

The ECHO

Texas Prison News

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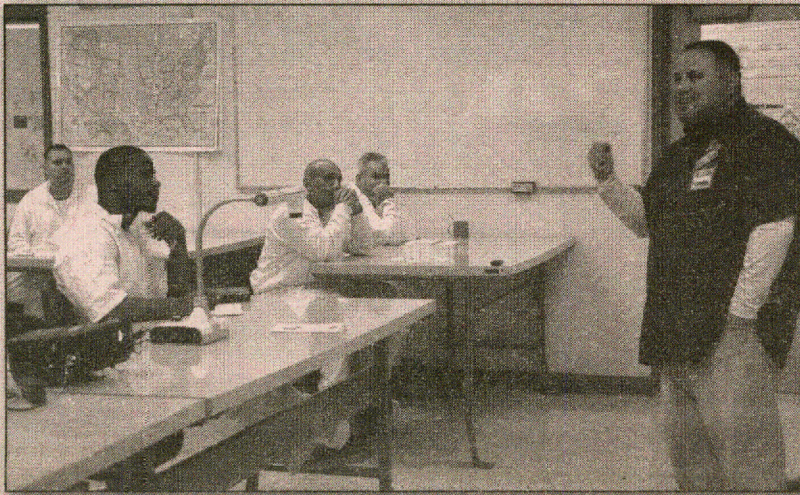
WSD Career Expos promote job readiness by bringing employers into TDCJ

G. Griffin, WSD Counselor, Dominguez State Jail

“Searching for a job is never easy, but can you imagine doing so with that proverbial ‘X’ on your back? How about the fear of prospective employers finding out that you have a past, or living with the belief that you are somehow unemployable,” asked Windham School District (WSD) Counselor G. Griffin at the Dominguez State Jail.

“WSD knows that obtaining employment is the most important factor in staying out of the ‘big house.’ We want to convince the incarcerated population of its employability and value to the community as productive citizens.”

“We can stand daily before our students and preach the gospel of the job search and sell them on persistence, effective interviewing techniques, and etiquette...but will they buy into it?” Griffin asked.



Ex-offender J. Granados of Yanlis Construction Company tells the story of his life changes and employment success during a Career Expo.

EXPOS continued on page 5

Innocence claims

The following information has been provided by the State Counsel for Offenders (SCFO) and can be found as Chapter 13 in the SCFO Legal Handbook available in unit law libraries.

Who should file an innocence claim?

Only offenders who did not commit the crime for which they were convicted should file a claim based on innocence. Claims that are based on insufficient evidence to prove guilt should use other avenues of relief discussed in this handbook. Unwarranted innocence claims detract attention from valid claims and waste precious resources.

If you were involved in criminal activity with others, but were not involved in the specific act for which you were convicted, the conviction may still be valid under the “law of parties.” For example, if you and a friend decide to rob a convenience store, and during the robbery your friend shoots someone, you may both be convicted of aggravated assault with a deadly weapon. Although you are technically “innocent” of the shooting (your friend did it, not you), you will not have a valid innocence claim.

INNOCENCE CLAIMS continued on page 11

Ellis Unit hosts GRAD completion ceremony: Bringing order out of chaos

John Flagg, Staff Writer

The Ellis Unit recently held a completion ceremony for Gang Renunciation and Disassociation (GRAD) Group #124. Ten offenders were recognized for renouncing their gang affiliation on that day, which culminated in a breakthrough event for all of the participants. D. Cox, the Windham School District (WSD) Cognitive Intervention Program (CIP) instructor at the Ellis Unit, shared impactful words with the graduates in his opening remarks.

“Congratulations! After all the ups and downs of conflict, you guys finally made it to the end. Today is your celebration of success, and I am proud of each and every one of you,” Cox said.

GRAD is a method for offenders to renounce their membership with a known security threat group (STG), commonly known as a “prison gang.” The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) instituted this process in the year 2000, with the Ramsey and Ellis units as host facilities. It is supported through a partnership with WSD, whose teachers provide the Cognitive Intervention component of the program.

“GRAD has become a guiding force in the lives of many offenders who have accepted the challenge of change and the weight of personal responsibility,” Cox said.

Along with Cox, the ceremony was attended by R. Grant, Program Supervisor V of the Security Threat Group Management Office; J. Benton, GRAD program administrator; C. Martin, GRAD volunteer and guest speaker, and J. Dixon, GRAD volunteer. Representing TDCJ were Major Preischel, Captain Barnett, Lieutenant Hill and Sargent Dudley. Also attending and supporting the program were P. Hill, WSD principal on the Ellis Unit, and GRAD graduates’ families and loved ones.

Gang affiliation arises in an offender’s life from a myriad of causes and conditions. However, according to eminent behavioral scientist B.F. Skinner, offenders share similar disadvantageous background traits, such as having their origins in poverty, abusive or neglectful parentage, drug and alcohol addiction, and anti-social elements. Some of the graduates of GRAD class #124 shared their insights on this issue.

GRAD CEREMONY continued on page 14

The ECHO

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— MANAGEMENT —

Dr. Clint Carpenter – Superintendent

B. Kiser – Supervisory Consultant

Don Keil – Managing Editor

Mary Partida – Graphics Consultant

— STAFF —

Todd R. Carman – Staff Writer & Graphics

Garrett Cushinberry – Graphics

John W. Flagg – Staff Writer & Graphics

William E. Hill – Staff Writer

— CONTRIBUTING WRITERS —

Joseph L. Fritz – Ellis Unit

Richard A. Luna – Neal Unit

Eva Shelton – Crain Unit

Von Michael Short – Wynne Unit

Richard E. Smith – Wynne Unit

Timothy Stonecipher – Michael Unit

Jennifer Toon – Mountain View Unit

— UNIT REPORTERS —

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Beto Unit – Kyle Bankston

Beto Unit – Quincy Patterson

Boyd Unit – Justin North

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Crain Unit – Jane Callaway

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LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

To the editor:

I would like to share an experience I had here and the lesson I took from it. I noticed a woman bringing the newest addition to the Patriot Paws program: a beautiful black Labrador who, despite his leash, was jumping around with excitement seeing people walking with others of his ilk. Finally inside the fence he broke loose and had a great time chasing cats and rolling in the grass. I couldn't help but notice the irony of the situation while everyone inside that fence wanted out, all this dog wanted was to get inside.

A couple months later I saw this same dog assigned to his offender and being trained to become a service dog. Two months ago he couldn't have imagined that he would surrender the exciting, playful life he was leading in order to assist someone to live a more fulfilling life. There's a world outside these fences full of happiness and freedom that I have imagined being part of once again. I can go back to my old ways or heed the instruction I'm getting in here. I have learned that I have to think before I act and that there is no telling how far reaching the consequences of one bad decision will take me.

Recently, my mom came to visit me. I hadn't seen her since I was in county jail when my mind was still full of ignorance. After our visit she gave me a long hug, and looking me in the eye said, "Wow, you sure have changed." I still see that now-obedient Lab every now and again, and he seems to smile and silently say to me, "It feels good to be good, doesn't it?"

Deidre McDonald
Riverside Unit



To the reader,

Thanks for a great story and a great illustration of being under self-control as a person. Many times in life self-control is simply absent in people. When making choices not guided by self-discipline we all are liable to end up in circumstances we would not choose. Thanks for writing The ECHO and sharing with our readers.

Letter from the editor: What will you leave?



How much money will I get when my parents die? How much property and stuff will I inherit? Who gets the house and the cars? A new and upcoming buzz word in our ever-changing culture seems to be the word "legacy." A quick dictionary search reveals the definition of "legacy" to be "money or property left to someone by a will or anything handed down from an ancestor" — Webster's New World Dictionary and Thesaurus, 1996.

However, there are other types of familiar legacies. People talk of the legacies left by former presidents — the good and sometimes bad things they did that they are eternally remembered for. Other people of power and prominence such as congressmen, CEOs, and philanthropists also are spoken of as leaving a legacy.

There are some additional ideas that would challenge us as individuals. Obviously the idea of leaving a legacy behind includes what money and material things are left to our children and family but it should include much more than that. It should include the heritage that we pass on, our reputation and character that we exhibited, what we were known for, who we really were, and what was important to us.


I recently read an article on cremation as opposed to normal burial. The article stated that for the normal person, only two generations will really care about the person: the person's children and grandchildren. After that, nobody would visit a grave in the ground, so one might as well be cremated — for a cheaper price, of course! For most of us, this "two generation" idea is probably true. My legacy, in all actuality is probably only going to last for two generations — unless I become someone famous! But that is OK.

I want to leave a meaningful legacy, even if it is only for my children and grandchildren. Therefore, I need to live life with purpose towards this end. Our legacy should start with who we are. I need to develop the character and reputation that I want to pass on to my family. I need to be intentional with my relationships, so as to teach and train children and set a good example as a role model. I need to understand that I am an example, whether I want to be or not! I want my character and the things I do to be above reproach towards all people, especially my family, for my legacy and theirs.

I am hoping my legacy will include money and material things to be passed down. But I also hope my legacy will include my reputation, character, love for family and love of other people.

I don't know if I will end up in the ground or in an urn, but I hope my legacy will be a good one to and for the people I love. We each have our own circle of influence. I want to finish well, with no regrets.

I have done many things for which I am not proud. I am hoping they will not be part of my legacy. My favorite inspirational speaker, Chuck Swindoll, always says, "It's never too late to start making the right choices."

Are you ready to leave a meaningful legacy? 

DEAR DARBY LETTERS TO THE DARBSTER

Dear Darby,

I would like to get my two cents worth in. I started out at the Travis County jail in Austin in 1993, and I would like to say, "Thank you" to all the men in white who helped me out all these 23 plus years. I have been through the good times and the bad times with you and we all have been there and done that together. Thanks for all of you who helped me make it this far. Thank you also to the medical personnel and correctional officers who have helped me and taken care of me when I became sick the last 10 years. Thanks to everyone and may God bless all of you.

