

To Our Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

WELCOME TO YOUR June edition of the Mule Creek Post. As we mark World Environment Month and the beauty of our natural world, we also want to acknowledge those who bring hope into prisons. Partnership for Re-Entry Program (PREP) team members travelled from L.A. in March to meet with Mule Creek residents. They shared stories of redemption and transformation from their own lives and inspired those in attendance to share their experiences. A major takeaway from the event was that change is possible and genuine change will be apparent at the board of parole hearings.

Join us in spreading this message of hope and inspiration with your own stories. Submission guidelines are on page 3.

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The Awareness Into Domestic Abuse (AIDA) program's first graduation at Mule Creek State Prison, in November 2023. From Left: Standing—Vanessa, Jesus Morales, Jose Avalos, Sidney DeAvila, Richard Faulks, Anthony Roberts, Steve Burr, Kevin Wyman, Mark Daigre, Chadd Smith, Wayne Dyer, Marco Balarezo, Brian Arriaga-Flores, Leslie. Next Row—Jaime Rivera, R-Ché Archuleta, Anthony Wimberly, Jeff Garrett, John Burch, Michael Dixon, Robert Wesson, Octavio Fragoso, Johnny Peraza. Front Rows—Darryl Crawford, Alfredo Rodriguez, Robert Fairweather, Adam Alfaro, Michael Simmons, Adrian Torres. (Courtesy of AIDA)

Redemptive Rehabilitation

By Earl S. Breckenridge, Feature Reporter

AMERICANS OVERWHELMINGLY FAVOR offender redemption, according to a recent study. Leah C. Butler and co-authors commissioned a 2017-2019 YouGov survey for their report "Redemption at a Correctional Turning Point: Public Support for Rehabilitation Ceremonies," they queried a cross section of Americans and asked to rate how they felt about specific aspects of offender rehabilitation and redemption. "Americans believe that offenders merit access to rehabilitative programs, have the potential to change, and warrant the possibility of gaining genuine acceptance," wrote the authors.

Most people engaged in crime as youths cease doing so as they age. However, a portion continue throughout adulthood. Criminological scholars used to focus on understanding the causes of career criminality; that is, until Shadd Maruna's 2001 book, *Making Good: How Ex-convicts Reform and Rebuild Their Lives*. Maruna observed a key feature for those who stepped away from criminality was their self-stories: What they believed about themselves and their futures determined whether they would make good in life and as citizens. He recognized that released offenders faced daunting challenges. Formally, legally, and systemically socialized into a caste system of degradation and condemnation, offenders bear the additional stigma associated with incarceration. In order for them to be reintegrated into society, they not only needed to rehabilitate themselves, but society needed to accept them as fully forgiven citizens.

While expunging a record seeks to erase an offender's past, the report noted that "Redemption is more public and aims at transforming an offender's status." For Maruna, a rehabilitation ceremony accomplishes this redemption. It includes four elements. First, the ceremony should have a formal ritual component, similar to a graduation ceremony where diplomas are awarded. Second, graduated offenders are given a certificate of rehabilitation. Third, "[R]edemption would not be automatic but merited — earned through actions that show an effort to make good ... and deserving of a place on an honor roll." And fourth, the ceremony would foster a legal re-biographing, where former offenders are enabled to rewrite their life's narratives.

"However, rehabilitation ceremonies are expected to impact desistance not only because they reorient the former

(continued on page 2)



(from *Redemptive Rehabilitation*, pg. 1)



Author Shadd Maruna
([Karantripathi.medium.com](https://karantripathi.medium.com))

offender toward a life free of crime but also because they mark a formal removal of collateral consequences that may impede full reintegration. This includes changing the public’s perception of those who participate in such ceremonies from offenders condemned to a life of crime to citizens whose slate has been wiped clean,” the report noted. To see whether Americans would favor such ceremonies, project participants commissioned YouGov to conduct a survey (see tables on page 4).

Sources: Leah C. Butler, Francis T. Cullen, and Alexander L. Burton, “Redemption at a Correctional Turning Point: Public Support for Rehabilitation Ceremonies”; Angela J. Thielo; Velmer S. Burton Jr.

Thank You Letter from a Parolee

By **Walter J. Lewis**, Outside Contributor

Walter J. Lewis was housed at the Correctional Training Center (CTF) at Soledad when he wrote a piece titled “Insight Letter” and submitted it to the Post. We will publish his work in the August 2024 BPH edition and sent him a letter of thanks for the contribution. This was his response.



THANK YOU FOR your kind letter of November 14, 2023. My parole officer brought it by the other day. The Governor agreed with the BPH Commissioners’ findings and I was released on Friday, January 12, 2024. They made the correct decision and I’m obligated to the other inmates trying to get out and to the BPH and Governor to succeed.

I’m glad my insight letter may help others, via the *Mule Creek Post*. What I finally came to understand, after almost 60 years in the CDCR, when you attend your parole hearing, the Commissioners have no idea what you’ve learned in your groups, or have you addressed their concerns. All of this has to be fished out of you at the hearing. With a lack of sleep, anxiety, and not the best choice of wording, the hearing may not be a correct portrayal of one’s efforts.

The Lifer actually has two hearings! The Commissioners review the record and submissions the day before the hearing. This provides the inmate an opportunity to address BPH concerns via an insight letter before they even see you. You answer the tough questions with well thought out responses. You show the BPH that you’ve done the work, and all the chronos mean you didn’t just fill a seat in your self-help groups.

The organization, Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC), picked me up at CTF and bought me a breakfast. It was a long ride to Sacramento, so they bought me dinner as well. They also took me to buy some really nice clothes.

The transitional housing is great. I’m in a two-bedroom apartment, with full kitchen, and washer and dryer. We get \$40 each week for food, and a food truck comes by every other week with potatoes, bread, tomatoes, pies, etc., all for free, as much as you can carry.

My only wish now is a dog! The thing I’ve loved most in life was a dog named Angel. She’s a service dog now. So maybe in another year, I can spend the rest of my life with a dog.

News Briefs

MONTGOMERY, Ala. (USA Today) — Alabama’s first use of nitrogen gas for an execution could gain traction among other states and change how the death penalty is carried out in the United States, much like lethal injection did more than 40 years ago, according to experts on capital punishment. Attorney General Steve Marshall said the execution of a 58-year-old convicted of a 1988 murder-for-hire went off as planned and his office is ready to help other states if they want to begin nitrogen executions.

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The *Mule Creek Post* thanks its sponsors and contributors who have made this newspaper and its growth possible:





by P. Covello,
Mule Creek State Prison
Warden



MCSP Stands Out on National Stage

THIS YEAR, TWO national journalism organizations joined forces to hold the first Stillwater Awards, recognizing prison journalism across the country. Out of over a hundred submissions, our very own *Mule Creek Post* earned second place in the category of Publication of the Year. This is a big deal for our little newspaper, which the judges described as “punching above its weight.” The *San Quentin News* won first place by just one vote.

This is an example of the kind of work being done here at Mule Creek: promoting positivity, spreading the message of restorative justice and rehabilitation, and showing that individuals are more than the worst thing they’ve done.

Congratulations to the *Post*, for getting Mule Creek recognized on a national stage.

MULE CREEK POST Submissions

Freelance writers, staff, and others may submit articles or material to the *Mule Creek Post*, % MCIC AWs Office, P.O. Box 409090, Ione, 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 Mule Creek Fallen Families Resource Foundation helps correctional officers and their families who are going through difficult times.

For more information, contact one of the following staff members:

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Above the Call of Duty

Part 2

By Don Chaddock, *Inside CDCR* Editor



SINCE ITS INCEPTION, some employees of the state prison system went above and beyond the call of duty to help those in need. In this installment of “Unlocking History,” we continue with the story of Clarence A. Larkin.



Folsom State Prison Warden Clarence Larkin

Larkin started his career as a correctional officer in 1915 at Folsom State Prison and worked there his entire career, other than his enlistment during World War I. Larkin was appointed captain of the yard in July 1924.

On Thanksgiving Day, Nov. 24, 1927, a massive riot took place at the prison. Correctional officers were taken hostage and nearly 1,000 inmates tried to escape. Prisoners had armed themselves with two pistols, an ax, and multiple knives. The National Guard was called in to help. Larkin was hailed as the “hero of the riot” for his actions. “The end of the rebellion came after a night during which state officials had assembled at the prison all resources of the

National Guard, including guardsmen, machine guns and armored tanks. It was the greatest turnout of state troops since the Wheatland hop riots of 1913,” reported the *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel*, Nov. 25, 1927.

In all, 13 lost their lives, including Officer Ray Singleton who tried to block the inmates’ efforts, and an inmate trustee who was hit by a stray bullet fired by the inmates. Seeing they were outgunned, inmates surrendered and turned over their weapons and ammunition. Six were charged with being the ringleaders of the revolt. Five of the ringleaders were sentenced to death while the sixth cooperated with prosecutors and was given life imprisonment. A decade after the large-scale riot, Larkin was named warden.

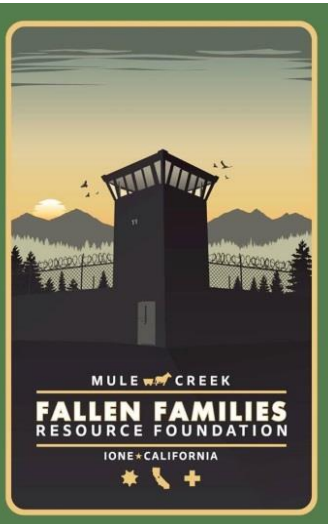
The Sept. 19, 1937, incident was dubbed “Bloody Sunday” by the press. Three were killed, including one correctional officer. The attempted break lasted 10 minutes. The inmates took Larkin outside and demanded he order the officers to stand down and open the gates. Larkin told the inmates their plans wouldn’t work because officers would shoot no matter what. Their plans thwarted, they turned their blades on the warden and the captain.

“Larkin, stabbed 12 times with one of the blades penetrating his liver, and [Captain] Ryan, stabbed three times in the lungs, were taken to Sacramento hospitals,” reported the *Santa Cruz Evening Sentinel*, Sept. 21, 1927. “Larkin, Ryan and Guards Harry E. Martin and James Kearns battled seven convicts in the escape attempt, which began in Ryan’s office in the prison yard. Martin was fatally stabbed in the melee.” Martin, stabbed through the heart, was killed trying to save Larkin and Ryan. “Martin met a hero’s death, slashed a dozen times as he fought his way to the side of his superiors whom the convicts sought to hold hostage,” reported the *Madera Tribune*, Sept. 20, 1937.

Larkin did not survive, the fourth death associated with the attempted prison break. “Warden Larkin, 46, of Folsom Prison, died this morning ... from injuries received from knife stabs in a prison outbreak attempt,” reported the *Healdsburg Tribune*, Sept. 24, 1937. “Infection followed the 12 stab wounds, however, gradually spreading throughout the warden’s chest and abdominal tract.” Thousands turned out for Larkin’s services in Sacramento, according to

the *Madera Tribune*, Sept. 27, 1937. He was laid to rest at East Lawn Cemetery.

Larkin was in many ways a remarkable man. “He was in truth a hero who died because of his own strict sense of duty,” according to an editorial in the *Desert Sun*, Oct. 15, 1937. Five inmates were charged with organizing the break and sentenced to death. Their sentences were carried out in the state’s new gas chamber.



Hope is a Good Thing

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

NAPOLEON HILL'S iconic best seller, *Think and Grow Rich*, opens with a true story: An old prospector spent more than 20 years digging and fighting the hard rocks in a deep dark hole in the state of Nevada. When he'd had enough dashed expectations and disappointments he finally quit. He sold his mine to two young hopefuls who were energized with visions of getting rich. Just two weeks later, the two neophytes discovered the largest silver lode in Nevada's mining history.

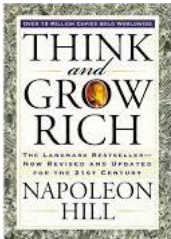
Here's a question Napoleon Hill causes his readers to examine: "How did the old miner feel about giving up just before his destined pay-off of a lifetime?" We never hear that answer.

Even so, as more and more lifers and those serving life without parole are set free, ask yourself the inevitable: "Am I ready to give up?" Why? Has your dream crashed? Perhaps you can relate to a story recently shared in the pill line:

An incarcerated resident was cuffed up after an incident. As he was being led away, someone yelled, "You're a loser! You'll be here till you die!" At that remark, the man in handcuffs launched his body over the tier, head first. But he didn't die. Today, he lives life in a vegetative state. Obviously, he gave up.

People's stories are stranger than fiction; yet, many losers turn out to be winners. Quitters never win, so hold on to hope. Things are changing. Some men and women are being released the first time at the parole board. Some are being resentenced and released by judges, overriding board requirements. Some are finding new laws to put them back into society.

It's time to take a deep breath. Make your next step of faith — whatever that may be. Throw your pickaxe back into that rock of hope and watch for the next golden opportunity. After all, hope is a good thing — and it's free!



Results of YouGov Survey on Redemption (from page 1)

Table 1						
Public Support for Offender Redemption (percentages reported)						
TA = totally agree; SA = strongly agree; A = agree; NAND = neither agree nor disagree; D = disagree; SD = strongly disagree						
Items Being included	TA	SA	A	NAND	D	SD
1. Having committed a crime should be no obstacle to becoming a valued member of society again.	64.9	25.9	39.0	24.7	7.9	2.5
2. People who have committed crimes deserve the opportunity to regain the respect of the community.	78.1	33.0	45.1	17.5	2.5	1.9
3. After time served, an offender should have a clean slate and be able to move on with their life.	51.3	18.5	32.8	30.0	13.5	4.3

Table 2			
Public Belief in Offender Redemption (percentage redeemable)			
If an effort is made to provide specialized rehabilitation services in prison, what percentage of prison inmates do you think can lead a law-abiding life after they are released to their community?	Answer	Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Over 80%	3.6	3.6
	71-80%	5.5	9.1
	61-70%	7.3	16.4
	51-60%	14.9	31.3
	41-50%	15.7	47.0
	31-40%	18.8	65.8
	21-30%	17.5	83.3
	11-20%	16.7	100.0

Table 3		
Public Support for Rehabilitation Ceremonies (replies percent)		
1. Some courts hold "rehabilitation ceremonies" for ex-offenders who have done certain things to prove to the community that they have left behind a life of crime – such as completing rehabilitation programs and community service activities, taking responsibility and apologizing for their past crimes, and/or staying crime-free for a certain period of time (such as five years). At these public rehabilitation ceremonies, ex-offenders are declared "rehabilitated" and free from all legal penalties and other collateral sanctions of their crimes. How much would you agree or disagree that rehabilitation ceremonies for ex-offenders will help them reintegrate back into the community and stay out of crime?	Replies	Percent
	Totally Agree	81.9
	Agree Strongly	17.7
	Agree	24.1
	Agree Somewhat	40.2
	Disagree Somewhat	11.9
	Disagree	3.2
	Disagree Strongly	3.0
2. At some rehabilitation ceremonies, ex-offenders are given "certificates of rehabilitation." These certificates are like letters of recommendation, which state that an ex-offender has been formally "rehabilitated." Ex-offenders can give these certificates to licensing agencies, employers, and state officials to show that they have paid their debt to society for their crimes. How much would you agree or disagree that "certificates of rehabilitation" will help ex-offenders be reintegrated into their communities and stay out of crime?	Replies	Percent
	Totally Agree	79.4
	Agree Strongly	14.8
	Agree	25.9
	Agree Somewhat	38.6
	Disagree Somewhat	14.5
	Disagree	4.1
	Disagree Strongly	2.0

Table 4					
Public Support for Rehabilitation Ceremonies by Conservatives, Republicans, and Whites					
1. How much would you agree or disagree that rehabilitation ceremonies for ex-offenders will help them reintegrate into the community/stay out of crime?	Percent of Conservatives	Percent of Republicans	Percent of Whites	Percent of Conservative, Republican, White	
	Totally Agree	78.4	76.1	79.9	71.6
	Agree Strongly	12.4	13.3	17.4	9.3
	Agree	22.1	24.3	22.0	21.8
	Agree Somewhat	43.9	38.5	40.5	40.5
	Disagree Somewhat	14.7	18.2	12.8	21.2
	Disagree	4.7	3.2	3.5	4.9
Disagree Strongly	2.2	2.5	3.8	2.3	
2. How much would you agree or disagree that "certificates of rehabilitation" will help ex-offenders be reintegrated into their communities and stay out of crime.	Percent of Conservatives	Percent of Republicans	Percent of Whites	Percent of Conservative, Republican, White	
	Totally Agree	76.8	77.0	77.1	73.4
	Agree Strongly	9.6	10.0	13.5	7.8
	Agree	24.0	29.4	27.4	27.0
	Agree Somewhat	42.8	37.6	36.2	38.6
	Disagree Somewhat	16.2	17.0	15.9	19.0
	Disagree	4.3	3.1	4.4	3.5
Disagree Strongly	3.0	3.0	2.6	4.0	

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

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The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

OUR FIRST WORD, *cacophony*, comes to us from the Greek word *κακῶφῶνος* (*kakaphonos*), and was first used in English in 1656. One dictionary defines *cacophony* as meaning:

1. Harsh, discordant sound.
2. Harshness in the sounds of words or phrases.

It can be used to describe crowd noise, discordant and indecipherable to the hearer. Some synonyms for *cacophony* are: *dissonance*, *discordant*, *harsh*, and *strident*.

Our second word, *pullulation*, comes to us from the Latin *pullulare* ("to spread out, sprout"), and is generally understood to mean "a teeming or confusing mass." *Pullulate* is an intransitive verb, and was first used in English in 1619. One dictionary defines it as meaning:

1. To germinate or sprout.
2. To breed or produce freely.
3. To swarm or teem with.

Some synonyms are: *brim*, *teem*, *swarm*, *bulge*, *buzz*, *crawl*, *hum*, *overflow*, and *seethe*. The two profiled words above can be used together to describe a seething crowd that was also noisy and confused.

