

The ECHO

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To the editor,

A lack of patience and tolerance has always been peoples' problem. Complaining and sniveling is an even bigger problem. Blaming other people and pointing fingers is an even bigger problem. I have been incarcerated almost 18 years, in and out practically all of my life. When I read "*The ECHO*" all I hear is blah, blah, blah. The truth of the matter is this: when you see an old fool, leave him alone. Find positive people who will motivate you to get an education or some vocational skills under your belt. Stop complaining about nothing. These young people need guidance. This place is, was and will always be prison. This is not a hotel. You don't have all the fixings and trimmings of the free world in here. Learn to adapt. The old can blame the young and the young can blame the old, but the reality is that it is what it is and we are where we are — inside a prison. You want to make change? Start with yourself. If you want people to listen to you talk, then start talking like you have some sense. Ladies and gentlemen, stop, look in the mirror and ask yourselves who you are. Embrace the good you have been taught and teach someone else how to read or do math. Help someone. This is who we really are — incarcerated citizens, not cry babies, not snivelers and not finger pointers. Can anybody hear me?

Sly

Allred Unit

To the reader,

You make many good points. Thanks for sharing your views with our ECHO readers.

Famous Quote:

'Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.'

— **Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Letter from the editor: The most unlikely hero

I'm really a baseball guy, but a play in Super Bowl XLIX still stays in my mind, an unbelievable play to say the least. I don't watch much football anymore — the Dallas Cowboys have broken my heart too many times. The one play when Tony Romo fumbled a snap on a field goal attempt to win a playoff game was my last real game as a fan. I have enjoyed watching some playoff games and Super Bowls since then, but not with much enthusiasm. Thus, my attitude towards the past Super Bowl was indifferent at best — especially with the teams from New England and Seattle.

Prior to and at the start of the game, most people felt it would be a close game, and so it was. With about two minutes left to play Seattle was down four points and making a final drive down the field to possibly score the winning touchdown. It definitely appeared this was going to occur.

Then two of the most unusual plays occurred, both involving rookie cornerback Malcolm Butler of the New England Patriots. With less than a minute to play, Butler deflected a 33-yard pass, but receiver Jermaine Kearse caught the ball while on the ground. Kearse got up to run and Butler pushed him out of bounds at the five-yard line, an unbelievable reception.

Then two plays later, on the one-yard line, with 20 seconds on the clock, Butler intercepted a pass from Seattle quarterback Russell Wilson intended for Ricardo Lockette and assured a victory for the New England Patriots. The crowd went wild and an unlikely hero was born!

"From preparation, I remembered the formation they were in...I just beat him to the route and made the play," Butler said. It came out later, the Patriots had practiced defending this exact play during their practice sessions. Butler admitted he had been beaten on the play in practice.

"Overall, I just knew what was coming. I just wasn't sure, but I had a good idea."

Most people were expecting a running play by Seahawks star running back Marshawn Lynch since they were on the one-yard line.

"I was thinking run, because of the running back," Butler said. "But I'm a pass defender first, so I had to do my job."

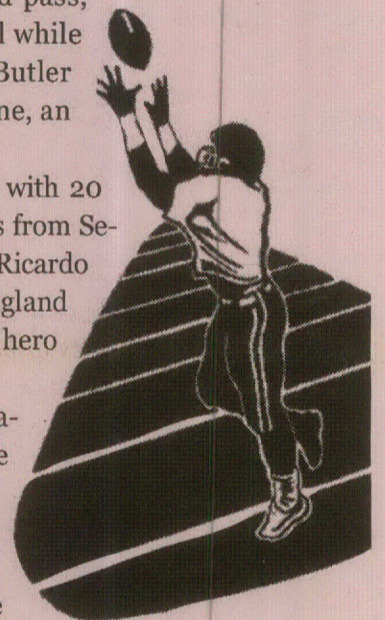
The Patriots were glad he did — he took care of his responsibility. Thus, Malcolm Butler's name will go down in NFL history as making the biggest play in Super Bowl XLIX.

A review of Butler's professional career is a short one. He was undrafted in the 2014 NFL draft. He signed with the Patriots on May 19, 2014. In his only season, Butler started only one game but appeared in 11 games. In all, he had 15 tackles, three passes defended and no interceptions.

He was a rookie playing in the Super Bowl and made the biggest play in the game! He was successful because he had prepared well, knew his role, and made probably the play of his life! His preparation was the key to his success. He was ready. I wish him the best in his NFL career and hope that his work ethic will take him far.

We won't be playing in a Super Bowl, but to be successful in our pursuits we must be prepared and focused like Butler. When the time comes, we all need to be prepared to make the big play!

Sources: <http://sports.yahoo.com/malcolm-butler>
<http://usatoday.com/tom-brady-malcolm-butler>
<http://wikipedia.org/malcolm-butler> ♣



DEAR DARBY LETTERS TO THE DARBSTER

Dear Darby,

I wanted to get your opinion on this issue. We have these wannabe tough guys who will walk from the back of the line and close out the left lane for incoming traffic, disrespecting every offender they walk in front of. These guys are really cowards and know that no one is going to challenge them as they think that no one wants to get locked up for fighting, and of course they are right. I talked to an old convict who told me that 35-40 years ago this type of disrespect did not occur. What's your thought on this kind of conduct?

Billy Bob Bodine

Dear Billy Bob,

You're right — cutting in line is VERY disrespectful, and that kind of behavior was dealt with in a prompt fashion back in the day. In this new age, the popo frown on convicts self-policing negative behavior from other convicts, and these cowards know it. There is a bright side of this, though — by reinforcing negative behavior, these critters will have a tough time readjusting to life on the outside (I mean, rules of behavior apply to others, NOT them!) and will likely violate their parole and come back. Oh, wait... that means they'll still be here cutting in line. Maybe there's no bright side to this behavior, after all.

Dear Darby,

Hey there, Darbster! It's nice to read your section in the paper — I love reading the letters. I was scared to write in because this isn't my thing. However, I just experienced a wonderful blessing called "A day with God." We had some touching, sincere moments, the kind that are missing from most our lives on

this side of the fence. Dads were able to spend quality time with their kids, and I believe it gave all of us good memories to tide us over until we're out. The program teaches dads to be Godly men with integrity, love and leadership. It really helped us dads build better relationships with our kids, and that's worth more than all the snacks in commissary! I want to say thanks to Forgiven Ministries — they (and the unit's administration) made it all possible.

#Mr.Agape Love!

Fabian D.

Torres Unit

P.S. That's your first hashtag, Darb!

Dear Fabian,

I'm glad you had a great experience at the "A day with God" program on Torres. The chaplaincy department offers many programs across the system that remind us that we're human and that we can have a positive religious experience, even in prison. I recommend that folks check out what's being offered in the chapels across TDCJ — you would be surprised at the variety of programs and classes available. Also, that's NOT my first hashtag — someone beat you to it in the July/August issue!



Dear Darby,

Howdy! I've been readin' The ECHO since I got to TDCJ back in 2011. I've read many articles that I agree with and many I don't agree with, and I have always taken your advice with a grain of salt. See, I may be young, just a 24-year-old cowboy, but I have the

character and morals of an older convict. My girlfriend has been down with me the entire time, sharing my struggles with me. But sometimes a man breaks weak, you know what I'm sayin'? Now, I've gotten right with the Man upstairs, and I pray and try to do the right thing. I've been doin' lots of soul-searchin', and who I am today is much better than who I once was. But I don't know everything. In my way of thinking, life is like ridin' a horse: it'll either buck you or be calm. But no matter what, you gotta hang on. So when I make parole, I reckon there will be lots of difficulties for me and my girlfriend. What do you say about that?

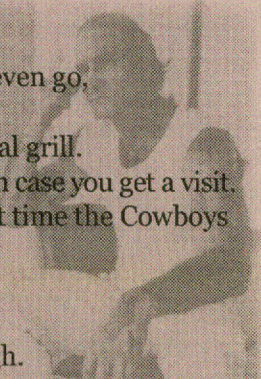
**Tyrone "Bull" Hayes
Hughes Unit**

Dear Bull,

Yeah, you need to grab life by the horns and hang on when you get out. Doin' a little "soul searching" isn't weird — it's a wise thing to do. Who am I? Where did I come from to get here? Where am I going FROM here? All of these are enlightened questions we should ask ourselves on our journey through life. Yes, you'll probably have ups and downs with the girlfriend, but that's normal life. The downs help us appreciate the ups. Buck up and get on that horse, cowboy! It'll be better than you think when you're out.

Darby's top 10 signs... you've been locked up too long

10. All the officers you knew as a newboot have retired.
9. Your name is on every checkout card in the library.
8. You know what they are serving for chow before you even go, based just on the smell.
7. Your oscillating fan has a blue plastic blade and a metal grill.
6. You still have some "Chuck Taylor" shoes you've saved in case you get a visit.
5. You still have canned goods in your locker for the next time the Cowboys go to the Super Bowl.
4. You still have a manual typewriter.
3. Your ID card still says **INMATE**.
2. You remember the last time you had a regular furlough.
1. You skip a parole lay-in to make store! 🐾



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). 🐾

DENTAL BITES



Dr. David Seals
UTMB dentist

Tips from the Dentist: Tartar, or calculus [the correct dental terminology], is caused by the calcium salts in your saliva attaching themselves to your teeth. We have this high concentration of calcium in our saliva so our teeth won't dissolve. Tartar cannot be brushed off. It does not cause cavities or gum disease directly. The problem with tartar is it acts as a physical barrier from being able to "thin out" the plaque [germs] on a daily basis. **The takeaway from this story is this:** Have your teeth professionally cleaned, as needed, to prevent gum disease. 🐾

Men do cry

Jamie Stewart
Telford Unit

To: A Man in Mourning,

What do you say to someone who loses the love of his life? The center of his universe? The push behind his purpose? The answer ... NOTHING! There are no words for a man who has endured such a loss. Not to the one in mourning, anyway. I first asked God to strengthen the brother. For I believe strength would be the immediate need for a man who has received word that his mother has passed away. Receiving such news under any circumstances would be painful enough. But to be told this tragic news while in prison ... this has got to be the most painful of all.

