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CCWF Celebrates Pride

Photos by Paper Trail

LGBTQIA+ participants celebrated a day of authenticity with face painting, photos, basketball games, and conversations that promoted strength and diversity.

By Tien H. Mo

On June 28, 2025, the Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) the LGBTQIA+ Group hosted its second annual Pride Walk and Ball-a-thon. The event brought together incarcerated participants, outside advocates and volunteers for a day filled with music, speeches and connection. It took place in partnership with Pollen Initiative and the CCWF Paper Trail.

The event transformed CCWF's gym and surrounding area into a festive, affirming space. Posters bearing the LGBTQIA+ flag were displayed across the gym walls. The doors were open to the yard, allowing participants to walk laps inside and out. Those with photo ducats were invited to take pictures with multiple backdrops highlighting the LGBTQIA+ community, capturing a moment of celebration and unity.

The morning started at 8 a.m. with outside guests and the decoration team arriving to get ready for the day's events. The event was scheduled from 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. for over 300 participants from all three facility yards. A schedule was in place including LGBTQIA+ history, skits, poetry, guest speakers and musical talent. With an hour and a half slated to walk, it would have given way for the full effect of the program. Being able to sit and enjoy lunch and sno-cones with a friend or guest was the intention. A day to celebrate like any other Pride event throughout the country.

However, on the morning of the event modifications were made to the day's entire program due to shortage of staff. Instead of the program running all day the truncated timeline had to encapsulate all the day's activities for each yard into an hour and a half per yard. The LGBTQIA+ Group and sponsors quickly restructured the day's events in order to accommodate the change in schedule.

Once the restructuring took place, the program for each yard began with a speech by incarcerated individual Sagal Sadiq, senior editor at

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Residents Observe Juneteenth at CCWF

By Megan Hogg

On June 19, 2025, Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) held a Juneteenth event celebrating the final freedom of the forgotten slaves.

The atmosphere was positive, with people socializing as they waited patiently outside in the heat. There were smiles, welcoming greetings, hugs and an air of happy anticipation. A building overhang created a strip of shade along the outside wall of the gym. Residents lined up two and three deep, trying their best to respect each other's space. The shared reasons for the day's event seemed to bring everyone physically and emotionally closer.

For the opening, "Lift Every Voice and Sing" by CCWF's Voices of Unity Community Choir and

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Quiet Collective Helps Shape Our Community Culture

By Sagal Sadiq

What do a Buddhist nun, a film producer, a rapper and a classical painter have in common?

They are all part of Quiet Collective, an artist-led community that offered a workshop series at Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) on Thursday, May 15. In the Healing Through Creative Practice textbook, Quiet Collective members describe themselves as "creators of cultural currency that elevates consciousness, builds community, and shapes culture." It is made up of over 200 artists around the world, at different stages of their careers.

The six-hour workshop series took place in three simultaneously occurring groups, labeled A, B and C.

Sister Peace, a Buddhist nun, led group A in a series of meditative movements, to create a milieu of tranquility. The group started with a breathing meditation designed, as Sister Peace said, to "calm our minds in the storm." Shortly afterwards, the participants engaged in exercises that helped them focus on bodily sensations, to heighten awareness of where their bodies

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COMMENTARY

Language Barriers in the Parole Process

People with low English proficiency struggle with legal proceedings like parole board hearings

By Amber Bray

Appearing before the Board of Parole Hearings is a stressful experience for any lifer or long-termer. Writing relapse prevention plans, parole plans, statements of insight, and all the assorted documentation that BPH requires is difficult, even for native English speakers.

But, what if English is not your first language? What if it is a language you can barely speak, let alone write? Some residents of Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) find themselves in this category.

Translators for widely spoken languages can be easily obtained. Spanish-speaking parole candidates frequently receive telephonic translation services to ensure they can participate in the parole hearing. Other languages are also translated. But not all.

Jesusa Tatad, a Filipina resident of CCWF, speaks Visayan. For her, the prospect of a parole hearing is more anxiety-provoking and intimidating than for most. In fact, she has postponed her last two parole hearings and plans to postpone her hearing this year, in part because of the language barrier.

According to Encyclopedia Britannica, Visayan encompasses three specific dialects of the Philippines, which are spoken by approximately 28.7 million people or a third of the country's population. However, Asian Americans make up only 2% of California's incarcerated population, according to data from the California Public Policy Institute. Because that is such a small number, finding a translator for someone in need becomes even more difficult.

Tatad is typically offered a Tagalog translator because a translator in her own language cannot be located. But, since it is not her actual language, difficulties in communication occur. When she meets with an attorney appointed for her, a translator is also required, which poses further logistical issues.

"I need [an] interpreter for my language exactly," Tatad said. "I understand some [Tagalog] words but I don't understand [what] everything means."

