller said. “Our literacy classes are leveled out based on their academic abilities and they work their way through those classes until they obtain their GED.”

Inmates are taught reading, math, science, social studies and language, which includes writing, to prepare for the GED test. They go to class for three hours and 15 minutes a day and follow a curriculum.

SUCCESS continued on pg. 7



Inmates of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice’s Estelle, Ellis and Eastham units were all smiles as they received their GED diplomas from guest speaker Barbara Cargill at the Windham School District graduation ceremony.

## TCI Computer Recovery makes social contribution through technology

Bryan J. Moore  
Staff Writer

In many ways, the key to success in society may be directly linked to one’s level of computer literacy. Even the simple act of applying for employment requires a degree of familiarity with computers. Poverty and incarceration are two circumstances that are quite effective in hindering development of the computer skills required for successful social navigation.

Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) has two computer recovery facilities: one on the Wynne Unit, the other on the Price Daniel Unit. They each have distinct priorities, but one overarching emphasis: leveling the technology playing field for the disadvantaged and the incarcerated.

After being buzzed through the security gate by an unseen hand, one enters the Wynne Computer Recovery facility and finds a meticulously maintained environment. From

the offices to the workspaces, everything is clean and neat almost to the point of sterility. It is the kind of professional atmosphere one hopes to encounter in a place where the stock and trade is computers. Working with computers requires focus, clear thinking and attention to detail. The environment is simply a reflection of the disciplined minds that supervise this workplace.

The question that naturally comes to mind for many is a very basic one: what is the purpose of a computer recovery facility?

“Our mission is to recycle state agency computer surplus and to teach offenders how to work on computers

so they’ll have skills to carry with them in the real world,” explained A. Williford, plant manager of the Wynne Computer Recovery.

COMPUTER continued on pg. 12

**‘Kids from disadvantaged families will go to school and use the computers that I build, so I’m giving back,’ said J. Hailey.**



# The ECHO

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Offenders can write *The ECHO* by truck mail.

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To the editor,

Greetings to you, sir, with all respect.

Though I'm actually assigned to the McConnell Unit, I've been doing some travelling to both the Galveston hospital and the hospital at Beto because of some problems in my right knee and leg.

As for the entire medical staff at both hospitals, I truly feel they're excellent. I've been in and out of prison for over 20 years, and the staff we have now is the best I've seen.

I know it's hard to please everyone, and that some will disagree with me, but I'm pleased with all the medical members whose care I've been under, and I would like to thank each and every one of them for all of their time, patience and care that was given to me.

I would also like to encourage them to keep their heads up, stay positive and keep up the good work.

Sincerely,  
Lefty

To the reader,

*Thanks for your letter to The ECHO. Thanks for your kind words toward the medical staff. They have an extremely difficult job within this prison environment.*

To the Editor:

I'd like to add to the comment made by "Respectfully Handicapped" in the October 2013 issue. Though there are many who do ridicule and belittle the physically challenged/handicapped, if you look long enough, you will see an occasional man who is respectful and courteous to handicapped persons, and these men are worth their weight in gold.

As mental institutions have closed in the past 50 years, prisons have absorbed many more of the mentally ill, among those individuals with severe depression and bi-polar disorder. We must give such persons the consideration they deserve.

Those who abuse, disrespect, neglect and even take advantage of these types of people have a much more serious handicap: one of the heart. Having no consideration for your fellow man, woman or child is the greatest illness of all.

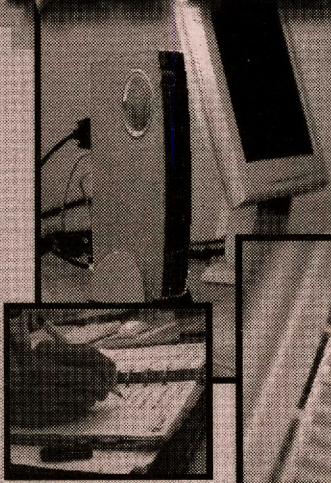
Consider your heart.

Elisandro Antonio Nava  
Michael Unit

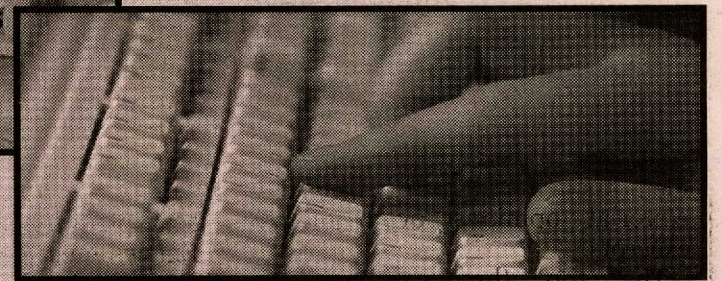
To the reader,

*Thanks for a very insightful letter. Evidently the article dealing with handicapped offenders has had an affect on many offenders in a positive manner. Thanks for writing The ECHO.*

# ATTENTION!



## ECHO Workers Needed



*The ECHO* is seeking **offenders** to assist in publishing *The ECHO*.

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

### Graphic Designer

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

### Preferences:

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

### Staff Writer

Job duties include writing articles and stories on various topics; typing; editing and performing general clerk responsibilities.

### Preferences:

- Experience in journalism/publishing or a degree in journalism or related field.
- A strong knowledge of grammar, punctuation and news writing styles is required.
- The ability to type 40 words per minute is preferred.

### Requirements:

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

### Offender must:

- Be classified as a G2 custody status.
- Be willing to relocate to the Wynne Unit in Huntsville, Texas.
- Have no history of convictions involving aggressive sexual acts.
- Have no history of convictions involving kidnapping.
- Have no history of institutional disciplinary cases involving aggressive sexual acts.
- Have no major disciplinary infractions within the past 12 months.
- Have no history of security precaution designators.

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

Managing Editor

The ECHO

Windham Administration Bldg.

Wynne Unit

Huntsville, Texas 🇺🇸



## The ECHO sponsors writing contest

**D**o you think you have the "write" stuff? Do you want to see how you measure up compared to the other writers in TDCJ? Enter The ECHO's writing contest! Recognition will be given to the top contestants in both fiction and non-fiction categories.

Fiction entries can cover any topic appropriate for publication in The ECHO.

Non-fiction entries can include memoirs (life stories), articles, editorial opinions or journal excerpts.

The top three winners in each category will have their work published, receive special recognition and receive a free one-year subscription to The ECHO.

Entries will be judged on content, clarity, creativity and correctness.

### Submission guidelines:

Include a cover sheet with your name, TDCJ number, unit of assignment and submission title.

Specify your work as fiction (F) or non-fiction (NF). DO NOT send poetry.

Entries should be neatly handwritten or typed. If typed, do not use a script font.

Entries should be no longer than 1,500 words (three typed or five handwritten pages).

Multiple submissions are allowed.

Entries must be received by The ECHO no later than April 30, 2014.

Mail your entry via truck-mail or regular mail to:

**The ECHO Writing Contest**

**P.O. Box 40**

**Huntsville, TX 77342-0040**

**Dear Darby,**

What's up, old buzzard? This letter is just to send my complaint of the month. See, over here at the "Ramada Inn I" (Ramsey Unit), they serve burritos prepared perfectly. The problem: after they put it on the tray, they cover the burrito with catsup or barbecue sauce! You end up not knowing what you're eating.

The only thing a burrito should have on top is cheese. Nothing else.

**The burrito don**

**Juan Ledesma,**

**Ad. Seg.**

**Ramsey Unit**

**Dear Don,**

*Got the ol' catsup and barbecue sauce blues, eh? Get over it. Tell them folks making the tray to put the mystery sauce to the side and not on your pristine burrito. It's not that hard, Juan. Oh, wait, I just realized that you're still in ad-seg. Hmmm. Yeah, that might be a little harder back there, since the trays are prepared before they're brought to you. Here's an idea: get out of seg, then tell 'em how you want your burrito. Personally, I LIKE having my sauce on the burrito — it adds moisture to a rather dry affair. Cheese IS good on top, though, so I agree with you on that one.*

**Dear Darby,**

I would like to comment on two of the letters in a previous issue of *The ECHO*, and more importantly, your responses

to those letters. First of all, I would like to address Wiz, who was complaining about late night rack. I feel that any time out of our cells should be appreciated, no matter what time of day it is.

Then there's Old Anon complaining about the "saggers". Saggers are not new. They were around when I was on the Ferguson Unit in 1980; we called them "low-riders" back then. But Darby, why are you even wasting time and ink on such a ridiculous issue? Besides, Old Anon's got nothing better to do than complain about the way his cellie wears his clothes? And why is he looking anyway?

What Old Anon seems not to understand is that the domino slammers and the dudes who sit on one end of the dayroom and shout a conversation with their road dog on the other end of the dayroom are far more disrespectful than someone who doesn't wear his pants pulled up.

I am at a loss as to understanding your responses to these letters. On the one hand you roast Wiz for feeling disrespected by the domino slammers and loud talkers, then on the other you throw in with Old Anon and roast the saggers for being disrespectful.

On an unrelated note, is the Mop/Broom plant still on Ferguson?

Sincerely,

**Dale Steadham**

**Hughes Unit**

**Dear Dale,**

*Are saggers, slammers and scream-*

*ers disrespectful? Yep. Is someone who is doing normal activities in a dayroom next to cubicles disrespectful? Not necessarily. Am I going to answer any letters on these subjects in the near future? Nope — I'm done with those for a while. If you want to hear from me, write about something else. And yes, Ferguson Mop & Broom is still there.*

**Dear Darby,**

We just got the new flat screen TVs and it's a shame that the channels could not be broken down into simple terms so as not to waste time trying to see what is being televised. My recommendation:

Channel Duh — for drooling idiots, containing shows like Jerry Springer.

