

To Our Readers

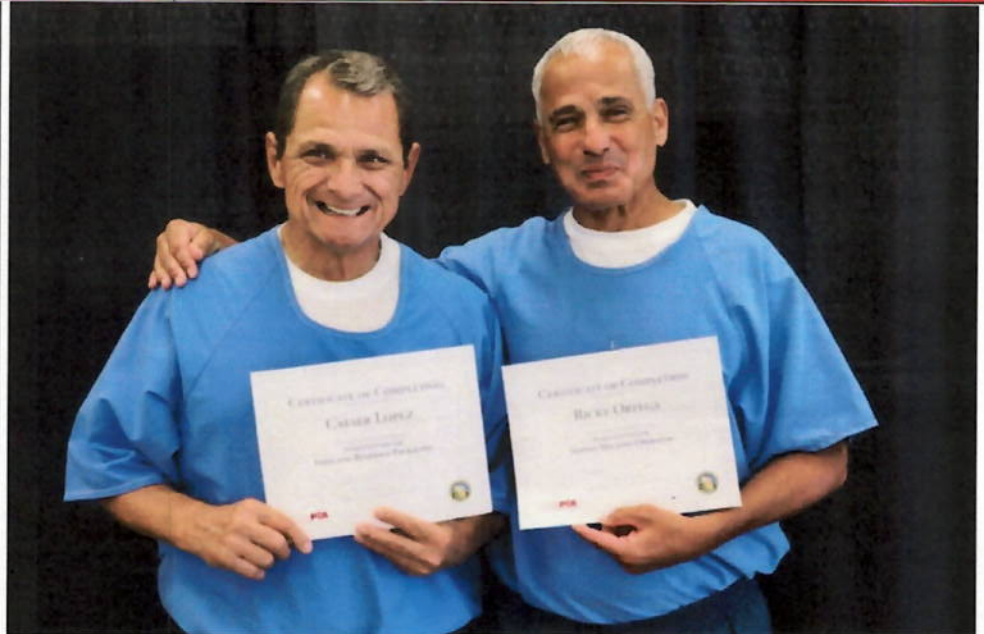
By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

WELCOME TO YOUR December *Mule Creek Post*. We end the year with a pressing question: Are you doing time, or is time doing you? If you could be happy, content, and peaceful, right now ... would you choose that over loneliness, despair, and suffering? Did you know that right now you can choose how your life is and can be? All time is now. The past is gone; the future hasn't happened; now is all you have. If we make the decision now that we are happy, content, and fulfilled, then that is our reality. Regret and shame are living in the past; anxiety, stress, and worry are living in the future, and are all illusion. Living now, choosing the freedom of peace, allows us to choose how our now is experienced.



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Apprentice graduates Caesar Lopez (food and beverage packaging) and Ricky Ortega (sewing machine operation).
(J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

CalPIA Graduates Apprentices

By Al Rice, Copy Editor
and Marty Williams, Production Editor

IN THE MONOTONY of prison life, we sometimes focus on the minutiae and fail to see the bigger picture and our roles within it. This is true for many incarcerated individuals employed by the California Prison Industry Authority (CalPIA). These nearly 6,000 workers clock in each day and do critical tasks, sometimes unaware of their importance, until those who appreciate them most shine the light of gratitude and praise for a job well done. This is what happened on a Thursday afternoon in September at the Mule Creek State Prison.

The men arrived to the visiting room oblivious to the extent CalPIA went to acknowledge their labor and diligence. They entered the room wide-eyed at the assemblage of CalPIA and administrators of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), where many found eager faces of loved ones and friends there to share in this moment. Even those with no visitors shared bonds of brotherhood with those to the left and right — that the work they did each day mattered, and that someone recognized their value as human beings. Only the most jaded would not want to be part of this celebration.

Ricky Brodmyer has been in prison for 17 years, 10 of them employed in CalPIA. He has earned 11 certificates, allowing him to enter the food service industry at almost any level when released. As to the graduation, he said, "It makes me feel like I've accomplished something in life that I've never accomplished before."

Michele Kane, as master of ceremonies, set the tone for the celebration and made everyone feel welcome as she introduced the distinguished speakers, special guests, and apprenticeship graduates.

Chief Deputy Warden Bryan Holmes gave a warm welcome to everyone and gave thanks to the benefits of partnership between CalPIA, the CDCR, and Mule Creek. "I get to recognize the effort and open up a way to thank these PIA employees," said Holmes.

CalPIA's general manager, Bill Davidson, shared that this was his 25th graduation ceremony, and that his most enjoyable days were those like today. "This day is about the accomplishments you've made," said Davidson.

Dr. Diana Toche, undersecretary of the California Correctional Health Care Services, noted that this was her first CalPIA graduation. She was particularly pleased for the graduates of the Healthcare Facility Maintenance apprenticeship, as the work these individuals performed directly impacts those areas for which

(continued on page 2)



(from CalPIA Graduation, pg. 1)

she is in charge. "We want you to have successful lives," said Toche to the grads. "I know you guys are going to succeed." For graduate Tony Palato, success means not just getting a job when he gets out of prison and supporting his family, but proving that he has changed. "If you're still doing criminal thinking," he said, "then you don't care about the future."

The day's special guest was Tony Curtis, a formerly incarcerated CalPIA graduate who, in just four years after parole, owns a successful solar services business in Southern California and is a pastor at his church. "Success is not the end result," said Curtis on the theme of his inspirational speech. "It's the last door you walk through after you walk through the door of opportunity. If you're not doing it now, you won't do it when you're out. It starts now." In closing, he made one last point to each of the graduates. "The most important people in this room are not you. The most important people in this room are your family. The most important people in this room are your children. Do it for them."

The wife and daughter of graduate Henry Sianez attended proudly and lovingly. They represented an unspoken aspect of the day, which is the reality that some employees have life without parole sentences and will never be going home. His wife, Barbara, was emotional about the emphasis on "getting out." "The only thing any of us have is right now," she said. "Hope is growing," added his daughter Emily, however, reflecting the many changes taking place socially.

Two inconspicuous attendees were lab technicians well known to the population, Kat Gray and Donna Young, who came after their job hours for no other reason than to be there. "We're here because it's an accomplishment," Young said. Gray reflected the support: "Yeah, these guys work hard." It was an amazing testament to how important recognition is to everyone, even if not involved.

These guys do work hard. There are no promises, just opportunities, and for many that's more than what they had before they started.



Barbara, Henry, and Emily Sianez.
(J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

CALPIA

Quality Products • Changed Lives • A Safer California

CalPIA Apprenticeship Grads

HFM TPC 450	Food & Beverage
Marcus Caldwell	Vernon Barker
Alton Dorrough	Anthony Brewer
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Michael Roessler	Donald Collins
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HFM	Lam Nguyen
Michael Roessler	Tony Palato
Jesus Tovar	Bruce Petersen
Data Entry	Luther Peterson
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MULE CREEK POST

THE MULE CREEK POST MISSION STATEMENT AND STAFF

The *Mule Creek Post's* mission is to present content and messaging that encourages rehabilitation and pro-social values, and enhances a sense of community, creativity, and positivity.

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or go directly to the *Post* archives at <https://fliphtml5.com/bookcase/zudxq>

Check out the archives of the *Mule Creek Post* on the Edovo educational app available on the GTL tablets

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The 2024 PIA Apprenticeship graduating class of the Mule Creek Infill Complex. (J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

The views and opinions expressed herein are those of the contributing writers and do not necessarily reflect those of the facility or the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

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Creekside

with Warden Covello

by P. Covello,
Mule Creek State Prison
Warden



Farewell, 2024!

SAYING GOODBYE TO another year always brings with it a feeling of gratitude. Every year brings us so much to be thankful for, even if that is normally the focus of November and Thanksgiving.

2024 brought with it so many opportunities for Mule Creek State Prison and our strong focus of rehabilitation. Our residents have seen numerous programs begin or expand, including the growth of educational programs such as seminary and to earn a master's degree. It will be hard to top this year, but I'm excited to see what 2025 holds in store.

The Mule Creek Post thanks its supporters who have made this newspaper and its growth possible:

Ledger Dispatch

Amador & Calaveras Objective Regional News

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PJP PRISON JOURNALISM PROJECT

SPI SOCIETY OF PROFESSIONAL JOURNALISTS

The Mule Creek Fallen Families Resource Foundation helps correctional officers and their families who are going through difficult times.

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Imprisoned As a Man

By Don Chaddock, Inside CDCR Editor



ARTIE BAKER HAD a request for the San Quentin prison doctor in 1916. The 39-year-old convicted swindler reported harassment by inmates and requested reassignment to the Women's Ward, revealing he was actually female. Dr. Leo Stanley tried to improve her situation, but commitment orders were clear: Baker committed crimes and was convicted and sentenced as a man. This is the story of a person who struggled with gender identity, one of the many early inmates whose influence on the state prison system is still felt today.

"I was a deformed baby. In my deformity, my mother mistook my sex until I was 11 years old. My family was ashamed of me and I was told to keep my deformity a secret," Baker told the *Riverside Daily Press*, Aug. 10, 1916.

Like many who came to the Golden State, Baker was in search of a better life. In the early 1900s, evangelical tent revivals were common. In Los Angeles, one was run by a minister known as Gypsy Smith.

"One day Gypsy Smith, in the presence of Dr. Ethel Leonard, accused me of being a woman," Baker recounted. "Smith then bought me woman's clothes and I wore them to his revival meetings."

Meanwhile, Leonard believed surgery would help Baker. "She claimed that (genitalia surgery) would make Baker into a normal woman," reported the publication *The Urologic and Cutaneous Review* in October 1916. Baker continued attending the revivals openly as a woman. Life was suddenly very different. She formed friendships, finally honest about who she was underneath her clothing.

"There I met and fell in love with a young man named Fred Vincent," she recalled. "We became engaged to be married. Before the wedding my health failed and it was postponed. I made my way to Summerdale where my sister was post-mistress. I was sick and broke," Baker recalled.

"Desperate, I stole a handful of money orders. I mailed a money order for \$100 to a minister in Sawtelle, near Los Angeles. In the letter I made believe I was my mother, sending the money to a wayward son in his city, whom 'mother' hoped had reformed. My letter asked the minister to look me up and if I was trying to do better to give me the \$100," she recalled in her 1916 interview. "Then I went to Sawtelle, attended the minister's church. I thanked him for the good his sermon had done me and left my address with him, saying I would become a member of his church. A day or so later he saw my letter and came over and gave me the \$100. I worked this scheme all over Southern California, cashing something like \$1,800 worth of money orders."



Artie Baker at San Quentin (InsideCDCR.ca.gov)

It all came crashing down in 1913 when she was arrested. On one trip to the jail, she managed to escape the county sheriff but was recaptured. She pleaded guilty to forging money orders and passing them in Riverside County.

"I was tried and sentenced as a man, but I did not open my lips as to my real sex," she said.

Baker arrived at San Quentin June 8, 1913, and was given number 26591, listed as 5 feet 7 inches tall and weighing 152 pounds. There was immediate confusion regarding Baker, thanks to a note on the police department's copy of the inmate description.

There is no indication Baker was transferred to the women's ward. Discharged from San Quentin on Dec. 8, 1919, her trail goes cold after that.



Like Free Books?

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Human Kindness Foundation
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92 Pike St., Box A
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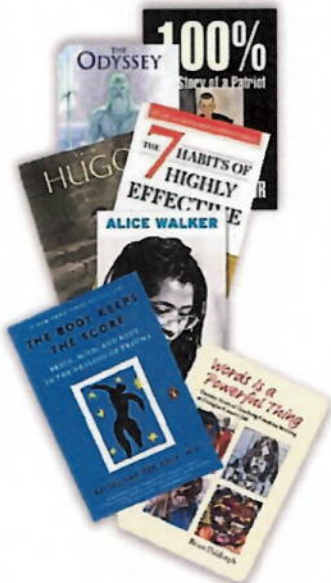
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0323 UCSD Old Student Center
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Prison Library Project
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915-C West Foothill Blvd., PMB 128
Claremont, CA 91711

Providence Books Thru Bars
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Providence, RI 02906

LGBT Books to Prisoners
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% Social Justice Center Incubator
Madison, WI 53703

NYC Books Through Bars
% Bluestockings Bookstore
116 Suffolk Street
New York, NY 10002



Why Civic Engagement Matters to the Incarcerated

By Dortell Williams, Post Reporter

AS THE ELECTION cycle swiftly propelled itself toward November, many incarcerated people were awaking to the realities of politics and civic duty: Those who participate in democracy are the ones who have their say.

Most people in prison are intimately aware of the legacies of Propositions 36 (Three Strikes), 47 (petty theft a misdemeanor) and 57 (milestones and other credits for non-violent offenses). These laws were voted on by the electorate of California. We know firsthand that change comes through change agents: People who make it happen.

Yet, there's another aspect to politics and civic participation that receives little attention, though it relates directly toward our transformation and demonstration of remorse: civic engagement. Recently, I asked two of my neighbors what civic engagement meant to them. "It's my right to participate in how decisions are made that affect me," answered Frank. "I don't know," responded Tommy matter-of-factly while shrugging his shoulders.

Indeed, to be civically engaged is to be pro-social; they are one and the same. Surely, most of us were anti-social upon entering the prison gates. We went against the norms of society. Being civically engaged is contributing positively to society. Most people in society are civically engaged because it's the right thing to do. But for us, those who missed the mark, we can demonstrate our remorse and contrast our past by being civic-minded.

Civic engagement is simply getting involved in our community and contributing to it in positive ways. Outside examples could be a "neighborhood clean-up," or organizing a car wash for a good cause, or volunteering at a local charity. In our own community within the concertina wire, it might be mentoring a neighbor or facilitating a class, or a combination of aid for both communities by fundraising for an outside cause. The bottom line is that whether inside or outside, we collectively shape the type of environment we live in. We can create an environment of mutual cooperation and peace, or a hostile and cutthroat environment.

Imagine a community where one teaches others to paint, because that's his gift. While another who was taught painting teaches creative writing, because that's his talent. Over time, we'll all be multi-talented, contributing members of a single, strong, and thriving community. That is the potential of civic engagement, equipping one another to contribute to our instant community, as well as the outside community where our family and friends reside.

Those of us who have honed our people and coping skills can contribute emotionally to our loved ones by actively listening, not making the conversation all about us. Many of us were heads of the household, but we failed in our decision making. Now we have all the time in the world to learn how to be better mates, parents, and citizens to the wider world.

Getting back to those propositions, we know that our folks outside are busy working their jobs and maintaining the household. They don't have time to research the coming bills and laws that affect us all. Yet we do. Contributing to our loved ones by solving problems, by doing our part — even from here — is the type of transformation the Board of Parole Hearings and our loved ones are searching for.

Of course, true transformation requires remorse. *Remorse* is defined as feeling so guilty for the harm we caused that we are motivated to make amends. Amends consists of three components:

1. *Direct amends*, which is giving directly to those we harmed; however, only when doing so would not cause further harm.
2. *Indirect amends* is giving back more generally to society. Some examples could be changing from anti-social to pro-social, learning a trade, going to school, taking self-help, or donating money.
3. *Living amends*. An illustration could be our reputation. When we were criminally minded we constructed a reputation. People knew us by that rep. Living amends is demonstrating a consistent life of change such that our transformation becomes our new reps.

So just like your transformation, civic engagement, remorse, and being pro-social all coalesce into a consistent, life-long, and daily journey that is not told, but simply lived.

Are you a GRIP graduate preparing for release, with questions about reentry, etc.?

GRIP's reentry coordinator position is open; contact BonaFide at (415) 659-8406



The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

THIS WEEK WE look at the word *heuristic*, and how it is used. Originally coming to us from the Greek — as is often the case — (εὐρίσκειν, *heuriskein*), meaning “to discover,” which the Greeks were great at doing. *Heuristic* was first used in English in 1821. One dictionary defines *heuristic* as an adjective meaning: “Involving or serving as an aid to learning, discovery, or problem solving by experimental and especially trial-and-error methods”; also, “of or relating to exploratory problem-solving techniques that utilize self-educating techniques to improve performance,” as in the evaluation of feedback.

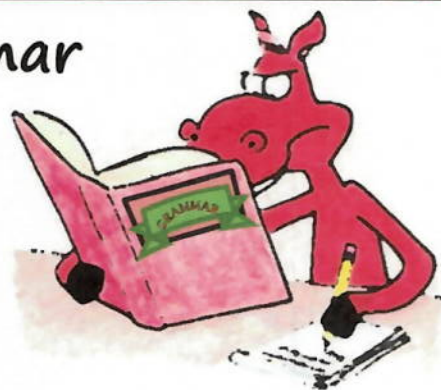
The word is also used in Biblical studies relating to *didactics*. This word also comes to us from the Greek (διδασκτικός, *didaktikos*), which means “to teach.” *Didactic*, as *heuristic*, is an adjective, defined as: “designed or intended to teach,” or “intended to convey instruction and information as well as pleasure and entertainment; making moral observations or systematic instruction.” The book called the *Didache* is a second-century summary of Christian practices.