Tatad is aware of the requirements to be found suitable for parole and understands she needs self-help groups in order to gain insight into herself and why she committed a crime. However, Tatad's language barrier also makes it difficult for her to enter these groups.

"I don't have the groups I need yet because I don't understand all of the words," Tatad said. "When I think about [the] Board, I am stressed. I am shaking in my body, [I'm] so scared."

Tatad says a Visayan translator would help her feel more at ease about the entire process. Barring that, Tatad could ask an English-speaking friend at CCWF for help in drafting the paperwork necessary to present to BPH. But, Tatad is unsure if documents translated for her would be accepted. A former attorney told her that she would not be able to submit documents written in Visayan to BPH because the commissioners would not understand them. Tatad also fears she wouldn't be able to answer the board's questions in person.

Imagine yourself at your parole hearing. Imagine you have to explain why you committed an act and how you have changed in the intervening years. Now imagine yourself in a country where you do not speak the language and are trying to address those issues without the benefit of a translator.

When some individuals cannot meaningfully participate in the parole process, injustices can occur. All people who require interpreters should have access to them to ensure a fair parole process.

Jesusa Tatad interviewed by Editor-in-Chief Amber Bray.

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COVER STORY: PRIDE CELEBRATION
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Paper Trail, who emphasized the importance of pride and progress.

"Pride is about progress and it is a reminder we can lift each other up. It is a celebration of authenticity," said Sadiq.

He also offered a brief but powerful history of the LGBTQIA+ movement, including the significance of the 1969 Stonewall protests in New York City, which ignited the modern fight for LGBTQIA+ rights.

Following Sadiq's speech, incarcerated person Medeon Dean delivered an original rap performance titled "They Don't Listen," inspired by the Stonewall uprising and the ongoing struggle for recognition and justice. The lyrics resonated with the audience underscoring themes of protest, pride, and perseverance.

The event ran smoothly across multiple yards, starting with B yard at 9:00 a.m. and concluding with D yard at 2:00 p.m.

Throughout the day, participants shared space and food. Despite the scorching 90+ degree weather spirits were high as volunteers passed out snow cones, hamburgers and cold refreshments to all. Music, laughter and heartfelt conversations filled the air as individuals walked, balled and talked. Jesse Vasquez, Pollen Initiative Executive Director, was hands-on at the grill, serving food and talking with the participants.

The crowd expressed deep gratitude for the opportunity to come together, celebrate pride, and acknowledge the strength and diversity of the LGBTQIA+ community.

"I did more than 30 years behind these walls and I will continue to share my love and support for those on the inside. I am thrilled to be here," Chryl Lamar, an advocate with UnApologetically HERS and the California Coalition for Women Prisoners shared.

Ellen Richardson, an incarcerated volunteer and long-standing member of the LGBTQIA+ community, shared, "I've been a part of the LGBTQIA+ community since the 1950s. I volunteered at bath houses when thousands were dying of AIDS. If I do anything of service, it will be for this community."

Diana Jordan, attending in support of a loved one, stated, "I came to support my trans friend who is coming into himself. I am in solidarity with him."

Outside guests share a similar sentiment. "We love any opportunity to spend time with the community on the inside," Emily Wonder from Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition said. "We must celebrate each other."

More than just a Pride event, this celebration served as a meaningful reminder of visibility, resilience joy even in the face of systems designed to isolate. The second annual Pride Walk and Ball-a-Thon at CCWF was not just a success – it was a statement.

Photo by CCWF TV Specialist R. Quinlan

COVER STORY: REMEMBERING OUR FREEDOM
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(VOUCC) members. Warden Anissa De La Cruz, Lt. Monique Williams and A.W. Cynthia Rojas delivered welcoming speeches, underlining the significance of the day. Othersin attendance included Lt. Jonathon Cuske and Capt. Brian Bastelle, and Anti-Recidivism Coalition (ARC) members, Candice Lewis, Wajuba Mcduffy, Lynn Acosta and Chris Acosta.

Former resident Carole "Mama Carole" Harris arrived and spoke to the group, then rejoined the VOUCC in another song. When asked about returning for the Juneteenth event, Harris said, "It's surreal and liberating," tearfully adding, "It's also bittersweet because I have to leave you all here."

Medeon Dean, our resident musical singer, dancer and rapper, gave beautiful and moving performances. The colorful program continued with a fashion show, individual and group praise dances by residents Antoinette Yancey, Jennifer Fletcher, Carmel Murphy and Chavonna Malone. There was even a debate demonstration by FSU debate team members and long-term residents, Robin Machuca and Crystal St. Mary. The outfits worn in the fashion show were sewn by long-term resident and seamstress, Anjelica Garcia-Morteo. The outfits were representative of historic African colors and designs, honoring our ancestors and culture.