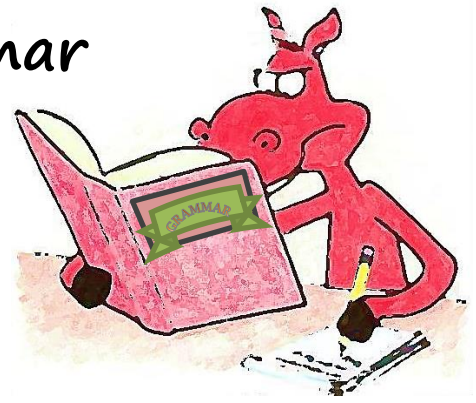
Our third word is *splenetic*, which has origins in the Late Latin *spleneticus* ("full of spleen"). It was first used in English in 1697. *Splenetic* generally means "very angry and annoyed"; one dictionary defines it as meaning:

1. Given to melancholy or sadness.
2. Marked by bad temper, malevolence, or spite.

Some synonyms for *splenetic* are: *bilious*, *dyspeptic*, *ill-tempered*, *surlly*, *bearish*, *cantankerous*, *acid*, *disagreeable*, *ill-natured*, and *angry*.

Sources: *Dictionary of Word Origins*; *Webster's Universal English Dictionary*; *Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*

Big Red's Grammar Guide



GOOD WRITING BEGINS with the basics. Here in my grammar guide are more things a writer should know. This month we'll continue our look at basic sentence structure. Remember, every sentence must have a predicate and a subject, and the words must contain a complete thought.

Last month, we began our discussion of complements, more specifically direct complements. This month we'll talk about another kind of complement, the **object complement**.

Object Complements

Another kind of complement used with a transitive verb is an **object complement** (sometimes called an *objective complement*); it elaborates on or gives a fuller meaning to a direct object. Object complements can be nouns or adjectives. Take a look at this sentence:

Karen asked her friend Paulette for a ride home.

In this sentence the direct object is *Paulette* (Karen asked whom or what? *Paulette*), and the noun *friend* is the object complement (it helps to complete the information about the word *Paulette*). Object complements that act in this way — that is, they elaborate on the direct object — are nouns or pronouns.

Object complements can also be adjectives. Look at this sentence:

On a whim, Matthew painted his fingernails blue.

The direct object is *fingernails* (Matthew painted whom or what? *fingernails*), and the adjective *blue* is the object complement (it elaborates on the word *fingernails*). Object complements that act in this way — that is, they describe the direct object — are adjectives.

Next month, we'll continue our lesson on complements, which are the additional parts of a sentence needed to complete their meanings.

Sources: *Grammar and Composition*, 4th Edition, Prentice Hall, 1990; Susan Thurman, *The Only Grammar Book You'll Ever Need*, Adams Media, 2003; *The Associated Press Stylebook 2017*; *Essentials of English*, 5th Edition, Barron's Educational Series, 2000.

News



Inside

Magazine

The Marshall Project

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New York, NY 10019

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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:

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Attn: Editor-in-Chief



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 Power of Forgiveness

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

IN FEBRUARY 2024, representatives of the Prison Seminars Foundation and officials from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) visited the Mule Creek State Prison in advance of the seminary bachelor's degree program set to start in the fall of 2024. Among these visitors was retired judge Tom Kohl, a senior member of the Oregon circuit court for more than 20 years (see the front page article, "Prison Seminars Foundation Initiates 4-Year College Program at the Mule Creek State Prison," in the March 2024 *Mule Creek Post*).

During the visit, Kohl shared the story of the tragic loss of Megan, his daughter, and his subsequent forgiveness of the man who murdered her. "She had fallen off the path," said Kohl about the beloved daughter who found herself involved in the drug world until a dealer took her life. Kohl shared how God has changed his life since that tragic event, and that only through the power of God was he able to forgive this heinous act. After coming through the tragedy with a changed heart, he went on to create programs for people in the criminal justice system who sought redemption.

Kohl was president of the Oregon Circuit Court Judges' Association. He also was the founder and presiding judge for Washington County Adult Drug Court, an intensive treatment program that addressed the pressing issues of drug addiction, which, with his empathetic nature, allowed him to give multiple chances to people caught up within the criminal justice system.

In 2012, Kohl wrote the book *Losing Megan*, a story about discovering hope, comfort, and forgiveness out of the chaos of drug addiction and tragedy. His book opened the doors for him to begin speaking in prisons in Oregon and around the country, eventually leading to the idea of placing a fully accredited college program in prison.

He retired from the bench Jan. 1, 2016. Then, in 2017, he founded Paid in Full Oregon

(PiFO), a nonprofit organization. Modeled after other highly successful programs, PiFO set out to do what had never been done before in Oregon: Provide incarcerated students with a fully accredited four-year Bachelor of Science degree in liberal arts, with an emphasis in psychology, social services, and leadership, through partnership with Corban University and the department of corrections.

Now this same opportunity is being made available to Mule Creek residents on Facility E through the newly formed nonprofit Paid in Full California (PiFC), in collaboration with SUM Bible College and Theological Seminary of El Dorado Hills and the CDCR. The impetus remains the same — to change the culture of the prison system by transforming adults in custody into spiritual and moral leaders.

The program affords graduates an opportunity to give back to their communities while in prison and after release. In addition, it is hoped that the impact of the graduates on other incarcerated individuals will help change the culture of the prison system from the inside out. The graduates will become moral and spiritual leaders within the prison system. After graduation, they will be sent to other prisons across the state to help with education, mental health, peer mentoring, and many other productive roles.

PiFC's role is to fund all costs necessary to maintain the seminary college program in the department. The nonprofit's mission is only possible through the generosity of its supporters and the community. There are 29 other states, in addition to California, that have similar programs for transformative education with bachelor's degrees.

Besides changing the culture of the prison system from within, 95 percent of the prison population in California will eventually be released back into the community — hopefully, with compassion in their hearts and a seminary college degree.

Chippin' Again

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

The more the marble wastes, the more the statue grows.

—Michelangelo (1475-1564)

MICHELANGELO, THE GREAT Renaissance artist, was once asked how he was able to carve a figure from a block of marble. To paraphrase his answer, all you have to do is take away everything else.

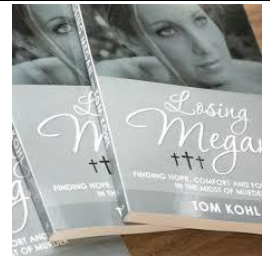
For those who've lived a criminal lifestyle, chippin' is something you're probably familiar with. It's when you take a little piece of what you are supposed to be selling or delivering and keep it for your own use or for resale to someone else. Then the next time (because you didn't get caught), you take a little bit more, and a little bit more, until finally its noticed and you are forced to face the consequences.

Chippin' can also be the erosion of your personal value system or moral basis for behavior. Most of us didn't start out committing the kinds of crime we did that resulted in a prison sentence. Many started with some small thing, like shoplifting, petty theft, vandalism, or even taking small amounts of cash from the register at work. Then, through chippin', we started taking more, committing bigger, bolder, more dangerous crimes until our behavior got to the point where we took something of great value, maybe someone's innocence, their ability to work or trust, maybe even a life. Chippin' is insidious; because we start small it seems easy. Nobody really notices it, and, just like that block of marble Michelangelo carved into a figure, we change. The major difference between criminal activity and Michelangelo's art? With criminal activity, there's no plan when the chippin' starts.

Here's the good news. Chippin' also works the other way. Almost everybody can start making small changes to the way they think, act, and respond. Bit by bit, we can become that beautiful figure Michelangelo saw in his mind when he started to carve a block of marble. With dedication and hard work, we can be a positive force in the world, someone worthy of trust and that all-important chance to do the right thing. For this to happen, we must have a plan. We have to decide who we want to be and take steps to become that person. Who we were and the criminal and harmful acts we committed will never go away. However, the longer we live pro-socially, the more often what comes to mind is no longer based in criminality or selfishness. What lives in the front of our mind is the good we can do and the good we have done. This can make it easier to do the right thing, have the right motivation, and live the best life we can.

Over the last 15 or 20 years, there have been a number of studies on the plasticity of the brain that prove if we continue to learn, we never stop being

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(from *View from a Cushion*, pg. 6)

able to learn. We can learn new ways of engaging, and as long as we are learning new ways to deal, we don't have to unlearn old ways; because we are actively learning and practicing new strategies, the old way we lived gets replaced with pro-social engagement abilities.

If you always take the same path across your lawn from car to front door, you will wear a trail through the grass. If one day you decide to take a different path, the old track will eventually disappear and new grass will grow over it.

Our brains work on the same basic principle: If we make a conscious and consistent effort to think differently, with time and practice we will.

It's not easy. It's not quick. But it is the only thing that works.

End of the Inmate

By Mark Daigre, Feature Reporter

IN 2022, THE California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation began using (for some) less offensive nouns for those under their care and control. In the last few decades, “convict” became “prisoner,” which became “inmate,” and has now changed to “incarcerated person,” “incarcerated individual,” or “resident.”

Inmate has often been used in a derogatory manner with the intent and result of keeping an incarcerated person in their place. *Inmate* can also be used to make a person feel small, insignificant, powerless, and without agency or autonomy.

In the early 2000s, people sentenced to live inside California prisons were given clothing with “CDCR Prisoner” printed in bold yellow or black lettering, depending on the color of the garment. This had the effect of constantly reminding those wearing the garments that they are imprisoned. However, if the goal of incarceration is the expectation that those sentenced to prison will effect some change in how each of us relates both to ourselves and others, walking around with a constant reminder of our current situation is not effective for encouraging change. Within the last few years, that lettering was removed from clothing provided

to the incarcerated population. This then led to a change in how people in prison are spoken to and about. No longer being called “inmate” can have the effect of allowing space for incarcerated people to think differently about their place in the world. For some, no longer being an inmate allows for the reality of change in their lives, of acquiring a GED certificate, finishing high school, going to college, participating in self-help groups, or other efforts to change the direction of their lives.

This change has even spread to the phone system. For decades, when an incarcerated individual made a phone call, the computer-generated voice said that the receiving party had a call from an “inmate.” No longer. Now the prompt is that the recipient has a call from an “incarcerated individual.” For some, this can change how conversations are perceived.



Prison Fines and Fees

By Leah Wang, Prison Policy Initiative

Editor's Note: The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation does not charge fines or fees for disciplinary infractions.

IN YET ANOTHER example of how the legal system extracts wealth from the poorest of prison families, at least one-third of prison systems nationwide charge fines as a punishment for a rule violation. Prison administrations claim that imposing disciplinary fines, along with other punishments, helps to maintain and reduce violence in correctional facilities. They also argue that the fines simulate outside-of-prison processes for dealing with misconduct, such as parking tickets.

Though rule violations and their corresponding sanctions are a common feature of incarceration, disciplinary fines and fees aren't the way to create safe environments where people can prepare for their release. On the contrary, when prisons impose these charges and subsequently help themselves to the funds in people's prison accounts, incarcerated people are often left with little to no money for purchasing essential items and services that the prison does not provide. As a result, their mental and physical health suffers, creating a more volatile environment inside. Loved ones also pay the price of these fines — often literally, as source of financial support.

Like medical co-pays and exceedingly low wages in prison, disciplinary fines and fees are little more than a means to exploit incarcerated people. Whether they're tiered fines or flat administrative fees, they are an undue burden; prison is already one big financial sanction for those who are already on the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. By focusing on punitive measures that deprive people further, prisons miss the mark on what actually makes prison safer — providing opportunity rather than taking it away. We hope advocates and policy-makers will understand how disciplinary fees, which exist alongside other excessive punishments, undermine the rehabilitative goals of corrections, the safety of people inside, and the odds of success during reentry.

To determine how common disciplinary fines are, we combed through the publicly available policies on prison disciplinary procedures in each state and the federal prison system. We also looked at policies related to prison-controlled bank accounts (often called “inmate trust accounts”) and related fees, as well as practices relating to collecting debts. We found that at least 16 prison systems charged incarcerated people disciplinary fines or fees.

- Disciplinary fines and fees are common.
- Most prison systems impose disciplinary fines between \$5 and \$25, but some charge hundreds or thousands.
- Some prison systems present these charges as administrative fees.

By pulling back the curtain on murky aspects of everyday prison life like discipline, we hope prison administrators and policymakers will see that incarcerated people are starved for opportunities to achieve economic, professional, and personal growth, and that disciplinary sanctions undermine these goals.

Leah Wang is a senior policy analyst at the Prison Policy Initiative, PrisonPolicy.org.

No Internet

By Fabian
Garcia,
Spanish
Reporter



WITH THE LASSEN Community College fall semester right around the corner for High Desert's incarcerated students, there is a common question for many: "Will the laptops actually work outside of the education department this time?"

During the spring semester, no one who received a laptop was could use any of its programs in the dayrooms, let alone in their cells. The myriad technological features students anticipated were only available to them in or around education classrooms; tuning into their laptops meant tuning out the class.

Edgar Borrego, a recent laptop recipient, described a cold February day. "I had to stand outside the education building to catch a signal in order to download some research articles and homework assignments," he said. His choices were limited, as connecting in the dayroom or from the comfort of his cell proved fruitless. "I'd get a blank page with a 'no internet' message," said Borrego. "There were also some suggestions for troubleshooting the lack of connection."

Unproductive suggestions aside, the plethora of valuable articles and sources remained out of reach. "I think it's futile to give us these laptops without any access to the programs and resources installed on them," said Rafael Arispe, another college student and former laptop program participant.

The distribution of these electronic devices in prisons is a move in the right direction. Providing access to digital content (when done correctly) benefits the incarcerated learner in their educational endeavors, and ultimate success upon release.

Clearly, inaccessibility to the laptops content was not foreseen by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation when implementing — and expanding — this program. With two unsuccessful semesters behind them, the ever-hopeful consensus among students is that they'll get it right the third time.

An Olson Review: Mining your File for Golden Nuggets of Data

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

A GOOD CRIMINAL investigator follows a trail of clues, snatching the breadcrumbs of evidence dropped along the way, and finally presenting a comprehensive case at the end of the search. However, Sherlock Holmes, the extraordinary fictional detective, chose avenues of inquiry most people overlook, off the beaten path, sometimes long-buried and forgotten.

Take your computerized "C-file" (central file) held on ERMS (Electronic Records Management System): An Olson review of your personal data may reveal documents and files you may not know exist, or expose data you expected to be in there, but are not. Taking the time to conduct a C-file examination prior to your suitability hearing preparation can be a treasure hunt, or a refresher of long-forgotten incidents the parole board may bring up. Go in prepared so you will appear organized when you present yourself.

Jesse Carson, 42, requested an Olson review for his hearing preparation. Support letters presented at his last hearing obviously found their way to the board; they were mentioned in the discussion, but copies were not anywhere in his file. Surprises await you when you investigate relics from your own past.

When formulating your board presentation, you want to provide an autobiography and closing statement that shows positivity from your past. Do not take a chance they found all the good stuff, or all the bad. The pre-sentence investigation and psychological interviews done by the court prior to sentencing were likely thorough. Excavate these documents for potential landmines of negativism or positivity. This includes old police reports of past crimes you may have forgotten about, including juvenile records. For example, there may be an ancient child services report surrounding a police report involving your family members. Perhaps this traumatic event affected your childhood years and explains some of your issues. Read the narrative sections of all police accounts and supplemental reports in order to find something you may never have known occurred, or forgot about, through the years.

Police reports are generally organized chronologically, according to arrival times and assignments to the incident, in this manner:

1. Original report written by the first-arriving/assigned uniformed officer.
2. Other officers responding to the incident write supplemental reports; these are usually next in line in a police report file. Assisting officers usually only write a supplemental report when they see, hear, or do something significant at the scene: hear a door slam, see a piece of evidence in plain sight, or take a statement from a neighbor.
3. Next in line is usually the assigned detective or investigators' reports. These include paramedic/medical/coroner's reports, evidence booking slips, lab analyses, and associated documents such as child services' response or follow-up agencies' involvement and their reports. These items could contain nuggets of beneficial information. Maybe an assisting officer made a comment about responding to your home many times before and no report was taken, thereby establishing a pattern of abuse not documented elsewhere. There may be golden nuggets here.

Go back into document storage in your cell. Dig out the old police reports or documentation that may also contain facts long ago forgotten.

The board's investigation before your hearing will be similar to a bank looking into your past financial history to find a reason to deny you a car loan. If you missed two car payments during the COVID-era, like many other citizens, this would be brought up by the loan officer. You would then provide an explanation that you made three phone calls to the finance company to clarify why you missed both payments, and both were repaid within a month after you received stimulus money. Show you are responsible and took action to keep the bank informed, and followed up by devoting stimulus money to your bills, not a weekend in Las Vegas. Treat the board's expected presentations in the same manner. Show due diligence, resourcefulness, and pre-planning.

If, after you forward your parole packet, you do find something new and worthy to present to the board, make copies and turn it in upon arrival to the hearing. This effort shows you are motivated, continued your due diligence and preparation, and cared enough to ensure the documents are considered. This makes a positive impression on the board. Very few candidates do this.

Take your time evaluating your file. Do not be rushed. Be courteous to your counselor and let her know you may take several hours in the examination of the files. Remember, you are allowed to make copies by filling out a form provided during your inspection. Good luck.



By Richard “Lonewolf” Legan,
Post Columnist

THE ROOTS OF bistort (*Polygonum bistorta*) are used as a tonic and also to treat bleeding gums and mouth ulcers. Some species are useful as a laxative, and are antibacterial and anti-spasmodic. This versatile stem has also been used to tan leather and, in China, to treat dizziness and even to prevent graying hair.

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!

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.



P. bistorta (WildlifeTrusts.org)



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.

