

To Our Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

ENTERING THE SEVENTH year of publishing the *Mule Creek Post*, the challenges of operating a prison newspaper, maintaining journalistic integrity, and serving the good of our readers remains a focus for editors and writers.

A newspaper is a place for public discourse where the freedom to express ideas is realized. It is our mission and our purpose to serve our readers. Your comments, opinions, and stories are important to us. Submission guidelines are on page 3; and we invite you to participate in the public discourse and the free trade of ideas in the *Mule Creek Post*.



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Administrators and dignitaries visit the grand opening of the Insight Garden Project on Facility D in October. Among the visitors was Associate Warden E. Pedersen, Capt. D. Mercado, Post Supervising Editor J. Iniguez, Associate Warden T. Miranda, Chief Support Executive A. Altschuler, and CEO of Health Care Services D. Smiley. (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Dignitaries Visit Insight Garden Unveiling on MCSP's Facility D

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

HALLOWEEN MIGHT BE the season for goblins and ghosts, but this year October 31 was a day for incarcerated people, staff, and volunteers with the Insight Garden Program (IGP) to meet with prison administration, local and state representatives, and even one parole commissioner to officially open and consecrate the garden site on Facility D at the Mule Creek State Prison.

A gracious welcome by IGP sponsor Jill Plumb was followed with statements from official representatives and state dignitaries that recognized the work the incarcerated population has given to the project. This was followed with the poem "Fostering Care" by Earl Rose Jr., a moment of silence for the victims of the lone stabbings in October, and the official mingle time in the garden itself (read the poem on page 28).



Earl Rose, Jr.

The garden is a bright spot on the yard where flowers, ground-hugging fruits (like strawberries, peppers and tomatoes), and herbs have resulted in a noticeable increase in the presence of many local birds, including the common house finch. Birdsong has taken over where shuffling feet and loudspeaker announcements were most prominent.

Along with birdsong each morning and evening, the colors and scents of flowers greet incarcerated residents as they go back and forth to the dining hall for meals, allowing some to catch a few moments of peace and beauty. Food grown in the garden is donated to local food banks, helping others in the community who might be struggling to keep food on the table.

Guests included former Mule Creek residents Esteban Núñez and Ricardo London, currently working in the reentry community with the Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) to make the transition experienced by people leaving prison smoother and more complete. As Assemblymember Heath Flora (89th District) noted, "Insight Garden Program is what the California Model is supposed to be. It's a way to counteract recidivism."

(continued on page 2)





THE MULE CREEK POST MISSION STATEMENT AND STAFF

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

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(from *Dignitaries Visit*, pg. 1)

Over the last couple of weeks, Plumb and incarcerated participants have noticed gofers in the garden. She takes the approach that this is one more way we share our bounty with the feathered and furry neighbors here at Mule Creek. Plumb also noted that the raised beds have gopher exclusion wire, but any food grown on the ground is going to be shared, no matter what.

Johanna Cote, another IGP volunteer, assisted the incarcerated participants in making sachets of tea: lemon verbena, chocolate mint, and cinnamon basil, which were handed out to guests as they left the ceremony. Cote said, "Working together to pick and process the fruit of our collective labor is so important to building community as well as creating and maintaining ownership and absolute connection with each other and earth. I look forward to doing this again with the incarcerated participants in the coming months. Learning how to manage the abundance that is the proof of our collective effort is also a very important part of the work that we do together."

As Plumb and others were speaking, the fauna of Mule Creek were also present. Hummingbirds and bees were in the garden feasting on the blooms of sage and other late season flowers, giving all present a chance to enjoy one of the effects of having flowers and food available for local residents.

The ceremony recommenced with a poem by Chris Rosas, titled "The Seasons of My Life," originally dedicated to his wife. Rosas planned and oversaw the installation of the irrigation system in the garden. Much to the delight of Plumb, the system, as she says, "can be adjusted anywhere, at any time; it is flexible and so well designed that we can add and remove items from the garden without wasting any water." In the center of the garden is a birdbath, fed by the irrigation system. It is a place for birds of all types, to stop and have a drink while resting in a safe space, surrounded by a 12-foot cyclone fence.

Currently, there are plans for the mural crew to create an installation on the wall behind the garden and Native American spiritual grounds, intended to depict images important to sharing the space and welcoming to all.

"I'm encouraging Capt. Mercado to strategically place flower pots around and throughout D Facility," said Chief Deputy Warden B. Holmes. "I think just having flowers

will be spectacular."

"The garden shows that you have to take responsibility for yourself," said Community Resource Manager Jason Ross, "and that's right in line with the California Model."

The ceremony closed with a dedication by the prison's Native American spiritual advisor, Marty Natividad, who provided some history of Mule Creek. He noted that as the infill complex was being excavated, remains and house pits were uncovered, showing that this area of Amador County had a population of Miwok people for centuries, and that the creek itself provided sustenance for those people, long before the prison was built."

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Facility D residents provided music for the garden's grand opening.



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Inside CDCR Editor-in-Chief Don Chaddock visits the Mule Creek Post. From Left—Production Editor Marty Williams; Copy Editor Al Rice; Feature Reporters D. Razor Babb, Jason Davis, and John L. Orr; and Editor-in-Chief Jesse Carson. (Courtesy of Don Chaddock)

An Interview with Don Chaddock

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

“MY WIFE WOULD say that I’m a hoarder of historical information and material,” Don Chaddock told the small group of editors and reporters gathered in the *Mule Creek Post* newsroom.

It was a chilly late November when the editor of *Inside CDCR* came to interview the *Post*. Yet, we could not keep from interviewing him in return for several reasons. The first is that we are natural lovers of history. Long-time readers know Chaddock writes the “Unlocking History” column for *Inside CDCR*, which we’ve shamelessly stolen to put in the pages of the *Post* since early 2018. He too is a lover of history. When hired by the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), he turned this love of history into a regular gig that is shared with tens of thousands.

“I found myself as a single dad with two kids, and they were looking for a newspaper editor to join OPEC [Office of Public Employee Communica-

tion]. That’s how it started,” Chaddock explained about how he came to be with the department some 10 years ago. The job provided stability and more time to spend with his growing children.

The second reason is that Chaddock is an artist, a writer, and a newsman. He’s been doing journalism since high school and, at the age of 20, took a job at the *Merced Sun Star* to make it as a professional. Journalists with over three decades of real-world experience don’t walk into our newsroom every day, so we weren’t going to let him go without picking his brain.

To our surprise, we learned that being a word nerd is also a neat way to meet people. Chaddock spoke fondly of his high school newspaper where he was the only guy working with four young women. He is still good friends with these brilliant minds who’ve since become a doctor, a lawyer, a teacher, and a veterinarian. Our lesson from this was that some people do the great work of our society, and then there are those who write about it.

Chaddock’s time with the *Sun Star* began in art layout and as a proofreader; however, the editors there were shortsighted and did not allow him to do what he really wanted — to write. He quit the paper and began his own newsprint magazine in the Central Valley during the 80s and 90s, and was eventually rehired at the *Sun Star* when they recognized their mistake.

“I hitched my wagon to different reporters and editors I wanted to learn from,” said Chaddock about his path into journalism.

Since these humble beginnings and over the next 25 years, Chaddock worked for several newspapers, to include one in Folsom and another in Auburn. Here is where Chaddock found his niche, covering the local community, writing stories of the people and places that mattered to his readers. He shared an anecdote about a story he was researching on drought during a time when Folsom Lake’s water level was very low. This threatened the drinking water supply of every surrounding community “that had a straw in it,” but Chaddock didn’t want to write a boring story about drought, *per se*. Instead, he chose to tell the story about an old community that had been swallowed up by the new lake.

He interviewed a 90-year-old woman who had lived there, then found the newly exposed foundation of her family’s barn the community used for dances. He published the story and was surprised when other news services picked it up and it went around the world. He ended up taking tour groups to the site and was met by park rangers who had been sent there by the state to assist him. The moral of the story is, according to Chaddock, “If you can write a story and connect it to people, they will be interested.” This was the best piece of advice he wished to leave with his audience.

Chaddock’s plans for the future remain with the department. He loves what he does and the state appreciates the way he does it. As to what he does, we’ll let him tell it.

“I’m 7-to-4,” began Chaddock. “My day starts off publishing the stories, two per day. Then I craft emails to all CDCR employees, do heavy editing and compile analytics every week, and handle the PIO [public information officer] submis-

(continued on page 4)



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



(from Chaddock, pg. 3)

sions." Most of the stories found on *Inside CDCR* are submitted by public information officers, parole offices, and other CDCR employees.

We were surprised to learn that he doesn't hang out in his office all day. In fact, he's more likely to be on the road doing research or interviews. Just like this particular day.

"Wherever my laptop is, that's where I work," he said.

Post staffers expressed their thanks to Chaddock for the visit, the time he spent answering our endless questions, and for his kindness and patience.

How to Write a Book Report for Parole Hearings

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane,
Life Support Alliance

BOOK REPORTS DONE for parole hearings are not the sort of book report you would write for scholarly purposes. Nor is the purpose of the report to illuminate the reader about the content of the book or the writer's skills. These should be less a book review than a report on how you've been able to benefit from your reading, not so much "Did you enjoy the storyline" as "Did you gain any new insights of any new tool to deal with your triggers and issues."

If the Board of Parole Hearings has directed you to take groups or classes on various subjects and you've not been able to get into said groups, or there are no such groups on that subject available, an option is to do some self-directed rehabilitation work via book reports. Books selected for these reports should deal with specific issues relative to your case factors, topics such as anger management, substance abuse, domestic violence, relationships, communication, and similar self-improvement topics.

The parole panel who will be reading your report is less concerned with the story line of the book than how the information connects to you and what you learned and can use from the text. Your book report should discuss things like:

- Why did you choose this book?
- How do you see the topic related to your situation and issues?
- What did you learn from it that you felt was directly connected to your situation?
- What did you learn from the book that will be useful to you in rehabilitation and reentry?
- Did you learn a new tool to intercept anger?
- Did you develop a new understanding of your past and hopefully future relationships?
- How did you find the book helpful?

This doesn't have to be long. In fact, you should keep all submissions to one page in length and hit the most important things about the book (what you learned from it) in the first one or two paragraphs, as it enables the parole panel to get to the meat of the issue right away. They will silently appreciate your summary.

If you do several book reports, you might want to provide a recap of your readings, list the books by subject, and include next to each book one thing you gleaned from that reading. Again, time is important to the panel. You don't have to cover every chapter in the book, and the panel won't be interested in whether you'd give it five stars or just one. This is your chance to be self-centered with a purpose: How did this book help you?

If you're at a loss for what books would be appropriate, we can provide you with a list of suggestions by topic, from anger management to sex and gender issues (contact information on page 10). Most are available for your family to order in paperback from Amazon or similar sellers, and some may be available in prison libraries as well.

Chattin' With the Chaplain

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist



WITH GREAT EXCITEMENT and high expectations, the Mule Creek State Prison welcomes Native American Spiritual Advisor Marty Natividad.

Preferring to be addressed by his last name only, Natividad comes to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) with over 30 years of experience as a traditional Native American dancer who was taught native ways as a child and young man living on the Abique Pueblo in New Mexico. Natividad started coming into prisons and volunteering with the Native American community in the 1990s, culminating in the teaching of traditional arts and dance in 2017 as part of Arts In Corrections.

His basic belief is that none of the great spiritual lessons in life can be taught in any college; they have to be lived in order to be learned and should be taught through tradition. Natividad brings a wealth of experience and ability to a community that has often felt left out for not having a full-time spiritual advisor.

Natividad isn't really surprised by any specific thing in prison, but has been amazed to recognize the number of Native Americans in prison who came through the foster care system, often resulting in a disconnection from family, cultural roots, and history. Looking up to those great native leaders from the past (i.e., Sitting Bull, Geronimo, and others), Natividad is constantly amazed at the level of dedication and commitment of those in the incarcerated Native American community.

"They teach me about myself and how to be sympathetic and understanding towards humanity," said Natividad.

If not working as a spiritual advisor, Natividad isn't really sure what else he would be doing. As a young man, just like many inside these walls, Natividad felt like he had no direction and had to learn to let the Creator guide him to where he is now, doing what he is supposed to be doing.

He notes the best part of working in a prison is having the ability to go to sleep each night knowing he has made a difference in the lives of others. It is the most satisfying job he has ever done.



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The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

THIS MONTH'S WORD, *inveigle*, has a bit of twisted history. Modified from the Middle French *avuegler*, which meant "to blind or hoodwink," it worked its way into Middle Norman as *enveigler*, and into English originally and metaphorically to mean "deceive." In the 16th century, it had come to mean "to entice, seduce, or persuade." Our modern dictionaries generally define *inveigle* to mean:

1. To win over by wiles; entice.
2. To acquire by ingenuity or flattery.

It can also mean "to lure by deceptive means."

Here are some synonyms for *inveigle*: *cheat, cozen, defraud, swindle, false, faithless, disloyal, mislead, hoodwink, treacherous, blind, and deceit*.

Another related word, *manipulate*, is also sometimes used in its negative connotation as one who inveigles another for some one-sided benefit. One dictionary defines *manipulate* as "to control or play upon by artful, unfair insidious means, especially to one's advantage." *Underhanded* comes to mind as another word akin to *inveigle* and according to one dictionary means "marked by secrecy, chicanery, and deception, not honest and above board, sly."

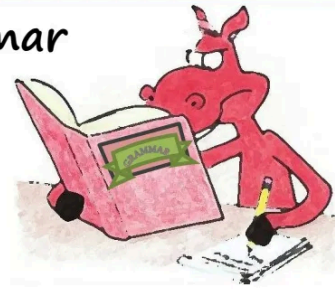
These words typically refer to a dishonest act, for example: a con man, dishonest politician, or lawyer who uses deceptive means to gain an advantage.

Unfortunately, it seems the advertising presentations of many products and services these days seek to inveigle people to accept these deceptive ads so as to spend their money. Words not only describe something, they also tend to inform and warn if one is sufficiently awake and aware to catch the nuances and act accordingly.

Sources:
Dictionary
of Word
Origins,
Webster's
Collegiate
Dictionary.



Big Red's Grammar Guide



GOOD WRITING BEGINS with the basics. Here in the seventeenth installment of my grammar guide are more things a writer should know. This month we'll continue making comparisons with adjectives and adverbs.

Comparisons with Adjectives and Adverbs

One common mistake in both writing and speaking is to use the superlative form when the comparative should be used. Remember that if you're comparing two persons, places, or things, you use only the comparative form (not the superlative). Look at this sentence:

Of my two dogs, the cocker spaniel is the friendliest.

The comparison is between only two (*two dogs*), so the sentences should be written with the comparative form (*friendlier*) instead of the superlative.

Another frequent mistake in comparisons is to use both the *-er* and *more* or *-est* and *most* forms with the same noun, as in the *most tallest statue* or a *more happier child*. Remember that one form is the limit. In the examples, *most* and *more* need to be eliminated.

Because some comparisons can be interpreted more than one way, be sure that you include all the words necessary to give the meaning you intend. Read this sentence:

In the long jump, Adele could beat her rival Fern more often than her teammate Sherry.

When the sentence is constructed that way, it isn't clear if the meaning is the following:

In the long jump, Adele could beat her rival Fern more often than her teammate Sherry could.

or

In the long jump, Adele could beat her rival Fern more often than she could beat her teammate Sherry.

Next month, we'll continue our talk about prepositions.

The Uncaged Writer

Nonfiction Book Proposals

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter



THE FOLLOWING ARE helpful tips from Rowan Moore Gerety, author of *Go Tell the Crocodiles: Chasing Prosperity in Mozambique* (The New Press, 2018), for those interested in writing a nonfiction book or memoir. Gerety is currently working on pieces for *WIRED*, *New York Times*, and *Bicycling* magazine.