Arturo Barajas and his Mariachi band, "Mariacha La Union," had performed previously at CCWF's Cinco de Mayo celebration, and was excited to return. Barajas was a great hype man throughout, which combined with the band's high energy created an impromptu dance floor. The scene evoked feelings of family gatherings at home with all ages basking in the warmth and glow of just being one with the music.

In the midst of all this, lunch was served: fried chicken, seasoned potato wedges and soda. Attendees had the opportunity to have a photo taken in front of a special Juneteenth "Dare To Be Free" background. It was a time to socialize and review the pictures of historic and current influential Black people and informational readings proudly and regally displayed throughout the gym.

Towards the back of the gym, A black fabric wall photo display titled A Walk-Through History was reminiscent of a museum or gallery in its professionalism and impact. Historical photos included dark brown hands bound with a chain and lock, and a group of protestors at the Edmund Pettis Bridge during the civil rights movement.

So well organized was this event that it could have been a Juneteenth celebration in the free world–good food, good music, and most importantly good people presenting, honoring, and celebrating the generational strength, growth and resilience that enables our culture to continue to thrive.

As a finale, Lt. Johnathon Cuske played the poem "I am Proud of You" by IN-Q. Then hostess and the event's developer Keri Cache requested that everyone stand together and sing Bill Withers' "Lean on Me," reminding us that we do have each other to lean on as we all celebrate freedom.

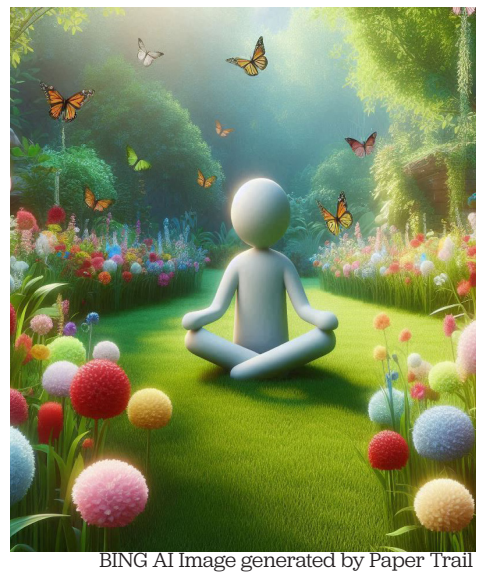
COVER STORY: QUIET COLLECTIVE
...CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

end and their surroundings begin.

The highlight of Group A's experience was Origami, the Japanese art of folding paper to create art. "Focusing on the fold of each piece, making sure the edges align perfectly before committing to the crease is a great metaphor for life," Cameron Raines, a long-term resident said.

Finally, group members were taught how to create their own Gathas. A Gatha is a type of verse from ancient Iran designed to keep users in the present. Sister Peace also shared Gathas especially curated for CCWF.

In Group B, the workshop theme was, according to a handout from the Healing Through Creative Practice curriculum, "exploring identity and healing through the duality of what is seen and what remains unseen." Pairing off, the participants used charcoal as a medium to draw portraits of each other. Judging by the laughter, they had a great time



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drawing one another.

Formally incarcerated, classical painter and owner of art teaching studio Atelier South, George Morton is dedicated to being a mentor to artists in carceral places. "I want to do for them [what] no one would do for me," he said. In his award-winning documentary, "Master of Light," he continues to use his art as an outlet to process trauma and healing.

Meanwhile in Group C, participants were watching "Songs from the Hole," the award-winning visual album-documentary set to original music by James Jacobs, AKA JJ'88, and produced by ritchie reseda, both previously incarcerated individuals. Based on JJ's life pre- and post-incarceration, the film resonated deeply with the workshop participants.

"The most impactful moment was when JJ'88 chose to forgive the man who killed his brother," Cassandra Hamm, a long term CCWF resident said. "That grace he showed was incredible."

During the lunch break, participants socialized with the workshop facilitators, and had the opportunity to take pictures with a professional photographer.

The workshops emphasized how art in all its forms can be used not only as a way to express oneself but also as a way to transform and rehabilitate lives. As JJ'88 said, "Prison is not how we find ourselves; we find ourselves through creative practices, accountability and integrity."

FEATURES

What's it Like to Live Long-term in the Skilled Nursing Facility?

No one knows better than Sally Whitham

Photo by Paper Trail

Sally Whitham in the courtyard inside the Paris Lamb Treatment Center at CCWF.

By Amber Bray

Tucked away inside the Paris Lamb Treatment Center at Central California Women's Facility (CCWF), is a small area called the Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF). It houses incarcerated individuals who are terminally ill, are recovering from surgery, or otherwise require round-the-clock care.

The SNF opened in 1990 – CCWF's first year – and is set up like most hospitals, with floors waxed to a high shine and neutral colors on the walls. But, while most hospitals are bustling with activity from visitors and medical staff, few people are allowed in the SNF.