Channel Huh — for the clueless, containing shows like The Young and The Restless, or movies like Bloodsport or Road House.

Channel Suh — for those with some sense, containing educational shows like Nova, Nature or Family Guy.

I think this would greatly simplify channel checks for the non-sports TVs. What do you think, ol' Wise One?

**Signed,**

**Billy Bob Bodine**

**(Jethro's cousin looking forward to the cement pond)**

**Dear Jethro's Cousin,**

*Yes sir, I understand your frustration with show quality during channel checks. I can hardly see my favorites, like The Beverly Hillbillies or Gilligan's Island, because of the proliferation of drivel like Duck Dynasty or Storage Wars. Still, channels show what the public wants to see (or what the channels want us to see), so unless you have satellite TV or full-version cable (which we don't have), you're limited during channel check. A better idea: get away and play chess, read a book or do something constructive with your downtime — then it doesn't matter if they vote in Road House for the fiftieth time this month.*

## DEAR DARBY LETTERS TO THE OL' THANG

**Dear Darby,**

Hello! I recently completed a class on self esteem. Many people tend to make fun of those who attend self-help classes, but I, for one, am grateful for the opportunity. I'm an agg/3G offender with an associate's degree so I'm ineligible to take Windham vocations. Instead of sitting idly by, I signed up for any classes that I could. I have taken life management, cognitive intervention, parenting, women's health and most recently, self esteem class. Next on my agenda is to take the grief class, which will help me deal with a lot of the reasons that led me here. I've been locked up for four years now and will finally see parole by the middle of next year. I am thankful that I've chosen to face my demons and deal with them here rather than at home, using them as an excuse to go shoot some heroine. The band Switchfoot had it right by saying everyday a choice is made. Everyday, I choose my fate. Prison is all about choices. So I ask you, will you make the right one today?

**Tippy**

**Mountain View Unit**

**Dear Tippy,**

*Girl, you're on my wavelength! I applaud you for your accomplishments and for continuing the path of growth behind the wire. You are absolutely correct about making a choice every day, and you're making good choices. The Mental Health Services (Psych) department is definitely a place to look for classes on personal development. I am aware of some units offering classes on stress management, anger management and depression management, as well as the self esteem class you mentioned. Folks interested in classes like these should contact their unit's Psych department to see what's available.*

### Famous Quote:

*"The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it."*

**— Martin Luther King Jr.**



## Point of View: Myth-making for fun

A column by  
Bryan J. Moore  
Staff Writer

A byproduct of the whole “celebrity as brand” dynamic that governs the entertainment industry is that a celebrity’s life unofficially becomes property of the public domain. The stock and trade of publications like OK, US, People, Star and the Enquirer is delivering grossly distorted portraits of stars lives. Broad assumptions loaded with half-truths, unsubstantiated “insider” reports and conjecture are confidently relayed as facts. Of course, the gossip enterprise would not be successful without a market for its products.

Generally, the American public is frighteningly eager to gobble up sweet, juicy tidbits about Khloe and Lamar’s troubled marriage or Miley’s bad girl behavior. There is just as strong a desire to exploit celebrity

offspring; and the sooner the better. It was very shortly after birth that Blue Ivy and North West became acquainted with the business end of a telephoto lens. No wonder Suri Cruise and Brangelina’s brood are old hands at ignoring the paparazzi.

Since prison is usually deficient in its supply of celebrities, the closest substitutes inmates have are other inmates. To the mind negatively affected by incarceration, nothing could be more interesting than telling or hearing someone else’s business. The compulsive twitch of a gossip’s tongue sends rumors running wild across units at breakneck speed. As with the tabloids, tales of who’s in for what, who got busted, and who’s snitching are typically the sum of conjecture and “insider” reports.

The source of the twitch in a gossip’s tongue is a selfish need to seem superior, expressed by excessive

sharing of so-called secrets. Having to fabricate most or even all of the details is but a minor consequence. The gossip’s objective is not telling the truth but being the center of attention. Gossips only care about casting themselves as the one who reveals what others are ignorant of but are dying to know. The audience benefits by getting one leg up on those who may not have heard the news, which empowers them to play the part of prison myth-maker as well.

An alien visiting earth would probably draw the conclusion that gossiping is a genetic trait, mysteriously designed to help the human race further itself through disseminating exciting but mostly made-up tales of one another’s scandalous deeds. The reality is that gossiping is a practice that yields no advantage to the bearer nor the hearer and certainly not the subject of these vicious exchange-



es. Our irrational indulgence in this toxic practice would certainly cause that same alien to question the notion that we are intelligent creatures.

Sequestered behind brick and concertina wire, the prison population is better off avoiding this sort of foolishness. Contending with long sentences, social and sensory deprivation and the business of rehabilitation leaves us with no time to bother with something as trivial and as childish as discussing people and situations of which we only have third-hand knowledge. Besides, prison myth-making is a skill that does not translate well on job applications. ♣

## Jazzman Phil Driscoll blows Wynne Unit away

Bryan J. Moore  
Staff Writer

*“I wanted to use my art to get people to develop God awareness.”*

— Phil Driscoll

On a chilly Saturday evening, massive black speakers hanging from towering poles sent inspirational hip-hop booming through the air. The Wynne Unit gymnasium was alive with bombast and bustle. In progress was the preliminary sound check that precedes all big musical climaxes. On the large, professional stage erected for the event was a man with a very deceptive appearance. He was fairly thin with longish white-blond hair encircling his head. His simple button down shirt, dark jeans and understated shoes complimented his calm, easy movements. Looking over the sound equipment, his face portrayed the focused bearing of a wizard overseeing key elements of some complicated spell.

The hip-hop faded and Mike Barber took the stage. On this, the third and final night of the Pro-Claim Ministries event, he introduced the man who was now waiting in the wings. When his name was announced, the man bounded energetically onto the stage and stood before the audience, blue eyes shining like lasers under his hawk-like brow.

“I’d rather be here than any where else,” he told the sea of men in white.

With no wasted motion, he pounced on the keyboard, belting out classic Christmas tunes and old R&B melodies with a voice as smooth as aged whiskey. Sensing the release that the music was providing the men, he paused, smiling at them like an old friend. “Freedom is what’s happening

inside you,” he said.

Having channeled the muse, he coaxed her to nestle in the polished brass of his second instrument. The moment his lips touched the trumpet the deceptive nature of his appearance became apparent. This rather ordinary looking man was by far no ordinary musician. This was Phil Driscoll, the Grammy Award winning sound architect whose specialty was manipulating subtle vibrations into bright rhythms that brought joy and happiness.

Earlier in the evening Mike Barber graciously granted me permission to interview Driscoll. I made the request because I simply had to speak with this enormously talented, classically trained jazzman with a burning passion for prison ministry. Later on, backstage with tinges of winter chill surrounding us, I would have my opportunity to speak with him face-to-face.

Driscoll, a former cocaine addict and secular performer, turned his life over to a higher power on Christmas of 1977. Decades later in 2006, he would serve a one-year prison sentence for tax evasion. That short stint in stir was all it took to convince Driscoll of the need for prison ministry.

“People cannot be changed without love,” he said. “I know there’s a God, and rehabilitation is His responsibility. I wanted to use my art to get people to develop God awareness.”

It was Mike Barber’s Pro-Claim Ministries that finally convinced Driscoll to act on his beliefs.

“I’ve known Mike Barber for years. I used to see him packing an old station wagon with equipment and going around to the different units. Seeing his sacrifice inspired me to get involved.”

What’s also inspiring is watching Driscoll own the moment. With brain, lungs and fingers, he wrung the most audacious peals and shrieks from the bell of his trumpet. Driscoll wanted the Wynne Unit to experience the ecstasy of the highest note of all: joy in the spirit.

“Seeing the guys having a genuine life change when I’m performing is a profound experience for me,” he explained.

Taken by his own energy and passion, Driscoll was often on one foot while playing the trumpet with one hand. His exuberance was contagious, causing the offenders in attendance to momentarily forget the cares of prison life. For over an hour, men who hadn’t laughed in weeks were openly grinning and singing along with Driscoll.

Once he sent the last shrieking blasts of his trumpet rocketing to the stratosphere, Driscoll stepped off stage wrapped in a hail of applause, almost trailing steam in his wake. A creative juggernaut who has made two films and recorded 37 inspirational CDs since 1980, he (no doubt) was hurrying off to finish his latest project.

“It’s a movie titled ‘Long Day Journey’ that’s being filmed at Angola (prison in Louisiana). So much of prison is without hope. The message of ‘Long Day Journey’ is that there’s hope on the other side,” Driscoll replied, when I pressed for details.

The message imparted by Driscoll’s dynamic performance at the Wynne Unit on that cold night was that the warmth of hope can be found behind the walls of prison. All that’s needed is an ordinary man with extraordinary talent to kindle it. ♣



# AGENCY INFO — POLICY UPDATES — LEGAL NEWS

## Safe Prisons / Prison Rape Elimination Act requests offender information

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice is currently working to become compliant with 28 CFR Part 115, National Standards to Prevent, Detect, and Respond to Prison Rape, otherwise known as the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards. During this process, it is important to discover current TDCJ offenders who identify as transgender in order to ensure their ongoing safety. The term transgender is also used in similar terms, such as transsexual or individuals diagnosed with Gender Identity Disorder (GID), as written in the Correctional Managed Health Care (CMHC) policies.

- A **transgender** is defined in the PREA standards as a person whose gender identity (i.e., internal sense of feeling male or female) is different from the person's assigned sex at birth.
- A **transsexual** is defined in CMHC policies as an individual (age 18 or older) with a sense of discomfort and inappropriateness about his or her anatomical sex, who wished to be rid of one's own genitals and to live as a member of the other sex.
- **Gender Identity Disorder** is defined in CMHC policies as a strong and persistent cross-gender identification, which is the desire to be or the insistence that one is of the other sex. A person is diagnosed with GID due to evidence of clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important functioning areas.