Didactic was first used in English in 1644, often in the Bible; especially in Psalms and Proverbs, a statement or question leads to a conclusion, and those are called *didactics* also. This is also true in other religion's sacred writing, such as in the Quran, Bhagavad-Gita, etc.

The word *pedagogue* also has a similar meaning as the two previous words. *Pedagogue* essentially means “teacher.” In the original Greek (παιδαγωγός, *paidagogos*) it actually meant “the slave who escorted children to school; a teacher, schoolmaster; esp: a dull, formal or pedantic teacher.” It is a combination of παιδός (*paidos*, the combining form of παῖς, *pais*, “child”) and αγωγῆν (*agein*, “to lead”). *Pedantic*, from the French *pédant* contraction of the Latin *pædagogare* (“to educate”) means: “one who makes a show of knowledge; one who is unimaginative.”

Source: Webster's Universal English Dictionary; Webster's Collegiate Dictionary; Dictionary of Word Origins.

Big Red's Grammar Guide



GOOD WRITING BEGINS with the basics. Here in my grammar guide are more things a writer should know. Last month, we completed our discussion of phrases. This month, we'll begin a discussion about clauses.

Subordinate Clauses

A subordinate clause (sometimes called a dependent clause) has a verb and its subject, but can't stand alone as a sentence. In order for a subordinate clause to make sense, it has to be attached to another part (to some independent clause) of the sentence. Look at this example:

I had just alphabetized the cards when they fell on the floor and scattered everywhere.

When they fell on the floor and scattered everywhere is a subordinate clause. It has a subject *they* and verbs *fell* and *scattered*. But read the words alone:

When they fell on the floor and scattered everywhere

So, what? What happened next? If the terminology seems complicated, think of the relationship this way: since a subordinate clause can't stand alone, it's secondary (*subordinate*) to the main clause of the sentence. Or, a subordinate clause relies (*is dependent*) on another clause (an independent clause) that's in the sentence.

There are three types of subordinate clauses; each acts in a different way in the sentence: 1) an adjective clause; 2) a noun clause; and 3) an adverb clause.

1. An adjective clause is a subordinate clause that acts as an adjective; it modifies or describes a noun or pronoun. It is sometimes called a relative clause because it often begins with a relative pronoun.

That man, whom I went to high school with, walked right by me as if he'd never met me.

(*Whom I went to high school with* is an adjective clause describing *man*.)

Next month, we'll begin with a discussion of writing and revising.

The Uncaged Writer

PEN America Prison and Justice Writing Program

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter



SINCE THE MID-1970s, PEN America's Prison and Justice Writing Program (PJW) has supported and amplified the work of thousands of writers who are creating while incarcerated in the U.S. In order to bridge the gap between incarcerated writers and the broader literary community, PEN provides writing resources such as *The Sentences that Create Us* (a 300-plus page resource guide provided free to incarcerated writers), mentorship, and audiences for their work.

The Prison and Justice Program is operated by PEN America's Jess Abolafia, membership coordinator, and Malcolm Tarig, senior manager of editorial projects. It is supported by a host of volunteers, mentors, and interns. We spoke with Abolafia who tells us, “Recognizing that the freedom to write in U.S. prisons is a critical free expression issue of our time. PJW leverages the transformative possibilities of writing to raise public consciousness about incarceration and justice, and supports the development of justice-involved literary talent.”

Known for its PEN Prison Writing Awards, initiated as PJW's founding program in response to the 1971 Attica prison riots, each year hundreds of writers submit unpublished work in the categories of poetry, fiction, essay, memoir, and drama (playwriting/screenwriting). Winners are published in an annual anthology, are invited to work with a designated mentor, and receive honorariums of \$300, \$200, \$150, and \$75 for first, second, third places, and honorable mention, respectively. Some winners are also featured in *Break Out*, an annual public celebration of the year's award winners, staged by well-regarded authors, actors, and activists in the New York City community.

The submission period is August 1 through December 31. Entries are accepted from anyone incarcerated in a federal or state prison, county jail, or other detention center. Submissions postmarked after December 31 will be

(continued on page 6)

(From *Uncaged Writer*, pg. 5)

considered for the following year's awards. Due to the volume of submissions PEN receives and the capacity of their team, PEN is unable to return submitted manuscripts.

Abolafia says, "*Works of Justice* is an online series (podcast, blog, and newsletter) that features content connected to the work of PEN America's Prison and Justice Writing Program, and spotlights key figures, writers, and artists who are critically reshaping the conversation on incarceration, advocacy, and justice in the U.S. The podcast and newsletter are published monthly, and the blog is updated regularly with book reviews, interviews, and essays written by staff and incarcerated writers."

Supporters of incarcerated writers are encouraged to subscribe on the PEN website, www.pen.org/prison-and-justice-writing, or by emailing PrisonWriting@pen.org. Or write to:



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AMERICA**

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Writing Program**

120 Broadway, 26th Floor
New York, NY 10271

The Freedom to Write



Don't Give Up. Don't Give In. Just Give

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

"JUST GIVE" — WORDS of wisdom that probably have been spoken in every culture since the beginning of time. But what do they mean. How can anyone *just give*? The answer is simple, but not always easy.

For many inside prison walls, when we look back over our lives there are times when we were peaceful and productive members of society. Those times often coincide with not being concerned with ourselves, but actually doing for others, often without any thought of what we were going to get out of any specific situation where we have freely given something to someone else.

This is not giving up. Giving up involves relinquishing input and or control over our destiny. Giving up means that we are no longer trying. Giving up means we cannot be interested in doing anything for any reason.

This is not giving in. Giving in means letting someone or something else decide how we are going to be in relation to ourselves and the rest of the world. Giving in can mean letting someone else have their opinion or point of view take over and become our own at the expense of our personhood. Giving in also can mean not allowing ourselves to take responsibility for our actions or their result.

This is just giving. Giving is more than the action of presenting someone with something — be it material, spiritual, or emotional. Giving is a state of mind that includes all of the above. However, it is also the recognition that we are not entitled to anything from anyone — for any reason. Giving is freely being our authentic selves while allowing others to do the same. Giving is grace. Giving is living in the light.

For many, this can be a radical change from how we have lived our lives. So many of us, inside and out, have spent much of our lives learning how to take care of number one at the expense of others, to the point that the mere thought of freely giving can feel like poison or active abuse.

How can giving be a part of the sometimes selfish process of recovery? One explanation could be that giving — without any expectation of return — can give anyone an opportunity to learn patience as well as a lesson in letting go of expectations.

In 12-Step programs, we are taught that having any expectation is holding on to a preconceived resentment. Many of us use resentment to excuse or justify our harmful actions directed towards ourselves and others. So, it follows that we can give without demanding anything in return. We could learn how to live with patience and grace.

Learning how to just give can be a very challenging and scary thing to do. However, with practice and commitment, it can become a way of life that is more fulfilling than one could ever imagine.



Criminal Offender Reform Establishment (CORE)

This group of educators has created customized course materials for incarcerated people to assist them in their process of rehabilitation. The courses are available via correspondence, and charges only for shipping and handling costs. CORE offers the following courses:

Mind Makeover: Changing your thoughts to change your ways

Biological Blueprint: What qualities you inherited to become who you are

Self-Awareness: Nurture your good qualities and eliminate the negative ones

Goal Gaining: Setting your goals and making them achievable

Perspective Personified: Seeing the world through more eyes than only yours

Dreaming in Color: Making your dreams a reality

CORE

P.O. Box 1361

West Sacramento, CA 95605

Email: CORE.educators@gmail.com

Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP)

GRIP is a yearlong program designed to build understanding of how past trauma has created attitudes and behaviors that hurt the self and others. Through intensive reflection, small group sharing, and instruction, the group focuses on cultivating mindfulness, understanding victim impact, developing emotional intelligence, and putting an end to harmful behaviors.

Interviews are held prior to the beginning of each yearlong cycle; the interview dates will be announced.

News |||| **Inside**
Magazine

The Marshall Project

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New York, NY 10019

TheMarshallProject.org



Impacts of Adversity

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

“THE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD Experiences (ACE) Study,” by R.F. Anda and V.J. Felitti, is one of the largest investigations ever conducted into childhood abuse, neglect, household challenges, and later-life health and well-being.

What are ACEs? Adverse childhood experiences are things that happen before adulthood that can cause trauma. Alternatively, they are things that make a child feel like their home isn't safe or stable. ACEs are categorized into three groups based on prevalence: abuse, household challenges, and neglect. Each category is further divided into the subcategories: emotional, physical, and sexual abuse.

There are many forms of childhood experiences that can cause trauma, such as one's mother treated violently, substance abuse in the household, mental illness in the household, parental separation or divorce, emotional or physical neglect, and having an incarcerated household member. Other examples often overlooked include discrimination, bullying, and placement in foster care; these can cause stress with long-term effects.

People with multiple ACEs tend to have more physical and mental health problems throughout their lives than people with fewer or no ACEs. This may be because of physical changes that can happen in a child's body through ongoing or chronic stress. It also may be because of health-harming behaviors (like smoking or risky sexual behaviors) that are more common in people with more ACEs. But having had ACEs doesn't mean that you will have

physical or mental health problems. It just means that your risk for those things are higher. There are things you can do to reduce the effects of ACEs and take care of your mental and physical health.

How Can You Reduce the Effects?

The best thing you can do is take care of your mental, emotional, and physical health. Here are some ways to do that:

- See a counselor. A counselor can help you:
 - Work through emotions about painful childhood experiences.
 - Learn how those experiences might still be affecting you.
 - Learn skills to help change negative thoughts, habits, or behaviors.
- Address health-harming behaviors.
 - Quit smoking
 - Avoid drugs and excessive drinking
 - Get help if you have signs of substance use disorder. Signs may include trying to stop using a substance but being unable to, and using a substance even though it harms you or your relationships.
- Make healthy habits.
 - Eat a balanced diet.
 - Get enough sleep.
 - Get regular physical activity.

ACEs are common. Most people have at least one. How you are affected by an ACE depends on the type and how much distress it caused. To better understand your trauma history, see the ACE survey below.

Sources: R.F. Anda and V.J. Felitti, "The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study: Bridging the Gap Between Childhood Trauma and Negative Consequences Later In Life," 1998; Parima Narula and Tara Divi, "Unravelling Childhood Experiences: Exploring Emotional Regulation and Resilience Through Positive and Adverse Experiences," *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology*, June 2023.

Adverse Childhood Experiences Questionnaire

By Earl S. Breckenridge, Post Reporter

DO YOU BELIEVE that any of the following experiences have affected your mental/physical/emotional health? These questions ask about some of your experiences growing up as a child and a teenager. For each question, mentally check the box if you feel it applies to you. Although some of the questions are of a personal nature, please answer as honestly as you can.

- ☐ Did you feel that you didn't have enough to eat, had to wear dirty clothes, or had no one to protect or take care of you?
- ☐ Did you lose a parent through divorce, abandonment, death, or any other reason?
- ☐ Did you live with anyone who was depressed, mentally ill, or attempted suicide?
- ☐ Did you live with anyone who had a problem with drinking or using drugs, including prescription drugs?
- ☐ Did your parents or adults in your home ever hit, punch, beat, or threaten to harm each other?
- ☐ Did you live with anyone who went to jail or prison?
- ☐ Did a parent or adult in your home ever swear at you, insult you, or put you down?
- ☐ Did a parent or adult in your home ever hit, beat, kick, or physically hurt you in any way?
- ☐ Did you feel that no one in your family loved you or thought you were special?
- ☐ Did you experience unwanted sexual contact (such as fondling, or oral/anal/vaginal intercourse/penetration)?

Your ACE score is the total number of checked responses.

Do you believe that these experiences have affected your mental, physical, or emotional health?

- ☐ Not much
- ☐ Some
- ☐ A lot

Experiences in childhood are just one part of a person's life story, and there are many ways to heal throughout one's life.

If you or someone you know needs help, contact the National Suicide Hotline 988, Badge for Life, or BLUE H.E.L.P.; or tell a staff member immediately.



The Long Walk Home

By Ricky Ortega
Post Columnist

It was a gloomy day in October 1983 when I was sentenced to life without the possibility of parole. The walk from courthouse to jail was through a dark tunnel about a quarter-mile long. Those serving life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) called it "The Long Walk Home," where the silence of cold walls is broken only by the rattle of leg chains across a concrete floor. Visions of the past flashed through my mind: visions of a life left behind, and the life I had to face.

LWOP inmates are met with a choice on that long walk home, with nothing to lose, they could self-destruct, or they could use their lives to make amends and take a turn for the better. This series of articles takes a closer look at some of those LWOP prisoners who are prime examples of doing just that, making something out of nothing.

Life without Windows

ON JANUARY 10, 1981, I was booked into the San Joaquin County Jail. As I stared at the black ink stains on my fingers, I realized that these were the fingerprints that will forever identify me as a murderer. I was placed in the isolation unit reserved for the most incorrigible, where the pale green walls matched the harsh reality I was about to face. Upon entering the doors that will never open again, I felt the silence of death lurking inside. I saw the piercing eyes of condemned individuals as they gazed in my direction and the faint pulse of their beating hearts. I remember the smell of unwashed bodies tangled with the stench of forgotten hope and, as I fell to my knees, I frantically turned to the power of prayer. But when I closed my eyes to face my God, I saw the scales of justice instead. Like a fading silhouette of His Almighty presence, He slowly turned away, leaving me alone to face the end of my innocence.

I was allowed to visit with my parents for 30 minutes behind a glass window. As I was escorted to the visiting room, I wondered how I would ever face my family. I remember the bright orange jumpsuit I was

required to wear and the waist chains that secured me tightly to my indignity. I remember the look of horror on my parents' faces when I entered the doors, mixed with a sense of elation that they were allowed to see me in my time of distress. It was the first time I had ever been separated from my mother, the first time I had to breathe without her. Her beautiful ivory face looked worn and weary from the countless tears she must have wiped away or perhaps from the unspoken disappointment I inflicted upon her heart.

As I stood there feeling lost and bewildered, she placed the palm of her hand firmly against the glass window that separated her from her troubled son. I looked into her eyes and reflected back to a time not so long ago when I listened to the beat of her heart as she held me in her arms and hushed away my tears. But now, it must have taken all her strength to stand there with me in my time of need, unable to protect me from a world she knew nothing about. As I placed my palm against hers, I remember feeling the beat of her heart through the glass, giving me life once again. There were so many things I wanted to say at that moment, but the look on her face assured me that words were not necessary. As I turned to walk away, I felt her undying love that gave me the courage to face my life and to face the God that I must now answer to.

Robert Garza has been looking through the windows of life without parole for 40 years, waiting for his time to be heard. "I often look out my cell window in the early morning hours and watch the morning dew reflecting off the grass," described Garza. "It always reminded me that I have a place in this life because each morning I would see a new day where the grass was fresh with a new sparkle of beauty. But now, as the years go by, both my parents have died while I've been incarcerated and I've recently lost my sister, Marcela. So when I look out my window today, I see the life that is passing me by and I feel like I've been forgotten," he confessed.

The windows of life without parole are the point of no return — the place of sunder, where freedom ends and isolation begins. The long walk home is often a journey of the heart, where our hope is tested by our will to live and where the windows of our world reveal the life we have lost. But as I looked through my window this morning, 44 years later, I saw the young boy I used to be — who is old and tired now — waiting for my time to die. I thought to myself that my mother is gone, but as I placed the palm of my hand on the window as I did on that dreadful day in the county jail, I felt the beat of her heart through the glass, reminding me that I can breathe once again. Indeed, what would life be without windows?



Robert Garza at work in the CalPIA food and beverage packaging plant. Regardless of what sentence one may have, work assignment is often mandatory. The California Prison Industry Authority offers certification training for those destined to be released; for those with life sentences, it is a matter of personal development and financial independence.

(Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



By Richard "Lonewolf" Legan,
Post Columnist

THE KICKAPOO INDIANS originally lived in the Great Lakes region of the United States. Today, the Kickapoo are divided into three groups near Oklahoma City, southern Texas and northern Mexico, and northeastern Kansas. The Kickapoo work as farmers and ranchers and follow traditional tribal customs.

KICKAPOO BERRY SYRUP

Start to Finish: about 1 hour

1 quart berry juice
1 pint sugar
1 teaspoon allspice
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1 teaspoon clove
1 teaspoon nutmeg

Mix all the ingredients in a pan and bring to a boil for 15-20 minutes. Remove from the heat and allow cooling. Put in a jar, seal, and keep for later use.

So next time you look at a plant, you might say to yourself, "I wonder what that's used for?" They are man's gifts from the Creator!



yegec otic.com

Richard Legan is the author of *More Valuable than Gold* published by Wild Willpower, available at RichardLonewolfSurvivalSchool.com. He has been teaching on this topic for nearly 40 years. The information in this column is for educational purposes only. In no way is this column intended to diagnose or treat any ailments.