William L. Self
Duncan Unit

Dear Billy,

Kudos for saying "Thank you" to all of the people who helped you on your journey. All too often folks forget about the effort those around them put forth, taking others' kindness and generosity for granted. There are many good people in our lives on this side of the fence — some of them live here, some of them work here. Don't forget to "pay it forward" to those around you as they go through their journeys in here and on the outside, too.



Dear Darby,

Darb, I have a question that only someone with your wisdom and experience can possibly answer; okay, enough smoke blowing. The other day as I was going to chow, a female officer unlocked one of the many crash gates that I have to navigate to get anywhere on this unit. When she did, I said, "Thank you" and went on my way. The inmate behind me said

(after he was safely beyond earshot of the officer in question), "You don't have to thank her; she only did what she gets paid to do." Here's the question Darb, did I violate some part of the convict code or break one of the many unwritten rules that govern life in here? Was I wrong here, Darb, or was the other guy a Neanderthal?

Non-Neanderthal

Dear Non,

No, what you did is not against the convict code — you practiced the common courtesy that should be part of normal interaction. There are those on this side of the fence who feel that those courtesies are left at the back gate when you enter a unit, but I disagree. By exercising good manners in here, you nurture a part of you that is important in normal social interactions, especially on the outside. This will give you a leg up when you're released, as opposed to the amount of relearning the Neanderthals have to do when they get out. We have to let go of many "normal" ways when we're incarcerated, but good etiquette is not one of them.

Thank you for writing!

Dear Darby,

I've got a burning problem. No, not that — medical fixed it. I'm talking about the new 10-year set-off. You see, those folks are really mad at me and gave me a 12-year sentence for non-aggravated nothing. You think they'll give me a 10-year set-off when I come up? Will they move me off the trustee camp? I'm scared!

Billy,

Trustee Camp Necessities Worker

Dear Billy,

Don't worry, your bunk and your job on the camp are safe. The only folks who are eligible for the dread-

ed 10-year set-off are those here for Aggravated Sexual Assault or a life sentence on a capital felony. House Bill 1914, which was passed this last legislative session, stipulated this option for parole voters, and it went into effect Sept. 1, 2015. See the October issue of The ECHO to read it yourself.



DENTAL BITES



Dr. David Seals
UTMB dentist

Tips from the Dentist: pH is the measurement scientists use to determine whether a solution is acidic [less than 7] or alkaline [greater than 7]. The normal salivary [spit] pH ranges from 6.4 to 7.2. The more acidic saliva is, the less healing qualities it contains. High carbohydrate diets containing lots of starches [potatoes, breads, pasta, etc.] and sweets [candy and desserts] will cause your saliva to become more acidic and increase your chance of developing cavities and gum disease. A high carbohydrate diet also lowers your immune system (one's ability to fight off infection), so you become more susceptible to colds and fevers. **The takeaway from this story is this:** Balanced diets allow one to take a better bite out of life 🍷

Transitioning back into the community isn't easy ...

UNLOCKING DOORS CAN HELP!

Have a criminal record?

Under community supervision - parole/probation?

Been released from prison or jail ... or about to be released?

Need assistance getting connected to the services and resources that are right for YOU to help you move forward to a crime-free, self-sufficient future?

Let UNLOCKING DOORS open the many opportunities that are available to YOU!

Contact us today or upon release -

Phone: 214.296.9258
Email: info@unlockingdoors.org
Mail: 17101 Preston Road, Suite 260, Dallas, Texas 75248

You will meet with YOUR Case Manager at the following location:
1402 Corinth Street, Suite 235, Dallas, Texas 75215

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A review:

'God's Country' discovers hidden talent

Ruben Constante Jr. Torres Unit Reporter

Here in Medina County, Hondo is affectionately known as "God's Country." The Torres Unit, then, must contain tremendous God-given talent, and recently, many men discovered for themselves just how much they can offer the world. This discovery took place as the Torres Unit held its first-ever talent show. Sponsored by several churches in the San Antonio and Hondo areas, it celebrated men who have found ways of doing something constructive with their time while in prison. Two celebrity guests arrived that day — Esteban Solis of

KABB Fox 29 News "Daytime @ Nine" lifestyle show, and Ramiro Russell, a fitness expert whose list of clients include various San Antonio celebrities. They both spoke of their past prison experiences and how they managed to succeed while in prison and after release. As they offered their testimonies, approximately 200 offenders in the gym could all identify with them. Hope was visibly seen in the eyes of the men who sat listening intently to Solis' and Russell's stories.

The event commenced with the singing of the national anthem by R. Boyd, which was followed by the posting of the colors by Torres Offender Honor Guard J. Britton, P. Garza, M. Moody and R. Sanchez. Afterward, the first half of the Torres Talent Show consisted of solo, duo, and group vocalists, while the second half consisted of theatrical, instrumental, and dance performances. The Peer Education Department hosted the event, and put on a skit, providing comedic relief. Lunch was pizza from Little Caesar's, and dinner was hamburgers from Sonic. Not a soul present allowed the sweltering heat of the day to distract them from enjoying the food and the day's activities. A dance contest was even held toward the end of the event, and the audience was allowed to elect the winner by applause: J. Soto.

Other contestants were chosen by a three-

judge panel. Six on-stage awards were given at the end of the day: The best solo vocal performance, the best stage entertainer, and the best overall talent went to S. McGaha; the best duo vocal performance went to L. Hutchison and R. Boyd; the best instrumental performance went to S. Davis and the best group performance and theatrical performance went to J. Ceja, J. Ramirez and S. Unger.

An art gallery section was also set up and judged for awards. For the craft shop workers, the most creative use of materials area went to B. Sanders,

who created a very pricey leather saddle. For a three-dimensional Lord's Supper portrait made of wood, W. Taylor won the most lifelike work, the most inspirational theme and the most original idea awards — nearly sweeping the entire art contest! For regular artists throughout the unit, the most creative use of materials and the most original idea awards went

to A. Rodriguez, who sculpted a pool room out of Dial soap! The most lifelike work award went to J. Pendleton for two illustration boards: one picturing death riding a motorcycle and another depicting an old school watering hole in the woods. The most inspirational theme award went to C. Brock for an illustration board containing several themes of Jesus or God.

Many of the men who were present expressed how special the event had been for them and how it had offered them hope for the future. Sincere gratitude was expressed during the award ceremony and afterwards.

Rehabilitation begins when offenders discover they are not defined by their mistakes, but are instead refined by them. When talents are found and utilized for a common good, genuine change begins to turn hardened criminals into men filled with purpose and direction. That's what "God's Country" discovered on this day. ➔



Torres Unit talent show coordinators are B. Hutchison, E. Garcia, S. Balfour, J. McClure, K. Cypher, A. Romero, L. Chavez and R. Constante Jr. Guest speakers include E. Solis of KABB Fox 29 News and R. Ramero, fitness expert from San Antonio.

A Woman's Perspective: Contemplating parole

Jennifer Toon, Contributing Writer

Parole. The mere mention of parole sets our wheels of anxiety into motion. Instantly we begin collecting and comparing data, tracking patterns of set offs as though we are studying the habits of an elusive wild animal. When this doesn't produce any gratifying results, we shift our efforts to more primitive methods. We draw circles, read tea leaves, analyze dreams, and repeat phrases. We know this makes no rational sense, but someone swore it worked, so we think maybe it's worth a try. We feel frustrated and foolish but there must be something else we can do, right?

Here's the reality — ultimately the decision as to whether or not you make parole is completely out of your control. We can improve our chances by doing things within our control such as keeping a clean disciplinary record and participating in programs which hopefully lead to self-discovery and transformation, but that's it. I'm serious, that's it.

We can argue that our offense and criminal history do not change and continued denials for those reasons aren't fair. Unfortunately, as an old boss of mine used to say, that's the nature of the beast, meaning it's part of the process.

I'm not belittling or dismissing anyone's frustration about being denied parole. I'm disappointed each time I'm denied. I eat my fair share of ice cream and cookies around those times. Whether you're a first, second, or fourteenth time offender, not being allowed to go home is disappointing. I've learned to cope by changing the way I look at things and accepting those things outside of my control. It's a simple but remarkably effective way to cope.

I remind myself this confinement won't last forever. One day I will be released, and I know I'll be ready this time. I can't change my offense or history, but I have the ability to shape the future with a new attitude and better decisions. I keep in mind that parole is a privilege, not a right and no matter how my spirit resists that, it is the truth. No one owes me anything in that regard. How could I be angry?

With parole, all we can do is hope for the best, and work towards the best, but prepare for the least desirable outcome. Preparation means abandoning the magical thinking and tea leaves. Instead, we can practice positive thinking, an outlook that sees setbacks as stages for comebacks. Positive thinking creates positive reaction to any situation.

The final decision is out of our control but still within our influence. We don't have to suffer the anxiety anymore, for even a denial creates opportunity (if we choose to see it). There is tremendous self-empowerment when we unflinchingly do what is required of us, even if all that is left to do is time. ➔

Famous Quote:

'There are no great people in this world, only great challenges which ordinary people rise to meet.'

— **William Frederick Halsey Jr.**

EXPOS continued from page 1

"Maybe, but we really need to take our selling to another level. Hence, the WSD Career Expo was born. This initiative is designed to help our students gain employment readiness, connect with potential employers, and open doors to employment upon their release back into the community."

These one-day programs are planned, organized and orchestrated at the unit level with assistance from the WSD staff. The process involves bringing prospective employers onto the unit to discuss, with WSD students, their particular industry or company, employment possibilities, and those traits they seek in a good employee. Some even bring ex-offenders who can share their secrets of successful reentry. WSD also has expos featuring service agencies and sponsors another event for education offerings.