Patients' doors lock with a heavy key, causing the echo of each lock or unlock to reverberate inside. The effect is jarring. And, unlike most hospitals, the SNF houses very few people: approximately 20 at any given time.

Inside one small room lives Sally Whitham, age 73. She is the SNF's longest resident, having lived there for more than 26 years.

Whitham was rehoused in the SNF in January 1999. According to Whitham, following a back injury, a doctor prescribed her pain medication contraindicated for epilepsy. As a result, Whitham, an epileptic, experienced a seizure that led to a debilitating stroke. The stroke resulted in partial paralysis on her left side and other medical issues which left her unable to care for herself.

Whitham's room contains two hospital beds, though she currently has the room to herself. She sits on her bed wearing a blue muumuu with white polka dots, a neck brace and a wrist brace, and happily points out how she has decorated her space to highlight things important to her: inspirational quotes, Bible verses, drawings, and various art pieces showcasing her love of the Las Vegas Raiders.

Even Whitham's wheelchair, which she named Susie, is adorned with Raider flags and logos.

Whitham alternates between Susie and her bed, which she describes as having the "lived in" look since she cannot make the bed herself. As she described her time in the SNF and her more than three decades of incarceration, her blue-gray eyes sparkle with intelligence despite her brain injury. She wears her graying hair loose down her back, but looks forward to going to CCWF's cosmetology class so she can get it trimmed. Like with older people, her skin is fragile and bruises easily. Several bruises in varying shades of plum, red, violet and brown are visible on her right arm and legs.

Living in the SNF is isolating. "It gets lonely back here," said Whitham, tears welling in her eyes.

> "Being away from the vast majority of CCWF residents causes Sally Whitham to question whether she is forgotten.

Being away from the vast majority of CCWF residents causes her to question whether she is forgotten. As a result, she tries to take advantage of any chance she is afforded to leave the SNF.

For example, every incarcerated individual must attend an annual classification hearing. While many CCWF residents take that opportunity for granted, Whitham likes to attend her hearings, which are held on Facility B.

Living in the SNF also presents challenges. Permanent SNF residents cannot avail themselves of all the opportunities available for the general population (GP). When she is told she cannot go to a group or event, Whitham takes the news hard. "Why can't I go out there? What's wrong with me?" Whitham wonders.

Even though the majority of SNF residents are assigned to the GP, they were not able to physically attend any of the farmers' markets recently held at CCWF. "I got a pumpkin," said Whitham. "But I would love to have gone."

Despite the challenges, Whitham nonetheless lives with hope and relishes opportunities to give back. She is the sole Inmate Advisory Council (IAC) representative for SNF. The IAC serves as a liaison between CCWF administration and the incarcerated population.

"I talk to medical when someone is having problems," Whitham offers as an example. But, being a Marine veteran, Whitham always follows the chain of command.

Feeling lonely or isolated is nothing new to Whitham. During her time in the Marine Corps she was one of very few women – "WMs" as they were then called– who enlisted.

"There were only two bases experimenting with WMs becoming MPs [military police]," said Whitham. As a result, she was stationed at Camp Lejeune and eventually became an MP on base.

Within the tiny SNF community, Whitham seeks to be a listening ear, an advocate, and even someone who will share items from fundraisers with those who may not be able to participate in them. Whitham will participate in CCWF's next fundraiser where residents can purchase items from warehouse store Smart & Final. Whitham has at least two SNF residents in mind with whom to share goodies.

"I bought the fruit snacks and Rice Krispie treats to share with my neighbor and another lady who's blind," Whitham said."I'm not rich but I'll give what I have to help somebody because they need it."

Whitham also engages in as much self-help work as possible given her disabilities. She proudly shares her red folder filled with chronos and certificates documenting the groups in which she has completed.

A sad fact for individuals housed in the SNF is that residents die, since it also serves as an end-of-life facility. Whitham has experienced her friends' deaths on multiple occasions. "I talk to people after someone dies. I try to give them spiritual help," said Whitham.

"My faith gives me purpose," said Whitham. "I don't think I'd be the person I am today without faith."

* This story originally ran in Wall City magazine, a digital-first magazine that documents California across prison walls @ wallcitymagazine.org.

COMMENTARY

Why Every Prison Needs More Virtual Funeral Attendance

BING AI Image generated by Paper Trail

By Mimi Le

I was anticipating a visit from my father on a Sunday in October and called him Wednesday to confirm. He laughed and joked about my niece finally getting her driver's license and learning to drive.

Ending the call with a laugh, I didn't know that would be that last time I'd hear his voice. I got a message the following day that my father was rushed to the hospital where he would ultimately take his final breath just 10 days later.