Suddenly finding yourself left with memories of various "lasts", such as ... the last time you heard your mother's laughter, saw her smile, heard her voice and constant words of encouragement, and experienced the silent roar of her courage and observed the sweet nectar of your mom's unwavering faith, and of course, heard your mother express how much she loves her son. And finally, remembering the last time you and your mom were together, the last time you held her hands, and gave her some sugar or hugged her with all your care. You were always reluctant to release her from your embrace. You were left speechless from just having your mother's heart so close to your own.

These memories hurt like nothing a man will probably ever encounter in his life. Nevertheless, over time, these same memories will carry you throughout your remaining life's journey. So keep living, brother! As hard as it feels now, and as painful as the feeling hurts, just keep living!

To anyone who has lost his mother, know that there are those who are praying for you. I hope that you'll find the will to continue on in a righteous manner that would make the "queen" so very proud. To accompany your renewed spirit, may your faith become refined to the point that the man next to you won't have any qualms shedding tears tomorrow that you've shed today. Because just as steel sharpens steel, men understand men!

Release your tears, bro. It's okay. Just know that through it all, you are still growing. You will continue to grow. So much so, that eventually, one day, when others take notice of you, the "son" they see will be the mirror image of his wonderful mother ... whose character, compassion and love will never die. ➔

People care

Deidre McDonald
Woodman State Jail

I recently bumped my forehead twice in two days. The result was one greenish-colored bruise and a small knot. The first injury was the result of lying on the floor, organizing my locker box and holding the lid up with an unsteady hand. The other mark was a result of knocking my head against the ladder on my bunk as I was rushing to be first for commissary.

No more than 12 hours after the second incident I was called to line control to see the Safe Prisons sergeant because of an "anonymous concern" pertaining to the marks on my forehead — and no incident report to report them. The assumption was that there was the possibility that I could've been "bullied" or "abused."

I said all that I could to get the Safe Prisons staff to believe that what actually happened was the truth, but to no avail. I was put under OPI (Offender Protection Investigation) to "protect me", under the assumption that I could be scared to tell if I was in fact being abused.

They took pictures and escorted me to medical. All the while they showed genuine concern, saying things like, "No one should take abuse," and "It's our job to protect you." Having resigned myself to the inevitable, namely, having to spend the next six days in protective custody, I just remained silent and allowed to them to do their job.

I was questioned again, this time by a Safe Prisons committee member, who looked at me and said, "Look, I understand, okay? You're 'old school,' you've done time before and you don't want to wear a snitch jacket, so you just sit there in silence and don't say anything. But, it's my job to protect you and that's just what I'm going to do."

A thorough investigation was conducted, which included an inventory of my property, reading all of my correspondence and questioning random offenders in my dorm. The investigation was dropped with the final conclusion that due to my clumsiness, I did in fact bump my head twice in two days.

What did I learn from all of this? I learned that if I had actually been "bullied" or "abused," there are people who care enough to drop an anonymous I-60 and tell it. I also learned that the Safe Prisons staff cares enough to take immediate action to protect me. Looking at it from this perspective makes me feel that I am "safe" in prison.

And most of all, I learned to always report an injury — immediately. ➔

A Woman's Perspective:

The face of fear: a cricket?

Jennifer Toon, Contributing Writer

Have you ever realized that what you feared the most wasn't nearly as unmanageable as you once thought? You discovered that your anxiety about the problem created more of an issue than the problem itself? Maybe you can even admit your fear caused you to overreact.

I was about four years old. It was morning. I lazily yet happily opened my eyes to a new day. I laid there a moment wondering about the whereabouts of our new kitten. My brother had recently convinced me that our cat was a fighter pilot in a secret elite army for animals. Don't ask me now, but it made perfect sense at the time. I decided to go ahead and get up, but as I was about to climb out of bed, I noticed an odd black dot in the sea of pink blankets. A cricket. This must have been my first encounter with one because all I remember was pure terror. I was too scared to move, cry, let alone think. We stared at one another for a long time, its antennae slowly twitching back and forth, until it abruptly turned and hopped off the bed. I quickly gathered my blankets and pillows about me and hugged them close. I mustered enough courage

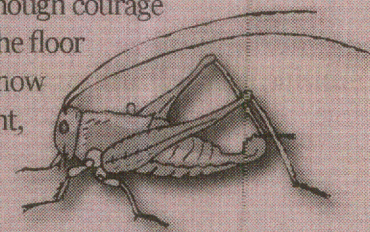
to finally put my feet on the floor

15 minutes later. I don't know where the cricket went, maybe it found its way to the screen door, or the cat ate it. All I know is I

never forgot how I felt that morning frozen in fear.

How silly it seems now to be afraid of a tiny cricket, but I keep that memory as a reminder of how immobilizing fear can be in our lives, often over things we imagine are beyond our capabilities to emotionally handle. Think of our fears of failure, of looking like an idiot, of public speaking, of doctor or dentist visits, of set offs, of so many things! Not to say anyone likes set offs or getting teeth pulled. I don't like crickets in my bed, but I don't have to be paralyzed by fear of them. It's not easy for us when our thoughts build on one after the other, creating and spiraling our worst fears out of control, completely out of proportion to the situation. I knew the cricket's actual size in relation to my own was very small, but I saw it through my imagination, which made the creature's head the size of a beach ball with big ole monstrous eyes and antennae as long as fishing rods. That's what I saw that morning despite reality; that's what struck me with terror. But it was merely a cricket.

We don't give ourselves enough credit. We have already endured and survived situations we never dreamed we could. Some we created ourselves, others we had no control over, but we persevered. C.S. Lewis wrote, "Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point." Even if your worst fears manifest, you can find and experience the spiritual strength to work through it. Chances are what you imagine to be a terrifying monster is just a cricket. Thump him off the bed. ➔



Goals

Joseph L. Fritz
Contributing Writer

We come from all walks of life: mechanics, clerks, construction workers, oil field workers and a thousand other things. Many of us were thieves, dope dealers and/or users, robbers and more. With our life experiences, we have many skills to draw upon while we are incarcerated. Sadly, many of us look only to reinforce what we know of criminal behavior while we're here, so we won't get caught next time. This is incredibly limiting and does not allow for advancement in any meaningful way.

There are many different options for bettering yourself while in TDCJ. There are trades, GED classes, college courses and programs all aimed at making you a better, more complete person. That said, there is no "one size fits all" approach. Many of us in here would like to start a music career, become a professional writer or artist, and other things that are outside conventional trades and other education offered by the Windham School District. All too often, I hear, "I'll do it when I get out." I cringe when I hear this. These are often people who should know better, having been released before, knowing how hard it is when we get out, or have been here long enough to have exposure to others who have gone through the same things.

The time to start is not when you get out, nor tomorrow, or after this or that happens. The time to start is NOW! An individual is only limited by their knowledge, access to more knowledge, ambition, drive and focus. There are 24 hours in a day. How many of these hours do you spend working on meaningful things? Look at your day. Are you spending five or more hours in front of the television? Do you spend all day at recreation? Perhaps at the "Knock" table? There is a time for recreational activities; time should always be made for them. However, these activities should not be the basis of what you're doing. Most of us have jobs in TDCJ, which range from 4 to 12 hours in length. If we're working that many hours, what are we accomplishing by spending six or more hours in front of a television?

The secret to success is knowing what you are doing, always looking to learn more about what you do, and setting short and long-term goals. This process can be explained in a few easy steps.

1. Study your topic, then keep learning.

You want to be a writer? You'll need to learn grammar, punctuation, effective sentences, and a host of other things. If you can take a course or two on creative writing and creative language, and/or get a degree in English, you'll be well on your way. You're only as good as your information. Be sure to get everything you can from every source possible. Network with people and read books when possible. Get books on self-help, and a good dictionary and thesaurus. An almanac puts thousands of facts at your fingertips. It's not like we have Google! One can also find resources in the general population library. Spend more time in the non-fiction section! There are also many places that will send free books on a variety of subjects, if you aren't able to purchase books yourself. Ask around. I promise you someone has a listing for all manner of resources for prisoners. This step is essential, no matter what you are learning about.

2. Set short-term goals.

Short term goals should lead up to long-term goals. Commit to having a cer-

tain amount of work done at least five days a week. Continuing with the learning to write analogy. This could be as little as 200 words per day of writing, or two chapters from a book you're learning from. No excuses! The "I'll skip today and do double tomorrow" excuse sounds good in theory, but it doesn't work in practice. Do what you have said you will do for every workday. A professional writer typically writes around 7,000 words per day. This is about 10 double-spaced pages. The industry standard for a novel is about 70,000 words. Sounds easy, right? It would be, at only 10 days for a novel. However, that is for the first draft! After that draft, there comes an editing and polishing process done by yourself and often at least one more professional editor. By committing to doing a certain amount each day, you form good habits, which makes the work a little easier. It takes at least 30 days to form a habit, good or bad. Most of us have enough bad habits, so let's focus on those good habits which will help us!