Rowan advises that nonfiction is more often sold with a proposal rather than a manuscript. There are two reasons for this:

- Publishers like to be involved in imagining the book from an early stage, rather than coming into the process once it's already been thought out — this is a bit different from fiction, but they will have strong thoughts about which elements of a nonfiction work to focus on for marketing, etc.
- They have limited time, so giving them a short sample along with a kind of outline allows them to evaluate the strength of the idea quickly.

A magazine feature can be a good onramp for promoting a book-length work you are planning. These types of articles are often used as the sample chapter in a proposal, which would then be rounded out with chapter summaries for the remaining parts of the book. This gives editors a sense of the structure and vision you have in mind.

Incarcerated writers in particular have encountered and endured experiences that enable them to develop degrees of patience the average person doesn't have. This is helpful in the publishing world because these processes can

(continued on page 6)

(from *Uncaged Writer*, pg. 5)

take a long time. Going from idea to initial pages to final product can be a multi-year endeavor. Usually, you develop a proposal and send a query letter to get literary agents to read it, and then they do the actual pitching and selling to publishers. Rowan suggests that when writing or pitching, it is always advisable (and interesting to editors, publishers, agents, readers, etc.) to invoke a bit of narrative tension when opening a piece, and get into the meat of the action (or to the point) very quickly.

There are more published works by incarcerated writers recently, which raises the bar for covering new ground. Finding a unique twist or angle or particularly interesting character to focus is key to getting published.

"Publishing can be a harsh mistress," says Gerety. Luckily for the prisoner writer, many find that type of challenge enticing, and many are equally familiar with that brand of engagement.

Do More Good

By Rob Sharp, Post Reporter

IN GREAT BRITAIN, a movement has begun, spearheaded by Oxford University professor of philosophy William MacAskill, a youngish man of deep conviction who sees donating to worthy causes his mission in life.

MacAskill calls his organization the Effective Altruism (EA) movement. The basic goal of the movement is to use evidence and reason to find the best, most effective ways to help others. In aid of that goal, he authored the book, *What We Owe to the Future* (Basic Books, 2022).

The basic tenet of his theory is that, rather than making our individual and collective decisions based only upon the present or next generation of people, we should consider our efforts on all future generations to come. He calls this thought process *longtermism*. MacAskill believes we are now at a crossroads, and that the long-term fate of the world depends on the choices we make now. That's where EA comes in; it seeks to contribute in the most effective ways to assist those in need. Funded exclusively by private

donations, EA chapters number more than 200 worldwide. Some donate 10 percent of their incomes in order to aid others. In 2021, EA-aligned foundations distributed more than \$600 million in publicly listed grants. Most contributors are average working people who felt the need to help others early in their own lives. The point is that a person does not need to be rich in order to make a difference; every little bit helps. Even from within prison.

So, the question is, can you donate something? If not money, how about donating your time, effort, and kindness? The good you do now will return to you tenfold.

Oreos

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

ARE YOU A whole cookie dunker? Or do you try to split an Oreo so that the filling is evenly spread across both halves? Do you try to get all the filling on one side and leave the other side blank?

Recently, a group of scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology developed an "Oreometer," a 3D-printed machine that can separate the two halves of an Oreo cookie in exactly the same way repeatedly in an attempt to discover the exact combination of force, speed, and direction to get a specific ratio of filling to cookie.

It turns out that there is no way to replicate the amount of filling that ends up on either side of an Oreo when split apart. Why can't they do this?

For those with baking experience, eventually the discovery comes about that the amount of water added to one batch of dough is never the same as that added to another. The reasons for this are many and include the specific humidity and temperature on the day the dough is being made, the temperature and humidity in the mill on the day the flour was ground, the specific water content of the wheat before it was ground, and even what field the wheat was grown in. These are things that are uncontrollable, and in some cases unknowable. So what do Oreos have to do with spiritual practice? As a cookie, not much. However, the experiment does.

Recall one definition of insanity: Doing the same thing over and over, but expecting a different result. With the Oreo experiment, that is exactly what seems to be happening. In reality, there are too many things the researchers don't know and have no control over, such as the processing of the wheat and cocoa that became ingredients the cookies were made from. Also, what nozzle the cream filling came out of on the assembly line, what the temperature and humidity were that day in the factory, even the specific water content of the individual ingredients in the filling must be taken into account. All of the above things the researchers could not know, and each had an influence on the outcome of the experiment.

So, what does this have to do with spiritual practice and development? Sometimes what we do today won't work tomorrow, or the way we respond to one person or situation has the exact opposite effect or result as with someone else. Sometimes we must accept that we cannot control what is going on around us and should allow things to be and happen as they are, without trying to make them fit into our notion of how they should be. The researchers at MIT were not looking for some groundbreaking discovery; they were only trying to figure out how to get the exact amount of cream on an Oreo cookie half.

In science, experiments and data obtained are shared so that all work can be checked and either reinforced or disproved. This is done for a couple reasons, the first being that when a scientific theory is presented, others must be able to perform the same experiment, and get the same results, thereby proving the theory. Additionally, sharing data helps to keep scientists honest: If the data sets are consistently different, then no conclusions as to consistency can be made and either a different underlying theory needs to be adopted or a different experiment needs to be attempted. Either way, something needs to change in order to have a successful experiment.

Spiritual practice is much the same; we develop an idea of how something may work in a specific situation and then do that, looking for a result. If the result is not what we were trying to achieve, it behooves us to attempt something at another time, hopefully gaining the same result, and if not then we can re-evaluate and change our thought or action accordingly.

However, there are always variables that we don't know about and have no control over, much like the humidity of the wheat used to make the cookies; sometimes we have no idea of what will block real communication with either ourselves or others. So, the next time you eat an Oreo, take a second to acknowledge the great diversity of each cookie in the package and enjoy.



Governor Appoints Leaders, BPH Commissioners

By Inside CDCR

GOV. GAVIN NEWSOM announced three people appointed to leadership positions within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

- Ronald Broomfield was appointed director of the Division of Adult Institutions.
- Jennifer Benavidez was appointed deputy director of Facility Operations, Division of Adult Institutions, where she has served as acting associate director of Female Offender Programs and Services.
- Jason Johnson was appointed director of the Division of Adult Parole Operations, where he has been chief deputy regional administrator since 2017.

The governor's office also announced the following five reappointments to the Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) on Aug. 22, 2023:

- Robert A. Barton has served on the BPH since 2017.
- Kevin Chappell has served on the BPH since 2016.
- Kathleen O'Meara has served on the BPH since 2021.
- Catherine Purcell has served on the BPH since 2021.
- Neil Schneider has served on the BPH since 2018.



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 edition for more info.

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

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Improve BPH Presentations by Showing, Not Telling

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter



THE BOARD OF Parole Hearings listens to many candidates say, "I had a really bad childhood" or, "I hated my father." The only difference in these presentations is likely the one who says, "I had a really, really bad childhood." These candidates' written life stories, the parole plan résumé, and closing impact statement, typically reflect the same shortened version "telling" the panel instead of a more clear, dramatic, and memorable "showing" version.

If asked by the board to describe your childhood, what they actually want are truthful and unforgettable descriptions showing how bad your early life was, a story that illustrates your understanding of insight, a single traumatic event, or more: "When I was just 6 years old, my dog, Montana, was just about my only friend. One day my drunken father killed our dog with a hammer, and he made me bury him. I was just 6 years old and was forced to dig a hole by the garage and bury Montana's bloodstained corpse." This incident realistically shows the board you have insight, a vital requirement at any parole hearing. Above all, be truthful; do not make up an incident.

The difference between telling someone you had "a bad early life" and showing with a truthfully explicit description, as above, makes you memorable to the board, and a step ahead of other candidates. "Show, don't tell" gets attention. Be explicit, but express yourself without offensive words. Again, be truthful; do not make up an incident.

Your written parole plan résumé and closing impact statement are sent to the board prior to the hearing, so instead of repeating something the panel has already read, save a few stories to help in your oral presentation. You may have hesitations about oral discussion in front of a group, like the dreaded oral book report in school, but the difference here is your familiarity with the story of your life. You likely did not read the entire book in school, but you truly lived the life you need to explain to the panel. The effort may be traumatic to relive, but to those in attendance and viewing your emotions, possibly even tears, such a presentation may have a memorable impact on them.

BAD EXAMPLE:

"My mom never took care of us."

"Dad was cruel and undependable."

GOOD EXAMPLE:

"I woke up one morning when I was just 6 and I was alone; Mom didn't come home until the next day. I went hungry for 28 hours."

"My father promised to buy me a new computer for Christmas. I saw him put my old computer in his car, then come back with weed. He never showed up on Christmas and went missing for two weeks."

The good examples show insight into your early years and understanding of why your life spun out of control and why you may have imitated the actions of your parents, the only life experiences available in your limited existence.

You are not blaming your parents for your ultimate life crime; you are simply presenting facts documented in juvenile court records and probation reports from prior parole hearings or court proceedings. Observations in these reports are authored by professionals who evaluated you behind the scenes as your case worked through the court system. Use these descriptive reports to further jog your memory and, when standing in front of the hearing panel, add a few more expressive stories that show your insights instead of telling the board, "I had a really bad childhood."

"Show, don't tell" applies to any written communication. Have you ever wondered why a work order for cell problems goes unanswered for weeks or months? "My toilet ain't flush right" is like a dozen others arriving at Plant Operations every day telling the problem. Try this next time: "When I flush my toilet, it drains slowly, allowing a putrid, reeking sewage stench to permeate my cell, so thick I swear I can taste the filth." Showing the problem may get a hearty laugh out of maintenance, but you will be remembered and noticed, just like the parole hearing panel thinks about your "showing" oral and written presentations.

The Power of Forgiveness

By Sean "Sharif" Neal, Lead Reporter

ON SEPT. 6, 2023, The Power of Forgiveness workshop was held in the Facility E chapel. Rob Corbin, who did prison time in the 1980s, conducted the one-day workshop.

Dedicated to helping others heal from emotional pain, Corbin's workshop centered around what he termed *Universal Laws*: 1) Every person deserves to be free from the past, and 2) Forgiveness is a decision, not a feeling.

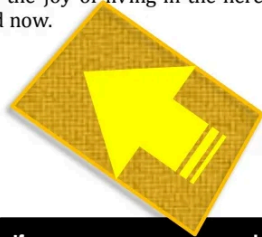
"There are no benefits to holding onto negative emotions," said Corbin. "The biggest battle takes place within our own hearts: You versus Ego."

Corbin explained that most men are serving two sentences. One is in emotional prison, which is by choice, and the other is in physical prison, which is not by choice.

Corbin noted that "forgiving someone does not mean going back to a harmful relationship, but that we have a duty to remove ourselves from those harmful relationships."

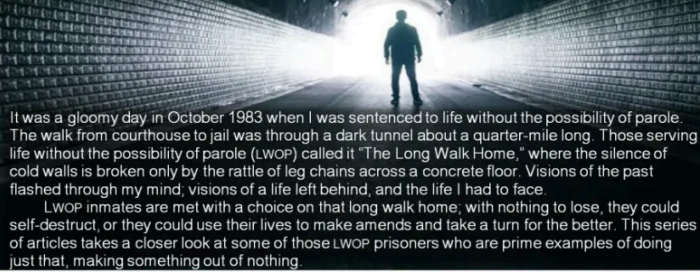
The highlight of Corbin's presentation was the Carpet Workshop that he introduced by holding up a carpet with a yellow arrow on it. Participants stood on the carpet with the arrow representing the way to "emotional freedom," and read a truth letter generated while in the classroom. The workshop was intended as a cathartic exercise in mutual sharing of past pain and peer support among men who Corbin observed "often water down our communications with other men."

According to Corbin, the true power of forgiveness is in learning to let go of a painful past in order to start experiencing the joy of living in the here and now.



The Long Walk Home

By Ricky Ortega
Post Columnist



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

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

Return of the Rising Sun/Son

SUNRISE, WHERE THE earth meets the sky in a kiss of splendor as it prepares for the birth of dawn. It lights the world with hope and promise, but only for a while as it slowly surrenders to the night. Now we wait for the hope of a new dawn as the prodigal sun bids farewell.

Raised in a beautiful home, I had every opportunity to succeed in life, not with a silver spoon, but a spoon filled with humility and goodness. Tempted by the desires of the world, however, I squandered the inheritance of love that was promised and traded it for a life of debauchery — a life without parole.

Michael Donnell Niles was arrested in 1983 and subsequently sentenced to life without parole. The story of his life began to take shape at the age of 9 when his beloved mother developed cancer. "I would rub medicine on her wounds hoping to keep her alive, but instead I watched her die slowly before my eyes," said Niles. "She was my everything, so I grew up mostly without parents. As a child, I never had much. My little brother and I were on our own at the age of 13 because of an abusive situation. I learned from the streets that having a gun gave me power, so I carried a silver-plated .25 automatic, which led to my criminal behavior."

While fending for himself, he developed his love for basketball, a love instilled in him by his mother. "She taught me everything I knew about basketball and so I played with a lot of passion when she died, like I had a chip on my shoulder," said Niles. At 6 feet 7 inches, he was a force to be reckoned with. Then, at the age of 22, his skill on the court led to him signing a lucrative contract with the Phoenix Suns. "It was the break I needed," Niles said, "but it was bittersweet because I kept thinking that now, maybe I could have helped save my mother's life. But I had security for me and my brother. It was an emotional experience. I had worked so hard and I was proud, I felt like I had finally arrived. But all this attention helped feed my ego. It gave me the false belief system that having money allows me to control people rather than being controlled by them. I was idolized by the fans and had all the women I wanted. It takes a mature person to handle all this pressure and I was doing all the immature things. Fame and fortune are like a magnet and this fed my hunger for power and soon, basketball wasn't enough," stated Niles.

When the judge sentenced him to life without parole (LWOP), it was an abrupt end to a living dream. "It was devastating to me," said Niles. "Back then, having [an] LWOP [sentence] meant you never had a chance of getting out. Surviving the mainline for over 30 years was the biggest challenge I've ever faced in my life."

Today, Niles is active in self-help recovery such as Emotional Intelligence, Board Prep, and Self-Awareness and Recovery (SAR), which has meant the most to him. His breakthrough moment came when he was in administrative segregation on Christmas 2010, when he felt like he was wasting away. "I knew there was something better," said Niles, "so I left the mainline and came to Mule Creek where I could learn to stop my violence. I don't regret it because I honestly see myself back in society one day and I want to be prepared."

The Long Walk Home is not a physical destination; it's a place in the heart, a special kind of freedom that perhaps only an LWOP citizen can understand. While tracing our steps back to our forgotten selves, we remember who we were before we committed our crimes, like the sun that rises from its slumber and awakens the world with its warmth once again. Perhaps Niles will never again play on the court of the Phoenix Suns, but as he steps onto the court of life, it will be the return of a promise, the return of a rising son.

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.





By Richard "Lonewolf" Legan.
Post Columnist

THE PERENNIAL OREGANO (*Origanum vulgare*) has pungent dark-green leaves with flower clusters in late summer. This herb is also known as wild marjoram.

In the Labiate family of plants, oregano has a very peppery taste that goes well in tomato dishes. The tea of this herb is a tonic and relieves coughs, muscle spasms, menstrual pain, and headaches. The leaves are said to be a powerful antiseptic. The oil of oregano is also an antiseptic, but can be an irritant to the mucus membranes. The leaves of this herb have been used to treat toothache.

There are several subspecies, *Origanum vulgare, aureum*, and *crissum*, which have a mild flavor. Or there is *Vulgare compactum*, which has savory leaves with red stems.

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!

With its many health problems, I hope this knowledge helps mankind live a better life.

Richard Legan is the author of *More Valuable Than Gold* published by Wild Willpower, about ethnobotany and survival skills. 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.



It was announced in January that the CPR newsletter will not be printed going forward.

For more years than many of us may remember, the **Coalition For Prisoners' Rights** newsletter provided services to American prisoners. On a shoestring budget and with little-to-no praise, they produced quality work month after month. An independent publishing entity, its content shined the light of justice on the country's penal system. The newsletter will be missed by readers around the country.