I went through the worst days of my life being in prison and mourning the death of my father. Although friends surrounded me, they could not understand the enormity of the grief and heartache I was going through. I thought I had experienced a broken heart before but I had no idea. I navigated my surroundings in a fog of disbelief.

I have Life Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOP) so therefore my custody level will always be a Medium A. Even though some incarcerated people are eligible, because of my custody level, I will never qualify to attend a funeral in person.

According to Supplement 62070 in the Department Operations Manual (DOM), a Temporary Community Leave (TCL) may not be permitted when the incarcerated person is serving a life sentence without the possibility of parole or the sentence includes a mandatory minimum.

In addition to meeting the eligibility criteria, an incarcerated person must find two officers willing to transport them to and from the funeral on their regular scheduled day off, and pay the correctional officers their hourly salary plus the costs of all transportation and meals.

Lack of funds to pay for these expenses will result in denial of temporary release. It is difficult or impossible for most people to get a temporary leave.

I began to spiral down and lost all strength to survive. I had the hardest time coping alone and grieving by myself. I resented my family because they all got the opportunity to say good-bye but I did not. I was in denial and stayed there for months, being numb.

> "...[F]unerals and the rituals that go along with mourning are fundamental to how we mourn, grieve, and reinforce social ties."

My emotional response was for good reason. Christy Denckla, a research associate at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and a clinical psychologist specializing in grief, explained on NPR's All Things Considered that funerals and the rituals that go along with mourning are fundamental to how we mourn, grieve, and reinforce social ties. They are important to expanding the social safety net in times of our loss and vulnerability.

"They reflect what it means for us to be human and for us to love and for us to connect," she said.

Is there any hope for healthier mourning for people with high custody status? One of the few silver linings of the COVID-19 pandemic is that another option is now available.

During the pandemic, all visiting was limited to video calls. The director of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation also issued a memorandum allowing all incarcerated individuals to attend the funeral of their loved ones via video call platform WEBEX. This allowed for the first time any individual to attend a funeral despite their custody level or financial status.

Facility D resident Arsenia Hernandez tragically lost her brother during the COVID-19 pandemic and was able to attend the funeral via WEBEX.

"Being able to attend my brother's funeral with my mom and sister made me feel like I was actually getting to participate in his mourning," Hernandez said.

> "Being able to attend my brother's funeral with my mom and sister made me feel like I was actually getting to participate in his mourning," Arsenia Hernandez said.

In a 2021 meta-analysis study from the Department of Psychiatry, University of Manitoba, Canada, researchers found that, "virtual attendance provided a way of being able to mark someone's death, particularly when the alternative was not attending whatsoever."

Attending virtually helped those participating to overcome the barriers of distance, health risks, and the gathering restrictions imposed. For that reason, every correctional facility should make this service more widely available.

After the strict restrictions brought on by COVID-19, the technology that remained in place has taken over. Board of Parole Hearings, court attendance, doctor's appointments, and many events that take place in the institution can now be attended virtually by family members and friends.

Since this new technology has become standard, implementing it for funerals would not be a hardship. Allowing anyone to attend services would give incarcerated people the opportunity to participate and receive some form of closure. This would also relieve the unnecessary burden placed on the family members.

Having a loved one pass away is one of the hardest experiences any family must face. The family members often feel guilt that the incarcerated person cannot attend the funeral and it becomes another added layer to the grief they are facing not having them there.

FEATURES

Close-up of dust mites chilling on a carpet.

House dust mites / Gilles San Martin / Flickr / CC BY-SA 2.0

Spring Cleaning

No matter what time of the year, keeping a sanitary living space is vital for staying healthy in prison

By Christine Loyd

Our grandmothers used a system of spring and fall house cleaning. They started with deep scrubbing, washing curtains and beating rugs, and finished with a sparkling house just in time for holidays or company. Our "system" at Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) is somewhat different.

On A Yard, where new arrivals are housed, the routine established by prison procedures is: one string mop and grungy bucket per room, every other day or so. That's for bathrooms and cells.

The hallways and day rooms may be mop-slopped front to back, usually with the same bucket, sometimes with soap from our rooms. That may be detergent, dish soap, shampoo or body wash. There are usually stinky yellow rags involved.

Wasn't it wonderful to leave that low standard behind and bounce over the wall into a General Population (GP) unit with mop sticks, brooms, spray bottles, scrubbies and Comet all on hand? Cleaning towels that aren't shredded rags! Toilet and shower brushes! Rubber gloves! Sadly, this turned out to be a false hope for most units.

Still, a lot of effort goes into cleaning our cell properly and many of us believe our way is the right (only) (best) way. In some cells, cleaning starts at 4 a.m. and is done twice a day. Why? Because this prison is not sanitary.

We disinfect at every opportunity because dirt is tracked in, wheeled in, coughed or sneezed in on every body part, but especially on our hands. Wherever we put our hands should be cleaned thoroughly.