3. Set long-term goals.

You've been writing (or drawing, doing music, and so on) many different things as part of your short-term goals. What are you going to do with everything? Will you get them self-published? Send them to a site that will make them available free to the public? While you have worked on your short-term goals, your long-term goals should be coming into clearer focus. As they do, create a list of what you want to do long-term, your timeline for doing it and how you plan to go about it. You are looking ahead to the future now. You've finished (or are still cleaning up) the projects that are part of your short-term goals. If you're planning to simply put what you've done in the back of your locker, or sending it home to await your release, you're making a terrible mistake. That is, unless you're getting out within the next six months. While you're incarcerated, you have plenty of time to work on what you need to do. Keep an eye towards the future, but keep your mindset in the present. If you're not staying grounded in what you're doing now, while looking ahead to the long-term, you're spinning your wheels.

Every one of us has a different skill set. The only way we can add to that skill set is to educate ourselves. Then we have to apply what we have learned, putting it into practice. However, an individual must learn to be patient! Things take time when doing them from in here, where our hands are tied in many cases. Our people have other things to do out there. The less time you want things to take, the more it will cost you. There are many services that help prisoners, but they are not miracle workers. You must have patience, and learn some trust. Without those two things, you'll get nowhere while you're still in here.

The struggle for tomorrow does not start tomorrow; it starts today! Plan for it, follow through and persevere! Do not allow yourself to be defined by your environment and circumstances.

Make the most of your circumstances and be the one to help define your environment. Positive attitude equals positive action. With positive action, all things are possible! ♣

'Poor me'

Von M. Short
Contributing Writer

I have been coming up for parole for 17 years now. After yet another parole denial, while sitting here feeling sorry for myself, I came across an article about 26-year-old humanitarian Kayla Mueller, who was taken hostage 18 months ago by ISIS and ultimately executed by them. As my heart began to break for this young woman, guilt began to flood in. My deplorable actions sent me to prison. Her courageous humanitarian notions imprisoned her and ultimately led to her untimely death.

Unbeknownst to Ms. Mueller, she unwittingly taught this 46-year-old convicted felon a lesson in

humility. She showed me that no matter how bad you have it, others have it worse, and that no matter where you are or what stage you are at in your life, you can turn a negative situation into a positive one. She made me proud to be an American, because she is the best of what America has to offer and the good that so many Americans do as a whole. I wish I could put those things on my resume but I can't because of the poor choices I've made in the past. But, even in light of that, I still have it better than a large portion of the world — just because of where I was born.

Ms. Mueller stated in a letter to her family: "I

have learned that even in prison, one can be free. I am grateful to see that there is good in every situation; sometimes we just have to look for it."

My advice is that you think about the words of this very wise young woman and the sacrifice she made to make the world a better place.

Kayla Mueller Thank you for your service!

Editor's note: Ms. Mueller was a humanitarian worker in southern Turkey assisting Syrian refugees. She made a trip into northern Syria for a day and was abducted by ISIS militants on Aug. 3, 2013. She was executed by ISIS on Feb. 6, 2015. ♣

Niccolo Machiavelli:

Rebuilding one's foundation with a past master

John Flagg
Staff Writer

Prominent thinkers have risen up over the ages whose influence has left an enduring mark across the literary landscape of civilization. Niccolo Machiavelli is numbered among this lofty assembly.

Born in Florence, Italy, on May 3, 1469, to a noble yet impoverished family, Niccolo Machiavelli ranks as one of the most important writers and statesman of the Renaissance (the period of great intellectual activity from the 1300s to the 1600s). With his charismatic personality, he easily secured an occupation as a diplomatic emissary and acted as an advisor to princes and other members of European aristocracy. Machiavelli is most noted for producing penetrating administrative literature, such as "The Prince" and "The Discourses," although he also authored many plays and poems. Machiavelli died on June 22, 1527. His writings remain to this day course curriculum in many prominent universities around the world.

Nevertheless, the origins of Machiavelli's astonishing awareness did not arrive without a sharp degree of personal suffering, as he grew up knowing extreme poverty and the disadvantages that come along with it.

"I was born into poverty and at an early age I learned how to endure hardship, rather than flourish," Machiavelli said.

Malice, covetousness and contempt, among other adverse traits, were generally the common qualities of the Machiavelli household. This psychologically depraved environment pulled Machiavelli down into the deceptive arts of intrigue and subterfuge. He carried this negative behavior throughout his youth and into early adulthood.

"Dishonorable acts — like lying, cheating and stealing — became second nature to me," Machiavelli said.

But to Machiavelli, there had to be more to life than thinking and acting like a rogue. There had to be a way, he thought, to break free of a destructive foundation that can conform and control one's behavior. He realized that developing perspectives of a higher nature through the enrichment of knowledge could lead to self-improvement. Education was, according to Machiavelli, the "grand strategy to edge out a negative framework."

Many offenders have also emerged from a negative or disadvantaged starting point. This negativity can manifest itself in many different ways, such as: gang affiliation, unpredictable or criminal behavior, greedy habits or the consequences brought on by foolish choices.

Offenders must accept the fact that the reality of where one starts in life cannot be changed, but it is never too late to set a path for a better tomorrow. The ground we stand upon is made up of a variety of things: stereotypes, tradition, culture, opinions, values and principles, for example. But nothing is permanent or impervious to change. Establishing a new foundation will bring about a whole new world of cultural symbols and social

content that will enable offenders to perceive a wider array of possibilities.

In Renaissance Italy, family ties and friendships with influential people determined everything. Machiavelli often found himself on the outside of these inner social circles. But he never allowed that to deter him from his

goals. He soon realized that through the elevation of his intellect he could raise himself up on an equal social footing as everyone else.

By the same token, offenders live amid a time that places tremendous emphasis on education. Doors seem to remain closed more and more for those who fail to meet a certain education criteria. But like Machiavelli, offenders must open their eyes to the fact that nothing can lift up a person from a disadvantaged background like the transformative power of knowledge, wisdom and understanding.

Knowing it was futile to rail against his fate, Machiavelli learned how to adjust his approach in order to achieve success amid the severity of hardship. Similarly, offenders can disentangle themselves from negativity, redirecting their criminal impulses while plotting a course to a successful, positive and productive future.

It must be clearly understood from the start that education is not something that only takes place inside of a classroom. For instance, what Machiavelli did not learn from books or from teachers, he learned in the streets and city squares of Florence, the public benches, courtyards, churches and taverns. These learning environments provided Machiavelli with a unique school of life, as he wisely informs us.

"Education is not merely a pastime: it is a common legacy, an attitude, an inner quality, an everyday affair," Machiavelli said.

The key to any lasting change is in establishing a foundation of beliefs, thinking and leadership skills that will hold up amid the most formidable odds. Be aware that change does not occur overnight.

It took many years for Machiavelli to restructure his foundation, but in time he learned how to approach the world in a new and creative way. Machiavelli shows us that changing this fundamental aspect of oneself, even subtly, can often create dynamic results.

Incarceration is not the end. There is still so much more for offenders to strive towards: uncharted horizons that have yet to be mapped and goals waiting to be reached.

It begins with a new foundation.

Sources:

"Machiavelli and the Renaissance," by Federico Chabod

"The Life of Niccolo Machiavelli," by Roberto Ridolfi

"The Private Correspondence of Niccolo Machiavelli," by Dominic Ferrara



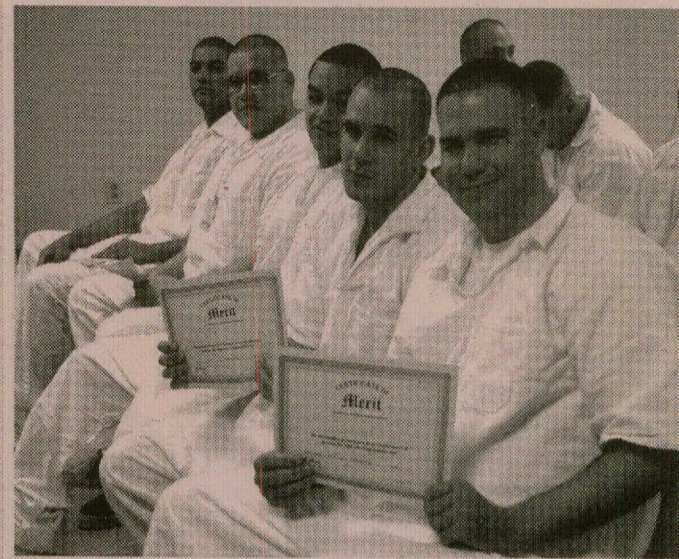
'Education is not merely a pastime: it is a common legacy, an attitude, an inner quality, an everyday affair.'

Tracy brings workforce knowledge, WSD history to encourage graduates at Travis State Jail in Austin



(Left) Speaker D. Tracy stresses the importance of preparing for job success after release.

(Right) GED graduates of Travis State Jail proudly display certificates.



Graduation speaker D. Tracy offered an invaluable blend of workforce training, education experience and history to Windham School District (WSD) GED and vocational graduates at the Travis County State Jail in Austin earlier this year. As director of business operations and marketing for the Austin Community College (ACC)'s continuing education division, Tracy is a 15-year veteran of human resource management and workforce education. He is also the son of Dr. C. Tracy, EdD, who played a key role in the early development of prison education in Texas and who is a former WSD superintendent.