Resentencing Pilot Program, Pt. 2

By Dale Hurd, Post Reporter

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

ALL NINE COUNTIES participating in California's Resentencing Pilot Program have established data sharing agreements with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Each county's agreement is unique, and the department responds to a county's data requests in accord with current agreements. Generally, the types of information provided under these agreements are current and past prison terms; demographics; experiences while incarcerated (including programming, credits earned, certifications awarded, and rule violations); and non-diagnostic assessment and classification information such as the California Static Risk Assessment score. Before obtaining case files, participating counties require signed waivers from the incarcerated individuals to release prison records to the district attorney.

Each county receives departmental case-level data and reviews this data in various ways. This is a key aspect of the program; it promotes efficient identification of cases to consider for prosecutor-initiated resentencing based on each county's unique selection criteria. Six of the nine counties have hired staff (law clerks, paralegals, and new attorneys) specifically to focus on these cases. Seven of the counties have formed collaborations with organizations such as For the People, a nonprofit organization based in Oakland that worked with the California Assembly to help draft the pilot program legislation, and university-based law clinics to review this data to help identify potentially meritorious cases. Six district attorneys work with their county's public defender. These offices are involved with recommending cases for consideration as well as contacting resentencing candidates and providing help with completing any required applications and waivers. For example, district attorneys have requested public defenders to help obtain candidate waivers to expedite case file reviews. Because reentry plans are a major component in resentencing considerations, public defenders also identify reentry support services available to resentencing candidates. Counties where this collaboration is significant appear to be moving more rapidly in their implementation of the pilot program. Seven of the nine counties have a limited description of their resentencing policies, procedures, and application process available on the district attorneys' websites, even as these criteria and policies continue to evolve. Eight of the district attorney offices have attorneys dedicated to working solely on resentencing cases that fall both within and outside the domain of the resentencing program.

The process typically begins with each pilot county obtaining a list from the CDCR of all incarcerated citizens whose abstract of judgment originates in that county. The primary way resentencing candidates are identified is through the district attorney office's internal procedures, with public defender and For the People referrals comprising most of the remainder. The CDCR secretary and the Board of Parole Hearings also refer state inmates directly to the superior court for resentencing through the process authorized by Penal Code §1172.1(a). Referrals by the secretary or parole board benefit from the "presumption favoring recall and resentencing" embodied in §1172(b)(2). One county district attorney commented that private attorneys were soliciting money from inmates and their families to prepare resentencing requests. This prompted that office to post that it would not consider recommendations for resentencing submitted by counsel outside the framework it had developed.

Resentencing Pilot Program offices review the data provided by the CDCR, identify potentially qualifying individuals, screen these candidates according to their county's eligibility criteria, work with the county public defender and other nonprofit agencies to develop packets for review, then the resentencing unit or committee selects cases to recommend for resentencing. These resentencing requests are then prepared and filed in the appropriate court. Inmates and their legal representatives are entitled to present evidence to the court as to why continued incarceration is no longer in the interest of justice. Especially important in this regard is evidence of rehabilitation and substantial reentry support. While a participating district attorney makes the recommendation for resentencing, the judge makes the final decision to grant or deny the request.

In some instances, participating district attorneys determined an individual was a good candidate for resentencing, but some reason (e.g., inadequate reentry plan, rules violation report within last three years, etc.) weakened their application to the point where it was not submitted to the court. Some district attorneys have let these individuals know what the issues were and suggested

(continued on page 10)

(from *Resentencing*, page 9)

that if they address the problems their case would be reconsidered in a year. For some district attorneys, an informal process exists such that individuals who do not make the final cut are allowed to appeal directly to the head of the resentencing unit or committee.

The nonprofit For the People provides a publication, *A How-To Guide for Incarcerated People Seeking Resentencing Under California's Prosecutor-Initiated Resentencing Law*, available online at ForThePPL.org.

California's Parole Suitability Hearing Support
 12350 Marshall Ave., # 133
 Chino, CA 91710
www.ForThePPL.org/flq

What is the California Model?

By Earl S. Breckenridge,
 Feature Reporter

“THE CALIFORNIA MODEL — changing lives one conversation at a time,” was the subject of an April 2023 memorandum to all employees of the California Department of Corrections. The memo was generated by Secretary Jeff Macomber and federal receiver J. Clark Kelso.

“The California Model draws on international best practices to change culture within California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS),” according to the CDCR website. The heading “What is the California Model and how is it transforming criminal justice in California?” went on to say, “The department is committed to improving working and living conditions for all who live in, work in, and visit state prisons, as well as improving the working environment for all employees regardless of their location.” The site went on to mention that CDCR has partnered with the Amend Program at the University of California, San Francisco, as well as incorporating ideals from Norway’s criminal justice system: “When we treat one another with respect, our environment will change for the better,” the CDCR said on its website.

Answering some frequently asked questions, the depart-

ment noted its reasons for implementing the California Model: “Because it is the right thing to do. CDCR/CCHCS is a vast, complex system with dedicated correctional professionals who have the opportunity to help people change their lives. We are reemphasizing that the loss of liberty is the punishment by the courts. Our primary duty is to provide an environment conducive to rehabilitation so the people in our care can become better neighbors, both in prison and when they return to our communities.”

The following programs have been implemented:

- Enhancing staff training to include implicit bias as well as developing training for 2024 based on California Model principles
- Implementing face-to-face college at all prisons
- Providing secure laptops to all incarcerated college students to use in their studies
- Rolling out tablets statewide to enhance connections with loved ones as well as provide positive downtime activities such as books and music
- Adding a third day of in-person visits at all institutions
- Implementing programs and events designed to include people of all ages and physical abilities
- Encouraging institution beautification efforts, including drought-tolerant gardens, landscaping, and murals
- Improving furniture and bedding choices to provide more comfortable and attractive options
- Expanding reentry services statewide.

To identify scalable possibilities for all state prisons, California Model programming at the Valley State Prison, Salinas Valley State Prison, Central California Women’s Facility, and California Medical Facility has been introduced with preliminary positive results, according to Macomber. On Sept. 21, 2023, Macomber identified California State Prison–Corcoran, California State Prison–Sacramento, Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility, San Quentin Rehabilitation Center, and the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility as additional prisons piloting California Model programs.

“We want to take the best practices from each of your institutions and expand this to other locations. It will become part of the norm,” said Macomber.

Guiding principles for the California Model include: dynamic security, normalization, peer support, and becoming a trauma-informed organization. See the November 2023 edition of the *Post* for more about these four principles.

Speaking with Secretary Macomber

By Vanessa Nelson-Sloane, Life Support Alliance

A SHORT FOUR months after being appointed California Secretary of Corrections by Gov. Newsom, Jeff Macomber met with *California Lifer Newsletter* to discuss the department’s past, present, and future.

Starting his career with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) in 1994, Macomber held several positions, including chief deputy warden and warden at California State Prison–Sacramento (2013-2016), a stint with the department’s medical unit, and two undersecretary positions.

Before looking ahead, the secretary noted the changes he’s seen and been part of over the last decade or so, mentioning the light-years shift in technology that now sees the incarcerated populations carrying electronic tablets and engaging in calls and visits on those devices. The presence of colleges in every institution, free calls for prisoners, and video visiting were also among the changes Macomber felt were significant.

He also noted that the rapid reduction in the prison population, albeit mightily impacted by the COVID pandemic, went further and faster than anticipated, with little influx of new prisoners after the COVID shutdowns.

But interestingly, while discussing these brick-and-mortar changes to the system, the secretary noted that the change he felt was most significant was the infusion and growth of hope among the incarcerated population — hope that they will be released and be allowed to restart their lives once again. That shift,

(continued on page 11)



Secretary Macomber

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

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(from Macomber, pg. 10)

that development and growth of hope, he counted as the biggest and most impactful change over the decades.

Contributing to that hope, Macomber noted the many changes in sentencing and enhancement relief put in place in recent years. Probably the biggest elephant in the room recently has been the announced reimagining of San Quentin in the California Model of corrections — what does that mean, and when and what can we expect as changes at California's oldest prison? Acknowledging the California Model is still a work in progress, Macomber indicated the first changes likely to be evident will be material — rebuilding the old death row cells and a currently unused warehouse. As to what those changes will be, there are still no hard and fast concepts. Several iterations of common space — where staff and the incarcerated population could mingle in a less us-and-them atmosphere, perhaps in a coffee shop or retail setting — are a possibility. However, he agreed that that the key to any successful change was acceptance of that change by staff, and prisoners, which would likely involve a change in mindset. He noted the department plans several methods to promote the benefits of the new model, both in safety and stress to those working, and living, in the prison system. He indicated videos on the coming changes — aimed at both staff and the prisoner population — would soon be available.

As to what the immediate future holds on Macomber's watch, he expressed the intent to bring the system back to normal after the disruption of COVID, as well as expanding programs for prisoners, and finalizing and implementing the new model. The secretary touched on the humanization that he feels has developed in the institutions, noting it was not unusual for prisoners to approach him as he walked the yards of various prisons, introduce themselves, and shake hands.

Macomber indicated he embraces that practice and hopes that similar scenarios will increase across lines and colors (blue and green), and contribute to the maturation of a rehabilitation-not-warehousing culture of corrections.

MCIC Leagues Pick up Steam

ON FACILITY D we just finished with our handball, horseshoe, pickleball, and soccer leagues. The current ADA Fitness program is going strong, and the Facility D music program is doing well.

We finished the football and soccer leagues on Facility E, and on Thanksgiving we held horseshoe, handball, chess, domino, pinochle, Scrabble, and spades tournaments. For Veterans Day the music program had a yard concert. The ADA Fitness program is really strong on Facility E. Both of the running and walking clubs are thriving.

The Minimum Support Facility finally received their prizes for the Labor Day events, and #1 and #2 dorms should already have their table tennis tables by now. We also held Thanksgiving tournaments similar to Facility E, with the addition of basketball and volleyball.



By A. Scholl, MCIC Coach

Fac. D Horseshoes League

By L. Garcia, Mule Creek State Prison

MANY OF US grew up playing horseshoes or watching people play horseshoes. Turns out there are a handful of people on Facility D who stayed loyal to the horseshoe game, like myself, and it's these guys you'll find at the horseshoe pits come the weekend, some even sharpening their skills during the week between their work assignments and whatever else they have going on. All of us agree that playing horseshoes on a day when the sun is shining and the wind is breezy can make you feel like you're free — like you're at the park hanging out with friends.

The horseshoe league on Facility D has brought players together regardless of race, creed, or color. The league consists of seven two-man teams competing for the most wins in the season, as well as bragging rights. Each team plays two games on game day, but having only one horseshoe pit makes things go a little slower.

A solid group of players shows up week after week, and rivalries have been established that make the competition more fun. Stay tuned to find out who came in first and second place.



Fac. D Homerun Derby

By L. Garcia, Mule Creek State Prison

ON SUNDAY, SEPT. 17, Facility D hosted its first Homerun Derby and it was a success. We had 10 of the top hitters show up to showcase their hitting power.

The competition was set up tournament style, consisting of the bracket system. Numbers were drawn out of a hat to determine who would go up against whom. To advance, the player had to hit the most homeruns out of 15 swings; the bat had to make contact with the ball to count as one swing. We set the homerun distance at 250 feet, which turned out to be harder to reach than anyone thought. Hitters were also trying to hit the ball as far as possible with everyone's longest hit recorded. The winner was able to knock out the last competitor with three homeruns and captured the longest ball title at 270 feet.

We look forward to the next tournament.



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



Incarceration of Ex-Law Enforcement

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

IN JUNE 1993, a federal prisoner sat by himself in a far corner of a noisy prison day-room trying to lose himself in a mystery novel. Someone shouted, "Officer! Hey, officer!"

The lone prisoner swiveled his head to answer and started to stand, but checked up and quickly sat back down and froze, hoping nobody noticed his over-reaction. Fifteen years in law enforcement had conditioned him to respond immediately to such pleas for help but, after two years in custody, the nervous man was still getting used to his new life — he was no longer a cop. Blending in was a necessity.

Beyond the extensive police academy training peace officers attend are real-life experiences of car chases, foot pursuits, interactions with the mentally challenged, and gunfire. However, nothing prepares a cop for a reversed role where he finds himself on the other side of the barbed wire.

Like a veteran of Vietnam, Iraq, or Afghanistan, a loud bang resembling a gunshot or explosion causes some ex-cops to react expressively. In an interview with a 15-year veteran detective from a medium-sized California city, the ex-cop said, "When I taught GED classes at Calipatria [State Prison], a hardcover school book dropped on the floor from a bookcase behind me. When it smacked the floor it sounded like a gunshot. I jerked and reached for my right side." The conditioned response to the piercing report was to verify his Smith & Wesson handgun was in its place on his hip; the grasp for his phantom gun noticed by two inmates. "I smiled and told them, 'Vietnam,' to keep them off guard. After all these years," the man groaned, "I still react badly to loud noises."

There are no "how-to" manuals or orientation classes to guide a newly-convicted cop into an existence behind bars. Most former officers are initially isolated from other inmates at the county jail level, but not always. California state prisons no longer have protective custody

The Department of Justice reported there are over 750,000 sworn local, state, and federal law enforcement officers in the United States. In a June 24, 2016, *Huffington Post* article by Matt Ferner, the author referenced a Bowling Green State University study stating, "Police crimes are not uncommon, averaging 1,000 arrests of officers per year."

Phil Stinson, the lead researcher of the study, found this figure equates to a rate of arrest of 1.7 per 100,000 people. According to FBI Uniform Crime Report Data for civilians in the United States, the arrest rate is 3,888 per 100,000.

The study also revealed that many convicted peace officers experienced an unraveling of their lives following arrest. Some agencies actually provide trauma or grief counseling to co-workers, but no support to the arrested officer who quickly finds he or she is on their own and a pariah.

"Police officers should not be getting arrested," Stinson added, "Yes, the rates of arrest are very low, but this stuff is nuts. And the fact that officers are arrested for so many different types of crimes is simply amazing to me."

yards, ideal venues for an ex-cop trying to blend in with other high-profile prisoners, but no more. Introductions to prison life for convicted cops vary, but initiations are generally perilous.

Walking onto a prison yard for the first time, Craig, a former cop from a large California department, was immediately attacked (his case was highly visible in the media and he was immediately recognized). A single sucker punch laid Craig up for a few days, but then a friendly yard *veterano* took him aside and told him to immediately face the issue head-on or forever regret it. In a clandestine yard interview, Craig said, "First chance I had, I walked up to the guy who punched me. He was surrounded by a couple of biker types, and I faced him head on, 'Is this over or what?'" The heavily-tattooed lifer's response, "Hey, man, you didn't snitch. No problem. We're good." Prison Orientation 101.

However, a former deputy sheriff from California, with only a few years on the job, found a different atmosphere. Aaron said, "It [the crime] was an officer-involved shooting but I wasn't the shooter. I just got caught up in it. There was lots of controversy and it happened while a lot of anti-police protests were on TV, so I was worried." Surprisingly, Aaron found his police union and fellow officers surrounded him and his family with positive support. "I've never had any negative experiences in prison because I was a former cop — none." Aaron was interviewed at a weekend yard event at the Mule Creek State Prison in Ione, California, and asked if he has ever run into anyone he arrested since incarceration, a common concern for imprisoned law enforcement trying to camouflage their existence. He cautiously looked over both his shoulders before answering. He smiled broadly and said, "There are two or three here right now, but we're all cool about it."

Incarcerated officers are frequent witnesses to violence. From two-on-one skirmishes over card games, bullying of the weak and elderly, or all-out attacks on staff, the former cops' entrenched motto of "to protect and serve" kicks in when such carnage is observed. Reacting to assist any staff member labels the potential rescuer as surely as snitching on fellow prisoners.

"If a female staff was getting beaten badly," Craig said quietly, hanging his head, "especially a cool one, man, I'd have to jump in." The challenge was obvious and the former peace officer chose to change the topic. The interviews with Craig were difficult with other inmates passing by, his former occupation known to only a few on the low-level yard.