For floors, only 16 brooms and four mop sticks are available for units of up to 175 residents. Many of the straw brooms are crusty stubs. Mop sticks are in disrepair. But with a towel wrap, the floor can be cleaned to some extent. Note about string mops: Even if they are available, the fabric is a germ factory.

Mops must be soaked in a disinfectant and thoroughly dried after each use. Remember you will be using the same mops and brooms other rooms have used, so sanitize your tools to control cross-contamination. Let staff know when it is time to replace worn-down or broken, unsafe cleaning tools.

It is also important to keep sinks and showers dry, as many germs love to breed on moist surfaces.

Contaminated air is another concern, especially in two-person cells or crowded eight-person cells. Use your fans to minimize virus breeding and keep some circulation going. Germs have a harder time reproducing and the air may be drier. Inside air quality results in a layer of thick dust from vents.

> "We did a lot more cleaning during the COVID pandemic and we had very few deaths as a result. More awareness is the key."

Daily dusting of locker tops, beds, and door frames is helpful in the war on dirt. Be sure and clean vent covers, too.

Incarcerated person Pearl Coleman has worked in medical environments and for Healthcare Facilities Maintenance (HFM). She has observed a great need for accurate information and better training to improve cleanliness in the facility.

"A lot more should be done to keep ahead of sanitation problems like germ buildup on hard-to-reach surfaces, as well as common areas like dayrooms," said Coleman. "The obvious goal is to prevent disease and stay healthy. We did a lot more cleaning during the COVID pandemic and we had very few deaths as a result. More awareness is key."

We have Cell Block for the basic disinfectant. It consists primarily of ammonium chloride, a caustic and potentially harmful chemical used in many products, even shampoo. Another excellent cleaner is the blue All-Clear, which is made up of surfactants and soap.

Surfactants are cleaning agents that attach themselves to dirt particles and keep them suspended until they are rinsed away. Generally harmless, they can sting your eyes if someone is spraying in the air.

Remember to utilize the "Right-to-Know" binder in your building if there are any questions about how much to dilute or what to do if an accident occurs.

Even more information can be found in the library non-fiction section. One excellent resource is the book "Totally Organized" by Bonnie McCullough.

This author is a recognized expert in cleaning techniques for every situation. One good tip: Be flexible about when and who does the chores, but be sure someone is assigned who can do the job. Some ADA workers can help an incarcerated person who has difficulty cleaning.

Generally, cleaning is done by assigned chores or a day per roommate. There is usually enough bickering about who does what and how to make cleaning a major cause of disputes.

Our quadruple-plus programming schedules present a big challenge to daily cleaning. Work starts at 7 a.m. and cleaning supplies are not available until 9 a.m. The roommates who don't program usually are the ones who have disabilities or limitations.

Some old-school techniques have to be used in order to maintain a safe, healthy room. If all you have is soap, cleaning rags and water, the jobs can still get done.

Some of my roommates have "walked" a towel around the room, moved lockers and tables, climbed up to get lights and window ledges, then showered and left for evening programs and classes. That is self-motivation and ingenuity.

One last tip: Cell Block can be toxic when mixed with other cleaning products. Be sure to follow the correct dilution, it should be very pale yellow. The chemicals in Cell Block can build up over time creating a thick film (actually called grunge) that attracts dust and fosters bacterial growth.

So, be sure and rinse after using the product.

Cleanliness can be complicated in this environment. It is critical for our health and well-being and necessary for safety and for many of us, peace of mind.

BING AI Image generated by Paper Trail

Mind-Body Healing

Turning adversity into healing with the Amen Method

By Delina L. Williams

A SPECT is a technology similar to an MRI machine, pictured to the left. Image by Uladzimir Liubamirski via Vecteezy.

Coming to terms with traumatic brain injury (TBI) and seeking help has opened a wide audience to the works of one man. His name is Dr. Daniel Amen and yes, he does in fact know what he is talking about.

He is a celebrity medical doctor who specializes in psychiatry and physical brain disorders. And now Amen shares through Edovo some of the ways a person can treat their TBI in prison. All one has to do is type in "Daniel Amen" in the dashboard of Edovo to have his Trauma Talks series available to them.

Amen considers TBI to be the silent epidemic because symptoms do not always present immediately. A TBI is defined as any damage to living brain tissues that is caused by an external force or penetrating head injury that disrupts the normal function of the brain.

Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI, and the severity of a TBI may range from "mild" (brief change in mental status or consciousness) to "severe" (period of unconsciousness or amnesia), according to the Journal of Forensic Sciences.

Amen and his colleagues have found that TBI and Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) have various symptoms which often present with overlapping warning signs. Many go untreated for this simple reason: They have not had the opportunity to experience formalized treatments necessary for healing.

