

To Our Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

WELCOME TO YOUR September *Mule Creek Post*. In the spirit of care and concern for California's incarcerated, the CDCR is providing nalaxone throughout the system for use in opioid overdoses. Illicit drugs remain a concern in facilities across the country, as do other health care issues, including mental health.

Maintaining personal and collective health and welfare can be difficult in prison. We would like to hear how you and your facilities are coping.

Please write to us; submission guidelines are on page 3.

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The May 22 Guide Dogs of America graduation. From Left: Standing—Sonya Parisi, Nicole Maples, Clarence Sargent, Eduardo Diaz Jr., Moises Tejeda and Zach, Scott Martin, Arthur Henderson, Walter Caesar, Damin Pashilk, Mario Lawson, Daniel Arevalo Sarvia, Steven Betti, Jason Beck, Ronald Prasad, Mr. Peyerson, Ivan Gonzalez, Ezakiel L. Johnson, J. Herman, Emily Dreiling, Staci Marcia, Tony Blevins. Sitting/Kneeling—Matt Warner and Anna, Mark Lim, Alex Arjona and Earl, Jamie Hunt, Jarrod Wyatt, Poly Sanchez and Wyatt, Michael Frausto, C. Alan Coker and Zuko, Frank Rojas, Jerry King, Frank Lanear and Izzy, Jacob Robles, Darren Dennison and Sasha. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

GDA/TLC Holds First Graduation Since COVID Shut Down Events

By Sean Neal and Jason Davis, Lead Reporters

GUIDE DOGS OF America (GDA) is in partnership with Tender Loving Canines (TLC) to bring service dog training into California prisons. While it began on Facility D at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility in San Diego in 2016, Tender Loving Canines brought its dog-training program to the Mule Creek State Prison in January of the same year on Facility A. Since coming to Mule Creek, Tender Loving Canines' incarcerated trainers have graduated 69 service dogs. At this time, there are 30 trainers on Facility E.

The May 22 event was the first live-streamed graduation of the program since GDA merged with TLC in 2020, allowing those unable to attend in person to participate. These graduations take place once a year with outside graduations cycling every two or three months.

Chief Deputy Warden Bryan Holmes spoke on the success of the program. He has observed many different programs since he joined the department in 1996, and the success of the dog program at Mule Creek has flourished beyond all expectations. Holmes thanked the TLC trainers and handlers who dedicate their time and compassion to the program.

Vice President of GDA Tony Blevins thanked the dog trainers and their supervisors. He spoke about his own experience as a veteran, as he spent time in the Marines, the Marine Reserve, the National Guard, the Army, and the Army Reserve where he operated helicopters and tanks during his extensive military career.

Blevins noted that, according to national statistics, there are 20 veteran suicides every day. "These dogs give them the drive to move forward with their lives," he said. Veterans he has met told him, "You [GDA] have given us back the freedom we have fought so hard for." This is something that would not be possible "without the dedication and commitment of the trainers," added Blevins.

Nicole Maples, manager for the TLC program, talked about
(continued on page 2)



Chief Deputy Warden Brian Holmes
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)



(from **GDA/TLC Holds Graduation**, pg. 1)
the dogs trained at Mule Creek and the families to whom those dogs were connected. She introduced the recent graduates and video messages from the recipients. Barlow, a black Labrador trained by Robert Mansfield, went to a mother of three, two of whom are autistic. “Thank you for the countless hours of training and dedication,” said Maples. “Barlow brings great relief to the anxiety of her kids.”

Robert Yim credited the program for having transformed him into an emotionally intelligent and responsible human being. Jackson, his second dog to graduate, went to military veteran Kim, who suffered a debilitating spinal cord injury. Kim stated that Jackson has enabled a greater independence as she is able to walk with him on the beach. “I am able to do things with him that I couldn’t do before,” said Kim.

Rosie O'Donnell received Kuma, trained by Carlos Aguirre. Kuma went to Rosie's 11-year-old son with autism. Paxton, a golden retriever, went to Megan at the Huntsville Hospital for Children. His trainer, Damin Pashilk, spoke of his experience with Paxton whom he fondly nicknamed “Fancy Pants” because he “pranced around like a show dog.” Pashilk discussed some of the restorative qualities that developed within him as a result of working with dogs. “It created a passion within my heart,” he said. “My biggest mistake in life,” he added, “was not being the stepping stone to my own success.”



Sasha (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Steven Betti trains dogs as his living amends. His dog Bindi went to Sara, whose son Elliot has autism. The first thing Elliot asked was, “Does he know how to wave?” Sara said, “You should have seen his face light up.” Arthur Henderson’s dog Gizmo went to veteran William. William talked about the all the help Gizmo has given him with his disability.

Ronald Prasad trained Laney who went to Polli, a mother of two. Laney works with her 11-year-old son with autism. “She is such a blessing to our family,” said Polli.

Prasad thanked Associate Warden E. Pedersen for bringing the program to this prison. “When I first joined the program,” said Prasad, “I did it for all the wrong reasons. But as time went on, I began to internalize the mission statement of TLC: Transforming lives through partnership with service dogs.”

Stacy, a mother to two autistic children, received Keeper trained by Robert Yim. Her 4-year-old son, Brandon, suffered from severe anxiety and isolated himself. “Keeper has been truly a blessing,” said Stacy as she thanked Yim for training Keeper. “You have made a better life for my son,” she added.



Izzy (H. Kim / Media Specialist)



Anna and Zuko (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

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by P. Covello,
Mule Creek State Prison
Warden



Summer Food Sale

THIS SUMMER, MULE Creek residents participated in a La Campana food sale to benefit our community. Here are the results.

Tri-County Wildlife Care: \$2,000 went to this organization, which works with local agencies to care for wild and domestic animals.

ATCAA: \$6,000 went to the Amador Tuolumne Community Action Agency, which determines strategies to address poverty and create economic opportunities.

Amador High Booster Club: \$2,000 went to support the fundraising of Amador Valley High School athletic programs.

Jackson Quarterback Club: \$2,000 went to this organization.

Mary Graham Children's Foundation: \$2,686 went to this organization, which creates opportunities for aged-out foster youth in San Joaquin County.

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, Lone, CA 95640, or by interdepartmental mail if living at MCSP. Submissions may be edited for length and content and become the property of the *Mule Creek Post* (authors retain intellectual rights to original material). When submitting legal news articles, include source material documentation. Include your name, CDC#, and address.



Stage Coach Bandit, Pt. 3

By Don Chaddock, *Inside CDCR* Editor



BANDITS OF THE Old West were the stuff of legends and penny novels, many of them ending up as repeat offenders or hanging at the end of a rope. There were exceptions, such as the notorious stagecoach robber Black Bart. When we left off in part 2, Black Bart was in the middle of robbing the Sonora and Milton stage.

"As McConnell [the stagecoach driver] drove the animals to the rear of the stage, he noticed a ... boy on the foothills a short distance away, who was carrying a Henry rifle, with which he had started out to hunt. He beckoned to him, and the lad came. The robber had secured his booty and was making off with it, when McConnell seized the rifle from the boy's hands and fired at the despoiler. Black Bart ... ran. McConnell pursued and discharged three more shots at him. In running, Black Bart lost his hat, a little round derby, and his handkerchief fell out of his pocket. ... (Later,) a further clue, another piece of property, which is presumed belonged to Black Bart, was found behind some rocks near the spot where the stage was stopped. This was the case of a pair of spyglasses, which it is thought he used to descry the stage from afar and to note how many were about it. On the handkerchief was a laundry mark, which was the means of securing his arrest," reported the *San Francisco Bulletin*, Nov. 14, 1883



Charles "Black Bart" Boles in an undated mug shot

The investigators found a launderer with that mark in San Francisco. From there, they discovered the owner of the handkerchief was C.E. Bolton, who was staying at a nearby hotel. Bolton, who also went by Boles, was put under surveillance and Sheriff Thorn got a warrant for his arrest. "It was found that (Bolton) was a well-known man about town. He was thought to be a mining man, having conveyed that impression in the society of others by his conversation," reported the *Bulletin*. "His departures from the city at various intervals were accounted for on this supposition."

Charles "Black Bart" Boles was caught on Nov. 12, 1883. Four days later, he entered a guilty plea and was sent to San Quentin. According to prison records, he was 48 when he arrived to serve a six-year sentence. By all accounts, he was a model inmate and paroled in 1888. The prison focused on rehabilitation in those days, and Black Bart may be an example of those efforts.

When released from San Quentin on New Year's Day in 1888, Bart vowed to give up his life of crime.

"He declared that he had robbed his last stage, and that when he got out he would lead an honest life. He has been a model prisoner, giving no trouble to the officers. He has worked during the greater part of his imprisonment in the drug department of the prison, and he has become an expert chemist," reported newspapers at the time.

"He had visibly aged, his eyesight was failing, and he had gone deaf in one ear. Reporters swarmed around him when he was released and asked if he was going to rob any more stagecoaches. 'No, gentlemen,' he smilingly replied, 'I'm through with crime.' Another reporter asked if he would write more poetry. Boles laughed and said, 'Now, didn't you hear me say that I am through with crime?'" Boles said he hoped to use his newfound chemist skills to work for a druggist.

What happened to Boles after his release is a mystery, but one thing is certain—he never returned to San Quentin State Prison. Despite some rumors that

he returned to his life of crime, the robberies were often proven to be the work of copy-cat bandits. There were also rumors that Boles was hired by Wells Fargo as a consultant to dissuade him from robbing future stagecoaches.

An obituary notice for a Charles Boles was reportedly published in 1917, which would have put him at 88 years old, although his death was never confirmed.

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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Prison Fellowship Graduation

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

ON JUNE 20, 2024, a large group of incarcerated citizens, outside guests, and staff gathered in the Facility E Visiting Room — at the Mule Creek State Prison — to celebrate the graduation of 15 incarcerated citizens from the Prison Fellowship Academy.

The Prison Fellowship was founded in 1976 by Chuck Colson, President Richard M. Nixon's right-hand man who was incarcerated as a result of the Water-gate scandal. During trial, he became a Christian and began to minister to fellow incarcerated men whom he promised upon his leaving prison that he "will never forget those inside these walls," according to Troy Fennel, the fellowship's director. Thus began the establishment of Prison Fellowship, a prison ministry that follows the example of Jesus of Nazareth to tend to the spiritual needs of the incarcerated. Their goal is to go into a prison and, within five years, have surrounding churches take over the ministry.



Chuck Colson

At Mule Creek, this mission falls to River City Christian Church under the leadership of pastor Jeff Koons. River City comes to Mule Creek twice a week to share Prison Fellowship Academy teachings of life and recovery skills using the Bible and cognitive behavioral therapy-based teaching. This is a one-year program, and Fennel said this graduation was the culmination and testament of the men's perseverance and faith.

The 15 graduates are Kevin Anderson, Antonio Ayala, Robert Barber, Frederick Dew, Jeffrey



From Left: Standing—Jonathan Prince, Caesar Lopez, Floyd Thompson, Joe Nieder, Joshua Huffman, Jeff Flecht, Frederick Dew, Gabriel Ramirez, Alan Kness, Troy Fennel. Sitting—Robert Barber, Job Rodarte, Geronimo Sierra, Wilbert Noble, Gordon Wilson Kevin Anderson. (H.Kim / Media Specialist)

Fecht, Joshua Huffman, Allen Kness, Caesar Lopez, Joseph Nieder, Wilbur Noble, Gabriel Ramirez, Job Rodarte, Geronimo Sierra, Floyd Thompson, and Gordon Wilson.

The graduation ceremony began with an address by Chief Deputy Warden Bryan Holmes. He thanked Fennel and recounted the monumental changes he's seen in 28 years that brought the incarcerated population from approximately 184,000 in 1996 to less than 92,000 today. Holmes said that there is a big push by the department to bring opportunities like this for those willing to program. He acknowledged community resource manager Jason Ross and Fennel for bringing about the opportunities for these 15 men and countless others to follow. Holmes also touched on his background as a Lutheran minister's kid who has been involved in church his whole life. In fact, it was in his belonging to the traditions of church and service that he met his wife after moving to California.

Fennel was also a pastor's kid and spent 30 years working for the department of corrections in education and administration before joining Prison Fellowship upon retirement. For him it was a natural fit and a calling.



Prison Fellowship Director Troy Fennel.
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)

According to Fennel, academy teaching is about seeking answers, finding new directions and paths opposite of what these men have experienced in life. It's also about the transformation of these men's lives upon their acceptance of Christ. Fennel's takeaway message was that those who suffer from "can't do" illness limit themselves from the power of change through God. He urged the men to continue their fight for a new mind and new life.

River City pastor Jeff Koons hails from Ohio. He visited San Jose his junior year in college, fell in love with California, met his wife of 37 years, and together they moved to Sacramento to fulfill his calling. He spent 15 years ministering to youth, including those in juvenile detention. He did not have the opportunity to bring his ministry to adult prison until he met Fennel.

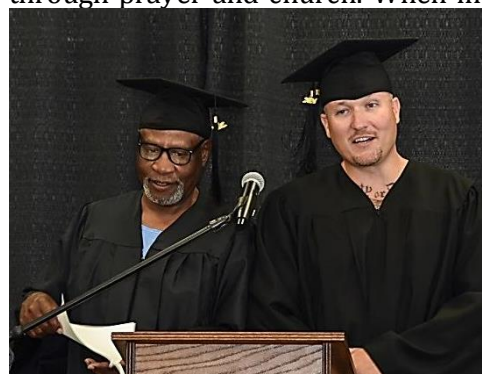


The Rev. Jeff Koons (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

In his keynote address, Koons gave mandates to the men, to lead the family unit, to tell and teach the words of God, to place trust in God, and to experience God through prayer and church. When interviewed later, Koons said, "The ultimate

message here is be willing to cooperate with God and the plan he has for you."

After the keynote address by Koons, graduates Huffman and Noble read comments from fellow graduates about what this experience meant to them. Koons closed the ceremony with a prayer. The graduates then took their group and individual pictures, and lunch and refreshments were served.



Graduates Wilbur Noble and Joshua Huffman.
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)



The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

WHAT DOES THE term *tort* mean? *Tort* is from the French for “injury,” but it also means “wrong, twisted, or crooked.” One dictionary definition of *tort* is “a wrongful act other than a breach of contract for which relief may be obtained in the form of damages or an injunction.”

Generally, *tort* is used in state-level actions under common law, which means the body of law originally developed in England prior to colonization of America, primarily from judicial decisions based on custom and precedent. It constitutes the basis of United States legal systems except for Louisiana.

Freedom of speech is considered to be our most vital freedom in the United States and the courts base that right on a theory of “clear and present danger.” That means that if there is a clear and immediate threat stated in what is said, written or broadcast through mass media, this speech is not protected. But what about civil damages?

There are four basic forms of relief based on the theory of equity, which is defined as “justice according to natural law or right; specifically freedom from bias or favoritism.” This theory embodies the concept of returning the aggrieved party to a condition equal to what they had before suffering the tortious action against them.

The four basic forms begin with “actual damages,” which are generally considered to cover lost income and the actual costs of replacing lost, stolen, or damaged property after considering depreciation of the value of the property in question.

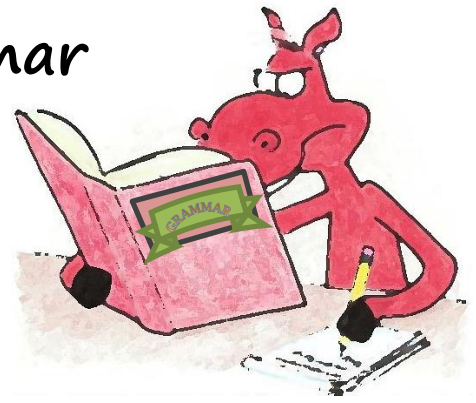
“Compensatory damages” are usually for physical, emotional, and psychological suffering.