"And so they come... 10, 15, 20 employers armed only with knowledge and an intense desire to make a difference. They engage our diverse classes of students for eight 30-minute sessions sharing hope for the future and reinforcing the messages brought forth by our teachers each day," Griffin said. "These are messages like, 'Cover up your tats, be on time, dress as though you are ready for work, think like the employer, sell your strengths, be honest, and convince the interviewer that you have changed.' Our students hear it over and over, and it lends our teachers even more credibility. More importantly, it tears away at those irrational thoughts and beliefs held by many in the incarcerated population."



R. Valenzuela, representative of Aerotek Staffing Agency, describes hiring opportunities for former offenders during the Dominguez State Jail Career Expo.

"Attitude and preparation are key to a successful job search, and it is up to the individual to believe that he or she is employable and would be an asset to the company. Anything less is a recipe for failure."

Students who participated in the recent Dominguez State Jail Career Expo Number Seven had this to say:

- "It motivated me seeing that there are employers out there willing to give us a job when we get out, and I can start a good career with their company,"

— R. Hernandez Jr.

- "One of the main things I learned was that your professional life after release will not be determined by your past, but by your work ethic." — J. Clark

- "They give you a chance to change your life by giving you a chance at employment." — J. Rodriguez

"Unfortunately, too many offenders lack role models and positive guidance during their formative years and make poor decisions." Griffin

said. It is up to us as educators, business leaders and the community as a whole to fill in those gaps and effect a paradigm shift that will literally change the culture of a family and beyond — and we have! We have taught, practiced, reinforced, reinforced and reinforced. It is now up to our students to take the information and make a new career path."

WSD Principal T. Craiker said freeworld participants enjoy supporting the expos.

"Employers and service providers feel good about what they are providing for TDCJ offenders," she said. "They are helping people who are not in a good place in life." ↴

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, 2016,** through **June 30, 2016.**

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, 2016, and June 30, 2016. 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 ↴

HELP WANTED:

Wynne Unit farm shop

The Wynne Unit farm shop is filling the following positions:

Farm equipment mechanic

- To work on diesel tractors, farm implements, hydraulic systems and preventive maintenance

Tire repair farm shop

- To repair or replace tractor, truck and equipment tires
- Heavy lifting is required

Welder combination

- Welding and fabrication

Requirements:

- Must be an outside trustee
- No medical restrictions
- Submit detailed experience for the job you are seeking.

Send an I-60 to:

Mr. Coburn, farm shop
Wynne Unit / 020

Wynne Unit livestock

The Wynne Unit livestock department is looking for hardworking, dependable offenders to fill the following positions. Work detail includes, but is not limited to:

Livestock

- General horse health care
- Veterinarian assistant
- Training of two- and three-year-old colts

Horseshoer

- Shoeing, trimming and general hoof care

Requirements:

- Must be outside trustee
- Submit detailed experience for the job you are seeking.

Send an I-60 to:

Livestock Department
Wynne Unit / 020

The ECHO sponsors writing contest

Todd Carman, Staff Writer

Do 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 and receive special recognition in *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.** If we can’t read your entry, then it won’t be judged.
- Entries should be no longer than 1,500 words (three typed or five handwritten pages).
- Multiple submissions are allowed and can be included in the same envelope.
- **Entries must be received by *The ECHO* no later than Feb. 28, 2016.**
- Mail your entry via truck-mail or regular mail to:

The ECHO Writing Contest
P.O. Box 40
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040

Book review:

‘It’s Kind of a Funny Story,’ by Ned Vizzini

Steven Garrett, Segovia Unit

“It’s Kind of Funny a Story” is a book that is kind of a funny story. New York City teen Craig Gilner takes us on a wild ride through his world of depression and how he found a way to cope with and live life. The stress of his top-notch private high school and all of the confusion of being a teenager comes crashing down on him. He finds his life to be unbearable and becomes extremely depressed. After a night of being unable to eat or sleep, Craig starts thinking about taking his own life. Luckily he finds his way to the local emergency room where he is admitted to the psychiatric floor for treatment. This is where the story turns around and he helps us see that no matter what the situation is — life is great.

Craig is housed with a schizophrenic roommate in the hospital wing. He meets a pretty girl with only one notable flaw: she has little self-inflicted scars all over her face. He meets a man who simply goes by the name Human Being. While he is locked away from the world he has a lot of time to think about who he really is and where it all went wrong. He figures out that changes must be made in his own thinking to ensure that he doesn’t fall back into the grips of depression.

This is a book that anyone who has ever been locked up can relate to. It is a tale about sadness and depression that isn’t sad or depressing. It stresses how often we need to take a timeout and focus on what is really important in life. You may discover a little about yourself in this book. Maybe it will remind you that everything has the ability to turn out better.

I hope you enjoy it as much as I did. ♣

CLEAN YOUR WINDOW

William Hill, Staff Writer

Have you ever heard someone describe what they think life is like? To me, it is like a journey that you take. Like any road trip, you have to be able to see where you are going to arrive at your destination. How can you expect to get anywhere if you can’t even see out of the window?



Have you ever wondered why certain people seem to continually make the same mistakes? Why is this? I believe that I have an answer. It’s because we have dirty windows. No, I am not talking about physical windows that you can see; instead I’m talking about belief windows. Each person has their own belief window whether we know it or not. Perhaps you have heard this described as your core beliefs.

How does your belief window affect your actions? Simply put, whatever you believe determines what your actions will be in any particular situation. If you believe that it is okay to lie to get what you want, then you will have no problem lying to those around you when it will benefit you. This is the case with whatever principle is on your window, whether it is lying, cheating or stealing.

The good news is that just because

something is on your window it doesn’t have to stay there. Just as you can wash your car windows you have the power to change what is on your belief window. Change is never easy but then again nothing worthwhile in life ever is.

Albert Einstein defined insanity as “doing the same thing over and over and expecting

different results.”

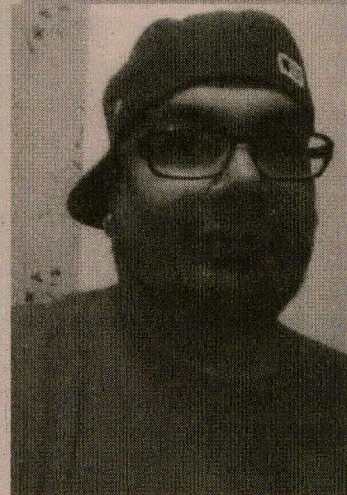
You have to make the decision that you want to change the negative principles that are on your belief window and replace them with positive ones. Then every time you find yourself in those situations, you exercise your new beliefs instead of the old ones. This has to be done with every belief that you want to replace. When you believe that lying is wrong, then you won’t lie when those situations come along.

Prison is not any of our preferred destinations; we all arrived here because of a detour we took in our life due to a dirty belief window. When you clean enough of your belief window to be able to see clearly, you will be able to avoid all those potholes that so easily hampered us. Let’s clean our windows and stay on the correct course to get to where we really want to go. ♣

CRIME STOPPERS

-Unsolved Homicide

Richard Anthony Escalante



On Oct. 25, 2014, Richard Anthony Escalante, born March 20, 1986 (5 feet, 7 inches tall, weighing 170 pounds), was brutally stabbed while working as a security guard at El Agazajo Bar & Grill in Austin. Richard was scheduled to work before midnight on Oct. 24, 2014, until 2 a.m. on Oct. 25. At approximately midnight, a black four door, possibly Nissan, older model vehicle pulled into the parking lot of the bar. The car was occupied by two younger Hispanic males. The vehicle was said to have stickers on the passenger side that were designed to appear like bullet holes. Richard was seen waving the car to the back parking lot and a short while later, the vehicle left at a high

rate of speed. Richard was found stabbed and later died.

TDCJ Crime Stoppers will pay from \$50 up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest, filing of charges, or indictment of a person or persons that committed a felony crime or is a wanted fugitive. Crime Stoppers guarantees your anonymity. ♣

The sports view: Michael Jordan vs. LeBron James

William Hill, Staff Writer

LeBron James is an amazing athlete and basketball player. There is seemingly nothing he cannot do on the basketball court. Rarely, if ever, has there been a player with his combination of size, speed and strength to play in the National Basketball Association (NBA). There is one thing he will never be able to do: he will never be Michael Jordan.

It seems like everybody is debating this issue and I thought I would set the record straight. There is a scene in the movie "Bad Teacher" where the gym teacher, played by Jason Segel, is arguing with a student who is saying that LeBron James is better than Michael Jordan, when the teacher says, "Call me when LeBron has six championships." The student responds, "That's your only argument?" the teacher says, "That's the only argument I need." It's a great scene in a so-so movie, but there are more reasons than just the discrepancy in championships that make Jordan the greatest basketball player of all time. Let's take a look at several areas of the game that I believe have an impact on this discussion. Those areas being: championships, scoring, defense, production in the clutch and leadership.

Let's examine first the issue of championships and get that one out of the way since it is objective and not subjective. Jordan has more championships than James (6-2) and before you can ascend to the throne you have to have the bling to be able to back up any claim of greatness. Those that support James in this debate claim that he has never had the supporting cast that Jordan had, when actually, just the opposite is true. James won his titles after leaving the Cleveland Cavaliers and joining fellow All-Stars, Dwayne Wade and Chris Bosh with the Miami Heat. While assembling a "dream team" doesn't guarantee championship titles, just ask the Heat who lost more finals than they won with James. The James supporters always seem to

forget that Wade had already won a title without James. In other words, James needed Wade to win, not the other way around. Jordan only had one other bona fide All-Star on his championship teams, Scottie Pippen. While Jordan and Pippen were a great tandem, nobody would ever try to make the argument that Pippen was Jordan's equal. Pippen needed Jordan, just as James needed Wade and Chris Bosh. Jordan leads James 1-0.