D. Tracy encouraged the GED and Career and Technical Education (CTE) graduates in attendance to "celebrate the doors that are open to you after this graduation, imagine what tomorrow looks like and take more steps to improve yourself.

"If you have earned your GED or completed a vocational program in prison, take the next important steps after you are released: look to the community colleges in your hometowns, look for more vocational training opportunities, and continue to move forward in life. Every step you take is important and meaningful, and we will celebrate and honor the steps you've taken today. Remember the impact you have on people's lives as you talk to them. Even those small conversations have a ripple effect.

"My dad was fond of telling me that about 90 percent of life is just showing up. You've got to be there," Tracy said. "You have to be in class. You have to be there in the lives of your family, friends and coworkers.... You can have a positive impact on them after you leave prison. So dream big, celebrate the steps of success, and always be there for others."

Tracy then introduced his father, Dr. C. Tracy, who also praised the WSD students' success.

"I've been attending GED graduation ceremonies in TDCJ for nearly 50 years," he said. "I started in the prison system in 1965, and the spring of 1966 went to my first graduation ceremony. These celebrations are a very important part of school operations and a way to recognize important accomplishments. What you celebrate today is very important to you, your families and your communities! We are all believers

and supporters of the importance of education and job training in the Texas prison system."

Travis County State Jail Warden K. Forrester of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice followed on the program, encouraging graduates to persevere in efforts to better their lives, and she thanked family members in attendance for supporting loved ones.

"I understand what you're going through," she told graduates. "I recognize that you have lost so very much before you came to this point. There have been people telling you what to do and where to go, and you've lost a lot of privileges, family members and possessions. However, today you gained something that can never be taken away from you: an education. It's in your mind, it's yours and you own it, so go make the most of it.

"I'm very, very proud of you," she said. "You accomplished this goal in a prison setting. I know what your everyday struggle is — it is almost impossible to reach this goal, but you persevered. If you can do this in our environment, you can succeed in anything that is going to come at you in the

outside world.

"Families: I'm here every weekend, and I know a lot of you by name," she said. "I'm so proud of you for coming and supporting these men. It's not easy to walk into a prison and spend time with a loved one. The love that you have for your offender does make a difference. Thank you! We couldn't do this without you and your support. Thank you for being here for them."

GED valedictorian for the ceremony was R. Dean, and salutatorian was M. Dolan. GED graduates also included C. Bagley, C. Chavez, T. Contreras, D. Drayton, D. Mugrage, C. Martinez, M. Prevot, H. Retta, B. Sauter and T. Schaffer.

CTE Landscape Design and Construction Maintenance graduates were C. Johnson, S. Johnson, T. Kaluza, B. Light, T. Martel, L. Smith, C. Washburn and P. Winskier. CTE Business Image Management and Multimedia graduates were B. Chapman, E. Montante, C. Nichols, J. Padilla and A. Perry.

* Reprinted courtesy of the Windham School District web site: www.wsd.tx.org 📍

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You will meet with your Case Manager at the following location:
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The invincible roach

Joseph L. Fritz
Contributing Writer



“I am invincible, nothing can stop me!” the cockroach thought to himself as he moved along the trail into the forest. He moved quickly, pausing now and then to investigate things he found interesting along the way. He had recently vacated his former residence due to the people there trying to trap and kill him and his kin. Many had fallen victim, but not him. He knew better, but still thought it prudent to leave while the leaving was good. He knew how to avoid all manner of traps, but if the people in residence decided to bring the bombs, he would have to leave on their terms, and not his own. He knew himself to be invincible. While he couldn't be killed, he didn't want to take any chances.

“My kind have outlasted everything else.” He boasted. “When every other creature has succumbed, my kind have remained. We made it through the wars, have survived through hundreds of years of persecution from the humans, and even the assault of cats who see us as nothing more than their personal toys to play with and torture. Yes indeed, we have survived everything, and I am a paragon of roachdom, having survived where lesser roaches have perished!”

He thought fond thoughts of himself as he continued his journey into the forest. He didn't know what he would find in there, but food could be found anywhere for his kind. He knew he had stayed in his past

location for too long anyway. Generations of breeding had made the colony uncomfortably crowded, and as an elite warrior, he thought himself better than the others. Even had the persecution not begun, he thought it likely he would have moved on before much longer.

After journeying for several hours, the cockroach decided to have a look around. When it came right down to it, one place was as good as another for him. When one was invincible, one wasn't worried about things like weather, animals or any other hazards that other, lesser creatures had to fear. He started climbing a thick tree, knowing he would get a better view of his surroundings from higher up than he would at ground level. He had been blessed with invincibility, but hadn't been granted omniscience. More the pity, it would have made some things so much easier.

As he climbed, spiraling around the trunk of the tree as he did so, he encountered several bores in the trunk that looked to be likely places to set up his new base of operations. Eventually he would worry about breeding a colony of mighty warriors like himself. For now, he just wanted to be left alone. He would flourish in this new environment. He had identified several potential sources of food during his journey. He could survive in the wilderness indefinitely.

He continued his climb, moving steadily upwards.

The tree hadn't looked this tall when he had started his climb. He didn't care — he had all of the strength and stamina necessary to make a journey of any length, to any height. This was part of what made him invincible, the ability to outlast everything else. He could see the sun peeking through the dense foliage of the canopy of the forest. He knew his climb was nearly over. He planned to lay in the sun for a time once he made it all the way up, to soak up some rays and bask in the glory of his success before he had to climb back down into the darkness of the forest.

At last, he made his way along the smallest branches near the top, climbing the stalk of a leaf before travelling the underside of the leaf itself. He came around the edge of the leaf and was immediately blasted with the scorching heat and radiation of the sun. He didn't care — he had withstood worse, and knew himself to be invincible.

He raised his antennae into the air before lifting the front segment of his body into the air as well as vertically extended his front limbs in victory.

“Yes!” He boasted. “I am the strongest, toughest, most enduring creature in the world! I am invinc...”

In mid-sentence, before he could even think of evading, a bird swooped in, grabbed the roach in its beak, tipped its head back and swallowed the roach, crushing the roach's body on the way down.

Oh, how the mighty have fallen! ❖



Awakening

Deidre McDonald
Lane Murray Unit



There comes a time in your life when you finally get it. When, in the midst of all your fears, you stop dead in your tracks and, somewhere in your head, a voice cries out, “ENOUGH!” — enough fighting, crying and struggling to hold on. Like a child quieting down after a tantrum, your sobs begin to subside, you blink back the tears, shudder and begin to look at the world through new eyes. This is your awakening. You come to terms with the fact that you are not Cinderella, and in a real world, there aren't always fairy tale endings (or beginnings.) Any guarantee of “happily ever after” must begin with you. In the process, a sense of acceptance is born.

You awaken to the facts: Nobody's perfect and not everyone will always love, appreciate, or approve of who or what you are... and that's okay. They are entitled to their opinions.

You learn the importance of loving yourself. In the process, confidence is born of self-approval. You stop complaining and blaming other people for things they did, or didn't do, and you learn that the only thing reliable is the expected.

You learn that people don't always mean what they say or say what they mean, and not everyone will always be there for you. It's not even always about

you. So you learn to care for yourself, and in the process, a sense of safety is born on self-reliance.

You stop judging and blaming and you begin to accept people as they are. Then a sense of peace and contentment is born of forgiveness. You realize that much of the way you view yourself and the world around you is a result of all the messages and opinions that have been ingrained into your psyche. You begin to sift through all the junk you've been fed about how you should live and what you owe everyone else. You learn to open up to new worlds and different points of view. You reassess and redefine what you really stand for. You learn the difference between wanting and needing and you discard the values you've outgrown, and in the process, you learn to go with instincts. Trust your instincts; they are usually based on facts filed just below the conscience level.

You learn that in giving we receive and that there is power in contributing. You stop maneuvering through life as a liability and become an asset. You learn that honesty and integrity are not outdated ideals but instead the foundation on which you build a life. You also learn that you don't know everything, and it is not your job to save the world. You learn the difference between guilt and responsibility and learn the importance of setting

boundaries. You learn how to say “No.”

You learn that the only cross you bear is the one you choose to carry. Then you learn about love: how to love and how much to love, and how much to give and when to stop giving. You learn when to walk away. You learn to look at relationships as they really are and not how you would have them to be. You learn that alone does not mean lonely. You come to the realization that you deserve to be treated with love, kindness and respect — and you won't settle for less. You learn to care for your body and treat it with respect by eating a balanced diet, drinking more water, and exercising more. You learn that being tired fuels doubt, fear, and uncertainty, so you take more time to rest. You learn that laughter fuels the soul, so you take more time to laugh and play.

You learn that anything worth achieving is worth working for, and wishing for something to happen is much different than working for it to make it happen. In order to achieve success, one needs direction, discipline and perseverance. You learn that no one can do it alone, and it is OK to ask for help. You learn that the only thing to truly fear is fear itself. You learn that fear is a primary emotion; all other emotions (anger, sadness, jealousy) precede fear. You learn

to step right through your fears because whatever happens, you can handle it.