“Punitive damages” literally punish the wrongdoer for their torts.

Last is “injunctive relief,” where the court may issue an order compelling wrongdoers to stop whatever acts they have committed that are before the court in the lawsuit.

Sources: *Black’s Law 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. Last month, we discussed subject complements. This month, we’ll talk about phrases.

Phrases

A **phrase** is a group of words that acts as a particular part of speech or part of a sentence but doesn’t have a verb and its subject. The most common type of phrase is the prepositional phrase.

A **prepositional phrase** is a group of words that begins with a preposition and ends with a noun or pronoun (the object of the preposition). Here are a few examples:

- during the storm
- for me
- after our dinner
- with his son

In a sentence, prepositional phrases act as adjectives (that is they describe nouns or pronouns; they also answer the question *which one?* or *what kind of?*) or adverbs (that is, they describe verbs, adjectives, or other adverbs; they also answer the question *when? where? how? why? to what extent? or under what condition?*).

Adjective phrase: Several friends from my job are getting together tonight.
(*from my job* modifies or describes the noun *friends*)

Adverb phrase: We’ll meet at the restaurant at 8 p.m.
(*at the restaurant* modifies or describes the verb *meet*)

Next month we’ll continue our discussion of phrases.

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*, The Associated Press, 2017; *Essentials of English*, 5th Edition, Barron’s Educational Series, Inc., 2000

The Uncaged Writer

Prison Journalism Renaissance

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Writer



WITH GREATER PUBLIC awareness of the inequities and brutality of mass incarceration, overhaul of the criminal justice system has become a hot political and social topic. Studies indicate that the more information provided to the public, the more it supports change. However, where is the public to get legitimate, firsthand information on what’s going on inside the nation’s prisons?

Enter the prison journalist and those who share their stories for publication, willing to face criticism, disdain, censorship, and possible retaliation for expressing their beliefs and opinions while documenting personal stories of trial, torment, triumph, and truth. These stories are the legacies that, once recorded, become the blueprint for history.

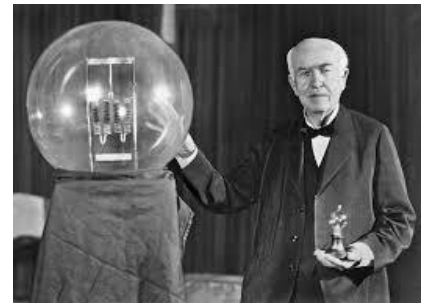
Pollen Initiative executive director Jesse Vasquez, former editor-in-chief of the *San Quentin News*, says there is a prison journalism renaissance occurring. “Prison journalism, reporting, writing from inside is unique because of where we are,” he says, “the conditions we endure, conditions of confinement that people need to speak of.”

In an NPR interview in June, Yukari Kane, CEO of the Prison Journalism Project said, “Overall we do see a growth and a lot of interest in starting [prison] publications, starting podcasts even ... that’s really quite exciting.” Thirty years ago, Kane says there were estimated to be only six prison newspapers. Today, there are more than two dozen.

(Continued on page 6)



PJP Chief Executive Officer Yukari Kane



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.

New Habeas Law Takes Effect

By Philong Huynh,
Feature Reporter

EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, the California Legislature amended habeas law (Penal Code §1473) to redefine new evidence as “evidence never presented and heard at trial and has been discovered after trial.” The law also allows for peer review literature like scientific journals to show support for any significant dispute about the evidence at trial that has since developed in your favor.

The above changes are significant in allowing for evidence that could or should have been discovered, but was not, if you can show that the evidence is presented without substantial delay once it is discovered.

The allowance for peer review literature is a game changer because not too many of us in prison can afford to pay for expert declarations to attach to our habeas petitions.

These changes are geared toward exposing false evidence at trial that has been undermined by “the state of scientific knowledge,” which is also new language added to the law to allow not just for later or the latest scientific research, but also for the state of scientific knowledge as it has existed.

This means if you were convicted by false medical, scientific, or forensic evidence — and can show by way of credible published scientific writing or adjudicated finding of facts in other published court cases that the evidence or testimony used to convict you at trial was false — then you should file a petition for a writ of habeas corpus in the superior court where you were convicted.



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

A Look at Mass Incarceration, Pt. 3

High Cost of Low-Level Offenses
By Wendy Sawyer and Peter Wagner,
Prison Policy Initiative

PRISON
POLICY INITIATIVE

MOST PEOPLE IN the U.S. criminal legal system are not accused of serious crimes; more often, they are charged with misdemeanors or non-criminal violations. Yet, even low-level offenses, like technical violation of probation and parole, can lead to incarceration and other serious consequences. Rather than investing in community-driven safety initiatives, cities and counties are still pouring vast amounts of public resources into the processing and punishment of these minor offenses.

Often overlooked in discussions about mass incarceration are the various holds that keep people behind bars for administrative reasons. A common example is when people on probation or parole are jailed for violating their supervision, either for a new crime or a non-criminal (technical) violation. If a parole or probation officer suspects that someone has violated supervision conditions, they can file a “detrainer” (hold), rendering that person ineligible for release on bail. People struggling to rebuild their lives after conviction or incarceration may find a return to jail for a minor infraction profoundly destabilizing. The most recent data show that nationally, almost 1 in 5 (19%) people in jail are there for a violation of probation or parole, though in some places these violations or detainers account for over a third of the jail population. This problem is not limited to local jails either. In 2019, the Council of State Governments found that nearly 1 in 4 people in state prisons are incarcerated as a result of supervision violations.

A particularly disturbing type of hold is becoming increasingly common: people held in jails while awaiting transfer to psychiatric facilities. One recent study reports that “thousands of [people] with serious mental illness languish in jail for months, or even years, waiting for a state hospital bed to open.” Typically, these vulnerable adults are in need of evaluation or restoration of their competency to stand trial. But, being held in jails puts them at heightened risk of victimization, self-harm, and even additional criminal charges for behaviors that are actually symptoms of their illness. The result of disinvestment in mental health infrastructure and the criminalization of mental illness mean these holds are not only unnecessary, but also unconscionable.

The massive misdemeanor system in the U.S. is another important but overlooked contributor to over-criminalization and mass incarceration. For behaviors as benign as jaywalking or sitting on a sidewalk, an estimated 13 million misdemeanor charges sweep droves of Americans into the criminal legal system each year (and that excludes civil violations and speeding). These low-level offenses, along with other non-felony offenses, typically account for about 25 percent of the daily jail population nationally, and much more in some states and counties. The rampant criminalization of homelessness and aggressive enforcement of these laws — almost all misdemeanors — also contributes to harmful and costly cycles of homelessness and incarceration.

Defendants can end up in jail even if their offense is not punishable with jail time. Why? Because if a defendant fails to appear in court or to pay fines and fees, the judge can issue a bench warrant for their arrest, directing law enforcement to jail them in order to bring them to court. While there is currently no national estimate of the number of active bench warrants, their use is widespread and, in some places, incredibly common. In Monroe County, New York, for example, over 3,000 people have an active bench warrant at any time, more than three times the number of people in county jails. But bench warrants are often unnecessary. Most people who miss court are not trying to avoid the law; more often they forget, are confused by the court process, or have a schedule conflict. Once a bench warrant is issued, however, defendants frequently end up living as low-level fugitives, quitting their jobs, becoming transient, and avoiding public life, even hospitals, to avoid having to go to jail.



Creating Neighbors Takes Flight

By Jerry King, Mule Creek State Prison

FROM A CALIFORNIA state prison classroom in Amador County to the beautiful islands of Hawaii, Creating Neighbors took center stage at the National Conference on Race and Ethnicity (NCORE) in Honolulu, in June.

Creating Neighbors is a model for student-led professional learning that takes a person-centered approach to higher education in prison. I and two fellow incarcerated students participating in Folsom Lake College's Social Work and Human Services internship at the Mule Creek State Prison created the program in 2023. We developed Creating Neighbors specifically for professors teaching in carceral settings, and to contrast the cost-centered discourse that often permeates most college-in-prison literature. Through the Creating Neighbors' model, professors and incarcerated students explore topics and issues through a co-learning format related to cultural humility, stereotypes and misperceptions, and theory and practice.

Creating Neighbors attempts to increase incarcerated student involvement and raise educators' awareness of students' unique experiences. The idea is that in order to produce the desired outcome of educated and rehabilitated students, it is necessary to have an environment capable of producing them, an environment that challenges incarcerated students to walk a road of self-actualization. This can only be done by also challenging educators themselves to walk such a road, and to take responsibility for their influence on the prison education environment. We believe that students and educators can create better outcomes together; that by coming together in the training environment they can strive for community building and self-growth, ultimately resulting in improved faculty training outcomes and improved prison education environments for all.

In reality, approximately 95 percent of the incarcerated population will be released into

society, and studies show that offenders enrolled in post-secondary education programs are 48% less likely to be re-incarcerated. Furthermore, it's estimated that \$4 to \$5 are saved on re-incarceration costs for every \$1 spent on prison education. Thus, society needs to see more programs like Creating Neighbors emerge. I encourage every educator who wants to see our society continue to grow and improve to get involved with prison education programming, and for every incarcerated individual looking to increase their own opportunities for success — both in and out of prison — to get involved as well. Together we can change the narrative and shift the culture.

For Creating Neighbors, Honolulu is only the beginning. It is no small feat for formerly incarcerated students to lead a panel discussion at NCORE with a professor who's taught in a carceral setting for nearly a decade, discussing a program created and piloted by incarcerated students at the Mule Creek State Prison. It's inspiring and motivating. It dares my mind to dream and think of the endless possibilities available. Programs like Creating Neighbors play a necessary role in the expansion of prison education, and we authors want to see others getting involved and joining in the work to recreate and further disseminate the Creating Neighbors' philosophy. Creating tomorrow's neighbors begins today.

Sources: L.M. Davis, *Higher Education Programs in Prison*, Rand Corporation, 2019; A. Gibbons and R. Rashawn, *The Societal Benefits of Postsecondary Prison Education*, Brookings, Aug. 20, 2021; D. Murillo, *The Possibility Report: From Prison to College Degrees in California*, 2021.

GED Math Class Makes Strides

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

BEGINNING IN JANUARY, a dozen men met in the B-section multipurpose room in building 19 for GED math instruction. These men had at least one common goal, to pass the GED test, and so they meet here twice a week for two hours of instruction by a highly trained, experienced, and dedicated tutor from the Peer Literacy Mentor Program (PLMP) at the Mule Creek State Prison.

Their literacy mentor, Ajay Dev, has been teaching math for more than 30 years, 16 of which were at Butte Community College and Sacramento City College. He began tutoring on the inside in 2010.

"I enjoy helping people, helping to build their confidence and motivating them," said Dev. "It's a rewarding experience when I know that I have made a positive impact on a person's life. ... The role of a mentor is to lead by example, honor, and integrity, and to teach good work ethics."

While Dev's students share a common goal, they come to class with varying levels of education. When students need one-on-one help, Dev and his fellow mentors are available to provide these services. Each mentor has his own strengths, and PLMP coordinator N. Springer works to ensure these strengths are maximized to the benefit of the students.

Dev is proud of the progress each of his 12 students has made over the four and a half months of this latest class. He is particularly proud of two men who took their GED math tests in June: Ben Villanueva and Carlos Alvarado. Both men plan to continue their education through the various college programs available at Mule Creek.

In recognition of the progress and achievements made by these 12 men, and to thank them for being such devoted students, Dev planned an event for the last night of class in late May. Sodas, burritos, and honeybuns were enjoyed by all as part of the celebration of their mutual endeavor and comradeship. Math games were played, and they shared some laughs. In addition to the food and laughter, Villanueva and Alvarado received special recognition for being at the top of the class. Dev awarded both men certificates of achievement, the first of many achievements to come believes Dev if he is any judge of character.



From Left—N. Springer, Ajay Dev, Raul Barriga, Mario Lopez, Carlos Quair, Mario Rivas, Refugio Escalante, Carlos Alvarado, Michael Maddox, Benjamin Villanueva, Ivan Castro, Sammuel Galindo, Job Rodarte, Shawn Brusacoram, Jon Esquivel.
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)



By Richard “Lonewolf” Legan,
Post Columnist

MANY PEOPLE HAVE seen the beautiful California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*) growing on hillsides in the spring. This herb also has several medicinal uses. The above-ground parts have a tranquilizing effect on the body, and this plant has been used for insomnia, hypertension, and to help oxygenate the circulatory system in humans. I used this many years ago for toothache, with positive results.

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!



California poppies (AmericanMeadows.com)

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



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

Prisoner Express
PO Box 6556
Ithaca, New York 14851



By Fred Munch, Post Columnist

Earth-Friendly Fare

SINCE WRITING MY climate report last December and six subsequent columns, I’ve become the bringer of bad news. Global warming and the burning of fossil fuels continue to create weather disasters that define the Anthropocene Age. Frequent floods, fires, and heat waves are the norm, affecting everyone regardless of status or location. Before summer started, U.S. residents sweltered from three heat waves, one after the other.

In Florida, the week of June 10, two feet of rain caused severe flooding. Cars were abandoned in the streets, floodwater up to the windows. Early this spring, Vermont suffered radical downpours and widespread damage, prompting the state to pass a law to hold fossil fuel companies liable for the destruction.

In California, wildfire season started with a bang. The fire northwest of Los Angeles ignited June 15. Fueled by 55-mph winds and low humidity, the Post Fire torched 12,000 acres in 24 hours, bringing the season total to 41,900 acres. By June 24, total acreage burned in California was 95,000 — 1,300% more than the same time last year. On tribal lands in New Mexico, two blazes merged near Ruidoso, forcing the evacuation of all 7,800 residents, blackening 20,000 acres, and destroying 1,400 structures in 48 hours. The governor declared a state of emergency. The area was in an exceptional drought, making conditions conducive to rapid spread. A weeklong heat wave across the Midwest and East Coast put 100 million people under heat alerts, and sent mercury soaring past 100°F in Boston on June 18, and in Maine on June 21. In Saudi Arabia, where temps are increasing 50% faster than the rest of the world, the thermometer reached 125°F during the Hajj (Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca), killing 1,300 and sickening many more. Due to global warming and the buildup of greenhouse gases, heat waves are three times more likely to occur than in the 1960s. Last year in the U.S., 2,300 people died from extreme heat, and the 12 months from May 2023 to May 2024 were the hottest ever recorded. There’s no question as to the worsening impact of climate change.

Enough of the doom and gloom; hopeful signs abound. One-third of all energy generated worldwide came from renewable sources. In northwest India, one of the largest solar arrays has been built. It covers 22 square miles, and is capable of powering a million homes. New companies, such as Neo-Car and EVs for Everyone are providing car-share services with a fleet of electric vehicles. At rates of \$4 per hour or \$35 per day, drivers who can’t afford \$20,000 for a new electric vehicle can get a feel for one of these pollution-free cars. The companies have advisers and workshops for those interested in buying, and startups are located in poor communities where people drive old gas-guzzlers and are left out of the market.

Here’s a surprising solution everyone can sink their teeth in: Eating healthy food can reduce greenhouse gas emissions. For my adult life, I’ve been conscious of a wholesome diet and avoiding junk food. After working in the natural food business and organic farming, I learned the benefits for mind and body. Recently, I discovered it’s better for the climate. Based on research, scientists developed a Planetary Health Diet. They found food production was responsible for 30% of greenhouse gas emissions, 40% of land use, and 70% of water use. These figures will increase as the world’s population climbs to 10 billion by 2050. They concluded an environmentally sustainable diet is the only way to feed so many people, and at the same time reduce emissions while conserving land and water. The diet consists mostly of fresh fruits and vegetables, nuts, whole grains, legumes, and unsaturated oils; modest servings of dairy, poultry, and fish; small amounts of meat, refined grains, and sugar. Walter Willett and his Harvard team used an index that measured adherence to the diet by 200,000 people over four decades, combined with a database that tallied the impacts of healthy foods compared to unhealthy. Based on the results, they predicted that if the world adopts this diet, embraces better agricultural practices, and reduces food waste, greenhouse gas emissions could be lowered by one-third, land use by half, chemical fertilizers by one-fifth, and premature deaths by one-fourth.