If the number of titles was the only factor in determining who the greatest player was, then neither Jordan nor James would be in the mix. Bill Russell, the great center for the Boston Celtic teams of the late 50s and 60s, won a total of 11 titles as both player and player/coach. However, there is more to this issue than just championships.

Let's look now at the issue of scoring. James is not even in the conversation with Jordan when it comes to scoring. That's okay. Neither is anybody else. Jordan won 10 scoring titles in his career. Nobody else in the history of the NBA won as many scoring titles. James has managed to win only one despite being the best player on his team. Jordan was the master at creating his own shot whenever he wanted it. Jordan would tell defenders exactly what he was going to do...then do it. Jordan leads James 2-0.

I believe that defense is the most underrated aspect of James game. He is a ferocious defender and can, and has, defended all five positions on the floor. He is constantly taking the other team's best player during critical times of the game. Jordan also was a great defender, which is often overlooked because of his offensive greatness. He won the NBA's Defensive Player of the Year award as a shooting guard. James greatness as a defender causes me to give him a slight edge in this category. Jordan leads James 2-1.

Performance in the clutch is where Jordan begins to separate himself, not just from James, but from

everyone. Jordan is the greatest finisher in NBA history. Nobody ever took over in the fourth quarter of games more than Michael Jordan. It was almost as if he was toying with the competition in the first three quarters because he knew he was saving his best for the end. Unfortunately for James, and the fans of the teams he plays for, the fourth quarter is where he often disappears. People often try to make the argument that points in the first three quarters are as valuable as points scored in the fourth quarter. This is one of those subjects that have two answers. Yes, a field goal scored in the first quarter counts for the same amount of points as the same field goal scored in the fourth. However, points scored in the first three quarters of a game are not the same as points scored in the fourth. The reason for this is because of the pressure put on by the other team. The ability to perform under pressure is what sets the truly great from the also ran. Jordan made a career out of being the best finisher in the NBA. Unfortunately, for his fans, James can't say the same thing. Jordan up 3-1.

Leadership is probably the hardest of the five categories to judge. There are a couple different types of leaders; those that lead by example, and those who are vocal leaders. I believe that to be a championship contender, every team needs both types. Michael Jordan was both. He gave the game everything he had and expected his teammates to do the same thing — and would tell them when they weren't performing up to his high standards for them. This might come across as arrogance, but it is how a team leader gets the best from the other members of his team. James would often defer to Dwayne Wade while he was with Miami. Now back with the Cleveland Cavaliers and younger players, James is going to be forced into the role of team leader. Only time will tell if he is up to the test. Jordan wins, 4-1. 🏀

Welcome to Joe Ney Unit

David W. Cauthen, Ney Unit

The Joe Ney Unit is a transfer facility that is transforming men's lives. No man should leave this little unit without being changed in a big way. Offenders are getting out and staying out by learning how to not habitually break the law.

The Gateway reentry program's self examinations are often uncomfortable but always necessary for the student's personal growth. The importance of education in the rehabilitation of offenders cannot be overemphasized. At

a recent GED graduation ceremony, the faces of the teachers glowed with pride for their students accomplishments.

The phrase "There is nothing you cannot do, if you put your mind to it" was brought home to all the graduates. The teachers and counselors are all dedicated and united toward one purpose: to reach the unreachable hearts of men and women in prison that the outside world may have given up on. We here at the Ney Unit want to say, "Thank you for not giving up on us." 🏀

Sudoku

Easy

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

Difficult

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

Former offender honors graduates, Windham holds ceremony at Dominguez State Jail

Gary Griffin
WSD Counselor

Former offender and success story G. Stanley recently told his story to Windham School District (WSD) graduates at Dominguez State Jail.

At the sound of "Pomp and Circumstance," the graduates marched 45 strong into the classroom, past the throngs of family members and stood dutifully in front of their chairs for the invocation and pledge of allegiance. Proud teachers and staff

members were there to greet the 33 GED and 12 vocational graduates at the Nov. 7 commencement exercise. After Principal T. Craiker offered her opening comments, offender A.

Johnson, himself a GED student, performed a moving rendition of R. Kelly's "I Believe I Can I Fly."

Former Windham GED and vocational graduate G. Stanley served as the guest speaker for the event and challenged graduates to follow his lead in questioning their own beliefs, attitudes, thoughts and goals. He lauded WSD and his teachers for providing those academic, vocational and affective skills that have helped make him a successful business owner and positive contributor to his community.

"I had no skills when I got here (prison) and if not for Windham, would have

had none when I left," Stanley said, adding that he chooses to come back to TDCJ and WSD events because "of the life [he has] today."

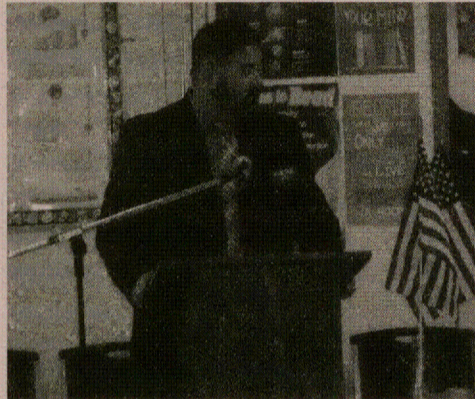
Also addressing the graduates were salutorian C. Andrade, who is a graduate of both WSD academic and vocational programs, and valedictorian M. Melchor. Despite his youth, graduate Melchor was quite insightful.

"Even though we have that so-called X on our backs, we can use it where people will see our progress

and say 'Wow' rather than whoa," Melchor said.

Graduate Andrade quoted his computer aided design (CAD) teacher C. Rocha, saying, "You don't have to be great to start, but you do need to start to be great."

The event ended with another inspirational song by A. Johnson, the benediction and a heartfelt thanks to the families, SSIs, security staff and teachers who freely volunteered their time for this ceremony. ♣



Former offender G. Stanley addresses WSD graduates at Dominguez State Jail.

Book Review: 'Gone Girl' by Gillian Flynn

Von Michael Short
Contributing Writer



New York Times bestselling author Gillian Flynn's 2012 book "Gone Girl" has reached number one on the USA Today's top-selling list. The movie adaption has also reached number one at the box office. This is one of the best books I've read in a long time, having read the 412-page thriller in two days.

The theme centers around perfect-turned-toxic couple Nick and Amy Dunne. Nick and Amy meet at a party and hit it off, only to lose contact. Months later when they reunite, their relationship takes off fast and furious and they become the "perfect" couple.

Every year for their anniversary, "Amazing" Amy sends Nick on a treasure hunt using poems that only he would understand. It's during their fifth wedding anniversary that the treasure he ends up hunting for turns out to be her. When he comes home to an open door and flipped-over furniture showing signs of a struggle, he knows things have gone wrong.

The search for Amy's abductor shifts a little closer to home when Nick is targeted as the main suspect. It turns out they weren't the perfect couple after all, with both partners harboring secrets. All the treasure hunt clues lead Nick on a journey of revelation where many of his dark secrets are revealed.

As her family and the media turn on Nick, he embarks on a mission to prove his innocence and find his beautiful wife. This story takes on a mind-bending twist where everything isn't as peachy as it seems. Flynn does a terrific job of showing the dynamic of relationships and how people's perception of the world and themselves can get distorted, compared to how others view them.

This psychotic thriller will make anyone with the proclivity to cheat rethink their infidelity. I give this book four stars and look forward to reading Gillian Flynn's other two novels — "Dark Places" and "Sharp Objects." ♣

Prepare for an opportunity

Garrett Cushinberry
The ECHO Staff

While incarcerated in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, each of us are waiting on that great opportunity—freedom.

In the process of waiting, most inmates prepare themselves in many ways: by earning a GED, learning a voca-

tional trade, taking advantage of the prison college programs and they may also seek treatment through self-help programs like AA/NA and Windham School District's Cognitive Intervention Program as a means of overcoming alcohol, drugs and anger.

Many prisoners simply exist until they are paroled or their sentence is completed. These are the ones who think that the rest of us are crazy, because we are doing all of this productive work with a prodigious amount of time to serve. Most of you sports fans can probably think of many athletes who were on the "B" team, or always sat on the sideline, waiting to get into the game. While waiting, they trained hard and practiced everyday to perfect their skills as a player. When the opportunity came for them to enter the game, they became great athletes, broke world records, traveled the world and influenced,

encouraged and motivated millions of people. We can do the same thing with the opportunity of freedom, but first we must prepare ourselves.

So disregard the naysayers and take heed of the old adage: **'It is better to prepare for an opportunity and not have one, than to have one and not be prepared.'**

In January, 2014, I enrolled in a Microcomputers college program. There I learned the application of Word, InDesign, Excel, PowerPoint, Flash and Fireworks. My intentions were to prepare myself for the opportunity of working a computer job. Upon the completion of my studies, I applied for and received a job as a civil drafter in Mapping and Graphics, which further enhanced my computer graphing skills. After earning an OJT certificate as a graphics designer, and later in AutoCAD, I saw an ad in *The ECHO* stating they needed a graphics designer. I applied for the position. In the meantime, I enrolled in English 1301 through the Lee College program in order to better my craft as a writer. Within one week after finishing my English class, I was hired at *The ECHO*. I had prepared for this opportunity, and now I am here to give it my best. I'm grateful for the opportunities I had to prepare for this assignment. ♣

Preparing for future: recognition of cold-related illness, injury

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

Frostbite

Wind chill can cause a rapid body heat loss and 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. ➔

Revival reigns on Eastham

Lance Brown
Eastham Unit Reporter

Deep in East Texas, the Eastham Unit held a three-day revival. Themed 'Light a Fire in my Soul', the revival consisted of three services that were conducted at the same time at three separate locations on Eastham: the north side and south sides of the unit and the trusty camp. These simultaneous revival services required a small army of chaplaincy volunteers, freeworld ministries, former offenders and unit administrators cooperating to make the revival a success.