You learn that life is not always fair, you don't always get what you deserve, and sometimes bad things happen to good people. When this happens, you don't take it personally. You learn that what goes around ALWAYS comes back around. You learn to deal with the worst of evil... the ego. You learn that all those negative feelings of anger, envy and and resentment must be understood and redirected, or they will suffocate the life out of you and poison everything and everyone that is surrounded by you. You learn to admit when you are wrong and to build bridges instead of walls. You learn to be thankful for the simplest things that many people take for granted (and many others can only dream about), like running water, food, and a bed. Slowly you start to take responsibility for yourself, by yourself and you make yourself a promise to never betray yourself and never ever settle for less than your heart's desire. You make it a point to keep smiling, keep trusting and to stay open to every wonderful possibility. Finally, with courage in your heart, you take a stand, you take a deep breath, and you begin to design the life you want to live as best as you can. ❖

Child Support Corner: 'Get it straight'

Attorney General Child Support offers checklist

Six ways to get straight with child support: A checklist for parents reentering the community after incarceration

As the official child support enforcement agency for the State of Texas, the Office of the Attorney General is responsible for providing services to parents who wish to obtain or provide support for their children. The child support system can be complex. Parents who are transitioning to the community after a period of incarceration may not know who to contact about paternity and child support issues, what information to provide, or how to begin paying the child support arrears that accrued while they were incarcerated. This checklist is a good starting point for parents who are getting ready to return to the community.

1. MAKE CHILD SUPPORT PAYMENTS

- Pay the full amount of child support you owe for the month, or make a good faith effort to pay as much as you can toward supporting your children.
- Pay by mail at Texas SDU, P.O. Box 659791, San Antonio, TX 78265.
- Pay in person using cash:
 - Fidelity XPressPay: Call (877) 508-0472 for the nearest Fidelity location or visit www.fidelityexpress.com.
 - MoneyGram: Call (800) 926-9400 for agent locations or visit www.moneygram.com.
- For additional payment methods, visit the child support section of www.texasattorneygeneral.gov, select Parents & Guardians and scroll to Other Important Links for Parents.

2. MAKE CONTACT

- **PHONE** — Speak with a child support representative by calling toll free (800) 252-8014. If you are deaf or hard of hearing, call Relay Texas toll free 7-1-1 or (800) 735-2989.
- **ONLINE** — Log in to Child Support Interactive if you have questions about your case. Go to the child support section of www.texasattorneygeneral.gov and click Child Support Interactive on the right hand side of the page.



- **IN PERSON** — Use the interactive child support office map to find an office near you. Go to www.texasattorneygeneral.gov. Find a location in the Child Support dropdown menu.

3. UPDATE YOUR INFORMATION

When contacting a child support office, provide your:

- Contact information: phone number, email and mailing and residential address(es).
- Financial information: employer name and contact information, amount of wages or benefits you receive.

4. EXPLAIN YOUR CURRENT SITUATION

- Are you in transitional housing? Explain how much is taken automatically from your pay check for transitional housing.
- Are you completing special terms of parole or probation? Explain whether those terms limit the number of hours you can work. For example, are you in a mandatory treatment program or Substance Abuse Felony Punishment Facility (SAFPF) program?
- Are you under geographical restrictions? Explain whether you are prohibited from leaving your county of residence.

5. ASK FOR AVAILABLE SERVICES

- Ask for a Review and Adjustment Packet if you want to find out whether your child support amount can be changed.
- Ask if your case qualifies for a Child Support Review Process. The Child Support Review Process is one way to get your child support court order changed without going to court.
- Ask about local services like shared parenting (access and visitation), military/veteran assistance (HEROES project), or help for unemployed noncustodial parents (NCP) who have child support debt (NCP choices).

6. STAY IN TOUCH

- Update the child support office as soon as you find employment so that a wage garnishment can go to your employer and automatic child support payments can be made.
- If you asked for a review of your case, stay in touch with the office and be sure to provide all necessary information. ➤

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. ➤

Second chance

Submitted by Ashley Ormes Robinson
Plane State Jail

LOOKING BACK ON
MY SO-CALLED LIFE,
ALL I SEE ARE BROKEN PROMISES,
PAIN AND STRIFE.
THEY SAY IT'S HARD TO SAY
GOODBYE TO YESTERDAY,
BUT I'M TIRED OF
LIVING MY LIFE THAT WAY.
IN AND OUT OF TRAP HOUSES,
SLEEPING ON FLOORS, NO LIGHTS
AND NO WATER,
STAYING UP FOR DAYS, CALLING
MY CRACK PIPE MY BEST FRIEND;
IT'S AN ONGOING BATTLE—
WITH NO BEGINNING AND NO END.
SOMETHING IN MY HEAD TELLS ME

LIFE HAS YET BEGUN
CHARLOTTE'S WEB HAS
YET BEEN SPUN.
A NEW SEASON FOR ME
IS ABOUT TO BEGIN,
ANOTHER CHANCE TO TRY
AGAIN.
I LOOK FORWARD TO TOMORROW,
GOODBYE TO PAIN AND SORROW.
I'M GLAD ALL THAT STUFF
HAS COME TO AN END,
DRUG ABUSE, BAD CHOICES,
AND NEGATIVE TRENDS.
NOW I HAVE A SECOND CHANCE,
A NEW BEGINNING
A NEW BEST FRIEND.

Through the winter

Submitted by J. Patrick McCann
Connally Unit

IN THE MIND'S EYE, I SEE HER STANDING THERE
SURROUNDED BY THE SPRING TIME
FLOWERS OF MY YOUTH, FULL OF PROMISE AND MYSTERY
IN HER ARMS, SHE HOLDS MY SUMMER BASKET,
FILLED WITH ALL THE LOVE AND JOY
WE HAVE SHARED TOGETHER
AND IN HER EYES, SHE STILL HOLDS MY HEART
AND CALMS MY FEARS WHENEVER I LOOK THERE.
NOW ENTER THE FALL, THE PETALS
HAVE FALLEN, COLORS FADED
AND THE SWEET SCENT THEY
ONCE CARRIED ONLY MEMORIES.
HER BEAUTY CAPTIVATES ME:
IT'S IN HER HAIR AND ON HER LIPS.
THEY STILL ENTICE ME, HER HANDS
I WILL HOLD INTO WINTER
AND THE FLEETING MOMENTS OF LOVE
IN OUR LIFE, I WILL CLING TIGHTLY TO THEM.
ALWAYS THE SIGHT OF HER WILL SING TO ME
AND FILL MY HEART WITH JOY AND
MY SOUL WITH SPRING AGAIN.
I AM HOLDING HARD TO MY MEMORIES OF YESTERDAY
AND CARRYING HOPE INTO TOMORROW.
SHE WILL FOREVER BE MY
SPRINGTIME LOVE, MY SUMMER FRIEND.
OUR SOULS ENTWINED INTO THE FALL
AND MY SHELTER THROUGH THE WINTER.

The journey

Submitted by Kay Rosenkranz
Lockhart Unit

FOR SO LONG, I'VE HAD THIS
ABSOLUTE LONGING TO GO HOME
EVEN WHEN I WAS HOME
DID THAT MEAN I FELT LOST?
DID THAT MEAN I YEARNED
TO BE EMBRACED BY GOD?
DID THAT MEAN I SLUMPED OVER
IN WEARINESS AND CONFUSION?
YEP! YOU BETCHA!
OH I'M NOT TALKING ABOUT
GOING HOME FROM THIS CELL
THE WALLS, AND THE RAZOR WIRE.
OH YEA, I WANT OUT OF HERE
BUT -WHICH WAY IS HOME FROM
HERE?
I'VE BEEN SEARCHING,
I'M STILL SEARCHING
COULD THAT PATH OVER YONDER
LEAD ME BACK TO HOME?
I WONDER
I'LL HAVE TO REMOVE SOME OF
THE MANY MASKS I'VE WORN
SOME, I'LL TOSS AWAY FOREVER
AH! LOOK! THE CORE OF ME
WOW! THE SPIRIT OF ALL
THAT I AM LIVES.
THE SPARK OF MY SPIRIT FLICKERS...
JUST A LITTLE
I'M SHEDDING LAYERS NOW
I'M DIGGING THROUGH THE PAIN

WHEW! THAT REALLY, REALLY HURTS
I'M NOT SURE I WANT TO DO THIS
NOW I'M SHRINKING,
CRUMBLING - FEARFUL
I SCREAM! I CAN DO THIS,
DETERMINED
TUMBLE DOWN THE WALLS
AND BARRIERS
COURAGE, PLEASE TAKE HOLD
THERE'S THE HAND OF GOD
FOR ONCE I GRAB IT
AND HOLD ON TIGHT
LOOK AT ME. I FEEL
INNOCENT AND PURE
EVEN IN THE MIDST OF
ALL MY EXPERIENCE
I'M FEELING MY SPIRIT
BEGIN TO SHINE NOW
THE GLOW HEALS ME
SMILING, I EMBRACE THE HEARTS
OF MY CIRCLE OF FRIENDS, BOLDLY
I AM STILL GROWING,
EAGER TO EVOLVE
I ENCOMPASS RESOLUTION
AND ACCEPTANCE
I AM REJOICING IN BEING ME
I AM CELEBRATING BEING ME
DANCING, TWIRLING, LAUGHING
I'VE FOUND HOME. HELLO, SELF!
WELCOME HOME