Prayer Warriors Alliance
P.O. Box 28352
San Diego, CA 92198-0352
SupportPWA.org



The Climate Challenge:
Small Steps on a Steep Climb

IN MY LAST two columns, I reported on answers to the problems of climate change; how utilities are switching over to wind and solar for generating electricity, and the increased production and sales of electric vehicles, all aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Here I want to describe projects that are up and running on a smaller scale: tangible steps taken at the local level to slow global warming and diminish the increasing risk of weather disasters.

Not only did 2024 begin with the hottest January and February ever recorded, it also marked nine consecutive months of record-breaking high temperatures, making the winter of 2023-24 the hottest in weather history for the Northern Hemisphere. Unusual heat spawned tornados across the Midwest, and thunderstorms with hail the size of softballs. Hot, dry conditions in the Texas Panhandle led to the Smokehouse Creek mega fire. Burning out of control for three weeks, it scorched over one million acres, razed hundreds of structures, killed thousands of cattle, and blackened 85 percent of the state’s grazing land. Every day for the last 12 months, ocean-surface temperatures have also broken records and melted 28 percent of sea ice at the poles.

These alarming statistics portend bleak prospects for the future. Rather than be discouraged and mired in despair, let’s look at two climate-conscious communities, progressive enclaves where they are working to reverse the warming trend by decreasing their dependence on fossil fuels.

Our first stop is rural New Mexico, where the Kit Carson Electricity Co-Op had been dependent on the coal power of Tri-State Utility for 80 years. In a distribution co-op, of which there are 832 nationwide, the customers are the owners and can have a say in policy. As many of the members became concerned about climate change, they elected a new board of directors who would be “good stewards of land and water” and agreeable to investing in renewable energy.

Not everyone was behind the co-op’s move to green power. Some board members and customers were reluctant to divest from coal and felt constrained by the contract with Tri-State, which didn’t expire until 2050 and had a 5-percent cap on alternate power sources. The climate-concerned members formed a non-profit, Renewable Taos, and reached out to every community in the service area. They succeeded in enlisting support for a Clean Energy Resolution that enabled the board to break its contract with the utility and find a supplier that used solar. By 2022, green energy was providing 100 percent of year-round daytime electricity to its 30,000 members. The switch was helped along by the lower cost of solar power, which reached parity with coal in 2015. Emboldened by Kit Carson’s success, other co-ops ended their contracts with Tri-State. New Mexico mandated all co-ops be entirely carbon neutral by 2050.

Even though Kit Carson reached 100-percent green energy for daytime use, it had further to go in meeting total demand. To that end, they are planning to build a green hydrogen plant capable of producing energy by splitting water atoms with an electrolyzer powered by renewables. The plant will be built on a shuttered mine under remediation and will use treated water pumped from the mineshafts. Very few hydrogen plants are in operation and this next phase will be difficult and costly. However, the members’ dedication to sustainability has already accomplished remarkable goals.

Ithaca, in upstate New York, is a liberal college town where there was support for a Green New Deal Resolution passed in 2019. The goal was to attain zero emissions by 2030, 20 years earlier than the national mandate. The first phase is underway, replacing gas furnaces and boilers with heat pumps in 6,000 buildings. This will reduce methane emissions, which is the most potent heat-trapping gas. The project got off to a slow start due to the pandemic and a shortage of installers. Only 10 buildings have been finished at a cost of \$1.9 million. One building can take months to complete. Sometimes a crane must be brought in to remove the massive boilers. The local utility is defraying some of the costs because it will profit from the increased use of electricity to power the new heat pumps. A historic black church, St. James AME, replaced its inefficient boiler system with help from the utility to pay the \$200,000 bill. Homes are not covered by the mandate, yet owners are weatherizing and installing heat pumps on their own. The U.S. government has committed billions of dollars to decarbonize energy systems through tax breaks and subsidies.

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(from *Healing Our Home*, pg. 9)

Ithaca may not reach zero emissions by the target date. Regardless, the community has taken the first ambitious steps, ushering in a new era where no matter the obstacles, planetary health is at the top of everyone’s agenda. They are learning lessons that will inspire and guide others in taking on the climate challenge.

Sources: *High Country News*, “Kicking Fossil Fuels,” January 2024; *NPR News*, March 2024; *CBS Science*, Feb. 8, 2024; *Yahoo Science*, Mar. 15, 2024



Starting a Prison Publication

Part 1

By Prison Journalism Project

SO YOU’VE CAUGHT the journalism bug and you’d like to start an inside newspaper. But how do you begin? First of all, you should know that you are joining a long-standing publishing tradition. People inside prisons and jails have been producing their own newspapers since 1800. Nearly half of U.S. prisons had a publication by 1935. And despite a downturn in the 1980s and ’90s, there are dozens of inside newspapers across the country today.

Prison Journalism Project talked to several current and former prison newspaper staff members and asked for their advice. Here’s a digest of what we learned about prison newspaper style and content, necessary resources and partnerships, timelines, and much more.

News from inside can be packaged in different ways, depending on staff and budget size. Here are the three most common types of prison news publications:

- **Newspapers** tend to be published on newsprint. They use similar formatting and sections as a local newspaper on the outside (e.g., news or other event coverage,

opinions, a staff editorial, features on life inside, profiles of people doing interesting things).

- **Newsletters** are shorter versions of newspapers, generally printed on copy paper. They may focus on a smaller target audience, like members of a program or unit, rather than the whole prison or all prisons in a state.
- **News magazines** offer longer, in-depth and narrative-driven articles. They may include more visuals: illustrations, photographs, and infographics.

When you start a publication, in addition to size and shape you’ll need to make decisions about the frequency of publication. Monthly and quarterly issues tend to be the most popular options. Keep in mind that many prison newspapers start as newsletters and scale up over time. California’s *Mule Creek Post*, for example, started at two-to-four pages in 2018 and is now a newspaper of 30-plus pages. Founding Editor-in-Chief David Babb recommended starting slow. “Important things are to be consistent, never miss a deadline, keep it interesting and don’t forget who you’re writing for,” Babb said.

There are three main categories of articles that appear in any news publication, including in prison:

- **News:** Coverage of graduations, sports events, concerts, fundraisers, celebrity visits inside your facility, briefs on news outside your facility.
- **Features:** People-centered stories that illustrate rehabilitation, positive work experiences, successful programs, or meaningful relations.
- **Editorials/Opinion:** Pieces that give staff and contributors a chance to share perspectives on pressing issues in your community and in the wider world.

A Note on Audience

Your primary audience is an inside audience — people who live, work or volunteer inside your facility, as well as their friends and family. But prison publications can also have a secondary audience, which might include educators, lawyers, policy makers, advocates, or law enforcement in your area or state. Identifying your audiences will help your publication make coverage decisions. Be sure to consider your mission statement, the masthead, and other guiding documents.

- **Mission statement:** A sentence or more that explains an organization’s principles and values.
- **Masthead:** A section, generally in the front of your publication, that lists the names of key members: staff, advisors, prison administrators. It lets readers know who worked on the publication.

Publications often prominently display their mission statement. Sometimes it is placed near the masthead. Stating your values explicitly in a mission statement is helpful because these values can guide your editorial decisions about what kind of content you want to include. Here are three examples of prison newspaper mission statements:

“*San Quentin News* reports on rehabilitative efforts to increase public safety and achieve social justice.”

“*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.”

“With this periodical, *The Nash News* staff seeks to: provide timely and useful information to the inmate population; offer a forum for discussion, dialogue and creativity; encourage, give hope and strengthen the Nash prison community; install an appreciation for the written word and cultivate a culture of reading.”

Gary Farlow of *M.A.C. News* in South Carolina recommended that prison newspaper staff also write bylaws — basic rules that establish the organizational structure and define the duties of each position. “[By] clearly outlining who does what,” he said, “bylaws can reduce conflict and provide a smooth transition when replacing vacant positions.”

To be sustainable, your publication will need buy-in from many different people. That includes the department of corrections, the facility’s administration and residents, your writers, and perhaps even people and institutions outside.

The Prison Administration

The first thing you need is a sponsor who will support your research needs, coordinate with potential volunteers, and facilitate the approval process so your publication can be distributed. The publications we know have worked with many different supervisors over the years — program officers, classification officers, education directors, psychologists, even unit managers. As Ryan Moser, formerly of *The Endeavor* in Florida, said: “You can write all day long and have the most fascinating articles, but if you can’t get them distributed at the prison,

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(from *Starting a Publication*, pg. 10)

nobody's ever going to read it. So, success hinges on having support from the administration."

If you are starting from scratch, you'll likely need to start your outreach with program staff or even the warden's office. Before you make your pitch, do some research. Are there any local and state-level guidelines for running a publication inside? Who do you need permission from — the warden, the department, or perhaps even the governor's office? A good pitch will emphasize the value of the publication, according to Jesse Vasquez, executive director of Pollen Initiative, the nonprofit responsible for charitable fundraising, development, and outside operations for prison media centers in California. In your pitch, you may want to emphasize the publication's value for education, recidivism reduction, community building or information sharing.

You could pitch your publication as a leisure program, but this can make it hard to get access to the necessary space, equipment, and technology. If your facility has an education department, a better option might be to approach staff there. They may be able to help you secure a computer access and paid positions for the first incarcerated staff. The education department may also be a partner for in-house printing. Some facilities supply paper and allow prison publications to use the photocopier. Another option would be to run your publication through the department, which might manage the publication and take over the administrative and distribution costs.

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Be sure to catch Part 2 of "PJP's Quick Guide to Starting a Prison Publication" in the July 2024 edition of the Mule Creek Post.

EASTER TOURNAMENTS WENT well! Facility D versus Facility E competitions took place in June, starting on Facility E with softball and a six-mile run, then at Facility D with volleyball, handball, and ADA cornhole. As we proceed, we plan to do more yard-versus-yard activities. Soccer will probably be next.

The ADA Fitness Program is going well on both Facilities D and E; Facility D is Monday and Wednesday, and Facility E is Tuesday and Thursday. Both facilities recently hosted music shows on the yard.

Statewide we are trying to incorporate some new things to all recreation programs. It's a slow process. Even so, my facilitators on both facilities D and E are doing an outstanding job as we prepare for July 4th tournaments on all facilities.



By A. Scholl
Physical Education Teacher
Recreation Coordinator

The Importance of Hydration

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

DEHYDRATION OCCURS WHEN your body loses more fluid than you take in, affecting the balance of minerals in your body. Fluid is lost through sweat, tears, vomit, urine, and diarrhea. Water accounts for over two-thirds of the healthy adult body.

The severity of dehydration can depend on a number of factors, such as climate, level of physical activity, and diet. Caffeine increases the need to urinate; however, it will not necessarily lead to dehydration. Therefore, caffeinated beverages like coffee and tea can contribute to your total daily water intake.

Anyone can become dehydrated, but certain groups among our population are more at risk. These include:

- older people, as they may be less aware they are becoming dehydrated and need to keep drinking fluids
- people with long-term health conditions such as diabetes or alcoholism
- athletes, who can lose large amounts of body fluids through sweat when exercising for long periods, especially in summer heat
- diabetics, who are at risk of becoming dehydrated because of high levels of glucose in the bloodstream; the kidneys will try to get rid of the glucose by creating more urine, so the body becomes dehydrated from going to the bathroom more frequently

How do you know if you are getting enough fluids? For most people, the first sign that you need a drink is thirst, although this is not a failsafe, as the so-called thirst reflex diminishes as we get older.

Signs of mild to moderate dehydration include dry mouth, tiredness, headache, muscle cramps, dark-colored urine, and feeling lightheaded.

Signs of severe dehydration include extreme thirst, feeling unusually tired (lethargic) or confused, rapid breathing, rapid heartbeat, and dizziness when you stand that does not go away after a few seconds. Severe dehydration can increase the risk of certain medical conditions, such as urinary tract infections, kidney stones, gallstones, and constipation.

The question of whether we are drinking enough for optimal health has been a matter of contention for decades. You may have heard that we should drink eight glasses of water per day, but this figure turns out to have no scientific basis, as it does not take into account the fluids we ingest from our food, which makes up around 20-30 percent of our intake. The amount of water our bodies need daily depends on many factors. Age, activity level, temperature, medication intake, and health conditions all play a role in how much we should drink. However, eight glasses or 64 oz. remains a good guideline for the adult male.

Most of the time, you can prevent dehydration by drinking water regularly throughout the day. Be guided by your thirst, but be aware in hot weather when exercising, and during any illness, that you should drink more. Questions and concerns should be directed to your primary care physician.

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:

Email: submissions@prisonjournalismproject.org
JPay email: prisonjourn@psu.edu
Postal mail: Prison Journalism Project
2093 Philadelphia Pike #1054
Claymont, DE 19703



Follow the Prison Journalism Project (and prisoner-written stories) on social media: **@prisonjourn** on Twitter and Instagram, **@prisonjournalism** on Facebook. They may also sign up on the PJP website for *Inside Story*, a monthly e-newsletter.

The Essence of Compassion

By Gabriel Espinoza,
Mule Creek State Prison

HAVE YOU EVER seen someone done wrong? Of course, you have. When you saw this, did you wish you could help that person? If so, you have experienced a sense of compassion. In an incarcerated environment, compassion may seem a rare thing, but as we grow and become more self-aware, we may realize that compassion can be a daily occurrence.

Going back to our two questions, we may have been the one who was wronged, or we may have been the one wronging another. No matter which role we fill in answer to those questions, please understand that trauma is involved in one way or another. You may have heard the phrase, “Hurt people hurt people,” and that surrounds traumatic events. Where such events occur, healing can take place and that leads to compassion.

Fritzi Horstman has created Trauma Talks, which is a 16-week curriculum under the Compassion Prison Project. The intention of Trauma Talks, says Horstman, is to “educate prison residents and justice-impacted communities about the effects and symptoms of childhood trauma, ways to heal from the past, and ways to see themselves and others in a new light.”

Horstman read the book, *The Body Keeps the Score* by Dr. Bessel van der Kolk, and learned of the adverse childhood experiences (ACE) quiz. Such experiences are characterized as childhood trauma, which van der Kolk discusses and reflects on in a series of 10 questions that individuals answer. Each “yes” answer gives a point to one’s ACE score. The questions address physical, emotional, and psychological abuse one may have experienced as a child. Horstman’s score was an 8. As a result of reading van der Kolk’s book, she decided to take action.

After visiting the Kern Valley State Prison and speaking to numerous incarcerated individuals, Horstman came to the realization that she “was not so much in a prison, but in a trauma center.” This led to her ambition to educate all prisons

in the U.S. in trauma awareness and trauma-informed care. Her objective has been to “turn these trauma centers into healing centers.”

While Horstman has made many stops at several prisons thus far, it is understandably hard to get to all of them in a timely fashion, whether it is to implement “Trauma Talks” curriculum, or to facilitate her one-day symposium titled “Step into the Circle.” In addition, Horstman has a podcast that the incarcerated population can access through the Edovo app, called *Compassion in Action*. She also shares some videos from her stops at a few facilities.

The podcasts consist of interviews with professionals in the field of psychology and trauma, including van der Kolk. The information shared in the podcasts and the prison visits is amazing. Paths to empathy and self-awareness definitely come into fruition, as numerous connections may seem inevitable after listening to Horstman and those she meets. We are never too old to learn, so why not learn more about ourselves?

Project Mend Releases 2024 Journal, Features MCSP Writers

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

Mend is an online and print journal that celebrates the lives and creative work of incarcerated and formerly incarcerated people as well as individuals who have been impacted by the criminal justice system. This annual issue showcases writing of all types, including fiction, poetry, and nonfiction. While prospective authors may submit pieces that describe their experiences with incarceration, the publication welcomes contributions on any topic. The 2024 Mend Awards for Excellent Writing recognizes Lisa Lesysen’s “Nothing to See Here” and Leo Cardez’s “The Colonel.” Visit surface.syr.edu/mend to view these stories and our multimedia content.

—Mend Editors

THE 2024 EDITION of the annual journal *Mend*, from Syracuse University’s Project Mend, has just come out. Three of our institution’s most prolific writers are contained within its pages. Of the 17 writers chosen from submissions received, that these three writers from one facility in California says something about their talent and tenacity. That they also are long-time members of creative writing and poetry instructor Lara Gulate’s writing groups may also reflect on the inspiration and tutelage of their mentor.

The printed version is a 75-page, high-quality, magazine-style glossy journal containing great writing and unique works of art.

First up is Albert Bell’s “Cooking with Butter” (pg. 24), a nonfiction essay about his daddy’s girl, Joy. This story appeared in the March 2024 edition of the *Post*. Next comes Nathan Blalock’s “Dealer” (pg. 48), a sci-fi short story about artificial intelligence gone rogue. This story appeared in the April 2024 edition of the *Post*. Finally, Brian Warner’s poem, “Skill Sets” (pg. 66), is so darn funny because it’s true, and is printed below for your enjoyment.

Skill Sets

Moms teach kids skills they'll need to live life.	Be kind. Tell the truth. Wash your hands. Brush your teeth. Work hard. Pray.	Moms who know their kids will do prison time add: “Don't wear slippers in the dayroom.”
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—Brian Warner

For more information on Project Mend, and its annual contest, write to:

MEND
%Patrick Berry
Syracuse University
239 H.B. Crouse Hall
Syracuse, NY 13244-1160

PEN America Prison Writing Program



588 Broadway, Suite 303
New York, NY 10012



Attorney **Maya Emig** focuses her area of practice on parole and post-conviction law. She is a former attorney with the California Parole Advocacy Program, where she represented thousands of parolees in parole revocation matters. She also has extensive experience representing prisoners at parole consideration hearings. Ms. Emig has appeared on *The Today Show* and *Dateline* to discuss lifer suitability matters. Ms. Emig is a graduate of UC San Diego and the McGeorge School of Law.