Five dynamic ministers visited Eastham's North Chapel of Peace during the revival, inspiring many of the men. Pastor D. Wells was the right man of God to start the revival with his spirit-filled message designed to motivate and encourage. On day two, the torch was handed to Woodlands United Methodist Church Pastor J. Purcell in the morning. It was C. Jones in the evening that kindled the flames of revival. On the third and final day, Standing in Faith's Minister C. Jenkins brought a powerful message that led many to personal revival. L. Cook, the final speaker of the three-day event, delivered

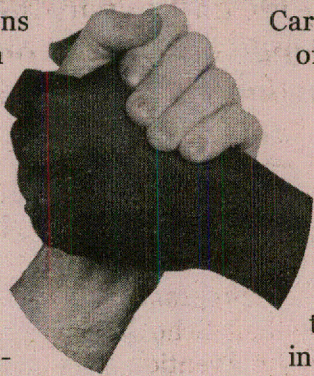
a summary that continued to encourage the capacity crowd.

Initially, the South Chapel wasn't large enough for the three lines of medium custody who would be attending the revival.

Under the direction of Dr. P. Carlin, the South Chapel of Peace underwent an extensive renovation.

For its inaugural services, Dr. Carlin brought the Living Letters Ministry, composed of former offenders who have used the lessons they learned in Eastham's Therapon program to live productive lives in the world. There were nine 'Living Letters' present throughout the revival, and they gave inspiring personal testimonies to the men of medium custody. L. Griffen played the South Chapel's piano with gusto while husband J. Griffen sang. On Saturday, the men were treated to a visit from C. Allen and his nationally awarded gospel group, The Allen Family.

Eastham's trusty camp was not left out of the picture. D. Ware and his wife spearheaded the revival with K. Haley and D. Cammeron assisting. D. Hogg and T. Hogg inspired and encouraged the men, as did D. Sewell, K. Stribling and E. Coward. They came back as the camp's version of Living Letters. ➔



Prison Rape Elimination Act Ombudsman (2015 revision)

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

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

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

Acta de Eliminación de Violación en Prisión Ombudsman

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

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

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

A father's true love

Submitted by E. Ray Moore
Estelle Unit

Teaching me how to
cook on an open fire
and the easiest way
to change a flat tire.

You taught me patience,
Respect and how to care.
You showed me love and
how to always share.

You were always there
whenever I needed you.
You are my father and
you are my friend true.

You have encouraged me
to do great things everyday.

That is a friendship
that I could never repay.

You taught me about
the Great One above.
And you always gave
a father's true love.



Mother I never had

Submitted by Jessica Yates
Halbert Unit

I always wondered where you were
when I needed you the most.

Wishing you were here
but instead you're like a ghost.

Haunting me and taunting me
as the days go by
steadily getting high
and making me want to cry.

Telling me you'll be here
and that you're gonna change
I've heard it all before-
now it just sounds strange.

Wishing for a mother
to correct me when I'm bad
Instead you're never here

You're the mother I never had.

As I became older
and became a mother to my own
I wish I would have listened to my-
self instead of throwing stones.

Because my kids are older
they are asking me the same things.
You'll never know what'll happen
or what the future might bring.

Now my kids are telling me:
We always wondered where you were
when we needed you most.

We wish you were here
but instead you're like a ghost.

Haunting us and taunting us
as the days go by
steadily getting high
and making us want to cry.

You told us you'd be here
and that you're gonna change
but we've heard it all before,
to us it all sounds strange.

We wish we had a mother
to correct us when we're bad
instead you're never here

You're the mother we never had.

I'm still a vet

Submitted by Bryan Berryman
Mark Stiles Unit

If you do the crime, you do the time,
Now that's a sure fire bet.
But even though I'm dressed in white,
inside I'm still a vet.

There was a time when in my youth,
my spirit I could not tire.
And so I joined the Marine Corps
to help me quench that fire.

They trained me hard and then
sent me to a land so far away.
Where bullets flew and bombs went off
and I prayed for life each day.

Now here I sit in prison walls,
with years I pay this debt.
But through it all I will stand tall
for inside I'm still a vet.

This country means the world to me,
even though I'm locked away.
I'm very proud to have done my part,
To keep it free another day.

And when I'm done and I'm set free,
this life I won't regret.

For I know I've done the best I could,
And I'm proud to be a VET!

Everlasting love

Submitted by Chavon Morrison
Lane Murray Unit

When I woke up this morning
the clouds were gray
and rain was coming my way.

I prayed that the Lord
would help me get through this day;
a day of feeling worthless.

A day of my lover's abuse
mentally, physically, emotionally.
I look into his eyes wanting to know,
Why? Why you find the sway
of another woman so tantalizing
that you miss the love in my eyes?

Why do you find fault in everything I do
and belittle me with no remorse?

Why is loving me so hard?

Now I lay down,
my pillow drenched in tears
falling asleep crying about the burdens
of yesterday and today.

I woke up this morning
with the sun shining bright
and the sounds of birds chirping.
All my gray clouds and rain went away
when I told him, "Pack your bags,
You cannot stay."

No more feeling worthless
because God woke me up this morning
saying, "I'm forever here,
because I'm your true lover."

The man in waiting

Submitted by Bernard Wroblewski
Daniel Unit

On the outside you can see
A man of serenity and composure.

He looks to be anchored
A calm amongst the storm.

But if you look in his eyes
Upon the lonely shores,
You'll see beyond his lies
A man completely torn.

He listens to the thunder boom
And watches the lightning crash.

As he cries for a love lost
And yearns for memories past.

He's transfixed by life's mysteries,
like sudden death and cancer.

Lost in his own misery
Searching for answers.

He calls for his Father
To mend his heart that's mangled
And waits for that beautiful day
He'll ride on the wings of an angel.

Creative Corner

Choosing an Innocence Clinic

At the time of publication of this handbook, four clinics associated with Texas law schools pursue innocence claims. They are the Innocence Project of Texas (IPOT) associated with the Texas Tech Law School in Lubbock, Texas; the Texas Center for Actual Innocence (TCAI) associated with the University of Texas School of Law in Austin, Texas; the Texas Innocence Network (TIN) at the University of Houston Law School in Houston, Texas and the Thurgood Marshall School of Law Innocence Project (TMSLIP) associated with Texas Southern University in Houston, Texas.

In order to avoid duplicative investigations and to conserve scarce resources, only one clinic will investigate a person's actual innocence claim. All four clinics share a common database. This means that if you write one clinic, it is noted in a database and the other three clinics can see the database entry. Consequently, it is not necessary to write all four clinics to have your claim reviewed. You should be aware, however, that clinics vary in the type of cases they review. The clinic that first receives and logs your case into the common database will be the clinic that works on your case. All other clinics that receive your case will allow the first clinic to complete their investigation. If the first clinic closes your file, another clinic may decide to begin an investigation. For that reason, you should review the filing guidelines for each of the four clinics noted below.

All four innocence clinics share at least one thing in common: they only take cases involving actual innocence. This means you cannot have been involved in the crime in any way. For instance, if you and a co-defendant planned to rob a store and during that robbery your codefendant unexpectedly shoots someone, the clinics will not assist you, even though you were not the shooter. The clinics will look at cases where the crime never happened (for example, a false claim of sexual abuse) or the victim of the crime has mistakenly identified you as the person responsible.

A. Innocence Project of Texas (IPOT) — Texas Tech Law School, Lubbock

For IPOT to accept your actual innocence claim the following must apply to you and your case:

- direct state appeals have been exhausted
- innocence claim involves a felony offense
- crime took place in Texas and was prosecuted in Texas
- not currently represented by an attorney

B. Texas Center for Actual Innocence (TCAI) — University of Texas Law School, Austin

TCAI focuses on felony cases where all direct appeals have been exhausted. TCAI will NOT handle innocence claims involving:

- death penalty cases
- federal cases
- drug offenses
- people who are not currently incarcerated

C. Texas Innocence Network (TIN) — University of Houston Law School, Houston

TIN will not pursue claims involving constitutional violations by others such as misconduct by prosecutors, police or jurors; claims involving self-defense, defense of others, justification or accident; or claims where you were an accessory or party to the criminal scheme, even if you did not commit the physical act resulting in the conviction. In addition to the above, TIN will NOT pursue cases where the innocence claim involves:

- a misdemeanor offense
- a sentence that has already been completed, even if the crime behind the actual innocence claim was later used to enhance a sentence in an unrelated crime
- the reason parole or probation has been revoked
- a plea of guilty or nolo contendere, unless there is physical evidence or a victim recantation that would show you did not commit the crime
- a conviction for an offense arising out of TDCJ confinement

- current or prior review from another innocence project

D. Thurgood Marshall School of Law Innocence Project (TMSLIP) — Texas Southern University, Houston

For TMSLIP to accept your actual innocence claim the following must apply to you and your case:

- direct state appeals have been exhausted
- crime took place in Texas and was prosecuted in Texas
- not currently represented by an attorney
- not a death penalty case

The Texas Prisoner Innocence Questionnaire (TPIQ)

All four clinics noted above worked together to create the TPIQ. It is a very comprehensive form that will take several hours or days to complete. You should read through the entire TPIQ without writing anything so that you have an idea of the information you need to collect in order to answer all the questions. A copy of the TPIQ (without any space for writing) is reproduced in SCFO REF 13.01 so that you can study the form before you request one.