So let’s heed this warning: Next time we’re filling out a canteen list, think twice about those giant bags of chips and cookies. Not only does a poor diet diminish your life expectancy, it might hasten the demise of this fragile blue sphere we all call home.

Sources: *Los Angeles Times*, “Planetary Health Diet,” June 10, 2024; *NPR News*, June 10, 2024; *BBC News*, June 19, 2024; *MSNBC*, June 16, 2024.



How to Check Your Medical Record for Errors



By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

IN AUGUST 2021, I appeared for a scheduled medical procedure at the facility clinic. The routine endoscopy required sedation and was performed by an outside medical group. The preliminary interview by the nurse went efficiently, but quickly turned unpleasant. Referring to a packet of papers on a clipboard, she stated, “Your chart indicates alcohol and substance abuse ... and you are a long-term smoker. What type of drugs did you use?”

I reacted spontaneously, “What? I’ve never smoked or used drugs — ever. I was a social drinker on the streets. You must have somebody else’s file ...”

Abruptly, she scooted her chair back at my intense declaration, showing me the first page of the paperwork that, indeed, carried my name and ID number. The 10 to 12-page packet contained three or four pages from my departmental medical file and the rest the medical group’s documentation for the pending procedure.

I found the face sheet from SecureMD, titled “History and Physical,” was mine, and handwritten, fill-in entries made by the nurse indicated my inaccurate substance abuse past, “yes” written in all of them. Deeper into the package of materials was a one-page CDCR medical document with the heading, “Social History,” from where the nurse copied the mistaken information. The offending sections read, “Substance Abuse: *Former*; Tobacco: *Former*, total pack years 40; and Alcohol: *Former*.”

An unrelated entry also stated I had skin cancer and a biopsy was taken. This phony entry had no bearing on anything at the moment, but was still a glaring error. The nurse made appropriate changes to my procedure’s worksheet for the doctor’s review and the endoscopy was completed.

I quickly made a doctor’s appointment and discussed the false entries in my medical records. Explaining the possible consequences of erroneous medical histories to the doctor, I found some sympathy. He agreed the Social History entries are referenced before treatments and procedures, as well as before prescribing medications. Former drug, alcohol, and tobacco abuse influence routine medication regimens and even during evaluations for emergency medical treatment. Prescribing the wrong medication can result in negative interactions or block the efficacy of your medications. There, his sympathy ended and he stated, “I cannot change these entries. Your medical records are legal documents.”

After a yearlong attempt to change these records to reflect historical accuracy, with several denials citing the “legal documents” excuse, a small addendum showed up in my file quoting my initial declarations of no substance abuse of any kind. No attempt by staff was made to investigate the source or date of entry of these gross errors. The cause of these mistakes remains a mystery.

Unlike the master file that the CDCR retains on each of us, there are no allowances for an Olson review of medical records. You can, however, request copies of specific areas in your medical records for review. Here is how:

- Request an appointment with your doctor to review your medical records (or during a routine visit, even with a nurse).
- Ask the physician to go to the index on the first page of your medical records/files, then click on the “Histories” section.
- Upon reaching that section, have the medic bring up “Social History” to view the Substance Abuse areas. Check the existing entries for accuracy.
- Also check the latest “Progress Notes” section for “Problem List/Past Medical History/Ongoing” section. Check to verify the only entries are legitimate diagnosed or treated maladies. This effort should only take a few minutes of the doctor/nurse’s time.
- If errors or irregularities are noted, pick up a CDCR 7385 Authorization for Release of Protected Health Information to ask for copies of these specific section pages from the Medical Records office.

In addition to maintaining medical record accuracy, consider this: Prior to a parole board hearing, a comprehensive risk assessment is conducted of your prison history and medical and psychological files accessed to determine your “degree of risk to public safety.” If you discover medical records errors, especially substance abuse mistakes, ensure you have the errors corrected prior to the evaluation. Bring proof to substantiate claims of erroneous entries to the interview in case all medical errors have not been corrected.

Fortunately, in a recent doctor’s appointment, I saw my Social History was updated: “Substance Abuse: *Never*; Tobacco: *Never*. *None*. *0 packs per day*; Alcohol: *Former*, *Wine*.” In a previous appointment, I had mentioned I used to enjoy a good wine with dinner, so this was apparently added.



D Yard Runs E Yard in 50s Basketball Showdown

By Nemo Burgos, Post Reporter

LUIS SAVARIA AND team captain Keith Seriales combined for 32 points to lead the D Yard 50s to a fast and furious victory over E Yard’s highly touted 50s, 47-37. Savaria and Seriales combined for six rebounds, two assists, and six steals. The D Yard coach said, cheekily, “[Savaria] was our secret weapon. His lightning speed and agility ran circles around the more rotund E Yard 50s.” In fact, Savaria was so dominating that E Yard 50s’ coach and several players questioned his age and demanded to see his paper-work.

Though E Yard 50s came into the game heavily favored, it became evident after the first five minutes they would not be able to keep up with the faster and fitter D 50s. Within minutes, D 50s running game blasted to a 13-5 lead. At one point, the E Yard coach, Aorrell Burrell, began to eye the gym for a defibrillator as his players were holding their chests and gasping for air. Burrell did give props to D 50s saying, “It’s easier to execute when you’re fitter and faster.”

The game turned into a basketball clinic on passing and transitioning. D 50s seamlessly flowed from offense to defense and back to offense. D 50s led by as much as 18, 36-18 in the third quarter and 42-24 in the fourth. E 50s kept fighting and got their second wind in the fourth quarter with an 8-0 stretch. They surged to within nine behind 45-36. With 2:32 on the clock, Seriales scored a 2-point jumper off a pass from Savaria to seal the 47-37 win.

Healthy Habits and Practices of Sleep Hygiene

By Al Rice, Copy Editor



(cnet.com)

WHAT THE HECK is “sleep hygiene?” Essentially, these are the things that help us sleep through most nights. And, while everyone is different, the following principles are the same:

- Make bedtime and wake-up time the same each night and day.
- Eating before bedtime can disrupt sleep.
- Same for alcohol: It can disrupt sleep.
- Avoid caffeine in the afternoons and onward.
- Try meditation or deep breathing exercises to relax before bedtime.
- If you must nap, take short ones, and not near your bedtime.
- Spend some time each morning in natural light, sunlight if possible, to reset your circadian rhythm.
- Most electronic devices emit blue light (computers, phones, televisions). Limit blue light at night, because it tells the brain that it’s morning.
- It’s best to have a routine each night before bedtime. Turn off bright lights and try to avoid stimulating activity shortly before you hit the rack.
- If you prefer noise to help you sleep, a fan is best, not the television.

“The best sleep comes when we’re practicing the healthy sleep strategies that set us up for success at night,” said Rebecca Robbins to *USA Today*. Robbins is an investigator in the division of Sleep and Circadian Disorders at Brigham and Women’s Hospital in Boston.

Robbins, and Dr. Charles Czeisler of Harvard University, published a study in 2020. In their study, they and other researchers tackled several common myths about sleep:

- When *someone claims they can fall asleep anytime or anywhere*, it probably means they are sleep deprived and not a good sleeper.
- *Some people claim to need less than the optimal seven to nine hours of sleep.* Research suggests those people are likely to have health problems later in life from the lack of proper sleep.
- *Some believe that older folks need less sleep than younger folks.* Not true, though they probably get less because of poor or disrupted sleep.
- *Eight hours of sleep is eight hours of sleep, no matter when.* Not so. Sleep at night is better than sleep in the daytime.
- Despite what some may think, *lying awake in bed* is not sleep.

“In general,” Robbins said in her *USA Today* interview, “the public has begun to realize sleep is just as important as diet and exercise in maintaining health. Gone are the days of bragging about not getting enough.”

Source: *USA Today*, Jan. 31, 2024

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ANGEL TREE

Prison Ministry Applications are available in the chapel.
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The Benefits of

Handwriting

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

WITH THE ADVENT of the many digital devices upon which we type our thoughts and ideas, humans rely less on handwriting, that carefully formed letter-by-letter process of old. Because, when it comes to efficiency, keyboards win over handwriting every time. But what might we have lost as the price of this increased productivity?

Researchers at several universities in the U.S. and Europe suggest there are surprising cognitive benefits to the physical process of handwriting for people of all ages. The research reveals that the physical act of forming letters by hand improves long-term memory, enhances recall, and increases conceptual understanding of the things we write about. Taking notes during a lecture with a pen is better than a keyboard for a deeper understanding of subject matter.

"There's actually some very important things going on during the embodied experience of writing by hand," Ramesh Balasubramaniam told NPR. "It has important cognitive benefits," added Balasubramaniam, a neuroscientist at the University of California, Merced.

In fact, brain imaging indicates that the benefits of handwriting come from its complexity — how the process involves different parts of the brain that need to work in concert with the body to consistently make the correct shapes on paper from the images held in our minds.

"Handwriting is probably among the most complex motor skills that the brain is capable of," Marieke Longcamp said to NPR. Longcamp is a cognitive neuroscientist at Aix-Marseille Université.

Holding a pen (or a stylus) is a very complex task. The brain and motor system must work together to direct the delicate force of your hand to form the letters onto paper; this, as the visual system makes constant comparisons so that adjust-

ments can be made on the fly as you write.

Sophia Vinci-Booher is an educational neuroscientist at Vanderbilt University. "Your fingers have to each do something different to produce a recognizable letter," she said to NPR.

This research also shows that the earlier children recognize letters, the better they perform later in life in reading and math. In other words, writing is an important part of the process in reading, and reading different examples of handwriting enhances recognition of letters — a positive feedback loop.

The importance of teaching cursive writing to our children is coming to the notice of state governments. In 2024, California began to once again require that elementary students are taught cursive. Similarly, states such as Kentucky, Indiana, Wisconsin, and South Carolina introduced legislation to bring cursive back into elementary school curriculums.

So, back to our question: What might be lost to the price of productivity?

Audrey van der Meer is a psychologist and study co-author at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology. "If young children are not receiving any handwriting training, which is very good brain stimulation, then their brains simply won't reach their full potential," she said to NPR. "It's scary to think of the potential consequences."

Source: Jonathan Lambert for NPR News.

Digital Literacy Matters

Search Methods

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter



SEARCH ENGINES EMPLOYED to facilitate access to data-based and web-based document archives have been evolving since our digital infancy. In mainstream internet use, Google is the example that usually comes to mind. For those whose access to these technologies is restricted, their operation can seem daunting. But with guidance, that need not be so.

College students in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation have access to a departmental version of the Ebsco research portal. To begin a search there, open Microsoft Edge. Go to "Manage Favorites" in the upper-left corner of the screen, scroll down to the "DRP Learning Portal" and click on it. Scroll down the page to the available apps and click on the application card titled "Ebsco Student Edge." Click once and wait (patiently) for a window to pop up. If the "Acceptable Use" pops up, click on "I accept." Congratulations: You are now ready to program your search for documents relevant to studies in Ebsco.

Before typing in search topics, there are a few things to know. Using the Ebsco search engine, one must be focused on planning. Beyond a generalized quest for detailed information, you must first make a mental map of the search by employing some of the limited information that you already know about the subject or topic you are searching for. You really do not want your search to be too broad and sift through tens of thousands of documents. You also do not want your search to be too narrow, finding none, or less than a handful of relevant documents. In mental map terms, you want your search to be regionally focused. Locate a region of relevant data for exploration, then implement the map you envision by identifying relevant key words and employ the effective use of search operators to define parameters — and so begin your search.

Here are a few descriptions and definitions of the operators required for effective mastery of programming the search apparatus:

- **Wildcards.** The *(s) indicates any results in combination with or in addition to what you've typed. For example, con* will return documents that have any word that begins with con.
- **Ampersand.** The & is a Boolean operator that combines words and phrases. For example, combining words like *prison* and *college* will only yield documents that contain both words (though not necessarily together).
- **Quotations.** "___" By placing phrases within quotes, only documents that contain the exact phrase between the quotes will be returned.
- **Or.** By combining words with or, documents that have either word(s) will be returned in the results. For example, college or prison will return all documents that have either word in them.

Using any combination of these operators can help to narrow your search so that you are not sorting through hundreds of thousands of results. Start broadly for the most results, then employ these operators to narrow your search results to support your study goals. That said, enjoy the access that dutiful and disciplined studies have afforded to new technological platforms and academic opportunities for agency and enrichment.



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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Success is not final,
failure is not fatal: it
is the courage to
continue that counts.
— Winston Churchill

Constructing Mental Health Management Plans, Pt. 3

By **Maya Emig**, Post Columnist

WHY IS A mental health management plan important? It's important to be an active participant in your mental health management. The plan documents an understanding of your mental health issues. This in conjunction with a tangible representation that identifies your triggers, your coping skills, and how you plan to address mental health symptoms when they develop, along with a support network of people who will help assist you in maintaining your stability. Here is part three of my article on constructing mental health management plans:

Step 6: Identify the coping skills that have worked in the past as well as those you have learned about and would like to try.

These coping skills can keep my depression from getting out of control:

- Having a structured day helps me — begin the day with meditation, spend time writing in my gratitude journal, exercise for at least 45 minutes, and eat healthy meals at regular times
- For the things that are overwhelming in my life — recognize that taking them in small parts helps me feel accomplished, which helps me feel good about some aspects of my life even while feeling depressed
- Talk therapy has helped me significantly in the past, and I will reach out to my clinician and my support network
- Even though I do not want to take a shower, taking a shower and putting on clean clothes in the past has helped me feel significantly better
- Listen to uplifting music, especially “Don’t Worry Be Happy,” as it brings me back to a time when I was walking along the beach
- Be mindful of negative thoughts and recognize those that are distorted
- When I feel overwhelmed, I will ground myself by naming five things I can see, four things I can touch, three things I can hear, two things I can smell, and one thing I can taste
- Opt to watch a TV show that makes me laugh, like *Friends*, or spend time calling a friend who laughs

Step 7: Create your support network and write an accountability contract. Write out a list of people you may want as part of your support network and the reason why they would be a good person to have as part of your network. For each of the people you listed, now evaluate them for reasons you may not want to have them as part of your support network.

After you have evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of the individuals you would like to be a part of your support network, determine which ones are solid accountability partners. Contact those individuals who made your final cut and ask them if they would be a part of your support network. Tell them why you would like them to be part of your network, what their role should be, and what the issues are you need support for. If they agree, then add them to your list. Give them a copy of your plan with all the pertinent contact information for your support network, professional network, and medications.

- **Pastor Johnson**—I see him weekly and he already checks on me. Made him aware of my issue with depression and the warning signs to be mindful of, and how he can assist me. I gave him a copy of this plan and he has all the contact information for the other members of my support network. I have agreed to give him a weekly number on a scale of 1 to 10 about how depressed I feel. I trust Pastor Mike and I have already shared with him in the past my struggles with depression.
- **Clinician Charlie Harper**—I have monthly meetings with Charlie Harper. Charlie has a copy of my plan and has helped me identify new ways to manage my stress levels, and sends me articles from time to time that I try and incorporate into my daily routine.
- **Mark Smith**—My brother also struggles with depression. He is a good accountability partner because he is easy to talk to and understanding because he also struggles with depression.
- **Kelly Smith**—My sister-in-law tells me the truth no matter what. She has agreed to check in with me daily when I reach out to her and inform her of my current struggle with depression, and she has also agreed to have a conversation every couple of weeks to ask me questions about how I am doing.