The mourning of us

Submitted by Rene Tamez
Lindsey State Jail

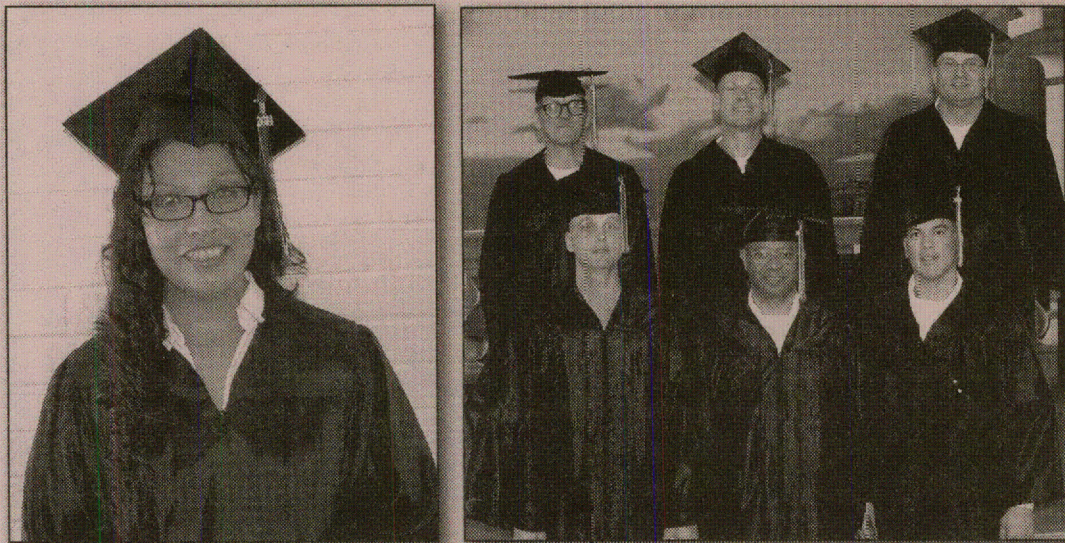
THEIR STORY IS ONE OF OLD
ONLY THE BRAVE WATCH IT UNFOLD
CONTROL AND POWER THE KING DID SEEK
BECAUSE HE THOUGHT HIS QUEEN WAS WEAK
PIECES OF YOU AND PIECES OF ME
WHAT HAPPENED TO WHAT WE CANNOT SEE?
OUR LOVE WAS TRIED AND PROVEN TRUE
WHERE IT WENT I WISH I KNEW
THE QUEEN WILL COME
TO CLAIM HER THRONE
HER KING'S DIRTY DEEDS
HAVE ALL BEEN SHOWN
LOVERS QUARREL AND LOVERS FIGHT
SHE SHALL WIN BY BEARING LIGHT
OUR FATE IS SAVED AND BEEN FORETOLD
FOR A BAG OF DOPE OUR LOVE WAS SOLD
THE TIME HAS COME, THE WAR BEGUN
WITHOUT YOU NOW I GREET THE SUN
HIS QUEEN HE ALWAYS DOES BETRAY
AND NOW HIS DEMONS SHE MUST SLAY
OUR LOVE IS OLD, OUR SOULS NOT NEW
WILL YOU STAND BY ME AND BE TRUE?

The Message

Submitted by Chris Lewis
Wynne Unit

IF YOUR INTENT IS NOT TO CHANGE
BUT JUST HAVE OTHERS AGREE
THAT YOU ARE READY, WILLING AND
ABLE AT THIS TIME
TO BE SET FREE.
THEN GO AHEAD AND SMILE
TO THOSE FACES AS YOU
PAT YOURSELF ON THE BACK.
AND RETURN TO THE FREE WORLD
WITH NO LESS LACK OF TACT.
OR IF BY CHANCE YOU'RE A BIT LIKE
ME AND NOW SEARCHING FOR
A CLUE OF HOW BEST TO DEAL
WITH YOUR SHORTCOMINGS, THEN I
HAVE A MESSAGE FOR YOU
THE DESIRE YOU HAVE TO SEARCH
SHOWS THAT YOU DO POSSESS HOPE
OF NO LONGER BEING ENSLAVED TO
FAST MONEY, ANGER, OR DOPE.
SUCH HONESTY CAN BE SEEN
THROUGH EVERY EYE THAT YOU MEET
THAT YOU ARE IN FACT READY TO
REJOIN LIFE ON THE STREET
SO HERE IS THE SIMPLE MESSAGE I
PROMISED YOU, AND PLEASE
DON'T THINK I'VE LIED
BUT IT'S NOTHING MORE THAN NOT
TO IGNORE WHAT YOU ALREADY
HAVE INSIDE!

Texas A&M University — Central Texas celebrates graduates



Texas A&M University — Central Texas holds graduations for male and female offenders. (Left) The Mountain View Unit graduate is A. Rizo. (Right) The Hughes Unit graduates are K. Umangor, H. Childre, G. Morris, S. Peace, T. Bagsby and M. Woods.

Texas A&M University — Central Texas is an upper-level institution offering classes towards bachelor's degrees for TDCJ male offenders on the Hughes Unit and female offenders on the Crain, Mountain View and Murray units.

Interested offenders should contact:

**Post-Secondary Education
Rehabilitation Programs Division
Two Financial Plaza, Room 370
Huntsville, Texas 77340** 📍

Darrington Unit holds marriage seminar

*John Stephens
Darrington Unit Reporter*

Worldwide Voice in the Wilderness brought a marriage seminar to the Darrington Unit. Johnny and Betty Moffitt, along with a group of volunteers, brought experience and wisdom with some tried, tested and proven formulas for husbands and wives trying to hold a marriage together while doing time. The marriage seminar played host to 14 couples that now have more tools to use to form a successful relationship.

Offenders expected visiting time with their wives, along with a little free world food, but what they got was something completely different. One couple said what they came away with was a better way to communicate in situations that arise among incarcerated couples, along with learning how their faith will help their relationship. Another couple says they were able to develop a deeper level of trust and forgiveness. Both couples agree that their relationship with Christ was strengthened and solidified. The couples signed a pledge to each other as a commitment. The volunteers also provided the spouses of the inmates with community contacts to help solve problems that will sometimes arise for incarcerated couples, since incarceration is a family issue. 📍

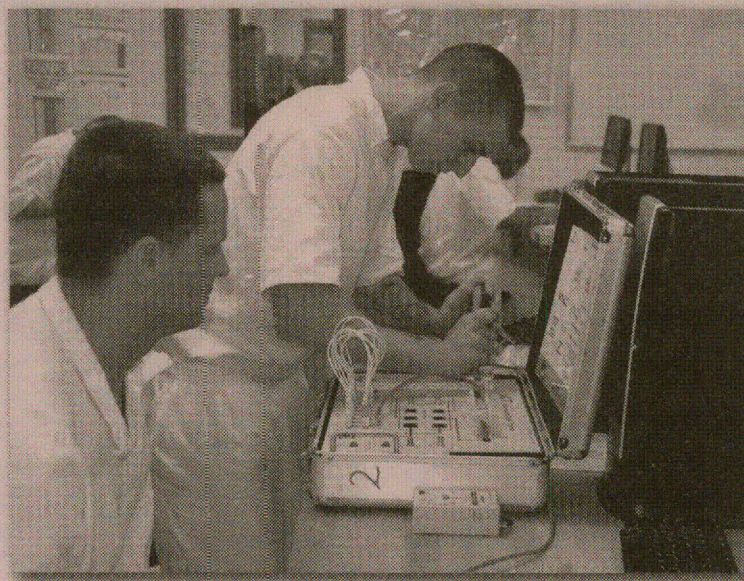
C-TECH continued from page 1

"C-Tech provides a structured learning environment resulting in a high level of job skills mastery," WSD Superintendent Dr. C. Carpenter said.

WSD is offering studies in Telecommunications Technology, Network Cabling/Copper, Network Cabling/Fiber Optics, Telephone Systems & Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP), Audio/Video Entertainment and Energy Management.

"C-Tech training is rich in job opportunities and of great interest to our students," Carpenter said. "We currently have a waiting list of about 400 offenders wanting to enroll in these classes. C-Tech certifications can be earned in six to eight weeks, and the classes don't require retro-fitting of current facilities. After release, former WSD students can go into a licensure program, and in two years, they could obtain a journeyman's license.

"In addition, C-Tech programs are highly correlated to employment and good salaries. Many companies are willing to hire offenders and recognize C-Tech certification as a ticket to get a job with them. Students trained in C-Tech are highly qualified and have an employment advantage. There are companies in Dallas, San Antonio and Houston that do installation of computer or audio visual components on big projects like civic centers, communications centers or even electronic signs for stadiums, roadways or businesses. These companies are interested in hiring our students, who can work on new construction as well as retrofitting. A lot of facilities want to set up audiovisual equipment using newer technology. Our students will be able to fill these jobs. Students with these skills can gain employment and good wages with electrical contractors, cable TV providers, video and sound technology installation



Dominguez State Jail is one of the locations offering C-Tech training through Windham School District.

contractors and energy management contractors."

WSD's C-Tech classes began in March and are currently offered at the Hutchins State Jail in Dallas and the Dominguez State Jail in San Antonio. The district is planning to next add these programs to a female facility, according to Carpenter. As of early June, six instructors have been trained to teach C-Tech, and 55 students have completed certification. More trainings and classes are planned for the new school year.

While working with freeworld training situations, C-Tech also has more than 15 years of experience in correctional education. The company provides short-term telecommunications training systems "behind

the wire" to give former offenders a second chance at a new career.

"Early on, we recognized a need for trained technicians at an above entry level wage," said D. Brady, C-Tech vice president of National Business. "It is very important to deliver technology at a level that addresses the majority of students and still provides much-needed skills. Companies have been able to cut as much as three months off of a new employee's preparation cycle by hiring C-Tech certified technicians. Retention is high and a positive outcome is achieved, ultimately lowering recidivism rates."