When you are ready to fill out the TPIQ, request a copy from your unit law library. If your library is out of the TPIQ forms, send an I-60 to Access to Courts. Do not send a request to the clinics for a TPIQ. They will only respond that you should visit your unit law library to request a TPIQ, and if one is not available, to send an I-60 to Access to Courts. If your I-60 request to Access to Courts is not received in a reasonable amount of time, send an I-60 to SCFO and include the date you sent the I-60 to Access to Courts.

Complete the TPIQ and send it to one of the four clinics listed above, paying careful attention to the criteria they list for the type of cases they accept. If your case does not meet the criteria for a particular clinic, do not send it there. If it meets the criteria for more than one clinic, you can either select just one clinic to send it to or you can make multiple copies of the TPIQ and send it to each clinic likely to take your case. Remember, the clinics share a database and will know that you have sent your TPIQ to another clinic, so your efforts at duplication may not be particularly helpful.

Write legibly so that your TPIQ can be read by the clinic staff. Write clearly and concisely. You may need to fill out more than one TPIQ if you are claiming innocence on more than one conviction. For example, if you were convicted in two or more sexual assaults, involving different victims who were attacked at different times, fill out a TPIQ for each conviction. However, if your convictions involve a sexual assault against the same victim on multiple days, fill out only one TPIQ. Likewise, if your convictions involve different crimes against the same person arising from the same incident (for example, kidnapping and sexual assault), fill out only one TPIQ. If you are filling out multiple TPIQs, mail all of them together to the same clinic. If there is not enough room in the space provided on the TPIQ form for your answers, write as much as you can in the available space, then write "see attached." On a clean sheet of paper, write the corresponding number of the question you are finishing and complete your answer. Before you send your TPIQ to a clinic, take time to carefully review it to make sure you have answered all the questions. An incomplete TPIQ wastes your time, the clinic's time, and may also result in the denial of your request for assistance. When you mail the TPIQ remember to include any additional sheets of paper you used to complete your answers. **DO NOT SEND ANY OTHER DOCUMENTS WHEN YOU SEND IN THE TPIQ.**

If the clinic needs additional information, it will request it from you.

The clinics you send your TPIQ to do not represent you. However, the information you provide in the TPIQ and send to the clinic is an effort by you to establish an attorney-client relationship with them. As such, that information is confidential and is protected in law by the attorney-client privilege. That is true whether or not an attorney-client relationship is ever formed between you and the clinic.

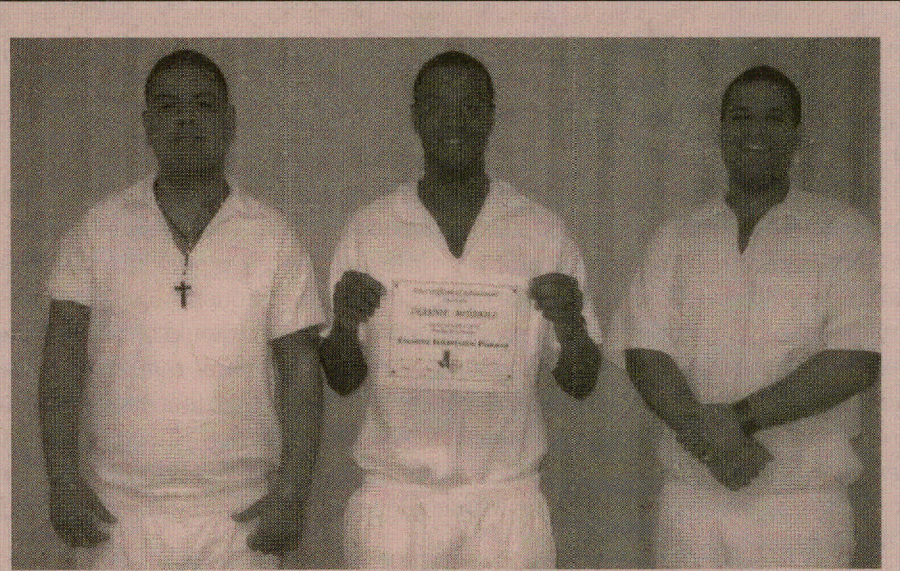
What to Expect After Sending the TPIQ

Any clinic you send the TPIQ to will respond to you. If you do not meet the criteria, you may receive a postcard or letter to that effect. If the clinic needs additional time to review your claim they will let you know. The clinic may also need supplemental information.

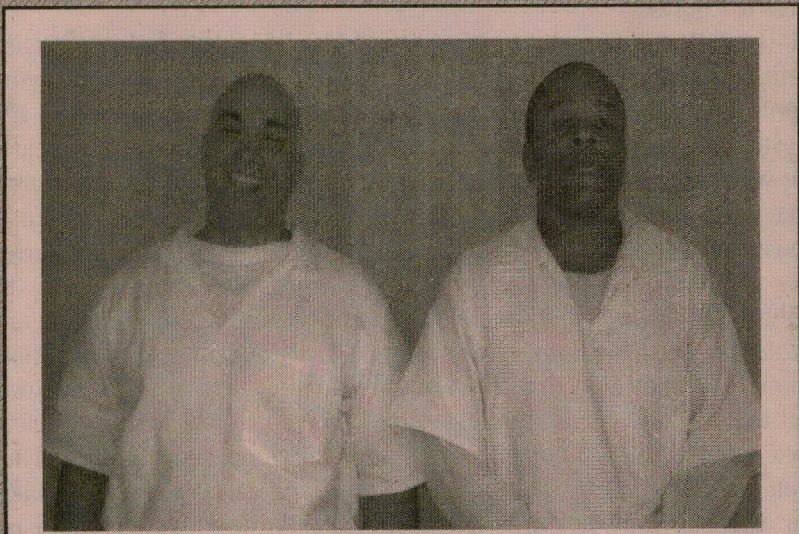
TDCJ/Windham bulletin board



Stiles Unit Lamar State College automotive vocational graduates are A. Day, M. Bynnom, T. Gonzales, A. Veras, H. Gomez, C. Hughes, J. Newman, J. Samarron, L. Rivera, K. Brown, A. Ortiz, C. Ware, J. Smith, J. Aguilera, R. Cardenas, M. James and S. Woods.



Daniel Unit CIP graduates are D. Ward, J. Miranda and Z. McDaniel Sr.



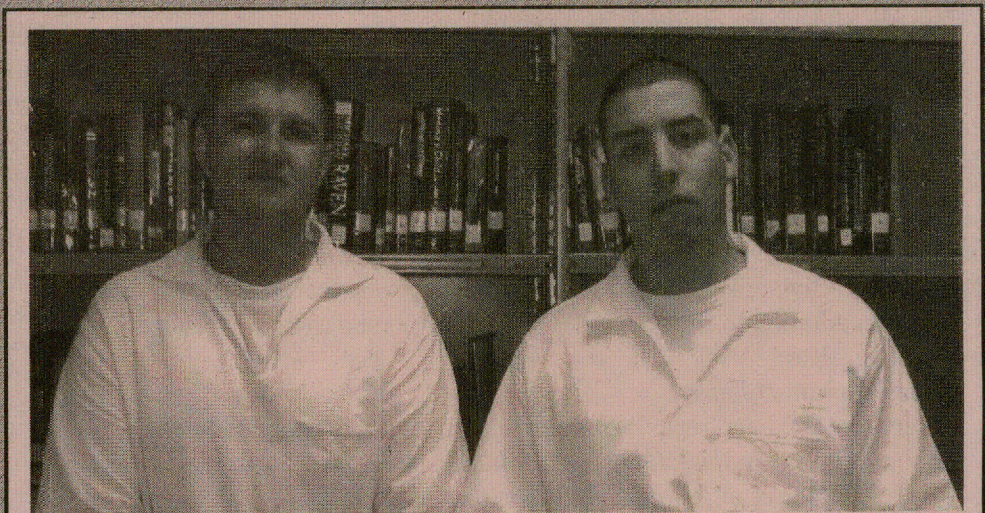
Daniel Unit CHANGES II graduates are D. Walker and S. Rimple.



Ney State Jail GED graduates are R. Garcia, A. Garza, R. Hernandez, A. Herrera, J. Jean, J. Garza, J. Juarez, R.S. Krist, J. Latham, B. Moore, B. Polk, L. Rios, E. Torres, J. Trevino and A. Garza.

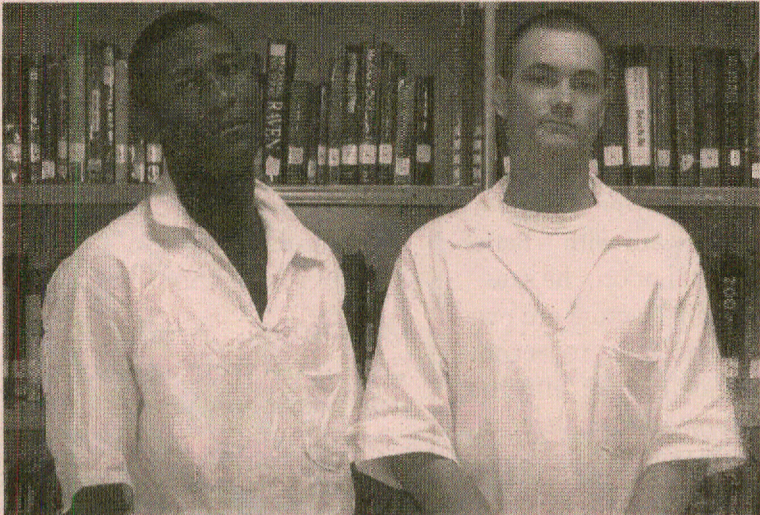


Dalhart Unit GED graduates are L. Taylor, R. Trevino, J. Hassell, E. Loredo, E. Parales and D. Castillo.