A total of six former law enforcement officers were invited to take part in creation of this article. Two did not respond; one was interested but later said no. Two agreed, but did not want to use the written list of interview questions; a personal interview was required. Talking with a reporter on a prison yard was too provocative, so many of the conversations took place while walking the track, hanging out in the noisy gym, or at a chaotic sporting event. The entire process was similar to an undercover operation.

Craig, in prison for over 25 years, has had no difficulties since the initial encounter described above, summed up with sage advice for other ex-cops.

"Fight back when you need to and don't act like a cop; blend in," he said wisely, then added, "Follow the yard code, not the penal code."

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(916) 555-0001 oig.ca.gov

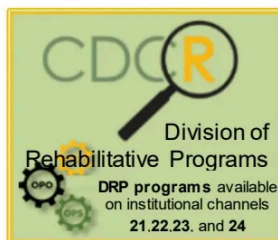


Attorney **Maya Emig** focuses her area of practice on parole and post-conviction law. She is a former attorney with the California Parole Advocacy Program, where she represented thousands of parolees in parole revocation matters. She also has extensive experience representing prisoners at parole consideration 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:

Maya Emig
4225 Executive Square,
Suite 600
La Jolla, CA 92037
 (833) Emig-Law
 AttorneyEmigMCP@gmail.com

For more information regarding the Board of Parole Hearings, write to:
BOARD OF PAROLE HEARINGS
 P.O. Box 4036
 Sacramento, CA 95812-4036
www.cdcr.ca.gov/
 (916) 445-4072



Limit your "always" and your "nevers."

— Amy Poehler

Relapse Prevention Plans, Pt. 3

By **Maya Emig**, Post Columnist

NOW THAT YOU have done Steps 1 to 5 (1: Identified the issues you had, 2: Written down the factual instances, 3: Written down your triggers, 4: Categorized your triggers, and 5: Examined what was going on in your life), let's delve into Steps 6 and 7 and learn how to develop coping mechanisms in order to deal with triggers within our relapse prevention plans.

Step #6: Take your triggers and develop coping mechanisms to deal with them. The next part of this is putting strategies in place to deal with your triggers in your classes that deal with your specific issues: domestic violence, anger, gangs, criminal thinking, etc., as they will provide coping mechanisms and strategies. Incorporate those into your daily life and your relapse prevention plans. You need to have more coping mechanisms than just walking away from the situation. That answer will never be enough for the board. In fact, be prepared to discuss the last time you encountered that situation and how you used your coping skills. QTIP (quit taking it personal) and STOP (stop to observe and process) are a couple mnemonics that can help you learn coping skills.

As an example for drug use, you should have a series of coping skills. Keep going with those coping skills by putting yourself in the situation wherein you still have the urge to engage in the activity. For example, you are having a hard time and the urge to use is steadfast. You have used Coping Skill A, but you still have the urge. So, you utilize Coping Skill B, but you still wanted to use so you utilized Coping Skill C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, etc., and go through the scenario wherein your coping skills increase and become more involved.

In total, you should understand the things that triggered you in the past to be prepared to discuss those triggers and real-life examples of being triggered, and how you use your learned coping skills now to mitigate the circumstances. It's important to think about these situations and have a written plan. Be prepared to discuss that relapse is always a possibility and be able to identify the susceptible areas that could bring you back to prison — often substance use and relationships. Do not tell the panel that nothing will ever bring you back to prison because you have learned your lesson, or how you are a changed person, or you have done so much time that there is nothing that would ever bring you back to prison. Remember, relapse is always a possibility.

Step #7: Create a separate plan to deal with stress, especially in context of your issues and triggers. Managing stress is important and you want to manage your stress before it gets to be overwhelming. In reading transcripts over the last couple of years, I picked up on a common statement that a few incarcerated people have made to the board. In essence, they think that once released they will have no issues and all they want to do is live a quiet life. Life is inherently stressful. Life will be stressful when you are released, and failing to understand that basic tenet means you do not understand what awaits you upon release. Even smaller stresses that may not feel like much in the moment can snowball and land you in a position of relapsing in your criminality if you do not have the appropriate coping mechanisms in place. If you don't know what awaits you upon release, then you certainly have not made those plans to address those issues. And, if you don't have those plans, then you are not suitable for release. This is a hard lesson to learn when sitting before the parole board; do not make the mistake of trying to convince the commissioners that life outside of prison will be a breeze. Be prepared for your hearing by ensuring you understand ways to manage real life day-to-day stress.

From a September 2021 post on WebMD.com by Lauren Ragland:

[K]eep a positive attitude, accept that there are events that you cannot control, be assertive instead of aggressive (assert your feeling, opinions, beliefs instead of becoming angry, defensive or passive), learn to manage your time more effectively, set limits appropriately and say no to requests that would create excessive stress in your life, make time for hobbies and interests, don't rely on alcohol, drugs or compulsive behaviors to reduce stress, seek out social support, seek treatment with a psychologist or other mental health professional trained in stress management...

A failure to practice self-care is a dangerous habit that can lead you toward relapse, even if the possibility of relapse is not at the forefront of your mind. Bottling up emotions, unhealthy eating, or not getting enough sleep all contribute to stress that can weaken your ability to utilize the coping mechanisms you have worked hard to develop and have grown to depend upon. Always prioritize your health by eating well, exercising, and doing things that reduce stress in your body like breathing techniques, meditation, or yoga.

Spend time thinking about the ways in which you can incorporate more of these into your daily life. Now get cracking on your relapse prevention plans; I wish you a plethora of insight as you work on them.

Commutation Application Guide

By California Coalition
for Women Prisoners

THE CALIFORNIA COALITION for Women Prisoners (CCWP) publishes a commutation guide (revised June 2019) for the incarcerated and their advocates to prepare commutation applications for submission to the governor of California. The CCWP shares this guide as a free resource for those applying for commutation.

People serving a sentence for a criminal conviction can petition the California governor to have their sentence reduced or eliminated by applying for a commutation of sentence. "Executive clemency" is another term for commutation. Pardons are a separate process, and generally are considered only after people have been discharged from parole or probation for at least 10 years.

The Application Guide

All people serving sentences for criminal convictions can apply for a commutation of sentence. This includes people who have been incarcerated for less than 10 years. People with active cases in the courts can also apply; they just have to mention this in their application. People with prior felony convictions can also apply.

Applicants do not need an attorney to apply for commutation. Some applicants do work with attorneys, but it is not necessary.

The application has three main questions (questions 2, 3, and 4) that require longer and more personal answers. The following are ideas to consider when answering these questions. We offer these as suggestions on how to approach your answers based on whether:

- You take full responsibility for the crime.
- You take partial responsibility for your conviction but were not the person who caused direct harm.
- You maintain your innocence.

Those who have already applied under the previous administration can choose to reopen their application. Applicants must have applied within three years of when Gov. Newsom announced his commuta-

tion process in March 2019. People who applied for commutation during this time frame who don't want to start over must fill out a one-page Re-application for Commutation and Pardon form to allow the governor's office to reopen their application. The re-application is available in your facility law library, and online at: gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Clemency-Re-Application.pdf.

Question #1: Conviction Summary. List conviction(s) for which you are requesting a commutation of sentence. Simply list each crime, county of conviction, and the sentence received. Check the appropriate box if you were under or over 26 at the time of your crime(s) for which you seek commutation.

Next, list all prior convictions in California, any other state or country, or in federal court. Just a list with no explanations.

Question #2: Briefly describe the circumstances of the crime(s) for which you are requesting a commutation. The answer to this question can be just a few sentences, clearly and concisely describing your crime and its circumstances. If you have access to your court documents, you might use a brief, to-the-point version of the wording from them for consistency.

If you maintain your innocence and cannot state that you committed the crime, you can phrase it as, "I was convicted of _____."

You may also add an explanation of any mitigating factors regarding the crime here: your age if under 26; history of domestic or sexual violence (as a victim); addiction of any kind, or family history of addiction; impact of discrimination due to race, gender, economic status, or disability.

Question #3: Describe how a commutation of sentence may impact your life. This is the section where you summarize your understanding of your life, patterns, major events, abuse histories, etc., and their impact on your conviction. It is important to share any factors that may have impacted the original crime and/or conviction, for example: violence and abuse in the home when you were growing up or in your adult life; a history of addiction, either your own or family members. Newsom's administration has also opened the door to other factors that may impact your life, such as: aging in prison; ongoing serious health or disability problems or terminal illness; your family circumstances, including serious illness or death of family members or children in need of your parental love and support.

If you are applying for a commutation because you are suffering from a terminal illness, or have a severe chronic disability or illness that would be helped by release from prison or sentence reduction, you need to submit an Authorization for Release of Protected Health Information form (CDCR Form 7385).

If you have an sentence of life without the possibility of parole (LWOP), begin by explaining that you are requesting commutation so that you can have the opportunity to go before the Board of Parole Hearings (BPH) to demonstrate your growth, insight, accomplishments while imprisoned, and your overall preparedness for release.

I. If you take full responsibility for your crime of conviction: Acknowledge personal responsibility and individual culpability; describe how you understand the harm you caused, how you feel and show remorse about your actions and choices.

Describe anything about the context of your life at the time that mitigates the crime, for instance:

- If you were young and have youthful factors defined in *Miller v. Alabama* or the youthful offender parole laws
- If you were a victim of abuse (such as childhood sexual abuse, domestic abuse, sexual violence, sex trafficking, physical violence, gender-based violence)
- If you were suffering from an addiction
- If you experienced neglect in the child welfare system
- If you were homeless, etc.

It is important you frame your contextual information not as an excuse for what you did, but in the vein of "I'm trying to understand how I could have committed the crime."

Describe how you understand any harm you caused, how you feel and show remorse about your actions and choices.

Share context that helps explain any negative information in your Central File, for example, explain the context for any disciplinary infractions, etc. If you received many disciplinary infractions earlier in your prison term, show that you have insight into your emotional state and behaviors that led to those incidents, and explain how you have changed over time.

II. If you take partial responsibility for your crime of conviction but were not the person who caused direct harm: Describe why you believe that although you were partially responsible, you were assigned too much responsibility for the crime. This can be tricky, because you have to do so while at the same time acknowledging some personal responsibility and also while being diplomatic about any direct criticism of the court's decision.

One strategy is to describe a road map of choices you made that led you to the situation in which the crime occurred, for example, what led you to participate in a robbery that ended in murder.

Describe anything about the context of your life at the time that mitigates the crime, for instance:

- If you were young and have youthful factors defined in *Miller v. Alabama* or the youthful offender parole laws
- If you were a victim of abuse (such as childhood sexual abuse, domestic abuse, sexual violence, sex trafficking, physical violence, gender-based violence)
- If you were suffering from an addiction

The application is available in your facility law library and online at gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Commutation-Application.pdf.

(continued on page 14)

- If you experienced neglect in the child welfare system
- If you were homeless, etc.

It is important you frame your contextual information not as an excuse for what you did, but rather in the vein of "I'm trying to understand how I could have committed the crime." Describe how you understand any harm you caused, how you feel and show remorse about your actions and choices.

Share context that helps explain any negative information in your Central File, for example, explain the context for any disciplinary infractions, etc. If you received many disciplinary infractions earlier in your prison term, show that you have insight into your emotional state and behaviors that led to those incidents, and explain how you have changed over time.

III. If you maintain your innocence: Describe why you maintain your innocence and the circumstances in which you were convicted for the crime. This can be tricky because you have to do so while at the same time expressing some degree of personal accountability and while being diplomatic if directly criticizing the court's decision. For example, we know that the BPH routinely rules against innocence claims as a "lack of insight," barring people from parole. While applying for commutation through the governor's office is not the same as going through the BPH. We recommend that applicants still be careful about how they maintain their innocence. This is in part because staff from the BPH will be the ones investigating commutation applications that the governor's office selects for review.

Describe anything about the context of your life at the time of your conviction or choices you do take responsibility for, while maintaining your innocence, for instance:

- If you were young and have youthful factors defined in *Miller v. Alabama* or the youthful offender parole laws
- If you were a victim of abuse (such as childhood sexual abuse, domestic abuse, sexual violence, sex trafficking, physical violence, gender-based violence)
- If you were suffering from an addiction
- If you experienced neglect in the child welfare system
- If you were homeless, etc.

It is important you frame your contextual information, for instance, "I'm trying to understand how I could have put myself into a situation where I was implicated in this crime."

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

**California Coalition for
Women Prisoners**

Explain that you feel remorse about whatever actions and choices led you to the situation where you were convicted of a crime you did not commit. We understand that this may feel like a contradictory position, but it is important to demonstrate personal accountability.

Share context that helps explain any negative information in your Central File, for example, explain the context for any disciplinary infractions, etc. If you received many disciplinary infractions earlier in your prison term, show that you have insight into your emotional state and behaviors that led to those incidents, and explain how you have changed over time.

Question #4: Describe your life since your conviction (e.g., efforts in self-development, including identifying and addressing treatment needs, professional and educational achievements; any setbacks, conduct violations, or new convictions; insight about past conduct; and future goals). This is the section where you describe how you've changed internally (the ways you think, feel, react to different situations and circumstances), and what you've accomplished in prison. This is also an important place to share any factors you believe should be weighed in considering your sentence commutation. Here are suggested areas to cover when answering this question:

I. Change and rehabilitation: Describe your process of change and rehabilitation, and what programs or groups helped you through this process, for example, work for the community (both inside and outside of prison), self-help groups, independent study, mental health groups, educational accomplishments, substance use programs, violence prevention, etc. Explain insights that you have developed about your circumstances, behaviors, and patterns, and describe the skills you've developed to respond to personal challenges differently. Make sure to highlight specific accomplishments, since this continues to come up in the previous governor's press releases about commutations. For example:

- Programs completed, including participation in self-help groups, job/vocational training, etc.
- Educational progress, courses taken, degrees earned
- Positive work record
- Attendance at church or other religious/spiritual activities
- Participation in charity events or efforts
- Chronos from correctional officers, supervisors, etc.
- Admission to honor dorms or other accomplishments

If you have been barred from programs because of where you are housed and/or discrimination you've faced, but you've managed to find ways to educate yourself and become more self-aware, we encourage you to share this information, too. This can include any coping skills you've developed to overcome challenges in prison.

II. Undue burdens: Explain if you face undue burdens because of imprisonment, for example, if you are elderly, disabled, ill, face particular forms of discrimination, etc.

III. Factors against recidivism: Describe factors that will ensure against recidivism, including your parole plan, access to family and community support once you're released, job prospects or plans for education, etc.

To apply for commutation, applicants need to send a notification form to the district attorney's office in their county of conviction. This notice, called the Notice of Intent to Apply for Clemency, must be mailed to the DA's office at least 10 days before submitting your application to the governor's office.

We suggest making two copies of your completed DA notification form before you send it — we recommend saving a copy for yourself and including a copy with your application to the governor's office. We strongly recommend that applicants send their DA notification form by certified mail, so applicants can show documentation of notice to the governor's office.

Once you submit your commutation application, you can continue to send in supporting documents (i.e. chromos, support letters, mental health evaluations, and any other documentation that supports your application). When sending additional supporting documents, make sure to include your name and CDCR number on all materials.

Send your commutation application to:

**Governor Gavin Newsom
Attn: Clemency/Legal Affairs
State Capitol, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814**

prep
partnership for reentry program

**PREP
P.O. Box 77850
LOS ANGELES, CA 90007**

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.



Prison Hacks

Almonds

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

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

PRISON LIVING CAN be as miserable as residing in a Third World country. A prisoner probably will not starve in a U.S. prison, but most are always hungry and unfulfilled by diets comprised of the cheapest ingredients money can buy and prepared by other prisoners. In general, meals require some creativity (spices, sauces, etc.) to make entrées and side dishes edible. Try this hack below if you have access to a microwave.

Toasted Almonds

These healthy snacks are sometimes in our prepackaged lunches and delivered raw. Toasting and adding them to other dining hall items can make edible otherwise bland foods. Here's how to prepare them:

1. Spread the almonds on a piece of cardboard. Do **NOT** use a plastic bowl or lid.
2. Place the cardboard in microwave for about 3½ minutes.
3. Take them out and allow cooling for 5 minutes.