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Disrupting Denial

DESPITE A DELUGE of weather disasters over the last decade, there are those who do not believe that the earth's climate is changing. Just the other day, I had a perplexing interaction with a fellow resident who's been following my journalism for years.

After reading one of my columns, he approached me and blurted out, "You believe in climate change." His tone suggested I was mistaken in this belief or delusional. "It's a hoax, you know," he added. I tried to counter his claim with facts from my research, but he didn't want to hear it. As the son of an astrophysicist, and one whose brother holds a Ph.D. in climate studies, it was disturbing to see someone turn his back on science. In fact, his stance reminded me of the "flat-worlders" who cling to a falsehood about the earth's shape.

As I've been reporting in this column for the last nine months, climate change is the new reality. Heavy flooding, mega fires, prolonged droughts, and heat waves are commonplace on every continent. Even in Antarctica, there were radically high temperatures during its Southern Hemisphere winter. Since mid-July, highs have been 50 degrees above normal. Instead of -78 °F, which is the average for polar winter, it was -22 °F. This alarming increase is capable of causing significant sea-level rise. The melting of one big glacier could result in a rise of 10 feet that would flood many coastal areas and change the ocean currents that keep the planet habitable. Most of the world's sea ice is at the South Pole, and in August it was 17% below normal. More melting will only create more record-breaking heat across the globe.

Extreme arctic warming was a contributing factor in 13 months of record highs — June 2023 to July 2024 — in the U.S. and elsewhere. As September began, the worst heat wave of the year followed the hottest summer ever, making 2024 certain to exceed 2023 as the warmest on record. In the Los Angeles basin, it was over 110 °F for several days. Death Valley was 125 °F or above for nine days in a row. Phoenix posted highs over 100 °F for 100 consecutive days, breaking the old record of 76. An unbroken series of monthly heat records is causing concern among scientists and officials about reaching the "tipping point" beyond which catastrophe looms. The secretary general of the United Nations, Antonio Gutierrez, said in June, "We are playing Russian roulette with our planet and we need an exit ramp off the highway to climate hell."

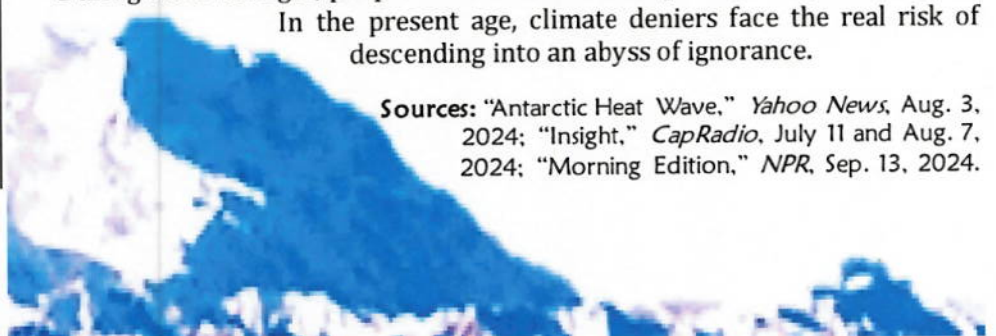
People are paying a high price for the myriad effects of a warming world. Heat-related deaths have doubled since 1999; 2,325 fatalities were reported in the U.S. in 2023. Over the last nine years, seven major heat waves caused \$7 billion in damages and 100,000 outpatient hospital visits. The losses are staggering. Take the Maui fire, for example, which cost over 100 deaths and \$5 billion in damages. Nighttime temperatures are higher than ever; this takes a toll on human and ecosystem health, while making wildfire suppression more difficult. A study of health costs of wildfires followed 500 major fire events for two decades and found they had elevated rates of cancer, high blood pressure, respiratory problems, and mental health issues. Utilities in fire-prone areas are passing the costs of fireproofing the grid on to rate payers, along with the expense of building solar power plants and wind farms. In New York, electric bills have gone up by \$60 per month. In the Sacramento Valley, utility bills have doubled since 2020.

It's no wonder my former fan refused to listen when I started to recite this long list of startling statistics — they're hard to argue with. The harmful impact of climate change affects everybody, everywhere, regardless of political persuasion. The first step to finding solutions to this predicament is admitting there is a problem.

During the Dark Ages, people were afraid of falling off the edge of the earth.

In the present age, climate deniers face the real risk of descending into an abyss of ignorance.

Sources: "Antarctic Heat Wave," *Yahoo News*, Aug. 3, 2024; "Insight," *CapRadio*, July 11 and Aug. 7, 2024; "Morning Edition," *NPR*, Sep. 13, 2024.



Back2Work[®] Success Stories

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter
and Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

THE BACK2WORK (B2W) program, actually a department within the Butte County Office of Education, manages statewide transitional employment prospects in 40 counties in California. Through service contracts with CalTrans, the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, and community nonprofits, B2W also provides learning opportunities for the incarcerated in preparation for a successful transition into the workforce.

Pamela Rogers, the Support Services Coordinator for Back2Work, beamed when asked about success stories from the program. "Yes, Andrew Hardy and Frank Abella are real-life examples," Rogers said. "I met Andrew Hardy while conducting mock interviews in a class at San Quentin last year." At that time, Hardy was the managing editor of *Wall City*, a magazine formerly published inside the California State Prison-San Quentin. "He made such a great impression, I asked him to work for our crews upon his release."

Rogers added, "Andrew has had many accomplishments after transitioning to the outside. He became house manager at his transitional home and is now on our Antioch crew, reestablishing his relationships, and contributing to the community by volunteering on weekends at the local food bank and living a life of amends." Hardy also obtained an internship with California Lawyers for the Arts, and had articles published in *Street Spirit* newspaper, the *Irish Herald*, and *TheaterStorm*.

"Andrew has been able to get established and back on his feet financially and move forward with his career goals," Rogers said. Hardy was also in a position to transfer to another B2W work crew and, "is growing and loving his new experience."

Another success story is that of Frank Abella. Thanks to planning ahead with skills learned in the B2W program, he was able to begin work on a Sacramento crew within eight days of his release, and also participated in



Pamela Rogers
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)

In a 2023 Impact Report, Back2Work stated, "Employment barriers can be intricate and not always evident. ... By acknowledging that individuals may grapple with various, sometimes concealed, obstacles to employment, we can strive for a more equitable and supportive workforce."



Let the Music Play

By David Rodriguez, Mule Creek State Prison

IT WAS A beautiful September day for a yard concert at the Mule Creek State Prison. Every couple of months we're entertained here on Facility E with some great music. It's so enjoyable to just sit and listen to the many genres at play. I'm there from the moment the music starts until the last note of the day, and make it a point to let each band member know how much I appreciate their performance by clapping and cheering.



Juan Arredondo
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

There's a long list of performing acts on this day: New Life, Integrity, SNRGY, Vision, Tone Time, Poquito Mas, Joint Aires, I Am Azeez, Black Berry Jam, and Destiny.

As I enjoyed their music, I tried to imagine what must go into the preparation before a show — the show before the show, so to speak — getting there before yard opens as Juan Arredondo and his crew set up the stage, plug in cords, test the mics, make sure the sound is just right.

I asked Arredondo about what goes into this setup, assuming it's just the setup and performances.

"The performance is the icing on the cake," he said. "The real work begins months in advance, from getting permission for the use of the equipment to organizing the practice times for each group — their dedication to practice three or more hours a week until the concert — the setup time and the sound system."

I was amazed at all that it takes for a day of pleasure, not just for me but the others here on Facility E. This insight allowed me to sit back and enjoy the sounds even more.

So, the next time you see a flyer announcing a yard concert, come and support the entertainers. Just remember: It's more than the music at play here; it's acknowledging each one's effort and talent. Enjoy.



Vision performing one of their songs. From Left—Robert Taylor, Corey Robertson, Sean "Sharif" Neal, Dawawn King.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Andy Austin performing a song.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Black Berry Jam. From Left—Omar Azeez, Steve Waters, Kevin Davis, Albert Bell.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

SPORTS AND RECREATION



The Facility E softball champions connect.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Mule Creek Crowns Softball Champions

By Nemo Burgos, Post Reporter

FACILITY E SWEPT a best-of-three Softball Championship Series at the Mule Creek State Prison with a pummeling performance on Facility D's field. The first inning of Game 1 proved portentous as E's entire batting order got at least one hit to make the score 9-0. The offense continued as they led 13-0 after two innings.

The D team finally got their teeth into the game with six runs in the third, making the score 13-6. They battled to make the score 14-8 in the fourth, and 18-12 in the fifth.

A slew of errors proved costly for D as E took advantage of sloppy play and jumped to a 26-12 lead in the sixth. To stop the bleeding, D's struggling team switched up their players to clean up the infield. Though D's batting improved, the infield continued to struggle with miscues as E extended their lead to 35-18 in the seventh. Both teams showed their competitive spirits to the end at 42-20 with an E yard championship.



Facility D's Cody Baxter.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Remember Those
IN PRISON



Good sportsmanship prevailed after an intense championship game.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Facility D's Keith Millet swings for the track.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Soccer Championship

By Nemo Burgos, Post Reporter



Photo by J. Carson / Mule Creek Post

ON SEPT. 7, 2024, at the Mule Creek State Prison, a battle between the two best soccer teams on facilities D and E took place under a blazing California sun.

E's Wilmer Coto drew first blood with a kick past D goalie Antonio Mattei, making the score 1-0. Luis Savaria answered with a goal from an assist by Manuel Martir. Then Savaria scored again off a penalty kick and, with 10:17 left in the first, D scored again. The period ended with D yard ahead 3-1.

The second was much like the first as both teams battled under the 100°+ sun. Suffering from exhaustion, players were substituted and the intense play continued. E yard closed to within a point when a collision of bodies near the goal caused a deflection off the head of D's Hector Bautista into his own goal. Moments later, Coto tied the game at 4-4.

With the score tied and less than three minutes on the clock, Savaria zigzagged through a host of E yard players to get the game-winning goal past Jacob Robles. D's team earned a well-deserved championship.



Intense play highlighted the game between the two yards.
(Photo by J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

Help Wanted:

Mule Creek Post writers needed.

Are you interested in seeing your yard or your prison represented in the Post? Do you know of a newsworthy event or interesting person on your yard that should be known by all our readers?

Send a Résumé and Writing Sample to:

The Mule Creek Post • Mule Creek State Prison • % MCIC Associate
Warden • P.O. Box 409090 • Ione, CA 95640
Attn: Editor-in-Chief



Gifts of Incarceration

By Earl S. Breckenridge,
Post Reporter

THE LAST THING one serving a life-without-parole (LWOP) sentence is expected to concede is that there are gifts of incarceration. Indeed, incarceration is the necessary evil imposed upon criminals to prevent them from committing additional harm to citizens. Incarceration itself is not the gift, mind you, but rather incarceration makes possible certain benefits otherwise denied in free society.

From birth to age 18, I lived a rebellious, reckless, and indifferent life resulting in criminality, substance abuse, and anti-social behavior. The impetuosity of youth, tumultuous childhood trauma, and lack of education contributed to my adverse lifestyle. I was convinced the world revolved around me, that my happiness and well-being was to be catered to by others, even to the extent of taking an innocent life. Self-centeredness, pride, and hate were the governing principles — mobilized by fear — that had predetermined the circumstances and conditions of confinement.

There's comfort and security in collective madness: Sanity is a solitary trek less travelled. Beginning in 1987, while in isolation and serving an indeterminate SHU term for validated gang activity, I began to question both the meaning and validity of my existence. Who was I? Why was I here? Where was I going? Was there purpose to life beyond the transitory and temporal seduction of money, women, and reputation on the streets? Had my time, energy, and attention been preoccupied with worthless endeavors?

Through spiritual awakening, academic instruction, and mental health treatment I came to realize my dysfunctional life course was not anyone's fault but my own. I was responsible for the miserable life and circumstances wherein I found myself. Blame and resentment could no longer justify my mistreatment of others. I felt deep sorrow for having hurt people as I had. I repented of my self-centeredness, pride, hate, rebelliousness, recklessness, and in-

difference, sought and received God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ, and committed to be the man of humbleness, humility, and love that God desired me to be. This translated into a new impetus, with these new life-governing principles:

1. What I think, feel, and believe about myself, others, the world, and my place and role within it, at the core of my being, is what drives, directs, and determines my identity, circumstances, and life outcomes. (I am not a victim!)
2. I would identify, confront, and rectify every component of my character, conduct, and conversation incompatible with the highest ideals of human life and being.
3. I would cultivate, grow, and extend my talents, skills, abilities, and gifts in order to increase competence to be of service to others, realize my highest potential, and enjoy satisfaction of the desires of my heart.
4. It is not what happens to me, but how I respond — in beliefs, values, and behaviors — that makes the difference in my life.
5. I am responsible for my past, present, and future, and thus the creative force of my life.

These are among the many gifts incarceration has provided me. Jesus Christ once said, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26.) Only in prison, in the darkest hours of an LWOP and indeterminate stint in the hole, stripped of all my worldly ambitions and countless distractions, delusions of grandeur and chimerical comforts, could I discover and lay claim to my most treasured gift: my soul. Incarceration did not rob me of freedom; it enabled me to find it.

Resentencing Pilot Program, Pt. 5

By Dale Hurd, Post Reporter

California's pilot program allowing prosecutors to look back and remedy unjust sentences, Prosecutor-Initiated Resentencing, was established to support and evaluate a collaborative approach to exercising the prosecutorial resentencing discretion authorized by Penal Code §1170 and §1172. Nine counties were selected to participate in the program: Los Angeles; Santa Clara; San Francisco; Riverside; Contra Costa; San Diego; Yolo; Merced; and Humboldt.

THE PROSECUTOR-INITIATED Resentencing (PIR) pilot program results, to be reported by the Rand Corp. Jan. 10, 2025, will be used by the state legislature to evaluate the recidivism outcomes for the pilot sites and assist non-pilot counties develop their own programs. Yolo County prosecutor Jeff Reising says, "[PIR] is the right thing to do no matter what side of the aisle you fall on. If people go to prison for a very long time and it doesn't seem just, or they've done a great job of rehabilitating themselves, why wouldn't we as prosecutors consider that? It's just the right thing to do."

Law professors Kay Levine and Ronald Wright caution that in some jurisdictions "Practices have settled into a disappointing set of outcomes that contradict the ambitious rhetoric that heralded the start of the program." Law professor Malcolm Freely has noted that uniform commitment to change is not always present because apparent surface agreement sometimes masks deep conflict. Law professors Matt Nadel and Charlie Lee commented, "While California prosecutors have their power to review sentences they view as extreme, few do." Also, the Rand data do not include the number of prisoners serving sentences of life without the possibility of parole (LWOP) because they are explicitly excluded from the PIR process by Penal Code §1172.1.

As a compliment to California's PIR scheme, Gov. Gavin Newsom has the power to affect the population serving LWOP by addressing the state's tough-on-crime punitive sentencing laws of the late 20th century and its legacy of mass incarceration. The United States hold 83% of the people sentenced to LWOP in the entire world. California holds over 5,000 LWOP prisoners. To put this number in perspective, a 270-design housing unit has a maximum capacity of 200 prisoners. Accordingly, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) would require over 25 buildings filled to capacity to house the current LWOP population.

Law professor Daniel Pascoe has researched the extent to which pardon, commutation, and compassionate release are effective challenges to the claim that an LWOP sentence inevitably leads to the prisoner's death while incarcerated. The results reaffirm the finality of an LWOP sentence despite the availability, in theory, of those three potential release procedures.

The first commutation since the 1976 inception of LWOP sentencing was issued in 2011 by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger. Gov. Jerry Brown granted clemency to 147 LWOP prisoners in 2018, shortly before leaving office. Gov. Newsom granted clemency to 38 serving LWOP between taking office in January

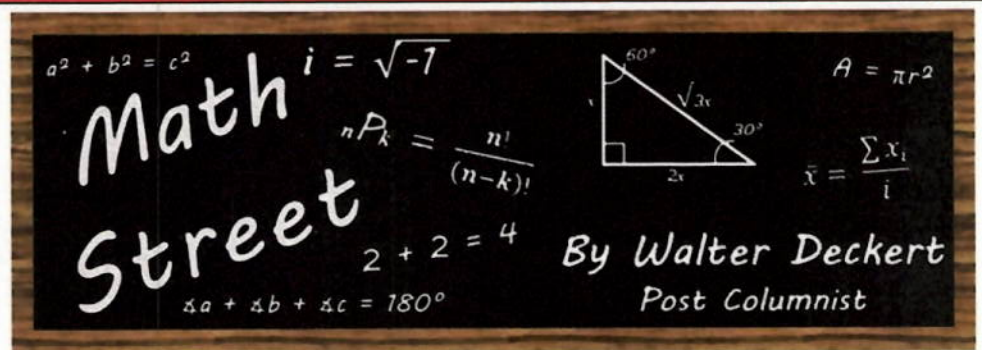
(continued on page 13)

(from Resentencing Pilot Program, pg. 12)
2019 and October 2022.

