

The ECHO

Texas Prison News

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Published Since 1928

Volume 87, No. 1, February 2015

Distributed Free to Texas Prisoners

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 Fund CURE Fan

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

Name _____

TDCJ# _____

Unit _____

2. The Trust Fund will then determine if you qualify for a fan and process your request.

Your request must be dated **Jan. 1, 2015**, through **June 30, 2015**. This is the only time period the request can be made during 2015.

Send only the request.

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TDCJ supports 'our veterans'

By Oliver J. Bell, Chairman
Texas Department of Criminal Justice

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Many of our veterans leave the military and face an array of life challenges, including difficult experiences, transitions, troubling symptoms and mental health conditions. All too often veterans return home needing support to address symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, alcohol and drug abuse, depression, anxiety, psychosis and mood disorders.

There are nearly 11,000 offenders with past military service incarcerated in TDCJ. Promoting and establishing programs to address the needs of those who served our military and are now under TDCJ's supervision, while ensuring they receive proper treatment and referrals, is essential to improving the lives of our offender veterans. Their success depends on support from everyone who interacts with them: friends, family members, and people in our communities across the nation, as well as veterans service organizations, community-based groups and local health care providers that have direct contact with veterans every day. TDCJ supports veterans with a keen awareness of both their needs and the various resources that are available.

TDCJ Veterans Reentry Services

The agency has historically made publications such as the Department of Veterans Affairs' *A Guide for Veterans Incarcerated in Texas* available to incarcerated offenders and also facilitates visits by representatives of the Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN). A new Veterans Affairs (VA)-produced video providing an overview of the VA's services for incarcerated offenders is being shown during the intake process.

With funding provided by the Texas Legislature, TDCJ has added more reentry coordinator positions in order to enhance existing services and serve more releasing offenders, including newly-releasing veterans. Pre-release services include requesting copies of DD-214 discharge papers and other military records and applying for health benefits. Medical and education records are provided to the Texas Veterans Commission to the local VA facility and/or county services officers when requested. TDCJ staff provides veterans with information regarding higher education opportunities and links the offender to the veterans' representative at the college of their choice, the Texas Veterans Commission, VA, or County Services' office in order to determine which college benefits are available.

VETERANS continued on page 8

Beds of change: Mattress factories on Wynne, Smith build production skills for offender world-readiness

John W. Flagg, Staff Writer

Since ancient times, people have been searching for a way to make sleep a more pleasant experience. From straw floor mats to feather-filled cushions to modern inner spring beds, the quest for a comfortable night's rest can be considered a fundamental aspect of what it means to be human.

Texas Correctional Industries (TCI), the industrial arm of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), has been doing its part to contribute to this task through the mattress factories on the Wynne and Smith units.

"Our mission is to create good quality products," said R. Hoke, plant manager at the Wynne Unit mattress factory.

Upon entering the mattress factory on the Wynne Unit, one is immediately impressed by the level of persistent effort that is occurring. Men and machines are fast at work, churning out mattress after mattress at an astonishing rate: 300 per day; 1,500 per week; 6,000 per month; 72,000 per year.

"When the cut order arrives to make mattresses, we go all out to get it done," Hoke said.



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The ECHO

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Offenders can write *The ECHO* by truck mail.

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To the editor,

A story that must be told: our volunteer Donnie P. is no longer with us. He gave his time to both the Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) program here at the Pack Unit. He was a winner.

His story: he was given an aggravated life sentence for armed robbery and spent over 10 years in ad. seg. One day he had a spiritual awakening and pictured a better way to live behind the walls.

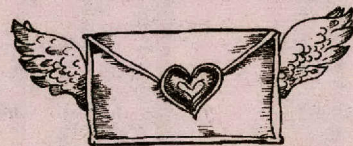
Locked up for over 30 years, he started getting involved with recovery after his awakening. Because he was an alcoholic/addict, he drank a lot of hooch before he saw the light. His main dream was to not die in TDCJ, so he stayed clean and sober for over 15 years. He ended up making parole and went home.

While he was out, he knew that to keep what he had, he had to give it away, so he became a volunteer and gave hope to those still behind the wire. He passed away in May. He left us at the Pack Unit with the knowledge that with recovery, anything is possible.

**James Rucks
Pack Unit**

To the reader,

*Thanks for sharing a remarkable story. The idea of him coming back into TDCJ as a volunteer speaks volumes of his sincerity and compassion for his fellow man. His story should offer hope to others who deal with addictions. It is difficult, but addictions can be overcome with proper help. Thanks for writing to *The ECHO*.*



To the editor,

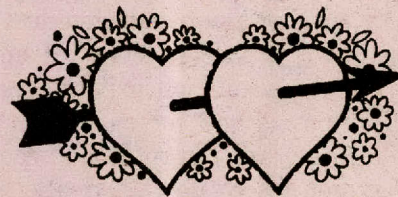
I believe in the accuracy of the wise adage: "A man who fails to plan has instead planned to fail." I believe that any man can ruin or build his destiny at any time. We, as offenders, know this first hand. I believe that our dreams are the blue prints and potent elements to our future realities. And I believe that failure can be a catalyst for a new approach

to change. Belief implies that we have to actually get up and do something about our situation if we really believe in a better tomorrow.

**Quincy Patterson
Beto Unit**

To the reader,

Dreams, plans, goals and self discipline are all necessities that can lead to a better tomorrow. The ECHO always encourages readers to do these things during the time you have now. Now is the time to make a plan for the future, not the day you walk out. Thanks for taking the time to share with our readers.



To the editor,

There are people in prison who have the tendency to make the environment totally inhospitable. It seems like they go out of their way to make things unpleasant for all concerned. These people could be called "interrupters." Not only do they make unwanted interruptions, they also express lots of negativity. The world is filled with so

much negativity, and all the interrupter does is add to the negativity presently existing. Our struggles as offenders are tough enough, and we don't need someone here on the inside working to make those struggles even harder. Prison doesn't have to prevent us from trying to be a better person. Because the path to self-improvement is open to all, it should be the responsibility of those already on that path to guide others to a more positive approach. We are in this together. We may not be able to change the world, but we can at least change our attitudes and values. It begins with us — with you, me and everyone else. Thanks for listening.

**Diana Salinas
Mt. View Unit**

To the reader,

I receive lots of letters discussing the negative attitudes found inside these prison walls. Negative attitudes are abundant. It takes a self-controlled person with character to see past negativity. Getting involved in programs or education can lead to positive attitudes and positive character traits. Put yourself in the best environment you can... even while in prison. Thanks for sharing your thoughts with our readers.

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). ♣

DEAR DARBY

LETTERS TO THE OL' THANG

Dear Darby

I am writing in regards to the article "In My Dreams" by William West, (Dec/Jan. 2014). My heart goes out to Mr. West because of the tragedy that occurred with his wife's accident. I'm not sure why he feels guilty over what happened since it didn't appear that what befell his wife was in any way his fault.

I commend him for continuing to love and remain married to his wife despite the fact that she is no longer the physically and mentally beautiful, vibrant woman he first married. Those who stay married long enough all have to make similar sacrifices eventually. This article did not have a Hollywood-style happy ending, but it is real life and I appreciate seeing such articles in *The ECHO*.

Keeping it real,
J.B.

Duncan Unit

Dear Jeb,

I, too, was moved by "In My Dreams." It was a poignant piece about love and tragedy in life. West's feeling of guilt is quite common — folks sometimes feel bad about something even though the tragedy is not their fault. It's submissions such as this that help me appreciate life when things are good and realize that things don't always have a fairytale ending.

Dear Darby,

Why do I bite my tongue all the time to keep some comments to myself? Because if I choose to unleash them upon the idiots in here, well, I guess I would stay locked up in solitary.

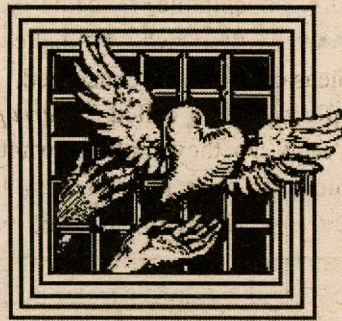
Why do common sense and respect go out the window when some guys come to prison? What really gets me is all the slang, sagging pants and cutting in line.

What can I do to change it? Lead by example. Treat others as I want to be treated. Refuse to give in to the temptation to lash out. But the best thing I can do to change it? Get out of prison! Darby, you have a four-digit TDC number, so tell me, am I wrong?

Bryan
McConnell Unit

Dear B,

No, you're not wrong. Taking the high road is the better path in life. Keep your head up, bro!



Dear Darby,

I want to keep this plain and simple: The women in our lives need to be re-

Famous Quotes

'NO ONE IS SO SAVAGE THAT HE CANNOT BECOME CIVILIZED, IF HE WILL LEND A PATIENT EAR TO CULTURE.'

— HORACE

spected. If you have someone on the outside, you need to show them the proper respect. We put ourselves in prison, and if someone has the kindness or compassion to extend a hand to us while we are here, we need to show them our appreciation. Enough said!

Just Saying!
Smith Unit

Dear J,

I couldn't agree with you more. I remember years ago when a guy on the block came back from a visit complaining. He was upset that his girl didn't bring any money to buy him something from the vending machines. It blew my mind — this ungrateful wretch is complaining about a lack of snacks when someone had the kindness to drive many miles to visit him behind bars. I determined never to become "that guy," and I show my appreciation to the family and friends who have supported me through the years. Folks in here need to let those on the outside know that they appreciate their support. 'Nuff said!

Dear Darby,

Say, Old School, what's good? Since you are so resourceful about what's going down around TDCJ, then maybe you can help a girl out. What is up with our throwed off clothes that they give us girls to wear?! I mean, like, really? These clothes are designed for ya'll dudes, not us girls! I'm a curvy lady, but I'm not saying that we need skinny jeans. It would be nice to have clothes that fit us though. Please see if you can get that arranged. Thanks!