Part 4 will continue in the October 2024 edition of the *Mule Creek Post*.

News Briefs

HELENA, Mont. (*USA Today*) — Lawmakers expressed concern to top brass at the Montana Department of Corrections over an audit showing limited educational offerings in the state’s correctional facilities, *The Daily Montanan* reported. The report said education and work program opportunities at Montana’s prisons are limited, featuring long waitlists and “inconsistently relevant programs.” Auditors also found inmates’ opportunities to access programs were not equitable between private and public facilities.

LOS ANGELES, Ala. (*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.

Guiding Rage Into Power (GRIP)

GRIP is a yearlong program designed to build understanding of how past trauma has created attitudes and behaviors that hurt the self and others.

INSIGHT-OUT

Interviews for the next cycle are tentatively scheduled for January 25, 2025.

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

LIFE SUPPORT ALLIANCE



Life Support Alliance provides correspondence courses to prepare you for release and for the Board of Parole Hearings. Write to find out about the **Connecting the Dots, Denial Management, RISE, and Amends Project** courses. Also ask about the **Parole Plan Roadmap!**

P.O. Box 277 Rancho Cordova, CA 95741 • LifeSupportAlliance.org

Living a Noetic Life

Our Relationship with Death
By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

The fear of death follows from the fear of life; a man who lives fully is prepared to die at any time.
—Mark Twain



Calacas (skeleton masks) are a popular part of Día de Muertos celebrations. (MielJolie.Blogspot.com)

MANY WONDER WHAT happens after death. In her in-depth research on this topic, Marilyn Schlitz interviewed experts from a multitude of faiths, sciences, and academia and found there’s a need to address and heal the great denial we have about mortality.

Death Terror Theory

According to death terror theory, each of us holds death terror, leading us to believe life is frightening, even if we’re unaware of it. In order to deal with this we seek to connect to or affiliate with groups or cultures whose values provide our lives with meaning, such as with religious organizations. As we’re confronted with our own mortality we become more aggressive and violent with opposing groups that hold opposing views and we become more entrenched with our own group. Denial of death is pathology of denial, a need to control and deny mortality. It’s a need to control our anxiety of death — a basic psychological conflict — a desire to live, while knowing death is inevitable.

Society reinforces creation of the hero system, a self-created myth that self is immortal and we can transcend death by participating in something of lasting worth. We feel compelled to create works that live on after we die, giving us a perception of immortality — such as establishing a family; building the pyramids, the internet, space stations; creating works that will last beyond death. Building a fortune or writing books are forms of a denial of death. Joseph Campbell says that in the process of developing hero myth, the main task of which is to become heroic and transcend life, we create personal and collective struggles.

Anxiety Buffer Hypothesis

Deep religious faith or spiritual beliefs, high self-esteem, and secure relational attachments should buffer people against death-related thoughts. Bringing forth positive qualities — enjoying the positive aspects of who you are and inviting others to share these positive attributes and feelings, even while facing our own mortality, enhances the lived experience.

Glimpses Beyond Life

Personal encounters such as near-death experiences have shown to enhance intrinsic value. These experiences also appear to promote pro-social behaviors that enhance individual and collective well-being. Schlitz recounts the story of a doctor who suffered bacterial meningitis and entered a coma. The doctor, a former skeptic of the concept of a spiritual existence, had tried to explain life-after-death experiences as some form of brain activity, oxygen depletion, and dream-like experiences. During his coma, he was connected to sophisticated brain wave monitoring equipment that revealed no brain activity — he was clinically brain dead. While in the coma that he had lost memory of his present life, but became aware of a spirit world. When he awoke from the coma, he recounted the experience of being separated from his body, watching the scene from outside his body. He subsequently authored the book, *Proof of Heaven*.

Life-after-death experiences exemplify the idea that energy cannot be created or destroyed. For many, this is a conceptual leap. When someone dies, their energy is still present in the universe. Reports of those who have seen visions or apparitions of deceased loved ones stand outside the worldview of most Westerners. In other cultures, it is not such an unusual experience: We come from the spirit world and arrive in our bodily form to perform a certain service. When our mission is complete, we return to the spirit world. These experiences challenge our worldviews and expand our sense of purpose and understanding. When we realize we go on, perceptions change.

Integrating Other Views on Death

Diverse worldviews are mind expanding. Including the collective humanity alleviates the terror of death. To find our own deeper truth opens us to other worldviews in an interconnected world. We don’t find noetic knowing in libraries or through academic study; we truly learn by sharing with others in curiosity and openness, a cross-ontological truth. This brings greater awareness of our own mortality, and understanding and harnessing full awareness of potentials and limitlessness.

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.





Jacques Verduin is a subject matter expert on mindfulness, restorative justice, emotional intelligence, and transforming violence. The father, community organizer, and teacher created *Guiding Rage Into Power* (GRIP) after he began his work in San Quentin State Prison in 1996.

GRIP, which existed in its first complete form in 2012, provides a comprehensive and trauma-informed approach to healing with the fourfold goal of stopping violence, cultivating mindfulness, developing emotional intelligence, and understanding victim impact. The GRIP Training Institute helps prisoners and challenged youth create the personal and systemic change to transform violence and suffering into opportunities for learning and healing. If you are interested in having the GRIP program taught at your prison, write to GRIP Training Institute, P.O. Box 2683, Berkeley, CA 64702.

Re-Membering Ourselves

THERE'S A LEGEND about a ritual that is attributed to a tribe in Africa. Though we cannot confirm the origin of this story, it describes a very beautiful custom. It represents their belief that humans are good at heart and that we all seek security, love, peace, and happiness. However, in this pursuit, we sometimes make mistakes, hurt other people, lose our way, or commit serious crimes. When that happens, the tribe gathers to remind and reconnect that member with their true nature and with their membership in the tribe in a very interesting way:

In *Sent by Earth: A Message from the Grandmother Spirit After the Bombing of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon* (2001), Alice Walker writes:

Where do we start? How do we reclaim a proper relationship to the world?

It is said that in the Bemba tribe of Africa, when a person acts irresponsibly or unjustly, he or she is placed in the center of the village, alone and unfettered.

All work ceases, and every man, woman and child in the village gathers in a large circle around the accused individual. Then each person in the tribe speaks to the accused, one at a time, about all the

GUIDING RAGE INTO POWER

By Jacques Verduin, GRIP Training Institute
Traducido por Fabián García, Spanish Reporter

good things the person in the center of the circle has done in his lifetime. Every incident, every experience that can be recalled with any detail and accuracy is recounted. All his positive attributes, good deeds, strengths and kindnesses are recited carefully and at length.

The tribal ceremony often lasts several days. At the end, the tribal circle is broken, a joyous celebration takes place, and the person is symbolically and literally welcomed back into the tribe. This tribe's message at this ritual is SAWUBONA, or I value you, I respect you, you are important to me. And the reply is SIKHONA or 'so I exist for you.'

You might say, "Well, nice story, but that's not too tough on crime, is it? Maybe a person should commit crimes so he/she can get all that attention?" And perhaps on some level, your crimes were indeed an inarticulate way of crying out for help and to get the attention you needed. With that in mind, let's take a deeper look at the ritual described in the story.

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Recordando Nosotros Mismos

HAY UNA LEYENDA sobre un ritual que es atributo a un tribu en África. Apodamos confirmar el origen de esta historia, se describe una costumbre muy hermosa. Sus creencias representan que los humanos son buenas de corazón, y que todos nosotros buscamos la seguridad, el amor, la paz, y la felicidad. Sin embargo, en esa búsqueda, a veces cometemos errores, lastimamos a los demás, perdemos nuestro camino; o cometemos crímenes serios. Cuando eso pasa, el tribu se reúne para recordarle—igual a reconectar—a ese miembro con su naturaleza verdadera y con su membresía en el tribu; y todo de una manera muy interesante:

En *Enviado por la Tierra: Un Mensaje del Espíritu de la Abuela Siguiendo el Bombardeo del Centro de Comercio Mundial y el Pentágono*, Alice Walker escribe:

¿En dónde empezamos? ¿Cómo reclamamos una relación apropiada con el mundo?

Se dice que en la tribu Africano de Bemba, cuando una persona actúa de manera irresponsable a injusta, él o ella son puestos en el centro del pueblo sin restricciones y aislados.

Con los trabajos cesados, cada hombre, mujer, y niño del pueblo se reúne alrededor del acusado en un círculo grande. Luego, cada persona de la tribu habla con el acusado—uno por uno—sobre todo lo bueno que el rodeado ha hecho en su vida. Cada incidente y experiencia que viene a la mente se relata con mucha precisión en cada detalle. Todos sus atributos positivos, fortaleza y amabilidad, y buenas obras son recitadas cuidadosamente, y con mucho detalle.

El ceremonial de la tribu a menudo dura varios días. Al final el círculo se rompe, dejando una celebración gozosa en su lugar; y de manera literal y simbólica, el antes rodeado es bienvenido de vuelta. El mensaje del tribu de este ritual es SAWUBONA, que significa te valore, fe respeto, y eres importante para mí. Y la respuesta viene siendo SIKHONA, o yo existo para ti.

Puedes decir, "Si, es una historia bonita, ¿pero se aplica la mano dura contra el crimen? ¿Tal vez una persona debería cometer crímenes para recibir toda esta atención?" Y quizás de alguna manera tus actos criminales fueran una forma inarticulada para pedir ayuda, y recibir la atención que necesitabas. Con esto en mente, tomemos un vistazo más profundo al ritual describió en la historia.

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**4400 Market Street
Oakland, CA 94608
info@womenprisoners.org**

**California Coalition for
Women Prisoners**

Journalism Societies Announce Winners

By Prison Journalism Project

A version of this article was originally published by the Prison Journalism Project. It can be found at <https://PrisonJournalismProject.org/2024/05/30/spj-pjp-announce-winners-inaugural-stillwater-awards/>.

ON MAY 30, 2024, the Society of Professional Journalists (SPJ) and Prison Journalism Project (PJP) announced the winners of the inaugural Stillwater Awards, a joint effort between SPJ and PJP, a nonprofit organization that trains and publishes the work of incarcerated journalists. Named after the first prison to publish a newspaper — the Minnesota Correctional Facility–Stillwater — the awards seek to honor journalistic excellence in the incarcerated community, while promoting the field of journalism as a viable path for justice-impacted communities.

“The Stillwater Awards are a testament to the hard work of writers behind bars, who’ve persevered against all odds to ensure their voices and stories are heard. We couldn’t be prouder to honor these rising journalists,” said Stillwater Awards Executive Director Michael Anguille.

The awards were judged by a panel of educators, professional journalists, and lawyers who are independent from SPJ and PJP. Collectively, the judges gathered weekly to discuss over 165 total entries and select the top three winners in each category. All winners, regardless of placement, were provided feedback directly from the judging panel — in addition to certificates. First place winners receive free SPJ membership. A virtual event to honor the winners, hosted by Lawrence Bartley, publisher of *The Marshall Project Inside*, was held via

Zoom on June 17, 2024. The event included discussion from the organizers and judges, as well as a Q&A with family members of the award winners and the press. Here’s a full list of winners:

- Prison Publication of the Year**

1st Place—*San Quentin News*, San Quentin State Prison (San Quentin, Calif.)

2nd Place—*Mule Creek Post*, Mule Creek State Prison (Ione, Calif.)

3rd Place—*The Endeavor*, Everglades Correctional Institution (Miami, Fla.)

Prison Journalist of the Year

1st Place—Christopher Blackwell, Washington Corrections Center (Shelton, Wash.)

2nd Place—Steve Brooks, San Quentin State Prison (San Quentin, Calif.)

3rd Place—Jeff McKee, Washington State Penitentiary (Walla Walla, Wash.)

New Prison Publication of the Year

1st Place—*Top of the Mountain*, Washington State Penitentiary (Walla Walla, Wash.)

2nd Place—*Perceptions Reimagined*, Edna Mahan Correctional Facility (Clinton, N.J.)

3rd Place—*MAC Newsletter*, MacDougall Correctional Institution (Ridgeville, S.C.)

Best News Story

1st Place—C. Dreams, “Georgia Prisoners Can BE Denied Vital Halfway House Placement Due to Medical Conditions,” *The Appeal*

2nd Place—Kevin D. Sawyer, “San Quentin is Decaying. California Has No Clear Plan to Fix It,” Prison Journalism Project

3rd Place—Christopher Blackwell, “Washington Prison Mishandled Court Mail, Impeded Access to Justice,” *The Appeal*

Best Feature

1st Place—Jeff McKee, “Inside the Mental Health Unit at Washington State Penitentiary,” Prison Journalism Project

2nd Place—John J. Lennon, “How Do People Released From Prison Find Housing?” *The New York Times*

3rd Place—Lexie Handlang, “Dreams of Leaving Prison: From Meeting Grandkids to Eating Whatever You Want,” Prison Journalism Project

Best Op-Ed

1st Place—Lyle C. May, “College On Death Row: ‘Y’all Aren’t Here to Be Rehabilitated,’” Open Campus Media

2nd Place—Christopher Monihan, “What Caused His PTSD? This Prison, Right Here,” Prison Journalism Project

3rd Place—Artemis Blankenship, “How California’s New Elder Parole Program Still Leaves Many Prisoners Behind,” Prison Journalism Project

Most Impactful Journalism

1st Place—Tariq MaQbool, “As A Muslim Prison in the U.S., I Worry I Will Be Cremated When I Die,” Al Jazeera English

2nd Place—Christopher Blackwell, “Washington State Bill Would Undo ‘Superpredator’-Era Sentencing Scheme,” *The Appeal*

3rd Place—Ezzial Williams, “The Hidden Cost of ‘Free’ Tablets in Prison,” *Scalawag Magazine*

Best Collaboration

1st Place—Josh McGhee, Kory Hussain McClary, “The Last Days of Little Eddie,” The Guardian US, Mindsite News, and Prison Journalism Project

2nd Place—Christopher Blackwell, Nina Zweig, “New Jersey Solitary Confinement Reform Hasn’t Changed Much in Prisons,” Type Investigations

3rd Place—Tina Vasquez, Derek R. Trumbo Sr., “86 Cents for a Day of Work is a Reality for Most Incarcerated People,” Prism Reports

Best Illustration

1st Place—Jessica Garza, for work published by Prison Journalism Project

2nd Place—Brian Hindson, for work published by Prison Journalism Project

3rd Place—Elsa Segura, for work published by Prison Journalism Project

For more information about SPJ, PJP, and the Stillwater Awards, check out one of the following sites:

www.spj.org
www.PrisonJournalismProject.org
www.PrisonJournalismProject.org/2024/05/30/spj-pjp-announce-winners-inaugural-stillwater-awards/

PEN America Prison Writing Program



588 Broadway, Suite 303
New York, NY 10012

Notable Hispanic Individuals



Pope Francis (Missio.org.uk)



Lee Trevino (Golfweek.USAtoday.com)



Julio Iglesias (Wikipedia.org)



Hernán Cortés (WorldHistory.org)



Ricky Martin (NBCnews.com)



Desi Arnaz (tcm.com)

On a Journey to Healing

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter



(HappyMall.com)

THE LAST DAY of April I took a semi-regular journey to the University of San Francisco for medical treatment. I needed healing; it was a good journey. The Sacramento River was swollen with snowmelt from high in the Sierras. The tributaries that feed it created scenes reminiscent of a PBS nature documentary. Water lilies floated gently, migratory birds took flight, and pasturing herds of goats, sheep, and cattle grazed the rolling, grassy, sun-splashed hills that were shaded by rustic barns and scatterings of majestic oaks.