There are also additional challenges before LWOP prisoners can truly benefit from a grant of clemency. In Nov. 2017, Gov. Brown pardoned Craig Richard Coley on the grounds of innocence. Aside from this one case, commutations of life with parole to a fixed term, or to time served, were the only forms of clemency documented. In other words, aside from Coley's case, no LWOP prisoner's entire sentence was vacated by any governor. Even when commutation does occur, rarely is release immediate. The prisoner must satisfy the parole board that they meet parole criteria or await the end of a longer-termed fixed sentence. Even after a commutation from LWOP to life with parole, or to a lengthy fixed term, it is still possible that the beneficiary could die in prison of natural causes.

"In California, the overwhelming majority of prisoners sentenced to natural life for murder since its inception in 1976 remain under that sentence, if they remain alive at all," states Pascoe.

Sources: Rand Corporation, "Evaluation of the California County Resentencing Pilot Program"; Jeff Reising and Hillary M. Blount, "Understanding Prosecutor-Initiated Resentencing: How and Why Prosecutors are Using a New Tool to Expand Justice"; Kay L. Levine and Ronald F. Wright, "Between Cooperation and Conflict in Second Chance Sentence Review"; Daniel Pascoe, "Clemency, Compassionate Release, and the Finality of Life Without Parole."



EVEN THE OLYMPIC Games have elements of mathematics at which we can look. For instance, in one of the semi-finals for the 100-meter run, Noah Lyles turned in an impressive 9.784-second run. So, I wondered, just how fast is that in miles per hour?

To find out, we can perform what is commonly referred to as "measure conversion," along with ratios, fractions, and simple arithmetic to convert meters (m) to kilometers (km) and miles (mi), and seconds (sec) to minutes (min) and hours (hr).

The starting ratio is what we know:

$$\frac{100 \text{ m}}{9.784 \text{ sec}}$$



Notice I have the time element on the bottom (denominator) because we are interested in miles per hour (mph), as *per* in mathematics generally means to divide.

Now we need some conversion ratios like the number of seconds in a minute, number of minutes in an hour, number of meters in a kilometer, and number of kilometers in a mile.

Here is what I used: 60 sec = 1 min; 60 min = 1 hr; 1000 m = 1 km; 1.60934 km = 1 mi. Generally, one can get these equivalent measures in a dictionary or an almanac.

First, I am going to calculate the kilometers per hour (kph). This means we have to multiply by the ratios for each conversion. For clarity, I'm going to do this step-by-step.

1) Convert meters to kilometers:

$$\frac{100 \text{ m}}{9.784 \text{ sec}} \times \frac{1 \text{ km}}{1000 \text{ m}} = \frac{100 \text{ km}}{9784 \text{ sec}}$$

Notice I am arranging the second ratio so that the measure in the numerator of one ratio "cancels" with the measure in the other ratio's denominator. Yes, words can cancel, too.

2) Now let's convert this to hours by multiplying by the seconds to minutes and minutes to hours.

$$\frac{100 \text{ km}}{9784 \text{ sec}} \times \frac{60 \text{ sec}}{1 \text{ min}} \times \frac{60 \text{ min}}{1 \text{ hr}} = \frac{360,000 \text{ km}}{9784 \text{ hr}} \approx 36.7948 \text{ kph}$$

3) How fast is this in mph?

$$\frac{36.7948 \text{ km}}{1 \text{ hr}} \times \frac{1 \text{ mi}}{1.60934 \text{ km}} = \frac{36.7948 \text{ mi}}{1.60934 \text{ hr}} \approx 22.863 \text{ mph}$$

Can we do that all at one time to get mph? Sure!

$$\frac{100 \text{ m}}{9.784 \text{ sec}} \times \frac{1 \text{ km}}{1000 \text{ m}} \times \frac{1 \text{ mi}}{1.60934 \text{ km}} \times \frac{60 \text{ sec}}{1 \text{ min}} \times \frac{60 \text{ min}}{1 \text{ hr}} = \frac{360,000 \text{ mi}}{15745.78256 \text{ hr}} \approx 22.863 \text{ mph}$$

This is just his average speed, because there were times in which his speed was not 22.863 mph and times when it was more. In fact, it was just above 0 mph when he took his first step, and it was reported by ESPN to be a maximum of 29.09 mph at the 65.1-meter mark. Incredible!

Estimating his speed at any given point on the 100-meter race is what calculus can be used for. Of course, we won't do that here, but for those with some basic calculus, we know that if I have Lyle's position function, I can determine his speed at any point with the second derivative.

If you have math-related questions or comments about my column, come see me in the Facility E Post-Secondary and Continuing Education program (formerly VEP) or send them to the *Mule Creek Post*.

The National Veterans Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit providing national veteran crisis management, information, and referral services.

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Making a Difference with CHILD

By Earl S. Breckenridge,
Post Reporter

“WHAT JESSIE IS doing in this program goes beyond what he’s doing for this community,” said Jason Davis, a recent graduate of Constructive Harmonization Involving Learning & Development (CHILD). “Bringing awareness to childhood trauma helps heal future generations,” he added. This was CHILD’s second cohort of 24 participants who completed the 16-week program created by Jessie Trevon Moore at the Mule Creek State Prison in 2023.

Humble, unimposing, and soft-spoken, Moore is serving a 32-years-to-life sentence that began 13 years ago at the Deuel Vocational Institution, in Tracy, California. “I was good in school growing up,” Moore recalled. “However, when my stepdad called me a nerd, I never went back.”

Like many incarcerated individuals with juvenile records, Moore assimilated the prison culture. However, while working in the coffee plant for the California Prison Industry Authority (CalPIA), a couple of correctional officers said he had potential for something better, and Moore took this to heart. He participated in the self-help groups presented by the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) and Criminals and Gangmembers Anonymous (CGA), where he said, “Step #5 and [K.] Bednarski [of the community resource manager’s office] encouraged me to delve deeper.”

Moore enrolled in Feather River and Coastline colleges where he ultimately received an A.A. degree in social & behavioral sciences, an A.S. in business, and an A.A. in American studies. He is currently working toward his bachelor’s degree in communication studies from California State University, Sacramento.

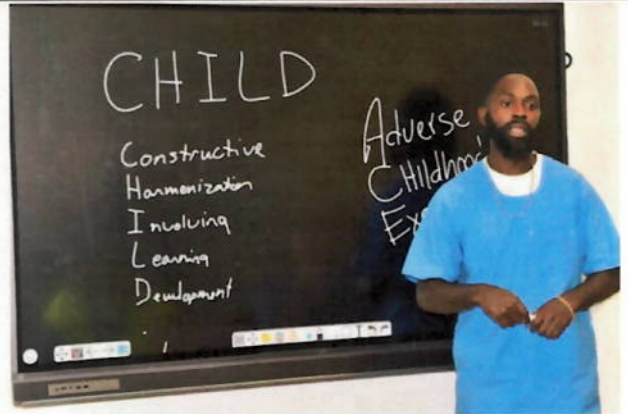
“In route to my rehabilitation,” Moore writes in his pro-

gram’s brochure, “I discovered that my being misled as a child/youth led to my dysfunctional way of living. At a certain point during this revelation, I realized I needed to give back to my community in an effort to protect childhoods and future childhoods, from developing maladaptive processes that generate dysfunction.” Among the various goals

the program offers, he writes “CHILD focuses on three aspects of development: Biosocial, Cognitive, and Psychological. It consists of six parts — prenatal development, the first two years, early childhood (ages 2-6), middle childhood (ages 6-11), adolescence (ages 11-18), and emerging adulthood (ages 18-26).”

CHILD began on Mule Creek’s Facility C, is currently on Facility E, and is expanding to Facility D. Moore notes the program’s success could not have been possible without invested participants, Community Resource Manager J. Ross, CHILD coordinator and adult education instructor C. Villarreal, and teacher’s aide/CHILD coordinator and staff sponsor A. DelToro.

“When I came to ‘E’ yard, the culture helped expand my vision,” Moore said. Looking forward, he is in the process of having CHILD recognized by the National Anger Management Association (NAMA) as a parenting program. He also is in the process to get credentialing for certified parent training specialists (CPS).



Jessie Trevon Moore facilitates the program he created.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Life is What You Make It

Hey open your eyes
It's been awhile since the last time
you've done right
Blinded by pride
Twisted mindset razed your frail heart

Life is what you make it
You're wrong reflect accept it
Don't minimize it
Life is what you make it
Repent move on amend it
Your whining won't fix it

You are free to do what your heart
desires
But in the end you'll pay the price

Hate lust and greed
Betrayed you and now you live in
misery
You blame god
and justify your actions you have the
audacity

Life is what you make it
Do good you won't regret it
Life is what you make it

—Jason Rosacia, Post Reporter

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California Coalition for
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will begin a new cycle open to residents of facilities D and E;
to be placed on the waiting list, fill out a CDCR 2016 form



Dogumentary Film Crew At Mule Creek State Prison

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter
and Earl S. Breckenridge,
Post Reporter

ON AUG. 6, 2024, Kenneth Johnson Productions (KJ2 Productions), a nonprofit media content film crew located in Sacramento, came to the Mule Creek State Prison. Director Kevin Molohan and a crew of three videographers documented the expansion of the Infinite PawsAbilities program with the arrival of eight adorable puppies.

According to Cherie Flores, director of Infinite PawsAbilities, local animal shelters are overfilled with dogs in need of adoption. The idea behind making a multidimensional documentary is to provide information about the Infinite PawsAbilities program on Facility D. Flores said there are three goals to keep in mind:

- Reaching donors as part of a social justice initiative and to help facilitate expansion of the program.
- Finding donors that are interested in helping with the dogs on the outside.
- The public, to inform what we are doing here and to highlight the positive initiative of the incarcerated supporting the community.

The video will be available on the Infinite PawsAbilities website and other social media content such as Edovo. The program takes at-risk dogs from shelters who have behavioral and trust issues that are less than favorable, and then provides rehabilitation training through positive reinforcement. Training for the K9s is evaluated on four levels, plus a final evaluation called Canine Good Citizen once they have demonstrated the Top 10 commands. "We will find a home for all the dogs," Flores said with confidence.

Capt. C. Elston said she has seen a positive change in residents' outlooks since coming into the program, and this

shows they think about more than themselves. Having the dogs "helps the environment be relaxed," Elston said.

The dogs have an effect on everybody in a positive way. One participant stated, "We strive to be better, not only in here, but in our hearts."

After a demonstration of commands and agility training, all the dogs and their trainers met in building 16 where the dogs are housed. A class that will be dedicated to Edovo as training content was also filmed. The class talked about three phases of the program.

1. Positive reinforcement
2. Thoughtful use of pressure
3. Fluency

The dogs showed amazing behavior during class, which ran for 30-45 minutes, a testament to their training. The group shared insights and knowledge learned from the dog training program that have a huge impact on mental health.

"I absolutely agree [that dog training has a huge impact on mental health]," said Elston. "I've noticed the difference between trainers' attitudes before and after."

As the dogs and residents of Mule Creek learn valuable lessons from each other about rehabilitation, only the dogs will be available for adoption. Thomas Moore added, "I could see myself in these dogs; traits, impulses, and how it relates to the steps I've taken."

For more information on adoption, go to InfinitePawsAbilities.org or email Cherie@InfinitePawsAbilities.org to help make a difference.

Do Fish Drink Water?

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

WHAT KIND OF a question is that? Of course they drink water. But do they actually drink through their mouths, or do they get their required liquids in some other way, such as osmosis? The question makes more sense in this light, so let's see what the experts have to say.

The U.S. Geological Survey says our planet is made up of a little more than 70% water. And, according to *The World Atlas*, somewhere around 3.5 trillion fish live in this water, most of which is in our oceans. That's a lot of fish pee. But putting this last aside, let's begin with some basic biology.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention tell us the average adult drinks over 40 ounces of water each day, and that 60% of human bodies are made of water. For all the biological functions of human bodies — and fish bodies — water is of utmost importance. Fish need it like we do, but you'll never see a fish carrying around a bottle of Evian. No, her only choice is the body of water she lives in and, surprise, fish consume it by osmosis through their gills, which at the same time is how they get their oxygen.

Once again, surprise, fish who live in saltwater also drink water by

swallowing it. Though, for a soon to be obvious reason, freshwater fish do not. The experts at Montreal's McGill University (do they get the irony in their name?) told *USA Today's* Evan Hecht, "Fishes' bodies, just like ours, need a certain concentration of salt to function best." In other words, drinking freshwater could mess up the



www.aqueon.com

balance of their body chemistry.

So, to recap: freshwater fish absorb water through their gills, while saltwater fish drink it. And now you know.



Guide Dogs of America

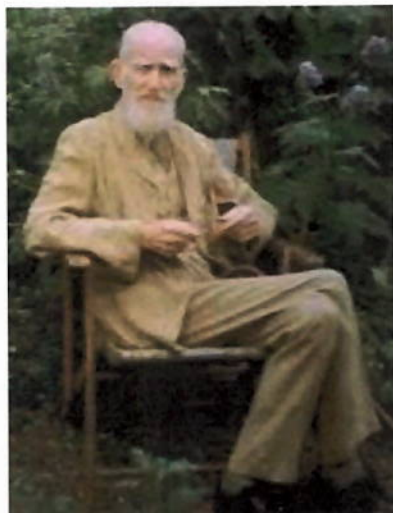
Tender Loving Canines

The True Joy in Life

By Marty Williams,
Production Editor

“THIS IS THE true joy in life, being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one. Being a force of nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances, complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the whole community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it what I can. I want to be thoroughly used up when I die, for the harder I work, the more I live. I rejoice in life for its own sake. Life is no brief candle to me. It is a sort of splendid torch which I have got hold of for the moment and I want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it on to future generations.”

—George Bernard Shaw,
Playwright 1856-1950



George Bernard Shaw
(Britannica.com)

Other than Shakespeare, no other English language playwright is performed more than George Bernard Shaw worldwide. Essayist, novelist, vegetarian, and feminist, he was also a noted critic of art, music, and theater. Primarily a social activist and devoted socialist, Shaw wrote radical plays that covered the whole of human experience, from slumlords (Widower's Houses) to humanist sanctity (Saint Joan). His 1933 *The Adventures of a Black Girl in Her Search for God* was well outside the norm in its day for the treatment of race and feminine issues. Always challenging, serious, and full of gravity, his plays are often touched with humor and a keen eye focused on the ridiculousness of humanity. He died in 1950 having written over 50 plays.

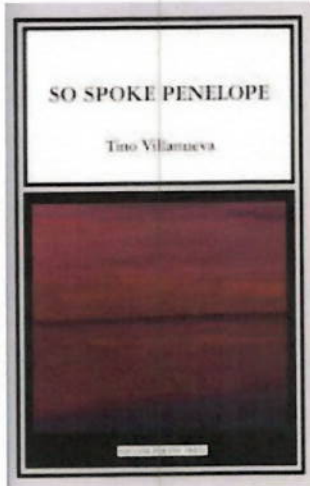


Workmanship

By Brian Warner, Mule Creek State Prison

work·man·ship \ˈwɜrk-mən-, -ship\ *n* 1: The art or skill of a workman.

THIS SERIES IS dedicated to exploring poetry written about work people perform that enriches our lives. *So Spoke Penelope* (Grolier Poetry Press, 2013), by Tino Villanueva, professor of Romantic studies at Boston University, is a collection of poems written in the voice of Penelope, wife of Odysseus, as she waits 20 years for his return from the war in Troy.



The book's introduction, written by Villanueva's friend Dr. Ifeanyi Menkiti, reveals that the author's remarkable ability to write in Penelope's voice about her trials was informed by those of his grandmother, Clara Solana Rios, who was born into hardship on the Mexican border in 1885. Like Penelope, she was a weaver and a caring mother who worked under difficult conditions.

Given this insight, Villanueva captures Penelope's many moods, ranging from hopeful to hopeless and back as the years drag on. She struggles with her anger toward Odysseus for leaving her as she raises their son, Telemachus, while fending off obnoxious suitors who covet her estate. She retreats into weaving to process the tangle of her emotions that besiege her; but her undying love for Odysseus provides her ultimate defense.

For those who have been separated from loved ones, *So Spoke Penelope* provides valuable insight into what they may be feeling in our absence.

So Spoke Penelope

This is the palace where I've learned to survive;
where two years ago I embraced Odysseus,
stout son of Laertes, one last time—

This is the palace I walk around in
from hall to hall, a world of stone and wood that is mine.
This is the room where I work in wool,
and talk it out with myself;
where still awake I toss and turn,
pace around in the middle of the night,
convincing myself once more
that the earthly idea of love is still the life-blood of my body.

This is the palace where I wear the crown of faithfulness;
where the sound of the sea is the sound I think with.
Therefore, if I stand by a window expecting each time to see
the outline of a ship coming toward me,
what is it but my love,
and the passion time gives it to grow for Odysseus,
like-minding husband of the cunning mind, for whom I wait.