Lisa "Versace" Augustine
Crain Unit

Dear V,

You gals got guy clothes?! What a coincidence — we guys have yours! They must have had a mix-up somewhere. Back in the mid-90s when they did away with the pants with the button fly and front pockets, they started giving us guys pants we swore were maternity wear, with the elastic waistband. It's gotta be a conspiracy. V, we've got to work on making parole — that way we can wear outfits more to our liking!

The ECHO requests submissions

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

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

Suggestions:

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

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

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

Extras: Extras refer to letters to the editor, letters to Darby, puzzles,

recipes and short stories, to name a few.

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

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

John Doe, #1234567

Huntsville Unit

Letter to the Editor (or article, poem, etc.)

Don't hesitate to send us your work — even if you are not a professional writer. We will edit your submissions for clarity and effectiveness.

Thank you for your continued support of *The ECHO*.

Remembering Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.:

The drum major instinct

Lion M. O'Neil
Staff writer

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. preached a sermon entitled "The Drum Major Instinct," in which he referenced a scripture from the Bible. In this scripture, two disciples say to Jesus, "When you establish your kingdom, let one of us sit on the right hand and the other on the left hand of your throne." The other disciples condemned this request as being selfish. Dr. King told the congregation not to be so quick to condemn the behavior of the disciples because we, too, possess those same qualities and desires. Jesus admonished the disciples who made the request and told them that "whosoever of you will be great among you, shall be your servant."

The "drum major instinct" is a desire to be out front, a desire to lead the parade, a desire to be first. We aspire to be recognized for our accomplishments, surpass others and achieve distinction, which some say starts as an infant when we cry for the attention of our care giver and perpetuates throughout adulthood. It's a basic impulse that Alfred Adler, the great psychoanalyst, defined as the basic drive of human life, attention-seeking behavior—the drum major instinct.

This instinct is why we as adults try so hard to "keep up with the Joneses." We tend to chase the newest trends and fads in an effort to be accepted by our peers. Even when we strive to be original, it's still in an effort to be distinguished as different from others and therefore recognized as a leader in our own unique right. When we receive praise from others, it boosts our self esteem and feeds the ego, which in turn encourages attention-seeking behavior.

According to Dr. King, this instinct is why people are joiners. We join organizations, fraternities, sororities, street gangs and various other groups in a quest for attention, recognition and a sense of importance. Our involvement in these various faculties reinforces the image that we want to portray ourselves to others as being notable and worthy of adornment.

The instinct has both negative and positive ramifications that can become destructive if not harnessed. It can cause our personalities to be-

come distorted. A person with a distorted persona is more likely to boast of attainment in things that are of no worth to others and have a higher proclivity for dishonesty.

Criminologists tell us that some people are driven to crime because of the drum major instinct. When a person feels as though they're not receiving an adequate amount of attention through the normal modes of socially acceptable behavior, they turn to anti-social behavior to gain attention in order to feel important.

Another key aspect of a distorted personality that Dr. King expounded on during his sermon was how the drum major instinct can cause individuals to push others down in order to pull themselves up. People spread evil, vicious lies and gossip about people to make themselves look good at the expense of others. The tragedy of discrimination is that because of a perverted and distorted instinct, some people feel the need to be superior to others and use the differences in our physical traits as an entitlement to civil and human rights not afforded to all.

Dr. King concluded the sermon by interpreting the message that Jesus made to his disciples. He didn't condemn the disciples for wanting to sit on the right and left hand of the throne. He told them that those who sit beside him will do so in the capacity as servants to humanity. Dr. King went on to say: don't give up this instinct. It's a good instinct if used correctly. It's normal to feel the need to be important and in the forefront of society, but we should want to be first in love, moral excellence, generosity and forgiveness.

The honor of sitting at His right and left hand belongs to those who are prepared, and one must earn that position through service to the people. True greatness comes not by favoritism, but by fitness. According to Dr. King, Jesus changed the paradigm of our aspiration for greatness. He taught us that it's OK to be great; however, our perspective of greatness should be redefined, as the greatest among us shall be servants for a righteous cause free from self-righteous reasoning.

Dr. King told the parishioners in the church that he didn't want

a long funeral or long eulogy at his funeral service. He told them not to mention that he had a Nobel Peace Prize and 400 other awards. He told the congregation that he'd rather they mention that he tried desperately to serve the needs of others. He tried to love somebody. He tried to feed the hungry. He tried to clothe the naked. He tried to visit those in prison. He tried to live his life in service to God by serving humanity. He told the people that if one were to say he was a drum major, say that he was a drum major for peace; he was a drum major for righteousness and all the other shallow things do not matter.

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968, two

months after giving this sermon. He left us a higher standard by which to measure ourselves. It's a natural desire to want to be recognized as great, but we should strive to be recognized for the great good that we do in service to others. We should seek approval and recognition for being law abiding providers for our families, loved ones and anyone in need. The legacy of Dr. King should not perish in the ignorance of self. May he live forever through selfless altruistic motives cultivated by the sincere desire to serve God by serving others.

Source: "Famous Sermons and Public Addresses," Ch. 43, p.259. ♣

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles introduces nationwide toll-free telephone number and offender search web page

Texas and the rest of the nation now can call a toll-free number for current information regarding an offender's parole review status, including: whether or not an offender is in the review process, the last parole decision and date; and an offender's next scheduled review. The Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles (BPP) recently made the announcement coinciding with the rollout of the agency's new offender search web page.

The listing — 1-844-512-0461 — consolidates telephone numbers of the numerous Board and Institutional Parole Offices spread across the state of Texas, centralizing them in one call center, handling approximately 300,000 calls annually. The call center, manned by seasoned telephone agents, will answer parole review inquiries about incarcerated Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) offenders, including: parole status information for offenders, offender families, attorneys, TDCJ Victim Services, state senator and state representative offices, trial officials and law enforcement offices throughout Texas and the U.S., among others.

The toll-free number is also designed to reduce hold times and increase the quality of the customer service experience.

In addition, the recently unveiled "sister" web page streamlines the current business process, alleviating the need to address the most commonly asked parole status questions and allowing BPP to respond to more complex requests in a timely manner. This allows the agency to be more responsive to public inquiries, provide better information access and achieve a higher volume of work.

Public access via the toll-free number will be from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (CST), Monday through Friday. The web page is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week (<http://offender.tdcj.state.tx.us/OffenderSearch/index.jsp>).

The Board of Pardons and Paroles, established by the Texas Constitution, decides which eligible offenders to release on parole, the conditions for parole, and whether to revoke parole if conditions are not met. The board also recommends clemency matters, including pardons, to the governor. ♣

Lessons from Elon Musk



John W. Flagg
Staff Writer

In the tradition of inventive pioneers like Alexander Graham Bell or Thomas Edison, Elon Musk has profoundly impacted civilization through his accomplishments in the fields of both science and technology.

But who exactly is Elon Musk?

Part scientist, part businessman, Elon Musk is the founder of half a dozen innovative companies and is considered one of the world's most brilliant minds. Heedless of the norms and conventions of the day, Musk has disrupted the aerospace industry (SpaceX), shaken up the auto business with electric cars (Tesla Motors), brought reusable energy into the domestic realm (SolarCity), and has made online purchases as quick as a click away (PayPal).

But how did Musk get to where he is right now? What is the source of his relentless drive? Where does he get his unique brand of creative vision? The following lessons are an attempt to unearth the means by which Musk has arrived at his astonishing level of success, rendered in a way that can be beneficial to offenders.

Dream big, but chart your course with clarity and determination: From mass producing electric cars to finding a path for humanity to expand beyond earth, Elon Musk has proven time and again that he can take his dreams and make them a reality. However, Musk had a fully thought out strategy and a clear definition of his objectives. Likewise, we as offenders all share a dream of changing our future. But we must first have a clear strategy of how to make that dream a reality. The greater *clarity* we have of a better future, and the more *determined* we are in our pursuit of that future, the greater our odds of succeeding. Where are you headed? What do you see yourself doing in a year? Five years? Ten years? These are serious questions that we cannot leave to chance. Because getting from point A (present) to point B (future) is perhaps an offender's most important journey. Once we have the vision for the future, the pieces will snap into place. Together, the *dream* and the *dreamer* will begin to create the future.

Failure is inevitable, but don't give up: Elon Musk knows failure. For instance, the trial launches of the Falcon 9 rocket at SpaceX were an utter disaster. One after another, the rockets kept malfunctioning. But Musk never gave up. He pushed forward with even greater determination and kept on trying until he got it right. Unfortunately, many offenders have seen their share of failure, too. But offenders cannot

allow failure to dash their high hopes for achieving goals. Like Musk, offenders must be willing to forge ahead in the face of defeat and learn to see their mistakes not as a reason to despair or to doubt themselves but as a means to strengthen their resolve. Failure reveals to us the flaws in our attitude and behavior, and encourages us to refine and reshape our approach. The future is shaped by men and women who use failure as a launch pad to propel them onto higher ground.

Don't be frustrated by the past: Elon Musk endured the tragic loss of his parents at a young age and grew up in various orphanages. A disadvantaged upbringing is a difficult obstacle to overcome, but Musk never let his past slow him down. Many offenders have also emerged from a complicated past. But to live in a way that maintains negative memories and emotions is a recipe for self-destruction. By resolving old conflicts and casting off negative habit patterns, as Musk did, we can learn to move beyond the past. Each of us has a unique history, a present reality, and an oncoming future. These are the places we have come from, our immediate experiences, and the places we will be heading. To accept the past is to be prepared for change. The future will evolve of its own accord, as long as we continue to find and pursue alternatives to a complicated past.