The roasted snack now tastes like peanuts or cashews. Add salt, lemon pepper, garlic powder, sugar, or a light honey coating to suit your tastes; be creative. The almonds can be eaten by the handful, tossed into your evening meal salad, or onto your hot or cold cereal for added flavor and texture.

As a personal favorite, I crush the nuts and add them to my peanut butter for a crunchy PB&J sandwich. They also enhance a honeybun, Danish, or other pastry. You might even try dipping your favorite candy bar into a bowl of crushed almonds for an excellent melding of chocolate and crunchy nuts.

Creating Pro-Social Neighbors

By Hollie Garrett III, Mule Creek State Prison

WITH AN ESTIMATED 2.2 million people incarcerated in the United States at any one time, eventually 95 percent of them will be released. Of those released, the recidivism rate for California is approximately 60 to 65 percent within three years. This rate lowers to 13.7% for those with an associate degree, 5.6% for with a bachelor's, and 0% for those with a master's. Yet, only 33% of incarcerated people obtain GED certificates, and only 14% get any college at all. With the rate of secondary education so low, most incarcerated people will be released from prison without assurances they have been provided the opportunity to rehabilitate. These people will be our neighbors.

Making good neighbors of the formerly incarcerated is the motivation behind the Creating Neighbors project designed by Mule Creek State Prison residents Angelo Ward, Ezakiel Johnson, and Jerry King. As interns at the Folsom Lake College (FLC) reentry program, they came up with Creating Neighbors as their social work/human services internship project.

"I have heard a lot of corrections officers say that one day I might be their neighbor," said Ward. "Hearing this, I perceived it as a motivator and a concern. So, if this is such a concern, I asked what we can do to create better neighbors."

"Education was my rehabilitative catalyst," added Ward. "I wanted to do something to help with the longevity of the educators' careers in prison and to help teachers understand the incarcerated students' mindset and culture."

"I really didn't want to do this project at first," said Johnson. "But as I started researching the topic of education in prison, I found flaws in the system and I wanted to help."

Creating Neighbors is a person-centered approach to the professional development of educators and incarcerated students. Its goals are to educate the educators by raising their awareness of the incarcerated student's unique experiences. Creating Neighbors addresses areas of cultural humility, stereotypes and misconceptions, theory and practice, education and life trauma. Where most talk about the benefits of educating incarcerated people focusing on the financial benefits to taxpayers, this project has a different tactic.

"We are moving from a cost-centered approach to a person-centered focus on prison education," Ward explained.

With the help of Folsom Lake College's M. Pershon and Dr. K. Jones, reentry program director M. Stafford, and the Mule Creek State Prison administration, the project was able to run three workshops for educators from the Los Rios school district over the spring 2023 semester.

"We are not just bridging the gap between students and educators, but the CDCR [California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation] administration as well," said Ward.

While the workshops were met by warm reviews, Ward, Johnson, and King wait to see how other groups will respond. When asked what success would look like, they described it as a community of practice where involved stakeholders come together to discuss problems, successes, and possibilities for the purpose of getting to the root of existing issues and creating realistic solutions.

"If we don't have a collaborative effort with FLC and CDCR's administration, we won't be able to continue," said Johnson.

"We opened the door to what the possibilities of working with us could do," said King. "We were able to step into a teaching role for people who have master's and doctorate's degrees. Who could be better to educate the educators on how to get the best results from their incarcerated students than those with the lived experience?"

Experience can be the best teacher, and each developer went into this project with certain expectations and left with a lived experience.

"I saw this as a way to develop the characteristics of being selfless because I didn't have that," said Johnson. "Now I know what it means to help others and I learned that I could have an impact on my environment by working with others to reach a common goal."

One common goal is to partner with the Office of Correctional Education to include the department's education system in rehabilitative efforts.

"That way we can help facilitate how to better help the students who are in basic education classes get their GED [certificate]s and get into college before they are released back into society," said King. "This will help reduce recidivism."

"Would you rather have a neighbor that came to prison, got educated, learned coping skills, and became a pro-social person, or someone who just did nothing resourceful with their time?" asked Ward.

With a plan and the experience to create better neighbors of those getting released from prison, Creating Neighbors is just waiting for a seat at the table.

For more about Creating Neighbors, check out the July and September editions of the Post.

National Pie Month Favorites



Apple Pie (Recipe30.com)



Banana Cream Pie (SallysBakingAddiction.com)



Blueberry Cream Cheese Pie (DessertNowDinnerLater.com)



Blueberry Pie (InspiredTaste.net)



Cherry Pie (LoveAndLemons.com)

Turning Lives Around at Pleasant Valley State Prison

By William Green, Pleasant Valley State Prison



TONY IS A man who — after 29 years and two failed suitability hearings — was able to make parole. But this isn't your typical success story, for Tony was a product of prison in the 1990s, a time of extreme racism, gang politics, and bloodshed. "Tony" is not his real name; his name is not being used to protect his identity.

Growing up in Fresno, Tony became part of the notorious F-14 prison gang. Though he was not the "shooter," he had a hand in a gang-related killing. And, because he chose to "hold it down for the homies," he sacrificed 29 years of his life over misplaced loyalty and an erroneous criminal mentality.

Upon arrival to prison, Tony found himself in the middle — literally and geographically (Fresno is between northern and southern California) — of a fierce war between Hispanic gangs, Northerners and Southerners, that had been going on since 1968. To top it off, Fresno gang members were involved in a civil war by separating from northern roots and former allies. Young Tony, ever loyal and ready to prove himself, was all too eager to raise his hand and put in work. This went on for nearly two decades until he began to notice a disturbing pattern: the ongoing cycle of negativity that had become his life.

A person's core beliefs are made of thoughts, feelings, and actions. It starts as a child, picking up core beliefs of influential adults, then one's peers in school, and finally through the adult social circle. Thoughts produce feelings, which produce actions that produce external results, whether beneficial or, in Tony's case, the ongoing cycle of negativity. He saw his life was being wasted, and these thoughts changed his belief about gangs and the criminal lifestyle. This awakening prompted him to action. Tony dropped out of his gang and reached out to Criminals and Gangmembers Anonymous (CGA), which he brought to Pleasant Valley State Prison; he was instrumental in getting CGA up and running.

Some who chair meetings do the basics, and most have little effect on others. But I was blessed to get to know Tony. He is someone who has a magnetic personality and exerts a strong influence on those around him. The oratory skills and social status that once drew others to follow him in a negative way are now amplified in a positive manner to promote healthy moral and spiritual principals, those qualities needed to lead and mentor CGA members away from the criminal lifestyle.

Another resident at Pleasant Valley, "James" has made the biggest and most pronounced turn in ideology and action, this self-proclaimed Hitler Youth who was a neo-Nazi growing up ("James" is not his real name; his name is not being used to protect his identity). He became a radical skinhead, but he didn't just hate Jews, he also abhorred homosexuals. James knew victims of molestation and blamed it on the gay community. When still very young, he went out of his way to annoy, harass, and even attack them. The beatings he gave got more severe until he took a life. Yet, James was proud of what he did when he came to prison, and other racist white nationalists were quick to recruit and use him until he made the ranks of the Aryan Brotherhood, which is the prison gang that runs all other white gangs in prison.

After 16 years of committing crime on the prison mainline, James dropped out of the gang in 2018. I met him three years later. He was my Substance Abuse Program mentor and, by then, he was already an Integrated Substance Use Disorder Treatment (ISUDT) mentor, Inmate Advisory Council member, and LWOP Alliance vice-chairman. Just last year he became a member of the executive body of the prison's Walk the Yard program, and is even preparing to become an addiction counselor fulltime when he transfers.

These are shining examples of change and prosperity taking place on Pleasant Valley State Prison's Facility A. Is justice and rehabilitation occurring concurrently? You be the judge.

Criminon offers a correspondence course covering common sense issues designed to broaden insight surrounding rehabilitation and self-awareness. Write for more information:

Criminon West US
P.O. Box 9091
Glendale, CA 91226



National Pie Month Favorites



Chicken Pot Pie (AllRecipes.com)



Chocolate Cream Pie (DessertNowDinnerLater.com)



Key Lime Pie (BillyParisi.com)



Lemon Meringue Pie (FoodNetwork.com)



Walnut Mincemeat Pie (TasteOfHome.com)



Pecan Pie (SeriousEats.com)

Apology Letter Bank Program Visits Valley State Prison

By Katie James, Chief of the Office of Victim and Survivors Rights and Services

OFFICE OF VICTIM and Survivors Rights and Services Apology Letter Bank program coordinators recently visited the Valley State Prison in Chowchilla. It is hoped that every California prison will host such visits.

Coordinators Antonette Ramirez-Rhode and Veronica Pedraza observed a Pathway session. Martina Lutz Schneider and other program facilitators from the Ahimsa Collective Organization facilitated the session where two guest speakers shared their stories during the visit. The first speaker spoke of lifelong abuse in every form committed by the same people in this survivor's life. He told about how he chose to set boundaries and continue to overcome.

Another speaker talked about his son's experience as a victim who experienced an attempted murder, which left him paraplegic for eight years before succumbing to the injuries. The father discussed how in those eight years the crime took a toll on his son's health and life. He said that he has forgiven the offender and has assisted in not having him retried for murder. This father participated in the victim offender dialogue program and expressed how this made a huge impact on his healing. He wishes to continue to share his son's story as part of his continued healing and to honor his son.

The coordinators provided information and examples to the incarcerated population of what emotions are expressed from victims and their families.

For more information about the Apology Letter Bank program or victim offender dialogues, email VictimServices@cdcr.ca.gov.

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

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

Life Support Alliance
P.O. Box 277
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741

LifeSupportAlliance.org



The Veterans Hub at CTF

By Mark Wade, Correctional Training Facility

THE CORRECTIONAL TRAINING Facility's (CTF) North Facility, in Soledad, California — comprised of facilities A and B — has been designated a Veterans Hub and a Level II Non-Designated Programming Facility (NDPF) for incarcerated veterans. It is the goal of the hub to revive that sense of camaraderie instilled in each veteran during military service.

Veterans who want to volunteer for the hub should make a request to their assigned correctional counselor prior to the next annual review, who will provide the veteran with an application. Once the completed application is received, it will be verified that the veteran has no enemy, safety, or security concerns at the facility and meets Level II NDPF criteria. The veteran must agree to NDPF placement and may request a transfer at the next annual review.

If the veteran is eligible, the counselor confirms military service via a DD Form 214 Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty. If the veteran does not have a copy in the Electronic Records Management System (ERMS), a SF Form 180 Request Pertaining to Military Records will be provided to request a copy of the DD 214. The veteran is responsible for mailing the completed form to the appropriate agency listed on the reverse of the form. The return address on the SF 180 should be the counselor assigned to the veteran. The processing time varies by agency.

Once the counselor receives the official DD 214, they will provide a verified copy of the form to Case Records to be scanned into the Miscellaneous section of the veteran's ERMS file. Afterward, the counselor mails the original paperwork to the incarcerated veteran's address on file.

At the annual review, if the veteran meets the case factors for placement at CTF Level II NDPF, the committee will consider the incarcerated veteran for endorsement by the Classification Staff Representative for the purpose of participating in the Veteran's Hub program.

Editor's note: Those serving life without the possibility of parole are not accepted at the Veterans Hub.

National Pie Month Favorites



Pizza Pie (BettyCrock.com)



Pumpkin Pie (BettyCrock.com)



Raspberry Pie (ShockingDelicious.com)



Rhubarb Custard Pie (MyRecipes.com)



Rutabaga Pie (TasteOfHome.com)



Shepherd's Pie (OnceUponAChef.com)



Strawberry White Chocolate Pie (TheCookinChicks.com)

The King of Love

By Sean "Sharif" Neal, Lead Reporter

ON JANUARY 15, we celebrate the life and legacy of one of the greatest and most beloved of civil rights leaders, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. King lived his life in the service of humanity, and a lot has been written and said about his heroic stance against civil injustices in this nation, as well as his "dream" for a brighter future and a more just and humane America.

Following in his father's footsteps, he became a minister and civil rights activist in the 1950s. He was later elevated to the leader of the civil rights movement after several campaigns with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which at the time was considered to be the most successful of the modern-day civil rights organizations, for which he served as president when it was formed in 1957. In 1956, he was elected president of the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA), a branch of the NAACP in Alabama. In February 1965, he led hundreds of people, including prominent whites, in a march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama, to force the federal government to enact the Voter's Rights Act just one week after marchers were savagely beaten on a day forever known as "Bloody Sunday."

During his lifetime, King would be beaten and jailed for his belief that all men are created equal. He became vilified by FBI director J. Edgar Hoover as an agitator and a liar, but many remember the civil rights icon in a much more reverent light. For example, Vincent Lloyd writes of King in his essay titled "What Love Is Not: Lessons from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.":

King is remembered as a practitioner of love, bridging the spiritual and the political by means of love. King was fundamentally concerned with what love is not, and it is this negation that colored his political vision.

King was the epitome of love. [T]he summer before his assassination was the 'summer of love.' Its anthem the Beatles sang 'All You Need is Love.' Love was at the center of everything King did with his life, even though the events of his times were not.

At King's funeral, Lloyd notes, "the deceased's unmistakable voice rang out." It was a recorded speech King had given months before. In it, he described how he would like to be remembered, and how he would like his funeral to be arranged.

I'd like for somebody to say that day that Martin Luther King Jr. tried to love somebody ... that I tried to love and serve humanity.

With so much conflict in the world today — mass shootings, racism on the rise, war and other global conflicts between nations, and an increasingly divided America — the question inevitably arises. Where are leaders like Dr. King today? Where are the selfless leaders who have nothing to gain except restoration of good old human dignity? Where are the men and women of integrity who can lead us to the Promised Land King saw in his awesome dream just over 60 years ago? Our world needs his kind of love today.

Happy Birthday, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. preaching. (WashingtonPost.com)



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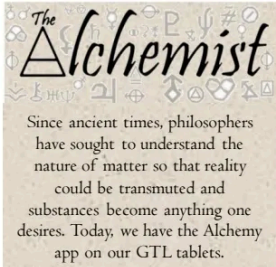
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Daisy Switzer is a psychologist who specializes in criminal evaluations. She was contracted by the Board of Parole Hearings a decade ago to perform forensic risk assessments. Mostly retired now, she contributes her time and knowledge toward a regular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

In addition to the rather generic **Dinosaur**, there are two other elements of specific kinds of dinosaur. Can you combine the right elements to make **Dinosaur**, **Plesiosauria**, and **Pterodactyl**? How about the kind of dinosaur we're most familiar with — **Fossil**?



Psych View

What Do You Offer Society?

By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

IF YOU HAVE education and work skills, what are they? Do you know how much the technology of the world has changed since your conviction and how would you adjust to these changes?

How will you support yourself? Your reply is between you and yourself; your real reply. Only you know if you intend to support yourself through crime or if there is a possibility that if lawful means do not pan out, you will turn to crime. It can be difficult to let go of lucrative activities that have run one's life. It can feel impossible. Maybe this is the case for you. You need to ask yourself how that will challenge your chances of parole and what other options are available.

Perhaps not all options are satisfactory. Wages or assignments might seem inferior to you. Do you get along with co-workers or do you find them beneath you? Do you expect to make an unrealistic wage? Is your budget realistic, and does it reflect the changes you need to make on parole?

You may not have health insurance on parole. You may not have a place to live. Your goals may not be realistic. You may still have something to offer society. What is it? How can you best turn your passion into employment and stability that is lawful? How can you secure income while you pursue your dreams?

Please understand the questions. Society can have a great deal to offer each of us, but there is nothing given without effort. It can be difficult to find employment and perhaps even lacks a realistic base to expect inmates to do so from prison. What if a person's only contact is family or a person's skill is obsolete? What of those who will survive on disability and require assistance with housing and basic needs? Complex systemic issues are beyond the scope of this simple missive, but are not belittled in their omission. I know there are hard tasks that face inmates seeking parole. I have been told it is very difficult to even access a phone book to look for potential employers. At the same juncture, I've observed those exceptional inmates who seem to create friendships and opportunities wherever they stand. What is keeping you from friendships and other contacts that could increase your possible opportunities? How can you change?