Any offender requesting to be identified as transgender, transsexual, or GID is encouraged to promptly submit an 1-60, *Inmate Request to Official* to the Unit Safe Prisons/PREA Compliance Manager.

## Prisiones Seguras/Acta de Eliminación de Violación en Prisión Peticiones Información de Ofensor

El Departamento de Justicia Criminal de Texas está trabajando actualmente para convertirse en cumplidor con las Normas Nacionales para Prevenir, Delectar Responder a Violación en Prisión, 28 CFR Parte 115, conocidas de otra manera como normas del Acta de Eliminación de Violación en Prisión (PREA). Durante éste proceso, es importante descubrir a los ofensores actuales de TDCJ quienes se identifican como transgénero para garantizar su continua seguridad. El término transgénero es también usado en términos similares, tal como transexual o individuos diagnosticados con el Trastorno de Identidad de Género (GID), como está escrito en las políticas del Manejo Correccional del Cuidado de la Salud (CMHC).

- Un **transgénero** se define en las normas PREA como una persona cuya identidad de género (i.e., sentido interno del sentimiento masculino o femenino) es diferente del sexo asignado a la persona al nacer.
- Un **transexual** se define en las políticas CMI-IC como un individuo (edad 18 o mayor) con una sensación de incomodidad e inconveniencia de su sexo anatómico, quien desea librarse de sus propios genitales y vivir como un miembro del otro sexo.
- **Trastorno de Identidad de Género** se define en las políticas CMHC como una flierte y persistente identificación de género cruzado, la cual es el deseo a ser o la insistencia que uno es del otro sexo. Una persona es diagnosticada con GID debido a la evidencia de malestar clínicamente significativo o deterioro en áreas importantes de funcionamiento social, laboral o de otro tipo.

Cualquier ofensor pidiendo ser identificado como transgénero, transexual, o GID se le anima a que envíe rápidamente un 1-60, *Petición de Preso a Oficial al Encargado de Prisiones Seguras/Cumplimiento PREA de la Unidad.*

### Sudoku Solutions

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

## Prevent, recognize heat illness

*Editor's note: The following information was provided by the TDCJ Risk Management Department. Summertime and summer heat has arrived, and offenders (and staff) are encouraged to be aware of these three types of heat illnesses.*

**Offenders who are at a higher risk for heat illness include those who are:**

- newly assigned to a job;
- on psychiatric medications;
- over the age of 60; or
- exposed to high temperature and humidity conditions.



**Prevention of heat illness includes:**

- drinking at least 1/2 cup of water every 15 minutes when working in hot environments;
- taking a five minute break every 30-60 minutes; and
- decreasing intensity of physical exertion under extreme conditions.

### Types of heat illness

**Heat Cramps:** usually develop following strenuous exercise in muscles that have been subjected to extensive work. The pain may be quite severe. Heat cramps usually occur after several hours of work and may occur even at low ambient temperatures. The cause is inadequate replacement of electrolytes (sodium and potassium).

**Prevention** is accomplished by ample fluid intake before, during and after work, and salting of food during meals (if not medically contraindicated). Use of electrolyte replacement drinks (sports drinks) may also be beneficial.

**Heat Exhaustion (Heat Prostration):** the most common form of heat stress, caused by depletion of water and salt. Symptoms include weakness, anxiety, fatigue, thirst, dizziness, headache, nausea and urge to defecate. Signs include profuse perspiration, rapid pulse, lack of coordination and confusion. Heat prostration may lead to heat syncope, a sudden onset of collapse that is usually of brief duration. During heat syncope the patient appears ashen gray and skin is cool and clammy. Failure to treat heat exhaustion may result in progression to heat stroke. Risk factors include failure to maintain adequate fluid intake during exertion, and taking diuretics.

**Prevention** is accomplished by ample fluid intake before, during and after work, proper work-rest cycles, and salting of food during meals if not medically contraindicated.

**Heat Stroke is a medical emergency!** While it may be preceded by signs of heat exhaustion, the onset is often sudden. In heat stroke the body has lost its ability to dissipate heat and maintain a normal body temperature. Body temperature is often elevated over 106°F. Exertional heat stroke occurs in young, healthy people who maintain inadequate fluid intake during exertion. Signs include headache, chills, gooseflesh, (weakness in coordination,) nausea and vomiting, progressing to unconsciousness. Classical heat stroke is seen in the elderly, those with predisposing medical conditions such as congestive heart failure, diabetes and alcoholism, and those on medications that cause fluid depletion, interfere with sweating or interfere with the body's thermoregulatory system. Classical heat stroke has few warning signs. Collapse may be among the first symptoms. Skin is hot and dry, and pulse is rapid and weak. Shock and death may occur in either exertional or classical heat stroke.

**Prevention** includes ample fluid intake before, during and after work, proper work-rest cycles, keeping people at high risk from working under conditions of extreme heat and humidity and maintaining adequate indoor conditions, such as access to cool fluids and use of cooling fans for persons at increased risk for heat stroke.

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



# Wynne Unit hosts Walk to Emmaus

By William Elliott  
Wynne Unit

I've heard many times in the days leading up to the Walk to Emmaus the Wynne Unit that it is a wonderful experience, and I will be blessed by it. Beyond these assurances, the details become elusive. I asked several past participants, "Just what is so special about this event?" Other than a knowing smile, all that is offered is that I'll just have to see for myself.

So here I am on the first day, greeted by an atmosphere of peacefulness. It feels strange, in the midst of the chaos that is prison, to find this settled calm. Serenity rules here, and the masks that many wear to keep others at a distance are removed. Part of what's so amazing is the

remarkable potential for growth. Keeping up one's guard takes a lot of energy. Letting down defenses frees one to look inward and make adjustments that usher in change.

As I progress through the second day, there are several repetitive themes. Even those of little faith recognize the therapeutic value in acknowledging where they are broken, forgiving those who have wronged them and forgiving themselves. To find deliverance from a destructive past, I must admit where I am lost.

Volunteer speakers from many different ministries deliver round after round of motivation, encouragement and inspiration to a

group starving for renewal. Years of institutional life have closed off many to showing any feelings, much less dealing with those feelings.

Day three comes faster than anyone realizes. Much of what I've experienced, I can't put into words. Much of it, I wouldn't want to. To describe the personal mountains that were moved would only cheapen what's happened in this place. God has come closer and become more intimate.

I know I'll do my best to keep the fire burning inside that was kindled here. I was blessed by it. Beyond that, what was so special about this event? You'll just have to see for yourself. ♣

## Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) 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 provides offenders, family and friends of offenders and the general public an independent office to report sexual assaults occurring in Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) correctional facilities, and to ensure the impartial resolution of complaints of allegations of sexual assault. 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**

Due to the serious nature of sexual assaults, and in accordance with TDCJ policy on "Zero-Tolerance" against sexual assaults, offenders knowledgeable of an offender-on-offender or staff-on-offender sexual assault that occurs within a TDCJ correctional facility are encouraged to immediately report the allegation to the facility administration or the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). ♣

## Students graduate electrical trade

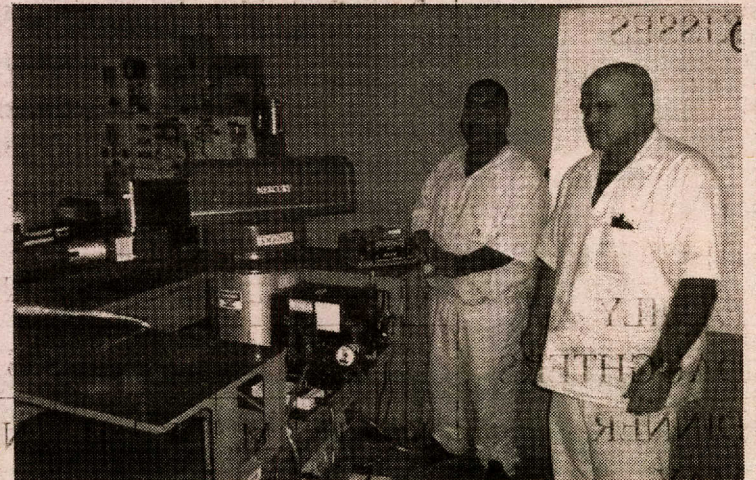
Telford Unit Report

Restoration of a mercury pneumatic robot is only one reason C. Wynn, who teaches Windham School District's electrical trade vocation at the Telford unit, is proud of his vocational students, Rangel and Mincey. They were offered an opportunity to restore a mercury pneumatic robot, which was in poor, non-working condition. Through their understanding of basic skills that are taught in the electrical trade program, they were able to restore the robot to good working condition. The basics included instruction on ladder diagrams and programmable electronic controllers (PECs).

"When we first started the Electrical Trade Class in Sept. 2012, we didn't know what ladder diagrams or PECs were. But as the months progressed and we learned ladder diagramming, we knew that we had learned something very valuable," offender Mincey said.

PECs are microprocessor-based systems used to control machines and processes in a wide variety of industries. The first controller was designed by Gould Corp in 1968 for General Motors to replace hard-wired electrical relays for controlling automatic transfer lines. The reason for this was to allow technicians to easily change the sequence of machine operations by reprogramming instead of rewiring relays. Today the programmable controller industry is a rapidly growing multi-billion dollar industry in the United States.