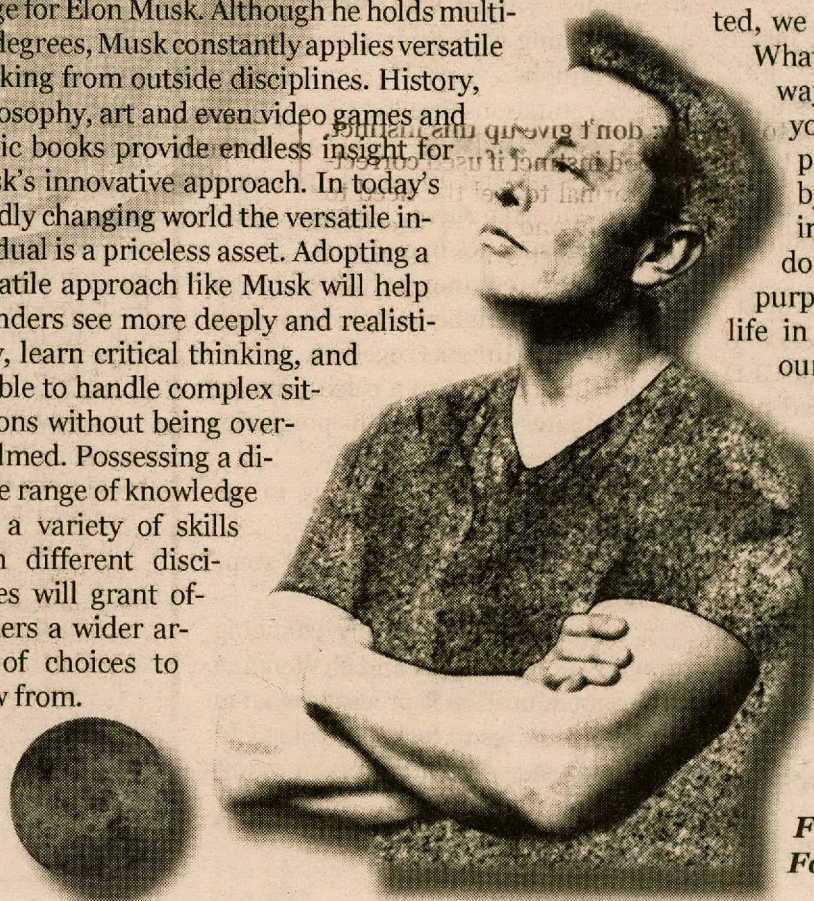
Be versatile: No field of study is out of range for Elon Musk. Although he holds multiple degrees, Musk constantly applies versatile thinking from outside disciplines. History, philosophy, art and even video games and comic books provide endless insight for Musk's innovative approach. In today's rapidly changing world the versatile individual is a priceless asset. Adopting a versatile approach like Musk will help offenders see more deeply and realistically, learn critical thinking, and be able to handle complex situations without being overwhelmed. Possessing a diverse range of knowledge and a variety of skills from different disciplines will grant offenders a wider array of choices to draw from.

Embrace a lifestyle of constant learning: Education occupies a vital role in Elon Musk's world of achievement. Receiving degrees in physics, engineering, and business would be enough for most people. But according to Musk, life is about *constant learning*. The maxim "Know thyself" — so ancient, so deceptively simple, so difficult to follow — has gained in breadth of meaning as we learn more about the connection between education and rehabilitation. By taking responsibility for continuous self development, offenders can transform their incarceration into an effective and purposeful education opportunity. Education will introduce offenders to positive habit patterns and renewed self-concepts while expanding their skill repertoire. Constant training, retraining, learning, re-learning and learning anew is the key for offenders to achieve a relevant position in today's fast paced society.

To live as though what you do makes a difference: Elon Musk has said: "The power of vast wealth and resources has only one advantage: the power to make a difference in the world." The quest for meaning is an instinctive human drive and is often a significant factor in determining our direction in life. What many offenders lack is a sense of a larger purpose in their lives. Yet in order to become fully committed, we must first have a worthy goal.

What are you aiming for? In what way do you intend to contribute your time and effort? Who depends on you and is impacted by your choices? Who or what inspires you to want to be and do more? A sense of meaning and purpose can change an offender's life in unexpected ways. By placing our personal goals within a larger context we can transform the ordinary into the *extraordinary*. A sense of meaning can be a reminder that, even as offenders, we are still connected to society, progress and a future filled with unrealized horizons. We, too, can make a difference in the world.

Sources:
Forbes.com
Fortune.com ↗



Wynne Unit celebrates GED achievement, education

John W. Flagg, Staff Writer

Warden K. Strong delivered a powerful opening address to the Wynne Unit's graduating GED class.

"Getting your GED is just the first step," Strong said. "The door to the future is open. Now take full advantage of the educational opportunities offered to you here on the Wynne Unit, and go as far as you can."

For the 19 offenders in the audience, those words could not have resonated with more positive vitality.

"My life has taken on a whole new meaning through the pursuit of education," GED graduate and valedictorian J. Trevino said. "I'm going through that door."

It may seem unusual to discover offenders expressing enthusiasm over academics. However, there is a thriving academic culture on the Wynne Unit that emphasizes learning as a rehabilitative tool. Such statements are not only commonplace on the Wynne Unit, but they are quite popular as well.

"I'm grateful for Windham for making it possible for me and my fellow classmates to have a solid education," said J. Roberts, GED graduate and salutatorian.

The ceremony was conducted inside the Rockwell Chapel, the Wynne Unit's very own architectural heritage site. A wide promenade, high vaulted ceilings, and ornate stained glass windows greet each visitor upon arrival, creating a truly breathtaking experience for the uninitiated.

Family members of graduates, in attendance to witness their incarcerated loved ones receive a certificate for GED achievement, sit in rows of hand-polished cherry wood pews. The presence of family adds special significance to the graduates' accomplishments, helping to fortify relationships that may have weakened over time and distance.

"Having my family here to support me and even watch me from the audience makes this all so much more special," said Trevino, whose sister and nephew were among the crowd.

Accompanying Warden Strong on the stage were members of the Wynne Unit's Windham faculty, including Principal J. Griffith and teachers D. Goffney,

M. Caldwell and C. Thornton. Griffith gave the commemorative address, imparting words of wisdom and inspiration to the assembled graduates. With a showman's flair he drew a \$20 bill from his pocket. Holding the bill aloft for all to see, he gazed pointedly at the offenders assembled in the crowd, and began his speech.

"This bill represents value. But what if I did this to it...?!"

Principal Griffith proceeded to do the unthinkable: he tore the bill in half. The crowd of onlookers gasped in shock.

As a hush settled upon the room, Griffith continued his dialogue.

"This bill, though torn, can easily be taped back together. Its value remains intact. It still serves a purpose; still has function. And just like each and every one of you graduating here today, you may be a little torn, but your value as a human being remains intact. You, too, still have function; you, too, still serve a purpose in society. Education is the tape that puts you back together again."

After applauding the speech the offenders lined up to receive their GED certificates, presented to them personally by teacher M. Caldwell. Families in attendance erupted with cheers, elated and brimming with pride at their loved one's triumphs.

"Congratulations!" yelled a parent.

"It's about time, dad," yelled a son.

The Wynne Unit Ensemble provided musical entertainment. They played a fusion of gospel, R&B, and jazz.

Graduates were then permitted to visit with family members while enjoying a round of refreshments together.

As the event drew to a close, some of the graduates were already pondering the next phase of their journey.

"I'm looking forward to going to college," offender Roberts said.

"Stay tuned. College is my next step," offender Trevino said.

In a world that is rapidly changing, growing more complex and challenging, a relevant education is precisely what an offender requires to tackle the obstacles that lie ahead. And it begins at Windham with a GED.

As Warden Strong said, "The door to the future is open." ♣

A Woman's Perspective: Change for the better

Jennifer Toon, Contributing Writer

"Have you lost your mind?"

That's what I wanted to ask the woman standing in front of me. She was new to the unit and had stopped me on the rec yard to inquire about the usual concerns such as job assignments, commissary and officer temperament. Then her personal story came tumbling out. That's when she unknowingly changed my life forever.

In explaining what she considered to be injustice for a five year sentence for robbery, she said, "It wasn't that big of a deal. I just tied an old man to a chair. He had some bruise on his wrists, but old people bruise easily." I was stunned by her thought process, but even more surprised by the realization of how such thinking mirrored my own. As she walked away, I asked myself the better questions, "Have we all lost our minds?"

Before I go any further, please understand what I'm about to say will be said in general terms. I have no way of knowing the details of each reader's circumstances, but I will venture to assume the majority can relate to what I'm writing. We are not victims perhaps at some point in our lives we were, but in regards to our confinement, we are not. We all have different degrees of guilt, and I'm certainly not arguing that. What I'm proposing is that we have the common thread of some level of accountability in our situations. The mere existence of guilt something we must never deny, even if we have strong feelings about the punishment. Accepting responsibility in what is truly our fault is the foundation for change.

So why do we blame others or justify or minimize our behavior? I think a simple reason is that no one enjoys consequences. When I was 14, I wasn't about to say, "It was me who totally ran up the phone bill to \$300, and I know Dad is going to ground me for the whole school year. Awesome! Can't wait for that!"

Uh, no.

I raced to the mailbox everyday to retrieve the bill, which I threw away because in my mind that solved everything. When that didn't work, I blamed my brother (Sorry, Bubba!).

While that's part of it, I believe the main reason we try to wiggle free from our guilt is because it is extremely painful to fully grasp how we've hurt others. We're not sociopaths. We're not unemotional, heartless empty shells. I refuse to believe that, no matter what we've done. We blame, justify and minimize because it's devastating to admit to ourselves (much less anyone else) that we are responsible for hurt. This type of honesty takes courage.