We offer society our work, our personalities, our habits, and our legacy. What is your work? How do you express your personality? What habits do you have, and do any of them need to change? What is your legacy? What would you like it to be?

Realistic goals can influence your risk assessment. Some goals are better left private, especially if they are based in fantasy. For example, if you say you will write a novel, but you've not written even an essay during your long incarceration. Or saying you intend to work with children, if you are a registered sexual offender who offended against children in the past. Those goals are not realistic.

Even if you once held a specific and high status job, it may not be realistic to return to if your criminal record would logically prevent you from doing so. Licensed professionals will not pass the state background checks if they have serious felony records. Smaller, honest goals directed toward self-sufficiency or even toward restitution are better received by evaluators. Do you have practical goals, such as finding a home and means to support yourself? Be realistic.

Criminal Offender Reform Establishment (CORE)

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

Mind Makeover: Changing your thoughts to change your ways

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

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

Goal Gaining: Setting your goals and making them achievable

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

Dreaming in Color: Making your dreams a reality

CORE

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West Sacramento, CA 95605

Email: CORE.educators@gmail.com

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

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JPay email: prisonjourn@psu.edu

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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.

Program Office Murals

By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

THE OXFORD DICTIONARY says a mural is a painting done directly on a wall. If you have been in the Facility E Program Office at the Mule Creek State Prison, then you've seen some amazing artwork on those walls by Frank "Pancho" Diaz. He has since been commissioned to do murals in the gym and the visiting room. The gym, as one would guess, will be of action sports figures.

Themes are the name of the game when it comes to murals. Diaz worked with airbrush, paintbrush, and spray cans on the outside. Here in prison, he is limited to latex paint.

"My colors of choice are the basics with premium mural paint," said Diaz. "Since we cannot use spray paint, I must rely on basic house paints and acrylics, all water-based and washable."

While at the California State Prison-Los Angeles County in Lancaster, Diaz did many military scenes on buildings 1 and 3.

"My family members are World War II vets and Vietnam vets," said Diaz. "We've supported the Air Force, Army, and the Marines, and my grandson is currently in El Salvador in the Marines. I look forward to painting military murals for the vets on 'E' Yard in the near future when that door opens."

A mural, as the dictionary states, is a picture on a wall. However, Diaz sees a mural as much more than just an image on or in a building.

"I feel good when my work helps others appreciate and see colors beyond the gray walls and the barbed wire," he said. "My murals give hope. I am all about bringing beauty and scenery that ignites the inmate's imagination and speaks to them of freedom."

Murals can bring the past into the present, the hopes of the free world into our incarceration, and lift our spirits to new heights every time we gaze upon their beauty.

How to Choose Calm

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

"The strongest principle of growth lies in the human choice."

—George Elliot



THERE ARE ALWAYS challenges and painful realities we must face at times in our lives. How we deal with these uncertainties is up to us, yet there are steps we can take to learn to manage the accompanying stress.

It starts with self-awareness, being aware of the body's response. It is important to locate and describe what we are feeling, and through this process of discovery we learn better ways to harness our stress response.

Everyone shares a common physiological response to stress that can serve a purpose, helping us solve important problems, learn, and grow. When stressed, our sympathetic nervous system delivers a jolt of adrenaline and cortisol (a stress hormone), giving us a boost of physical energy, allowing us to respond to a possible threat. When the threat has passed, this heightened state is followed by a calming effect of the parasympathetic nervous system, returning our bodies to a state of recovery and rest. With our bodies and minds calm, we can prepare for the next challenge.

The key is to understand our stress and our body's normal stress response, rather than being passive to it. Through practice, we can learn to move deliberately between an engaged state — where we are energized, focused, creative, and productive — to a recovery state where our brain processes events, learns, and rests. Too often, however, we do not calm down but continue to experience stressors without the restorative effects of a normal stress response. This can lead to chronic stress, which is associated with mood swings, reduced empathy and impulse control, and increased risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke, and other ailments.

At the core of this challenge for many people is a misguided view of stress itself; this contributes to our inability to recognize and manage it. No meaningful life is stress free; however, managed correctly, stress can be used for personal growth and self-awareness. Here is how to use it to your advantage:

- Focus on one thing at a time. Life was not meant to take everything on all at once. Take one moment at a time. When we try to take on the current task, and the next, and add on the uncertainties of the future, we become overwhelmed. Focus on the present moment. Enjoy the simple things.
- Just breathe. When in doubt, deep breathing can help. Even a minute of slow deep breathing reactivates our parasympathetic nervous system and helps break the cycle of stress.
- Add small breaks; even just a short break can reduce stress. Take a walk around the dayroom, go outside, watch the clouds. See what works best for you and make it a habit.
- Exercise regularly. Regular exercise boosts mood, reduces inflammation, and helps regulate our emotions. Schedule a short, 10 to 15 minute session of physical training, including a brisk walk. Even regular, low-intensity exercise boosts our energy and reduces fatigue.
- Eat better and hydrate. Good nutrition is a vital part of managing stress; poor eating habits are associated with numerous ailments, including burnout. It is much easier to stress over life's daily challenges when you are hungry and tired; your emotions run short.
- Get serious about sleep by forming better habits, with a consistent bedtime and no caffeine — this should be obvious. Neuroscientist Matthew Walker notes that caffeine from your 2 p.m. coffee or tea will still be in your system at midnight.
- Reevaluate your expectations. It is a lot easier to change what you expect than to try to get people or situations to change. We always want to work towards a better future, but start with accepting the current reality.
- Dwelling on what has not happened yet is a sure path to stress. Focus on redirecting your thoughts; distract yourself with another activity that will keep your attention. The uncertainties of life are worth embracing, so think about them as an opportunity for adventure.
- Journaling can also help you gain insight into how your body reacts to different activities with a stress response or a recovery response log of events.

If stress has created roadblocks in your life, perhaps you'll be inclined to take a new direction that allows growth and peace in your life by choosing calm.

Awareness
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Domestic
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The People in Blue and the California Model

By Dr. Joan Parkin,
Outside Contributor

THE SUCCESS OF Gov. Newsom's plan to reform San Quentin according to the California Model with the \$380 million he is requesting from the state may rest with a little-known group of incarcerated individuals named The People In Blue (TPIB). Geared up after decades in prison working on reforms, these prisoners have organized themselves to work collaboratively with Newsom's high-profile San Quentin Transformation Advisory Council to offer a way forward for his plan to redesign San Quentin into a rehabilitation center.

Although Newsom's advisory council is chock full of leaders from California's reform movement, it does not contain anyone incarcerated. The People In Blue maintains that a person who has not been incarcerated cannot possibly understand the changes that will need to take place in order to turn San Quentin from a retributive prison into a true rehabilitative center. They would have no idea about the programming needed to meet the needs of the 4,000 prisoners currently housed in the 170-year-old prison. In their call to action, they insist, "The dynamics of rehabilitation in action, and how to foster a rehabilitative environment, can only come from the stakeholders who have never been consulted on the issue; the incarcerated people doing the work."

The People In Blue are a group of incarcerated individuals who represent the idea that the California prison system is broken and pose solutions for fixing the problem. They state, "We are not representing the incarcerated population. We are representing ourselves and our lived experiences to the world and if any incarcerated person agrees with us they are free to join us. We are all stakeholders." The members of TPIB Incarceration Committee (Arthur Jackson, Steve Brooks, Tam Nguyen, Henok G. Ruffalo, and Anthony Tafoya) have 107 years of incar-

ceration experience. They engaged in, established, and facilitated extensive rehabilitation groups, programs, and curricula to help incarcerated people heal. Moreover, they challenged conditions within the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) that did not support the restorative justice approach, rehabilitation, and healing of the incarcerated.

Newsom needs all the help he can get. Two months after introducing the plan to transform San Quentin into a Scandinavian-design prison, lawmakers began pushing back saying his ideas lack a cohesive strategy. "I try not to consider it insulting, but it's close," said Assemblymember Tom Lackey (R-Palmdale). "I find it to be very disturbing that we're following a pathway where we're being asked to fund first and answers will come later."

A post issued by the Legislative Analyst's Office, titled *May Revision Proposals to California Model and San Quentin State Prison*, states, "While the administration has articulated some broad approaches to pursuing the goals of the California Model, such as 'becoming a trauma-informed organization,' it has not identified any clear changes to policy, practice, or prison environments it deems necessary to achieve the goals."

CDCR spokesperson Terri Hardy called the criticisms "premature" and said that a newly appointed advisory council — led by Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg — was "actively working to develop recommendations to transform the prison by the end of the year."

The only thing concrete about the governor's plan is to demolish an existing building and put up a rehabilitative center in its place. This idea has been met with sharp criticism by TPIB, among others, who believe it will cause "more harm than healing." They argue serious concerns about the project because it will eliminate existing rehabilitative programs serving hundreds of incarcerated people, create hazardous conditions from the spread of asbestos, toxic mold, and lead particles, and lead to constant delays and shutdowns of prison programming due to the need to move heavy equipment. According to TPIB vice president and *San Quentin News* editor-in-chief Steve Brooks, "The only way to truly transform prisons is by transforming relationships between prison staff and the incarcerated population. A building isn't going to do anything but add more space to cage people in overcrowded squalid conditions."

In short, TPIB asks what can a building do to fix a broken system. They do not believe that building more prisons is the way to implement the California Model. Instead, they have introduced a 10-point plan to shift the culture inside of prison and make prisons less toxic and trauma-inducing.

In a proposal to the advisory council, they suggest the following:

- Eliminate overcrowding
- Expedite volunteer gate clearance process
- Remove or do not implement any crime-exclusion criteria for the California Model
- Open program including showers until 9 p.m.
- Conduct a massive cleaning of each building
- Create institutional constituency
- Remove all restrictions on healthy food items in the vendor package
- Expand, add, and increase San Quentin's Authorized Personal Property Schedule to allow incarcerated people access to healthy food items from health food vendors
- Open the gym and add machine weights and stationary bikes for use by the incarcerated population and officers
- Have ongoing town-hall style forums for both officers and incarcerated people to announce new and potential program and rule changes, as well as to receive questions and advice to better existing programs

TPIB believes these changes are essential to create a smooth transition into the California Model. They are aimed at reducing the anxiety of the incarcerated by promoting positive physical and mental health and creating a community with officers' and incarcerated people's buy-in. In a press release titled, "We Don't Need New Buildings, We Need a New Culture," TPIB states that they wholeheartedly support rehabilitation and healing for the incarcerated, victims, survivors, and families impacted by crime. They want to help facilitate a healthy and safe environment conducive to getting people home. They insist that "we can do so safely and efficiently without building new prison infrastructures and by instead building a new culture. But we believe that as a society, we must become less reliant on cages and continue to close prisons in California."

The governor's advisory council has opened up the opportunity for the incarcerated to work with CDCR administrators and other state department entities to bring about the type of healing necessary for a true transformation of San Quentin. To this end, they have proposed four strategic areas of focus that include orientations for officers and prisoners (that will include matters on hygiene, manners, common sense, and patience), up-scaling of existing

(continued on page 23)

(from *The People in Blue*, pg. 22)

successful programs, healthy food sources, and financial literacy programs. By focusing on these strategic goals and the utilization of the 10-point plan, TPIB has designed a project that would put flesh on the bare bones of Newsom's efforts to create the California Model.

The task before Gov. Newsom is enormous. The Scandinavian model contrasts sharply with the state of San Quentin. Prisoners live on a tier with another person in a 4-by-8-foot cell designed for a single occupant. It's so small that one person has to be on the bunk for the other to move about. One can touch the walls with both hands outstretched. The cells have bars, so all of the noise and conversations from the housing unit come crashing in at all hours. And while it has been touted for its programming, the limited slots available make it nearly impossible for most of the 4,000 occupants to access it. In addition, most correctional officers see the prisoners as numbers to be shuffled about, counted, and housed in cages. They do not see them as equals. The prison is also home to the country's largest death row and has a long history of human rights violations.

Prisons in Norway offer conditions that contrast in every way. Prisoners live with open doors and rooms twice the size of the claustrophobic cells at San Quentin. There is programming for everyone, with picnics, boat rides, and correctional officers that treat prisoners as equals. Former prisoner Thanh Tran, who cofounded and co-hosted the podcast *Uncuffed*, created a segment from an opportunity to tour Norway's prisons. "It was mind-blowing to see officers connecting with incarcerated people and treating them like humans," said Tran.

The governor's herculean task of turning a fortress-like institution into a scalable rehabilitative Norway-like center makes the case for the involvement of TPIB all the more necessary. Said Brooks, "The best way to change the culture of corrections is by training officers to believe it is their job to encourage rehabilitation and to actively participate in the transformation process and help celebrate incarcerated people's milestones, graduations, and

achievements when those transformative experiences occur."

It is hoped that Newsom will hear the call of TPIB and turn their ideas into a viable strategic plan for the implementation of the California Model. This is a moment that TPIB has long envisioned. It is a moment when "we must be bold." In a call to action, they write, "We must look at the mountain of evidence produced by history demonstrating mass incarceration does not work. We must learn from historical failures (i.e., the California Rehabilitation Centers, the Sensitive Needs Yards, the Earned Living Units, etc.), and create something truly unique and, most of all, that works."

I've Been Fighting This War Within Myself

By Brian Warner, Mule Creek State Prison

THE BOOK, *I've Been Fighting This War Within Myself* (Meadowlark, 2022), edited by Brian Daldorph, chronicles the life story of Native American poet and returned citizen Antonio Sanchez-Day. Friend and writing mentor Dr. Daldorph assembled this collection of Sanchez-Day's work with the assistance of the poet's family after an untimely death at age 47, after a long battle with kidney and pancreatic disease.

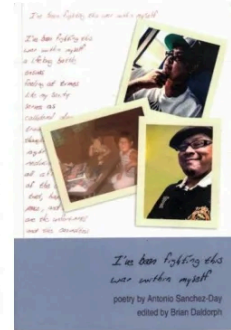
The book's 107 poems and essays are divided into five sections, each describing a stage in the author's life: HOMETOWN, SICKNESS, INCARCERATION, TRANSFORMATION, and ENDING. Images of handwritten poems from Sanchez-Day's journals accompany many selections as do family photos.

The two met in 2013 in Daldorph's writing class in the Douglas County Jail in Lawrence, Kansas. Sanchez-Day was finishing his second prison term and was determined to turn his life around. Class member Sherry Gill, who is also the Douglas County Jail Program's Director, wrote a poem in tribute to his transformation, quoted here, in part: "Through your writings we have / been given a chance to see / inside you. Your words have such / meaning to me, *I feel them.*"

Sanchez-Day was a man who knew the terror of prison's confinement and addiction's hopelessness, while living in a body breaking down amidst feelings of abandonment and disconnection from reality. He conquered his demons by writing them out of his life. He went on to teach incarcerated brothers in the program after his release. "*I write because... / I am a testimony / to the power of the written word*" (quoted from the poem "I Write Because," pg. 5).

Sanchez-Day was a member of the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation. His spirituality shines through descriptions of sweat lodge ceremonies in each of the book's five chapters. Award winning poet Jimmy Santiago Baca comments, "Sometimes I'm lucky enough to encounter a poet who uses poetry as it should be — to reach within, to challenge demons, to worship Mother Earth, scale back lies."

If you are seeking truth and healing in your journey, consider joining Sanchez-Day as he reveals discovery after discovery. Daldorph observed: "His only weapon against all the enemies lined up against him was the pen, and Antonio wrote brilliantly."



I've been fighting this war within myself

I've been fighting this
war within myself
a lifelong battle
ensues
feeling at time
like my sanity
serves as
collateral damage
traumatized
thoughts
night terrors
reclusive tendencies
all after-effects
of the conflict within
trust, happiness,
peace, and love
are the unfortunates
and the casualties
of this war.