Maya Emig writes a monthly column for the *Mule Creek Post* focusing on Board of Parole Hearings issues. For more information about the BPH, write:

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For more information regarding the Board of Parole Hearings, write to:

**BOARD OF PAROLE
HEARINGS**
P.O. Box 4036
Sacramento, CA 95812-4036
www.cdcr.ca.gov/
(916) 445-4072

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Much of spiritual life
is self-acceptance,
maybe all of it.


— Jack Kornfield

Current Character Defects

By Maya Emig, Post Columnist

A QUESTION THAT comes up often is “What are your character defects now?” I am seeing a shift with some of the commissioners away from using the phrase “character defects” to using “maladaptive coping mechanisms” instead, because of the judgment that comes from using the original phrase “character defects.”

You will want to figure out those parts of your character that made you dangerous and contributed to your crime and your history of committing crimes — whether you were caught or not.

For now, I would like to focus this column on the question: “What are your character defects now?” Often, the answer to this question goes one of two ways — either the incarcerated person states they got rid of all of their character defects and have none now, or they are able to articulate the ones they currently have.

First and foremost, we all have character defects, and for some of us — a lot of character defects. I often start a client meeting with a list of common character defects that everyday people have. Before I list some of them, I would like you to think about some of yours that you have today. List seven before I go into my list of those I hear commonly or that I have personally experienced. It’s often easy to see defects in other people and more difficult to see them in yourself. If that’s the case, ask someone you trust to be honest and share the character defects they see in you. For example, these character defects can be difficult if you are in a relationship: dishonesty, judgmental attitude, closed-mindedness, lack of boundaries, passivity, does not speak up for themselves. Here are some other common character defects: procrastination, selfishness, lack of accountability, inflexibility, impulsiveness, anger management issues, perfectionism, addictive behavior, and lack of empathy.

So now that I have you thinking about them, start to think about those qualities in yourself that make things a bit of a struggle — either with others or within yourself. For those of you who are perfectionists, for example, from the outside it may be a good characteristic; but if you know someone like I do who has this flaw, it really can be an excruciating process for the perfectionist. When things are never good enough, the work is never complete because you are never satisfied with the work product; you think that if you do it again, it will turn out better and sometimes it does and sometimes it does not. Think about the time it takes to rise to the unattainable level of perfection. It can be maddening for the person who suffers from this.

Make a list of the character defects you have now and be prepared to discuss them at your next hearing, and the inherent challenges that come with each of them. There are ways to take each of your known current character defects and work on them.

For the perfectionist, here are some books to help find peace and acceptance: *The Gifts of Imperfection* (2022), by Brené Brown; *How to Be an Imperfectionist* (Selective Entertainment, 2015), by Stephen Guise; *When Perfect Isn’t Good Enough* (New Harbinger Publications, 2009), by Martin M. Anthony and Richard P. Swinson; *The Pursuit of Perfect* (McGraw Hill, 2009), by Tal-Ben Shahar; and *CBT Workbook for Perfectionism* (New Harbinger Publications, 2019), by Sharon Martin.

In order for you to understand your criminality and answer questions by the board, you truly must understand yourself. That journey begins with *wanting* to understand you. Spend time going back through your life and figuring out how you became that person to do that crime. You need to go through the process, because as you learn more about yourself, you will have a new outlook on yourself and a deeper understanding of yourself.

I urge you to do the hard work. It is in the hard work where growth happens in uncomfortable places. When you have a better understanding of your causative factors and see them as the beginning development of the character defects that made you dangerous and brought you to prison, then you can work on the trauma and the emotions around it. Seeing things from a new perspective as an adult can be eye opening, and it can help you heal your trauma and have a better understanding of the trauma you caused.

I want to leave you with hope, because as you chip away at understanding yourself, you will often find a deeper level of understanding and compassion for victims, as well as yourself and your trauma. This is not about blaming anyone; it is about understanding yourself.

Foundation Provides Scholarships

By Foundation for California Community Colleges

SCHOLARSHIPS ARE NOW available for children of incarcerated Californians attending any California community college. The Educating for Change Scholarship is designed to support students attending California community colleges who have a parent in a prison operated by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Funding Amounts & Uses

Students may receive \$1,000 per academic term, beginning spring of 2025. Scholarships can be used to pay for tuition, fees, books, computer equipment, internet access, education tools, uniforms, and other expenses. Scholarships can also be used to pay for food, health care, household items, clothing, childcare, housing, and transportation, but may be considered taxable income under IRS regulations.

Apply Today

For questions regarding the application process, contact FoundationCCC at this web address: advancement@foundationccc.org. The deadline for academic year 2024–25 is October 2024.



Living a Noetic Life

Transformative Healing

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

WORLDVIEWS ARE FUNDAMENTAL, informing every aspect of our lives without us ever being aware. Transformation is finding ways to create inner resilience in the face of external challenges and complexities that involve formal practices and living life as practice.

Session three of Marilyn Schlitz's *Noetic Living* on Edovo is about transformative healing. Healing is different than curing. *Curing* is fixing a condition or treating a disease. *Healing* is about transformation, growth, and the restoration of wholeness even in the face of disease. Schlitz's book, *Consciousness and Healing: Integral Approaches to Mind-Body Medicine* (2005), tells us that health is not seen as the absence of disease, but as a process by which individuals maintain the ability to develop meaning systems that allow them to function, heal, and grow in the face of changes of self, others, and their world.

Using intuitive mind we begin to understand our needs. In practice, find a place to relax, take three deep breaths, feel yourself relax and direct awareness to your inner experience. Begin to see self-radiating health and happiness. See health radiating to self and others around you. Feel radiating health, wholeness, purpose, and meaning. Inhale all the goodness — exhale any cause of discomfort.

There have been enormous successes in the last century in diagnosing and eradicating disease and advancing technology to improve healthcare interventions. However, there is a depersonalization in healthcare, technology, and time as these processes are managed in ways that make people feel dehumanized. There is a need to re-humanize healthcare, to bring caring back, bring healing into the fullness of lived experience, accepting the possibility of human transcendence in the face of suffering and even death.

Personal relationships, emotions, meaning, beliefs, and worldviews are fundamental points of connection between body, mind, spirit, and nature. Disease is a part of the natural cycle of life. Each of us may use a noetic knowing in our personal health care. Life must be understood as individual wholeness based on the premise of unity of diversity. The dynamic of integral diversity — scientific methods of the West combined with the self-analytical non-dual practices of the East.

In *Mind, Body, and Health: Toward an Integral Medicine* (1984), James Gordon, Dennis Jaffe, and David Bressler call on people to acknowledge the possibility of a universal life force that is the foundation of human development and healing. The key to integral healing isn't the medical bag of pills and practices, but the holder of the bag — patients and practitioners alike — open to an entire spectrum of consciousness. In a guided practice, find a quiet place and relax; scan your body and discover areas of discomfort. As body and mind come into rhythm with breathing and heartbeat, ask yourself: "Are there people and things in your life that make you feel out of balance?" Feel yourself as an integral whole, move your awareness beyond self. Breathe in this awareness. As experiences arise simply watch and let them go. Healing is a multi-dimensional set of connections — biological, innate consciousness of propriety, and careful intervals of body, mind, and spirit. The body has a natural knowing, such as in healing a cut.

Stress affects healing. Using the mind to lower stress allows the body to heal more effectively. Mind-body approaches to understanding how the mind influences healing and immune response is at the core of transformative healing. Meditation, fostering healthy relationships, intimacy, caring, visualizing an intent of loving kindness, all enhance the body's healing abilities.

Schlitz emphasizes four intentions: "May I feel safe, may I feel happy, may I feel strong, and may I live with ease." Meditate on that, and feel it in the body. Send that message to others — to those we care about, to those we don't have relationships, and to those we have issues with. An inner knowing of the divine and the transpersonal, something bigger than self, brings awareness to this larger perspective and increases healthfulness. Prayer, meditation, good intentions transcends mere physicality and affects health outcomes.

There is something powerful in the intentions we hold. It improves the individual, and community. There is a knowing inside that heals, connecting to the world in a transformative manner (experience). Place intention on expanding thoughts beyond body and on the interconnectedness of the entire universe. As Gandhi said, "Wouldn't it be wonderful if goodness was as contagious as the common cold?"

For more about this topic search "Noetic Living" on the Edovo educational app. Marilyn Schlitz also lists two books that changed her life: Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, and *Psychic Exploration* by Edgar Mitchell.

Celebrating Father's Day

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

THE THIRD SUNDAY in June can be a joyous time for fathers, sons, and daughters, for this is the day we celebrate fatherhood.

In 1909, Sonora Smart Dodd asked for the support of her community in Spokane, Washington, for a day to recognize fatherhood. On June 19, 1910, the state became the first to celebrate fathers with an official day.

In 1916, President Woodrow Wilson sent a telegraph signal from Washington, D.C. to unfurl a flag in Washington state to celebrate Father's Day.

In 1924, President Calvin Coolidge insisted all 50 states observe Father's Day. And, in 1972, President Richard M. Nixon signed the bill to declare it a federal holiday.

Remembering D-Day

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

ON JUNE 6, 1944, some 130,000 troops crossed the English Channel to Normandy in thousands of ships. At the same time, some 23,000 airborne assault troops parachuted and flew gliders behind enemy lines to disrupt Nazi communications, and take strategic bridges and rail lines. It was the largest invasion by sea in history.

The invasion began at 6:30 a.m. along 60 miles of Normandy coast. It was a total surprise to the Germans, but not an easy fight. However, by the end of June 6, all landing sites were secured, and Adolph Hitler's Fortress Europe was no longer as impregnable as he believed.

The Battle of Normandy cost the lives of more than 50,000 Allied aviators and troops by mid-August, but it was the beginning of the end for Hitler's Nazi regime.

Without the bravery of the men and women who participated in Operation Overlord, our world would be a different place today. And this is why we honor them each June 6.

Source: *World Book Encyclopedia*, 2017

Father's Special Days

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter/Son

IN JUNE 1976, just before Father's Day, my new wife, whom my father loved like a daughter, planned a four-day trip to include my 58-year-old dad. She did not ask either of us; she knew there was no question we would jump at the chance to go camping in the desert despite the high temperatures of the Kelso Valley in Kern County.

The previous September, I went on a deer-hunting trip in the same area with a fellow firefighter. After spending a day hiking the ridgelines, we found few deer tracks; however, a concealed water source showed signs of frequent use and hoof marks led down the steep mountain slope, below the tree line. We followed the tracks and found the herd of about 15 black-tailed deer bedded down in the concealing brush. It would be a difficult stalk, but two three-point racks peeked above the sagebrush. Cool.

My buddy suggested that he drive six miles down the mountain and onto the desert floor, and, when I saw him get into position on the lower slope, I would walk towards the bedded herd and he would intercept them. My stalk would cover a steep 2,000-foot slope, so I found a strategically located rock outcropping and settled in the shade of a small piñon tree. I watched through my binoculars and, when he was in position, I cautiously dropped down into the sagebrush, low-crawled for about 50 yards, and then sneaked a peek over the top of a bush. I saw only clouds of dust blowing downslope, chasing the departing deer herd. The wind revealed my presence, which explained why the ruminants chose that area to hide.

The hike downhill was a challenge, even at age 27, through boulder-strewn deep sand where dislodged fist-sized rocks chased me all the way to the bottom. Thoroughly exhausted and covered with fine dust, I met my partner at the truck where he laughed uncontrollably at my disastrous stalk. He told me the herd did a fishhook maneuver, out of my sight; then, they ran back uphill, never coming near his position either.

My wife's Kelso Valley trip proposal was met with enthusiasm by me and Dad. The trek was intended to be relaxing and in the shade of our favorite huge pine tree campsite.

As we drove into the 8-mile-long Kelso Valley, my father looked up at the ridge I hunted the previous September. He asked us to drop him off on Paiute Mountain and he would hike down the same route I did months ago. At 58, he had a few ailments, with pain in some joints, but reasonable stamina. Still, my wife and I queried him closely about the difficulty of the trek.

"I got my walking stick, pistol, canteen, and some snacks. Just drop me off up on the ridge," he said boldly. "I'd like to take a few pictures from up there. If I don't make it — just leave me there," he added smiling.

We reluctantly agreed and dropped Dad off at my September departure point. Returning to the valley floor, we parked and spent some quality time in the camper, knowing we would have at least 30 minutes before we could see my father via binoculars. In 40 minutes he appeared as a speck, and we shared the optics while viewing his measured descent. He stopped at the same piñon tree I used before, where he sipped water, ate a snack, then continued his cautious downward passage, stumbling several times. We gasped unnecessarily. In two hours he made it to the flatland. Dust covered and smiling broadly, he was breathless, but content. The next two days were spent lounging in the shade of his favorite pine tree.

The last time I saw Dad was in 1999 when he drove 150 miles, at age 85, to visit me at a federal facility in Lompoc, California. In December 2010, I received word from my brother that Dad died in his sleep, just shy of his 94th birthday. With me incarcerated, my two brothers photographed their one-day trip to Kelso Valley to scatter Dad's ashes, as requested, around the old campsite I will never see again. But Dad lives on in my mind every day, and especially on Father's Day.



Kelso Valley in Kern County, California (Courtesy of Mike Orr)

Prison Hacks

Sewing and Footwear Repair

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

hack [hæk] *verb*: a way to make tasks easier; a shortcut

IF YOU DISCOVER a rip or tear in your sneakers or boots, it is best to sew up the breach before it spreads. The most difficult task in repairing footwear is pushing a threaded needle through thick leather and rubber. A thin needle is not suitable for shoe repair — it will probably break and likely cause injury. With a stout needle, thread it and begin the repair.



Start by piercing the shoe leather or rubber sole. A thimble of some kind will be needed to push the needle through. Only a thin edge of the rubber can be pierced successfully; usually as an anchor point. Use your thimble if you have one, or substitute something handy like cardboard or a similar material that creates a thick surface about 1 inch square.

Slowly push the needle through. Once it emerges about 1 inch or more, the rubber will have a firm grasp on it and make it difficult to pull the needle through. The same happens with thick leather parts of your shoes. Try this: Wrap a rubber band around the exposed portion of the needle where it emerges; the improved grip will allow you to pull the needle through to continue. A latex glove works as well.

Often, you may encounter glue in seams or other parts of shoes or clothing. As a result, your needle may have glue clinging to the shaft. Use Vaseline to clean it off.

News Briefs

LOS ANGELES (USA Today) — Black people accounted for nearly 13 percent of traffic stops in California in 2022, far above their 5-percent share of the state’s population, according to a report released under a law designed to address racial profiling of motorists and pedestrians by police.

The annual report, compiled by California’s Racial and Identity Profiling Advisory Board, for the first time included data from all law enforcement agencies in the state.

Restitution Responsibility

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter



TWENTY-FOUR YEARS inside and Mule Creek resident Sean Leslie has had no major write-ups. He’s worked in California Prison Industry Authority (CalPIA) the past several years and has a stellar work record. He has completed many of the groups and rehabilitative programs available, obtained a college degree in sociology, and is by any standard a program success.

Following a lengthy Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) appearance in December 2023, Leslie was found suitable. However, when he received the written findings from the hearing a few days later, he was shocked to read: “Commissioner requested an investigation into circumventing restitution.”

Leslie recalls the very last question posed at the hearing. “They told me that they have a new directive regarding circumventing restitution and asked if I’ve ever done that or let someone put money on my books,” states Leslie. “I answered honestly that I have allowed cellies to put money on my books. They asked what I got out of it and I told them I didn’t get anything, I just did it as a favor.

“A BPH investigator came and interviewed me two weeks later,” says Leslie. “They requested a five-year log of my trust account and Jpay activity, which lists everyone who ever put money on my books. After the investigation, I got a notice advising that my case was referred to en banc. They vacated my suitability and put me on the calendar for another hearing in July.”

Recently, the BPH has focused on the act of putting money on another person’s account, someone who doesn’t owe restitution, in order to avoid paying restitution. In fact, evading restitution is a violation of Penal Code §155.5(b), and circumventing restitution is a violation of California Code of Regulations Title 15 §3097.

Leslie’s appointed parole board attorney, Maya Emig, recently wrote on this topic in her column for the *Post* (February 2024):

A sentencing court orders restitution fines to cover costs related to a person’s crimes. Incarcerated people have found ways around those deductions. It is a hot topic at the parole board. Integrity is about doing the right thing when no one is looking. The definition of criminal thinking is knowing the difference between right and wrong and choosing wrong. The Board of Parole Hearings can, and already has, ordered investigations into restitution circumvention. Anticipate this line of questioning and prepare for it.

“I did artwork about a year ago, sold it to another inmate and his wife put money on my books,” Leslie also admits. “That’s illegal. I haven’t put money on another’s books since 2016. We’re not supposed to even share lunches according to the Title 15. I don’t blame anyone else; I’m just mad at myself. It was my choice.”

“My attorney told me that the board doesn’t ask questions they don’t already know the answer to,” he adds. “I’ve got another hearing in July. I know being aware of the rules and law is my responsibility; I fully own that.”

Quality Products • Changed Lives
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News Briefs

PHILADELPHIA, Pa. (USA Today) — Of nearly 3,500 people exonerated of serious crimes in the U.S. since 1989, more than half had their cases marred by alleged misconduct by police or prosecutors, according to a national database. But experts say it’s rare for anyone to be held accountable for the harm — for the coerced confessions, hidden evidence, false testimony, and other dubious work that contributes to flawed convictions. The pending perjury trial of three retired Philadelphia police detectives could prove an exception, if they themselves are not cleared by alleged mistakes by District Attorney Larry Krasner’s office.

LEXINGTON, Ky. (USA Today) — Kentucky’s juvenile justice system has lingering problems with the use of force and isolation techniques and has done little to implement a 2017 state audit’s suggestions for improvement, according to a report. The new report from Kentucky Auditor Allison Bail says the state’s juvenile detention centers lack clear policies concerning the use of isolation cells, Tasers, and pepper spray, and have significant staffing problems. It also found that Department of Juvenile Justice staffers were using pepper spray at a rate nearly 74 times higher than it is used in adult federal prisons.