In the "Power of New Attitude," Alan Nelson writes, "Healthy guilt is an emotional or mental conviction that results in a behavioral change." Admission is not guilt enough. We must have the understanding of how our actions have affected others. I call that remorse. Healthy guilt leads to remorse which leads to repentance. Don't let that word scare you off. Repentance in its simplest definition means turning away from a behavior, then trying to make amends by doing something to compensate for the harm.

I remember I had a neighbor who woke me up every single morning by yelling over my head to someone across the room. Each time after I sat up she'd say, "Oh, I'm so sorry!" Finally out of frustration, I said, "Really? If you were, you'd stop." Whoa. Now I understand why my "I'm sorry" never meant much to the people in my life.

Healthy guilt will produce a change in behavior. Denial prevents that, as much as staying stuck in the pain of guilt does. Festering in the guilt without the behavioral change produces shame, which leads to self-hatred.

It's not easy to be accountable. It hurts; but avoiding healthy guilt through the extremes of self-hatred or total denial hurts everyone involved. We are actually empowered when we own our guilt. Viktor Frankl wrote, "Being responsible for your crime brings an opportunity to overcome the offense." If we can agree with that, then perhaps we haven't lost our minds after all. ♣

I've learned

Submitted by Charles Haynes Jr.
Coffield Unit Reporter

I've learned:

- that you cannot make someone love you. All you can do is be someone who can be loved. The rest is up to them.
- that no matter how much I care, some people just don't care back.
- that it takes years to build up trust and only seconds to destroy it.
- that it's not what you have in your life, but who you have in your life that counts.
- that you can get by on charm for about 15 minutes. After that, you'd better know something.
- that you shouldn't compare yourself to the best others can do.
- that you can do something in an instant that will give you heartache for the rest of your life.
- that it's taking me a long time to become the person I want to be.
- that you should always leave loved ones with loving words. It may be the last time you see them.
- that you can keep going long after you think you can't.
- that I am responsible for what I do and how I act no matter how I feel.
- that either you control your attitude or it controls you.
- that regardless of how hot and steamy a relationship is at first, the passion fades and there had better be something else to take its place.
- that heroes are the people who do what has to be done, when it needs to be done, regardless of the consequences.
- that money is a lousy way of keeping score.
- that my best friend and I can do anything or nothing and have the best time.
- that sometimes the people that you expect to kick you when you're down will turn out be the ones to help you get back up.
- that sometimes when I'm angry, I have the right to be angry, but that doesn't give me the right to be cruel.
- that the things that I have learned are a part of the continuous growing process that we endure while we are living. This is what carries me every step of the way while I am alive. ♣

Softball tournament at Duncan Unit: Greysox vs Sports Reach ministry

Jim Brannen
Duncan Unit reporter

"The Duncan Greysox never should have won," said J. Brannen, unit reporter on the Duncan Unit. "Offenders in their 50s, 60s and 70s are not supposed to beat younger softball players in their 20s and 30s."

For the past six years, members of the Sports Reach ministry in Huntsville have played softball games with some older offenders on the Duncan Unit.

"For four years straight the games were uneven, as the younger players from Sports Reach had youth on their side and won every time against the older offenders," Brannen said.

Two years ago, Chaplain Edwards of the Duncan Unit came up with a plan to give the older offenders a fighting chance. He organized teams and practices with the help of several volunteer coaches. A sense of team spirit and camaraderie developed among the offenders as a result.

"Skills and muscles that had long lain dormant were dusted off and put to good use," Brannen said.

On game day the strategy paid off. The older offenders on team Greysox beat the Sports Reach Youngsters two out of three games.

"The Greysox have been winning with a competitive edge ever since," Brannen said.

Many thanks to Warden Mill of the Duncan Unit, Chaplain Edwards, Sports Reach ministry and all the volunteer coaches. ♣

Success is failure

Ricardo Cisneros
Neal Unit

This is a story about twins, born identical, yet so much apart. On a day much like today, a mother gave birth to siblings, only seconds apart. With father at hand, Dr. Dividus received orders to name the first one Success, and the second one Failure. After hours of labor, and a trying delivery, the two pushed through almost simultaneously. With no time to spare, the doctor delivered one, then the other, but confused who was who. Quickly, and unbeknownst to anyone, he grabbed the second one and named him Success, then grabbed the first one and named him Failure. Father was happy. Their fate was sealed — or was it?

Success and Failure grew, but no one could tell them apart. Success, it seemed, tried his hand at everything, and Failure, without a doubt, was always around. Wherever Success went, there too was Failure — inseparable from birth. When Success landed the grades, made the team, and got the girl, Failure was there with his own victories, but made it look easier.

The twins went about accomplishing many tasks and overcoming great feats.

One day, Success and Failure met with much adversity, so they separated and went their own way. With life's ups and downs, Failure gave in to many false truths and stumbled and fell. Success did no better, as he believed less in himself than he did in his brother. The siblings, it seemed, were on the road to self-destruction, trapped in wishful thinking, and paralyzed with fear of the unknown. Truth be told, Success and Failure were no common kin, nor were they ordinary twins. They were one and the same.

The years passed and Success and Failure grew further apart — both-ered with thoughts of "what could've been." They soon settled into a couple of "have beens" who had no zest for life. With little hope for anything great, they slid into a grave state-of-mind and became deathly ill. Failure checked into the hospital and Success soon followed. Dr. Dividus attended to both patients and struggled

to obtain a diagnosis. Meanwhile, the brothers sank deeper into self-pity, only breaths away from death. Then, Dr. Unitus sought to help. He placed the two in the same room separated only by a sheet. The twins were unaware of each other's presence in the room, yet, almost simultaneously, they came back from whatever state of illness plagued them. They gained strength from one another and grew stronger in heart, full of hope. It was as if, reconciled, Success and Failure were now in harmony. Suddenly, the sky was bluer, the air was fresher, and the day was livelier.

Dr. Dividus sensed the change and rushed in to face Success and Failure. He addressed them individually and explained their birth, his folly, and the mix-up in names. Dr. Unitus followed. He was inspired by Success and Failure, but dismayed by Dr. Dividus. He took the high road, though, as he encouraged everyone with these words:

"You have no choice in your birth or what people call you, but you have a

choice in how you live your life and what you become. Oftentimes, what-ever divides us is no greater than what unites us, but we have to be willing to grow together."

Then, Dr. Unitus pulled the sheet down and there they were — Success and Failure — staring at each other, face to face. They peered into one another's eyes as if looking into themselves, and they saw life.

The moral of the story: Success is Failure turned inside out. We can't have one without the other. Complacency is fine for those who are done living and make memories their final resting spot. But for the rest of us who wake-up on this side of the dirt, life is lived in the moments between Success and Failure. A little more might get us there, but a little less just means we keep trying again, and again, and again. And even when our Success is called Failure from the beginning, we never give up. After all, it just might be a mix-up in names. ♣

Scams target Texas offenders, families

Scam: A fraudulent or deceptive act or operation; To deceive, to defraud; To obtain money by a scam.

— Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition, 2003

In today's fast-paced, internet world, people are many times tempted to make fast, illegal money. Today, scams of all types are rampant. Scams include certain lotteries, auctions, postal scams, pet scams, Super Bowl ticket scams, psychic scams, etc.

It is now becoming more evident that certain people are now attempting to scam prison and jail inmates and their families, including those involved with the TDCJ. Naturally, scams involving prison inmates will normally involve promises of release or reduced sentencing. The scams, today, are easily contrived by use of multiple databases now available on the internet. Inmate and inmate family names and addresses are easily

available for scam mail-outs. Family phone numbers are also available, and thus, aid in scams.

Unfortunately, scams continue to target offenders in TDCJ. For example, Texas prisoners or their families may receive letters from companies promising to achieve release results, regardless of what post-conviction remedies have been previously sought. These letters make promises that are sometimes impossible to fulfill. A one-time fee is sometimes required for a company to review an offender's case.

Other examples of scams targeting offenders and offenders' families include the following:

1. In Georgia, a caller told an inmate's family to put \$900 on a pre-paid debit card and the prisoner would

be released from jail. Similar scams have been reported in several Georgia counties.

2. In Florida, callers to families made promises to get jail prisoners into special rehabilitation classes or anger management classes that would lead to release. The scam fees ranged from \$300 to \$1,500. Also, false solicitation was made for registration fees and court programs. A prison advocacy group also claimed they could get cases overturned. A \$500 retainer fee was required with future charges to be made.

3. In New Jersey, a phony non-profit organization offering legal services charged a \$350 consulting fee and claimed to be a watchdog group over inadequate public defenders.

4. In Hawaii, alleged "Ponzi" (also known as pyramid) schemes have victimized inmates serving federal prison sentences and their families. Inmates and families were asked to give money to invest in companies that offered guaranteed returns from commodities trading.

5. In California, a person impersonating a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) official attempted to scam a prisoner of \$36,000 by promising to get his sentence reduced.

TDCJ offenders should be particularly wary of correspondence regarding these scam issues. Offers that sound "too good to be true" probably are. ♣

VETERANS continued from page 1

Other veteran reentry services and activities include collaborating and sharing information with the VISN to help offenders whose requests for copies of their DD-214s have been rejected. TDCJ works closely with unit medical staff to identify appropriate medical facilities for veterans receiving a medically recommended intensive supervision release or in need of medically appropriate residence or care upon parole or discharge. TDCJ works in coordination with the Texas Veterans Commission to develop continuity of care and submits benefits applications for eligible veterans. TDCJ staff acts as liaison with the Texas Military Veteran Peer Network to develop a comprehensive continuity of care network for incarcerated veterans. Additionally, agency staff participates as members of both the Texas Coordinated Council for Veterans Services and the Texas Council on Incarcerated Veterans and Jail Diversion where they develop recommendations for the criminal justice workgroup.

Of the many support and rehabilitation programs TDCJ offers, three of them have a dramatic and positive impact on the lives of veterans.