Wallace Unit CHANGES graduates are W. Davis and A. Padriena.

TDCJ/Windham bulletin board



Wallace Unit Cognitive Intervention Program graduates are C. Andrews and W. Jones.



Beto Unit GED graduates are K. Whitlock, R. Ladet, J. Gomez, D. Strong, M. Barrett, B. Woods, C. Williams, C. Gaines, B. Hamilton, M. Navarro, H. Dobbins, C. McGonigal, C. Francis, W. Dorsey, K. McGaritz, S. Perez, W. Pugh, P. Cockrum, M. Ned, L. Adama, D. Scott, T. Rodriguez, C. Reta and S. Moun.



Mountain View Unit GED graduates are H. De La Cruz, A. Helmuth, A. Brown, L. Goree, A. Sacksteder, L. Walker, C. Montelongo and V. Jones.



Daniel Unit Cognitive Intervention Program graduates are R. Menchaca, E. Gil and M. Rush.



Sanchez State Jail handball tournament winners are A. Flores and S. Chavez.



Murray Unit Cognitive Intervention Program graduates are T. Aguilar, D. Buchanan, C. Carmichael, C. Carnahan, V. Drisker, L. Frye, R. Garza, N. Lopez, L. Melancon, D. Melvin, C. Reyna, C. Sanchez, S. Stayton, S. Williams, A. Takats, I. Bustamante, C. Henderson and J. Kirven.

GRAD CEREMONY continued from page 1

"Most of us come from difficult beginnings; we had a tough start in life. After many mistakes, foolishness and poor choices, we each found our way to prison and ultimately into another family or a substitute family called a 'gang,'" said a GRAD graduate offender.

"Gangs seem important because they help prisoners get through the stigma of a long-term incarceration, like splintering your problems into multiple pieces," another GRAD graduate said.

"I grew up in a dysfunctional family, abusive with little or no values," said a GRAD graduate offender. "People join gangs for many reasons, the main one being a means of protection...and also to recreate a familiar family experience."

Skinner says offenders, being human, continue a normal routine of social contact and make friends and alliances while incarcerated, discovering family-like qualities with one another in prison.

"Gang affiliation provides the prisoner with a sense of familiarity and of regaining what was lost or perhaps never known," Skinner said.

The GRAD program enriches offenders' lives through rigorous mental exercises which help them see more deeply into their circumstances. GRAD is about working through conflict and learning to look for new ways to approach life more positively. C. Martin, guest speaker at the ceremony, attested to this fact in his powerful presentation.

"GRAD has given each and every one of you the tools you need to bring order to all the chaos and conflict in your lives," he said.

GRAD participants learn essential lessons to become re-socialized within the prison general population, such as cognitive intervention, anger management and substance abuse education. The coursework and group involvement offers the offenders the ability to learn to control their anger and frustration, according to GRAD volunteer and guest speaker Martin.

"The GRAD program is a grueling process sustained over many hours and many days of intense dedication. Obstacles rise and tempers flare as offenders struggle to face the consequences of their actions," he said.

"The program is tough, and while I was in it, I wanted to quit from the beginning," said a GRAD graduate. "But GRAD made me realize that I needed to finally make a change."

"It's a huge investment, with inevitable bumps in the road, but the returns are well worth the struggle," said guest speaker Martin.

GRAD is a nine-month process, broken down into three phases. Phase I, (two months): the offenders are housed in a single cell and are provided with written and video programming in the cell. Phase II (four months): the GRAD offender is housed with another offender and is provided with programming in a classroom environment. Phase III (three months): moves the GRAD offender into the general population on the unit. During this phase, offenders are assigned a job and offered the same access to programs and activities as the general population. Through the cooperative efforts of the Rehabilitation Programs Division and WSD, GRAD provides programs and courses such as substance abuse, alcohol abuse, chaplaincy, anger management, criminal addictive behavior and cognitive intervention.

On completion of this program, the offender will be released into general population and placed on a unit recommended by the State Classification Committee (SCC).

If the offender does not successfully complete the GRAD process or is found to be involved in STG activities after release to general population, the offender will be returned to administrative segregation and will not be allowed to participate in the GRAD process again. The offender must express in writing a desire to renounce membership in the STG, and the request must be submitted to the Unit Security Threat Gang Officer. The Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO) will make the final decision on any matters pertaining to the GRAD process.

Sadly, offenders are not the only ones affected by their thoughtless actions, as loved ones on the outside can also be impacted. GRAD makes it a point to bring this to an offender's awareness through specific programming.

"It is a shared experience and can deeply and directly affect family members on the outside," WSD instructor Cox said.

"GRAD taught me that my criminal choices could grow to become generational, transferring from parent to child, forming a chain of criminal behavior," a GRAD graduate said.

"I would like to thank all of our families and loved ones for coming to the ceremony. It is important to

be here and show support. Some families couldn't make it, but we appreciate them nonetheless," said another graduate.

GRAD instructors received plenty of respect and appreciation as well. Giving credit where credit is due, CIP instructor Cox gave tribute to their efforts.

"We are all grateful for the program and the facilitators and instructors who have given you the opportunity to move forward with a better life free of gang affiliation," he said.

"The program instructors are people who work tirelessly to accomplish the difficult task of effecting thinking and behavioral change, and we must applaud their labors," guest speaker Martin said.

GRAD graduates shared their gratitude and admiration for the program and revealed how it has impacted their lives.

"It is hard to put into words, but the teachers show us something new, like a new perspective on life and living. The seeds of change are within us all, and the GRAD program helps that change to grow. For those of you who are still trying to be slick, hip or cool and still walking that crooked path, it is the hope that you, too, will one day see the error of your ways," said another GRAD graduate, who has been incarcerated since he was 17 years old.

"It takes a lot of courage to change for the better, and to stay on the right side of the lines within an environment like prison. This program has enabled me to recognize my mistakes, to get out of SEG, and get out of a gang and to finally disassociate myself from a negative prison culture," said another graduate.

"To be honest, if it wasn't for this program I would probably still be in a gang. This program has been a life-changing experience for me," said another GRAD graduate.

"This is more than just a program — this is something that will even reach the strongest persons' heart. I feel like I am a stronger and more developed individual as a result of this class," one of the graduates said.

Editor's Note:

Please see related story "GRAD, ASDP programs offer offenders chance to change lives" in this issue of The ECHO, page 15. ➔



Recipes

SONJO'S ENCHILADAS

Adrian Gutierrez
Michael Unit

Ingredients:

1 bag of Cheese Puffs
1 package of chili-no beans
2 packages of chicken chunk
(substitute beef tips)
1 package of flour tortillas

Directions:

Crush cheese puffs into powder. Add water until you get slush type mixture. Shred chicken or beef into cheese mixture, mixing well. Spoon mixture into a tortilla, roll and cook for approximately 30 minutes. Cook chili and pour over enchiladas. Makes 2-4 servings.

SMOTHERED CHICKEN CHEESY CREAMY BURRITOS

Cheryl Haga
Riverside Unit

Ingredients:

1 package flour tortillas
1 pouch of chunky chicken
1 bottle jalapeno squeeze cheese
2 jalapeno peppers (diced)
½ pickle (diced)
1 cup of rice
1 Ramen noodle-chicken seasoning packet
1 Ramen noodle-chili seasoning packet
½ bag of kosher beans
½ bag of jalapeno chips
1 bag of Hot Fries
3 packets of cream cheese
1 bottle picante sauce
1 chili pouch
(with or without beans)

Directions:

Empty chunk chicken into large mixing bowl adding jalapeno squeeze cheese (to taste) and diced peppers and diced pickles. After cooking rice separately, add the chicken and chili seasoning packets to your mix. Mix well and add kosher beans, jalapeno chips, Hot Fries and seasoning with picante sauce. Make each burrito and cook for two hours. Use the cream cheese packets and squeeze cheese to make cheese sauce. Use heated chili pouch as final topping. Makes 4-6 servings.

GRAD, ASDP programs offer offenders chance to change lives

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice initiated a process in 2000 that provides a method for offenders to renounce their membership with a known security threat group (STG). This procedure is called the Gang Renouncement and Disassociation process (GRAD). Those offenders willing to renounce their gang affiliation are required to participate in the process and associated activities until successful completion is attained.

GRAD is a nine-month process, broken down into three phases. Phase I (two months): the offenders are housed in a single cell and are provided with written and video programming in the cell. Phase II (four months): the GRAD offender is housed with another offender and is provided with programming in a classroom environment. Phase III (three months): moves the GRAD offender into the general population on the unit. During this phase, the offenders are assigned a job and are offered the same access to programs and activities as the general population. Through the cooperative efforts of the Rehabilitation Programs Division and the Windham School District, GRAD provides programs and courses such as substance abuse, alcohol abuse, chaplaincy, anger management, criminal addictive behavior, and cognitive intervention.

GRAD was started at the Ramsey I Unit in August of 2000 and completed its final class on August 6, 2014. There were 210 classes during the time GRAD was offered at Ramsey, with a total of 3,430 gang members assigned and 3,097 offenders who completed the GRAD process. GRAD expanded to the Ellis Unit in October of 2008 and continues to provide the program to any STG offender who desires to renounce his affiliation and participate in the process. To date, GRAD has successfully graduated more than 4,500 offenders. The success of GRAD has not only been recognized by TDCJ but is being considered by several states as they attempt to respond to the issues concerning gangs.