Biomes of the Planet Earth



tundra (TreeHugger.com)



evergreens (nathab.com)



temperate forest (StateOfTheBirds.org)



redwoods (VisitCalifornia.com)



everglades (Britannica.com)



deciduous forest (OneEarth.org)



chaparral (Peakery.com)

Closet? What Closet?

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

RECENTLY, I READ about a young man who came out of the closet to his family and the world. I found myself stunned; I never had a closet.

From age 10 to 17, I was sexually abused by a man who owned a business in our neighborhood. As a result, for much of my life I felt that I never had a closet to come out of. My sexual identity wasn't chosen by me; instead, it was forced upon me and, until I was in my 50s, I just went along to get along. I felt that I didn't have a physical ideal because I wasn't allowed to develop a preference. I just wanted to be physically close to another human and leaned into every opportunity to do so.

A few minutes after reading about the young man, I realized I did have a closet I needed to come out of — the victim closet I had been living in for so long.

As a child, an adolescent, and as a young man, I was sure that my specific situation was plain to see. I was sure that everybody I met knew exactly who and what I was and, because they left me there, they were okay with that. I felt like I had a flashing neon sign above my head that said, "victim," with an arrow pointing downward. I didn't know that I had learned to effectively lie and cover up the abuse I was subjected to. I couldn't see that the drugs, alcohol, and other addictions were my way of coping with that abuse. I was sure I was the only person on the planet with this experience, that I was alone, unlovable, and that I was a sacrifice for some reason who deserved to be abused.

After some careful consideration, I found that "coming out" applies to me on a couple of levels. First, I've come to terms that I am most likely a gay man, and that I may never be sure about it because the origin of my sexual identity was forced upon me. I have also had to learn to live with the hurt, harm, and damage I inflicted upon others for decades as a result of not dealing with the abuse I lived through.

Nevertheless, the positives of coming out far outweigh any negatives I have so far encountered. My life is much more peaceful, and I am more loving, forgiving, and accepting of others and myself. And, while I am still not completely secure in my sexuality, I'm OK with that. I'm OK and secure in the knowledge that when I came to prison, I didn't know my sexual identity. And, until given the chance to explore that part of my essential self in relation to others, I get to be in that place of not knowing.

Coming out in prison is difficult. There are always people around willing to judge and criticize you and your choices, doing their best to make you regret the condition in which you live — that's just part of the landscape. However, even with those struggles, as a human being I am more complete and content, as well as happier for doing so.

The Moment of Truth

By Tonie Elmore, Mule Creek State Prison

WHEN MY SISTER — Mrs. Monnie Brown Elmore — came into this world, she was blessed to be intersex (born with both male and female genitalia). It was very hard for her to identify with the transgender lifestyle; therefore, I walked her through this wonderful journey and explained to her that we were twins, and we are part of a gender spectrum, that God made us to be the way that we are so it's OK.

Being transgender isn't difficult nor suffering; it's reality for me to be myself. I've endured such pain, physical and psychological abuse, to live my life as a female. I constantly feel incompetent as a human being with incorrect anatomy, longing for what will make me whole, to become the only person I've ever known myself to be.

I've been using hormone replacement therapy since 1970, and I've been approved for the gender confirmation surgery. I've enjoyed the feminizing effect it has had on my body, the physical female shape, and the softening of my skin.

Because we are twins and very close, I went through a sympathetic pregnancy when she became pregnant. I had all of the cravings and even had labor pains.

Monnie passed away from cancer on June 10, 2020. Once again, I became very sick during her illness, but I am much better now.

I dedicate these words to Monnie Brown Elmore, and, because I enjoy singing, one day I will sing about Monnie and this moment. God bless you all.

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

GRIP's Reentry Coordinator is Rafael Cuevas
(415) 759-8824



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Chinese desert (News.cgtn.com)



Australian desert (Twinkl.com)



grasslands (eh-Resources.org)



African veldt (Stock.Adobe.com)



savanna (Britannica.com)



meadow lands (Pix oto.com)



Amazon rainforest
(Education.NationalGeographic.org)

Finding Freedom Within

By Kaci Bowman, Chuckawalla State Prison

FOR A LONG time I’ve been afraid. Mainly, I’ve been scared to open up about my life, because for most of my life I’ve wanted to be female. But now that I am a transgender woman, I can open up about who I am.

It is not easy because there are those who judge and those who want to point and laugh. We simply need to put it into our minds: We are who we are and no one can change that.

For 15 years I’ve suffered in various ways, all because of who I am. But I do not let those people stand in my light. By being honest with myself, I can be free of this dark prison within. It is not easy, but I know it is possible.

To my sisters: It’s okay to be who you want to be — just be honest with yourself.

LGBTQ+ Identification Rising in US

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

SINCE 2012, THE percentage of American adults who self-identify as something other than heterosexual has more than doubled — this according to a Gallup poll reported by Marc Ramirez in the March 14, 2024, edition of *USA Today*. According to the authors of the poll, approximately 7.6% “identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or as something other than heterosexual.” If the trend continues at this pace, they believe, LGBTQ+ adults in America could reach over 30% by 2054.

“More people identifying as LGBTQ is often a sign that more people feel safe and/or comfortable to openly claim an LGBTQ identity,” said Brandon Robinson, an associate professor and department chair of gender and sexuality studies at the University of California, Riverside.

“It gives me hope that our policies will become even more positive toward LGBTQ+ people, but it is also important to keep in mind that experiences of discrimination and rejection will vary greatly depending on specific life contexts,” said Pamela Lannutti, director of the Center for Human Sexuality Studies at Widener University in Chester, Pennsylvania.

Gallup’s poll data came through a telephone survey conducted in 2023 of over 12,000 adults in the U.S. Of this large sample, more than 85% of individuals identified as heterosexual, while nearly 7% chose not to respond at all. Those who identified as transgender were about one of every eight LGBTQ+ adults, and those who identified as bisexual were 57% of all LGBTQ+ adults. This poll data showed that approximately 4.4% of all American adults are bisexual, with more than 1% gay, and just over 1% are lesbian.

According to the poll, it appears that youth explains this growing portion of U.S. adults who now identify as LGBTQ+:

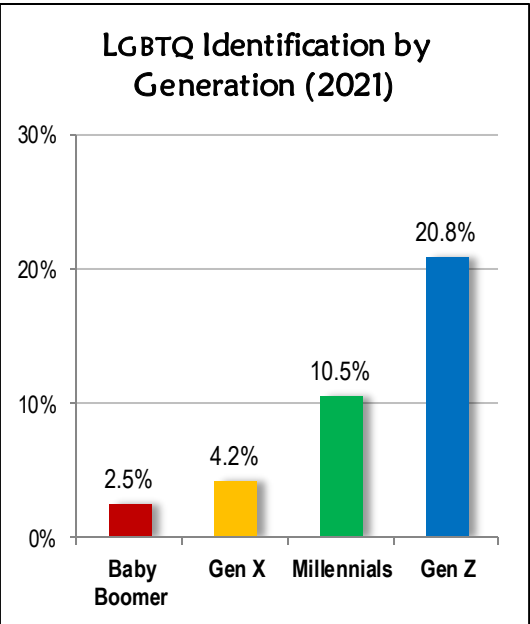
More than one in five Gen Z adults (ages 18 to 26) identifies as LGBTQ+, as do nearly 1 in 10 millennials (ages 27 to 42). The percentage falls to less than 5% of Generation X, 2% of Baby Boomers and 1% of the Silent Generation.

“As younger generations are growing up with more LGBTQ representation and arguably more acceptance of LGBTQ people, it makes sense that they are also more comfortable to openly claim their LGBTQ identity,” said Robinson.

Approximately 8.5% of women in the survey identified as LGBTQ+, while about 4.7% of men identified as such. The differences were even greater in the

younger generations. The ratio was 12.4% to 5.4% for women and men among millennials, and 28% to 10.6% respectively among Gen Z.

Robinson noted that these rising numbers don’t necessarily mean more people are LGBTQ+, only that people feel safer about declaring it.



Generation	Born Between...
Baby Boomers	1946-1964
Generation X	1965-1980
Millenial	1981-1996
Generation Z	1997-2012
Generation Alpha	2012 to present

Pew Research Foundation

Biomes of the Planet Earth



dry forest (JaliscoDryForest.Blogspot.com)



peat bog (NorthumberlandNationalPark.org.uk)



old growth forest (News.MongaBay.com)



dry desert (Wikipedia.org)



arctic tundra (Wikipedia.org)



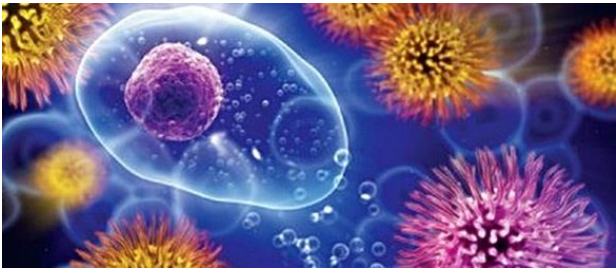
temperate coniferous forest (TripAdvisor.com)



the Earth (UniverseToday.com)

Changing Face of HIV/Aids Care

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist



IN 1981, A new and deadly disease quickly spread through gay communities around the world: AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome, caused by the human immunodeficiency virus, HIV). Initially called GRID (gay related immune deficiency), this disease killed by weakening the body’s immune system, which left those who contracted it susceptible to infections like pneumonia, and certain cancers such as Kaposi’s sarcoma. People contract AIDS as a result of contracting HIV, which was first recognized as the precursor to AIDS in 1984.

HIV is difficult to get. As an anaerobic organism, the virus dies on contact with oxygen. For it to spread, there must be serum contact with an infected person, and this can happen during unprotected sex and through contaminated needles shared by drug users. The best way to ensure one does not get or spread HIV/ AIDS (or any sexually transmitted infection) is to be celibate; however, barring that, always use condoms and dental dams.

Today, testing positive for HIV/AIDS is not the death sentence it once was in the 1980s and ’90s. The development of anti-retroviral therapies completely changed the way the medical profession considers the treatment of HIV/AIDS.

Investigations into HIV/AIDS began in the mid-1980s by scientists looking for ways to bolster a person’s immune system, and to eradicate HIV. These efforts continue to this day, working toward a cure for all viral infections. This work influenced the research, treatment, and vaccine development for other retroviruses like SARS in the mid-2000s, and more recently the coronavirus that caused COVID-19.

Initially, HIV/AIDS treatment was sometimes as dangerous as the disease itself. For example, AZT, the first FDA-approved (1987) anti-HIV drug was toxic for some people; others could not tolerate the side effects and were taken off the drug. As time went on, many took whatever HIV drugs were on the market, even if doing so made them very sick, until the next therapy that would both keep them alive and allow them a normal quality of life.

In the mid-1990s, newer and less toxic drugs were developed to fight HIV. Sometimes called the “cocktail,” the best known treatment consisted of three drugs taken in concert to reduce the presence of HIV in the bloodstream of infected individuals, allowing them to live near-normal lives.

Over the last 20 years, newer and more effective drugs and therapies were developed to treat HIV/AIDS. In addition, there have been a couple of cases where all traces of HIV disappeared from people who underwent bone marrow transplants that used material from non-infected donors genetically predisposed to be HIV resistant. This effectively changed their status to cured and able to live the same as people who have never been exposed to the disease.

However, those cases are few and the treatment very costly. For many, current HIV therapy reduces the amount of virus present in the blood to levels that are undetectable. As a result, they are unable to transmit the virus to another person through sexual contact. Additionally there are therapies for people who are not infected with HIV but have sex with those who are or may be, called PREP (pre-exposure prophylaxis). This gives an additional level of protection above barrier-protected sex.

Originally, being treated for HIV meant taking several pills every eight to 10 hours. Over time, those regimens were reduced to a single pill once a day, and today there are treatments that consist of a single injection given by a medical professional every three months. However, just because treatments have gotten better, this does nothing to remove the danger of contracting or spreading HIV. The virus still kills hundreds of thousands of people worldwide and is one of the leading concerns of the World Health Organization.

Finally, once HIV treatment is started, patients need to adhere to their treatment regimen for the rest of their lives. This can be complicated as people move, change jobs, or travel out of country.

Many incarcerated people have a high risk of exposure to sexually transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS, as a result of unprotected sex, IV drug use, and other risky behaviors. If you are incarcerated and are not sure of your HIV status, fill out a CDCR 7362 Health Care Services Request for Treatment to request a test. It just might save your life, as well as the lives of any future partners you might have.



(Commons.Wikimedia.org)



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

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.

Creek Post.

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.

The creature known as Leviathan is believed to be one of many species of whale. Beginning with Whale, the world's largest mammal, can you create the world's second largest, the Elephant?

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Psych View

Why You?

By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

A SMALL PERCENTAGE of incarcerated people secure release each year. Will you be one of them? Why should you be? Remember, you are asking the parole authorities to trust you with their safety and even their lives, and the lives of their loved ones. Your word is not going to get you released, because your conviction identifies you as a criminal and your word is (by definition) the word of a criminal. Your actions, record, and plans will define your risk. Make them shine.

There are good people in prison, and there are people in prison who are safe to release. How do we find such people? If you are lucky, you get enough authorities who recognize your efforts that you increase your chances. Sometimes you do not get lucky. Is there a poor record on you, indicating a person with poor coping skills and criminal tendencies? What have you done to change that, and to create a record of a person who has changed?

Was your crime particularly heinous? Many people are in prison, but crimes are different in terms of their level of detachment, violence, planning, and personality. A gunshot is different than two gunshots, or three, or five. A gun is different from an ice pick or hammer, or car. A person who commits arson is different from a person who commits kidnapping. A poisoning is different from a strangling. What level of risk and detachment does your crime indicate, and how does your record indicate that the factors of detachment have changed?

Exploring your life and crime is important if you are going to create a profile as someone who has changed. If you deny your crime or criminal past, you haven't much to work with. This is not a book of appeal; this is a book of parole. People who make good candidates are those who have done work on themselves to understand who they are, what they did, and why they did it. They also take steps to change the factors that led to crime. If you are ready to take these steps, you may shine as a person who others may consider as ready to parole. If you are stuck on denial or other issues, your time is better spent on appeals.

You are in prison. This is your chance to show yourself as you choose to be when it no longer matters. You can refuse work assignments, get into fights, deal and use drugs, and be a management problem for the prison. You can get into trouble by association or accident. Or, you can keep your head down, do what you need to do, and take care of yourself. You might then get noticed and you might then get out. If you are an ass, you won't get out; so decide what you want others to think of you and act accordingly.

Writing an Insight Book Report

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

BOOK REPORTS ARE a chance to learn more about yourself and to develop the necessary insight to apply what you have been learning to everyday life situations. This is not about a book review or if you enjoyed the storyline. Did you gain any new insights or tools to help you address triggers or causative factors relating to your crime?

"Insight" is understanding the causative factors of your crime and why you committed your offense. Developing insight means you will have to confront issues about yourself that may be difficult to face. Robert Price has been writing book reports for five years.

"Book reports have helped me learn more about myself," said Price. This has helped him put a name to some of the emotions and experiences he did not understand. It has also made his writing more concise, along with insight.

Book reports are a good way to cover relevant material that may not be covered in self-help groups. If you do several book reports, you may want to list the books by subject in your parole plans. Resources for book report forms are available in your facility library, in Success After Parole (SAP) on the Edovo educational app, or by writing to parole preparation organizations like Suitable Solutions or Life Support Alliance.

One can also follow a basic format by answering three questions: Why read this book? What did you learn and how does it connect to your life? How will this book help you be successful when you get out? Either way the goal is the same: to show what you have learned and how it applies to your offense.

For book suggestions on specific subjects, write to Life Support Alliance (see ad on page 24).

Suitable Solutions
P.O. Box 341309
Sacramento, CA 95834.

Being a Gentleman

By Bruce Lomath,
Mule Creek State Prison

NATURE HAS HARDWIRED humans for attraction to one another. For this reason, they notice one another. The complication comes when I, as a man, check out a woman without her consent. Granted, consent can come in many forms, and there are areas of gray. But I have learned that when I gaze at a woman, my action is not for the woman's benefit. It's for my own gratification. This question came to me while trying to figure out why I lack empathy.

I participate in one of the many self-help groups offered at the Mule Creek State Prison, and I recognize that my character defects of entitlement and lack of empathy are key elements in my criminality. I also realize that my objectification of women fall into these same categories. I never considered my actions were causing harm, and the last thing I want to do is create additional victims.

Staff members work here, and the key word is "work." They are here for a variety of reasons; but whatever the reasons are, please keep in mind that we owe them dignity and respect. The incarcerated residents can do a great service to the women among us with a little self-awareness. Pro-social behavior is more action than words.

Awareness Into Domestic Abuse



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In-person instruction will begin a new cycle on Facility D later this year, open to residents of facilities D and E; to be placed on the waiting list, fill out a CDCR 2016 form.

Hypertension: The Silent Killer

By Sean "Sharif" Neal, Lead Reporter

IF YOU'RE BEING treated for high blood pressure, it's likely you're taking medication in order to manage a health condition you do not fully understand. It's also likely you don't have a clue as to what it means to have high blood pressure, what effects it could have upon your quality of life, or what questions you should be asking your health care provider. You may have been told your condition is genetic, or related to excess salt in your diet; however, what's not being said is what this deadly disease is doing to your body.