Patriot PAWS Service Dog Program — Lane Murray and Crain units

The mission of Patriot PAWS (Pawsitive Approach Worthwhile Solutions) is to train and provide service dogs of the highest quality at no cost to disabled American veterans and others with mobile disabilities in order to help restore physical and emotional independence. Patriot PAWS trains service dogs to perform a variety of assistance behaviors, including helping patients with post-traumatic stress disorder. Our primary goal is to increase an individual's self-sufficiency, so each dog is trained to perform services to fulfill the specific needs of the owner.

Military Veteran Peer Network — Travis County and Dominguez state jails

The Military Veteran Peer Network is an affiliation of service members, veterans and family members dedicated to establishing camaraderie and trust among themselves, identifying and vetting community resources for veterans and, collectively, contributing to the communities where we live. The Military Veteran Peer Network has collaborated with TDCJ to provide in-person peer support to incarcerated veterans in a pilot program at the Travis and Dominguez state jails. Upon release, the veteran will be linked by this program to peer support in any community they may return to across the state.

The Military Veteran Peer Network also sent more than 40 peer-network members to be trained as TDCJ volunteers at the Fifth Annual Justice-Involved Veterans Conference. These volunteers will support the criminal justice-involved veteran in the community, on probation, in county jail, in a TDCJ prison unit or on parole. Never before has such a broad and direct effort been established to meet the behavioral health care needs of criminal justice-involved Texas veterans.

The Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) Program — Statewide

Health Care for Reentry Veterans (HCRV) is the oversight program within the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. VISN specialists collaborate with TDCJ through a memorandum of understanding to provide services to special needs veteran offenders. HCRV services include outreach and pre-release assessment services for veterans in prison; referrals and linkages to medical, psychiatric and social services, including employment services upon release; short-term case management assis-

tance upon release and providing information to veterans while they are incarcerated so they may plan for reentry.

Military veterans bring valuable skills, experience and qualifications to the civilian workforce, and we are proud of veterans who overcome challenges, reach positive outcomes for treatment, and recovery, and find a path to a law-abiding and fulfilling life. I believe that every military service member should be supported before they deploy, while they're gone and when they return, and I am encouraged that TDCJ provides opportunities for our veterans to receive peer support and service linkage during the difficult times of their incarceration and return to the community. ♣

FAN continued from page 1

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. 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 ♣

Dream

Richard E. Smith, Contributing Writer

“Your life story will only be as good as your latest stumble,” my father told me. “Your good will never be good enough to prove that your walk is true. Yet, your bad will always be sufficiently bad enough to prove that your walk is false. No matter how good you’ve been, no matter how long you’ve walked in the most honorable and upstanding righteousness, the final verdict by man will not come down until you fail. I can live as the greatest, most passionate man on the planet for the last 25 years, but as soon as I say one thing wrong, I’m condemned. Being aware of such an unfair phenomenon, I strive to always walk like this walk will be the last walk I ever take. I will be remembered by this walk, so I want it to be great. I know I will fall short of perfection, but by shooting for it, I will fall at a much higher level than I ever would have on my own. While I understand that we should not walk seeking approval of man, I also understand that it is human nature to desire such approval.”

Dad stared me straight in the eye as he spoke. I felt his sincerity and desire for me to really understand what he was saying so I paid close attention.

“A man’s walk is a living testimony to what is in his heart,” he said. “It exemplifies what is planted deep inside his soul. When your walk reflects the tenets of positive morals, people can’t help but take note. There will be something about you that captures their attention. My walk must line up with my talk or I’ll be labeled a hypocrite or worse. Far too many people talk about what an honorable man should do, yet they are personally lost in the sticky mess of unforgiveness, anger, jealousy, lust, and other terrible things.”

I dropped down on my bed and Dad sat down beside me before continuing.

“If true goodness lives within us, then the fruits of it will reveal itself in the way we live,” he said. “Our lives should light the path for others so that they can find their way through this world. Our strongest witness is our walk and the things we do when nobody else can see. Our walk is a living testimony that other people see and recognize. The things done in darkness will, eventually, come to light. Our actions will always be weighed against the things we say.”

That conversation took place many years ago. I did not pay attention to it then, but I strive to follow it now. It’s so simple, yet can be terribly hard at times. Still, no matter what the conclusion of our fellow man, it is on us to live our lives in a manner that honors those who came before us. Part of living that life is learning to dream.

Like all people walking this earth, I am a work in progress. I came through some things to get where I am at, but that’s just it; I came through. To continue growing I must always stay humble, hungry and teachable. With that mindset, there will remain no end to my growth. All I have to do is stay motivated to change.

Dreams are fabulous motivators when we actually pursue them. Far too many people are too fearful to dream. A dream is like a vision in that people die for lack of having a dream.

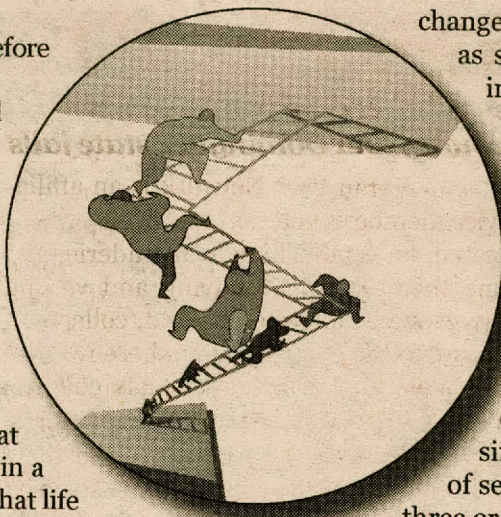
So, dream, I say. Dream in the morning; dream at night. Dream those serious dreams of a home, a career and a perfect husband or wife. Dream those fun dreams splashed with bright colors and laughter.

Feel free to dream of the things you want to do. Visualize dreams of who you want to be. Dream of things you dream to have and desire to see. Take time to experience spiritually and emotionally healing dreams. Lay out your physical and financial dreams so you can see them written out on a piece of paper. Dream of the legacy you will leave behind for others to follow. What memory will you leave for others to remember you by? What will be the story behind the dash between your birth and death dates?

Let your dreams touch other people. Inspire them to become dreamers too. Dream, my friends, and when you do dream, dream often and dream big. If you dream enough, the dreams will begin coming true. From the very beginning, a dream was dreamt for me. It has kept me alive and let me experience all of my life’s madness so that I would be capable of fulfilling the dream for my life.

There is a dream for each and every person on this earth. Will you fulfill yours? If you listen to your heart, it will happen.

I know you will be able to do so because dreams were made to happen! ♣



Self-esteem, self-image and our lives

Lion M. O'Neil, Staff Writer

Most humans have an innate desire to succeed. Whether personally or professionally, the feelings associated with accomplishing goals help us to build confidence which is directly related to self-esteem and self-image.

Self-esteem is how one feels about oneself as a person. Overall judgment of yourself can be high or low depending on how much you like or approve of yourself. The regard we have for self has a direct affect on our social lives and the choices we make. It helps determine career choices, who we befriend, our morals, values and an assortment of other behavioral traits. Those beliefs shape our personalities and form the core of our self-worth and are important to our psychological well being.

Self-image is a set of beliefs or images we have about ourselves and how we believe others perceive us. How we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us affect how they subsequently treat us as a direct result of their perceptions. It influences how we interact with others and can determine how productive we are as well as how much we make use of our aptitudes and abilities. Self-image affects our tendency to be assertive when we need to be as well as whether we tend to be leaders or followers.

The terms self-esteem and self-image are sometime used interchangeably, but I choose to differentiate and define self-esteem as something you give yourself and self-image as how you imagine others perceive you. Most of the ideas we have about ourselves were formed during childhood from how others treated us and what others told us about ourselves. Many of the characteristics that shaped our personalities were derived from behaviors we witnessed in others, whether in real life or on television, movies, books or music.

The primary cause of low self-esteem or negative self-image can usually be traced back to childhood. The people who raised us have the most significant influence on how we feel about ourselves. Research shows that the single most important factor in determining the amount of self-esteem a child starts out with develops during the first three or four years of a child’s life.

When parents are neglectful, critical and unfair, providing harsh discipline and inappropriate limits, children can become insecure and self-critical, lacking confidence in their ability to succeed. When a child develops in a loving, encouraging environment with fair-minded discipline setting boundaries and appropriate limits, they tend to have more self-confidence and are self-monitoring and self-actualizing. The characteristics that we develop as children, whether negative or positive, usually carry over into adulthood.

High self-esteem can be produced when one appreciates the uniqueness of one’s own personality. Developing a sense of self-worth and self-respect that isn’t dependent upon the approval of others is imperative. At some point in your life you must gain an understanding and knowledge of who you really are as a person, regardless of what other people think.

You must learn to accept yourself for who you are. If others don’t accept you, it shouldn’t have a saddening or negative effect on your mood, conduct or character. Sure, up to a certain degree, you may care about the opinions of others, but their views shouldn’t make or break your assessment of yourself.

The criminal thinking that shaped the behaviors that brought us to prison were learned and can therefore be modified. We are not bound to the behavior that we once embodied. We can use our time as a tool to help us deconstruct and then reconstruct our attitudes to comply with the standards and social norms that will make us law abiding citizens.

“What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.”-Ralph Waldo Emerson ♣

What a wonderful mom

Submitted by Cequinthia Adams
Crain Unit - Sycamore

Looking back to yesterday,
the places that I've been.
I'd change so many things
if I could do it all again.
I'm sorry I ever hurt you.
I know I let you down.
This time I lost myself
and just couldn't be found.
I tried to run away,
living my life so fast.
I want you to know I'm sorry
for the pain I caused in the past.
But tomorrow's another day,
and I know what to do.
I'll change all my ways
and make it up to you.
I want you to know I miss you.
I'm sad that we're apart.
And I hope that you know
I love you with all my heart.