*So spoke Penelope when she awoke this morning:
when the golden cloth of day rose
out of the sea.*

(Image courtesy of Penn.museum)

—Tino Villanueva, from *So Spoke Penelope*
(Grolier Poetry Press, 2013)

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The donation of flat artwork for PREP auctions is ongoing without a deadline for submissions. Donations can be made in the drop boxes in the facility chapel. If you wish to contact PREP for its excellent self-help correspondence courses or to receive the *Oasis* newsletter, feel free to write.

Our Endangered Neighbors (January is Wildlife Conservation Month)



giant armadillo, Venezuela (WorldLandTrust.org)



babirusa, Indonesia (Wikipedia.org)

Mexican grizzly bear, Mexico
(Novum-Terram.Fandom.com)

cheetah, Africa (ShadowsOfAfrica.com)



California condor, United States



American crocodile, United States



dugong, East Africa

The Enigma of *Mona Lisa*

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

ONE OF THE most famous Renaissance paintings is the portrait of Lisa Gherardini, which is known as the *Mona Lisa*, an oil painting on poplar panel by the no-less-famous Leonardo da Vinci — artist extraordinaire and Renaissance man for all time. Cast as the epitome of fine art, *Mona Lisa* represents one of the most important artistic legacies of European culture while embodying the ideals of beauty during the *belle époque* of artistic and cultural revival. Typical of his genius, da Vinci brought *Mona Lisa* to life with personality and spirit. His work has been said to unite soul and substance.

As a young man, Leonardo was an apprentice to Early Renaissance artist Andrea del Verrocchio, who asked Leonardo to paint one of the angels in Verrocchio's painting of the baptism of Christ. While Verrocchio's angels have been described in simple terms as looking like a boy, Leonardo's angel, on the other hand, has been described by many as an elegant, graceful, complex figure in motion, representing the Renaissance's ideal.

The *Mona Lisa* is the portrait of the second wife of Francesco del Giocondo, a Florentine merchant who commissioned it in celebration of his economic arrival after having made enough money to move out of his mother's house. The painting was said to have never been delivered to its patron for whatever reason. Years later it was in Leonardo's possession in France while he was employed by King Francis I. Beyond the mundanity usually associated with portraiture, the *Mona Lisa* brings to life the enigmatic grin of a woman whose face has been synonymous with western art and culture. The universality of its effect on the many levels of human psychology is an example of how a work of art can go beyond paint and canvas to convey emotion, or, in this case, to convey the enigma that veils the emotion behind the ordinary yet extraordinary facial expression of *Mona Lisa*'s knowing look at her audience.

The *Mona Lisa*'s enigmatic presence has been the subject of many literary tributes. As Victorian-era writer Walter Pater wrote, "The presence that thus rose so strangely beside the waters, is expressive of what in the ways of a thousand years men had come to desire. It is a beauty wrought out from within upon the flesh, the deposit, little cell by cell, of strange thoughts and fantastic reveries and exquisite passions."

In fine art fashion, the subject, *Mona Lisa*, is representational. The lines are exquisitely precise and symmetrical but still have a flowing quality to them as evidenced by her dress, her hair, and by the moving water behind her. Her figure is voluptuous, and the color has an overall yellowed varnish. The emphasis is on the subject. She is larger than life as compared to the background. Though a still life, *Mona Lisa* seems to come to life in a mysterious and quiet way. Her soul-piercing look and knowing smile hypnotize the viewers.

Compared to Michelangelo's *David* (1501-04), which was a colossal public statue produced around the same time, *Mona Lisa* is diminutive and tranquil, set intimately in nature's uninhabited scenery with rocks, river, and greenery behind the subject to reveal their own discreet splendor in isolation. Both works of art convey extraordinary beauty. Their creators, Michelangelo and Leonardo, were also rivals at the time. Their creative genius borders on the divine as their demonstrations of beauty — in the classically smooth and flowing lines of the *Mona Lisa* and in the flawless nudity and proportionality of Michelangelo's *David* — reveal vestiges of the classical standards perfected by the Greeks who were once the conquerors of the Roman ancestors of Michelangelo and Leonardo.

The *Mona Lisa* is for the ages. It is timeless yet classical. I had the privilege of viewing it at the Getty Museum years ago when it was on tour, and, seeing it now on a computer screen in prison through a college art appreciation correspondence course is somehow more impactful with the benefit of decades of life experience under my belt. I hope as art lovers you will get to see it in person at least once, as it is a masterful rendering of a historical figure come to life in all her mystified splendor.

Sources: Victoria Coates, "When David Met Lisa," *National Review*, Dec. 27, 2021; K. Scianni, *The Nature of Art*.



Mona Lisa, 1503-19, Leonardo da Vinci, 77 x 53 cm, oil on poplar, Musée du Louvre. (Britannica.com)

Our Endangered Neighbors



northern swift fox, United States



gorilla, Africa



brown hyena, Africa



black-faced impala, Angola



leopard, Africa and Asia



spider monkey, Borneo

Falsely Accused Day at the Capitol

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

ON A SWELTERING Monday in September, advocates gathered under a canopy in the Rose Garden of California's Capitol building. They were there to bring awareness to the issue of false accusations on the anniversary of International Falsely Accused Day, observed each September 9. The theme of the event — beyond bringing attention to this real injustice in our nation — was that it could happen to anyone. Conspicuously absent were any public officials or media, despite proximity to California's seat of government and Sacramento's extensive multimedia landscape.

Nearly a dozen speakers took the stage to tell their personal stories of how false accusations and wrongful convictions altered or ruined their lives and the lives of those they care about.

"Everyone had their own story," said Lara Gualarte, El Dorado County's poet laureate emeritus and teaching artist of creative writing at the Mule Creek State Prison. "It was very sad. The people who came to tell their stories felt it was important for people to hear."

Gualarte, herself an advocate for the falsely accused, used her time to read the essays by two of her creative writing students, Albert Bell and Dymitri Haraszewski. Below is Haraszewski's poem, "I Didn't Know."

In his essay, "For the Falsely Accused & Wrongfully Convicted," Bell wrote:

I would like to be a voice of the voiceless in regards to the many facets, effects and repercussions, of the wrongfully convicted/falsely accused. ... How can man or woman, be made whole again, redeem their career, their reputation and good names, after being falsely accused, wrongfully convicted and sent to prison? ... All across this nation there are men & women whose hearts beat with the hollowness of loss.

I Didn't Know

*I heard your words to me that day,
you said you understood.
You said you didn't blame me,
you told me we were good.
You gave me your forgiveness
when I never thought you would.*

*I wanted to explain myself;
I took the shot but don't know why.
And overnight, "I love you" turned
to "I can't look you in the eye."*

*I heard your words to me that day,
I even saw the poem you wrote.
I wish I could've answered you
but there were boulders in my throat.
The monkey on my back clings tight now.
It claws and bites me through the night now.
Insisting I know wrong from right now...
Sometimes I think I'll die.
For I have borne false witness, friend,
but never meant to lie.*

Despite the lack of media presence, cellphone video of the event will be uploaded to YouTube. For more information, contact Advocates For the Falsely Accused at: www.TheAFFA.org.



From Left—Albert Bell, Lara Gualarte, Dymitri Haraszewski
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Some Telling Statistics about Wrongful Convictions

Exonerations in the U.S. since 1989: **2,471+**

Total years lost in prison: **21,725+**

Ethnicity of Exonerated

- Black 49%
- White 37%
- Hispanic 12%
- Other 2%

Contributing Factors

- Mistaken identity 28%
- False confession 12%
- Forensic science problems 23%
- Perjury or false accusation 58%
- Official misconduct 54%

Data from The Innocence Network. To learn more, visit www.iwcd.org.

Our Endangered Neighbors



orangutan, Borneo



marine otter, Peru



giant panda, China



red wolf, United States



humpback whale, All Oceans



wild yak, Tibet



Our Stories Matter

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

I WAS A terrible alcoholic. This means I was a terrible *person*. From the age of 12, I spent decades under the delusion my drinking produced only good times for me and those who attempted to keep company with me. The truth is that — as a logical eventuality of my reckless drinking — I began devolving into a disgusting, degenerate, and dangerous version of the garden-variety drunk. *Not* drinking, and amending the damage caused by my reckless and selfish decision to drink, is now my full-time job.

I was, perhaps, a far worse drug addict. The decades I spent abusing illegal stimulants just gave me license to increase and extend my drinking and get into unnecessary mischief. Upon reflection and careful inventory, much of it was criminal. Now firmly in recovery, I am happy to report that my self-issued license to abuse illegal drugs has been self-revoked.

I was a tragic criminal, the result of undignified, unprincipled, and unrestricted selfishness. This means I understand a little about selfishness and selfish practices. Tragically, this also means that all of those people I victimized have acquired an intimate, detailed, and personal understanding of the depravity of my potential for selfishness. My crimes were not victimless. In recovery, I strive daily to live my amends. Evolving beyond a strict rehabilitative discipline, it has become a labor of love.

My journey toward rehabilitation began with a letter I received from the office of the district attorney while imprisoned at the Los Angeles County Jail. In the first two lines, the author forgave me for what I'll describe as the outrageous, misguided, and brutal murder of his brother. He was particularly gracious in including some of the details of his own journey of transformative redemption. Here's just a little of what he shared:

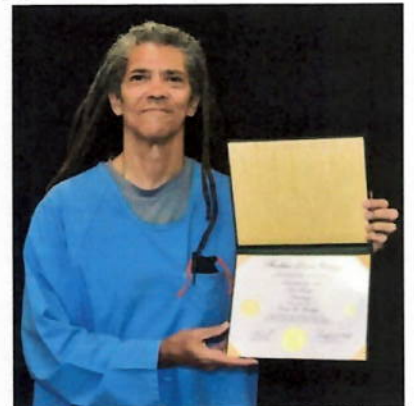
I hated everyone and anyone who didn't love me. I was so consumed with myself that anyone who I saw as a threat to my position or an obstacle to my advancement in this world became a victim of my venomous hate. Sometimes it was spewed out in the way that I spoke, sometimes through altercations, but it was always there like a dark cloud that hovered over me. It kept me in chains ...

Somehow, he understood my personal struggle. I took his words to heart. Following his encouragement, I made important and life-changing decisions. His testimony — his honesty, generosity, and demonstration of moral courage became both my roadmap and motivation — my solemn obligation towards rehabilitation and recovery. To this day, I keep a copy of his letter within reach.

I devoted myself to personal sobriety, began each day with prayer, and attended every rehabilitative group that fit in my calendar. I enrolled in college, became a rehabilitative mentor and recovery sponsor, and took a position working for the prison newspaper, the *Mule Creek Post*.

One day at a seminar hosted by the *Post*, I met the president of Feather River College, Kevin Trutna, along with James Elliot, the president of the Phi Theta Kappa honor society (PTK). Elliot enjoyed the distinction of being the first previously convicted felon to preside over the honor society. After speaking at the engagement, both men encouraged me to transfer to the college and enroll in PTK.

Two members of our editorial staff at the *Post* were members of PTK and graduates of Feather River. I remember deciding that day that I'd transfer my college credits to Feather River College and graduate as a member of PTK.



Bridges with his A.A. degree from Feather River College.
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Today, in my 10th year of continuous sobriety, I author this article as a grateful alumnus of Feather River, and a proud fraternal member of Phi Theta Kappa. I would like to publicly thank persons involved in supporting my personal recovery and education. This includes the forward-thinking taxpayers who are the people of California. I understand from each of your investments that my story is still being written, and, perhaps most importantly, that my story matters.

O. Rick Bridges is a feature reporter for the *Mule Creek Post* who earned his bachelor's degree in communication studies from California State University Sacramento in December 2024.



The Alchemist

Since ancient times, philosophers have sought to understand the nature of matter so that reality could be transmuted and substances become anything one desires. Today, we have the Alchemy app on our GTL tablets.

The premise of the game is simple: Beginning with four elements (air, earth, fire, and water), combine them with one another (or themselves) to create new substances. For example, the combination of earth + fire = lava, or air + air = wind; then you can go further, adding lava + water to make stone and steam. There are 390 possible results in the game. Have fun!

SO, YOU WANT to be an alchemist. Here's your challenge for the month.

After more than two years, it's time to let you alchemists loose and close out this column. Next month, we'll provide a list of all the elements (spoiler alert!), but for now, let's see if you can create all the dead-end elements (those that don't combine with anything):

Albert Einstein, Ambulance, Aquarium, Ashtray, Avian Flu, Bacon, Bar, Batman, Belarus, Bow, Camel, Caramel, Catdog, Chemistry, Crop Circles, Dr. Zoidberg, E-book, Egypt, Electric Eel, Electric Ray, Explosion, Finland, Firefighter, Firefly, Fisherman, Frankenstein, Genie, Germany, Ghostbusters, Hot Chocolate, House M.D., Iceland, iPhone, Island, Italy, Japan, Juice, Lance Armstrong, Lava Golem, Lava Lamp, Leech, Lichen, Lighthouse, Locomotive, Mermaid, Mite, Molotov Cocktail, Motorboat, Motorcycle, Omelet, Pearl, Penguin, Petri Dish, Phoenix, Pie, Piggy Bank, Pillow, Pinocchio, Prisoner, Rainbow, Romania, Ruby, Russia, Rust, Sailor, Salamander, Salt, Sandstorm, Santa Claus, Saudi Arabia, Sex and the City, Snail, Soap, Steamer, Sunflower, Sweater, Team, Thunderbird, Toast, Transformers, Twilight Saga, Typhoon, Ukraine, Undead, United Kingdom, Vinegar, Vulture, Weevil, Whey, Zoo.

F U E L

Families United to End LWOP
Life Without Parole
6109 S. Western Ave #100
Los Angeles, CA 90047

Psych View

Lockdowns and Safety Issues, Pt. 1

By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

PRISON IS UNSAFE. This is not intentional; it is a fact. There are many in prison who cannot function in any environment, including the confines of prison.

There are individuals who behave recklessly toward others. You may find yourself in the proximity of these individuals and you will have reasonable concerns about protecting yourself.

Some incarcerated individuals will seek special housing placement if a genuine personal threat exists. This is intended to protect people from "known enemies." Sometimes it works. Other times, the ratting out of your enemies may not be in your best interests, in which case contingency plans are needed.

Is it possible to protect yourself by asking for a different cell or bunk placement? If you take no steps for your own protection, what are your fears? Are they realistic?



(Courtesy of Prison Journalism Project)

This is a dilemma, because in some cases a person seeking protection may inadvertently draw attention when doing so. This can have an influence on parole decisions if the person ends up in restricted housing due to creating an unsafe situation by making themselves a target. Certainly most individuals are not going to seek to make themselves targets, but care should be taken not to habitually report unsafe situations. If the common denominator in all the reports is you, others will start to wonder why you keep attracting unsafe situations.

Placement in restricted housing for your own safety has been reported. It has never been discovered to match records, at least in my experience comparing statements and records. Does that mean that every single person who reported that he or she was specifically housed for protection was lying about it? Probably not. It does highlight the need to consider segregated housing as a last resort, and to document enemies and seek alternatives to restricted housing when keeping yourself safe.

Daisy Switzer is a psychologist who specializes in criminal evaluations. She was contracted by the Board of Parole Hearings a decade ago to perform forensic risk assessments. Mostly retired now, she contributes her time and knowledge toward a regular column in the Mule Creek Post.

Together we can do this, one step at a time.

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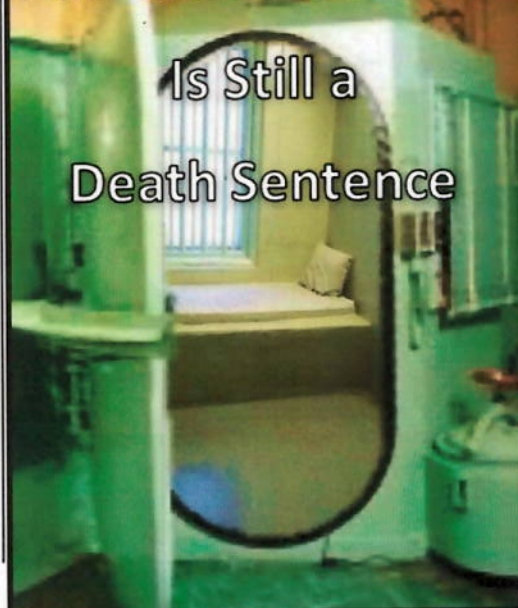


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(Photo by J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

Soldiers of the Cross Bring Hope to Mule Creek State Prison

By Rob Sharp, Feature Reporter

DEDICATION IS A word that gets used a lot by people and the news media, at times in absurd ways. That said, there is a group of non-denominational Christians who show true dedication to their faith and mission: Soldiers of the Cross. They don't belong to any brick-and-mortar church; their mission is their faith and how they fulfill it. On September 28, this missionary group roared onto Facility E at the Mule Creek State Prison on their motorcycles, and spent five hours interacting with over 1,000 incarcerated individuals from facilities D and E.

This group does far more than visit prisons with their message of hope and transformation through Christian spirituality. They have built churches in Mexico and Belize, constructed a Bible college and childcare center in Belize, and performed other works in the U.S. and abroad. It isn't about hotdogs and chips, but about hope.