As we approached the San Francisco Bay, dusty brown pelicans surfed the costal breeze as they stealthily stalked their prey from the skies. When there was an accident on the Bay Bridge, we took an alternate route. We drove through the marinas that hug the shore of Berkeley and navigated our way through the tony streets of Marin.

As we approached on the Golden Gate Bridge, ahead lay San Francisco, part legend, part postcard, part dreamscape: The City by the Bay at its finest.

Our journey to the university medical center took us through clusters of opulent Victorian and Queen Anne mansions that signify the Marina District, marking the path to Knob Hill. Our progress led us past the magnificent and iconic blue-and-gold dome of City Hall. It was a respite, and a sight for exile-weary eyes — in a soulful destination ... a city famous for its ethos of care.

Having arrived at our destination, when we exited the elevator I was greeted by a young nurse in charge of my care. She offered me the hospitality of coffee and snack cookies as she brought me water. Then she asked all of the obligatory questions required for my care. When she asked me how I felt, I returned the question in courtesy. She said that she had better days, but that it was still a good day. Smiling, she asked if it was OK to tell me a story. I thought that was just fine.

She began by sharing that two close relatives of hers had been murdered in the last three years. It had been understandably difficult times for the members of her family as they grieved. She told me the hardest part was that she forgave both of the murderers within a week of each killing, which was in line with the values by which she had been raised. It was hard to tell her family that she had forgiven and moved on, which made her own process of grieving even more challenging. She wished no person ill will.

She went on to relate that she would soon be leaving nursing and starting her own food truck business. The events of the past two years had encouraged her to revisit her priorities in life, and she wanted me to know how grateful she was for that. It occurred to me that I had, rather selfishly, come to this hospital seeking my own healing, yet I was only too happy to celebrate hers.

In one of my worldviews, a loving god extends my duty toward living amends to every corner of my life experience. My rehabilitative experience has led me to a position of inclusion, appreciating, adapting, and adopting the worldviews of others.

When we finished speaking I asked if I could, on behalf of us who are convicted and incarcerated for crime, offer her an apology. Although she was courteous and appreciated my intention, she wanted nothing to do with it; what was done was done. Nevertheless, she was happy to see in it an opportunity to move forward in a more meaningful way in life and in love. The healing and restorative power of love in our lives never ceases to amaze me. For so many of the things that ail us, love is the only cure.

Help Wanted:

Mule Creek Post writers needed.

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

Send a Résumé and Writing Sample to:

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



Notable Hispanic Individuals



Jennifer Lopez (Vogue.com)



Fidel Castro (Wikipedia.org)



Selena Quintanilla (Eonline.com)



Che Guevara (History.com)



Frida Kahlo (AcademyOfMedia.edu.au)

Mule Creek K-9 Resident Celebrates Birthday

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter
and Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

IN JUNE, THE GDA/TLC dog training program on Facility E, at the Mule Creek State Prison, celebrated the completion of a year of training for six of the program’s brightest stars. Over 25 trainers and several well-behaved K-9 participants gathered for photos and video. The video production, which will be shared with dog programs at other institutions, featured trainers’ commentary on working with their wards and emphasized the important benefits of dog training. The mission of the program is to transform lives — not only for those who receive the trained dogs, but for the trainers themselves.

“These dogs are usually matched with disabled individuals like veterans or autistic children,” said Arthur Henderson, one of the trainers. This class of K-9 grads met with other clubs and potential clients in late June in Sylmar, California, to see which dog connects best with a client. They work four to five days with the clients before making a match.

“I’m proud of this crew,” said Guide Dogs of America (GDA) and Tender Loving Canines (TLC) staff trainer Sonia Parisi. “I’m here to ensure they’re on the right track to learn and follow the right training methods. They’re professionals. Everyone here is eager to learn, and will be able to one day take these skills to the street.”

Trainers and their graduating dogs for this class are: Darren Dennison and Sasha, Arturo Castro and Shane, Frank Lanear and Izzy, co-trainers Jason Beck and Mario Lawson and River, Josh Thomas and Oslo, and Matt Warner and Anna.

A special ceremony celebrating the Izzy’s third birthday, complete with a birthday cake, was a highlight of the festivities. The cake was made of kibble with peanut butter icing. Three candles made of Beggin strips topped it off.

“I’m going to miss Izzy, but that’s a part of the program,” said Lanear, Izzy’s trainer. “We do the best we can with them, and then they move on to help someone like she has helped me.”

The dog programs at Mule Creek have graduated 75 dogs since its inception in 2016. As dogs and trainers walk the track each day, the influence on those involved is apparent. Describing the bond formed between trainer and dog is difficult to put into words, but something that is transformative, lasting, and unforgettable.



Birthday dog Izzy
(M. Johnson / Media Specialist)



Frank Lanear and Izzy
(M. Johnson / Media Specialist)



Izzy’s birthday party. From Left: Standing—Eduardo Diaz Jr., Robert Yim, Clarence Sargent, Walter Caesar, Ezakiel Johnson, Ivan Gonzalez, Steven Betti, Scott Martin, Garry Tankersley, Frank Rojas, Todd Simmons, Alex Rosales, Mario Lawson, Frank Lanear and Izzy, Guillermo Brambila, Arturo Castro and Shane, Daniel Arévalo-Sarvia, Jason Beck, Arthur Henderson. Sitting/Kneeling—Eddie Sample, Matt Warner and Anna, Darren Dennison and Sasha, Angus MacIntyre, C. Allen Coker and Zuko, Jose Herrera, Damin Pashilk, Mark Lim, Jarrod Wyatt.

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Notable Hispanic Individuals



Pablo Picasso (Britannica.com)



Simón Bolívar (TheCollector.com)



Antonio Machado (PoetsHouse.org)



Eva Perón (awpc.CattCenter.laState.edu)



George Lopez (kens5.com)

Seeing Through Stone

A Major Art Exhibition — Part of the Larger “Visualizing Abolition”
By Al Rice, Copy Editor

THE WORK OF seven artists from the Mule Creek State Prison are currently on display at the Seeing Through Stone art exhibition organized by the San Jose Museum of Art (SJMA) and the University of California, Santa Cruz, Institute of Arts and Sciences (IAS). This exhibition is part of the larger “Visualizing Abolition” project that features contemporary, incarcerated, and formerly incarcerated artists throughout the world.

Artists were asked to submit works based on the prompt: “In a world without prisons — and where all people are free — everyone would be able to see the sky.”

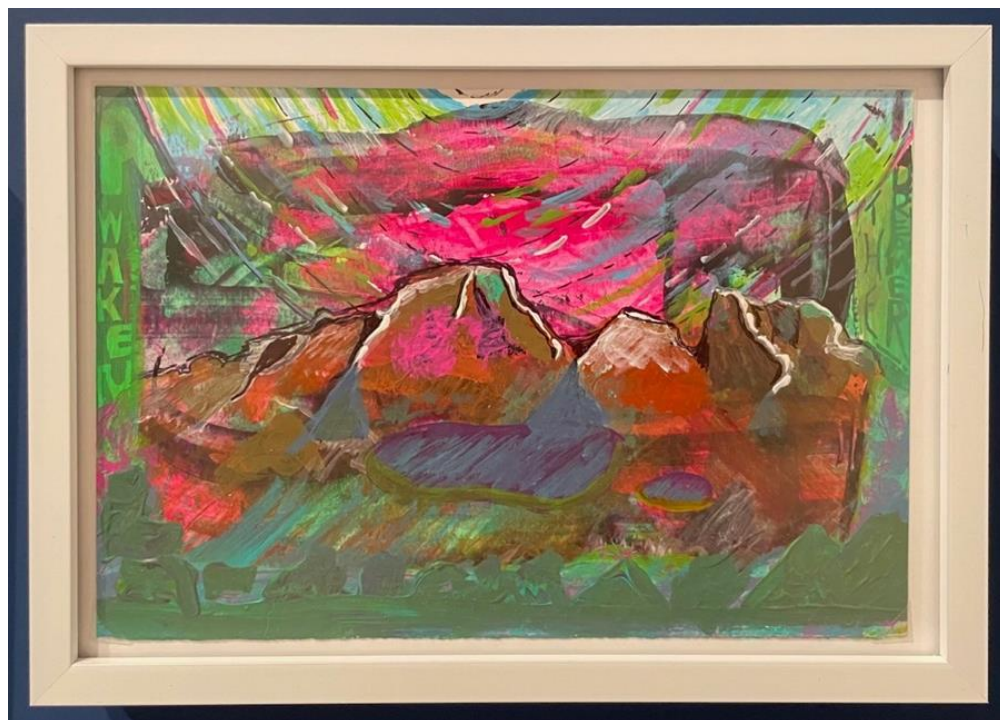
Renowned artist Cherie Hacker — who teaches several art classes at Mule Creek — helped to arrange the postage, which was funded by the William James Association. These seven artists are currently students in Hacker’s art classes, and she is understandably proud of their achievements.

Here are the artists, and the exhibition site where their work is displayed:

- ✚ Albert Bell, *Moonrise Over the Hudson* (acrylics on Bristol board), SJMA. *The Doors of Opportunity* (acrylics & colored pencil on Bristol board), SJMA.
- ✚ Bryan Matheson, *Arctic Exile* (acrylics & ink on Bristol board), IAS.
- ✚ Donnie Ivy, *In a World Without Prisons ...* (acrylics on Bristol board), IAS.
- ✚ Daniel Alas, *Maui On My Mind* (acrylics on Bristol board), SJMA.
- ✚ Jose-Luis Herrera, *My Life Under the Artificial Stars* (acrylics on Bristol board), SJMA. “It’s based on the fact that light pollution prevents us in a prison yard from seeing the stars at night.”
- ✚ Juan Arredondo, *Unwitting Contributor* (charcoal & soot on Bristol board), IAS. *Untitled* (acrylics on Bristol board), SJMA.
- ✚ Robert Barber, *In a World Without Prisons ...* (acrylics on Bristol board), SJMA.

The exhibition is being held at both sites, from April 12, 2024 through Jan. 5, 2025. Additional information can be found online at:

ias.ucsc.edu and sjmusart.org/exhibition/seeing-through-stone.



Bryan Matheson’s Arctic Exile (acrylics & ink on Bristol board)
Photograph by Matheson Family

Creative Arts Program: Drawing Class



The Creative Arts Program provides instructional workshops in drawing techniques, led by local artist Cherie Hacker.

In Facility E Hobby Room:
Tuesdays 2-3:30 pm

In Facility E Hobby Room:
Tuesdays 6:30-8 pm

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

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





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



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

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

SO, YOU WANT to be an alchemist. Here's your challenge for the month. There are several fantastic creatures in the game from cultures around the world. Can you create the **Phoenix**, **Dragon**, **Quetzalcoatl**, **Tortoro**, and **Ent** elements? Hint: the first two involve **Fire**, and the latter two involve **Tree**.



(SFweekly.com)

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.

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🌐 NVF.org



Psych View

Should You Be Diagnosed? By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

SOME INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS hide their problems because they do not trust others to help them. Sometimes they refuse to accept that they may have problems at all, even when everyone around them says they do. Could this situation apply to you?

Prison is not a comfortable home for most people. Even in society, it can be difficult to seek help. You live in your body; you are the person most subject to the moods and thoughts of your psyche. You know if you are well.

Some stress-related moods are expected in the harsh conditions of prison. Some paranoid thoughts are normal in that environment. A belief in conspiracies against you is probably excessive in most situations (certainly not all situations). Have others suggested that you may benefit from medication? Have you asked them why they think so? Have you tried medication?

Read your crime review. Were you suffering from illness at the time you did the crime? Did your attorney suggest an insanity defense? If these factors are present, you need to be realistic in addressing any suggestion of illness. If you have not done so, it reflects poorly on you. If medication is not effective, that's fine. At least you tried and made effort to change. If you have problems, deal with them. It is not realistic to expect that symptoms are going to go unnoticed, or that you will parole successfully with untreated problems.

If you are mentally ill, you must be realistic about your illness. If you fail to take medical advice or seek help, you will be judged as "treatment resistant." If you feel you are not mentally ill and have been diagnosed unfairly, seek a second opinion. Ask what your diagnosis is based on, how you can change it, and what is expected of you. If you fail to take these steps, you will increase your perceived risk because you may be viewed as irresponsible and mentally unstable.

Can seriously mentally ill incarcerated individuals parole? Yes, with work to control their illnesses they can. Do not use mental illness as an excuse for your crime; use your crime as an excuse to take control of your mental illness. The rest of us thank you.

Learning and Change

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

FOR MOST PEOPLE, learning is a journey. It begins at birth and is still ongoing in my middle age. At its infantile stage, it was the processing of language to learn speech, the making of meaning of my mother's tongue, the acquisition of skills like walking, and the relishing in newfound experiences in exploring the world through taste, touch, sight, sound, and mobility, which is not unlike how adults explore the world.

In my middle age, learning is still essentially the intake of information and experience and the processing, evaluating, and deriving meaning from those morsels of knowledge and experiences for an applied purpose, whether it's applied knowledge in planning the future, strategizing tactics in solving complex problems, or deriving pleasure and meaning from reading a good book.

From newborns to incarcerated adults, the paths to where we are were the product of the conditioning and learning we were exposed to or voluntarily took part in. The highs or frights that rewire neural circuitry upon our exposure to drugs, our inroad into crimes or criminal behaviors, upon the pollution of innocence, the outbursts of vitriol and violence on young minds and bodies — all ensue in endless repetitions of destructive behaviors and self-loathing that lead here to this place.

Just as we learned, observed, and modeled the things we saw in our early life, we could also choose to unlearn and change. Whether prison was a dramatic and monumental event, or a seemingly inescapable fate and revolving door behind which one can choose to wallow in hopelessness and regret over a life un-lived, or over an immutable event, one can choose to forge a new path toward learning, changing, mending, healing, and true freedom that comes with a break from the past and, with that, true remorse and empathy.

In the end, change is the common denominator; change that takes place before a learning experience and change that results afterward. Whether it's the internal process in our brain or external events in our environment, at all levels of human experience lies change. Change is the essence of learning, and learning, in turn, affects further changes as many of us navigate the new lingo of self-help groups in bringing about change in ourselves, in others, and in preparation for a better future.

Oregon Repeals Drug Law

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

BALLOT MEASURE 110, Oregon’s decriminalization law, was signed into law in 2020, and went into effect in 2021. The law decriminalized possession of illegal drugs (in small amounts), and was supported by nearly 60% of the state’s voters. While it did not make drugs legal, it put a stop to prison sentences, substituting fines of \$100 if users underwent addiction screening. But the timing couldn’t have been worse, as COVID and the fentanyl crisis came along at the same time.

“We can’t think of the Oregon effort as a failure because it was never given a chance to get off the ground,” said clinical professor Jeffrey Bratberg in an interview with *USA Today*. He is from the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy.

Oregon’s overdose deaths increased from 84 in 2019, to over 1,100 in 2022-23. According to Cassandra Frederique of the Drug Policy Initiative who also spoke with *USA Today*, this increase is not a result of decriminalization. Instead, due to the COVID-19 pandemic there were critical staff shortages that prevented adequate implementation of the drug treatment portion of the law. Also, at this time fentanyl became a crisis across the U.S.

While Oregon’s Measure 110 was repealed this year, other states are considering similar — while not as ambitious — harm reduction measures. The idea is to keep people alive so that recovery is possible; but it remains to be seen if Oregon’s reversal will affect other states’ efforts toward decriminalization.

“The idea that criminalization works is one that most people know is not true,” Frederique told *USA Today*. “I think we’re going to continue to see people speak about Oregon. But I think with time, people are going to be able to move away from the political theater around it, and actually look at the research.”