Pause and a thought

Submitted by Hogan Nathan
Clements Unit

Life as I once knew
has ceased to exist
because of the rules
I chose to dismiss.
Your life is defined
by the decisions you make
while most decisions come
with risks you must take.
Taking that risk
is like a chance with the dice
So that only means
you must always think twice
For in the heat of the moment
where actions unveil
You should pause and listen
to what your mind has to tell.
For when a man is faced
with a difficult plight
a pause and a thought
can make most men choose right
So take heed my friend
and apply what I say
for it can make most outcomes
a positive, okay?

Life is

Submitted by Dushaan Gillum
Coffield Unit

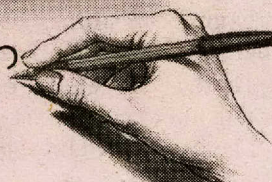
Life is given in love,
Life is what we make it
Life is the leaf, we are the wind,
it will go as far as we take it
Life is joy, life is pain,
Life is both darkness and light
Life is what's seen, through our own eyes,
and only we can make it right
Life is a journey, through space and time,
a trip that extends far beyond
an intangible reality, often taken for granted
It can be here one moment then be gone
LIFE, was the sentence, handed down by the
judge
but life has just begun
though my body is shackled, my mind is free
and the wheel of time has been spun.
Life...
Life...
Life is what we make it.

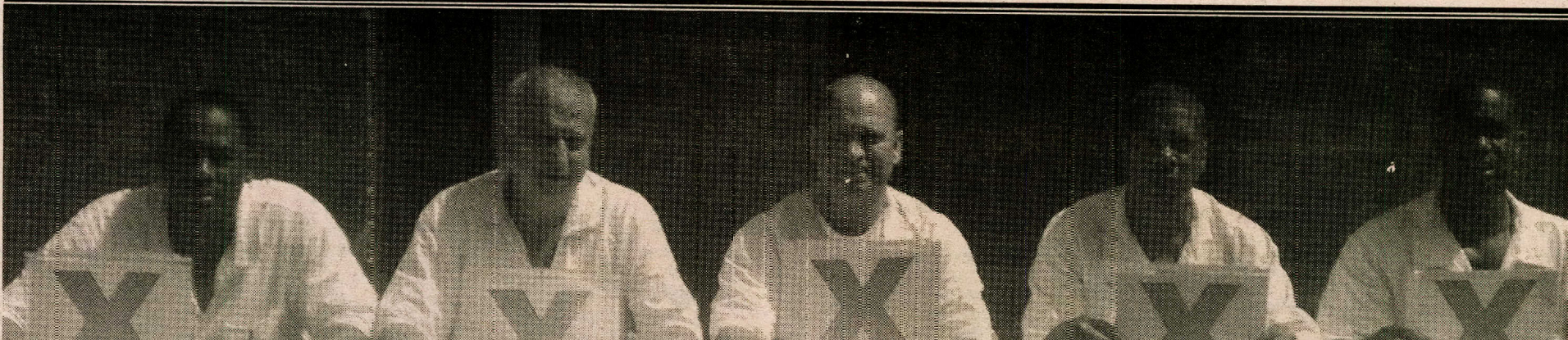
Things you can do without

Submitted by C.W. Elliot
Wynne Unit

Want to drop a few pounds? No matter the amount,
Here's a few things a real weight loss plan comes without.
It comes without powders; it comes without pills.
It comes without treadmills or sky-high gym bills.
It comes without Atkins nor Pritikin neither.
Bowflex, Total Gym; it comes without either.
It comes without lipo or stomach bypasses.
It comes without expensive exercise classes.
It comes without doctors or food that tastes bland.
It comes without clinics that can cost a few grand.
It comes without running; it comes without sweat.
It comes without hitting balls over a net.
It comes without burning; it comes without pain.
It comes without one single muscular strain.
It comes without saunas; it comes without steam.
It comes without giving up coffee with cream.
It comes without rice cakes or zero fat foods.
Or meals that can put families in foul moods.
It comes without yoga; it comes without a mat.
It comes without portions too small for a rat.
If you want to shed pounds, hopefully you've paid heed
To these things your weight loss regimen doesn't need.

Creative Corner





Huntsville Unit holds fourth annual talent show

David McKay, Huntsville Unit Reporter

The Huntsville Unit recently enjoyed the entertainment associated with its annual Talent Show. The event took place on a Saturday on the recreation yard and was hosted by J. Turner and F. Hopkins. Performers had the use of musical instruments, sound equipment and props. Commissary manager L. Land also generously gave some of her weekend to sell ice cream and soft drinks from the commissary.

The categories mainly consisted of music, skits, recitations and comedy. The musical acts included country, rock, blues, rap, Latino and a cappella. The house band also performed a variety of these songs though it was not eligible as a contestant. Some acts generated raucous approval from the crowd, which numbered



Huntsville Unit talent show first place winners are (l. to r.) C. Broomfield, A. Bevel and E. Cadoree.

almost 500.

The judging was patterned after "America's Got Talent" with the use of the buzzer and "X" cards. On a few occasions the judges received louder boos than the contestants.

By the end of the show approximately 37 acts had performed. After adding up the judges' scorecards, three winners were chosen. First place went to A. Bevel, C. Broomfield and E. Cadoree for their rap rendition; second place was awarded to J. Turner for his rap performance; and D. Varela captured third place for his version of Motley Crue's "Home Sweet Home."

Thanks go out to Warden Smith, Capt. Wilson, Lt. Luedtke and staff for their cooperation and coordination of this event, and sincere appreciation goes to Chaplain Collier for his loan of the chapel equipment. ♣

Preparing for future: 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.

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.

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

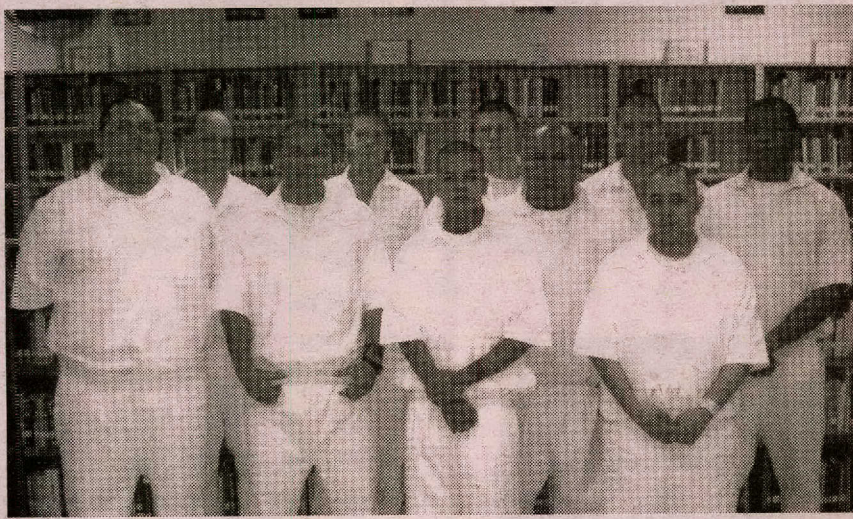
below 95 degrees. Because the temperature drop may be gradual, and an early symptom of hypothermia is mental confusion, the victim may not know a problem exists. If one's body continues to lose heat, involuntary shivers begin. This reaction is the body's way to produce more heat and is usually the first 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 hypothermia symptoms:

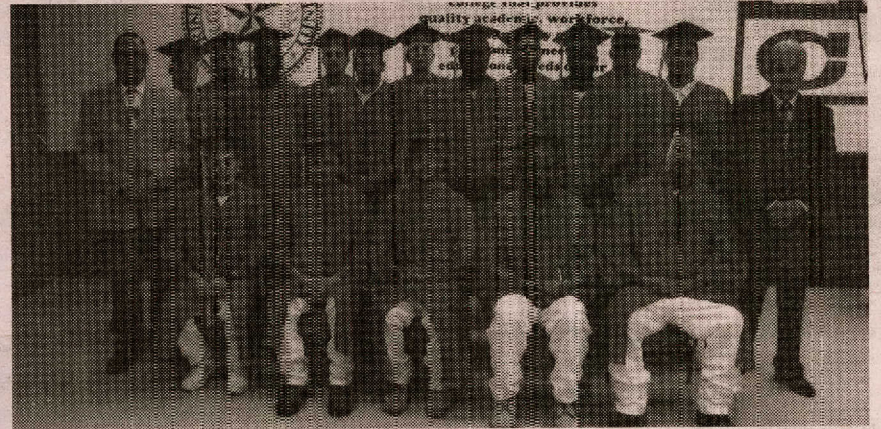
- confusion;
- drowsiness;
- slurred speech;
- a drop in blood pressure;
- shallow breathing; and
- a pinkish tint to the skin.

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

TDCJ/Windham bulletin board



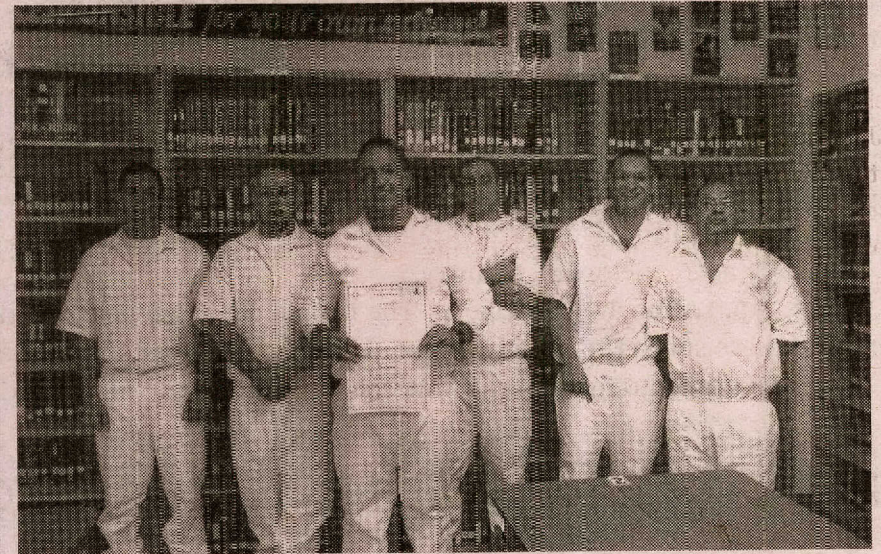
Daniel Unit CHANGES II graduates are I. Sanchez, E. Arce, D. Wineinger, D. Miranda, D. Benavides, D. Maria, C. Rose, C. Neal, N. Medina and R. Adams.