Amen's team has a very explicit method for healing people. The process involves systematic evaluations for bio-psycho-socio-spiritual needs. They believe there is a connection in these four components of humanity. The Edovo series unravels what the processes look like.

Enter the SPECT (Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography). The SPECT is an X-Ray of sorts for the brain. It provides specialized insight for Amen and his team to treat patients with TBI. The SPECT has the potential to add important clinical information to patient care in many different areas. According to an article in Psychology Today.

Amen and his clinic do "an in-depth evaluation, and then add brain SPECT imaging, which tells you three things: the areas of the brain that work well, the areas that are low in activity, and the areas that are high in activity."

His logic follows: "When you don't get physiological data, you don't understand that depression is a cluster of symptoms. That means there are many different ways to get depressed."

In using SPECT, medical practitioners can evaluate underlying brain system pathology in individual patients. This also allows a route for care through follow-up evaluations. In doing so, SPECT encourages innovative and alternative treatments for those suffering from TBI and PTSD, according to Amen.

When a person has a headache, they may take some aspirin. When they break an arm, they go to the doctor. "Psychiatry is the only field of medicine where it's considered normal practice to treat an organ–in this case, the brain–without looking at it," says Amen.

Given the success of Amen's treatment in the outside world, wouldn't it be great to bring the SPECT to Central California Women's Facility? Until that day comes, Edovo has brought the information to us through this amazing series.

As they say, a mind is a terrible thing to waste.

Felon's Alphabet

Graphic by Mouby Studio via Vecteezy

By Sagal Sadiq

Hope is a dirty word.

A four-letter word. Incarcerated persons, especially those doing long sentences, lifers and of course Life Without the Possibility of Parole (LWOPS) have often expressed an aversion to hope.

Upon further questioning, their answers remain eerily similar - to hope is scary. Simply put, they are afraid to hope. Afraid of not having their hopes realized. Afraid of how that pain will feel. However, to hope is to be human.

"H" is for hope.

Webster's Dictionary defines hope as "A feeling that what is wanted will happen; a desire accompanied by expectation."

Let's face it, there are no certainties. And yes, what we hope for, we may simply not get. And yet, that is OK too. Unfortunately, it is part and parcel of the human experience.

Granted, it is easier for some of us to hope than it is for others. Personality, temperament, and lived experiences will color the way we approach hope. So, for those among you whose glasses are perpetually half empty, I posit that hope will replenish your glass into a half-full status, provided you allow it to.

The hope that tomorrow will be better than today will give you the much-needed boost to get by and keep going. The faith that the next moment will be more palatable than this one will keep you seated at life's table and bravely tasting each dish on offer.

Hope is the premium unleaded gas your lowrider needs to be road-ready. And road-ready you must be, there is atonement to be done, amends to be made, selfie-worthy destinations camera ready for you, and loved ones eager for your presence. Hope, and get it done.

It can feel like apathy may be easier, coasting and letting the tidal wave of life's struggles drown you. It may seem like giving in is easier than daring to hope, resisting that nagging voice that won't stop telling you, "This is not going to work anyway, so why try?

But, try we must. After all, what other options remain? Not many. Through self-help groups and positive programming, we know that the only way out of a situation is through, that there are no shortcuts, and that which will sustain us in that journey through our struggles is hope.

So, what to do? Think of hope as a muscle. Replace the word hope with faith. A word comparable too but not as loaded, not as fraught with tension, as hope. With constant use, your hope muscle will get stronger. With every struggle, and disappointment, its fibers, your fortitude and subsequently your faith will stretch, get tested, and ultimately get stronger.

I leave you with a quote I love that fits this occasion: "Jump and the net will appear."

I get it, to hope is scary. Please, please, please, hope anyway.

Hold On Past Everything!

FEATURES

Restyle Your Life

A visit to cosmetology services is like stepping outside for a brief moment in time

By Kristin Rossum

"When we look better, we feel better. And when we feel better, we do better." Jamie Monroe, a Central California Women's Facility (CCWF) resident currently serving a sentence of life without the possibility of parole stated these words after her stylist turned the mirror around following cut, style and color services. Monroe explained that after she saw the transformation, it made her feel like a human.

Cosmetology services are an important part of the normalization process, one of the pillars of the California Model. It is the goal of the California Model to help incarcerated individuals be better prepared to enter society fully rehabilitated and healed from trauma with a skill set that will enable them to make a livable wage.

And walking into the CCWF Cosmetology Salon is like stepping outside of prison for a brief moment in time. Popular music plays softly on the salon floor to complete the feeling that you have a little bit of freedom.

You are greeted by the hustle and bustle of the incarcerated student stylists lined up getting ready to serve their clients. They are dressed professionally, wearing their black smocks. Many are pushing small carts loaded with supplies and hair tools.