High blood pressure, also called *hypertension*, is a condition that can quietly damage the body's arteries when blood pressure rises and forces the heart to work harder to pump blood to other parts of the body. Healthy arteries are elastic, flexible, and strong. The inner lining is smooth, which allows oxygen-rich blood to flow freely to the vital organs, such as the heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, and brain. However, when arteries are damaged, a condition known as *arteriosclerosis* (hardening of the arteries) develops that leads to narrowing of the arteries that limits blood flow throughout the body. The most common form of this condition is *atherosclerosis* in which fat deposits build up in the arteries in addition to the loss of elasticity. If left untreated, this deadly condition can lead to the following life-threatening health problems:

- Aneurysm.** Over time, the constant pressure of blood moving through a weakened artery can cause part of it to bulge. An aneurysm can burst open and cause life-threatening bleeding inside the body. The aorta is the most common site of an aneurysm.
- Coronary Artery Disease.** Narrowed and damaged arteries leading to the heart restrict blood flow to this vital organ causing chest pain, called *angina*. This can lead to irregular heart rhythms, called *arrhythmias*, or it can lead to a heart attack.
- Heart Failure.** High blood pressure strains the heart, making it weak over time, or it may become stiff and start to fail. Essentially, heart failure occurs when the heart is no longer able to pump enough blood to meet the body's demand for oxygen. Although there is treatment, there is no cure for this disease.
- Enlarged Left Heart.** This condition results when the heart is forced by high blood pressure to work harder to pump blood to the rest of the body. It causes the lower left chamber of the heart, the *left ventricle*, to thicken and grow larger. This, in turn, leads to heart attack, heart failure, and increases the risk of sudden cardiac death, where the heart suddenly stops beating.
- Metabolic Syndrome.** This condition is a cluster of health problems caused by high blood pressure, and it includes high blood sugar, high blood pressure, diabetes, high blood fats called *triglycerides*, low levels of HDL (the good cholesterol), and too much fat around the waist.
- Strokes.** This includes something called Transient Ischemic Attack (TIA) or *mini-stroke*. A TIA is a warning of a full-blown stroke. It is caused when part of the brain is blocked for a short time. A stroke happens when the brain doesn't get enough oxygen or nutrients. It can also occur when there is bleeding inside or around the brain, causing brain cells to die. Blood vessels damaged by high blood pressure can break or leak. High blood pressure can cause clots to form that blocks blood flow to the brain leading to a stroke.
- Dementia.** Blocked blood flow to the brain can lead to cognitive impairments such as dementia, or vascular dementia. This can happen as a result of a single stroke or multiple ministrokes.
- Mild Cognitive Impairment.** Having more trouble with memory, thinking, or language than other adults your age.
- Damage to the Eyes.** Damaged blood vessels in the retina can lead to bleeding in the eyes, blurred vision, and complete loss of vision, a condition called *retinopathy*. Fluid buildup under the retina called *choroidopathy* is a condition that distorts vision, while a condition known as *optic neuropathy* or *optic nerve damage* takes place when blocked blood flow damages the nerve that sends light signals to the brain. This condition can lead to bleeding in the brain or vision loss.
- Sexual Problems.** Trouble getting or keeping an erection is called *erectile dysfunction*. It becomes more common after age 50, but men with hypertension are more likely to suffer from erectile dysfunction. Limited blood flow caused by high blood pressure can block blood flow to the penis.

If you are being treated for hypertension, the above conditions should alarm you. Hypertension is a deadly disease that destroys a person's health and quality of life if left untreated. In the next health update, we'll discuss healthy lifestyle changes that can help you manage hypertension alongside treatment supplied by your health care provider.

Missteps

In the October 2023 edition, the article "Know Your Neighbor" on page 25 misstated the name of the publishing company behind Mike Owens' book; it is Random Lane Press, not *Random Lark Press*. In the same article, it was also stated that Owens was the first incarcerated individual in the country to be certified as a domestic violence specialist; he was in fact among the first 25 such certified specialists in the country.

Our Moon is Shrinking

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

ACCORDING TO NICHOLAS Schmerr and fellow scientists from the University of Maryland, our moon's circumference has shrunk some 150 feet over the past several hundred million years, due to the natural cooling of its core. Their study also indicated this shrinkage is nothing to worry about.

"Fortunately, as it shrinks, the mass of the moon doesn't change, so it should not affect tidal cycles in any substantial way," Schmerr said.

Well, that's a relief.

Where Does Salt Come From?

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

THE MINERAL SODIUM chloride also known as salt, usually comes from natural means, such as evaporation of seawater and brines by sunlight. However, there is more than one way to manufacture salt.

Salt is also mined from underground salt deposits, or by evaporation through the use of artificial heat sources.

According to the U.S. Geological Survey's *Mineral Commodity Summaries Report*, the U.S. contributed to the world more than 42 million tons of this essential mineral in 2022 (valued at \$2.5 billion), which makes our nation the eighth-largest producer of salt in the world.

That's a lot of salt.

Source: USA Today, Mar. 18, 2024.



(Amazon.com)

Los Defectos del Carácter Corrientes

Por Maya Emig, Post Columnist

Traducido por Fabián García, Spanish Reporter

UNA PREGUNTA USADA con mucha frecuencia es, "¿Cuáles son tus defectos del carácter?" Estoy viendo un cambio en algunos comisionados por reemplazar "defectos del carácter" por "mecanismo de afrontamiento desadaptativo." La razón por este cambio es la crítica que acampana el uso de la frase defecto del carácter.

Vas a querer averiguar las partes de tu carácter que facilitaron tu cambio a una persona peligrosa, y entender como dichas partes contribuyeran a tu crimen, igual a tu historial criminal—sin importar si fuiste capturado por esos crímenes.

Por ahora, me gustaría que el enfoque de este artículo sea "¿Que son tus defectos del carácter el día de hoy?" Muchas veces, la respuesta viene siendo una de las dos siguientes: (1) el encarcelado clama que se deshizo de todos sus defectos, y que ya no cuenta con ninguno; (2) tiene la habilidad de poder articular los defectos que tiene.

Para empezar, todos nosotros contamos con defectos del carácter—y algunos de nosotros contamos con aún más. Me gusta comenzar cualquier cita con un cliente aún el menciono de los defectos del carácter más comunes entre la población. Antes de mencionar algunos de los defectos, quiero que pienses en algunos de tus propios defectos. Haz una lista de siete, y luego yo comparto algunos de mi experiencia personal, igual a otros defectos comunes. Muchas veces es fácil mirar los defectos de los demás, y muy difícil mirar los de uno mismo. Si este es el caso, pregúntale a alguien de confianza, que sea honesto contigo y te diga todos los defectos del carácter que mira en ti. Por ejemplos, estos defectos pueden dificultarte si estas en una relación: la deshonestidad, el criticar, el estar de mente cerrada, la falta de líneas divisorias y el no hablar por uno mismo. Aquí te van otros defectos comunes: el aplazamiento, el egoísmo, la falta de responsabilidad, la inflexibilidad, el comportamiento adictivo y la falta de empatía.

Ahorra que te tengo pensando en estos defectos, piensa en las cualidades que dificultan las cosas con ti mismo, o con los demás. Para ustedes que son perfeccionistas, por dar un ejemplo, se puede decir que es un buen atributo—en los ojos de los demás. Pero si ustedes conocieron alguien como el que yo conozco, esta imperfección puede ser un proceso muy insoportable para el perfeccionista. Cuando las cosa nunca son lo suficiente bueno, el trabajo jamás se acaba porque nunca estas satisfecho con los resultados. Piensas que si lo haces otra vez te va a salir mejor; y a veces si sale mejor, u a veces no. Piensa en todo el tiempo que uno toma en subir al nivel inalcanzable del perfeccionismo. Para alguien que sufre de esto, puede ser muy exasperante.

Haga una liste todos tus defectos del carácter ye esté preparado para discutirlos en tu próxima audiencia, igual a los retos inherentes que vienen incluidos con cada uno. Hay manera de tomar cada uno de tus defectos del carácter, y trabajar en ellos.

Para el perfeccionista, aquí hay libros para ayudarle encontrar la paz y la aceptación: *The Gifts of Imperfection* (2022), escrito por Brené Brown; *How to Be an Imperfectionist* (Selective Entertainment, 2015), por Stephen Guise; *When Perfect Isn't Good Enough* (New Harbinger Publications, 2009), por Martin M. Anthony y Richard P. Swinson; *The Pursuit of Perfect* (McGraw Hill, 2009), por Tal-Ben Shahar; y *CBT Workbook for Perfectionism* (New Harbinger Publications, 2019), por Sharon Martin.

Para la entender tu criminalidad y poder responder las preguntas en tu próxima audiencia para tu libertad condicional, debes de entenderte tú mismo. Ese viaje solamente empieza cuando realmente quieres entenderte. Toma tiempo en reflejar de tu vida para poder entender cómo te convertiste en la persona que cometió el crimen por cual estas preso. Tienes que pasar por el proceso porque cuando aprendes más de ti mismo, más profundo va hacer tu entendimiento de ti mismo, incluyendo una nueva perspectiva.

Insisto que hagas todo el esfuerzo. El crecimiento toma lugar en lo incomodo, cuando uno trabaja duro. Cuando tienes un mejor entendimiento de tus factores causativos, puedes mirarlos como son: el inicio del desarrollo de tus factores causativos cuyo te convirtieron el alguien peligroso, y te trajo a la prisión. Luego, puede empezar a trabajar en la trauma y las emociones a su alrededor. Viendo las cosas de una nueva perspectiva te abre los ojos; también te ayuda sanar tu trauma, y tener un mejor entendimiento del trauma que has causado en los demás.

Quiero dejarte con esperanza, porque lo más que te entiendas tú mismo, lo más profundo tu comprensión, y compasión, por las victimas—igual a ti mismo y todas tus traumas. No se trata de culpar a alguien; se trata de ser comprensivo con ti mismo.



Flag Day

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

FLAG DAY IS celebrated in the United States every June 14 to memorialize the day in 1777 when the Stars and Stripes was adopted by the Continental Congress as the new nation’s official flag.

On Flag Day, it is proper to display the Stars and Stripes on homes, businesses, public buildings, and in public spaces such as parks and schools. Parades are often held with other patriotic observances.

President Harry S. Truman officially recognized June 14 as Flag Day when he signed the National Flag Day Bill in 1949.

How to Honor the Flag

- ★ Salute the flag the moment it passes in a parade. Put your hand over your heart or give the military salute.
- ★ When marching, always carry the flag to the right of any other flag, or, when marching in front, be sure to carry the flag in front of the center of the line.
- ★ From a building, hang the flag on a staff or on a rope over the sidewalk, with its canton (the blue field containing the stars) away from the building.
- ★ In a window, hang the flag vertically with its canton to the left of a person who is seeing it from outside the building.
- ★ On the same flagpole, hang the flag above other flags or pennants.
- ★ Never hang the flag upside down except as a signal of emergency. It is a recognized distress signal.
- ★ During periods of mourning, hoist the flag to the peak before you lower it to half-mast. Raise it to the peak again before lowering it at the end of the day.
- ★ On a casket, drape the flag with its canton at the head and over the left shoulder of the body. Do not lower the flag into the grave.

Source: World Book Encyclopedia.

How Long Is Too Long?

By Earl S. Breckenridge, Feature Reporter

“ACCORDING TO ANALYSIS by the Council on Criminal Justice, 63 percent of people in state prison were serving a sentence of 10 or more years in 2020, up from 46 percent in 2005,” noted a report by the Council on Criminal Justice in March 2023. In 2022, a task force on long sentences, co-chaired by former U.S. Deputy Attorney General Sally Yates, along with former federal and state prosecutor and current South Carolina Representative Trey Gowdy, gathered with 16 experts to address long sentence concerns. “A justice system that is both respected and worthy of respect is the cornerstone of a flourishing society,” offered the co-chairs. “Our criminal justice system is responsible for punishment, rehabilitation, restitution, separation, restoration and more — often simultaneously.”

The task force was comprised of former prosecutors and current public defenders, law professors, judges, law enforcement officers, victims and survivors of crime, individuals who served long sentences, legislators, and corrections officials. “Criminal justice policy should be based on facts and evidence, not rhetoric and emotion,” the report observed. “[A]nd we should be laser focused on strategies that make the most effective use of our limited resources.”

The task force convened for a year under the following guiding principles:

- Keep people safe from serious violent victimization.
- Recognize that all people deserve to be treated with dignity.
- Acknowledge and alleviate the impact of racial and other biases.
- Help all victims and survivors of crime heal and recover from the impact of violence and trauma.
- Allow for the possibility of redemption.
- Balance the interests of victims and survivors with traditional purposes of punishment, including incapacitation, deterrence, rehabilitation, and reintegration.
- Rely on data, research professional expertise, and lived experience.
- Make our criminal justice system worthy of the respect of all people.

After “deliberations, disagreements, and compromises,” the report said, the task force proposed 14 recommendations it hopes “will inspire legislators and policy-makers to take steps to improve long sentencing law and policy in their jurisdictions.” Recommendations were:

- Prioritize funding for violence reduction and victim and survivor services.
- Guarantee access to services for all victims and survivors of serious violent crime.
- Reduce recidivism by addressing behavioral health needs of people serving long sentences.
- Promote accountability and enhance access to services through the enforcement of victim’s rights.
- Identify and alleviate unwarranted racial disparities in sentencing.
- Ensure that judges may consider relevant facts and circumstances when imposing long sentences.
- Decouple drug quantity from sentence length and restrict the use of long sentences in cases that stem from symptoms of substance use and mental health disorders.
- Ensure that sentencing enhancements based on criminal history are focused on individualized assessments of risk.
- Provide restorative justice opportunities for victims, survivors, and people serving long sentences.
- Prioritize professionalized assessments of rehabilitation and current danger to public safety in parole decision-making.
- Maximize rehabilitation by expanding earned sentence credit opportunities.
- Promote accountability and rehabilitation through selective second-look opportunities.
- Provide people serving long sentences with access to rehabilitative living conditions and opportunities.
- Improve the nation’s understanding of the use of long sentences with more data, greater transparency, and a focus on clear costs and benefits.

“While we believe in accountability,” the report said, “we likewise believe that a justice system is only worthy of respect when it metes out punishment in a proportional manner — the sentence must fit the crime.”

Sources: Task Force on Long Sentences, *Task Force on Long Sentences Final Report*, “How Long Is Too Long?” Council on Criminal Justice, March 2023. *Federal Sentencing Reporter*, Vol. 36, nos. 1-2, October-December.

Minando Su Archivo

Por John L. Orr, Feature Reporter
Traducido por Fabián García,
Spanish Reporter

UN BUEN INVESTIGADOR sigue el camino de pistas, recogiendo las migas de evidencia dejadas sobre el camino; y al fin de la búsqueda, presenta un caso comprensivo. Sin embargo, Sherlock Holmes, el detective ficcional extraordinario, escogía los caminos de investigación—muchas veces olvidadas—que les pasaba por alto a la mayoría de gente.

Como ejemplo, vamos a usar su carpeta central (Central File, or C-File) en forma digital, encontradas en sus registros electrónicos del sistema de dirección (ERMS). Una revisión Olson (Olson review) de tus datos personales podrá revelar documentos y archivos sin saber que existan, o también exponga datos que tu esperabas encontrar, solo para darte cuenta que no están. Tomando el tiempo de su día—antes de prepararte para tu audiencia de acomodamiento—para conducir una inspección de su C-File, puede ser como una búsqueda de tesoro, o un recordatorio de incidentes olvidados que podrían impedir su libertad condicional. Ingrese preparado cuando te tora presentarte, y así, aparezcas organizado.

Jesse Carson, 42, solicito un Olson revisión en preparación de su entrevista ante la Junta de Audiencias de Libertad Condicional (“la tabla”, o BPH). Cartas de apoyo presentadas en su última audiencia se hicieron aparecer con la BPH; fueron mencionadas en las discusiones, aunque no había copias en su C-File. Cuando investigas reliquias de su pasado, las sorpresas te esperan.

Cuando formulas tu presentación de la BPH, incluye declaraciones de autobiografía y de cierre cuyo tienden demostrar la positividad de su pasado. No tomes el riesgo que encuentren todo lo bueno, o todo lo malo. Las investigaciones antes de la sentencia y las entrevistas psicológicas preparadas por la corte antes de ser sentenciado—probablemente fueron producidas de manera cuidadosa. Excava estos documentos, y también los más antiguos, por el posible encuentro de minas de

positividad y negatividad. Esto incluye reportes policiacos de crímenes anteriores, como los antecedentes penales de su infancia, que tal vez se te han olvidado. Por ejemplo, podrá estar una denuncia de parte de la protección de menores asociado con un reporte policial cuyo involucre sus familiares. Puede ser que este evento traumático afecto sus años de infancia, lo cual explica algunos de tus problemas dentro de usted. Lee los segmentos narrativos de todos los reportes policiacos, igual a los informes suplementos para poder encontrar cosas ocurridas hace varios años, los cuales se te han olvidado, o tal vez, no sabías de su existencia. Por lo general, los informes policiacos son organizados de manera cronológica, de acuerdo con su llegada, y asignaciones a cada incidente, de esta manera:

- Reporte original escrito por el oficial de policía primero en llegar, o de ser asignado.
- Oficiales distintos respondiendo al incidente preparan informes suplementos; usualmente, estos siguen en el archive del reporte policial. Los oficiales auxiliares, por costumbre, escriben reportes suplementos en los siguientes casos: cuando miran, escuchan o hacen algo de manera significativa en la escena. Esto puede incluir la presencia de evidencia en plena vista, tomando la declaración de un vecino o escuchar una puerta cerrar de un golpe.
- Al siguiente son los reportes de los investigadores, o del detective asignado. Estos incluyen reportes del médico forense, igual a los reportes médicos, y paramédicos; tiquetes del registro de evidencias; análisis laboratorios; por último, documentos relevantes, como las respuestas de la protección de menores, o los informes de agencias de seguimiento. Todo lo mencionado podrá contener croquetas de información benefical. Tal vez una oficial auxiliaría hizo un comentario sobre estar despachado a tu residencia varias veces en el pasado sin tomar algún reporte, y por esa razón, estableciendo un patrón de abuso sin estar documentado en algún otro sitio. Vuelvo y repito, aquí podrá encontrar croquetas de oro.