These are not your suit-and-tie churchgoers. "We are common rough-necks who have lived hard lives, but through our pain found Jesus Christ and have developed a deep and profound love for Jesus," said Jacob Davey, a vest-wearing member of the organization. "A member who wears the vest is the sign of admission into our ministry. We don't allow bad behavior of one who wears the vest."

Jack Bower and his 19-year-old son, Marcus, also expressed their joy at being vest-wearing members of Soldiers of the Cross. "I enjoy sharing the gospel with people," said Marcus. "The trust and love I receive from the brothers keeps me with my walk with Christ and our outings helps to give me more opportunities to preach the gospel and pray for people," he said. "We take the opportunities as they come to preach to people the message of hope through our ministry, and to help you guys inside the walls understand that you are loved," added Jack.

Soldier of the Cross "Chango" fairly glowed with excitement at being at the prison for the event. "We love to encourage our brothers inside," he said. "It's like bringing a cold drink of water to the thirsty."

Another member, Sean McGuire, spent 33 years in prison, "on the installment plan," he said. In fact, he went through three CDCR numbers over seven separate prison terms, but has been out now for 15 years. "I'd tried everything to stay out, and none of it worked," said McGuire. "Only my relationship with Jesus Christ worked. We are under constant attack against our faith, and by spending part of every day in my Bible, I am now able to endure those attacks. I'm happy now, getting to watch my grandkids grow up. I had to get right to stay out of prison. Get into the word — that's where God speaks to us and we speak to him through our prayers and actions. Our own way will always get us into trouble, break up our families, and destroy us."



Soldiers of the Cross (Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Soldiers of the Cross (Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



(Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



(Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



(Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



(Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



(Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Soldiers of the Cross donated all of the food, labor, and service to make sure everyone on the yard enjoyed hot dogs and chips. They took time to share their stories and faith with the population, as well as listen to our own stories.

(Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Season's Greetings from the Guide Dogs of America and Tender Loving Canines Team



Paxton (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Earl and Alan Coker. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Jacob Robles and Nickel. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Paxton and Damin Pashilk. (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)



Nickel (Photo: J. Davis; Illustration: M. Williams)

Harleys and Jesus

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter



TYPICALLY, MOTORCYCLES AND Jesus don't seem to go together. Most think of the Hell's Angels when they see a group of motorcyclists wearing leathers and colors. Webster's dictionary says *angel* means "messenger." So, what is the message Soldiers of the Cross brings to the Mule Creek State Prison yard? The men in black leather on a bright September Saturday morning had some very interesting answers.

Dan Freeman told the *Post* that his friend, Dog the Bounty Hunter, contacted Soldiers of the Cross and the group made arrangements with Mule Creek for the September 28 event. Everything was coordinated with the prison and the day was a success.

Freeman has appeared on 39 muscle magazine covers and competed with Arnold Schwarzenegger at bodybuilding competitions for years. Freeman also was an MMA fighter, which means his muscles weren't just for show. At 40, he got married and started a family. By 42, it all came crashing down at once. Suddenly, his wife and children were gone, as was his home and business.

"Seemed all my buddies were crashing at the same time," said Freeman. "I grew up in a strict Old Testament-style church, didn't know much about the New Testament or Jesus. It was Christmas in 2000 and I was in the mall. Lonely, disheartened, and empty. I felt the world hanging on me. I went to the public restroom, sat down, and there was this tract, a personal message with a drawing of a bloody Jesus hanging on a cross. I read it. I went home, fell to my knees, and ended up with my face pressed to the floor. That tract had the Sinner's Prayer in it. I said it out loud and signed and dated it. With my face pressed hard to the floor, with my wife, kids and lifestyle gone, all I had now was Jesus.

"I got divorce papers in the mail," continued Freeman. "In court, the judge said I was compulsive. I hadn't seen my kids for two years. I'd run out of words. The judge said, 'Mr. Freeman, do you have a place for your children to sleep tonight?' At 6:30 p.m. that night, my visitation rights were activated.

"Anyone who will humble themselves and call on Jesus Christ for help will get help and God will show you what to do next. That's my story and why I ride with [Soldiers of the Cross]. We look for that one guy who is lost and wants to be found by Jesus."

So why Harleys for Jesus? Without hesitation, Beto said, "God uses our motorcycles as chariots, kingdom horses. I was sick of being tired, lost, and empty inside. I called on Jesus and the Holy Spirit chose me and filled me with hope. God filled me with his glory. I learned that when you submit yourself to him, he lets you see that his promises are real. God says, 'Taste me and you will see I am good.'"

"I did 20 years in prison," said Junior. "Real people want to see how to live life to abundance. I had tried it all; a lot of people give up, but God has a purpose for all of us whether we are locked up or out there free."

"Our heart is that we want to be here for that one guy," said Rueben. "We want to tell that one guy that Jesus is real and he really loves you."

Martin had done some county time. He shared that he had been stabbed and almost died. He'd never been to church, but all of his family who loved Jesus came and prayed for his recovery. "It was then I realized the Lord Jesus loved me," said Martin. "As you can see, my face is covered with tats and so are my arms and hands, so a good job was a big deal to me and seemed out of reach. But Jesus gave me favor and I got this great-paying job. I guess you could say it was his kindness to me that drew me to him."

Mark drives truck as a member of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters out of the Bay Area. "I give my time to glorify my King Jesus Christ," said Mark. "Jesus said when you visit the sick, or those in prison, or feed the hungry, you are actually doing it unto him, for he counts the least of his brothers and sisters as if it is he himself. Since he came in a flesh-and-blood body to die on a cross for our crimes, he honors those who honor him and live the same lifestyle he modeled while he was here on earth. He did not stay dead; God raised him up to life again so we can know that his death paid for our sins and all we have to do is believe it enough to turn from our sins and call on Jesus' name to receive eternal life.

"Jesus told a story of a shepherd who had 100 sheep," began Mark. "One got lost, so he left the 99 to find the one that was lost. That's what [Soldiers of the Cross] is all about. We go everywhere looking for that one guy to let him know Jesus is alive from the dead and he has forgiven him and loves him; all he has to do is turn his life over to Jesus and trust him and he will live forever."

AB 1186 Addresses Restitution

By Rob Sharp, Feature Reporter

THERE IS A lot of furor over this Assembly Bill, approved by the governor on Sept. 28, 2024. This legislation, which would eliminate court-ordered restitution, *does not* apply to all restitution fines. If you were not a minor — or among those sentenced prior to August 29, 1994, under Government Code §13967(a) — then your restitution fine is still enforceable and collectible under §2(a) of the new legislation. Only those who were sentenced to pay restitution fines under §1(d) of this bill, pursuant to Penal Code §1202.4, are receiving relief from their restitution fine. Section 1(d) reads:

Upon the expiration of 10 years after the date of imposition of a restitution fine, pursuant to §1202.4, the balance, including any collection fees, shall be unenforceable and uncollectible and any portion of a judgment imposing those fines shall be vacated.

AB 1186 also *does not* affect direct orders of restitution for anyone, including juvenile offenders. The bill *does* make any court-imposed costs, including attorney fees, unenforceable and uncollectible as of Jan. 1, 2025, as well as any court-imposed civil assessments against minors.

Summary

So, if you were not a minor at the time of the commission of your offense, and not sentenced to pay a restitution fine under § 1202.4, Penal Code §1465.9, then you will continue to be charged up to 50% of any deposits to your trust account for your outstanding balance due. As yet there is no information on whether AB 1186 will include youth offenders between 18 and 25 years of age. And remember: Even while on parole, you will be required to pay restitution fines and direct orders of restitution (per AB 1186, §2(e)).

Sources: GTL Law Library app, AB 1186 (2024).

The Journey Makes Us One

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

THE INAUGURATION OF a seminary college to further support a culture of moral learning in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) was years in the making. The daylong event at the Mule Creek State Prison's (MCSP) Facility E on Saturday, September 28, was understandably a celebration of those years of hard work, faith, hope, and vision. It was a heartfelt investment in community.

As the day's festivities came to a close, the student seminarians, their professors, supporters, and hosts retired to the chapel to reflect on their journeys, personal and professional. If you asked any person present in the room that afternoon, they would likely describe the day's closing seminar as the logical convergence of a lifetime of prayer. They felt called to this moment to humbly serve one another as community. Pastors and professors, staff and administrators, custody officers and recovering criminals, secretaries and directors, bikers and incarcerated seminarians all joined in prayer.

Burl Cain, the high-profile ex-warden of the infamous Louisiana State Prison at Angola and present director of the Mississippi Department of Corrections, was the first dignitary to address this assembly — the first 23 incarcerated seminarians in the history of CDCR.

Cain began, "I've been a lot of places, and seen a lot of things." He assured the attendees that they would not see this type of heartfelt dedication to personal and professional duty anywhere else. He acknowledged the potential of professional risk that CDCR Secretary Jeff Macomber and Division of Adult Institutions Director Ron Broomfield might be taking in developing this vital social justice program and encouraged the seminarians to join him:

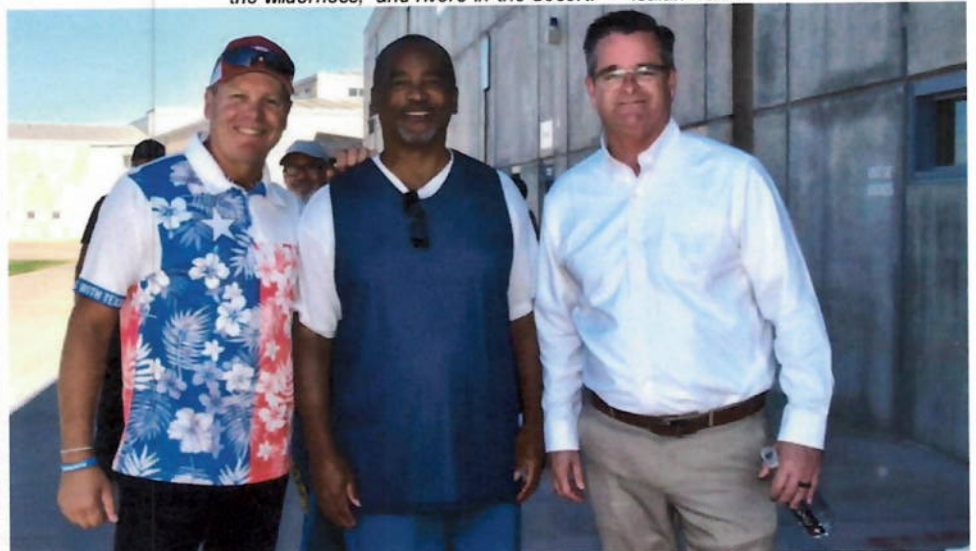
They've stuck their necks out. Your conduct needs to be beyond reproach. Don't mess up. Follow the rules. You are representing God. You need to be the change in culture that leads to a church. At church, the people are a gang, and the preacher is a gang leader. It's a good and moral gang. You need to challenge one another. I've seen it all work out.

Broomfield described the life of prayer, duty, and purpose that transported him to the chapel that day. He began:

In this position you get a lot of gratitude and credit for things that you don't deserve. My faith journey led me here today. I thought that I might like to be a pastor. Just like you, I didn't want to be in prison. It's about the journey. Trust what God is doing in your life. The relationships that God puts together, make things happen for us. My prayer is that each of you makes it across the [seminarian] finish line.

Macomber was reflective and, rather appropriately, spoke on behalf of the entire community. "You wouldn't have seen this 30 years ago in CDCR — with incarcerated and staff in the same room. I'd like to thank everyone for making this happen today."

"Behold, I will do a new thing, now I shall spring forth, shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert." —Isaiah 43:19



Chief Deputy Warden Brian Holmes, Seminary Student Earl Breckenridge, and Director Ronald Broomfield.
(Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Seminarians Richard Gomez and Andrew Rivas (J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)



Burl Cain and Secretary Jeff Macomber
(J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)



Antoinette and Jordan Jeske join the seminary students to listen to their witness and concerns.
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Chief Deputy Warden Bryan Holmes, Secretary Jeff Macomber, and Facility Capt. C. Elston.
(J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)



Dignitaries, donors, and SUM staff listen to student testimonies. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Rattle magazine, which is distributed by Prisoner Express, is always open to submissions by incarcerated poets and writers.

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Administrators and visitors listen to one of the speakers in September 2024. From Left—Joe Stewart, Professor Johnson, Burl Cain, Jeffrey Macomber, Bob Morris. (Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist)

SUM on a Mission for Change

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter and Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

TWENTY-FIVE STUDENTS of SUM Bible College & Theological Seminary got their start at the Mule Creek State Prison working toward a bachelor's degree in theology, thanks to the efforts of many caring and compassionate people, and the creation of Paid in Full-California.

The nonprofit organization is made up of six board members who have made it their "mission to change the moral culture of the California prison system," says Bob Morris, the company treasurer. Paid in Full began working on creating the seminary program in the institutional setting early 2023; by July 1 the board filed for 501(c)(e) nonprofit status. "The essence of what we are doing is an outreach program," he adds.

Joe Stewart, the director of the organization, previously worked at the California State Prison-Sacramento for 25 years before retiring as an associate warden at Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego. With his history working in the prison system and long-time friendship with both Jeffrey Macomber, the state's corrections secretary, and Bryan Holmes, Mule Creek's chief deputy warden, Stewart was able to receive support when he pitched Paid in Full's mission.

"This is just the beginning," Morris says, as board members Mike Broyles and Jonathan Melilly are currently working on creating a Southern California chapter of the program in another institution. The idea is to have 150 students going at any given time. That is no small feat, as the program requires substantial financing: \$180,000 per year for each cohort of 25 students. However, as its name implies, Paid in Full covers all the costs of the entire program for the students. This requires a tremendous amount of commitment and faith, not just by the nonprofit, but by the sponsors and donors. "This is all a leap of faith," Morris adds.

Melilly, who also works with the motorcycle ministry Soldiers of the Cross, has been instrumental in bringing the seminary college program to Mule Creek. Melilly was a chaplain at Louisiana State Prison in Angola before moving to California. Asked what role religion plays in the lives of incarcerated men, Melilly said, "For decades Angola was one of the most violent prisons in the U.S., and by bringing spirituality to the place, over the years the minds and hearts of the men changed." Melilly said a third of the members of Soldiers of the Cross were formerly incarcerated.

Influential in the early success of the nonprofit were chief deputy warden of San Quentin, Oak Smith, and Paid in Full's secretary Jordan Jeske. The two look to the future of the program as moral rehabilitation. As an ex-offender, Jeske knows all too well the power of rehabilitation from the inside and outside; he got out of prison in 2010 after three years of incarceration. He and his wife, Antoinette, also provide couples counseling at their church.

When the first cohort of students graduates in three years, they will be relocated throughout the prison system in pairs as spiritual leaders and developers of a new prison culture.

If you are interested in contributing to Paid in Full-California or would like more information, write to or go online at:

Paid in Full California
25005 Blue Racine Rd., Suite 318
Folsom, CA 95630
PaidInFullCalifornia.org

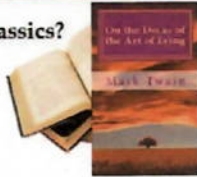


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Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp,
Feature Reporter



AT THE VERY least, you have probably heard of the literary humorist Samuel Langhorne Clemens, also known as Mark Twain. You may have read *Tom Sawyer*, *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, or one of his other novels. But there is a little-known essay of his titled, "On the Decay of the Art of Lying," that is worth reading. The work is only 15 pages and was first published in 1885. It is thought-provoking in its logic. For example:

No virtue can reach its highest usefulness without careful and diligent cultivation—therefore, it goes without saying that this we ought to be taught in the public schools—even in the newspapers. What chance has the ignorant uncultivated liar against the educated expert? What chance have I against a lawyer? Judicious lying is what the world needs. I sometimes think it were even better and safer not to lie at all than to lie injudiciously. An awkward, unscientific lie is often ineffectual as the truth.

The author quotes various sources and a few proverbs to support his theory that we all lie and therefore should have our dishonest skill set so as to become proficient in the art. For example: "Children and fools always speak the truth." And, quoting a historian named Parkman: "The saying is old that truth should not be spoken at all times; and those whom a sick conscience worries in to habitual violation of the maxim are imbeciles and nuisances."

Twain decried hurtful speech no matter from what source, truth or lie: "What I bemoan is the growing prevalence of the brutal truth. Let us do what we can to eradicate it. An injurious truth has no merit over an injurious lie. Neither should ever be uttered."

"On the Decay of the Art of Lying" is available in the Library app of the GTL tablets.