Offender Mincey explained the way the information was applied: "Ladder diagrams are the symbology used



by industry to represent electrical relay systems and logic control systems. We also learned the basics of hydraulics, helping us understand the air logic (pneumatic system) of the robot. With this knowledge we were able to discover that the solenoid directional control valves needed overhauling and that the electrical circuitry had faulty limit switches and wiring that needed replacing. Learning to write the programs for this particular robot was the most challenging of all."

"Hopefully someday we can apply our newly-acquired knowledge and skills in obtaining and maintaining productive employment. This is the whole reason we signed up for the electrical trade in the first place, and we're very grateful for this experience," Rangel said. ♣

## Eastham Unit hosts GED graduation

Lance Brown  
Eastham Unit

A crowd of family, friends and visiting dignitaries gathered in Eastham's Chapel of Peace to witness 14 men walk the aisle to receive their General Education Development (GED) certificates. The graduates were J. Bocanegra, T. Clark, P. Cruz, O. Duarte, S. Ephraim, C. Fennie, R. Flores, N. Garay, A. Houston, L. Kremplewski, A. Marsh, C. Owens, R. Renick and B. Rucker.

All the men had spent many years striving to earn their diplomas and were rightfully proud, as were their families.

Jefferson County judge and Texas Board of Criminal Justice member L. Gist encouraged the men with a heartfelt commencement address. Gist explained that he's working to improve the criminal justice system and getting more offenders educated is part of that plan.

"It's your attitude that determines your future. If you work hard and try, you will go up the ranks," he told the men. "The more education you have, the more chances you will have, the more education you have, the more you will succeed."

The commencement address was appropriate, and Judge Gist encouraged the men to use their diplomas as stepping stones to a new beginning.

Valedictorian A. Houston noted that to survive in today's world he needed a certified education, so he set out to earn his diploma. "This GED is a door to opportunity," Houston noted. "I just took the THEA test to get into college; my journey has not ended—it has just begun."

Graduate O. Duarte echoed these sentiments: "This is the first time in my life I've ever done anything like

this, and it really feels good to follow through on something and complete it. I'm using my GED as a step to acquire more education. Doors have been opened to me, and I am going to take full advantage of all the education I can get. This GED is just the beginning."

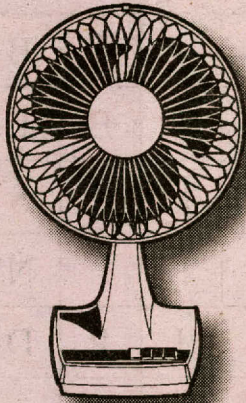
"These men are not going to stop learning with family members. Many of the men present had never accomplished anything of which their family could be proud of until now. I am proud of you all," Ms. J. Carlin told the men. ♣







## Free fan from TX-CURE — How to get one —



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

1. Write an I-60 request to:  
**TDCJ-CID TRUST FUND, P.O.  
Box 60, Huntsville, TX, 77342**

Inmate Trust Cure Fan

I would like to get a fan from TX-CURE.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

TDCJ# \_\_\_\_\_

Unit \_\_\_\_\_

2. The Trust Fund will then forward the request to:

TX-CURE Fan Project  
P.O.Box 38381  
Dallas, TX 75238-0383

Your request must be dated **Jan. 1, 2014, through June 30, 2014.**  
**Send only the request.**

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

4. You may request a fan between **Jan. 1, 2014, and June 30, 2014. No earlier, no later.** The rule is one fan per prisoner, even if yours gets broken, stolen, confiscated or if you received a fan under a previous TDCJ number. TDCJ keeps accurate records, so please don't apply for a fan if you've received one in the past. Protect your property papers. Report a malfunctioning **new** fan to Unit Property. If you do not receive a fan this year, try again next year.

**Mike Jewell, Director**  
**Cheri Ledbetter, Fan Project**  
**Joan Covici, Secretary**  
**Dallas Office (214)348-0293**

## A personal thank you: Teachers shape the world

Bryan J. Moore  
Staff Writer

Besides mother and father, teachers are the most important people in a child's life. Rare indeed is the person who cannot recall at least one teacher who had a profound impact on their lives. Actors, politicians, wealthy entrepreneurs and others who have risen to the pinnacle of worldly success are not as self-sustaining as they appear. The efforts of their teachers helped them reach their lofty goals.

The primary job of a teacher is not to show children how to read and write (as one would assume), but to instead cultivate and mold the essence of the students in their charge. Teachers shape the worldview of young, impressionable human beings who will grow up to determine the social climate of the world we live in. Yet professional athletes receive millions of dollars to toss and catch a ball, while teachers struggle to figure out how to pay off their student loan debt. Receiving pay grossly incommensurate with their effort and contribution to society is only one source of frustration for teachers.

Faced with multiple adversities, teachers constantly have to devise innovative strategies that will allow them to effectively instruct their pupils. Are they better off slanting their instruction in a way that will bring students greater success on standardized tests? Should they focus on the top students in the class, those in middle, or those at the bottom? And speaking of the bottom, how do they reach students who seem to be unable to grasp the subject matter, regardless of how hard they try?

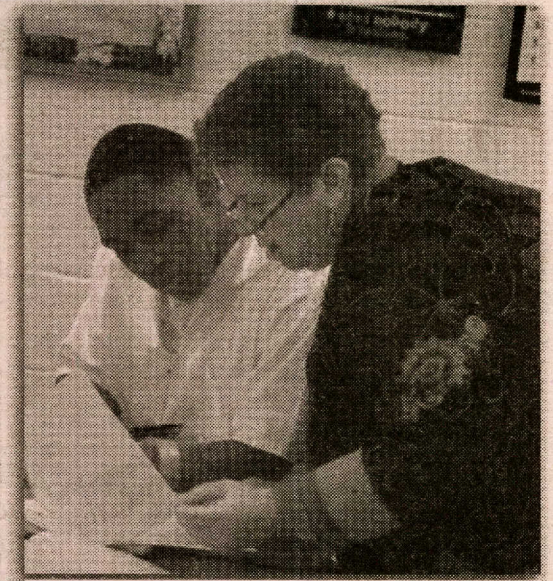
Teachers also find themselves vying with technology for their students' minds. While it can be and often is used as a means of aiding the educational process, technology is also a major contributor to the general academic decline that makes a teacher's job all the more challenging. It is very difficult for a teacher to compete with the speed, flash and color of technology. The exciting, exotic settings of the digital fan-

tasylands rendered in video games may cause the typical classroom to appear to be no more than a drab torture cell.

There is also the mean trick being played on tech savvy youths. They believe that greater use of tech gadgets causes a directly proportional increase in their intellect. Call it the "I Google, Therefore, I Am" syndrome. The reality is that the more they utilize technology, the more it is the device that is doing the thinking, computing, information gathering, etc. The human mind is being exercised only as much as is required to program and operate the gadget. Skill in operating technology is being erroneously equated with intellect. To be fair, it is a demonstration of technical proficiency. Overall, though, the mind is still going fallow because the beneficial work of learning is bypassed. We have children who can set up a website but don't know the capital of the state they live in. Youth, through overreliance on technology, are actually becoming less educated.

Take 4 xample txt mssng. LOL, OMG, IDK and other such blurbs are the customary manner in which text messages are sent, supposedly for the purpose of saving time, but the unintended consequence is the degradation of written communication. Skills such as spelling and grammar suffer because children think that if the way they spell in the real world (i.e. on their smartphones) is acceptable, then why should it matter how they spell in school? In fact, children literally cannot write, because cursive is fast becoming obsolete.

The teacher also has to contend not only with technology itself but also with the intellectual arrogance it tends to breed in our youth. They have to deal with superiors who are often more interested in pass/fail statistics and political niceties (as opposed to whether or not the students are actually learning) and parents who are not assisting their children at home (but expect the teacher to work miracles). If that were not enough, teachers are also required



**A Windham School District literacy teacher focuses on her student's writing skills.**

to play psychologist, counselor, referee and role model.

The average person would not put up with the way teachers are treated for five minutes, but teachers themselves endure these sorts of conditions from the time they are certified to teach often until they retire. Since a person who enters the field of teaching obviously is not doing it for the money or the fame or the prestige, why do they do it? The short answer is that they are not focused on how much they can get but on how much they can give.

The best of teachers have warm, nurturing personalities and become personally invested in the welfare and progress of their students. They measure their compensation not in dollars but in how many students they are able to reach — in how many lives they are able to change. They concentrate not on how much they can gain but on how much they can share the goodness they have inside. No computer, regardless of how advanced its programming, can do the job of a teacher. We need passionate teachers to bring out the best in our youth. Without teachers, the world becomes void and without form. ♣

## Darrington hosts annual Ironman contest

Chris Irby  
Darrington Unit

A slew of athletes, young and old, competed to see who would become the next Ironman champion of the Darrington Unit. Some had entered to see if they could finish the course, while others competed with the desire to become champions. Between these eager competitors and victory lay a course designed to challenge their every ounce of muscle and heart.

Each athlete, after running eight laps around a medium size recre-

ation yard, had to perform 25 jumps over a box, 150 squats, 150 sit-ups and 200 push-ups. They were then required to perform 50 repetitions of an 85-pound bench press, 60 pull-downs of 70 pounds and 35 dips. To complete the course, the contestants had to do a gator crawl around the entire basketball court.

Besides each other and the course itself, the men were also competing against the clock. On its face, the layout of the course appeared simple, but the events proved difficult when performed in sequence.

Of the more than 80 participants

there were three first-round winners: J. Keith, who represented the older group of men and recorded the best time of 28:06, M. Gonzales, who posted the second best time of 29:23, and L. Reza, who placed third with the time of 29:29.

In an inspirational ceremony, F. Blackmon, ex-Ironman Champion, passed the Ironman torch to the overall winner and new Darrington Unit Ironman Champion of 2013, J. 'J Real' Hightower.