Michael Unit graduates who received their Associate of Arts and Applied Science degrees from Trinity Valley Community College are E. Naquin, C. Brown, D. Haynes, D. Baker, S. Valdez, R. Davis, Q. Brown, J. Brown, D. Huckaby, M. Roray, E. Rojas, L. Castaneda, H. Boudreaux, D. Ali, J. Randle, R. Bradley, (left) college counselor R. Dupree and (right) associate vice-president Dr. W.K. Sam Hurley.



Crain Unit CIP graduates are R. Davis, L. Scott, R. Mendez, L. Ortiz, T. Alberson, R. Boutte, S. Demease, A. Jaramillo, J. Norris, D. Dilworth, T. Tingle, B. Tucker, E. Taylor, S. Delazerda, A. McFail, and I. Sagastisado.



Ware Unit CHANGES graduates are J. Aguilar, E. DeLeon, B. Hudgehs, M. Melencaez, J. Miramontes and J. Quintana.



Torres Unit HVAC & Electrical Trades graduates are D. Chapa, A. Charles, J. Chavarria, M. Hernandez, A. Richardson, J. Ruvalcaba, R. Sims and G. Suell.



Torres Unit basketball tournament winners are A. Lester, A. Johnson, C. Dennis, J. Smith, D. Hope, N. Victoria, D. Pittman, D. Dixon and B. Clark.

BEDS continued from page 1



Similarly, this same level of efficiency and workmanship is staunchly adhered to at the Smith Unit factory.

"We can make mattresses faster than the trucks can haul them," said T. Chaplin, assistant plant manager at the Smith Unit mattress factory.

Few things are more recognizable to offenders than a 'line mattress', which is the blue vinyl mattress that has been an ever-present fixture in TDCJ for as long as anyone can remember.

"Here on the Smith Unit we provide approximately 70 percent of the line mattresses that go to TDCJ," Chaplin said.

At the Wynne Unit, the production of line mattresses completes the remaining 30 percent. Wynne concentrates on manufacturing innerspring and box spring mattresses, foam core mattresses, pillows and gym mats.

"Wynne factory operations focus primarily on fulfilling orders destined for outside agencies," Hoke said.

Outside agencies refer to other tax-supported state agencies that lie outside of TDCJ, such as county jails, state hospitals and juvenile correction centers. This area also includes state-governed universities.

"Texas Tech, Texas A&M, Sam Houston State University, Stephen F. Austin State University, U. T. San Antonio and U. T. Arlington are some of our biggest customers," Hoke said.

Upon completion, a Wynne Unit innerspring mattress or box spring is of such high quality that they are nearly identical to more familiar brands, like Sealy or Serta.

"In a field test, some volunteers were asked to

lay on two separate beds: a Serta and a Wynne Unit mattress. None of the volunteers could tell the difference," Hoke said.

When fully staffed, the Wynne mattress factory operates with six employees and 70 offenders during a five-day work week. Comparatively, the Smith factory functions with a total of eight staff members and 106 offenders, in service on a four-day work schedule.

Although a variation in production and merchandise exists, both unit mattress factories share similar goals. Each of these departments has succeeded in conveying new skills to offenders.

As the social and economic gap between the offender and society grows wider and wider, it is necessary for offenders to learn a diverse range of skills. A job at the mattress factory, for example, can teach offenders skills such as machine operator, maintenance and repair, mattress design and construction, carpentry, needlecraft and computer fluency. These are the types of skills that every offender needs to compete in today's work world.

Manufacturing mattresses is a multi-tiered process, but it all begins when a 'cut order' (command to action) is generated. This order is then relayed to the supply room, which in turn issues the necessary material.

"Once the material is dispensed, it will either go to the stuffing machine (for line mattresses) or to the build-up table (for innerspring)," Hoke said.

The pursuit of excellence is a priority to mattress manufacturing. After the mattresses are constructed, they immediately go through various quality assurance checks.

"Making quality merchandise is of the utmost

importance, and we do our best to maintain a high level of product integrity," said S. Leger, a quality assurance clerk at the Wynne mattress factory.

After the mattresses clear the quality checks, they are then prepared for shipping. They are loaded onto trucks by fork lifts and manpower and ultimately distributed throughout the state of Texas.

Waste and pollution are serious concerns in today's world. Utilizing recycled materials is a necessary measure as populations rise and resources dissipate. The mattress factories acknowledge this critical situation.

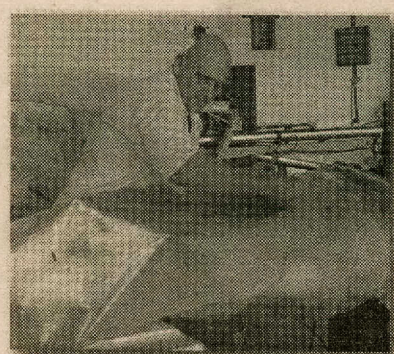
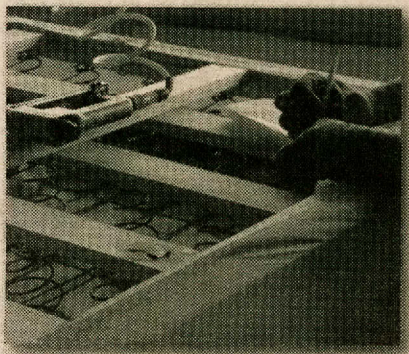
"All of the line mattresses are constructed from recycled materials. Going 'green' is important in this day and age," Hoke said.

"People are the most important aspect of the TDCJ manufacturing process," said Chaplin, whose workers said they appreciate the opportunity to expand their job skills.

"This job is great. I have learned so many different skills at the mattress factory, but one that stands out is how to work productively with others, because teamwork is so important," said D. Menifee, a Wynne Unit mattress factory worker who builds innerspring and box spring mattresses for outside purchases.

"The supervisors are supportive and the level of cooperation between the other offenders is amazing. Showing up every day — and having a good work ethic — are things I have learned," Leger said.

"Just knowing that I have contributed to the comfort of others by making beds they will sleep on is so worthwhile," Menifee said. ♣



The view from the top: Daily release

James Metten
Huntsville Unit

Though I live inside the confines of "The Walls," I get to experience the daily privilege and blessing to see far out into the world. I work in the West Building, which was built in 1958. From the fifth tier of the D Wing cell block, I can see for miles over the many tall trees that dominate the Huntsville landscape. Every morning, I watch the pre-dawn darkness slowly morph into shades of purple, pink and then in sky blue. Since the building faces North, I don't get to see the sunrise. Like fingerprints, no two days are the same. Daybreak is usually calm, sometimes bringing the wind. When this happens, the tall trees all look like they're waving at me! Clouds move slowly across the sky.

With morning in full bloom, the hawks make their appearance gracefully riding the airstream over the treetops as they hunt for breakfast.

From all five tiers I can see directly into the craft shop. The inmates have reported to their spots and are all working diligently on various projects. The woodworkers build and restore furniture: tables, rocking chairs, rocking horses, bed stands, benches, picture frames, etc. Leather craftsmen work on belts, wallets, saddles, etc. The saddles look awesome! The crafters are busy little elves — in the craftshop every day.

Beyond the craftshop is a driveway and parking lot that sits behind a gas station on the main road. To the right of that is a prison administrative building. Behind that is a freestanding building with orange-clay shingles. This is the offender release family waiting area. Next to that is a grassy courtyard with a picnic table in the middle.

Early on, people begin to arrive, and the crowd continues to grow throughout the morning. None of these people know each other and probably will never meet again. But for the next couple of hours, they are all sharing common ground — to be there for loved ones who are about to step into the free world. The crowd is always diverse: mothers, fathers, grandparents, brothers, sisters, wives, children,

friends, and even the family dog! Strangers introduce themselves and share their stories. Others are talking on their cellphones or smoking a cigarette. A young boy is playing "air drums," while a couple of other kids are picking up twigs off the ground and chasing each other around the courtyard.

Some folks hold hands and form a prayer circle; some people are just quietly and anxiously waiting...

I'm sure that everyone in the crowd has their own truly unique story. I always wonder what each one is going through. The grandpa, walking with a cane — his grandson has been locked up for 15 years. The rest of the family never embraced forgiveness and gave up. The mother and/or father, who have remained supportive for 10 years, eagerly waiting for their son to

walk out the door. The brother and/or sister, waiting for their sibling to step into freedom after 20 years in prison — during which time, both parents passed away and all they have left is each other. The wife, who has waited faithfully for five years for her husband to return home. She has two kids with her: one is now a teenager, the other was just a toddler when their dad got locked up. There is the life-long friend, who stayed loyal and connected for 12 years when no one else would. Indeed, there are many compelling scenarios. Wow!

On my way to work in the mornings, I pass by a holding area made of polished brass bars. This area is called the "Bull Ring," and is the passageway to freedom. I guess the shiny bars are symbolic? I don't know. Past this area, final preparations are made for the long anticipated walk out the door. I'm sure that many emotions are at full throttle: excitement, joy, fear, dread. Yikes!