Maintaining a Rehabilitative Dialogue

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

THE MERRIAM-WEBSTER'S Dictionary, the one digitally available to each of us on our GTL tablets, defines *communication* as "the act or process of using words, sounds, signs, or behaviors to express or exchange information or to express your ideas, thoughts, feelings, etc., to someone else." Ideally, each of us that operate in a prison context — as prisoners, staff, or custody officers — should maintain some form of rehabilitative dialogue in our vital and necessary communications with one another, as we count the days and nights of our individual prison careers. Such is the philosophy — and the regular daily practice — of Correctional Lieutenant M. Shepard as he navigates his duties at the Mule Creek State Prison. His manner is sincere and direct:

I strive to have meaningful dialogue with individuals every day. Speaking with staff and inmates prevents problems. It functions like a barometer. It helps me to gauge subtleties and get a feel about things that are going on around me. It informs the work that I'm responsible for.

That work — Shepard's term in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation — began in 2010. He started at the High Desert State Prison where Shepard found it especially challenging dealing with an environment where there was so much matter-of-fact violence and a "blatant disregard for human compassion." As with many of the incarcerated, he thought it "wise to be in a better situation."

Initially, coming to Mule Creek from High Desert was culture shock. He has since worked a range of duties. Today, Lt. Shepard relates that he finds his discipline of intentional communication to be especially effective on the lower levels. He thinks it important to have an understanding of, and advocate for, a range of transformative programs. He's found that discussing transformative opportunities with those who are incarcerated affords them a strong sense of motivation.

When interviewed by the *Post*, just after the SUM inauguration and BBQ on September 28, Shepard was reflective, and shared his thoughts:

When I first arrived at Mule Creek, I was asking for more programs. Faith-based communities might be a path that some people have never really been exposed to. I think that being engaged in spirituality gives someone the opportunity to be reflective in meaningful ways.

Much like many of the rest of us doing our terms, he looks forward to all of the accompanying opportunities that we have to engage one another, as we strive to attain and maintain the very best versions of ourselves in transformative and rehabilitative dialogue.



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Life Support Alliance
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LifeSupportAlliance.org



Straw Poll Results

By Daniel Larson, Feature Reporter

DURING THE SUM grand opening, while the populations of facilities D and E mingled on the Facility E recreation yard, the *Mule Creek Post* took a straw poll of approximately 150 residents to hear what they thought about the day. We asked if they felt good, bad, or indifferent. Everyone said they felt good. In addition, they told us what they liked best of three categories: food (40%), camaraderie (35%), and music (20%).

The remaining 5% had no opinion, or were too busy looking for the guy who owed them money.



MULE CREEK POST Submissions

Freelance writers, staff, and others may submit articles or material to the *Mule Creek Post*, % MCIC A/Ws Office, P.O. Box 409090, Lone, CA 95640, or by interdepartmental mail if living at MCSP. Submissions may be edited for length and content and become the property of the *Mule Creek Post* (authors retain intellectual rights to original material). When submitting legal news articles, include source material documentation. Include your name, CDC#, and address.



The Prayer Warriors Alliance (PWA) is a non-denominational organization of volunteers who will assist anyone of any faith with research. The PWA charges no fee; return postage (up to 20 pages per request) is paid by PWA. See the July 2023 edition for more information about the PWA.

PWA follows all departmental mail restrictions and guidelines. PWA cannot search for legal or case information or individuals. Donations are gladly accepted.

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CDCR Secretary Visits MCSP

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

DRESSED DOWN IN khaki shorts and a black short sleeve shirt, one might have easily mistaken California's corrections secretary Jeff Macomber for someone attending a weekend barbecue. Flanked by a mini-entourage of similarly clad Mule Creek State Prison officials — including Chief Deputy Warden Bryan Holmes and Facility D Capt. C. Elston — he exited building 21 on Facility E Saturday morning, September 28. The trio stepped onto a crowded yard that was, in fact, the scene of a hotdog barbecue and bike-show bash hosted by Soldiers of the Cross and the Prison Seminary Program. Greeted by a trio of *Mule Creek Post* reporters, Macomber couldn't have been more accommodating, patiently fielding questions beneath the shade of a convenient handball wall.

The motorcycle show, barbecue, and visit by approximately 75 guests celebrated the inauguration of Facility E's seminary program, the first of its kind in the state. Macomber is a vocal advocate for program expansion within the state's 32 prisons and said, "We like to keep the population busy and engaged in positive programs and rehabilitation. While some aren't ready, when they get there it gives them a chance ... whether it's college, groups, or religious organization involvement." He proudly pointed out that 12,000 incarcerated students are involved in college programs, with more classes being added.

Asked whether he thought of the seminary program as an affirmation of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation's (CDCR) commitment to the new California Model, Macomber said that it fits well into the dynamic security pillar, and admits, "Introduction of the California Model is a slow process and not nearly fully implemented. It's still developing and rolling out incrementally throughout the CDCR. It's not an 'us versus them' institutional dynamic now ... the old custody culture." He added that he understands that getting custody staff on board is key and will take time.

Macomber visited Norway in 2021, along with a contingent that included members of the California Correctional Peace Officers Association (CCPOA), victims' rights groups, former prisoners, and others. He points out that it took Norway a decade or more to convert its system, but the benefits for staff and incarcerated individuals are enormous. "It's stressful working in a prison, or living in one," he says, "and the California Model is designed to ease some of that stress." Working with Amend out of the University of California, San Francisco, the CDCR is cooperating with Norwegian penology specialists and other countries and states such as Oregon to normalize the California Model.

Staff training, based on the Scandinavian system of incarceration with an emphasis on sociological teachings, will be maximized in 2025, with staff at more facilities becoming familiarized by the end of the year.

The CDCR was forced to strike \$750 million from a budget of \$14.5 billion earlier this year, but funding for implementation of the California Model doesn't add to the budget. "It's a matter of prioritizing and maximizing the efficiency of the funds we have," the secretary said. He emphasized that while there are no plans to further reduce the overall prison population, the fact that parole board grants have increased from 4% 20 years ago to a current approximate rate of 25% is progress.



Secretary Macomber (Courtesy of CDCR)



Canine trainer Jacob Robles speaks with a Soldier of the Cross during the secretary's September visit.
(J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

The Prison Journalism Project's mission is to help incarcerated writers and those in communities affected by incarceration tell stories about their world using the tools of journalism: gathering and testing facts; writing with nuance, texture, and insight; and reaching a thoughtful audience. Submissions may be made electronically or by mail:

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Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee
Post Columnist

Positive Affirmations #4

Thoughts When You Disappoint Yourself
or Someone You Care About

MY BUSINESS REQUIRED me to leave home to fly to a client site each Sunday afternoon and return home late Friday night. My weekends were a flurry of errands and chores and I had very little time to see my family and friends. At that point in time, I had several friends who took it personally when I didn't see them every weekend.

I was brushing my teeth when I looked in the mirror and saw an exhausted, stressed-out woman who was worn out from beating herself up for not being able to satisfy everyone else's needs. I took a deep breath and told the woman looking back at me, "You're trying to do too many things instead of making the things you do count."

When we're berating ourselves, whatever the reason, we're stuck in a useless cycle that can cause our confidence and mood to go into a negative spiral. It's important to remind ourselves that we have the wherewithal to understand how we've failed to live up to our own expectations, and plan to either mend the situation or keep from making the same mistake again.

Leah Ward-Lee is an international business consultant for the airlines and aerospace industries, community activist, social justice advocate, and entrepreneurial trainer. LWL Enterprises Inc. provides scholarships for disadvantaged minorities and underserved demographics such as prisoners. She volunteers for Defy Ventures, a prison entrepreneurial training program, and provides pro bono counseling for aspiring small business startups.



To Build Your Credit Profile, Start With Your ID

By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

FIRST, DECIDE ON your name. Choose one form of your name and use it in all your financial and legal dealings. In the mortgage world, it is usually first name, middle initial, last name, and any suffix that applies. The other option is to write out your middle name. Some people don't care to use their first name, so they go by initial, middle name, last name. You don't want to use first and last name only, because there are too many people with the same name. Check this by doing a Google or Bing search with your first and last name. If you're a Baby Boomer, you will likely see many with the same first and last name. Back then, parents named children to fit in with society. If your name is unique or a common name with an unusual spelling, you have a lower chance of finding others with your name, but a higher chance of having multiple spellings (or misspellings) of your name on your credit report.

If you have credit opened in two or three forms of your name, that's OK. But from here on, use one legal name. If you have a half dozen or more names for yourself on your credit report, I recommend removing all the nicknames and incorrect variations, because doing so could raise your score 5 to 10 points. Likewise, make sure your date of birth and Social Security number are written correctly on applications for credit, including rent and cellphone applications.

Now that you know how you're going to open credit, you need to open three accounts, also called "trade lines" by the professionals in the mortgage industry. Why three? Because that's the minimum number preferred by mortgage lenders to get the best loan. Also, because three good accounts result in a top-tier credit score. Of the three accounts, at least two should be Visa or MasterCard. These are major credit cards that you can use all over the world. They provide more clout than a credit card used only at one store. The third account could be an individual store card, a gas card, a student loan, or an automobile loan. Having two major credit cards plus an auto loan or student loan is excellent, because it gives you two different types of credit. The credit cards are revolving credit, whereas an auto loan or student loan is installment credit.

Carolyn Warren is the author of Amazon's bestselling *Repair Your Credit Like the Pros*, *Repair Your Credit Like the Pros: Deeper Dive*, and *Get the Mortgage You Want Like the Pros*. She is passionate about saving people money and helping people reach their dream of home ownership.

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Bestselling author of *Repair Your Credit Like the Pros™*



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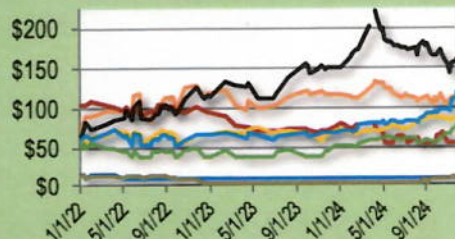


The OIG is a prison oversight agency independent of the CDCR,
established by the California Penal Code, §§6125 and 6126(a).

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Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1, 2022 to Nov. 25, 2024)

● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.76 → \$9.19	-14.6%
● ConocoPhillips (COP)	\$117.00 → \$111.75	-4.5%
● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$93.19 → \$58.01	-37.8%
● Edison International (EIX)	\$63.62 → \$86.48	+35.9%
● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.22 → \$7.88	+51.0%
● Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)	\$112.00 → \$158.48	+41.5%
● ONEOK Inc. (OKE)	\$65.90 → \$117.05	+77.6%
● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$41.29 → \$75.93	+83.9%



Creative Arts Program

If you want to be happy, be.

—Leo Tolstoy

Creative Crossroads: The Haibun

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter
and Steven R. Waters,
Mule Creek State Prison

THE ART OF poetry can help us articulate our pain and anger — as well as love and compassion — in constructive ways, helping us to find purpose and meaning in life. Creative writing is cathartic, a safe way to express anything we may have bottled up inside.

A small group of writers gathers each Tuesday in the Facility E hobby room with Lara Gularte, creative writing instructor and poet laureate emeritus of El Dorado County, to engage our creativity through prose and poetry. June was a month filled with traditional Japanese forms of poetry including haiku, senryu, and haibun. This month we will define the haibun.

A haibun is a traditional form of Japanese poetry that combines prose and haiku. The prose section provides a descriptive narrative or a personal essay-like passage, while the haiku serves as a brief, poetic moment or reflection that complements the prose. The prose typically describes a scene, a journey, an experience, or a memory in a concise and vivid manner, often incorporating sensory details and emotional insights. The haiku serves as a concise poetic snapshot, capturing a fleeting moment, or distilling the essence of the prose passage. It can echo an image, expand on a theme, or provide a different perspective. For more on the haiku, see full article in the November edition.

Writing haibun can be challenging and rewarding. The balance between prose and haiku, the careful selection of details, and the mastery of brevity all require skill and practice. However, the challenge also presents an opportunity for creative expression and self-discovery.

Here are a few examples from Gularte's Poetry class:

Wilson

As a young boy, I wonder what would I become. What are the things that I want to accomplish and be successful with. Should I follow my parents career? Or make my own path.

Another morning
It was nothing just a dream
I'm just a number



(www.invaluable.com)

Patrick G.

From the closest star looking back, Earth is not visible even with the mightiest of telescopes. Not even a speck to be seen — just nothingness floating in the eternity of space and time, our home is a gem of blue waters, green plants and full of life and we cherish this moment we call my-life.

In the struggle of life
It is good that men cross paths
On our journey towards our deaths.

Steve Waters

He needs to let go. It had been a month since his mother had passed away, but pain was still palpable. She was his best friend. He wasn't afraid to tell anyone who asked that he was a momma's boy. A proud one at that, but he was also an addict. Demon alcohol was haunting him and he was sinking fast. They had had an argument that morning before he left for work. It was silly, a simple misunderstanding. But insisting on standing his ground, he left without resolving it. She died an hour later. Now, he was floating in a sea of alcohol and regret.

When life's currents pull you
Too far out into the oceans
Release your burden.

If you are interested in joining the writers on Tuesdays — under the guidance of Lara Gularte — then send an Inmate Activity Group Request (Form 2016) to the CRM for Creative Writing or Poetry. The only requirements are being open to trying new things, and participation by sharing your work. Bring pen, paper, and imagination. You might surprise yourself.



Mule Creek art instructor Cherie Hacker with her work, *Flowers* (acrylic on board). (Photo by H. Kim / Media Specialist.)



Photo courtesy of Lara Gularte

The Creative Arts Program

The Creative Arts Program provides instructional workshops in drawing, painting, guitar, and writing by local artists.

In Facility E Hobby Room:

Creative Writing
Poetry
Painting
Painting
Guitar
Drawing

Tuesdays 12-1:30pm
Tuesdays 2-3:30pm
Tuesdays 2-3:30pm
Tuesdays 6-7:30pm
Wednesdays 9-10:30am
Wednesdays 9-10:30am

Fill out an Inmate Activity Group Request (CDCR 2016) if you'd like to be on the waiting list for these groups.

The Funny Side

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

A NEW KID arrived on the yard and celled up with an old guy. The kid stared at the old-timer who said, "Look at me; I'm old and worn out. You'd never believe that I used to live the life of Donald Trump. I wintered on the Riviera and in Florida, had a yacht, four great cars. The most beautiful women dated me, and I ate at the finest restaurants all over the world."

"What happened?" asked the kid.

"Well, one day Donald Trump discovered his credit cards were missing."

✦ A prisoner working in the hospital tried to ask a passing doctor a question. The doc looked back over his shoulder and continued walking. "I can't talk right now," said the doctor. "I have an autopsy scheduled"

The prisoner called out, "Oh, yeah, I had one of those once. Hurt like hell!"

Dispatcher: "9-1-1, what is your emergency?"

Caller: "I heard gunshots coming from the brown house on the corner."

Dispatcher: Do you have an address?"

Caller: "No, I have on khakis and a Pendleton shirt."



PATRICK MERRILL

HCRV Re-Entry
Specialist

Reno VAMC
975 Kirman Ave. (CH 116)
Reno, NV 89502
(775) 842-1397



Holiday Greetings from the Yard

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

Pumpkin Pie at canteen!
—Joshua Huffman



Holidays mean family & friends, I am grateful for all the people in my life.
—J. Cooper-Harris



I am grateful to have my wife Alison and stepson AJ by my side. Grateful to have good friends teach me how to train service dogs and help me prepare for board.

This time of the year means another year closer to home and to have a little extra compassion and understanding for others. This time of year is not always easy; a little patience goes a long way.
—Jason Beck



This time of year means time for family and friends to come together, laugh, cook food, and have fun together. Make new memories that last forever. Family and good food!
—Dewaun King



I am grateful for every day waking up and having God in my life. I look forward to spending time with family and friends; it's an opportunity to feed others at the homeless shelters with my grandkids, giving them an opportunity to help serve those less fortunate.
—Lieutenant S. Lee



I am grateful for all the wonderful memories of family and being together.
—Joseph Courtney



Although there are five senses of humankind: smelling, touching, tasting, hearing, and seeing, there are also five human needs of equal importance: love, new experiences, companionship, security, and good health.

The Lord provides in his own way the aforementioned. The question remains, what is the ultimate importance of all human beings that makes it all possible? Something that everyone just takes for granted? Something that is more valuable than all the gold in the world, or all the senses and needs of mankind? Something that millions have suffered and still dying for today?

During the Holiday Season especially, I'm overwhelmingly reminded just how important "Freedom" was. It makes all else seem small and insignificant. I would give anything to be able to just walk a mile in "Freedom" again!

Appreciate your "Freedom" during these Holidays in all of your choices and decisions throughout the coming year...

Merry Christmas and please have a Happy, Joyful, and Wonderful New Year to come!

—Larry Salkeld



I think there are two sides to the holidays, they can be hard on you with family get-togethers. In a good sense, holidays are a time to try to put the past behind you and being able to let go.
—C/O C. Green



Family, health, and an awesome job. Life can be so darn busy, that families don't get together. It had been 15 years before I took X-mas off. So I look forward to family get togethers!
—C/O Duchow



Craftsmen of Crochet

By Jason Davis, Lead Reporter

PERHAPS NOT YOUR everyday pastime found in a men's prison, these needle-wielding men carry on in the centuries-old traditions of crafting in a variety of needlework, including crochet, knitting, and embroidery.