An administrative segregation STG offender must meet the following criteria in order to be eligible to participate in the GRAD process:

1. Shall have a completed and signed GRAD Process Renouncement Form;
2. Shall not have been involved in any STG activities for a minimum of one year;
3. Shall have a completed and signed Gang Member Disassociation Form;
4. Shall have been assigned to Administrative Segregation Level I (1A) for six months prior to enrollment;
5. Shall not have received any Level I major disciplinary cases for offender assault, staff assault, aggressive sexual misconduct, or weapon possession for a period of at least two years prior to enrollment; All other Level I major disciplinary cases shall be reviewed on a case-by-case basis after a period of one year;

6. Shall not have received any Level II or III major disciplinary cases for a period of at least six months prior to enrollment;
7. The following security precaution designators: Escape (ES), Staff Assault (SA), or Hostage Situation (HS) shall be reviewed by State Classification Committee (SCC) for consideration on an individual case by case basis;
8. Shall have a signed GRAD Letter on Intention to Participate Release Form and
9. Shall not have previously completed the GRAD process.

In July of 2014, the Administrative Segregation Diversion Program (ASDP) began at the Ellis Unit. This program is for the STG offender who was previously assigned to administrative segregation, was released from TDCJ custody, and is returning to TDCJ custody. The program offers the offender an opportunity to avoid the return to administrative segregation. ASDP is a six-month program, broken down into two phases, and is managed the same as the GRAD program as it relates to programming. After completion and graduation, ASDP offenders are released into the general population as an ex-STG member.

In order to be eligible to participate in the ASDP program, during the intake process an offender must:

1. Be confirmed as a member of a STG by the Security Threat Group Management Office (STGMO) within TDCJ;
2. Have been out of any federal, state, or county confinement for a minimum of 12 consecutive months before returning to custody;
3. Have a completed and signed ASDP Renouncement Form;
4. Have a signed ASDP Letter of Intention to Participate Release Form; and,
5. Not have previously completed the ASDP or GRAD program.

The GRAD and ASDP programs require the offender to renounce their affiliation with the STG. When an offender chooses to participate in either program, the unit STG Office will then conduct the required investigation and provide the STGMO with the results of the investigation. After reviewing the investigation report, if qualified, the offender will be placed in a pool of eligible offenders until they are transferred into GRAD or ASDP. After successful completion of ASDP or GRAD, the offender will be released into general population and placed on a unit decided by SCC. If the offender does not successfully complete the ASDP or GRAD process, or is found to be involved in STG activities after release into general population, the offender will be returned to administrative segregation. The STGMO will make the final decision on any matters pertaining to ASDP or the GRAD process. ♣

INNOCENCE CLAIMS continued from page 11

Although the TPIQ form covers a lot of information, once the clinic understands your issue, they may send you an additional form to fill out. Do so as quickly as possible and return it to the clinic. If you do not understand their instructions, write them back and ask for clarification. It is important that the clinic knows you are serious about pursuing your case and that you are doing all you can to provide the clinic with needed information.

It takes a very long time to work up a case based on innocence, sometimes years and even decades rather than months. Do not be impatient, and do not lose hope. If none of the Texas clinics accept your case, pursue clinics outside the state for assistance.

Questions offenders often ask

1. What do I do if my unit law library doesn't have a copy of the Texas prisoner innocence claim (TPIQ) form?

Answer: Send an I-60 to Access to Courts and tell them your library needs more TPIQs. Wait a reasonable time and check back with your library to see whether they have more. If they still do not have TPIQ forms, send an I-60 to SCFO. Tell SCFO the date you sent your I-60 to Access to Courts.

2. I have a lot of documents I can send the clinics to prove my innocence. Should I send those documents with my TPIQ?

Answer: No. The clinics will write you back and let you know which documents, if any, to send them.

3. Can I send a TPIQ to more than one clinic?

Answer: Yes, but remember that a clinic will look at the database and know you have a request pending with another clinic. Duplication may not be helpful. You may want to wait until you hear from the first clinic before you send a TPIQ to a second clinic.

4. If one clinic turns me down should I send another clinic my TPIQ?

Answer: Yes, so long as you fall within the criteria for that clinic.

5. I am innocent of more than one crime that police say happened at the same time. I did not kidnap or sexually assault the victim. Do I still fill out two TPIQs?

Answer: For that situation, fill out only one TPIQ since the crimes were part of one incident against one victim.

6. I was convicted for a string of sexual as-

saults against different victims, but I did not commit any of those crimes. Police claim the same person committed all of the crimes. Do I still fill out two TPIQs?

Answer: For that situation, fill out a TPIQ for each conviction. If there were two different sexual assault victims (who were not assaulted together), fill out two TPIQs; if there were three sexual assault victims (who were not assaulted together), fill out three TPIQs, etc.

Editor's Note:

Addresses for the four clinics mentioned in the above article are as follows:

1. **The Innocence Project of Texas, 1511 Texas Avenue, Lubbock, TX 79401**
2. **Texas Center For Actual Innocence, 727 E. Dean Keaton St., Austin, TX 78705**
3. **Texas Innocence Network, 100 Law Center, Houston, TX 77204-6060**
4. **Thurgood Marshall School of Law Innocence Project, 3100 Cleburne St., Houston, TX 77004** ♣



Recipes

KENDALLNEEZY'S EASY STUFFED CRUST PIZZA

Kendall Hartl Cantu
Bridgeport PPT

Ingredients:

- Bread
- 2 turkey and swiss sticks
- 1 Squeeze Cheese
- 2 cream cheese packages
- 1 V8, optional
- 1 Tbsp. ketchup, optional
- Ranch dressing
- BBQ sauce

Directions:

Tear crust off bread; form bread bowl inside large bowl two inches high on sides. Place cheese sticks around edges of bowl; mold bread over cheese, and press down so cheese is not seen. Chop turkey sticks. Mix one tbsp. cheese with two cream cheeses, two tbsp. V8 and one tbsp. ketchup. Spread over bread. Top with meat. Pour BBQ sauce and Ranch dressing over top.

LEMON-LIME CHEESECAKE

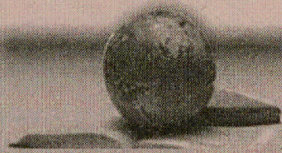
Richard W. McConnell III
Hamilton Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 box graham crackers
- 3 packages instant milk
- 10 packages cream cheese
- 4 lemon lime sports drinks
- 1 Mountain Dew soda
- 2 Tbsp. strawberry preserves

Directions:

Crush all of graham crackers into powder and add water until powder is a doughy texture. Shape the dough into a crust using a large mixing bowl. In a separate bowl squeeze all the cream cheese into separate bowl. Add one instant milk package at a time to the cream cheese until all are used and then add the sports drink and the Mountain Dew. The batter should be thick but able to be poured into crust, spread evenly. Let sit for two hours to settle and then evenly spread the strawberry preserves on top. Makes eight thick slices.



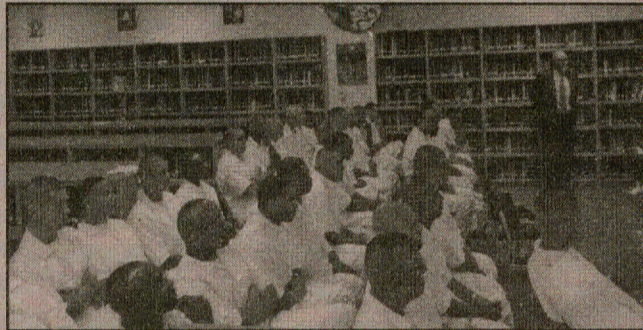
Library Corner

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

— Samuel Maugham

Susan Wilson
Library Services Coordinator

The Robertson Unit in Abilene has a maximum capacity of 2,984 men. There are many programs and services available for the occupants, including going back to school for a GED or training for a vocational career. One program/service that is growing in popularity is the library. The Robertson library has 15,259 books, circulated 12,684 books in 2014-15 (the best loan history ever), and had 17,113 visits by patrons, also in 2014-15.



Robertson Unit celebrates a WSD graduation attended by 17 GED and 15 vocational (HVAC and Auto Brakes) graduates.

There are two main reasons for the growing success of the Robertson library:

1. C. Williamson, Robertson librarian assistant, is enthusiastic and dedicated about finding the right material for each patron. She is frugal with book funds and often goes to books sales to get the best deals. She has spent personal time browsing at book sales on weekends. Library Services has received more than one letter from Robertson patrons praising the positive attitude and commitment of Williamson.
2. Library staff cannot be effective without the full support of WSD Principal K. Morgan. He is very much pro-library and has attended book sales with Williamson. He has also gone to great lengths to provide two new book drops for the library patrons.

With these two people working together to make a better library and to promote reading, it is only fitting that the Robertson library was used as the site of graduation on Nov. 7, 2015.

HELP WANTED

Wynne Unit tire shop

The Wynne Unit tire shop is filling the following positions:

Over the road tire repair

- Remove and replace tires on trucks and trailers
- Patch tires as needed
- Lifting is required

Over the road truck mechanic

- Diagnose and repair diesel engines
- Diagnose and repair air brake systems
- Diagnose and repair minor electrical systems
- Preventive maintenance

Fuel pump operator (service station)

- Must be able to climb stairs
- Must be able to handle short periods of inclement weather

General clerk

- Must have basic knowledge of computer systems
- ### Requirements for above positions:
- Must be in trusty status
 - No medical restrictions
 - Must be able to multi-task in various positions as needed

Send an I-60 detailing your experience to:

Mr. Anderson, Wynne Unit tire shop.

Refrigeration mechanic

The Neal Unit box beef plant, located in Amarillo, is looking for offenders with a background in HVAC, boilers or industrial refrigeration to work with an ammonia refrigeration system.

Applicants must have:

- A classification of S3/G2
- No medical work restrictions.
- No major cases in the past 12 months
- No STG affiliation.

Qualified applicants should send an I-60 with experience information to:

Box beef plant manager, Neal Unit, Amarillo, Texas.

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