—Antonio Sanchez-Day

Precision and Respect

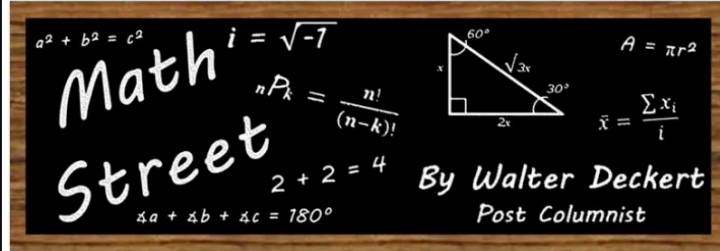
By Bob Gay, Feature Reporter

THE FACILITY E feeding-system has become seen as a turn-key operation. Incarcerated residents have the opportunity to communicate with staff and, in turn, staff from the top down hold the workers to commitments made early in the hiring phase, which is especially true for the first shift. Unlike other yards, no recruiting is necessary Facility E. Men seek out employment and the communication begins immediately; expectations are exchanged between management and workers.

Because of this clear channel of information and agreement, very few misunderstandings see the light of day. Workers are asked to put in writing their expectations and commitment. This allows staff the opportunity to clearly respond to workers as well as to their superiors, as needed.

If you've been on other yards, like most of us one time or another, it becomes obvious we have an efficient system here with regard to food preparation and service. This became clear during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even staff blended skills and service to meet the demanding schedules required to prepare meals and deliver them hot — and on time — to the buildings in all kinds of weather.

Mutual respect between staff and the dozens of workers has kept an on-time schedule of meals flowing here on Facility E. As incarcerated residents, it's reassuring to know we'll all eat when it's mealtime. It's easy to forget that the occupants of the Maricopa County Jail in Phoenix were fed two packs of peanut butter and an apple twice a day. Not to forget some prisoners in North Korea get a bowl of rice on a good day; those in Mongolia get no food at all unless family brings it in for them. We may not be excited about the menu every day, but it's healthy and it's filling if we choose to eat it all.



IN THE PAST couple of months, we have discussed the myriad algebras that exist. One such algebra is abstract algebra, where the emphasis shifts from routine problem solving to studying the principles and ideas that lay the groundwork for problem solving. Proving that these principles always work, or under what conditions they work, is but one element of abstract algebra.

When most students heard the word *proof*, they immediately think of geometry, which is where most are introduced to the concept. This is, of course, fair since it was the Greeks who insisted that every theorem about geometry be proved vigorously. This idea extends to all mathematics.

One of the ways that mathematics proves theorems as valid is called “prove by induction.” Let’s do one of these proofs to see how it works. In one of the earliest “Math Street” articles, we declared, without proof, that the sum of the first n integers can be written:

$$1+2+3+\dots+n = \frac{n(n+1)}{2}$$

The theorem, called “the Principle of Mathematical Induction,” simply states that we assume some set of positive integers (like $1+2+3+\dots$) we call set A . Then we consider the following:

- The integer 1 is in that set
- If there is another integer, we’ll call k , in that set, then the next integer $(k+1)$ is also in A .

Now let’s look at how we will use those conditions. There is proof in this theorem, but we’ll skip it for now. If you really want to see it, let me know. First, we let set A consist of all positive integers for which our equation is true. So:

$$1+2+3+\dots+n = \frac{n(n+1)}{2} \text{ is true, then 1 works because:}$$

$$1 = \frac{1(1+1)}{2} = \frac{1(2)}{2} = 1$$

Then, on to condition (b); we need to know when k is in A , so is $k+1$. So:

$$1+2+3+\dots+k = \frac{k(k+1)}{2}$$

Now, add the quantity $k+1$ to both sides. Remember $k+1$ is just the positive integer.

$$1+2+3+\dots+k+(k+1) = \frac{k(k+1)}{2} + (k+1)$$

$$1+2+3+\dots+(k+1) = \frac{k(k+1)}{2} + \frac{2(k+1)}{2} \quad (\text{common denominator})$$

$$= \frac{k^2+k+2k+2}{2} \quad (\text{distribution property})$$

$$= \frac{k^2+k+2k+2}{2}$$

$$= \frac{k^2+3k+2}{2} \quad (\text{add})$$

$$= \frac{(k+1)(k+2)}{2} \quad (\text{factor numerator})$$

This last bit shows that $k+1$ is also in set A .

Using the principal of mathematical induction, we can say that our original equation seems to hold for every possible positive integer.

Next month I will discuss another type of proof: Proof by Contradiction.

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



Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp,
Post Reporter

BORN IN NEW Jersey in 1789, James Fenimore Cooper lived a pioneer life in upstate New York until 1803 when he enrolled at Yale. Only two years later, he was expelled for causing an explosion that destroyed another student's door.

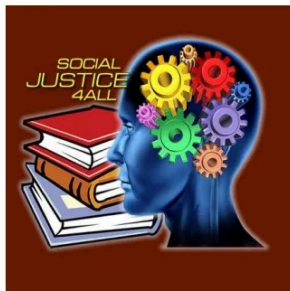
Cooper is best known for the five *Leatherstocking* novels he wrote between 1823 and 1841, which of course included *The Last of the Mohicans*, published in 1826.

You may have seen the recent movie of this fine book that starred Daniel Day Lewis as Hawkeye and Wes Studi as Magua.

The language of the novel is formal and difficult for some readers to follow. For example, on page 32: "*entering the path of the singing-master, whose foal had taken advantage of the halt to exact the maternal contribution.*" At the time this novel was written, polite society demanded certain words such as *nursing* were too vulgar. Other examples are *legs*, which would be called *limbs*, and of course the above *nursing* when applied to a young mammal feeding from its mother.

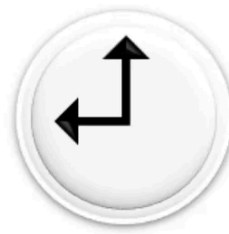
There are some excellent adventure sequences within this book, and while they differ from the movies, they are nonetheless good reading. This novel is full of bravery and cowardice, honesty and deception, tenderness as well as savagery; it is lively in the telling.

If you enjoy a good adventure novel, check out *The Last of the Mohicans*. It is available through the GTL tablet Library app under the Education dashboard on the tablet. In fact, there are 32 novels by Cooper available on the GTL tablet.



Getting Organized, Planning Ahead

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter



FOR SOME REASON, January is designated as Getting Organized Month, likely proclaimed by a guy who got to the airport only to remember he left his plane tickets at home. I am reminded of the almost weekly occurrence of one of my cellmates sitting down to breakfast and discovering he left his fork and spoon back in his cell. Eating scrambled eggs and oatmeal with your ID card sends a mixed message to your tablemates. So, maybe this early in the new year we should all examine our daily routines to expose complications of our poor preparation in all areas of our existence. Planning for breakfast on Thursday begins with getting organized Wednesday night.

With cellies competing for toilet use and other ablutions, in the dark at 6 a.m., as well as cell cleaning responsibilities, it's no wonder we forget breakfast necessities when the pod doors open unexpectedly and someone shouts, "Chow time!" Your organization should start at bedtime, the night before, and include checking out the next day's breakfast menu. You know you need utensils; set them on your locker next to your bed. The menu reads "eggs, tortillas, beans, cold cereal," so depending on your tastes, you may want to set squeeze cheese next to your spoon, or some special salsa for flavoring; definitely a sugar packet for the cold cereal. Put all this together so it's ready to grab and stuff into your jacket pocket when the "Chow time!" shout comes prematurely.

It is said that as we age we become forgetful. My cellmates, who average 66 years of age, bring this up daily, disregarding the fact we already talked about it the day before — maybe minutes before. Memory is abstract on a good day.

Part of getting organized is to expect the unexpected. For example, you arrange to meet a pal on the yard, in front of your unit, to pay back a sausage you owe him. He has been pressuring you to "pay your debts, fool!" You organize a time to meet him at yard release Saturday morning, before your visit, only to have a 7 a.m. announcement for staff training at 8 a.m., with the yard delayed indefinitely. Now what? If you planned effectively, you made alternate arrangements for a friend to complete the repayment in your absence, planning for a circumstance such as this — simple organization.

Keeping a calendar displayed prominently in your personal area is an efficient organizer. Place the planner in a location that is in your face prominent several times a day, not hidden inside your locker door or under a book. Clearly mark notable dates of special events coming up. If Mom's birthday is on the 27th, mark the date on your calendar, but also the 22nd. Why? You need to send her birthday greeting several days before to allow the card time to get there.

For short-term planning and organization of upcoming major events or requirements, you will find cleverly positioned written notations and cues are helpful. Tape the notes in conspicuous locations. Affix reminders on your television — it is likely the first thing you look at every morning; same goes for your tablet. Try taping notices to the screen as your personal bulletin board. Make the prompts clear; avoid abbreviations that you may not recognize later. Trust me, I am still trying to figure out what "BBs @ fx" means, found on a Post-It note in my spare boots, fallen from who knows where.

Canteen day may be two to three weeks down the road, but do not depend on your memory when you go to fill out the list the day before you shop. Near the end of month, you may discover a desperate need for a replacement coax cable, but when you fill out your list for third draw, weeks later, the cable may not be on your mind. While filling out our lists, how many of us skip reading the back side of the order form, paying close attention only to food items on the front? Tape a "canteen needs" list next to the head of your bed or on your locker, and when you discover a canteen necessity — write it down — even in the middle of the night.

Getting organized requires discipline and a little innovation, but pays dividends in the long run.



Business & Finances

ENTREPRENEUR'S WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee

Post Columnist

Your Personal Finances (Pt. 7)

WHEN LOOKING AT your monthly obligations, it is important to see if you have an opportunity to reduce each one.

Savings

This is a critical category of expense. If you don't budget for it and sock some money away every month, you might be one emergency away from disaster. These disasters show up in many forms, and by not saving you're inviting them. For example, if you don't put away money for your taxes, you can end up owing the IRS and paying a fine.

Your **emergency fund** should be your starting point. This is the fund that's going to prevent a disaster from making you broke while allowing you to remain financially stable. It should contain two months of living expenses. When we take money out of our emergency fund, it needs to be replaced ASAP.

Your **short-term savings** allow you to make wise short-term decisions. This is where you start to get ahead of the game.

Your **long-term savings** is for your future. We all know we need to start saving now; however, more than 50% of American families have no retirement savings.

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.



The Financial Corner



By C. Robertson
Post Columnist

WE EXPLORED THE Whats, Whys, and Hows of saving money in our last article. We will continue to go over a proven blueprint for successfully planning and managing your savings.

So what are we even saving for: a nice watch, house, college tuition, etc.? Regardless of the reason or the cost, you need to be equipped to do so without tapping into credit lines or taking out loans when it makes sense.

Savings can be broken into three categories: short-term, point savings, and long-term. Let's focus on short-term or your emergency fund, since it is the first one you should have established. Your emergency fund is for the expenses that pop up unexpectedly that are larger than the monthly discretionary income in your budget.

Discretionary income is the difference between your monthly income and your necessary monthly expenses (NME). We'll refer to it now as your monthly cash flow (CF). So, let's say your car needs a repair, and that the expense is more than your CF that month; use your emergency fund.

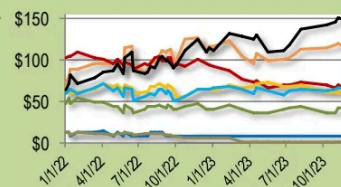
In the last article, I recommended putting 10 percent of your paycheck every month into a separate online savings account; that's your emergency fund. You want to make sure the account is liquid, meaning you can access the money quickly, if needed. Practically every banking institution, whether it is a mainstream bank or an obscure online bank, has a way for you to use your phone or computer to go online and make transfers between accounts you may have at different institutions with just the click of a button. The aim for your emergency savings is to have three to six months of your NMEs on hand at any given time. So, if your total necessary monthly expenses are \$2,000 a month, keep between \$6,000 and \$12,000 in your emergency savings. This is money you don't touch, ever, except for emergencies. The amount of months of your NMEs that you keep represents how long you could survive with no income if you were to lose your job. It is a necessary safety net, and this is why I recommend using an online bank separate from your primary checking account. You need to set up 10 percent of your paycheck to go into this account and then forget about it. The only time you will ever log into this account is when you need to transfer money into your primary checking to handle an emergency. Most savings accounts do not issue debit cards so you have to log in to make a transfer, creating an extra step to prevent impulsive spending.

The first part of your savings journey is simply building an emergency savings. Whether you save up to four months of your necessary monthly expenses or six really depends on how fast you think you could find a comparable replacement job in the event you are fired or laid off, how frequent large unexpected expenses tend to arise, and how much CF you have every month. If you make \$4,000/month and your total NMEs are \$2,000/month, leaving you with a monthly CF of \$2,000 (or 50 percent of your income), then saving closer to four months of your NMEs in your emergency savings might make sense, because most emergencies you have could be covered by your CF. If your CF is less than \$1,000/month, or 25 percent of your income, it would make more sense to build your emergency savings closer to six months of your NMEs.

This is a blueprint for planning and managing your savings the way successful individuals and companies do. Next month, we will discuss the other two savings categories: point saving and long-term saving and how they tie into our overall financial success.

Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Jan. 1 to Nov. 27, 2023)

● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.76 → \$10.72	-0.4%
● ConocoPhillips (COP)	\$117.00 → \$115.49	-1.3%
● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$93.19 → \$69.42	-25.5%
● Edison International (EIX)	\$63.62 → \$65.85	+3.5%
● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.22 → \$1.26	-75.9%
● Marathon Petroleum Corp. (MPC)	\$112.00 → \$149.50	+33.5%
● ONEOK Inc. (OKE)	\$65.90 → \$67.32	+2.2%
● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$41.29 → \$42.92	+3.9%



Business & Finances

Get Interest on Your Trust Account Balance

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

IN 2008, SECTION 3099 was added to the California Code of Regulations Title 15. This little-known regulation allows for the interest accruing on an inmate's trust account balance to be collected by the prisoner. With economic impact payments filling the accounts of many inmates, now is a good time for looking into collecting that interest.

In order to qualify, the inmate must have a Social Security account number or a taxpayer ID number validated by the Social Security Administration or the Internal Revenue Service. That validation occurs by filling out a form, the SSA-89 Authorization for the Social Security Administration (SSA) To Release Social Security Number (SSN) Validation. This form is available upon request from the prison's Trust Account Office, and when completed should be returned to that same office. The form is mostly filled out; all that needs to be completed is to print your name, date of birth, and Social Security number, and sign and date it above your address and CDCR number.

If you acquire a form that isn't filled out already by the institution (if you receive a copy from a family member, for example), it is suggested that you complete the form with the following language:

- Under "I want this information released because I am conducting the following business transaction," write: Applying to receive interest on my inmate trust account, collection of restitution and child support (if applicable) and for inclusion in CDCR databases for interest.
- Where the form asks for the reason(s) for using the form, check Other.

- For the company name, write: California Department of Corrections & Rehabilitation. For the address, write: Attn: Inmate Interest P.O. Box 276088, Sacramento, CA 95827.
- Write n/a for the name and address of the company's agent, and in the blank spot asking for how long the authorization remains valid (and in the spot next to it for your initials).
- Enter your address at the bottom of the form, writing n/a for your phone number. Don't forget to include your CDCR number, in the first line of the address.
- Sign and date the form, and write n/a where it asks for your relationship to the person with the Social Security number (that's you).

Interest is paid in whole-penny increments (rounded down) on a monthly basis, according to the average daily amount in one's trust account. The interest rate is variable, posted usually around the 12th of each month, and is not exempt from restitution fines. Once the variable is posted, the monthly rate is calculated by dividing the annual rate by 12. Anyone earning \$10 or more in interest during a calendar year will be sent a Form 1099-INT to file with the IRS. CCR Title 15 §3099 contains more information about what happens to the interest borne by trust accounts and how the interest may be decreased by operational costs.