In summer of 2023, the cosmetology program began offering services to clients in the general population once COVID-19 social distancing protocols were lifted. The cosmetology certification process is lengthy and comprehensive, requiring 1,600 hours of practice.

Once certified, stylists are trained in color, cut, style and manicure techniques and become licensed to work in a salon or independently.

Today, there is a contemporary feel to the salon that didn't exist five years ago. The upgrade came with the arrival of the new vocational instructor, Louis Espinoza, in 2019.

He previously worked as a hair stylist and instructor for the Paul Mitchell Salon on Hollywood Boulevard in Los Angeles, before accepting the position here and bringing a new normal into the salon.

Espinoza encourages a professional work environment that promotes success and builds up individuals so they are better future neighbors when they are released back into the community.

One of Espinoza's veteran cosmetology stylists is Lauren Patrick. She has 20-plus years of experience in the cosmetology field and used to be the sole proprietor of her own salon. She has participated in the CCWF cosmetology program for more than eight months.

Patrick said that her "favorite part of being a hair stylist is seeing the way people feel after I'm done doing their hair." Her favorite skills are braiding and coloring hair. Patrick likes to see their reaction when she turns around their chair.

"One of my clients cried because she felt like she was a whole new person," she remembered. "It makes me feel connected to give back to others."

She plans to continue working in the industry when she paroles and plans to set up her own shop.

Eileen Huber agreed that having access to cosmetology services is essential for building the self-esteem and confidence of an individual. Huber has been incarcerated for more than 35 years and recently had her hair dyed as a reward for graduating the Fresno State bachelor's program.

"Self-care is very important and I neglected that for so many years. I felt like a princess. I was walking on air when I walked out," she said.

When Huber's stylist turned her chair to reveal her new look she started crying.

Photo by Paper Trail

The current cosmetology cohort and instructor Louis Espinoza pose for Paper Trail in their work space.

> "When we look better, we feel better. And when we feel better, we do better," Jamie Monroe said.

"I looked like a totally different person staring back in the mirror," she said. "It makes me feel more prepared to take on other life challenges."

The cosmetology program also provides services to the Skilled Nursing Facility (SNF) residents, recognizing that the positive benefits of confidence and self-esteem are universal regardless of an individual's medical or physical limitations.

Elizabeth Brown, an SNF resident, enjoyed having her hair cut, colored and styled and the overall experience. "It made me feel special, like I was being treated like a lady," she said.

Brooke Hollins found purpose and future possibilities in the cosmetology program. Since joining the program in August of 2024, she describes herself as a self-trained visual learner who has added to her natural skills.

Prior to enrolling in the cosmetology program, Hollins had years of experience cutting and braiding hair. Since her enrollment she has become skilled with coloring.

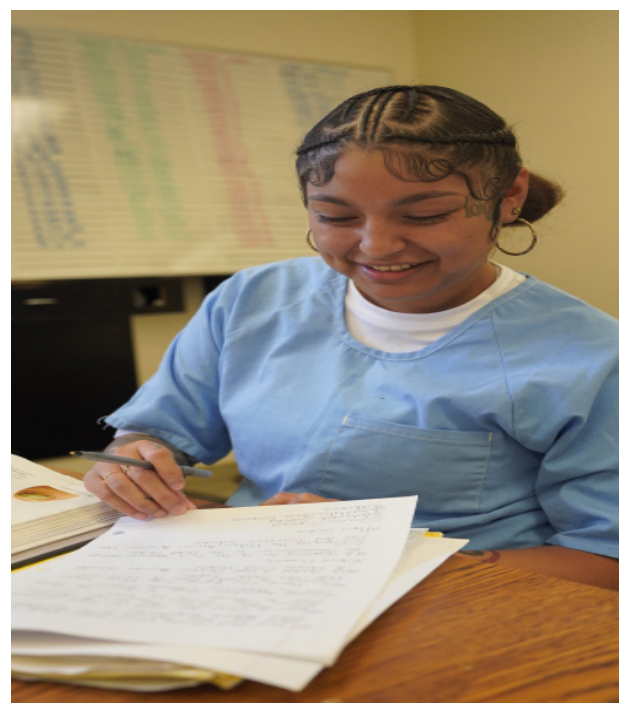
"The best part is seeing how happy and excited the clients are about how their hair turns out. When a client walks out feeling really good, that is the best part of the day," she said.

Not that the days are without challenge. Hollins explained that client consultations can be difficult and are the most important part of the process.

"It can be challenging to consult with the client to determine what their specific needs and wants are," she said.

But in the end, she said, "I can see myself pursuing this as a career in the future because I realize I am good at this."

Photos by Paper Trail



Left: Cosmetology student Brittany Stanford practicing braiding styles on Angela Hays.
Above: Student Ajanai Stone beutifying Kalia Sanchez.
Right: Genesis Ruiz studying cosmetology related materials.