A special thank you goes to Warden C. Tucker for allowing this event. ♣



# The Writer's Corner: Lesson 4

## Fun with magic

We've been discussing subordinating conjunctions, and now we'd like to present a grammatical magic trick. Look at this sentence: *Bob likes mustard.*

As anyone can see, it's a complete sentence subject, verb and all. We, the wizards of the Writer's Corner, will now render this complete sentence incomplete, not by taking away, but by ADDING to it. Watch closely...

Voila!  
**Because** Bob likes mustard...  
**If** Bob likes mustard...**Although** Bob likes mustard...**As** Bob likes mustard...**When** Bob likes mustard...  
**Unless** Bob likes mustard...

Our sentence is now less than complete through the process of addition. Pretty neat, huh? (Don't feel bad if you don't find this as thrilling as we do.) If the word added is a subordinating conjunction, it will make the sentence a subordinated clause.

Subordinating clauses relegate clauses to a lower grammatical status, so it's no longer a whole sentence; it's a subordinate clause. These are often called dependent clauses because they depend on other clauses to make complete sentences.

The reader will instinctively

know the subordinate clause is less important than the main clause. Remember what we said: the reader is king. So, ask yourself, what does the reader most want to know?

Let's look at an example: *Until Finn can slay the dragon, rescue his love from the tall tower, and reclaim his father's kingdom, his mission will remain unfulfilled.*

The subordinating conjunction is *until*, and it's subordinating some pretty interesting stuff: dragon slaying, damsel rescuing, kingdom claiming. Why would the reader care that the mission remains unfulfilled when there's all this other cool stuff to think about? There can be times where this is a perfectly acceptable sentence. If you've already talked about the dragon slaying and whatnot prior to this sentence, then it truly is subordinate information because you don't need to describe it again. You can subordinate exciting information when it's already been covered.

We need to fix that bad sentence: *If I'm going to give you \$10 million, you must use it wisely.* Obviously, getting \$10 million is definitely more interesting than using it wisely. Here are some examples of how to rewrite this sentence to give your reader the info they want:

Bryan J. Moore,  
 David Van Houten  
 Wynne Unit



*I'm going to give you \$10 million if and only if you use it wisely.*

*I'm going to give you \$10 million on the condition that you use it wisely.*

*Here's \$10 million. Use it wisely.*

*Here's \$10 million. Blow it all at the blackjack table, and I'll smack you upside the head.*

Each of these sentences has a different meaning, but that's the point and the power of good writing: getting your true point across. The reader's need should dictate which information you subordinate. It should be a choice — which is an example of the power you hold over words.

Be sure to catch up with us next lesson, when we will be covering phrases and clauses.

### Vocabulary

- **cupola**
- **fiancé**
- **pugilist**
- **veracious**
- **savory** ➔

## A Woman's Perspective

### Grieving the grievable



Jennifer Toon  
 Mountain View Unit

I don't mind helping others with questions concerning grievances. I believe the process works the way it was designed to when a complaint is valid. Notice I said valid. Let's not waste time grieving the fact it rained (that's outside of the agency's control) or that you were sold chili soup instead of chicken (you should have checked your items before you left the window). You have to determine the importance of the matter. Is it worth the time it takes to investigate and answer?

You may be wondering why we should care about the grievance officer's time. Well, we want their energy and resources to be available for legitimate concerns instead of frivolous complaints. Locate the OG-02 form TDCJ instructions on how to write and submit a grievance. It details the proper way to write one, and states what issues are grievable. Anything related to policy, or reporting abuse, makes sense. Complaints about the variety of cupcakes in the vending machine in visitation do not. If a complaint or concern is valid, it will be properly addressed. It may not necessarily be resolved the way you'd like it to be, but it will be in accordance with established agency standards.

I've heard it said many times that the grievance system doesn't work, but I'm often curious why anyone thought complaining that we don't get HBO was a valid concern? I've learned through experience that there are staff members who don't have a problem with correcting something. Try thinking about it like a maintenance order. You report a broken sink, and they come to look at it. Imagine the maintenance crew's response, if they come to investigate the problem and find that the sink works fine — you just don't like the particular way the handle moves.

The grievance system is the place to report legitimate issues. Utilize it responsibly. ➔

## Bobby's free

Tim Jordan  
 Released

In my many years in the Texas Prison System, I have listened to many stories. This is a true story that was meant to be shared. I heard this just a few days ago, and it made me pick up my pen.

Let's call our subject "Bobby". I met him some months ago. He had an accident — DWI, seven years. He was probably in his 20s, smart, with a lot of positive drive.

He was mentally and physically stable and spiritually connected, too. He was kind to me and other people. We talked about my years of addiction and health problems, etc.

He never knew how his victims fared after his accident. He had written letters to people trying to find out. No answers. He never knew until the last few days of his sentence how they were doing. One day, the warden called him in and told him he had a visitor: A victim's activist lady. As they sat down, she said, "I have a letter written by the victim's daughter. I need to read it to you."

I cannot quote the beautiful letter word for word, though I wish I could. Bobby came in that day with the letter, brought it to the rec yard, and read it to me. As his voice cracked, I felt his tears were sincere. Bobby never knew both victims, the mom and the dad, had

died. The mom's neck was broken, and she died in the hospital. The father died soon after — they say from a broken heart. Bobby told me he prayed every day that the family he never knew would somehow forgive him.

The letter the daughter wrote was unbelievable. Her forgiveness was genuine. It changed Bobby then and there, forever. He said, "Jordan, I am gonna read this everyday. I'll frame this in my heart." The daughter wrote, "I pray this will be your testimony to help others as well as yourself. By now you know I have forgiven you."

The full intensity cannot be felt unless you were there to hear Bobby read her beautiful letter in its entirety. It took the greatness of God for this lady to orchestrate such a powerful letter of forgiveness. I pray she and Bobby meet someday. I pray a piece of this story has touched your heart — a peace called forgiveness.

Bobby's gone home now, released to his loving family. He now has a new life and the gift to help others in need. He's far past the fences now, and I know in my heart Bobby's free. ➔

**'I am gonna read this everyday. I'll frame this in my heart.'**



## Description of a mother

Submitted by Michael E. Carr  
Hughes Unit

I sit and think of the lessons you've taught me  
as I grew up facing life.  
You told me to always keep my head held up  
when going through struggle or strife.  
Carried me nine months and gave up so much  
just so I could grow to be a man  
The sacrifices that you've made no one  
would ever begin to understand.  
Whenever I needed you, you were always there.  
You never let me down  
And for those few things alone, Mother,  
you deserve a golden crown.  
But that isn't all that you've done.  
I can tell the world so much more.  
The world should thank the Lord for an angel  
like you and beat a pathway to your door.  
A mother is such a wonderful thing. She should  
be praised and respected here on earth.  
She's a priceless gem, truly a rare find  
and nothing could estimate her worth  
If you were hungry and had no food,  
who else would give you something to eat?  
And if you had nothing to wear, who else would  
clothe you and put shoes on your feet?  
When you needed rest and a place to sleep,  
who gave you a place to lay your head?  
Your mother did and she'll do it again,  
even if she has to give up her own bed.  
When it comes to a mother nothing can compare  
or even come close to matching  
her love and compassion.  
She's an angel here in this world and I can promise you  
for her children her love's everlasting.  
From the time you were an infant  
to the time you were a man,  
she blessed you  
with her love and guidance.  
And in difficult times  
whatever our age,  
when we needed advice  
she was there to provide it.  
So never forget the woman who has given you birth.  
In all ways we should love her.  
She's something special, a saint to us all  
and she can only be described as a mother.

## Days of old

Submitted by Eric L. Mapps, Sr.  
Lynaugh Unit

There's the smell of rain.  
I think the skies may be gray.  
It feels real humid for this time of day.  
Sitting in his rocking chair on an old wooden porch,  
his eyes are cast toward the road,  
seeing only shadows and the shapes of images before them.  
Sitting in his rocking chair,  
gently rocking back and forth,  
his mind is idle, void of thoughts.  
There is no one there to talk to  
there is no one there to see,  
there is no one there to hold his hand and tell him that this  
doesn't have to be.  
Sitting in his rocking chair, forlorn and frayed,  
he was once so strong and vital,  
now so wrinkled and old.  
Where has everyone gone?  
Who is around to help him stand?  
Who is there to comfort this now reclusive old man?  
Sitting in his rocking chair,  
he takes a deep breath and exhales.  
He looks toward the sky.  
There's the smell of rain,  
I think the skies may be gray.  
It feels real humid for this time of day.

## Why?!

Submitted by Albert Sarinana  
Formby State Jail

"Why?" is a question that runs through my head  
all through the day, and even while I'm in bed  
I think about all the bad things I've done in the past  
man, am I so glad those days didn't last  
Now I've got time to think about what I've done  
even dream about the day I'll be able to hold my wife and son  
I wonder why it took me this long to finally see  
that the life I was leading wasn't the right one for me  
Now I am doing my best to stay off the road of hate and fear  
so that I can stay out in the free world instead of being in here  
God is giving me another chance to lead a life that's not a lie  
but if I mess it up again, then I'll be back in prison, wondering "Why?"



## 20 lost years

Submitted by Shane Barnett  
Robertson Unit

You talk of all the dope and the fun  
for me, let me tell you how it had all begun

I had a life full of promise and hope  
until I did that very first shot of dope

What I thought was a heck of a ride  
was more akin to a slow suicide

Shot by shot, one at a time  
I was destroying my life and my mind

Everything that I loved and held dear  
turned to madness, paranoia and fear

I let all my life's dreams and plans  
slip away right through my hands

While I thought I was having fun  
being chased by shadows and hiding from the sun

Now that life is over, I'm no longer high  
I'm no longer determined to see myself die

Twenty lost years I can never get back  
I'm way late in life, but I'm finally on track

I walked into the dope world and came out alive  
I saw many who weren't lucky enough to survive

So I thank my lucky stars and God up above  
for never giving up and for all of His love

## Last dance, last chance

Submitted by Noe Guerrero  
Torres Unit

It's the middle of the night  
And your memories kept me up  
Got me staring at the darkness  
welded to my coffee cup.