* Reprinted courtesy of the Windham School District web site: www.wsd.tx.org 📍

TDCJ/Windham bulletin board



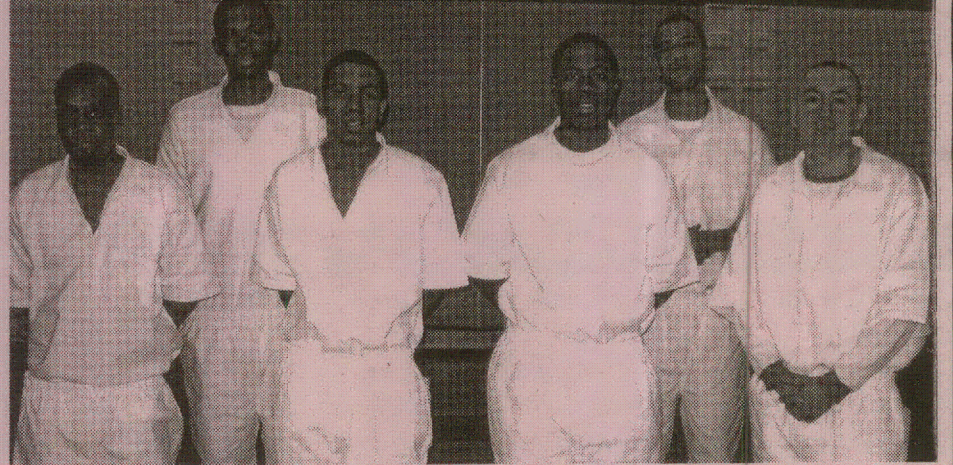
Boyd Unit GED graduates are M. Salgado, B. Politz, D. Hughes, W. Brimm, C. Pierce and J. Ball.



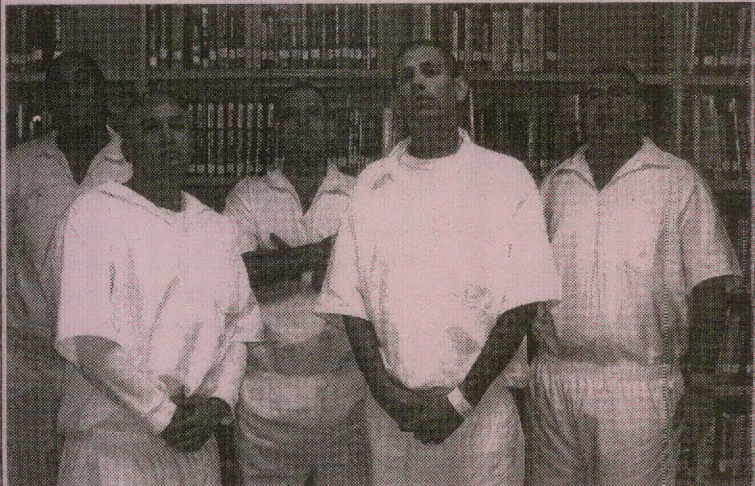
Neal Unit GED graduates are J. Cisneros, A. Jones, D. Imboden, A. Agado, C. Gilbert, J. Palacio, J. Smith, M. Cano, T. Sherman and G. Alvarez.



Daniel Unit CHANGES II graduates are A. Leoning, J. Sepulveda, P. Trevino and K. Trantham.



Ferguson Unit GED and vocational trade honor graduates are E. Bell (valedictorian), J. Dean (salutatorian), C. Villanueva, D. Jordan, D. Quarles and C. Thompson (J. Barton not pictured).



Wallace Unit CHANGES graduates are I. Perez, B. Chambers, J. Waddell, L. Garcia and J. Lusk.



Allred Unit electrical vocational graduates are J. Emory, M. Hall, J. Whitlock, S. Cross, A. Allen, J. Rule and J. Bailey.

TDCJ/Windham bulletin board



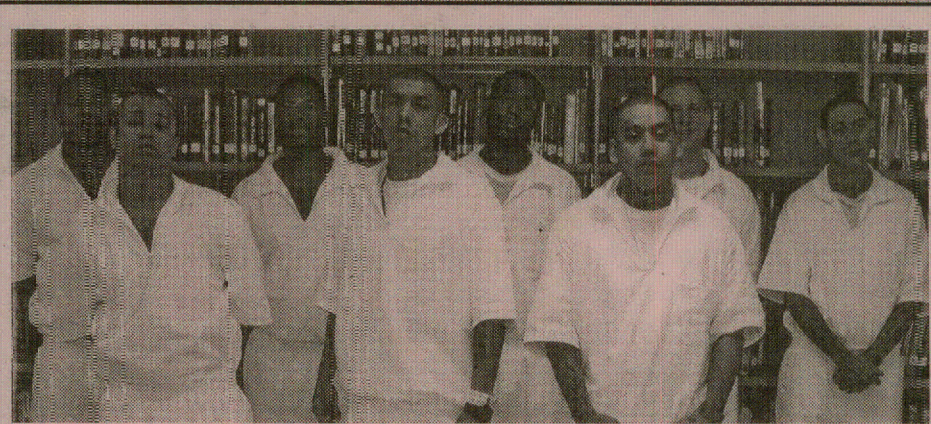
Dalhart Unit WSD Carpentry Vocational graduates are J. Gonzales, R. Trevino, J. Eisenhower, D. Garcia, T. Whitehead, F. Mosley, A. Agudelo, T. Sosebee, D. Manshack, B. Young, M. Wesley, A. Abundez, C. Jimenez and M. Guerra.



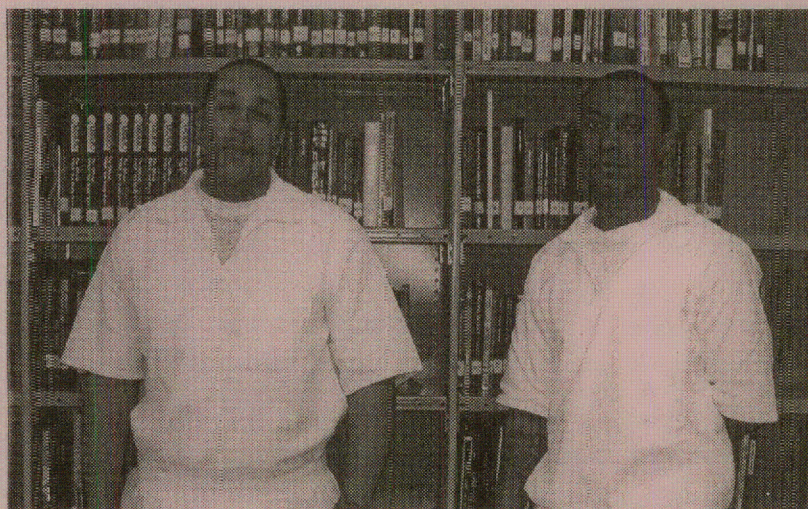
Sayle Unit GED graduates are J. Davila, O. Lopez Jr., J. Fannin, L. Martinez, C. Kennedy, D. Henly, C. Nabors, G. Darnell, A. Lumpkin, D. Cunningham, C. Gonzales, A. Flores, T. Torres, S. Hernandez, T. Gomez and K. Lee.



Bates Transfer Facility Cognitive Intervention graduates are S. Murillo, M. Green, T. Brown, J. Delagarza, B. Kelly, M. Gutierrez, J. Rogers and instructor P. Bruce.



Wallace Unit Cognitive Intervention Program graduates are W. Williams Jr., J. Williams, E. Flores, G. Espitia, J. Hernandez, R. Adkins, D. Darrington and J. Yzaguirre.



Wallace Unit CHANGES graduates are V. Reynolds and D. Robinson.



Bates Transfer Facility CHANGES-II graduates are D. Claunch, C. Reed, H. Retana, P. Saldana, F. Alaniz, C. Yharte, M. Arnett, M. Henry, S. Auld, I. Alford, R. Benavidez, T. Trejo, A. Coursey, H. Antunez, L. Leonard, Q. Gleason, A. Lina, A. Chaney, C. Mosley and instructor P. Bruce.

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. ➔

Sudoku

Easy

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

Difficult

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

Darrington Unit holds talent show

Chris Irby, Darrington Unit

Recently the Darrington Unit held its annual talent show to promote culture, called The Remix, in the Chapel of the Resurrection. The event was put together by the dynamic duo production team of T. Williams and J. O'Neal. O'Neal, the unit's foremost comedian, hosted the show. Thirteen different musical acts of rock, rap, gospel, country, Spanish and neo-soul entertained the packed chapel of more than 300 offenders.

This year's show was different from the previous year's because the "Darrington Drama Team" performed commercial breaks, skits, and comic spoofs in between the musical acts. Some of the audience favorites were: So, Darrington, You Think You Can Dance; Old School Face Off, Job Fair, The Darrington Five's Greatest Hits Album and the Darrington News. Also, all music was performed by the house band Inclined. The show has been the talk of Darrington for days now and garnered nothing but rave reviews as everyone waits for next year's production.

We would like to thank Chaplain C. Knapp, Warden C. Tucker and the Darrington administration for allowing the unit to have such events. ➔

Missing Persons

CRIME STOPPERS

Teleta Michelle Lightfoot



Teleta Michelle Lightfoot has a small build and was last seen around the Sherman Street area in Grand Prairie (Tarrant County) on Oct. 1, 2001. She has "CHYNA" tattooed on her right upper arm. Lightfoot is 4 feet 11 inches tall, weighs 110 pounds, has brown eyes and black hair. At the time of her disappearance she was 25 years old.