Source: *USA Today*, Mar. 25, 2024

Embracing Endurance

By O. Rick Bridges, Feature Reporter

IN THE HEBREW tradition, endurance is intentionally developed, dutifully maintained, and clearly defined as an emotional attribute in a personal state of being. It is an all-of-person response to the entire range of experiences that one might encounter on a given day, week, month, year, or lifetime. The Hebrew term for commitment to endurance is known as *netzach*.

In his popular text *Counting the Omer: A Spiritual Guide*, Rabbi Simon Jacobson describes the depth and breadth of this emotional state when properly developed:

Netzach means endurance, fortitude, and ambition, and is a combination of determination and tenacity. It is a balance of patience, persistence, and guts. Endurance is also being reliable and accountable, which establishes security and commitment. Without endurance, any good intention or endeavor has no chance of success. Endurance means to be alive, to be driven by what counts. It is the readiness to fight for what you believe, to go all the way. This, of course, requires that endurance be closely examined to ensure that it is used in a healthy and productive manner.

Commitment to Endurance

It is both healthy and reasonable to measure our individual commitments in terms of endurance — our ability to follow through on our declared intentions. Given that we choose to make commitments as individuals and in deeply personal contexts, the questions we ask ourselves about our commitments are, perhaps, more important than any answer that might be garnered from personal reflection or offered as advice and counsel from another person. Here are several relevant questions in support of endurance:

- Do I have difficulty making commitments?
- How much do I love and enjoy the objectives that require my commitment?
- Do my enduring commitments cause me to be inflexible, demanding, or controlling?
- Do I love and commit to my self-care, my family, my recovery, my rehabilitation, my work, my education, and my choices?
- Do I know when to yield in the will of my commitment, including others, out of strength rather than fear?
- Do others in support of my commitments cooperate, collaborate, or capitulate under the sheer force of my will, or out of love?
- In what ways is my commitment to endurance a truly dutiful reflection of my past indiscretions and failures, my selfishness and criminal cruelty?
- Does my endurance include a commitment to physical, emotional, intellectual, spiritual, and social sobriety?
- As a person living in a rehabilitative and therapeutic community, how is my endurance a manifestation of my commitment to living amends?
- Am I committed to an enduring social contract where my citizenship is a manifestation of purposeful living connected to the greater good?
- Is my commitment to endurance generous and dignified? Is it a manifestation of the very best of me?
- When faced with hardships, do I walk proudly with my head up, aware of my weaknesses and confident of my strengths, like a king or a queen?

A healthy commitment to endurance is ideally directed to develop our good qualities and eliminate our bad ones. It logically and eventually informs the types of essential social literacies and durable social competencies that serve as the components of resiliency — and the foundation of endurance.

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Lilly, You Touched my Heart

By Jason Rosacia, Post Reporter

THERE WAS A man who, while walking back to Building 18 at the Mule Creek State Prison, was tired and had racing thoughts. This Facility D resident used to dislike dogs until a cute and cuddly German shepherd puppy caught his attention. He asked the trainer, Mike Simons, if he could pet the playful dog. Simons consented with a smile.

Upon fondling Lilly’s fluffy head, the man had mixed emotions as Lilly warmly expressed her longing for affection. He said to himself, “Thank God for CDCR’s commitment to rehabilitation!” This puppy reminded him of his young children, and all children in general: They’re helpless, fragile, in need of genuine care, love, and protection. They are teachable, and have no ill judgments polluting their innocent minds. That mellow man felt the need to share his sentiments for two good reasons: This is therapeutic and it is rehabilitative.

“Yeah bro! There was this scary-looking dude full of tattoos who couldn’t help it, but showed his soft side and pleaded with me to pet this puppy,” Simons said after the man expressed his feelings toward the dog.

In the following days, the man inquired about the presence of the puppies. He asked a dog trainer, who said these German shepherd puppies were rescued by Cherie Flores, the owner of Infinite PawsAbilities, (InfinitePaws.org) when they were 8 weeks old. “Taking care and training these puppies promotes the feeling of making amends, redemption, empathy, and patience,” said trainer Jeffery Duvardo, who is also a facilitator in the Lifer Support Group. His words echoed exactly the former dog despiser’s unexplainable feeling when he first petted Lilly. “We encourage all to pet these puppies while they’re still here, because they’re supposed to leave soon for adoption,” added Duvardo. When asked if training puppies will be part of the dog-training program, Duvardo suggested he

ask the kind-hearted person behind the dog-training program, Flores.

“Yes, hopefully, this will be a regular thing,” she said with a smile and hopeful eyes.

This is good news for most of us who are greeted by gloomy mornings and cranky folks. Most would agree that seeing the puppies just being puppies is amusing and therapeutic. Hence, that man decided to write this article.



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The Medicinal Benefits of Tea

By Sean “Sharif” Neal, Lead Reporter

TEA, CONTRARY TO popular belief, is the second-most consumed beverage in the world after water at an estimated two billion cups per day. Studies have shown that it may be the medicine we need to prevent diseases such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, coronary artery disease, and dementia.

According to the National Center for Complementary and Integrative Health, a division of the National Institutes of Medicine, it is estimated that about 38% of Americans use complementary and alternative medicines. This comes as no surprise since the rise in preventable chronic disease, along with a growing distrust of pharmaceutical companies and Western medicines. This seems to have many health-conscious Americans looking toward natural alternatives to heal their bodies without having to experience the harmful side effects of many of the prescription drugs on the market today.

Tea, which originated in China over three thousand years ago, is produced from the *Camellia sinensis* plant, and comes in six different types: green, white, yellow, oolong, black, and dark. Each kind depends on the way they it is processed and each is sub-divided into fermented, semi-fermented, or non-fermented varieties. All teas contain polyphenols and catechins, which are powerful antioxidants that help fight cancer. In an article published by Nagma Khan and Hasan Mukhtar, the authors note studies conducted in China have reported that drinking black tea regularly significantly lowers the risk of developing squamous cell and cutaneous malignant melanoma cancers.

Another study conducted in Hangzhou, China, suggests that the consumption of green tea has protective effects against developing prostate cancer due to a reduction in serum levels of prostate-specific antigen (PSA), hepatocyte growth factor, and vascular endothelial growth factor in men with prostate cancer. This was found after brief treatment with green tea extract containing polyphenon E, with no elevation of liver enzymes.

Similar studies conducted in Uruguay associated tea drinking with a reduced risk of lung cancer in male cigarette smokers, while a Shanghai control study associated a protective effect of frequent, daily, or several-times-a-week black tea consumption in female non-smokers with the same protective effects.

In addition, tea drinking has been shown to have positive effects against breast cancer. As suggested by Khan and Mukhtar’s article, though results from treatment were inconsistent, there was a relation between green tea intake and risk of getting breast cancer in women who consumed green tea regularly. In fact, stage I and II breast cancer patients showed a lower recurrence rate, and were free from cancer longer due to consuming more than five cups of green tea per day. Therefore, it seems there is enough evidence to conclude that drinking tea daily can produce health-stimulating results, and the strongest associations with these benefits revolve around green and black teas.

Let’s be clear, tea is no substitute for regular checkups with your health care

provider or taking medications as prescribed to treat your condition. Instead, tea should be integrated into daily diets for its antioxidant benefit, and the science seems to support this. Tea is not only medicine; it tastes great with many different varieties to choose from. As for coffee drinkers, no need to worry: You can still have your cup of Joe with two sugars and hazelnut creamer in the mornings. It may not have the same health benefit as tea, but it’s still all good.

TOP TEAS

 Peppermint Good for nausea and stomach pain	 Matcha Boost energy levels and reduces brain fog
 Hibiscus Helps high blood pressure and respiratory issues	 Oolong High in polyphenols can help stress
 Chai Enhances immune system and fights inflammation	 Ginger Helps reduce bloating and upset stomach
 Chamomile Beneficial for sleep	 White Highest in antioxidants

(ar.Pinterest.com)

CalTrans Opportunities

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

Back2Work®

ON TUESDAY, APRIL 6, 2024, Pam Rogers of Back 2 Work held a first-of-its-kind meeting in the Facility E Hobby Room at the Mule Creek State Prison to inform incarcerated residents of the variety of opportunities available to them upon release. Back 2 Work is a statewide agency operating in 40 counties to help the incarcerated, veterans, and others overcome barriers to employment by connecting people to job opportunities and training.

In particular, CalTrans will hire work crews for less than six months to do beautification and landscape work, with pay starting at \$16.50 per hour, 30 hours per week. Good workers may then move into other positions and eventually a career.

Besides CalTrans, there are county and state positions open to the formerly incarcerated. For example, Sacramento County Waste Management often calls Rogers' agency to look for entry-level job candidates to start at \$28 per hour.

The waiting list for the Back 2 Work program is two to eight months, so contact them as early as possible before your release date; they have offices in most counties. You'll need a valid state photo ID or driver's license and a Social Security card to get started. There is a bill in the Legislature this year that, if passed, will require the Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation to obtain California IDs for everyone leaving prison by next year, not just for those whose sentences are less than 10 years as is currently the practice.

Back 2 Work also writes letters for those going to parole hearings to inform the board that you are eligible for placement in their program.

Two weeks later, Rogers returned with handouts on available programs and opportunities, and provided training on résumé writing, interviewing techniques, and phone etiquette. She plans to bring a representative from Patelco Credit Union to

educate people on financial literacy.

Back 2 Work works with other subcontractors to provide training and certifications for numerous marketable skills, such as forklift operation and truck driving. It also works with the Department of Rehabilitation to pay for similar training to include truck driving, barber or cosmetology school, heavy equipment operation, and even tattoo removal, among many other things.

Some exemplary partners of Back 2 Work include Five Keys and Homeboy Industries, who not only provide training, mentorship, and job opportunities, but also a safe place to come to during the day for many formerly incarcerated. Notably mentioned by Rogers was an outfit called Positive Change that trains people on how to start a business.

Additionally, Back 2 Work partners with various unions throughout the state, as well as with the Center for Employment Opportunity to connect people to even more good-paying jobs.

On the horizon is coursework by Back 2 Work on Edovo, the education app on the GTL tablets. Also coming is a dog-training program for the formerly incarcerated.

A Father-and-Son Union

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

WHAT IF YOU knew you had a child out in the world, but you'd never met? What if you were this son or daughter and never knew your father? William Harley knew he had a son named Cody, a fact he'd known for more than 32 years, the fruit of a relationship ended long ago. What is more, due to life's circumstances, they never had the chance to meet. Harley went to prison and their chance of ever knowing one another faded to a distant hope. Enter Harley's daughter, Christine Torres, Cody's half-sister from another relationship, and it was her who helped keep this hope alive.

Through the passing years, Christine told Harley the whereabouts of his son, Cody Thompson, and he made the best of these few details as he could. Still, he always held out that one day they would meet. Just recently, hope bloomed into real possibility.

Christine told Harley that Cody was being transferred to the Mule Creek State Prison, though she did not know on what Level II facility he would end up. Harley, who was housed on Facility C, a Level III yard, had been endorsed for Level II for some time. He contacted staff and they looked into the situation, at which time they were able to accommodate the transfer in order to bring father and son together.

Harley walked into building 21 on Facility E and discovered his former supervisor working there as a building officer. He told the officer about his son, who was also housed in building 21, and Cody was called to report to the podium. As the young man approached the officer, he noticed an older man standing there.

"What's up, son?" said Harley. "I'm your father." And the two came together in a hug that had waited 32 years.

Over the next few days, father and son spent time getting to know one another; however, this time was short because Cody would be moving soon to the Minimum Support Facility. They made the best of it, took a first-ever photo together, and made arrangements to keep in touch. No one knows what the future holds for father and son, but the outlook is as bright as the day they met.



William Harley and Cody Thompson at the Mule Creek State Prison, Facility E.

Water: How Much is Too Much?

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

WATER IS ESSENTIAL to life on Earth; in fact, it is the reason there is any life on our planet at all, for in liquid water is where the chemical and biological processes of life are possible, and we must drink enough of it each day to survive.

We know there is a minimum amount of water needed, though most of us still don't drink enough. According to the Mayo Clinic's website, drinking eight glasses of water each day is about right. It's the best way for us to keep our bodies running efficiently, and here's a simple way to determine our hydration levels: By the color of our pee.

- If urine is brown or deep yellow, we're dehydrated.
- If it's pale yellow like lemonade, we're hydrated.
- If it's clear, then we're overhydrated.

It is possible to drink too much and become overhydrated to a point that could cause water poisoning. When we take in too much water, our body's electrolytes are diluted and we run the risk of hyponatremia — low levels of blood sodium. The National Kidney Foundation lists symptoms of hyponatremia to include nausea, vomiting, low blood pressure, headache, confusion, fatigue, and muscle cramps.

Everyone's water needs are different based on sex, weight, body type, age, and other factors. Still, we need to know how much is enough and how much is too much. The Mayo Clinic says we should drink water before, during, and after meals; before, during, and after exercise; and when are thirsty.

Source: Kristen Apolline Castillo, USA Today, June 17, 2024.

Understanding Your CRA

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

THIS ARTICLE IS intended to assist incarcerated people who will receive a compressive risk assessment (CRA, or "psych eval") prior to a parole hearing, as there has been a great deal of misinformation and anxiety about the CRA process.

Here is part two of four of this series on understanding the CRA.

How to Prepare for the CRA Interview

Honesty is always advisable, as is a non-confrontational attitude.

- Incarcerated people should approach the interview and the clinician with the same serious and civil demeanor expected at a parole hearing.
- Incarcerated people should approach the interview as a pre-parole rehearsal and be ready to discuss any area of their life, crime, and post-incarceration behavior the clinicians wish to delve into.
- Your attitude and behavior will be carefully observed by the evaluator and will be described in the report under "Mental Status Examination."
- You have the right to ask the evaluator questions about the process throughout the interview, but such questions should be relevant, and you need to be courteous and cooperative throughout the interview.
- The evaluator is not your friend or your psychologist, but they are not your enemy either. Thus, it is not in your best interest to approach the evaluator with any kind of hostility or suspicion in your demeanor.
- We recommend that you do a thorough Olsen review to be sure you understand the record of your crime that both the clinician and the parole panel will be operating from; be aware of what's in your file that is likely to come up for discussion.
- It is a good idea to bring as much of your parole plan as you have to the CRA interview, relapse prevention plans, and support letters related to housing and prospective employment. If your parole plans are not complete, take what you have.
- Solid plans in these areas are often referred to as "mitigators" by the clinicians regarding an individual's risk assessment.

Weight of the CRA

- The CRA is only one tool the panel members use in deciding suitability, but it is one of the most important.
- A moderate or low risk will not sway much either way; however, a high-risk rating is a very good predictor of denial.
- However, parole panels have been known to substitute their own opinions on risk for that of the FAD clinician and grant parole despite a high-risk rating as well as deny parole in the face of a low-risk rating.
- Certainly, the CRA will be mentioned in the panel's articulation of support of their decision, either to grant or deny, but will not, in itself, be the sole or primary reason for that decision.
- The CRA is also the vehicle by which the "relevant domains," or areas that are of current concern regarding risk, are identified for parole panels.

Timing of the CRA

- CRAs are done every three calendar years, regardless of the timing of parole hearings.
- Interviews for the CRA are done usually four to six months before the scheduled parole hearing.
- Prisoners should receive a copy of their CRA about 90 days prior to their hearing, if a new CRA is due. It is possible to appear at two hearings with the same CRA.

Next month, we'll continue with LSA's lesson on CRAs in What the CRA Means.



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The donation of flat artwork for PREP auctions is ongoing without a deadline for submissions. Donations can be made in the drop boxes in the facility chapel.

If you wish to contact PREP for its excellent self-help correspondence courses or to receive the Oasis newsletter, feel free to write. See the July 2024 edition of the Mule Creek Post for a list of courses available.