Caffeine can't take your place  
But it helps to ease the pain  
It blots out thoughts of you  
Running through my veins.

I was a wretched mess.  
An addict at his worst  
Couldn't clean my act up  
wouldn't try to break the curse.

I lost my joy, my wife, my sanity,  
My toys, my life, integrity,  
my children, my freedom, my rights.  
In short, I lost the fight.

Now I sit in prison  
yearning to go home  
tired of hurting my family  
tired of being alone.

Well that's it, I am done  
and devil, that was my last dance  
God, I don't deserve it but  
Could I have one last chance?

## We have been broken down

Submitted by Melissa Woods  
Plane State Jail Facility

We have been broken down, by our conscious call  
We have been broken down, but we didn't fall

Trying to help another sister or brother rise  
from the differences get out of the gutter

We have been broken down, on a daily basis,  
struggling to survive, and dealing with so many faces

We have been broken down, settling for less,  
putting our bodies and minds through a test, creating such a mess

We have been broken down, with a bottle of rum, dope under our gums  
and a needle in our arms, a man full of charms

We have been broken down, jumping in and out of cars  
hanging at all kinds of bars, bodies marked up with scars just be rock stars

We have been broken down, staying up for days,  
promising to change our ways.

Too proud to beg or plead, you had to get on your knees  
We have been broken down, thinking we've got it made,

I've already reported, now it's time to get paid  
ending up in jail on the very same day

We have been broken down, knowing right from wrong,  
but we end up in prison singing the same song.

It's time to get up and refuse to fall again.  
The struggle is over, we have to put this dysfunctional cycle to an end.

## Soon, someday

Submitted by Peter Treviño  
Stiles Unit

Received a visit from my son  
when he was just a couple of years old,  
So young with a handsome face  
He asked me if I'm coming home today.  
I answered him, "Soon, someday."

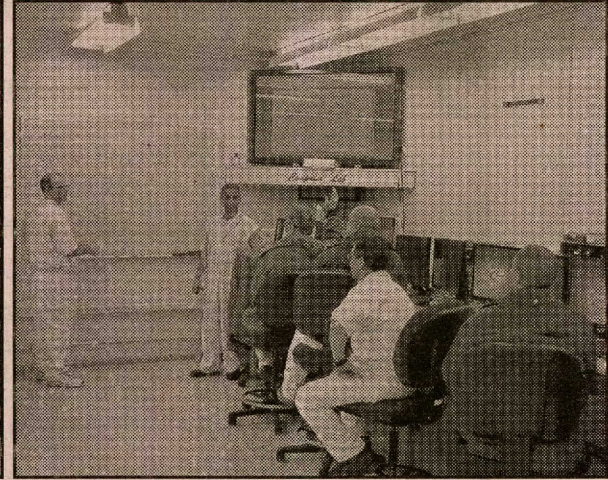
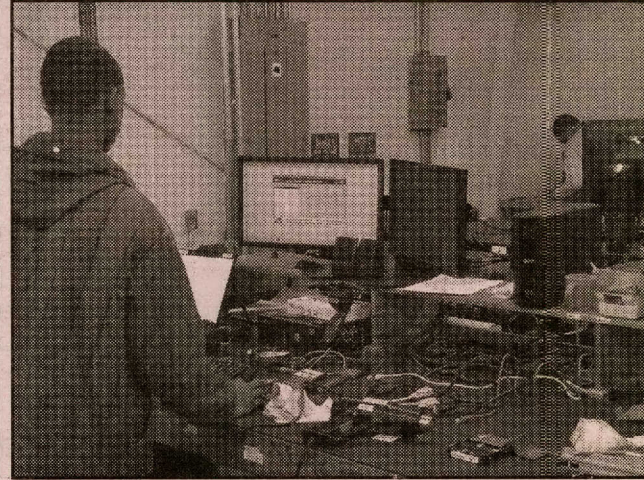
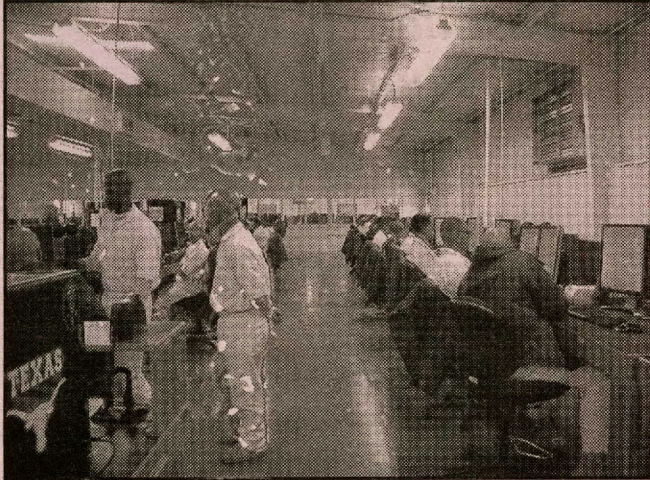
He visited me on his twelfth birthday,  
looking like a strong young man  
with his football trophy in his hands  
He asked me if I'm coming home today.  
I answered him, "Soon, someday."

My son and his wife saw me today,  
told me a grandson is on the way  
before he left he turned around  
with a tear in his eye and asked  
if I'm coming home today.  
I answered him, "Soon, someday."

I went back to my cell and began to pray:  
how do I find a way  
to tell my son?  
I'm never getting out of this place.



COMPUTER continued from page 1



To accomplish the first half of its mission, Wynne Computer Recovery relies on a streamlined process that has served it well since Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) opened the facility in 1999. Functions and offender workers are divided into five work zones.

When computer components arrive, their first stop is Zone One, where they are given an initial cleaning and testing. This is to determine whether they will be deemed scrap or possibly salvageable. When computer components check out as salvageable, they are sent to Zone Two.

In Zone Two, components are given a more thorough evaluation and sorted by type: mice, keyboards, monitors, hard drives, cables, etc. The facility's entire inventory of usable computer equipment is then stored in Zone Four. When components are sent here, they are entered into a database and maintained in inventory until an order is generated. Components required to fulfill the order are pulled and sent to Zone Three where the orders are built to the customers' specifications.

Memory capacity and hard drive installation are two examples of what happens in Zone Three. Once a computer is built to customer specifications, it is operated at 100 percent capacity for a designated period of time in a "burn test" to ensure there is no system failure. After a memory wipe, the computer is

sent back to Zone Four.

In this final stage of the process, Zone Four boxes and wraps the computer for shipping. A TDCJ truck makes regular visits to pick-up the newly refurbished computers.

The customers of the Wynne Computer Recovery are underprivileged children who attend schools considered low-income. To make sure that these children have the same access to computers as their privileged peers, every order of computers for low-income schools is given as a donation from TCI.

"Kids from disadvantaged families will go to school and use the computers that I build, so I'm giving back," said J. Hailey, an offender working Zone Two of the computer recovery facility.

The facility's staff of 42 offenders and eight supervisors work diligently from 5:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m., Monday through Friday.

"We ship about 150-200 computers a month," Williford said.

The humanitarian nature of their efforts inspires a certain degree of emotional investment in the offenders.

"I feel like I'm doing something productive with my time — I'm a lifer, so that means something," offender J. Hargrove said.

"These guys take pride in their work. Their attitude is 'Hey, my child could end up using this computer, so I'm going to do the best that I can,'" said R. Vitale, supervisor of Zone Two.

To fulfill the other half of its mission, Wynne Computer Recovery offers training in A+, Net+, programming and troubleshooting. The training is taught by seasoned offender computer recovery workers. This training takes place in a learning

lab known as Zone Five.

"Through this work, offenders get marketable skills they can use upon release," Vitale said.

The Price Daniel Unit computer recovery has a method of operation very similar to that of the Wynne facility, as well as a similar mission: to recycle state agency computer surplus. Opened in 2006, the Daniels' facility receives most of its computer surplus from state universities. It shares the same charitable objective as the Wynne facility: to provide as many low-income school children as possible with access to computers.

"We shipped approximately 2,400 computers for the calendar year of 2013," Daniels Plant Manager A. Mercer said.

Daniel Computer Recovery also offers training in A+ and Net+, programming and troubleshooting, training that offender workers recognize as valuable.

"I wanted to learn outside of the computer box. I wanted to learn how the Internet functions. The Internet is thousands of networks linked up together, and that's what the networking part is about. The more I grasp, the more I realize there's more yet to learn," offender S. Howell said.

Daniel Unit Computer Recovery workers do not have actual Internet access, but learn the mechanics of it by way of an "Intranet", a system of in-house networks set up just for them to learn.

"I always wanted to learn about computers. The world has become more information-driven, and if you don't know about computers, you will be lost," offender I. Thomas said.

In addition to refurbishing computers and developing the skill set that comes with it, offenders at the Daniel facility are also engaged in a

unique endeavor: producing e-books.