Joseph Brandon Benton, AKAs: Joe Benton, Smokey Joe



Joseph Brandon Benton, "Joe", has a small build and frequently wore a t-shirt with jeans and a ball-cap. He has a scar on the left side of his forehead and a scar under his left eye. He has a mushroom tattoo on his lower left calf, "Smokey Joe" tattooed on his left forearm, "LOVE" and "HATE" are tattooed across his knuckles on both hands, and a tattoo of a cross between his right thumb and forefinger.

Benton has several teeth missing and his left ear is pierced, in which he is known to wear a small gold hoop. His 1987 Ford F150 extended cab pickup was located abandoned on Parker Point Road, south of Angelina County. Benton was last seen on Jan. 6, 2004 in Lufkin, Texas (Tyler County). He is 5 feet 6 inches tall, weighs approximately 116 pounds, has hazel eyes, black hair and his date of birth is Jan. 22, 1985.

If you have any information on the above missing persons, or any other missing person or homicide, please contact the TDCJ Crime Stoppers Office at P.O. Box 1855, Huntsville, TX, 77340. Crime Stoppers will pay from \$50 to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest, filing of charges or indictment of person or persons that committed a felony crime (or is a wanted fugitive). Crime Stoppers guarantees your anonymity. ➔

Bridges To Life: A Journey To Peace



*A personal report by
David R. Lopez
Holliday Unit*

“**F**orgiveness” is such a powerful word. One definition of the word forgive is to grant free pardon to a person or to cease to feel resentment against a person. But what if that person is you? I am now — and have always been — my own worst critic. No one is as hard on me as I am on myself. Why is that? I have beaten myself up over the years, unable to forgive myself, refusing to accept my humanity, to embrace my vulnerability.

Never — that is, until now. This year the Holliday Unit sponsored a Bridges To Life (BTL) gathering, which was the third session of its kind for that particular facility.

BTL became a reality in 1998 as a restorative justice program offered through the Chaplaincy Department of TDCJ. Its founder, John Sage, sought peace and reconciliation within himself while endeavoring to forgive the man and woman who brutally murdered his beloved sister. On the one hand, the mission of the program is to connect communities to prisons in an effort to reduce the recidivism rate (particularly that resulting from violent crimes), as well as reducing the number of crime victims, while enhancing public safety. On the other hand, its spiritual duty is to minister to prisoners and victims in an effort to show them the transformative power of God’s love and forgiveness.

“Victims of brutal crimes — such as murder, rape, assault, and severe spousal abuse — began going into Texas prisons to meet with inmates who committed such crimes,” said Kirk Blackard, the author of “Restoring Peace”.

The program consists of 14 weeks of an engaging education in peace and reconciliation. Volunteers who participate receive no monetary compensation for their contribution. Their reward is simply knowing they are working to make a difference in an offender’s life. During the 14 weeks topics taught were responsibility, accountability, confession, repentance, forgiveness, reconciliation and restitution.

BTL graduates show a significantly lower recidivism rate than the national average statistic. The latest three-year recidivism study of BTL graduates is very encouraging. The large, diversified sample group includes 863 inmates who participated in BTL in 28 different prisons and were released from prison in 2011. The recidivism rate for this group is 14 percent, including only 3 percent of offenders returning to prison for committing violent crimes.

As part of the BTL curriculum, we were encouraged to write a letter to a victim of our crime, but not allowed to send it. This person was someone I loved. Someone I had truly hurt. I wrote it in order to once and for all let go of all my guilt and frustration, to hopefully give her closure, to allow her to heal.

Before the Bridges To Life experience, this letter would never have been possible. Being honest with myself — finally — lifted this burden I’ve been carrying with me since the death of my mother from a drug overdose in 1989. I was 10 years old when she died. I became a problem child, kicked around from home to home. Growing up feeling unwanted and unloved, it seemed like I was destined to live a life of pain and heartache.

Many of us are expected to be re-incarcerated! If you are reading this I strongly encourage you to drop your chaplain an I-60 and see when BTL is coming to your unit. “There is nothing wrong with me,” I would say. “It’s everybody else’s fault. I never hurt anyone that didn’t deserve it. It’s my mother’s fault, no it’s my father’s fault. The lawyer lied to me, the district attorney had it in for me, and the judge was on their side, my dog just died”... on and on...you know the story. Never, not once, did I accept responsibility for my actions.

Men and women, we owe it to ourselves, to our families and — most importantly — to our children to commit to change. Fathers, let’s stand up and be fathers. Mothers, stand up and be mothers. Sons, daughters, brothers and sisters...stand up!

“You cannot change the past, but your past can change your future,” said Richard Lopez, a Bridges To Life volunteer.

Change starts from within. Let’s take that important first step towards the rest of our lives. It is never too late to change. It takes hard work, effort, dedication and honesty to become a better person, and you are worth it!

While the BTL program isn’t the answer to all of life’s problems, it has been proven an effective method for living a responsible, honest life. For that, I will always be grateful.

I want to personally thank John Sage, Warden Baggett, Chaplain Grigbsy, R. Lopez and the many volunteers throughout the Bridges To Life program who make healing possible not only for the victims of crime but for those of us who were hurting inside and learned to let go by using the tools and guidance provided by BTL volunteers. I believe I speak for the entire Holliday Transfer Facility BTL graduating class when I say, “Thank you. You made a difference in our lives.”



Recipes

CHOCOLATE 'LOCO NUT' CHEESECAKE

*Silas W. Boyett and Linden Duggan
Formby Unit*

Ingredients:

- 1 Sprite, chilled
- 2 instant milks
- 2 lemon lime sports drink
- 1 pkg. chocolate cream cookies
- 1 pkg. coconut macaroons
- 4 pkg. cream cheese
- 1 Hershey candy bar
- 2 Sweet Mate sugar substitutes

Directions:

Combine powdered milks, cream cheeses, sports drinks, Sweet Mates and ½ can of Sprite and mix until smooth. Separate cream filling from cookies; smash cookies into fine powder, add ¼ can of Sprite to form crust. Pour filling into crust, let stand. Smash macaroons into fine powder and spread evenly on top of filling. Melt Hershey bar in hot pot, drizzle on top of cake. Let stand for minimum of 30 min. Slice and enjoy!

Sudoku Solutions

Easy

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

Difficult

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



Recipes

SPANISH RICE

Nick Adams
Rudd Unit

Ingredients:

1 bag rice
1 can V8
4 jalapenos, diced
½ bottle Camino Real salsa

Directions:

Cook the bag of rice in the V8. Let it cook for 15-20 minutes. Dice four jalapenos and stir in half bottle of salsa. Let sit for five minutes. Enjoy!

CAMERON'S POTATO BOWL

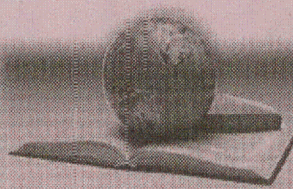
Cameron Vollcut
Briscoe Unit

Ingredients:

1 bag potato flakes (any flavor)
1 bag jalapeno or BBQ chips
1 pack cheese crackers
1 pouch chunk chicken
2 jalapenos
½ pickle, diced
2 ranch dressing packets
3 spoonfuls of BBQ sauce
1 chili, no beans
squeeze cheese

Directions:

Crush chips and crackers and combine in a bag with potato flakes. Add hot water to form dough. Place in bowl and conform to the shape of bowl. In second bowl combine chicken, jalapenos and pickle along with dressing, hot sauce and BBQ sauce. Place chicken mixture in bowl with dough, folding dough on top of chicken. Flip bowl making sure the dough is detached from bowl. Heat chili pouch and pour over the top, add cheese to liking. Makes two or three servings.



Library Corner

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

— Samuel Maugham



Powledge Unit poetry contest winners are J. Davis, F. Johnson III, E. Lotts, L. Mathis, B. McDonald, D. Sails, T. Stubblefield, G. Treybig and V. Zaragoza. Also pictured is librarian D. Bethurum.

Powledge Unit holds 2015 poetry contest

D. Bethurum, librarian at the Powledge Unit, is the sponsor of a poetry writing contest once a year. Bethurum received 43 poems this year, entered by 20 library patrons.

All the poems entered in the contest were extraordinary, and everyone who participated is a winner. However, room does not allow for every poem to be printed. Those who participated are:

J. Davis, G. Treybig, F.D. Johnson III, T. Stubblefield, E.G. Lotts, L.A. Mathis, D. Sirls, B. McDonald, V. Zaragoza, K. Allred, I.C. Crawford, M.W. Hart, T. Lewis, M.W. Mullins, S.D. Myers, T. O'Neill, A. Ornelas, G. Payne, E. Thomas and S. Wilson.

The following poems are examples of the writing talent at Powledge:

My eyes light up

Submitted by Bill McDonald

*As I sit and think of you,
My eyes light up, but my heart is still blue.
Now as I sit and wait for mail call at night,
I wonder why you did not write.
So as I sit and think of you,
My eyes light up, but my heart is still blue.
Now it comes another night,
I start to worry why you did not write.
As I sit and think of you,
Well, I write this letter to say, I love you!*

Thanks

Submitted by Daryl Sirls

*As I sit and think about my life,
My struggles, my troubles and all of my strife,
I think about the lending hands,
The ones who helped me become a man.
The ones whose love was like money in the bank.
These are the ones I would like to thank,
As I sit and think about my life...*

Library challenge: "Say it in six"

After you read a book, give the unit librarian a book review in just six words — it can be negative or positive. You will need to put your name on the review. ➔