Build and Protect Your Credit Like the Pros

How's Your Credit?

By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

IS YOUR CREDIT score in the average range? Are you in the top 2 percent? Are you considered "sub-prime"? Let's look at some facts and statistics.

First, just for fun, guess which state in the U.S. has the highest credit score. And the lowest. Got your guess? Congratulations go to Minnesota, the state with the highest average credit score at 742. The state with the lowest average credit score is Mississippi at 680. Only 1.3 percent of Americans have a perfect credit score of 850.

If you have subprime credit, lenders, credit card companies, and insurance companies are charging you higher interest rates and fees. And how does that help you pull out of subprime status? Clearly, they're not about helping you but about raking in more money if they perceive you as being a higher risk. The subprime classification is somewhat fluid, but we can say a score of less than 580 is in that category. Having seven accounts with late payments will put you in the subprime category. Some stricter lenders classify any score below 620 as subprime.

Nearly 1 in 3 people have subprime credit. That's a lot of folks who are paying too much in interest, late fees, and other penalties. If that's you, take heart, because you can turn that around. You can pull yourself up from subprime to average and then onto excellence.

So many people had stellar credit until a disaster struck — something beyond their control that was not their fault. A subprime score can happen to anyone, including the responsible people, the hardworking people, and the wealthy. If your credit is subprime right now, you're not alone. Your credit score is your past, not your future. You can change your future credit status.

Shame On The Credit Bureaus

Approximately 34 percent of credit reports contain errors. That is unacceptable. The most common error is with personal identifiers: names misspelled, a wrong name or address on the report. If you are working on improving your credit status, start with fixing your personal identifiers. That is what the top pros do. *Repair Your Credit Like the Pros*, because it is the best way.

Anything on your credit report that is erroneous, out of date, incomplete, or unverifiable is unacceptable, and you are allowed to challenge it. You have the right to a credit report that is 100 percent true and correct.

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*™

Creative Arts Program

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step."

—Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

The Healing Power of Art

Daniel Gibson

By S. Marty Williams,
Production Editor

DANIEL GIBSON HAS a way with ... stuff. During COVID he created a wig completely out of the white, elastic straps from the blue N-95 masks. Just for fun.

Gibson's story began 62 years ago, a not-fun story. From an early age he struggled with depression, living in both denial of it and a disbelief in the legitimacy of psychiatry. Art became a kind of "self-medicating," driven by an inner curiosity.

"I could draw by copying stuff of all kinds," he says, talking about his first preteen attempts. "I got bored with it; I wanted to create out of my own mind."

This boredom would make him set aside his gifts for the next 30 to 40 years, based on the belief that "If it doesn't come from me, it's not worth doing." During those years he worked as a mechanic, finding creativity through looking into the unknown of problem solving, which all artists know to be the core of artistic process. He recalls when he was first incarcerated, placed on suicide watch with nothing but a pencil stub. Staring into the unknown, he began to draw from within. He hasn't stopped since.

In prison, working out artistic challenges has become an alternative to TV, isolation, anger, violence, and drugs. Instead of driving him deeper into a personal hell, he has found hope, and not just for himself; he's come to see everyone in prison as redeemable. He now sees a world where there is a space for



Daniel Gibson's N-95 wig (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

everyone.

Much of his art incorporates complex repetitive forms that seem random, but are actually carefully planned. There is a lot of deconstructing of geometrics, spiraling, and false focus. In many ways, much of his sculpture is reminiscent of M.C. Escher, although Gibson probably wouldn't agree.

Art is a means of struggling against societal expectations, expectations usually around accepting the world as it is, even if it is a world of harmful waste, abuse of children, non-accountability, and prisons. Speaking to this, he likes to quote Kermit the frog's lament of being unique in a blandly complicated world:

"It's not easy being green."



Daniel Gibson holding one of his complex sculptures (H. Kim / Media Specialist)

Fostering Care

The healing that can be found when two worlds colliding

Rummaging through the darkness of uncertainties,

Plummeting into discouraging facts that are assumptions of truth

Causing the depth of our essence to remain in hiding

For the lack of proper nurturing in a wicked nature

Stunts our better selves from blossoming through

Possessing roots that longs to dine on greater pursuits

Reaching out to aspire to

Those greater things that are presented here today

Compassion, camaraderie, curiosity

Reaching out to be embraced by those better things in you

As we all are tentacles, reaching out to each other's souls

To water those pained areas & nurture growth in order to empower each other to rise

up & let go

Then finding a greater degree of, our intended existences, whether as incarcerated beings or societal citizens

A communal occurrence (ridding ourselves of division)

Gracing us to see life for the beauty of it is

Recognizing human beings more than just commodities of dividends

When we can then find (2) worlds uniting, seeds dropped, becoming resources — to spring crop — of

Reformed thinking — leading to behaviors feeding, now

And replenishing — our communities, rather than diminishing. Wow

Darkness turned into light — a nutrient illuminating greater sight

To see empathy moving away from past deeds of victimization to remorse moves us now to drop seeds

Of harvest, which our own tears now water

Gardens of changed souls

No longer chained souls, but liberated beings, having come to learn what living free truly means

Cultivating mindfulness, realizing our impact on lives that

Lost much more than the time we've gained

We've no less days — than now — to represent that change — which we now strive for the world to see

Fostering care — by first caring about what's in here (our hearts) through which we can finally present who we were called to be

Change agents, which through forgiveness and our lessons can begin to propel us there

For with your help and our hard work, we can return, as you shall today, back to society, and FOSTER CARE.

—Earl Rose Jr.

Insight through the CGA 12



Steps Step One

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

“I NEED SOME help.” The first step on the path to recovery is admitting that we have a problem and then either submitting to our higher power or asking that higher power for help in overcoming our addiction to whatever it may be.

In American society, often males are actively discouraged from asking for help. We are told that as men we should be able to do anything we set our minds to, that we are not only capable of being independent, but are actually required to be independent. And while in many ways this is absolutely true, it is also a base untruth.

Overcoming addiction can be likened to building a car in that there is a tremendous amount of knowledge available to us. If we don't know something specific, we can ask someone with more experience. We can go and find a book, rent or buy a tool, or (in the classic addict method) attempt to solve the problem through trial and error; often resorting to brute force to accomplish the goal.

For many incarcerated people, as children we were not only discouraged from asking for help, but sometimes we were actively punished for doing so. This can create the ideology that as addicts, even when we know we need help, we cannot bring ourselves to ask because of the fear that exists as a result of the consequences we suffered as children for not being able, or not having a necessary piece of knowledge.

However, asking for help can be empowering; asking for help can be uplifting, and asking for help can be the one thing allowing some of us to engage with recovery and be successful. The work many of us in recovery had to do just to be able to ask for help may have been some of the most difficult self-work ever attempted, specifically because asking for help can require us to be humble and even contrite (if

we have come off as all-knowing in the past).

Having a sponsor is asking for help. Walking into a meeting is asking for help. In some ways, giving assistance to another struggling addict by being a sponsor is also asking for help, as it is only through the act of service that many of us have come to realize just how far from OK we really were and how far we have come in our recovery.

Effectively avoiding a full relapse can be the paramount result of asking for help. As relapse happens, first in our mind long before we actually engage with our addictive substance, sometimes the easiest way to avoid a relapse is to call a friend and spend some time talking about something else, or even the desire to use — that call, that conversation, is an ask for help.

Do you ask for help? Do you allow yourself to ask for anything, much less help with something so fundamental and life-affecting as addiction? If the latter, it may help to remember that many people found the act of asking to be empowering, and can help find new doorways of experience in recovery that may never have been contemplated.

It can be scary and uncomfortable, but as so many have learned, the end result can be beyond measure.

The Sun's Benefits

By Jason Davis, Feature Reporter

AS THE SUN rises, that fiery ball of light brings with it benefits beyond vitamin D. It appears to stymie a long list of diseases, including some cancers. Perhaps we should take a better look (although not directly) at the sun.

Scientists recognize that exposure to the ultraviolet radiation (UVR) in sunlight has both beneficial and harmful effects on human health. Although moderation is key to reaping the benefits of the sun's rays, the “healthy tan” appears to be in, and “ghostly pale” skin, out.

There are three main forms of skin cancer: melanoma, basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma, which are related to excessive UVR exposure. Whereas skin cancer is associated with too much UVR exposure, other cancers may result from too little. A 2020 scientific review published in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* found that a lack of sunlight exposure “may have led to 820,000 deaths yearly throughout the United States and Europe.” Living at higher latitudes can also lower the amount of sun exposure, increasing the risk of some cancers such as Hodgkin lymphoma, breast, ovarian, colon, pancreatic, prostate, and others.

The best-known benefit of sunlight is its ability to boost the body's vitamin D supply. Vitamin D aids in the absorption of calcium to form bones. Only 50 percent of the required amount of vitamin D is obtained from food, therefore, sufficient UVR exposure is essential for our health. Most cases of vitamin D deficiency are due to lack of sun exposure. Without sufficient vitamin D, bones will not form properly. In children, this causes rickets, a disease characterized by growth defects and various skeletal deformities.

There are several other benefits triggered by sunlight, such as the release of nitric oxide from the skin and the direct effects of UVR on peripheral blood cells. Evidence suggests that sunlight lowers blood pressure by the release of nitric oxide, which improves blood flow and reduces risk factors for cardiovascular disease — the leading cause of death worldwide.

International Journal of Epidemiology research shows that high vitamin D levels reduce the risk of active tuberculosis (TB). Phototherapy has recently emerged as a popular medical treatment not only for TB, but also for rheumatic disorders, diabetes, gout, chronic ulcers, and wounds.

While current research shows there are many benefits of sunlight exposure, public health guidelines are behind in setting new optimum vitamin D levels, maintaining healthy limits of sunlight exposure, and balancing the risks and benefits of the sun.

Researchers suggest that brief, repeated exposure is all that is necessary for efficient vitamin D production. Unless there are known risk factors to sunlight exposure, as in sun-sensitive individuals or those taking medications that increase photosensitivity, spending a few minutes outdoors (three to 15 minutes for light skin tone and 15 to 30 minutes for darker complexions) when the sun is highest — with 40 percent of the skin area exposed — is sufficient and safe.

Sources: “Sunlight's Health Benefits Ignored at Our Own Risk,” *Epoch Times*, Aug. 16-22, 2023; “Benefits of Sunlight: A Bright Spot for Human Health,” *Environmental Health Perspective*, vol. 116, no. 4, Apr. 2008



SpaceAndBeyondBox.com

The Story of Adnan

By Hollie Garrett III, Mule Creek State Prison



I FIRST MET Adnan Judeh Nijmeddin at Mule Creek in 2022. He was Palestinian and introduced himself as "Ninja," a peculiar name for an older Middle Eastern man. He then explained his last name's cultural and religious context. In Arabic, *Najm* means "star" and *Deen* is the religion of Islam. *Nijmeddin* means "star of the religion."

Nijmeddin, born in 1957, knew the history of his homeland, Palestine. He drew a detailed map of the Middle East, from the Dead Sea to Jordan, and used it to explain that, after the first Israeli-Arab war in 1948, most Palestinians moved to the West Bank and the rest crossed into Jordan. Jericho, which is where Nijmeddin's family is from, is in the West Bank.

This clash for territory between Arabs and Jews goes back to 1799 when Napoleon first offered Palestine to the Jewish people. In 1882, the Jewish settlement of Rishon Le Zion was established in Palestine. In 1885, the term *Zionism* was birthed by Theodor Hezi, and there was public opposition to the Zionist colony. A Palestine writer, Najib Nassar, opposed the Jewish colonization of Palestine through his own newspaper, *Al-Karmel*.

Muslims populated Palestine for 1,279 years (from 638-1917). In 1917, Palestine came under British-French rule. In 1921, Britain divided Palestine into the Emirate of Transjordan and the western half of Palestine. Conflicting obligations to the inhabitants proved too much for Britain, so they took the matter to the U.N. In 1947, which divided Western Palestine into two states. This prompted an attack upon Israel by the surrounding Arab countries of Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Jordan. By the end of the war, 750,000 Arabs fled Palestine, most to the West Bank and Jordan. This is the world Nijmeddin was born into.

In Jericho, Nijmeddin's father, a master mechanic and a landlord, employed maids, cooks, and caretakers of the land. They grew citrus, bananas, and wheat. It was a good life, but it faced a dramatic change.

On June 10, 1967, Israel attacked Jordan, Syria, and Egypt in the Six-Day War. The Nijmeddin family fled Palestine just four days into the war. "We left in a VW Beetle with 13 people," Nijmeddin said. Israeli planes bombed the road as their caravan left for Jordan. "One of the bombs hit a truck in front of us," said Nijmeddin. "We watched the people in the back fly in the air from the explosion."

The 3-day-old daughter of their caretaker died in the VW. Unable to stop and bury her, the baby was thrown from the moving vehicle. By the time they arrived in Amman, the car was on four rims.

The Nijmeddin family first lived in the stairwell of an unfinished building, and then a refugee camp. As a result of the Six-Day War, Israel more than tripled its territory and ruled over 1.2 million Palestinians from the West Bank to Gaza.

In 1967, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) went public. While Jordan and the PLO wanted to recover the lands occupied by Israel, they differed in methods. The Jordanian government sought recovery through diplomacy, while the PLO sought to liberate Palestine through guerrilla tactics, which caused Jordan to bear Israel's retaliation. It was the Population Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), a faction of the PLO, that Nijmeddin joined.

"My uncle was the body guard of PFLP founder Dr. George Habash," said Nijmeddin. "I was Ashbal. That means 'cubs of the lions.' As Ashbal, we would post flyers to announce revolutionary actions. We got caught by Jordanian Intelligence a few times. They would torture us for information on who the leaders and members of the PFLP were."

There was also the matter that PLO guerrilla fighters (*fadayeen*) infringed on Jordanian sovereignty by establishing a state within the state and antagonized Jordan's institutions, especially the army. These issues would result in the disastrous 1970 civil war known as Black September.

"My uncle Nabel was killed and buried in a mass grave," said Nijmeddin. "I watched my mom jump in the grave, throwing bodies around looking for my uncle. I remember walking over dead bodies in the street; some were shot and some were burnt up. I watched my mom sew a man's scalp back on. My mom also delivered the baby of our neighbor. They named him Nijmeddin. I would watch my mom walk around the hospital and lift up the heads of dead people to see if she knew them. I still remember those faces."

In 1975, Nijmeddin and his mother got their visas to come to the U.S. The rest of the family followed two years later. In 1988, Nijmeddin began treatment for his addictions. After treatment, he would further his education and found ways to give back through the human services' field.

"During sobriety I see my greatest success," Nijmeddin explained. "I was a certified drug and alcohol counselor, and I was an HIV counselor. I was a member

of the Oregon Counseling Association and the American Psychological Association."

In 1993, Nijmeddin opened an outpatient clinic for drug and alcohol abuse in Portland, Oregon, with his wife. The clinic was called Avenues Counseling, and the policy was to help everyone, even those who could not pay. This open-door policy would catch the attention of a local paper, *The Oregon City News*.

A relapse in 2007 caused Nijmeddin's world to crumble and eventually led him to prison.

Nijmeddin was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, and, in April 2023 during the month of Ramadan, he was granted compassionate release to live out the rest of his days surrounded by family. He passed away in June.



Postscriptum

THIS MONTH, MULE Creek residents enjoyed a Costco food sale, getting their fill of pizza and sweets and washing it all down with sports drinks. The sale raised over \$50,000 on Facility E alone, proceeds from which benefitted local organizations.

It's a beautiful thing to see people giving back to their community, but there's something a lot more subtle that happens during these sales that also speaks to our often-overlooked humanity. In the days after the food was delivered, there was not one person who did not enjoy a slice of pizza or a piece of candy. No matter how unlovable, how despised, how avoided a person is on every other day of the year, when it comes to sharing the abundance of food, even the people we don't like are part of our community.

On these days, it's great to see the way we can care about those we have difficulty tolerating. Let's see if we can continue this year round.

-J.C., Editor-in-Chief