The time has arrived! As the doors swing

open, the crowd outside springs to attention! Some rush to the sidewalk, cellphones snap shut, cigarettes are snuffed out, and out come the cameras. Everyone is looking for their special loved one to come through the door. The release has begun! Let the reunions commence! Grandpa and grandson hug, then begin their trek to the parking lot with tote bag in hand. Mom hugs her son, rubs his back, kisses him, then another hug. The wife is swept off her feet by her liberated husband — long hugs for the kids as Fido wags his tail, waiting for his turn to welcome daddy home! Wife and kids in tow, he's outta there. Brothers, sisters, group hugs, kisses, pictures. The faithful friend snaps a photo and greets his freed buddy. The energy from this collective emotional release is tremendous! I can feel it all the way up on the fifth floor! Tears, smiles, relief...

This moment is not without sadness. There are those with no one there for them. They are stepping into a world to which they can no longer relate. They make the lonely walk down the street to the bus stop. They have nowhere to go and no plan or desire to face their future. I cannot imagine the depth of loneliness, fear and dread that these men are feeling.

As everyone disperses one way or the other, the moment is over. Anyone who makes it through the prison experience with their sanity and self-respect intact should be commended.

Some have paid their debt to society, repented and have made good use of their time in prison. They

are smarter, wiser and stronger. Then there are those who squandered the opportunity to better themselves. They can't wait to return to their criminal ways and bad behavior.

Some will be back!

Watching the daily release is bittersweet. It's good to see that every day someone gets to leave this place. It is also a daily reminder of where I am and how far I have to go. Most of us will some day walk into freedom. They cannot hold me forever. My day will come! Until then...



Guest column: Human Inner Voice

April Phillips
Lane Murray Unit

Human Immunodeficiency Virus (HIV) is a term that we hear a lot. To some of us who happen to have the virus, we're called all sorts of unwanted names. Some people choose to react in a negative manner because they're not educated enough about the virus to know better, and they really don't mean what they say. Some of us feel as if the world is against us. Family and friends turn their backs on us as if we were nothing to them. For some of us this is true, but for some it is not.

HIV is a virus some people contract that becomes an eye opener. I consider it God's way of stopping another from falling captive to HIV. To me, HIV is a Human-Inner-Voice to let those that have it know they are not alone. People of all ages and cultures can get HIV.

Those that are hiding in the night, or shall I say, in the closet, can come out and be loved the same as others, and stop letting words get to them.

I know it feels like everyone is laughing at you because of your virus, but don't put your head down ... keep it up! Go out and teach others and open their eyes to your world. That's what I'm doing. Someone you know may

be giving up on themselves, but don't let them. Open your mouth and let them know that you are in their shoes, and they still have a life to live.

Words can't break you. Reading this should make you stronger. You probably can't believe I'm writing this and I'm only 23 years young. I'm not giving up on life, and you shouldn't either! ♣

Sudoku Solutions

Easy

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

Difficult

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

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

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

"It's a cinch by the inch."

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

Contact: Dennis Kelly,
President
P.O. Box 230384
Houston, TX 77023
(832) 882-5895



Crespo's Chess Corner: Chess term quiz

Richard Crespo
Terrell Unit

Match the following terms to the correct definitions:

Terms

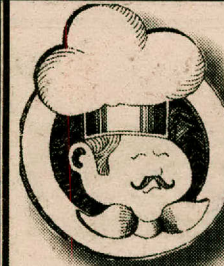
1. Closed position
2. Fish
3. Flag
4. Kibitzer
5. Line
6. Open position
7. Strategy
8. Tactics
9. Variation
10. Post-mortem

Definitions

- A. Long strings of projected moves
- B. Type of position in which there are few pawn trades, and pieces are locked in behind pawn structures
- C. Analysis following a game
- D. Long term planning and maneuvering
- E. Players who hang around skittles room, offering often colorful, and sometimes unwanted, advice
- F. Synonym for variation, often used when talking about various opening possibilities
- G. Position in which there are many open files and diagonals, and fewer locked pawn structures
- H. Slang for a weak player
- I. Indicator on a chess clock that drops when time is reached
- J. A short operation requiring proficiency in calculating that forces checkmate or a quick win in material.

Answers:

1. B 2. H 3. I 4. E 5. F 6. G 7. D 8. J 9. A 10. C



Recipes

COMMISSARY CRITTERS

Ruben Salazar
Bridgeport Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 pack Maria cookies
- 1 jalapeno
- 1 packet cream cheese
- strawberry preserves

Directions:

Squeeze a ring of cream cheese on the outer rim of a Maria cookie. Drop a dab of strawberry preserves inside the ring of cream cheese and top with a slice of jalapeno. Repeat until an entire pack of cookies has been prepared in this fashion. Pop a cookie into your mouth whole to experience the flavors coming together.

SAMANTHA'S CHOCOLATE STUFFED SURPRISE

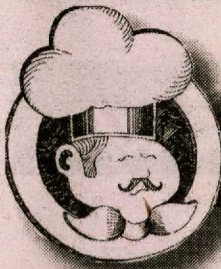
Samantha McLain
Bridgeport Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 pk. duplex cookies
- 1 honey bun
- 1 pk. peanut or plain M&M's (crushed)
- 1 Hershey bar
- 1 cappuccino

Directions:

Separate cookies from cream. Crush cookies and add a little water to form dough. Separate dough in half. Layer the bottom of bowl with one half of the dough. Cut honey bun into small pieces and place on top of dough. Melt Hershey bar and squeeze on top of honey bun. Roll the other half of dough out on plastic paper. Place on top of honey bun pieces. Now that the cake is stuffed, take cream of cookies and cappuccino and a few tablespoons of water to make icing. Top with M&M's.



Recipes

GOLF'S DEVILED EGGS

Grumpy Old Man
Beto Unit

Ingredients:

- 2 boiled eggs
- 2 spoonfuls sandwich spread
- 1 chili soup seasoning packet

Directions:

Shell boiled eggs. Cut eggs longways and remove yolks. Put yolks in a bowl and add sandwich spread. Mix until it becomes a paste. Using a spoon, scoop mixture into egg halves. Lightly garnish by sprinkling chili soup seasoning over the top. Eat up!

BRENT'S QUESO LOCODIP

Brent Neall
Gurney Unit

Ingredients:

- ½ jar mayonnaise
- 4 ranch dressing packs
- 2 spoonfuls onion powder
- 2 spoonfuls garlic powder
- 1 bottle squeeze cheese (melted)
- 2 well-rounded spoonfuls of brown bag coffee
- 2 jalapeno peppers, diced
- ½ chili soup seasoning pack
- black pepper, to taste
- habanero salsa, to taste
- 1 large bowl

Directions:

Melt one full bottle of squeeze cheese with hot water. Pour into bowl; empty all four packs of ranch dressing into bowl. Add ½ jar of mayonnaise and diced jalapeno peppers into large bowl. Next add garlic powder, chili seasoning, and the spoonfuls of coffee. Add black pepper and habanero salsa to taste. Enjoy!

Nightmare begins

Eva Shelton
Crain Unit



You came into my house and my home and destroyed my perfect life. You say your intention was not to destroy my life, and not to turn my little slice of heaven into a fiery, tortuous hell. You say you didn't even know about me at first. I say, when you did find out about me, you could've and should've said you refused to do this horrible, awful disrespectful thing to me — and maybe saved me from ever finding out you existed at all. You didn't walk away, though, and everyday I see you, you take away another piece of me.

I feel as if you took the photos off my walls, broke the glass into shards, and shattered the wooden frames. You cut me out of future pictures and replaced my face with your own. The smile of my kids, the twinkle in my husband's eyes, and the setting sun reflecting off numerous familiar places all now surround you in the photographs on the wall. My dresses used to hang in my closet like a multi-hued rainbow nearly overflowing out



'You cut me out of future pictures and replaced my face with your own. The smile of my kids, the twinkle in my husband's eyes, and the setting sun reflecting off numerous familiar places...'

the door. Now your clothes hang from white plastic hangers: your drab slacks and matching jackets all two sizes too small for me make the closet a dull and uninviting place.

There was once a pot on every burner on the stove. The smells of roasting beef, brown gravy and simmering vegetables danced in merriment down the halls. My husband would come home to cornbread still hot from the oven, butter flowing over the crust as has he carried the bread to the table. The children would laugh with smug little smiles as I placed crumbling pieces of chocolate cake with inch-thick icing onto blue ceramic plates. Now the kitchen sits quiet and the dishes might as well run off with the monogrammed spoons, because every night there is no laughter and never a dirty, chocolate smudged smile.

I remember the Saturday mornings before I ever heard your name. My kids and

I sprawled on the brown, plush carpeting listening to the popping, snapping, and crackling of cereal in milk as we watched cartoons on the flat-screen TV in the living room. I remember the pillow fights with the throw pillows from the couch. There's the spot of strawberry ice cream I could never quite get out beneath the second cushion on the couch, but you don't know the spot is there, or if you do, you've probably made up a story to tie the spot to you. I imagine the story was hard to invent with kids who now only get a piece of the freshest of fruit and a healthy, paper wrapped granola bar on the way to the next child enrichment lesson.

I once felt this consuming, burning rage which constantly nipped and tore away at me. The rage gave way to a dull and constant ache which never seemed to fall away from me. Now the ache of loneliness is joined by a bitter pity I feel only for you and sometimes for myself. I see you: tall, glorious, a girl who used to dream of modeling while I dreamed of a house, a fence, a loving husband, and a couple of laughing kids.

I used to have a happy life where I complained about the laundry, the noise, and the messes left behind. Now I'd slice off my own right arm to go back to the days before you arrived to destroy my life. You walked down the darkened hall, past my smiling face in the photographs. I imagine you laughed a shy, schoolgirl laugh as you fell into my husband's arms. I figured you didn't care at all as you stepped into my dream and turned my life into a never-ending nightmare. ➔

Sudoku

Easy

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

Difficult

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