Regrese a su almacenaje de documentos en tu celda. Cava los reportes policiacos, o documentación, que puede contener hechos olvidados con el tiempo. Antes de su audiencia es la investigación de la BPH, lo cual es comparable cuando un banco revisa su historia financiero por buscar razón de negarte un préstamo de antes. Durante la era de COVID, su retraso de dos meses al pago de coche—como fue el caso de muchos ciudadanos—seria mencionado por el agente de préstamos. Luego darás una explicación, que hiciste tres llamadas telefónicas a la compañía financiero clarificando su retraso de ambos pagos, y que fueron pagados entre un mes de recibir tu pago de estímulo. Demuestra que eres responsable y que tomaste acción en mantener el banco informado, mientras dedicabas tu dinero de estímulo pagando su cuenta, en lugar de un fin de semana en Las Vegas. De la misma manera debes de tratar las presentaciones que esperan la BPH de ti. Demuestra la diligencia, la inventiva, y el planeamiento previo.

Si encuentras algo nuevo y digno de presentar a la BPH después de entregar sus documentos de tu libertad condicional; haga copias, y llegando a tu audiencia, los presentas. Este esfuerzo demuestra su motivación que continuaste con tu diligencia y preparación, y finalmente, que te importa lo suficiente asegurar que los documentos son considerados. Esto da una impresión positive con la BPH. Son pocos los candidatos que hacen esto. Toma tu tiempo evaluando tu C-File, sin estar apurado. Sea respetuoso con su consejero y explícale que la inspección de tus archivos podrá tomar varias horas. Recuerda que estas permitido hacer copias si llenas por complete una forma proporcionada durante tu inspección. ¡Buena suerte!



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Why Read the Classics?



By Rob Sharp,
Post Reporter

FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1913, *Oh Pioneers!* is one of 11 titles by author Willa Cather available on your tablet under the GTL Library app.

The story begins in Nebraska about 1883 and portrays the simple lives of pioneers living on the plains. In particular, it is about the Bergson family from Sweden; the death of their father John; his eldest child and now head of the family, Alexandra; and his three sons Lou, Oscar, and Emil.

Their relationships with one another and the neighbors are primary to the story, especially Ivar, the transcendentalist:

Ivar found contentment in the solitude he had sought for himself. He disliked the litter of human dwellings ... he preferred the cleanness and tidiness of the wild sod.

If you enjoy discussions about wild creature’s ways, this story has some good ones. Also, due to the time it was written, there is more religious thought than you’ll find in contemporary fiction. However, the storyline is enjoyable and draws the reader in with rich prose.

The knowledge in the novel may seem strange; keep in mind this story is about people dependent on agriculture.

One thing that makes this work stand apart, especially for its time, is that Alexandra is the heroine of the story. When Cather penned it, to cast a woman as a visionary hero was unusual. Alexandra’s mother is seldom mentioned in the novel.

These people are struggling settlers on the plains during drought and hard times, and the spirit of Alexandra’s character shines throughout. This is an entertaining and sensitive portrayal of a family of diverse individuals struggling together and sometimes against one another. It also has moments of spiritual enlightenment:

The Genius of the Divide, the great free spirit which breathes across it, must have bent lower than it ever has bent before. The history of every country begins in the heart of a man or a woman.

Check out “*Oh Pioneers!*” It’s well worth the read.

Energy Conservation in Prison

Help Save the Planet in Your Cell

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

EVEN THE INCARCERATED create a carbon footprint that, in turn, contributes to the formation of greenhouse gases that affect Earth’s atmosphere. In fact, we generate a *primary footprint* directly by using electricity for everyday use, and a *secondary footprint* through our purchases at the canteen, package vendors, and through the use of products that generate a primary footprint in their manufacture, storage, and transportation. Is there a realistic way for the incarcerated to lessen their individual carbon footprints? Yes, and this effort includes cutting costs the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) incur by our presence.

All state prison employees and incarcerated people can benefit the planet while helping cut energy costs. Part of this is possible through voluntary in-cell energy conservation. Self-help groups and pre-release training steers incarcerated people into realistic practices that help the transition into civilian life. As such, energy conservation can be part of everyone’s rehabilitative programming, and the CDCR can assist by appointing staff energy conservation positions as watchdogs over wastage.

For example, do you know someone who leaves their hot pot plugged in 24/7? Hot pots run approximately 15 minutes each hour to keep water at 160 °F. According to “Math Street” columnist Walter Deckert, a 350-watt hot pot plugged in all day costs about \$3 per month. If 200 people per yard used this much electricity, that would be \$600 per month, per yard. How many leave a TV or fan on while on the yard or at work? A 50-watt fan will cost another \$1.60 per month, times 200 people per yard. Multiply these conservative estimates times the number of yards at each prison, times the number of prisons in the state, and the figure reaches well over \$1 million per year. Mule Creek State Prison alone spent over \$5 million on electricity between December 2022 and November 2023, according to the department website.

“The standard utility company home or business billing rates run from \$.41 - \$.62 per kilowatt hour (kWh),” said an energy company employee who is not authorized to speak for the company. “However, the CDCR’s Pacific Gas & Electric discounted rate at Mule Creek costs them from as low as \$.15 to as high as \$.23 per kWh (average \$.19 per kWh). The rate fluctuates depending on usage.”

Following are beneficial measures we can take as residents:

- Always turn off your TV and fan when you leave the cell.
- Only plug in your hotpot when you need it.

These practices carry the additional benefit of fire safety, because an unattended electrical appliance can fail at any time.

Is there more the department can do to help the planet and save taxpayer dollars? Yes. During drought conditions in California over the last 10 years, the CDCR installed water-saving showerheads, and implemented landscape watering, yard wash-down, and vehicle cleaning restrictions.

As recounted by incarcerated writer Bryce Canyon, one prison’s five-acre parking lot remained fully lit after sundown. Between 5 p.m. and 6 a.m., overnight workers’ vehicles occupied about 10 percent of this field of asphalt. The rest remained empty. Turning off the remaining 80 percent of parking lot lighting after 6 p.m. is a no-brainer — just reset the timer. With 32 prisons statewide, such vigilance can render substantial savings. Appointment of a conservation officer at the prison level is a step in the right direction. According to a CDCR source, the sole energy-conservation-awareness measures already in place are periodic emails sent out to staff; no conservation official.

A prison is an isolated ecosphere, but not exempt from real-world limitations. By embracing the innovative California Model, perhaps a cooperative effort between staff and residents could create a plan to conserve energy, help the planet, save money, and introduce modern-day mindfulness.

Source: Bryce Canyon, “Squander 101,” *Vanguard Incarcerated Press*, Winter 2023.



(MyRepurposedLife.com)

National Veterans Foundation

5777 West Century Boulevard, Suite 350
Los Angeles, CA 90045-5656

 (310) 642-0255

 (310) 642-0258

 VetSupport@NVF.org

 NVF.org



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

Call 1-888-777-4443 toll-free for information and references.

Celebrate Great Outdoors Month

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

MULE CREEK STATE Prison in Ione, California, is nestled into the rolling foothills of the majestic Sierra Nevada Mountains, surrounded by a bountiful forest of oak and pine, merged with a blanket of bright green grass. The air is clear and clean; the scent of pine frequently apparent. This tranquil expanse is one of the reasons why the environment we live in is designated as “The Great Outdoors,” even on a prison yard.

On any day of the week, avid outdoorsman Darin Mack, 50, can be found walking the lush green of Facility E, where he embraces the open air. “I spend four to five hours a day on the yard,” said Mack, “walking about 12 to 14 miles each day, while listening to gospel music.” Born and raised in a farming community in rural southeast Pennsylvania, Mack has always preferred outdoor activities. “If allowed, I’d bring out a blanket and pillow and spend my nights out here.” Many Americans feel the same way.

Beginning in 2008, governors from across the United States formally joined to encourage celebration of the wide array of spectacular scenery and environmental resources offered in our country. In 2019, the U.S. Senate acknowledged these efforts and officially designated June as Great Outdoors Month.

National Trails Day kicks off the first Saturday of June, recognizing the abundance of pathways used for not only hiking, but mountain biking, hunting, and fishing access, and the now-popular land navigation competitions known as orienteering. Planning for these adventures may be an indoor activity, but the ultimate goal of Great Outdoors Month is to encourage citizens to break away from computer monitors, cellphones, televisions, and video games. There is no comparison between playing “Fishin’ Frenzy” or “Duck Shoot” on your computer and the primeval aromas of cedar and mesquite in the air, an icy wind slapping your face, or thrilling to a boisterous covey of

quail exploding from underfoot along a remote desert trail.

June also includes National Trails Day, the Urban Kids Fishing Derby, National Get Outdoors Day, and Great Outdoors Day of Service. These events include participation and partnership with the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service, and include a “Fee Free” day to encourage citizens to get outside and celebrate the varied environments in all of our countryside settings.

Many citizen volunteers assist in the celebrations and associated activities by participating in trail and campground clean up and maintenance projects, as well as the Urban Kids Fishing Derby in Washington, D.C. The purpose of the latter, a traveling amateur fishing derby, helps inner-city youth experience nature through fishing; sometimes the first outdoor recreation experienced by these kids and adolescents.

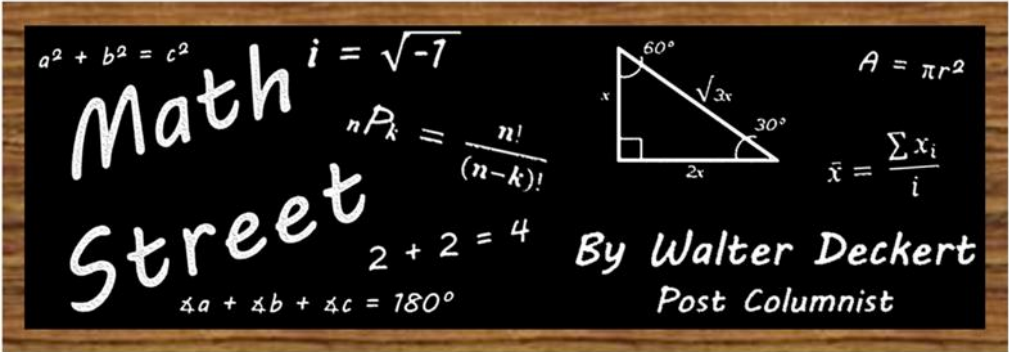
Lasting memories are created when the outdoors is explored and experienced with others, or on solo adventures, encouraging diverse recreational activities or simply enjoying an idyllic, life-affirming atmosphere.

When asked the main reason for his daily walks, Mack simply said, “Sanity. Indoors here is a madhouse of unwanted noise. When outside, I sometimes turn off my music and just listen to the sounds of the birds and wind and watch the clouds drift by. Being outdoors is my rehabilitative program.”

Millions of Americans concur. Celebrate Great Outdoors Month all year long.



Poly chrome Pass, Denali National Park, in Alaska



IN THE NEWS recently is the story of an upcoming cicada invasion. Seems two different populations are emerging simultaneously: One population appears every 13 years, and the other every 17 years. The news reported that this only happens every 200 years. Was she correct? Or did the producer round the number so it is easier for the audience to grasp?

Let’s see.

This is a good use of the lowest common multiple. Remember, this is a number that is evenly divisible by two or more numbers. In this case, our two numbers are 13 and 17.

The first thing I notice is that these are prime numbers. How does this help? Since there are no common factors, the lowest common multiple will simply be the product of the two numbers: $13 \times 17 = 221$.

So, the report under-reported how often these two populations will emerge at the same time. It is more accurately every 221 years, or the year 2245 next.

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



(Wired.com)



Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S
WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee
Post Columnist

Establish a Paperwork System

LETTING PAPER STACK up is one of those “I’ll get to it later” habits that can get you in trouble if you don’t put in place a method of managing it. This applies to both your personal paperwork and the paperwork you’ll accumulate when you start your new business.

One method of managing it is the folder system. You can do this even if you don’t have a file cabinet by using a simple banker’s box you can find at any office supply or big box store. While you’re there, pick up hanging folders in two colors, one for your business files and one for your personal files. I recommend choosing the type that comes with plastic labels and paper inserts that slide into the labels.

I’ve found it helpful to have a personal folder and a business folder labeled “Bills” where I can store unpaid bills until I pay them. Also a personal folder and a business folder labeled “Action” where I can temporarily store everything I need to do, and a personal folder and business folder labeled “Information” where I can temporarily store any information I want to read.

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.



Only 5% Down for Rental Properties

By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

GOOD NEWS FOR people who want to invest in real estate or create more wealth through equity. Fannie Mae, the government-controlled company that helps provide money for the U.S. housing market, announced that beginning November 2023, it will reduce the down payment requirement from 15% to only 5% for an owner-occupied duplex, triplex, or 4-plex property.

How it works is you put down 5% and Fannie Mae carries the rest of the loan. You must live in one of the units for a minimum of one year. After that, you may turn it into 100% rental, if you like. Your income must qualify, but rental income for the additional unit(s) does count. A rental appraisal or current rent-lease determines the income used; but be aware that only 75% of the rent is used for qualifying purposes.

As with all rental properties, 25% of the rent is considered maintenance money and isn’t used by underwriting for income. For example, if the rent you receive is \$2,000 per month, then your rental income will be \$1,500 for qualification.

Your credit must qualify and that can vary from lender to lender, which is why I favor going to a mortgage broker rather than a bank. A mortgage broker can shop wholesale lenders to get you the most lenient lender, if needed, or the strictest lender with lowest rate if your credit is stellar. This loan program is available in all 50 states, and you can get it from all mortgage brokers and any bank or lender that uses Fannie Mae money for loans. Many credit unions don’t use Fannie Mae money, so they would be last on my list.

The ability to buy a duplex, triplex, or 4-plex and use your renter’s income to pay for your own unit is a fantastic opportunity.

“One of the surest ways to build wealth over time is to offset a liability with an income-producing asset,” says Donielle Geiser, chief operations manager of Thrive Mortgage.

And I agree.

Build and
Protect
Your Credit
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Go from beginner to expert,
raise your credit score, and
secure your finances

Carolyn Warren

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

Office of Victim and Survivor Rights and Services Opens Remorse Letter Bank

If you are interested in learning how to write an apology letter and having it available to those you have harmed, write to Life Support Alliance and request enrollment in The Amends Project

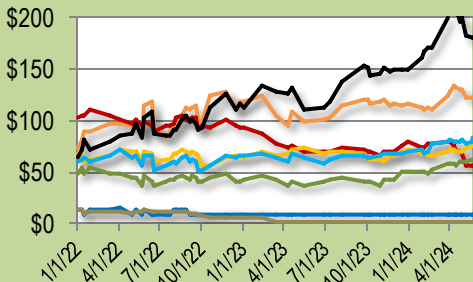
Life Support Alliance
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4400 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608
info@womenprisoners.org

California Coalition for
Women Prisoners

Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1, 2023 to May 20, 2024)

● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.76 → \$10.48	-2.6%
● ConocoPhillips (COP)	\$117.00 → \$121.71	+4.0%
● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$93.19 → \$57.68	-38.1%
● Edison International (EIX)	\$63.62 → \$76.30	+19.9%
● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.22 → \$1.32	-74.7%
● Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)	\$112.00 → \$179.67	+60.4%
● ONEOK Inc. (OKE)	\$65.90 → \$82.63	+25.4%
● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$41.29 → \$61.08	+47.9%



Creative Arts Program

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet.”

—Helen Keller

On Parole

Walking outside
These gates of hell
Alive and healthy
Feeling well...

It's not over
Only the beginning
The Road ahead
Has no ending...

Life outside
In the groove
From one spectrum to another
On the move...

The excitement you cherish
Your feelings are tucked
You hope and pray
For good luck...

On parole
Under restraint
Living life
At first it's faint...

A day of relaxing
Having fun
Visit the beach
Bathe in the sun...

Walk for miles
To clear your mind
An hour well spent
Valuable time...

Don't let the past
And hatred kill ya
The shame etcetera
And the stigma...

Faced with no shelter
And need a place to sleep
Don't let it get the best of you
And start to weep...

At times you stop
And sense the subliminal
The vibes and such
That brand you a criminal...

Hike in the mountains
At the beach take a swim
Sit back relax
Watch a film...

Wake up in the morning
Stretch and yawn
Start the coffee
Relish the calm...

Take a hot shower
Pour coffee in the cup
Sip while thinking
About a stab at good luck...

Standing in the window
With a panoramic view
The tips of the grass
Display morning dew...

Briskly walking
So much beauty to see
Inhaling exhaling
Am I really free?

Anything is better
All the right stuff
All the right stuff
To stay away from prison...

— Horace Thomas, Salinas Valley State Prison



(Source photo: TripAdvisor.ca; Illustration: S.M. Williams)

Aztec in an American Prison

There's an Aztec warrior
Bold, strong and determined
He is confined to a cell for three
Hundred years in an American prison

A majestic jaguar lives with him
In his cell flourished bountiful of
Fragrant diverse flowers
The extended plumage on his
Headdress is immaculate and
Brimming in colors

His strong right hand clutched
His weapon of sharp obsidian blades
And his shield, he always possesses
It on his wide forearm without
Putting it down



(BaliSafariMarinePark.com)

In melancholy a golden eagle
Hovers endlessly around the fortress
With soaring towers
Elongated bright American
Flags on top of every tower whip in the air

The Aztec, for fortitude dances
And chants in his cell made of solid concrete
One day the brown embroidered
Mighty Aztec warrior contemplated
About his loving Indian girl
He buckled and wept

But the flowers in his cell inclined
On him to console him
And the lion roared strenuously to remind
Him of his birthright identity

— Arnoldo Juarez, Correctional Training Facility

Creative Arts Program

Facility E Hobby Room

Creative Writing	Tue 12:30-2 pm
Poetry	Tue 2-3:30 pm
Graphic Arts	Tue 2-3:30 pm
Graphic Arts	Tue 6:30-8 pm
Graphic Arts	Wed 9-11 am
Guitar	Wed 9-10:30
Guitar	Wed 11-12:30
Intensive Journal	Wed 2-3:30 pm

Participants Gain Insight through CGA



By Sean "Sharif" Neal, Lead Reporter

RECOVERY IS NOT easy; it takes hard work and dedication. The journey from criminal thinking to significant transformation of character can be a roller coaster ride with plenty of ups and downs. It also can come with feel-good moments and, in some cases, pure joy. It may seem strange that the incarcerated can find meaning in their imprisonment, but the testimonials provided by facilitators of Criminals & Gangmembers Anonymous (CGA) shed light on what motivates them to march forward on the path of recovery.