Why Read the Classics?



By Rob Sharp,
Post Reporter

PUBLISHED IN 1926, *The Weary Blues* was Langston Hughes' first compilation of poetry, wherein the author "reminds readers that equality is a part of the American dream that remains unfulfilled." He went on to publish several more collections of poetry over the years.

Born in 1902, Hughes was a native of Joplin, Missouri, though he lived in many places, including Mexico City prior to his 12th birthday. He graduated high school in Cleveland, Ohio, and ended up in New York at Columbia University; he found the environment there, "Distasteful or worse."

Hughes went on to be a steamship sailor and cruised through the Canary Islands and the coast of West Africa, where he wrote many of his poems. From his "Proem" (prologue poem) to his last work in this volume, Hughes shares with great depth and passion what it was like to be an African American in the early 20th century. But, he also had times of great joy, as during his stay in Italy where he wrote:

*To fling my arms wide in the
face of the sun, Dance! Whirl!
Whirl! Till the quick day is
done. Rest at pale evening ...
a tall slim tree ... Night
coming tenderly, Black like
me.*

Through the days of Jim Crow, to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, to today, true equality is still a chimera eluding many African Americans. But Hughes doesn't dwell on that and he finds joy in the common and mundane as well as in the high points of his life.

If you enjoy poetry, then try *The Weary Blues* by Langston Hughes. Regardless of one's ethnicity, you'll find delight in his masterful use of deeply descriptive language.

The Weary Blues is available on the GTL Library app in the Education area of your tablet.

Learn More to Earn More

By Fabian Garcia, Spanish Reporter



SPENDING YEARS CONFINED to the custody of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) should serve as a turning point for someone to want to do better and be better when they return to society. Earning a BA degree or being certified in a trade provides you with the skills and education you'll need to stand out in the job market, and ultimately enjoy a livable wage for you and your family.

Although BA degrees and trade certification programs are offered at no cost to those incarcerated, not everyone has sufficient time left to serve in order to complete them, so costs are something to consider if they wish to continue after release. In California, the average resident tuition is \$13,753 a year, according to College Simply. Also for California, Top Trade Schools reports that a one-to-two year certification in a vocation-focused community college or a private vocational school will cost between \$8,000 and \$33,000.

Taking advantage of your time while on the inside to prepare yourself for after your release isn't just economically beneficial for you, but for any prospective employer as well. Employers willing to hire people with criminal records can benefit from a \$3,000 tax credit for the first year, and \$1,500 for the second year of employment. That's a reassuring incentive for employers hesitant to hire from the justice-impacted pool of talent.

Returning to society comes with a number of things one covets on the inside, like spending time with family, eating out at a favorite restaurant, and having the freedom to choose when to do something without needing to ask permission. Along with these comes one of the realities of life: paying the bills. And with the median earnings of those with only a high school diploma standing at \$39,700, according to the National Center for Education Statistics — 55 percent lower than for those with a BA degree — reentering society living paycheck to paycheck doesn't have to be your reality.

Regarding the trades, many institutions within CDCR offer the welding vocation on one or more of their facilities, which could lead to a more practical career choice after release. The Mule Creek State Prison, to use as an example, offers welding on three of its facilities. The skills and knowledge learned in two years of hard work and dedication will set up anyone willing to give it a chance. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data reports the annual mean wage of welders in California is \$59,170, with some metropolitan areas paying much more. In the Vallejo-Fairfield and San Francisco-Oakland-Hayward metropolitan areas, that number jumps up to \$69,280 and \$67,690, respectively.

These figures also vary largely depending on which industry you decide to pursue employment in. In the motor vehicle body and trailer manufacturing industry, the annual mean wage for a welder is \$47,310. Contrast this with the electric power generation, transmission, and distribution industry where that number more than doubles to \$101,220, according to BLS. That's an attainable six-figure job with skills you learned while incarcerated.

While the trades continue to be in demand coast to coast, they're not for everyone, so obtaining a BA degree might be a better fit. Throughout the CDCR, there are a handful of BA programs offering degrees in journalism, sociology, and communications. Mule Creek, for instance, offers a BA program in communication studies through Sacramento State. The salary projection for someone with a BA in this field in 2024 is \$60,925, according to a salary survey conducted by the National Association of Colleges and Employers. Such a degree encompasses a variety of career paths, such as public relations, advertising, interpreters/translators, business, brand strategist, brand manager, event planner, and journalist, just to name a few.

As with the trades, income for BA holders can vary depending on the industry you go after. Even then, a job offer on the low end of the mean wage percentile still tops the wages of those who only hold a high school diploma.

The statistics provided throughout this article should give you more than one reason to consider furthering your education or learning a trade while incarcerated. There's absolutely nothing wrong with making an honest living in a minimum-wage job after getting released from prison, because working hard and contributing to society trumps our previous criminal lifestyle. However, if better wages and career opportunity await us if we obtain a BA degree or trade certification, I think we owe it to ourselves and our loved ones to give either a try. What have we got to lose?

Juvenile Diversion Program Makes New Connections

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

EARLY IN THE morning of April 20, 2024, the men of the Facility E Juvenile Diversion Program (JDP) were gathered at the gate leading onto the yard. As they paced, the 14 Mule Creek residents chatted nervously, waiting for the program sponsor to lead in several young people for a daylong workshop. The nine expected youth were participants in Sacramento's Brother 2 Brother program. However, when sponsor CCI E. Albertson arrived at just after 8 a.m. shaking her head, nervousness turned to disappointment — for the third time in a row, Brother 2 Brother hadn't followed through, and there would be no young men to mentor today.

This didn't stop the JDP mentors from practicing their craft, though. With Albertson were two members of the Modesto Police Department, Alejandra and Lena, who are attempting to restart the department's Wake Up youth diversion program which has been inactive since the COVID pandemic. They were later joined by Oakland-based attorney Elizabeth and accountant Mustafa. The visitors wanted to learn what JDP had to offer to at-risk youth, and the men pivoted neatly into a demonstration of their program. "This isn't something I could've conveyed in an email," said Albertson, explaining her reasoning for inviting the guests to see what JDP is all about.

As they practiced, the mentors introduced themselves giving their age at the time of the offense that led them to prison, what crime they had committed and the sentence earned, and how long they have already served. Sean "Sharif" Neal and Jamar Lawson shared their life stories, expressing how the choices they made as young men eventually led them to prison.

Neal, for example, shared that he had joined a gang for

protection. But, "in order to be in a gang, if you want to get along, you have to go along," committing crimes to prove loyalty to the gang. "Or else, the gang is going to turn on you."

The mock workshop continued with a tour of the yard, a swing by the chow hall to pick up lunches, and a presentation on choices and the "G Code." The day was shorter than normal, ending after just a couple of hours, but the visitors saw what they needed.

"I'm really impressed," glowed Alejandra. "I feel like this is legit."

Elizabeth agreed. "You guys are really educated on this, and it shines through," she added.

The Wake Up Program brings in at-risk boys and girls to visit a correctional facility, listen to a presentation from a probation officer, and learn about social media and internet safety. Alejandra and Lena both agreed that the Juvenile Diversion Program was what they were looking for to re-launch the program.

"People need to think about consequences and ripple effects," said Alejandra. "This was amazing. A lot of the lessons can apply to anyone in life."

The 7 Habits (of Highly Ineffective People)

By Marty Williams, Production Editor

IN STEVEN COVEY'S deservedly famous book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, he outlines some time-tested practices about how to be an effective person. But this is, at best, mostly unrealistic. Looking around me I see a different philosophy most of us in prison have learned to adopt, and have pretty much decided in some way works; it must, because we are very loyal to this way of thinking. Someone should write a book about it.

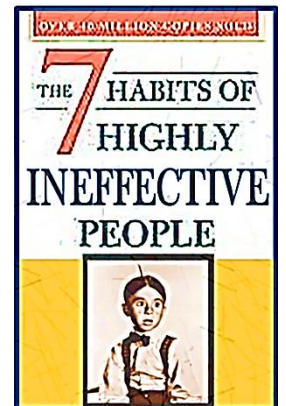


Illustration by Marty Williams

Habit 1: Let Someone Else Do It. Covey writes that we should be proactive, to start the process of getting what we want ourselves. But we know that the best way is to wait around until something happens, or somebody does it for us. This way, when nothing happens, we can complain that nothing happens. It can likewise be really healthy and affirming to complain about what other people are supposed to, or should, be doing.

Habit 2: Have No Idea What You Want or How to Get There. It's okay to sort of have an idea about what you kinda want to happen; thinking "I want a million dollars" is plenty to get you there. A vague plan to get a vague goal is practically a whole idea.

Habit 3: Make Unimportant Things Into Priorities. You may have an important goal to achieve, but that's really hard and fairly out of reach, so make sure to focus on current things that require little effort but feel like you're accomplishing something. Also, while goals are important, what's most important is whatever currently bothers you right now, and if you have to sacrifice some future stuff in order to satisfy your need to be right, you absolutely should.

Habit 4: Think Only How Things Benefit Yourself. As a matter of fact, it isn't a win at all if the other party isn't demoralized and destitute. Winning isn't just everything; it's the only reason to live. It should permeate your relationships, your faith, and especially, your criminal trial, regardless of how guilty you may actually be. You go, boy.

Habit 5: Yours Is the Only Viewpoint That Matters. Everybody else is stupid, and no one ever understands you. It probably comes from them not being able to handle all the "real" you bring. It's important to pretend to listen, but don't let any of their nonsense affect you. There's nothing more you need to know in this life than what you already know. Understanding others just gives them the edge over you. Don't get weak.

Habit 6: Compartmentalize. Keep spirit out of it, and what you learned as a father has absolutely no bearing on how to relate to others ... especially people you manage or work with. Keep your relationships, aspects of your life, and education as separate as possible. This way you'll be in control of everything and everyone, and don't have to share credit with experience or people.

Habit 7: Once You Learn It, Forget It. I mean, you had to learn it for a specific reason, usually just to get a grade or certificate. You got the grade, so just move on. If you really need it, you'll remember it. Otherwise, who cares? Being the smartest person in the room means not having to practice soft skills, empathy, listening, or any of that other loser nonsense.

Keeping habits like these will ensure that you'll be as effective as you've always been, even more so now that you know that they're time-tested. Mainly, know that you aren't alone, and are part of a proud tradition of highly ineffective people.

Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee
Post Columnist

Positive Affirmations

THE JURY IS still out on how many thoughts we have each day. There are credible studies that cite the number as being between 10,000 and 60,000! Even if the number is on the low end, that's a lot of thoughts to process.

Negative thoughts get in the way of us doing what we want to or need to do. Have you noticed when you have a negative thought about something it's often followed by another negative thought, then another, and another, and soon you're not only in a bad mood, you've stopped doing anything productive? Before you know it, an hour has gone by and you've accomplished nothing.

Understanding the triggers of negative thought patterns and developing mechanisms for each one can help you avoid the slippery slope of negativity. Your first thoughts when you wake up set the tone for the day.

Starting the day with "It's Monday; I can't believe how short the weekend was and now I have to go to work" sets you up to start the day on a negative note. Try starting the day with "What a great weekend. I got to spend time with my children and get some exercise."

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.



Build and Protect Your Credit Like the Pros

What is a Credit Report?
By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

WHAT IS A credit report? A credit report is a record of your credit history that includes information about four areas:

1. *Your identity:* your name, address, social security number, date of birth, and employment information.
2. *Your existing credit:* credit cards, car loans, student loans, other installment loans, and mortgages. It includes terms of your credit, the balance owing, and your history of paying on time or late.
3. *Your public record:* tax liens, court judgments, bankruptcy, and foreclosure or short sale/deed in lieu of short sale information.
4. *Inquiries about you:* a list of companies or creditors who recently requested a copy of your credit report.

There are three major credit bureaus that gather and maintain records, then create a report that can be purchased by lenders and creditors. The credit bureaus (also called credit reporting agencies) are Equifax, Experian, and TransUnion.

These credit bureaus each rate your credit with a numeric score. This is very interesting, because you can literally control your own score when you know how it works. All the details and instructions are explained in later columns.

The three credit bureaus love selling your report to increase their profits. But because credit reports contain personal, sensitive information, the law limits who they can sell it to. The list includes lenders from whom you are seeking credit, lenders that have granted you credit, phone and utility companies, insurance companies, government agencies you have applied for benefits from, employers, landlords, banks, and anyone else with a legitimate business need. That's a long list! Obviously, your credit report affects many areas of your life, so you need to know how to build your own report in the best way possible.

Carolyn Warren is the author of Amazon's bestselling Repair Your Credit Like the Pros. She is passionate about saving people money and helping people reach their dream of home ownership.

Build and
Protect
Your Credit
Like the Pros™

Go from beginner to expert,
raise your credit score, and
secure your finances

Carolyn Warren
Bestselling author of Repair Your Credit Like the Pros™



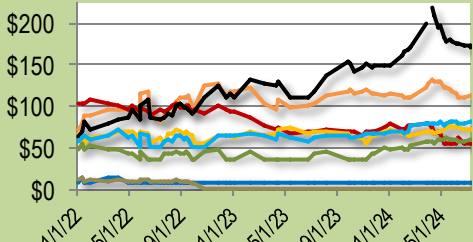
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If you have news, stories, or information for sharing or if you have questions, please feel free to reach out to us at:

Drop LWOP Coalition
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Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1, 2022 to July 8, 2024)

● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.76 → \$9.75	-9.4%
● ConocoPhillips (COP)	\$117.00 → \$112.55	-3.8%
● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$93.19 → \$56.63	-39.2%
● Edison International (EIX)	\$63.62 → \$72.40	+13.8%
● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.22 → \$1.02	-80.5%
● Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)	\$112.00 → \$170.74	+52.4%
● ONEOK Inc. (OKE)	\$65.90 → \$82.25	+24.8%
● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$41.29 → \$59.62	+44.4%



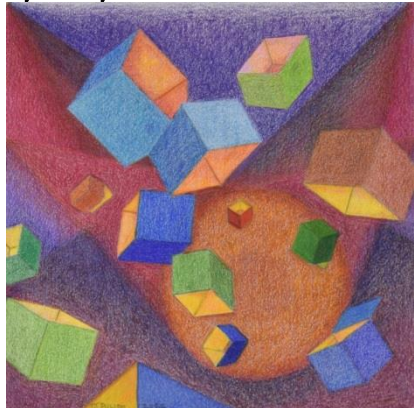
Creative Arts Program

"You can't depend on your judgment when your imagination is out of focus."

—Mark Twain

The Healing Power of Art

By Marty Williams, Production Editor



Floating Boxes, © 2022 Jose Pulido, color pencil

Jose Pulido

JOSE PULIDO PREFERS that you call him Joe. As a little Mexican boy growing up in California in the 1960s, the name "Jose" just couldn't be tolerated. At an all-white school, he says, "The teacher told me what my name was going to be."

Yet he was born Jose, in his aunt's adobe house in Michuacan, Mexico in 1956, on the Fourth of July. On Jan. 1, 1960, his family moved to Salinas, California, then several years later on to Santa Barbara, California, where he calls home. He was learning English at the same time he was expected to learn school basics, a monumental task to put on the shoulders of a child.

His journey into art began with American comic books, specifically Spiderman. He copied, not traced, the drawings with surprising ability, creating his own comic books. Even his brothers and sisters complimented Little Joe on his own comics, but that didn't satisfy him for long.