"We work for a company called AMAC to make books accessible via multi-media for the disabled and colleges. They send us books on a daily basis and we turn those into e-books that can be read on an iPad. Records are kept of our performance and we get evaluations. AMAC, which is a part of Georgia Tech University, said that if we do well here, there

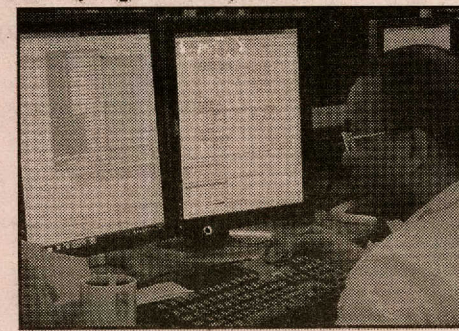
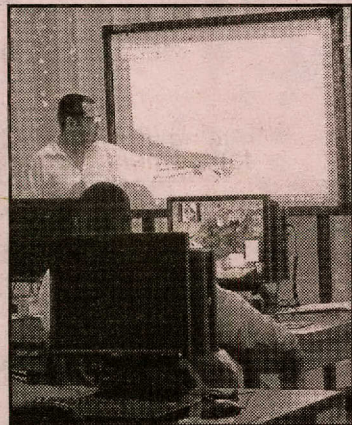
would be employment opportunities for us with them once we got out," said J. Ring, an offender who works in the e-text department.

Like their Wynne counterparts, the Daniel Unit offenders are aware of the socially beneficial cause that frames their work.

"It means more to us because we know

that we're doing something in here that's going to help people who can't do a lot for themselves. By helping to format these e-books, we're helping someone who's disabled get through school," Ring said, referring to those who are unable to physically attend a university because of a disability.

The efforts of the Wynne and Daniel facilities provide children access to computers and also assist offenders in developing technology-based skills which help make future success in society a possibility for both. ♣





# TDCJ/Windham bulletin board



Diboll Correctional Center softball tournament first place team players are A. Burlew, A. Baldwin, J. Charles, R. Acosta, J. Ruiz, K. Elam, B. Grinstead, D. Garcia, L. Johnson, J. Salas, M. Sanchez, K. Williams, J. Stark and X. Hubbard.



Clements Unit board game tournament winners are: dominos "42" - E. Lewis and J. Smith; chess - S. Green, and scrabble - A. Albert.



Clements Unit domino tournament winners are N. Carter and J. Bibbs. Scrabble tournament winner is R. Reed.



Rudd Unit basketball three-on-three tournament second place winners are A. Madrid, J. Walker and T. Robinson.



Dalhart Unit ping pong winners are first place - C. Wells, second place - E. Harrell and third place - M. Fox.



Clements Unit three-on-three basketball tournament winners are L. Sheckles, D. Simmons, M. Sanders, D. Fields and A. Galentine.



Dalhart Unit volleyball tournament second place winners are C. Martinez, B. Calderon, J. Hernandez, F. Armendariz, G. Villanueva and C. Servantez.



Terrell Unit volleyball tournament second place winners are R. Cano Jr., C. Hernandez, J.C. Agular, E. Perez, M. Amaya and J.J. Peno.



Dalhart Unit volleyball tournament first place winners are J. Conn, M. Blankenship, R. Delossantos, J. Landry, D. Matthews and C. Silva.



# The poem

Greg Rains  
McConnell Unit

I never was one to believe in miracles. Truth is, I'm still not quite sure what to make of "The Poem." All I know is something happened — something profound. What you believe is up to you. As for me, it was nothing short of miraculous.

It all started at the end—literally. You see, my grandmother was dying, and I was preparing for what would be my first real experience with death. As a child, I'd been to family funerals, but those were relatives I'd hardly known. This was different. This was "Mom."

I called her that not because I didn't have a mom. I did, and I do — the best; but 10 years earlier, as a rebellious youth of 17, a harsh winter of self-imposed street life had ended with a serious drinking binge and a blackout. I was on my mother's doorstep looking like Sly Stallone at the end of a Rocky flick. After a little motherly T.L.C., I caught a Greyhound to my grandmother's in the country to get myself together.

When I showed up at her door all battered and bruised, the woman I'd always known as "Grandmom" took one look at me and opened her arms, heart, and home to me without so much as a sigh. Over the next year of "getting myself together", my love and respect for her grew stronger and deeper with each day. Though I soon moved out to start a family, from then on she would always be Mom to me, and would forever hold a very special place in my heart.

Ten years, four kids, and a devastating divorce later, I learned that my grandmother had been diagnosed with cancer. What I didn't know was that it had already reached an advanced stage by the time they found it, and she was terminal.

Some say it's easier when you have some time to prepare. I wouldn't know. She was going fast — faster than anyone had expected. Before I could even begin to come to terms with what was happening, the hospice nurse informed us that if we wanted to be with Mom as she passed on, now was the time.

I was shocked. I had thought chemotherapy would "fix her right up", but after a few brutal rounds of that heavyweight losing fight, she'd thrown in the towel. Mom was a woman of faith, and if God was calling her home, she'd be more than happy to oblige.

So there I was, still languishing under the dark cloud of divorce, bracing for yet another gathering storm as I prepared to go to my grandmother's side at her deathbed — to 'lose' Mom. I felt the tears coming, welling up from the depths... and I was afraid. The crushing loss of my wife had nearly driven me to suicide, and I was afraid I might finally go over the edge. There at the brink, I did something I hadn't done since I was a child. I cried out to God.

"Lord," I prayed in a strained whisper, "please help me deal with this," choking on the last word as I felt the floodgates start to give. At that moment, a thought came to me that was so pure and simple that it took me a minute to get my mind around it: celebrate **her life**.



Sitting there lost in deep repose pondering those words, I recalled how our Irish tradition of a wake celebrating life rather than mourning death had always seemed to me the right approach, and it was then that I understood why.

It's the scarcity of our time together which makes the blessing of shared life so sacred, and that truth is never more apparent than when life and death come into stark contrast in those final moments.

And so, taking a pen and pad from the end table drawer, I began to reminisce about Mom, "celebrating her life" in remembrance of all the good she'd brought into this world, and I wept. Not those dreaded tears of sorrow, but sweet tears of joy for the heartachingly beautiful blessing that was her life — tears that flowed as freely as the sentiment pouring from my heart onto the paper before me.

Swept up by powerful memories, I felt myself carried along until, as suddenly as it had begun, the storm was over, and I realized "The Poem" was finished. I hurriedly gathered myself together, stuffing the poem into my pocket, and rushed out the door, anxious to make it to Mom's side before it was too late.

Pulling up to the "home away from home" where I'd known such happy times, I again felt the gravity of that somber occasion begin to weigh on my heart. The scene felt more surreal with each reluctant step as my leaden feet slowly carried me to the door where my mother's tear-filled eyes met mine. "Mom's gone to be with the Lord," she said softly, "She passed at..." but by then we'd embraced, silently crying in each other's arms.

After a lot more hugs and tears, the family began to say their goodbyes until we'd meet again for Mom's funeral. Hugging my mom for probably the hundredth time that day, I remembered "The Poem." "Here," I said, pushing the folded notebook page into her hand, "I wrote this. You can read it later if you want. It might make you feel better."

It wasn't until I was driving home thinking, "If only I hadn't spent so much time on that poem..." that I realized the time of death recorded by the hospice nurse was precisely the moment "The Poem" was finished. At first it struck me as just an odd coincidence. But the more I thought about it, the more I began to think, "What if... no, that's crazy. I don't even believe in such things." Yet I just couldn't help wondering in the back of my mind, "Could we have had some kind of spiritual connection through which we'd somehow spent her last moments more together than even those who were physically by her side?" That was just too much, so

I turned my thoughts to Mom's coming funeral. "The Poem" and the curious circumstances surrounding it were quickly forgotten.

The following week, I pulled through the huge iron gates of Restland Cemetery's sprawling grounds to find its winding "country" lanes clogged with mourners. It seemed Mom had cultivated and nurtured lasting friendships with practically everyone she'd ever known over the years. I wasn't surprised — they say you have to be friendly to have friends, and I never met a friendlier soul than Mom.

As I stepped out of my car I was handed a memorial program, and upon opening it, was surprised to see "The Poem" printed in elegant script. It wasn't until the service started that I came to realize I had written Mom's eulogy.

In the deep, rich baritone of a natural orator, the pastor began:

## MOM

The time has come,  
to say goodbye,  
To let you go,  
to spread your wings and fly.

And as we bid farewell,  
forgive us if we cry,  
With tears of joy,  
we celebrate your life.

Anyone who knew you,  
knew you as a friend,  
Someone who was always there,  
to lend a loving hand.

You touched our lives with kindness,  
and helped us understand  
The love we share  
is all that really matters in the end.

So let us take this moment,  
to remember all you've done,  
To make this world a better place,  
for our daughters and our sons.

By giving us your goodness,  
to keep and pass along,  
With all our hearts we thank you,  
goodbye, we love you, Mom.

As those words were so eloquently spoken by the pastor, it seemed each line was just what we needed just when we needed it, as if some knowing guardian angel was lovingly guiding our way from mournful grief for Mom's death to joyful gratitude for her life. But the crowning moment came a few months later when I saw the epitaph on Mom's headstone: "Anyone who knew you, knew you as a friend."

Since then, "The Poem" has been there for others to comfort them in their time of need. And I've never lost sight of the deeper truth I've come to know through it. Ironically, it was in her death that Mom came to define life for me. But isn't that how it is with us, to never truly appreciate the value of something until we stand to lose it?

Like I said, I never was one to believe in miracles. But you want to know something truly miraculous? I never really did lose Mom. She's right here, in my heart, still going strong. Oh, and in case you haven't figured it out already, I'll let you in on a little secret: "The Poem" is Mom — my miracle. ✦



## Crossing paths with Billy the Kid:

# PAT GARRETT'S TWO SHOTS AT FAME

Richard A. Luna  
Clemens Unit

**P**atrick Floyd Jarvis Garrett was born in Chambers County, Ala. on June 5, 1850. His maternal grandfather gave him the lengthy name, a rifle, saddle, and a bridle — all that was needed to survive on his southern parish Louisiana ranch. He would become the Lincoln County, New Mexico

sheriff who ended the notorious criminal career of William H. Bonney, a.k.a. Billy the Kid.