The craft of crochet has surged in popularity in the 21st century as a leisure activity, art form, and gifts for loved ones. For many, crochet is personally and socially meaningful, sustaining and transformative of personal wellbeing.

Kevin Castaneda describes various techniques and artistic skill involved in knitting, which has led to "some of my greatest achievements, proudest accomplishments, and yes, at times, disappointments." However, through disappointment and failure, he feels this is what pushed him to become a better knitter. When he first started knitting, he was looking for something that was unique, that would push his creativity, and give him a sense of fulfillment. "Knitting does all of that for me," said Castaneda. "It's also very therapeutic, and teaches me to have patience, resilience, and best of all gives me confidence, pride, and happiness."

For Joshua Ruoff, crochet began with the basics. Watching a friend crochet, he thought, "How hard could it be?" His friend taught him chain stitch, single, and double crochet. He made two hats. "They were both terrible," he admitted. Now, 12 years later, he has become the instructor, teaching others who want to learn.

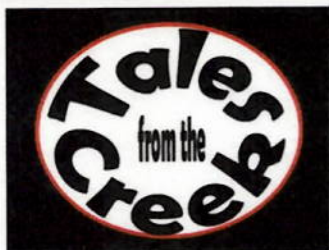
Recently Ruoff's dad asked if he could make a hat for a friend who is going through chemo. "Those are the times I really feel connected, when I can send something I made to someone in need," he said. Ruoff added, "It can also be therapeutic, as I zone out counting the stitches."

In 2019, Jose Duarte first encountered crochet while working as a porter in the receiving and release area. Every month, a guy from the yard would mail home scarfs and beanies. Duarte found out they were being sent to support those in need in the community. "I'm always trying to find ways to give back to my community," he said. This inspired him as an artist and creator.

Years later, while in the High Desert State Prison, Duarte joined a program called Place for Grace that sponsored and facilitated family bonding. However, during COVID the program had to go virtual. They sent games and packages to the institution for the fathers to play along with their children over Skype. Within the package were included crochet hooks and yarn. For Duarte, this was an opportunity to learn something new he could share with his family.

Over the past year Duarte sent home many gifts. He recalls his aunt saying, "I just want to touch something that you made." This speaks to the power of longing and connection. "It feels good to be able to send my family something I spent my time on," said Duarte. "I can send them a piece of my love."

Prior to his incarceration, Jarrod Wyatt joined an all-female group called Knit N' Kbits, where he began knitting clothes for his dogs — knitting was familiar as



Elephant by Jose Duarte.
(Photo by J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

his grandmother and great-grandmother knitted clothes for the family. "I really enjoyed learning and creating things for my dogs," said Wyatt. The first item he made was a sweater for his Rottweiler.

Wyatt noted that people often comment on his appearance. At 6 feet 3 inches tall and covered in tattoos, he is not who one would expect to be wielding a crochet hook and ball of yarn. "It's a great feeling every time I complete something that was a challenge," said Wyatt, and he's looking forward to his next project. "A granny square blanket," he announced. "I really want to make one."

As this small group of crafters search for new techniques and challenges, they remind us there are no limits unless we limit ourselves. The possibilities are endless. Castaneda notes that it's never too late to test one's creativity. "Pick up some needles or a hook, and join [us] in creating memories for a lifetime."

Postscriptum

AS WE WRAP up another year here at the *Post*, we want to extend our gratitude to all our readers. It has been your support (and criticism) that continues to lead us to being better and better. We've grown our team; won national recognition; returned to a limited print run; appeared on the Edovo educational app; and acquired new equipment to help us do our jobs more efficiently. It's been a pretty good year.

But in addition to all the things we have gained this year for which to be grateful, it is worth acknowledging that those aren't the things that matter most. I am reminded of the words of Francis of Assisi: "Remember that when you leave this earth, you can take with you nothing that you have received ... but only what you have given: a full heart, enriched by honest service, sacrifice, and courage." These aren't the days to rest on our accomplishments, but to strive all the more for opportunities to serve one another. Readers, reporters, reviewers—we all have been given talents to share. Let's make 2025 a year of service.

Thanks for a great year.
Here's to many more together.

-JC, Editor-in-Chief



Facility E crochet craftsmen. From Left—Kevin Castaneda, Colby, Jose Duarte, Jarrod Wyatt, Joshua Ruoff.
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

THE BACK PAGE | What you need to know about

Sources: *Amgueddfa Cymru*; *Dictionary of Saints* (1980); *Euronews*; *History*; *Living With Christ* (December 2024); *Middle East Eye*; *Sky History*; *World Book Encyclopedia* (2017)

SANTA CLAUS

The Story of the Person

The idea of Santa Claus developed from stories about the real person Saint Nicholas who died around the year 350. According to tradition, he was born in Patara (in what is now Turkey). When Nicholas was 19 years old, he became a priest and eventually was named bishop of Myra (near Patara). He was briefly imprisoned during the Diocletian persecution (303-305) and attended the first ecumenical council at Nicaea to denounce Arianism. He is the patron saint of storm-beset sailors, prisoners, and children; as well as Greece, Apulia, Sicily, Lorraine, and Russia.

The Growth of the Legend

Tradition has it that he once aided a poor nobleman who had three daughters no one would marry because the nobleman had no dowry. Nicholas threw three bags of money through an open window of the nobleman's house, providing a dowry for the women to marry. It is believed that the legend of St. Nicholas as a person who brings presents may have developed from this story and his patronage of children.



The Birth of Santa Claus

The custom of giving gifts on a special day in winter predates Christianity, but once it took hold in Europe St. Nicholas became a symbol of this custom; some scholars believe that the origin of the winter-gift-giving character was none other than the Germanic god Thor. During the Reformation in the 1500s, Protestants substituted nonreligious characters for St. Nicholas. In England, for example, the saint was replaced by a gentleman called *Father Christmas*, named *Père Noël* in France and *Weihnachtsmann* in Germany, and *Babbo Natale* in Italy.



The people of the Netherlands were especially fond of St. Nicholas (*Sint Klaes* or *Sinterklaas*); the first Dutch settlers came to America in a ship with a figure of the saint on the front. These settlers maintained their tradition of celebrating his feast day (December 6), telling their children that he visited their homes on Saint Nicholas Eve. He was said to leave small gifts in their shoes left near the fireplace.

English settlers eventually adopted the festivities, and excited children made *Sinterklaas* sound like *Santy Claus* or *Santa Claus*.

The Evolution of Appearance

Until the 19th century, St. Nicholas was pictured as a tall and stately man wearing a bishop's robe and riding a white horse. It was Washington Irving's *Knickerbocker's History of New York* (1809) that described him as a stout, jolly man with a broad-brimmed hat, huge breeches, and a long pipe, who rode over treetops in a wagon to fill children's stockings with presents. Clement Clarke Moore (or Henry Livingston, depending on whom you ask) wrote the poem "An Account of a Visit from St. Nicholas" in 1823, famous for its opening line: "'Twas the night before Christmas..." In the poem, St. Nicholas was described as wearing a suit trimmed with white fur and riding a sleigh pulled by eight reindeer. Between 1863 and 1886, cartoonist Thomas Nast completed the modern image of St. Nicholas with a series of drawings in *Harper's Weekly* magazine.



Other Santa-Like Characters

In the Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Hungary, and Germany, St. Nicholas Eve (December 5) is the day St. Nicholas brings gifts to children, to be opened on St. Nicholas Day. He is frequently accompanied by *Zwarte Piet* (Black Pete), who carries a birch rod to whip naughty children, but also helps deliver presents. Austria's Krampus, a horned half-goat creature with a lizard tail and black tongue, wanders the streets on Krampusnacht (December 5) to quiz children about their behavior. In Wales, the "benevolent spook" *Siôn Corn* ("Chimney Pot John") delivers presents. Iceland doesn't have a Santa Claus per se, but the 13 Jolasveinar (children of the ogress Grýla and her troll husband Leppalúði) leave gifts in shoes left on windowsills.



In southern Germany, people usually say that the *Christkind* ("Christ child") brings gifts on Christmas Eve; from this name came the character *Kris Kringle*, who gradually became identified with St. Nicholas. But in northern Germany, it is the *Weihnachtsmann* ("Christmas man") who brings the presents. The French *Père Noël* leaves small presents in homes on Christmas Eve, as does the elflike character *Jultomen* in Sweden and *Julenissen* in Denmark and Norway. And in Syria, camels bring gifts to children, supposedly the same camels who carried the three wise men to Bethlehem.



2024 IN PICTURES



The Mule Creek Post contributors and staff. From Left: Standing—Ed Atherly, Albert Bell, John Orr, Jerry King, Earl Breckenridge, Michael Owens, Steven Waters, Daniel Larson, Jesse Carson, Bob Gay, Mark Daigre, Walter Deckert, Rob Sharp, Nemo Burgos, Jason Rosacia, Dale Hurd, Gabriel Espinoza, Brian Arnold, O. Rick Bridges. Kneeling—Nickel and Jacob Robles, Al Rice, Jessie Moore, Ricky Ortega, Ajay Dev, Jason Davis, Sharif Neal, Philong Huynh, Dortell Williams, Fred Munch, Alex Rosales, Marty Williams. Not pictured—D. Razor Babb and Fabian Garcia. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Sebastian, a TLC graduate. (courtesy of Ron Korn)



Wilmer Coto and his Spanish galleon. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Earl Rose and David Grey at the Insight Garden Opening in January. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Mule Creek TUMI graduates. From Left—Michael Franklin, Gary Whiteside, Steven R. Waters, Claude Foulk. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



2024 GDA/TLC dog training graduates. From Left: Standing—Robert Yim, Matthew Warner, Kenneth Carroll, Damin Pashilk, Ronald Prasad, Joshua Thomas. Sitting—Moises Tejeda, Arthur Henderson, Clarence Sargent. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



2024 GRIP alumnus Willie Brambila and family at graduation. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Friend, mentor, and GRIP facilitator Bernard Moss passed in 2024. We miss him. (Photo courtesy of the Moss Family)



Lizzy (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Soldiers of the Cross visited the Mule Creek State Prison in 2024, bringing Harley's, prayer circles, and grilled hot dogs for the population. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



The 2024 Realize graduation. From Left: Standing—Alex Rosales, Luke Scott, Laquann Hamilton, Keith McRorie, Ernesto Tarango, Vernon Barker, Eugene Sinohue, Kenneth "Little Two Bears" Brown. Seated/Kneeling—Alba Contreras, Frank Lanear, and Michael Owens. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Participants in A Journey to Freedom for America's Sex Trafficked Kids walkathon gather in front of the wall at the Mule Creek State Prison. (Photo courtesy of the CRM's office)

1: Mexican Independence;
Emancipation Proclamation
27: International Holocaust
Remembrance Day



January 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	31	1 New Year's Day	2	3	4 World Braille Day
5	6 ☾	7 Law Enforcement Appreciation Day	8	9	10	11 National Human Trafficking Awareness Day
12	13 Korean American Day	14 ○	15	16	17	18
19	20  Martin Luther King Jr. Day	21 ☾	22 Celebration of Life Day	23	24 National Compliment Day	25
26	27	28	29 Lunar New Year	30 CTE Awareness Day	31	

January is: Glaucoma Awareness Month, Birth Defects Prevention Month, Thyroid Awareness Month

February 2025

2: National Wear Red Day



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
2 Groundhog Day	3	4 World Cancer Day	5 ☾	6	7	8
9	10	11	12 ○	13	14 Valentine's Day	15
16	17  Presidents' Day	18	19	20 ☾	21 International Mother Language Day	22
23	24	25	26	27 ●	28 Ramadan Begins	

February is: Black History Month, American Heart Association Month, National Cancer Prevention Month
Feb. 1-7: World Interfaith Harmony Week



March 2025

25: National Medal of Honor Day

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
23	24	25	26	27	28	1 Self-Injury Awareness Day
2	3	4 Mardi Gras	5 Ash Wednesday	6	7	8 International Women's Day
9 Daylight Saving Time Begins	10	11	12	13 Purim Begins At Sundown	14 Holi Pi Day	15
16	17 St. Patrick's Day	18	19 World Social Work Day	20 Spring begins	21 International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Eid al-Fitr	31 Cesar Chávez Day					National Vietnam War Veterans Day

March is: Greek American Heritage Month, National Women's History Month, National Developmental Disabilities Month, Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month, Social Work Awareness Month



April 2025

22: Earth Day

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	31	1	2 World Autism Awareness Day	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12 Passover Begins At Sundown
13 Palm Sunday	14	15 National American Sign Language Day	16	17	18 Good Friday	19
20 Easter Sunday	21	22	23	24 International Guide Dog Day	25	26
27	28	29	30	1	2	3

April is: Arab American Heritage Month, Autism Awareness Month, National Deaf History Month
April 20-26: National Crime Victims' Rights Week April 24-30: World Immunization Week

5: National Day of Awareness for
Missing & Murdered Indigenous
Women



May 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	1  May Day	2	3
4  Star Wars Day	5  Cinco de Mayo	6	7 National Foster Care Day	8	9	10 Día de las Madres
11  Mother's Day	12	13	14	15 Peace Officers Memorial Day	16	17 Armed Forces Day
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26  Memorial Day	27	28	29	30 World Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Day	31

May is: Jewish Heritage Month, Asian & Pacific Islander Heritage Month, Mental Health Month
May 11-17: Women's Health Week May 12-18: Stuttering Awareness Week
May 15-June 15: Tourette Syndrome Awareness Month



June 2025

20: World Refugee Day

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2  National Cancer Survivors Day	3	4	5	6 Eid al-Adha	7 Tourette Syndrome Awareness Day
8 National Best Friends Day Pentecost	9	10	11	12	13	14  Flag Day Army Birthday
15 Father's Day	16	17	18	19  Juneteenth	20	21 Summer begins
22	23	24	25	26	27 National PTSD Awareness Day	28
29	30	1	2	3	4	5

June is: Caribbean American Heritage Month, LGBTQ Pride Month, Men's Health Month

July 2025

18: Nelson Mandela International Day



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
29	30	1	2	3	4  Independence Day	5
6	7 Global Forgiveness Day	8	9	10	11	12 Malala Day
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 International Chess Day	21	22	23	24 Cousins Day	25	26 American Disability Act Day
27 Parents' Day	28	29	30 Father-in-Law Day	31		

July is: French American Heritage Month, Disability Pride Month



21: International Day of Remembrance and Tribute to the Victims of Terrorism

August 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	31	1	2
3	4  Coast Guard Birthday	5	6	7  Purple Heart Day	8	9 International Day of the World's Indigenous People
10	11	12	13 Left Handers Day	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21 National Senior Citizens Day	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						National Grief Awareness Day

September 2024

10: World Suicide Prevention Day



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1 Labor Day	2	3	4	5 International Day of Charity	6
7	8	9	10	11  Patriot Day	12	13
14 Grandparents' Day	15	16	17	18 Air Force Day	19	20 National POW/MIA Recognition Day
21 World Alzheimer's Day	22 Autumn begins	23 Rosh Hashanah Begins At Sundown	24	25	26	27
28 Gold Star Mother's Day	29	30 National Day for Truth and Reconciliation				

September is: National Service Dog Month, World Suicide Prevention Month
Sept. 4-10: Suicide Prevention Week Sept. 15-Oct. 15: Hispanic Heritage Month



October 2025

10: World Day Against the Death Penalty

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28	29	30	1 Yom Kippur Begins At Sundown	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10 World Mental Health Day	11
12	13  Columbus Day Indigenous Peoples Day	14	15	16	17 World Trauma Day	18
19	20	21 Back to the Future Day	22 International Stuttering Awareness Day	23	24 United Nations Day	25
26	27	28	29	30	31  Halloween	

October is: Hindu Heritage Month, Dyslexia Awareness Month, Breast Cancer Awareness Month
Oct. 1-7: Mental Health Awareness Week Oct. 16-20: Invisible Disabilities Week Oct. 26-31: Red Ribbon Week



November 2025

1: Day of the Dead

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
26	27	28	29	30	31	1
						All Saints Day
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Daylight Saving Time ends 🕒		Election Day		National Stress Awareness Day		
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Marine Corps Birthday	Veterans Day		World Kindness Day	World Diabetes Day	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
International Day for Tolerance				Transgender Day of Remembrance		
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
Fibonacci Day		International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women		Thanksgiving	American Indian Heritage Day	
30						

November is: Native American Heritage Month, Diabetes Awareness Month, Transgender Awareness Month, No-Shave November

Remember to sign up for gifts for your children!

ANGEL TREE

December 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
	World AIDS Day	Giving Day	International Day of People with Disabilities		International Volunteer Day	
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day			Human Rights Day		Día de la Virgen de Guadalupe	National Guard Birthday
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
	Hanukkah Begins At Sundown			Space Force Birthday		International Human Solidarity Day
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
Winter begins				Christmas Day	Kwanzaa begins	
28	29	30	31			
			New Year's Eve			

December is: Universal Human Rights Month, National Impaired Driving Prevention Month