"I wanted to be able to create what I see," he explained. He moved on to high school where he took art classes, discovering

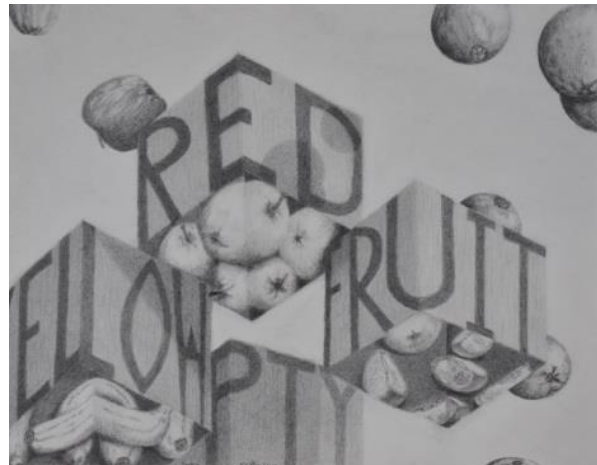
clay, ceramics, forging in metal shop, and creating his own tools. The whole time he hungered to create something new, something unique. In other words, his own voice.

When living in Santa Barbara he had the advantage of many museums and art galleries, especially the Getty Museum, where he discovered the uniqueness of Picasso and Dalí, the layers of Van Gogh, and once saw the *Pieta* by Michelangelo.

"You never see marble," he said of the masterpiece.

For Pulido, art gave him a way to find normalcy as a child in a foreign world, while also giving him a unique place among his family and society. He says of art "The most important thing is trying something new, testing inabilities as much as abilities." He wants other artists to stretch themselves, to find new vessels of meaning, and their own unique expression.

For those who feel they do not have such gifts, he says, "Do it anyway."



Fruit Boxes, © 2022 Jose Pulido, color pencil



Pieta, 1498-99, Michelangelo Buonarroti, 68.5 in x 76.8 in, marble (Wikipedia.org)



Stained Glass, © 2022 Jose Pulido, color pencil



Stained Glass, © 2022 Jose Pulido, color pencil



Boxes, © 2022 Jose Pulido, color pencil



Shadow Blocks, © 2022 Jose Pulido, color pencil

Creative Arts Program

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

In Facility E Hobby Room:

Creative Writing	Tuesdays 12-1:30pm
Poetry	Tuesdays 2-3:30pm
Painting	Tuesdays 2-3:30pm
Painting	Tuesdays 6-7:30pm
Guitar	Wednesdays 9-10:30am
Drawing	Wednesdays 9-10:30am
Guitar	Wednesdays 11-12:30pm

Creative Arts Program: Writing

The Creative Arts Program provides instructional workshops in writing techniques, led by local poet Lara Gularte.

In Facility E Hobby Room:

Tuesdays 12:30-1:30 pm

In Facility E Hobby Room:

Tuesdays 2-3:30 pm

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



CGA and the Lifestyle Addiction

Identifying Sexual Dysfunction through the Lifestyle Addiction
By Criminals & Gangmembers Anonymous

THE “LIFESTYLE ADDICTION to Illegal Activity” defines our common problem, being addicted to some form of illegal activity, no matter the choice of our lifestyle. Addiction is simply a habit and a habit is something we repeat until it has become automatic. Addiction has no conscience, no compassion. It is lethal, self-serving, and always craves something. All of us have committed crimes for money, power, personal pleasure, and self-gratification.



You might be sitting there wondering how this topic could possibly relate to you. We are all familiar with the obvious sexual dysfunctions: rape, incest, and child molestation. But what about the subtle dysfunctions that destroyed relationships of the past and can still harm our relationships today?

Our choice of illegal activity does not matter; we all have damaged or destroyed relationships with others. And, if we are not aware, we could continue to step on the lives of others with no empathy or compassion in many different ways, including through sex. The Lifestyle Addiction Chart (see the Back Page) gives us the definition of *sexual dysfunction* as when people “wrongfully use or misuse sexual activities for personal pleasure, while hurting, mistreating, injuring, insulting, abusing excessively another without consent or decency and no respect for their rights.”

Sex. Who hasn’t experienced it? It is a topic most of us don’t want to talk about in the process of working the 12 Steps. However, sex is essential to our state of humanness, our culture, and our recovery. It is easy to think, “If I am not convicted of a sex crime, there’s no problem.” But what about the subtle dysfunctions, like the manipulation of someone else, just to have sex? What about paying for sex? Or

making someone feel obligated to have sex with you? What defects arise when someone refuses to have sex with you? Do insecurity, low self-esteem, resentment, lack of self-control, and selfishness come up?

By going through the 12 Steps, we can see the patterns that have shaped our character defects, and some of those patterns were created by our sexual experiences. Some of those experiences generated a set of warped beliefs about sex, and those beliefs can be damaging to our victims, past and present.

Because of shame, guilt, or fear of exposure, most men allow these defects to be their little secret, and these unresolved issues will plague our recovery. Many men rely on their charm or influence and can give the impression that they are sincere and honest. Yet, underneath is an ulterior motive. This can be dangerous, because this form of addiction has no consideration for the destruction it causes to those being harmed. As criminals and gang members, our generally negative outlook on this topic and our lack of understanding when it comes to sexual dysfunction can and will ruin relationships and create victims.

Questions to Be Honest About

- Has sexual dysfunction played a role in destroying any of your relationships, past or present?
- Is this a tough topic for you to talk about? Why?
- Are any of these dysfunctions active in your character today? If so, how can you stop them from controlling your behavior?

We must change our outlook and achieve a competent level of understanding so that we don’t create more victims from our sexual dysfunction. It starts with an honest set of answers to these questions.

Opinion: Dying of Spite

By Cameron Terhune, Correctional Training Facility



WE ARE THE biggest fools on the planet. Human beings are not naturally inclined to quit; when we fall down, we get back up. When a bridge collapses, we rebuild it. When a plane crashes, we keep flying. Our dauntless species scarcely hesitates to tackle any number of grand challenges, yet when it comes to fixing our prison system we cannot give up fast enough. Surrender is our default position. The moment incarceration enters the conversation our hands are thrown skyward, something we’ve done for so long that we have forgotten how to do what humans do best: effect solutions to our most pressing problems.

Prisons are man-made disasters, spanning generations, and swallowing millions of lives. Of its many failings, our justice system’s ultimate punishment is the most egregious. Beyond questions of morality, there exists no greater waste than executing someone. To impose the death penalty upon a single person takes decades and costs millions of dollars — for zero benefit. Nobody looks back fondly on an execution: “Remember when we killed Joe? That was great. Life’s so much better now.” And, besides the acute waste, capital punishment carries a grave opportunity cost as well. What could the person we throw away have done in the half a lifetime it takes for the state to kill them, were we to give them the chance? Thirty years can pass as these cases wind through the torturous appellate process — we can turn a fetus into a brain surgeon in less time. To pretend we are incapable of discerning the roots of a person’s behavior and guiding them back to wholesomeness in the same span is absurd. But we don’t even try.

It is not only those we condemn that we are failing. While thousands are living to die on death row, hundreds of thousands are sentenced to lifetimes in prison, dying to live more than the basest existence. Rather than offer them a path towards a positive, productive future, we treat them as if they were lepers. When our prisons operate like doctorless hospitals, what outcome might we reasonably expect? Some lucky few may pull through, but we can take no credit for successes that occur in spite of our best efforts to prevent them. Hospitals are filled with the sick and injured. Prisons brim with the same, except the wounds tatter hearts and minds. Hospitals hold our society’s most vulnerable members in their care, tasked with returning them to wellness. Prisons are no different, except we root against healing.

There is no question that the patients who fill prison wards deliver themselves into their own predicaments. They are not blameless, but that makes them no less ailing. Just as the doctor would never withhold treatment from the smoker, fast-food fanatic, or the exercise averse, it is abhorrent to withhold treatment from the people we incarcerate because we resent their anti-social behavior. It is, in fact, monumentally short-sighted to do so when those same people, healed or not, will eventually be back on the streets of Anytown, USA, to make room for even more shattered souls. Alienated or not, they are coming.

(continued on page 30)

(from *Dying of Spite*, pg. 29)

Human beings are the least helpless species on this earth. With our hands and minds and wills we have accomplished wonders to make even the most strident pessimist crack a smile. Our Homeric failure to fashion a carceral system that does anything but undermine the foundational values of our society, then, is born not from honest trial and error, but from a brainless knee-jerk reaction to blame patients for their illnesses.

We humans can do better than this.

The Spark of Life

By Fred Munch, Post Columnist

THE RAVENS HAVE returned to Facility D at the Mule Creek State Prison. Actually, they never left. Big, black, and beautiful, they exude strength and cunning. They are dignified avian emissaries from nature's realm, cloaked in glossy black feathers with a ruff around their necks. We watch them walk on the grass with the confident swagger of an apex predator, royalty of the winged world. They're not colorful, yet are stunning in their sleek blackness and formidable size. The nest they built last year at the top of a light pole is their castle in the sky, a raven haven beyond the reach of man or beast. Throughout the year, they were seen swooping in and over the razor wire, making their distinctive raucous calls. Once inside, they often had to compete with the turkey vultures and seagulls to claim the lunchmeat thrown out for them by raven fans. While on my walks during the winter months, I'd pass by their perch on the edge of a building and hear them make a very different call. Not the usual loud squawking we've grown accustomed to, but a low-pitched musical gurgling sound in a conversational tone, as if whispering, "Hello there, human friend. I want to have a word with you. Any chance you might have some of those delicious treats you brought me before?"

In late February, the pair remodeled the old nest, carrying new sticks in for structure and lining it with string and bits of fabric for comfort and insulation. On a day in the first week of March, early spring sunshine stirred me to bask in its soothing warmth. Soon afterward, dark clouds gathered and the wind gusted as the first drops of an incoming rainstorm fell. Near the light pole, I heard the familiar raven call, sounding like a hoarse duck. Glancing up, I caught sight of one by the nest. Then, out of nowhere, another one arrived, circled around under the darkening sky and came to a rest less than 20 feet from where I stood. Instantly, the one above flew down and landed within inches of its mate on the ground. Usually, ravens shy away from people, yet these two were so close, as if they sensed my interest in them and knew I didn't pose a threat. In what appeared to be a dance, they intertwined their heads and began a mating ritual. After a minute or two of this foreplay, the female was ready and willing to make a new batch of baby "wolf birds," as they are sometimes called. Fascinated, I watched as she crouched down, with her chest in the grass, and spread her wings in an inviting gesture. To my surprise, he hesitated, seemingly ambivalent about the act at hand. He just stood there, observing her without responding in the way she expected. However, each of the four or five eggs she would lay needed separate fertilization.



Illustration by Fred Munch

Maybe he wasn't in the mood at the moment because I was right there taking it all in. Or the approaching storm had a dampening effect on his ardor. For whatever reason, he stayed put, immune to her alluring display. Despite his hesitation, they made me privy to their intimate private lives. I can't help but think it was more than a coincidence that I happened to be there at the right time and place to witness the creation of their future fledglings. My rational mind says it's impossible they could perceive my admiration for their beauty and tenacity. Yet, in my heart, I want to believe they know about my desire to chronicle their achievements in parenting.

For the rest of March, the two ravens were in and around the nest constantly, meaning the eggs were laid and incubated by the female. While she brooded, her devoted partner and protector brought food to share with her and kept a lookout for vultures and hawks who dared venture too close.

Even in prison, amid the darkness of a dead-end dumping ground, these wondrous, intrepid creatures ignite the spark of life and keep it glowing for all to see.

Source: Heinrich Bernd, *Mind of the Raven: Investigations and Adventures with Wolf Birds*, Harper Collins, 1999



Postscriptum

A FREE AND unbiased press was deemed important enough to those founding our country that they saw fit to enshrine it in our Constitution. But journalism has been under attack for a while now.

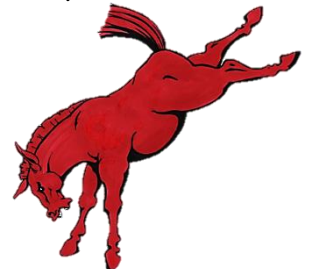
The attacks aren't usually direct, except in cases like a Midwest sheriff harassing a newspaper uncovering corruption or the trend of referring to all disagreeable news as "fake." Most often, the threat to the field is subtle.

As the internet grew in popularity (yes, young people: We didn't always have an internet), more and more people got their news online. It costs a lot of money to print and distribute a newspaper or to produce and broadcast a news show, and when it's available cheaper elsewhere, consumers won't pay for it.

In California, legislators are considering a bill that would require online platforms to pay for content they publish, but much of that money would go to the employer and not to the journalists themselves. And incarcerated journalists are struggling with this spring's adjustments to the pay scales, which in some cases reduced monthly paychecks by over half. All of these things have made it hard to stay competitive and moved journalism away from being a career by which one can support oneself.

But journalism *is* important, especially in prison. We all have a story to tell, and at the *Post* we aim to tell the best of them. We can read what's wrong with the world anywhere — what's *right* with it? As journalists, we have an obligation to tell our stories and effect change, and the best way to change the world is to change ourselves. Help us to tell our stories — your stories — and inspire each other to see the world differently. I think the Founding Fathers would've wanted that.

-JC, Editor-in-Chief



An Inside Look at the Development of the Gang Member Character

Delinquent: Failing of neglecting to do what duty or law requires.	Prejudice: A judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known; a judgment or opinion held in disregard of facts that contradict it.	Duty: The obedience or respect that one should show toward one's parents, older people, etc. Conduct based on moral or legal obligation.
Beliefs: Acceptance of something as true, even though absolute certainty may be absent.	Influence: The power of persons or things to affect others, seen only in its effects.	Loyalty: Faithful to people, ideals, etc., that one is under obligation to defend, support, or be true to.
Pride: Proper respect for oneself, the sense of one's own dignity or worth; self-respect.	Respect: To feel or show honor or esteem for.	Manners: A way or method in which something is done or happens; ways of social life, behavior.
Standard: Applies to some measure, principle, model, etc., with which things of the same class are compared in order to determine their quantity, value, quality, etc.	Tradition: The handing down orally of stories, beliefs, customs, etc., from generation to generation. A long-established custom or practice that has the effect of unwritten law.	Habit: A thing done often and hence, usually done easily; practice; custom; a pattern of action that is acquired and has become automatic; difficult to break.

Common Ground Between Criminals and Gang Members

Warped Beliefs: To turn from the true, natural or right course.	Lack of Morals: Not good or proficient at making the distinction between right and wrong.
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Violent Crimes, Cultural Influences, Vandalism, Substance Abuse, Drug Dealing, Theft

The Lifestyle Addiction to Illegal Activity Swings in the Lives of Both Criminals and Gang Members

Addiction: 1) Can't stop the idea, desire, or emotional rush to do something. 2) Act and repeat. 3) The longer one keeps repeating the act, the worse the result, until the act gets out of control.

Gang Members, Delinquents, White Collar Crime, Sexual Dysfunction

Deception: Deliberate misrepresentation of fact by word, action, etc., generally to further one's own ends.	Mislead: To cause to follow the wrong course or to err in conduct or action, not always by deliberate deception.
Delude: To fool someone so completely that what is presented is accepted as true.	Betrayal: Implies a breaking of faith while appearing to be loyal

An Inside Look at the Development of the Criminal Character

Delinquent: Failing of neglecting to do what duty or law requires.	Manners: A way or method in which something is done or happens; ways of social life, behavior.
Habit: A thing done often and hence, usually done easily; practice; custom; a pattern of action that is acquired and has become automatic; difficult to break.	Prejudice: A judgment or opinion formed before the facts are known; a judgment or opinion held in disregard of facts that contradict it.

A Common Fact

There are many different lifestyles and unlimited defects of character (although some defects are very common among both criminals and gang members). The one fact we all have in common is we are addicted to illegal activity. We all have a crime of choice that we repeated over and over again, and there are often other crimes that we commit or intermix within our own personal lifestyle addiction. Our main goal in CGA recovery is to find solutions to our common problems and reach out to help other criminals find a peaceful, productive way of living.