The first recorded incident of Garrett taking action was 1876. Joe Briscoe, a good friend, pulled an axe on him during a heated argument. Garrett shot him and immediately turned himself in to

the justice of the peace, where his action was ruled self-defense.

Capt. Joseph Lea of the U.S. Army knew Garrett was the man to stop Billy. So, in 1878, he finally convinced the ranch hand to move to Roswell, N. M. and run for sheriff of Lincoln County. In November of 1880, Garrett defeated incumbent George Kimbrel. Garrett's was the first generation of sheriffs after the U.S. Civil War, a lawless time when the six-shooter settled most arguments and everybody had something to prove. Less than a month later, he captured Billy in a dramatic shootout that also took down Tom O'Folliard and Charlie Bowdre, two of the Kid's close companions. Garrett was esteemed throughout the New Mexico Territory as a distinguished officer who served warrants — he always got his man.

District Judge Warren Bristol sentenced Billy to death by public

hanging, scheduled for Friday, May 13, 1881. Garrett was also a Deputy U.S. Marshal, which was not unusual then. There was county business to look after, so Billy was left in the hands of U.S. Marshals Bob Olinger and James Bell — who were instructed to have no less than two guards at all times. The men ignored those instructions, and it cost them their lives. Billy escaped and the manhunt resumed.

Billy was cornered on July 14, 1881, unsuspectingly, by Garrett and his posse at the Fort Sumner ranch of Pete Maxwell. Two shots from a Colt revolver ended a brutal era as Billy clutched a small butcher knife that he'd used moments

earlier to trim jerky. Those who sympathized with the Kid labeled Garrett a coward for shooting an "unarmed" man. The response was a book penned by Garrett titled: "The Authentic Life of Billy the Kid". It failed dismally. It seems that the world lost track of the famed sheriff after that.

Pat Garrett was an entrepreneur. He dreamed of owning a successful business. With crime fighting in the past for the time being, he pursued the personal dreams he had put on hold. In the meantime, President Roosevelt appointed him customs collector in El Paso, a move that angered Texas voters because it was traditionally reserved for Texans.

Garrett wasn't without flaws. He was fond of the drink and was a gambler, which eventually cost him his appointment. A series of failed business ventures forced him back into the saddle as sheriff of Dona Anna County, N. M. He quick-

ly earned a reputation as a hard-nosed tracker of cattle rustlers. His story ended abruptly when a band of outlaws shot Garret in the back of the head on Feb. 28, 1908. There was a trial, but no conviction. There are still numerous theories on who killed him, but the culprit took his secret to the grave.

Why is society fascinated with outlaws like Billy the Kid, while shunning the selfless acts of others like

Pat Garrett, who reluctantly answer the public's call to restore peace to a torn land? There are no less than 60 films about Billy, Billy the Kid museums, a National Scenic byway, and more than one tourist attraction claiming to be the final resting place of Billy's remains (Hico, Texas is one). In 2004, New Mexico Governor Bill Richards,

probably in an effort to boost tourism in his financially-challenged state, reopened an official investigation into all things related to Billy the Kid, exploring the idea of a possible pardon. Cooler heads prevailed, and Billy remains an outlaw.

There are no ballads for Pat Garrett, and no signs pointing to his grave, which was neglected and re-located in 1957.

There's a large difference between good guys and bad guys in media exposure and notoriety. No matter what is portrayed to the masses, good might lose a battle now and then, but it will ultimately win the war.

### Sources:

*USA Today*; June 13, 2013 "Nation". Section 3A  
"To Hell on a Fast Horse: Billy The Kid, Pat Garrett, and the Epic Chase to Justice in the Old West," Mark L. Gardner — first edition Copyright 2010, Harper Collins Publishers. ♣



PAT GARRETT



BILLY THE KID

## RECIPES

### TIPPY'S SPICY TUNA WRAPS

Kristin Metz  
Mountain View Unit

#### Ingredients:

- 1 pkg. tuna
- 4 flour tortillas
- jalapeño chips (crushed)
- 2 jalapeño peppers
- ½ hot pickle
- 1 chili noodle
- ¼ bottle Jalapeño cheese

#### Directions:

Cook noodles without seasoning. Drain tuna. Put tuna in a bowl and break up into little flakes/pieces. In a separate bowl cut up the two jalapeño peppers and ½ hot pickle. Then add the cooked noodles, crushed Jalapeño chips (as much as desired), ¼ bottle of Jalapeño cheese, and ½ packet of chili seasoning. Stir together. Add the tuna to the cheesy mixture and mix it together again.

Spoon mixture into 4 flour tortillas and place in double bagged cooking bags. Heat for 30 minutes and enjoy!

### FUDDY'S BANANA PUDDING

Pamela Harris  
Murray Unit

#### Ingredients:

- 2 pints banana pudding ice cream
- 1 pouch powdered milk
- 1 bag vanilla wafers

#### Directions:

Let ice cream melt. Add half of powdered milk to each pint and mix. Line a white spread bowl with vanilla wafers. Pour some melted ice cream mixture on vanilla wafers, add another layer of wafers; pour more ice cream, add more vanilla wafers until all ice cream and vanilla wafers are used up. Leave it alone for an hour and enjoy!



**RECIPES**



**Ingredients:**

- ½ bag corn chips
- 1 cup refried beans
- 1 cup smashed cheese curls
- 2 jalapeno peppers, sliced
- Squeeze cheese
- 1 summer sausage, diced
- Dehydrated onion

**Directions:**

Mix corn chips into a maza (paste) with water until it has a thick dough-like consistency. Spread maza out on open chip bag in rectangle form approximately 12-inches by eight-inches. Prepare beans and spread over maza. Add hot water and two squeezes of jalapeno cheese to cheese curls, mix to desired consistency and spread over beans a spoonful at a time. Slice jalapenos peppers and summer sausage. Spread over top and add dehydrated onion. Slice into desired number of pieces and cook pieces separately in hot pot. Can produce up to eight pieces.



**Ingredients:**

- ½-1 cup peanut butter
- 1-2 packages oatmeal (any flavor)
- ½ cup hot chocolate

**Directions:**

Mix all ingredients together. Spread out on open chip bag into an approximately 12-inch by eight-inch square. Makes two dozen two-inch square cookies.

**Book review:**

**‘Seriously...I’m Kidding,’ by Ellen DeGeneres**

E. Molina  
Middleton Unit

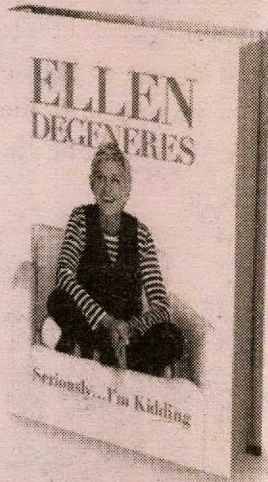
Although Ms. Ellen DeGeneres is most widely known for her work as a stand-up comedian and television host, she has begun a career as an author. In addition to a biography, she has written two other works, “My Point...And I Do Have One” and “The Funny Thing Is...”

In order to fully appreciate the biography “Seriously...I’m Kidding,” the reader must first begin to understand the upbeat but often random antics of DeGeneres. Ellen, as she is simply known, has gained notoriety as an outspoken woman with few inhibitions. While watching The Ellen DeGeneres Show, it would not be uncommon to see her breaking into sporadic improv dancing or venture off topic with a guest in favor of embarrassing lines of questioning.

That being said, “Seriously...I’m Kidding” resonates Ellen’s personality. To give an example, Ellen’s acknowledgement page reads: “I had a hard time deciding how to list and acknowledge all the important people in my life. I was going to list people in alphabetical order, but I didn’t think that would be fair to Catherine

Zeta-Jones. Then I thought maybe I should list every one from shortest to tallest or thinnest to heaviest, but that didn’t seem right either. So I decided to list everyone from smartest to dumbest. No, that’s not true. This list is in no particular order.”

She begins the actual text by briefly outlining her journey and process of writing. She warns the reader about frequent departures from the subject matter and sets up her biography. The first few chapters cover milestones in her career and personal life. She describes her venture as a Cover Girl model and gives advice to aspiring entertain-



ers. She briefly discusses her position as an American Idol judge before moving on to the subject of hoarding in the same chapter!

Ellen’s work is peppered with an array of writing styles including short stories, journal entries, poetry and even coloring pages mixed in with the formal text.

To my surprise, only a relatively small portion of the overall text covers actual biographical events. A large portion of this book seems to relay abstract thought and

reasoning. For example, “How come when you wipe up dust it’s called dusting, but when you wipe up a spill it’s not called spilling?”

Although the text, as a whole, is difficult to follow due to its seemingly random nature, it is funny and educational. She offers fun facts, as well as a dictionary to decipher teenage lingo. A few pages are dedicated to the topics of gift giving and meditation.

Though at times a little hard to follow, “Seriously...I’m Kidding” is a good read. Ellen offers a mental break from our prison routine by using her skills as a comedian to lighten our day. This text is upbeat, positive and fun. I give it four out of five stars. ♣

**Sudoku**

**Easy**

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

**Difficult**

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

**Manufacturing & Logistics:  
Skilled craftsmen wanted for  
Gib Lewis Unit woodworking  
shop in Woodville, TX**

To apply for a Manufacturing and Logistics job at the Gib Lewis Unit woodworking shop, send an I-60 detailing your work history and qualifications to Mr. Risinger, Plant Manager. You will be notified if chosen.

Craftsmen are needed for the following positions:

- Furniture building
- Carpentry
- Spraying and staining
- Woodworkers
- Cabinetmakers

Must be classified as a G2 S3 — NO OUTSIDE TRUSTEES. ♣