Don Livingston, 47, began CGA in 2015, while on Facility B at the Mule Creek State Prison. Like most who hear about CGA, Livingston immediately associated the program as a group for those seeking recovery from the gang lifestyle. Even after he accepted an invitation to attend a meeting, he didn't take it seriously until a facilitator spoke on the power of beliefs. "I wasn't a gang member, but I had friends who were," said Livingston. "CGA taught me that hanging around gang members and doing the same things they're doing makes me a gang member, too. It really was a different way of looking at things," he added.

As Livingston began to take the recovery process seriously, he naturally started to internalize the principle of accountability. Coming in with a history of deep emotional trauma, he recognized the relationship between trauma and criminal thinking and behavior. "My favorite step in CGA is Step 10 because it's a daily inventory," he said. "I'm keeping myself in check with this step, and I love it. If I'm doing anything wrong, if I'm mistreating someone, I have to be mindful of it. I have to change the behavior and make amends, because I realize that relapse begins with a thought. That thought can turn on the cycle of addiction."

To stay grounded in recovery, Livingston relies on the spiritual principle of empathy. "It

helps me accept people for who they are, and not be judgmental," he said. "I don't like feeling judged myself, because it makes me feel bad. It makes me feel worthless, not good enough, and unwanted. Because I know what that feels like, I want to make sure that in CGA we continue to provide an empathetic and non-judgmental space for anyone seeking recovery. You are not alone."

Livingston is currently serving a sentence of life without parole, and his role as CGA facilitator serves as a living amends.

Sixty-five-year-old Ivan Charles is a long-standing member of CGA, and has been in the recovery process for 19 years. "I came to CGA looking for a change in my behavior," said Charles. "I needed a way to find out why I had created victims. I wanted to change my criminal thinking."

Some of Charles' early influences in CGA recovery were men he had known from the mainline, along with the founder of CGA, Richard Mejico. "I knew them when they were full-fledged gang members," said Charles. "They didn't care about anybody. They were ruthless. Then there they were in group being vulnerable and shedding tears, telling everyone about their childhood traumas and how they became the monsters that they were. Once I heard them, I knew that change was possible."

Since becoming a member of CGA, Charles has been a stalwart champion of the recovery process while encouraging other members to let down their walls and to explore their own childhood traumas in order to understand what caused them to harm others. He also acknowledges that he has a lifetime of amends to make. "I do this to give back," he said. "I owe a lifetime of amends to the Mitchell family, and I do this by facilitating groups and changing the old warped beliefs I had that caused me to bring harm to anyone."

Charles says that Step 3 is responsible for the change. "I had to let go of all the past beliefs I had, and I highly recommend CGA for anyone seeking recovery," he said. "It covers all the addictions," Charles added.

Finally, facilitator Sean Patrick Leslie, 52, holds the position of sergeant-at-arms in CGA. Though Leslie is relatively new to teaching recovery, he nevertheless brings fresh insight to the group process. "CGA opened my mind more," he said. "It helped me with my anger. People think that anger is bad, but anger can be a tool. Now that I understand it better, I can take steps to process what's making me angry, instead of stewing on it. I've learned that there are other things driving my anger." He added, "It gives me a chance to work on it, and I learned from those who came before me."

For many group participants, the credibility given to any program has to do with how well they adapt the group's principles into their lives. If the program doesn't seem like it works for the facilitators, then it probably won't work for them, either. That's why it's important to not only talk the talk, but also to walk the walk.

Another Season, and the Swallows Have Returned to Mule Creek

By Don Domelle, Mule Creek State Prison

AFTER LIVING AT the Mule Creek State Prison for 11 years, I have found there are many creatures that make up our local environment. We have deer, raccoons, and skunks — oh my! — and even a few mountain lions have been sighted. Then there are the many different species of birds we see all around us: turkeys, seagulls, crows, sparrows, black birds, and ravens. Then we have the soaring birds: buzzards (turkey vultures), red tail hawks, and even a few eagles have been spotted.



(H. Kim / Media Specialist)

If you happen to look down, you'll see the ground is alive with lizards, snakes, frogs, rabbits, and even ground squirrels; ants, beetles, and various other insects. When it rains, you'll notice the earthworms on the walkways. However, let's focus on the swallows that return each year to build their mud nests.

Barn swallows are migratory birds that spend their winters in parts of Central and South America. Some even have been found as far south as Argentina, which is 9,000 kilometers (5,592.6 miles) away. An adult barn swallow weighs approximately 17-20 grams. They are aerial insectivores, meaning they catch and eat insects in the air as they fly. In fact, their diet during breeding season is 99.8 percent flying insects. They'll spend all day going back and forth to feed their young. They live about four years, and begin to breed after one year.

The swallows build their nests with mud pellets, and like to reuse nests year after year when they can. Nest building takes up a lot of energy, with the birds

(continued on page 30)

(from *Another Season, and the Swallows Have Returned*, pg. 29)

making more than 1,000 trips to complete the new home. Newly mated pairs will even take over unused nests. Males share nest building and feeding duties, and will sometimes incubate the eggs; however, egg sitting is mostly left to the females.

Mated pairs produce two broods of four to five eggs a year, and 70-90 percent of mated pairs will successfully raise at least one chick to adulthood. The young leave the nest between 19 and 24 days after hatching, though they continue to hang around for about a week, being fed by the parents and sleeping in the nest at night. But once they leave, they never come back to the same nest.

Next time you're on the yard, be sure to keep your eye out for the wild creatures that share our spaces. In early April of each year, look for the swallows to return. Watch as these incredibly acrobatic flyers soar through the air with the greatest of ease.

Dishonor Among Thieves

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

THIS STORY WAS told to me in confidence by a career criminal in a federal penitentiary. I'd never spoken of it, but 15 years later I overheard another guy tell it. As the statute of limitations ran out decades ago, its retelling can't hurt anyone.

It all began when a disreputable businessman in a western state approached Joe Smith (not his real name). The plan was simple: Steal a famous art item from a remote, well-protected residence. It required bypassing the alarm system — no problem — but the boss insisted, "Just you, Smith, nobody else involved. Don't breathe a word of this to even your old lady. Ever."

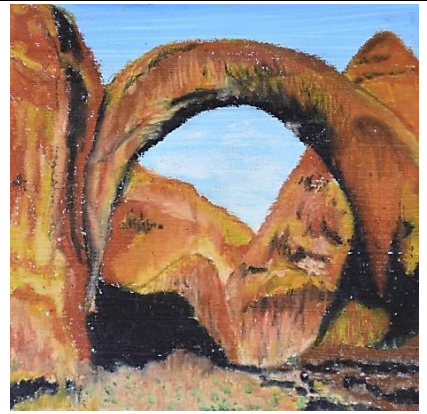
The piece was valued at over \$500,000 (in 1980 dollars), and Smith would get a sizable sum for stealing it. Anything else Smith found was up for grabs, too. He was just supposed to get the art and not vandalize or burn the place. Get in and out. Simple.

Smith said the businessman knew he could never display the hot item; he just wanted to put it in his bedroom to admire it. The monetary value was irrelevant. He also added that when he died the art would be returned anonymously. "Nobody does that," Smith said to me — and I agreed. The burglary was set for when the art owner attended a faraway golf tournament on a holiday weekend.

It was a moonless night when Smith parked in a grove of trees several hundred yards away from the house. He headed in on foot and soon found the alarm box; the bypass was easy. He entered, located the art where the businessman said it would be, and placed it into a cloth bag. With time to kill, Smith found the dark stairway to the basement and quickly descended with the aid of his flashlight. When he reached the bottom, he gasped. There before him was a recreation room with a pool table, and hundreds of bags of coins along one wall. The canvas bags were marked: quarters, dimes, and old half-dollars. Several bags were marked silver dollars. Smith cut one open and verified the contents — all decades old and 90-percent-pure silver coins.

Taking a deep breath, he considered his plight as the greed threatened to overwhelm him. He couldn't chance driving his Volkswagen up to the house; the VW wouldn't carry many bags anyway. And so, despite the deal he'd made to work alone and not tell anyone, he chose to drive into the nearest town and call his buddy, Lance, who owned a van. Explaining the treasure trove he'd found, Smith made a deal with Lance, a gym owner, to load the van up as many times as he wanted and they would split the proceeds later. Dawn was still seven hours away, and Lance agreed immediately. Smith explained he could not help and had to drive a hundred miles to deliver something that he could not describe. The steroid freak agreed to complete the task alone and not involve anyone else. With that settled, he took off for the rendezvous with the businessman. Nevertheless, he had an uneasy feeling about the arrangement with Lance, who had been loyal in the past but was of questionable intellect.

Years later, Lance told Smith that he violated their agreement that night and called a gym rat friend to help him. Driving to the house, Lance and gym rat entered, found the basement, and were astonished by the treasure. Wearing gloves, they took time to raid the bar, and then labored up and down the stairs carrying 50-pound bags of silver coins. The buzzed twosome decided to take as much as they could in one trip, then come back. The van was overloaded and the suspension bottomed out, but instead of driving cautiously back to town, the half-drunk thieves roared off down back roads and a mile out of town hit a cattle guard. They blew a tire and shattered two shock absorbers — the van was dead. They walked into town, got another van, and retrieved the treasure from the disabled



Landscapes, © 2022 Robert Day, oil pastel. [not the stolen artwork]

vehicle, undetected despite the daylight hours. They never went back for a second trip; it was too risky.

Turning thousands of coins into paper money took several years and many out-of-state trips. Lance said it was almost a full-time job for a while, but Smith got his cut, too. The crime was never mentioned in local news media — maybe the artwork was already "hot" and the coins stashed by the victim to avoid taxes.

I moved to another prison after Smith died, and 12 years later I read an article in *Smithsonian* magazine. A notable, long-missing art relic was found on the loading dock of a museum in Texas. I recognized the pictured item as the one Smith stole. The article said an anonymous caller notified museum staff to check the area and the piece was recovered. The provenance of the work was not explained in the news brief. The businessman was good to his word by returning the piece, but not to the person he stole it from.

Postscriptum

THANK YOU FOR joining us this month, and enjoying (hopefully) the June edition.

With a relatively small team and undeterred by the pay cuts in April, the *Post* continues to put in long hours working on making the best publication possible, something we can be proud of. We hope it is a publication our readers are proud to be a part of as well.

With the support of Pollen Initiative and the prison administration, we expect to win the next Stillwater Awards (watch out San Quentin!). Until then, thank you for your readership, and stay cool out there.

-JC, Editor-in-Chief



THE BACK PAGE | What you need to know about

Sources: U.S. Postal Service (pe.usps.com/PriceChange/Index); MCSP Operations Manual Supplement (§54010); Department Operations Manual (§54010)

THE MAIL

First-Class Mail [rates good until proposed rates go into effect July 2024]

Letters (stamped) ¹		Large Envelopes (Flats) ³	
Weight Not Over (oz.)	Cost	Weight Not Over (oz.)	Cost
1	68¢	1	\$1.39
2	92¢	2	\$1.63
3	\$1.16	3	\$1.87
3.5 ²	\$1.40	4	\$2.11
		5	\$2.35
		6	\$2.59
		7	\$2.83
		8	\$3.07
		9	\$3.31
		10	\$3.55
		11	\$3.79
		12	\$4.03
		13	\$4.27

¹ Letters that are “nonmachinable” are subject to a 44¢ surcharge.

² For weights over 4 ounces, see Large Envelope prices.

³ Large envelope-sized pieces that are rigid, nonrectangular, or not uniformly thick pay parcel prices.

1 ounce = five sheets of paper in an envelope or just one envelope (e.g., five sheets in an envelope = 1 oz.; five sheets + a return envelope in an envelope = 2 oz.)

The USPS has proposed price increases starting July 1, 2024 to products such as first-class mail and certified mail. The new rates include a five-cent increase in the price of a first-class mail Forever stamp from 68¢ to 73¢. First-class letters will increase 5¢. The additional-ounce rate is increasing from 24¢ to 28¢ for letters. The online postage and metered letters rate remains at 4¢ per letter. First-class flats are increasing 11¢, and the additional ounce rate for flats is increasing 27¢ to 30¢ depending on the weight of the envelope.

Mule Creek State Prison Mailroom Policies

Indigent Mail: When an indigent resident is sending outgoing correspondence that weighs more than 1 ounce or requires a larger envelope, they can request a manila envelope from the mailroom. Five unused indigent envelopes are required to be attached to the request in order to receive one manila envelope, which is usable for mail up to 13 ounces.

Disallowable Items in the Mail: Residents may not receive any of the following in the mail:

1. Address labels

2. Adhesive notes (such as Post-Its or “Sign Here” flags)

3. Banners

4. Batteries

5. Cancelled stamps

6. Cards with ribbons, string, or 3D embellishments

7. Cardboard items (except for confidential correspondence) or padded envelopes

8. Cash

9. Flashdrives, memory cards, or cassette tapes

10. CDs

11. Clothing

12. Art paper (such as drawing paper, cardstock, or tracing paper). Writing paper must be no thicker than lined paper issued for indigent residents. Paper is limited to 150 sheets per day.

13. Driver’s license (original or copy)

14. DVDs

15. Feathers

16. Fiber padded envelopes

17. Floppy discs or computer printout banners

18. Folders with metal clasps

19. Food

20. Hard plastic items

21. Items that cannot be searched without being destroyed

22. Fluids, biohazard materials, or items with metal

23. Laminated items

24. Lottery tickets, sweepstakes paperwork, gift cards, coupons, or vouchers

25. Magnets

26. Mail with bodily fluids, hair, or lipstick markings

27. Mail with items glued or pasted on (such as jewels or foam stickers)

28. Maps of any area in the county of Amador, Calaveras, or Sacramento, or any area within 10 miles of a prison

29. Modified pictures (e.g., pictures with non-allowable elements covered by marker or other materials)

30. Ornamentation, jewelry (wood, metal, or

hardened plastic), or fabric of any kind

31. Passport (original or photocopy)

32. Pens, pencils, or erasers

33. Perfumes, colognes, or scents of any kind

34. Photocopies of money, ducats, credit cards, checks, deposit slips, or other monetary instruments

35. Nude or obscene images of a person who appears under the age of 18

36. Images depicting sexual acts

37. Plastic bags, containers, or sheets

38. Plastic folders

39. Social Security card (original or photocopy)

40. Stickers

41. String

42. Tattoo patterns, tracing paper, gang logos

43. Trading cards, sports cards, or game cards (original or photocopy)

44. VHS tapes

Computer-generated cards (i.e., homemade, not purchased) must comply with all other restrictions (no glitter, not on cardstock, etc.).
- Restricted Items:* The following items are allowed, but only as described:

1. 1 calendar. Up to 12" × 24", no wire or plastic binding.

2. Up to 10 cards per day (e.g., three greeting cards + seven blank postcards = 10 cards total), no music or electronic components allowed; 3D attachments or removal attachments allowed. Up to 12" × 12".

3. Up to 40 envelopes (unstamped or pre-stamped).

4. Newspaper clippings: Complete inserts are not allowed, must still qualify as first-class mail.

5. Photos. Up to 8" × 10".

6. Photocopies. Up to 8½" × 11".

7. Posters or maps. Up to 12" × 12".

8. Up to 40 stamps or stamped envelopes.

9. Up to 10 books per 30-day period.

length
height
thickness

Product	Current Prices	Beginning 7/14/2024
Letters (1 oz.)	68¢	73¢
Letters (metered 1 oz.)	64¢	69¢
Domestic postcards	53¢	56¢
International postcards	\$1.55	\$1.65
International letter (1 oz.)	\$1.55	\$1.65

Letters		Large Envelopes (flats)	
minimum	maximum	minimum*	maximum
5 in.	11½ in.	11½ in.	15 in.
3½ in.	6 ⅞ in.	6 ⅞ in.	12 in.
0.007 in.	¼ in.	¼ in.	¾ in.

*Flats exceed at least one of these dimensions.

Department Mail Policies

The maximum weight for a first-class letter is 13 ounces. With the exception of parole clothes and third-party special purchase health care appliances, incarcerated individuals are not allowed to receive packages directly from personal correspondents; such packages must be clearly marked on the outside with “parole clothes” or “health care appliance.” (§54010.4)

Incarcerated correspondents who have less than \$1 in their account for 30 days may request up to five indigent envelopes per week. Foreign mail requiring postage in excess of the minimum required for first-class mail is limited to two of the five letters. (§54010.5)

Books, periodicals, or other publications mailed from a religious organization bookstore are considered as coming from an authorized vendor. A departmentally approved vendor is any publisher, bookstore, or book distributor that does mail order business. (§54010.8)

Funds may be received in the form of a money order, cashier’s check, certified check, personal check, or other negotiable instruments other than cash or traveler’s checks. The instrument must be made payable to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, with the incarcerated individual’s last name and CDCR number, and must show the sender’s name and address. Funds from other inmates or parolees are not allowed unless approved correspondents and members of the individual’s family or a parent of their child. (§54010.18)