

To Our Readers

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

THIS MONTH WE acknowledge the winners and participants of the San Quentin Film Festival. The film-freeway.com description of the event describes it as creating “a transformational experience ... offering both currently and formerly incarcerated filmmakers the opportunity to be recognized for their work and to meet industry professionals for future training, collaboration and employment opportunities.” The festival featured 35 films by currently and formerly incarcerated individuals. More than 300 people were in attendance, including professionals from the entertainment industry.

More on Mule Creek's own finalist will be featured in an upcoming edition of the *Post*.

IN THIS ISSUE:

The California Model	3
Data Breaches; Correctional Health Care	4
Winter Olympics Return in 2026	5
A New Kind of Hard Time	5
News and Happenings	6
How to Use Bleach; MCSP Channel Lineup...7	
The Wordsmith; The Uncaged Writer	8
Prison Hacks: Preparing for Spills	9
Big Red's Grammar Guide; Essay Writing	9
Why Read the Classics?; Math Street	10
Why Not? (part 2)	10
Transitions Program Provides Benefits	11
A Difference in Departments: MN vs. CA	11
Community Corkboard	12
A Programming Roadmap (part 6)	13
36 Strategies of Suitability	14
Una Mapa de Programación (parte 6)	14
Anatomy of Civil Commitment; Psych View..	15
BPH Proposes Regs; What Cancer Steals ...	16
Cancer Screening Town Hall on Fac. E	17
Living with a Diagnosis of Pre-Diabetes	18
Vignettes; Joe Biden's Cancer Diagnosis	19
What's Body Dysmorphic Disorder?	20
Dog Trainer Forced into Retirement	20
The Four Agreements; What's in a Name? ..	21
CTF's Road to Freedom; Local Turkeys	22
The Benefits of Prison Gardening	22
Native American Spiritual Circles Evolve.....	23
View From a Cushion: Imposter !	23
When Fiction and Facts Collide	24
What do the NIH, FDA, and CDC Do?	24
Trailblazer	25
Sports and Recreation	26
Business & Finances	27
Tuned In	28
Creative Arts Programs	29
Tales from the Creek: A Tale of Service	30



Trainers and dogs in August. From Left: Standing—Ramon Navarro, Nicole Maples, Gino Ervin, Scott Martin, Matthew Warner, Damin Pashilk, Guillermo Brambila, Robert Yim, Walter Caesar, Christopher Clark, Raymond Henson, Ronald Prasad, Mario Lawson, Daniel Arevalo-Sarvia, Sonia Parisi, Teddy Cornejo, Jason Beck. Seated/Kneeling—Jacob Robles, Desmond Perry, James Rimbey, Jarrod Wyatt, Gabriel Garcia, Ramonta Forte, Michael Frausto, Chester Coker, Mark Lim.
(M. Johnson / Media Specialist)

GDA/TLC Graduates New Cohort

By O. Rick Bridges, Interim Lead Reporter
and F. Orlando Wells, Feature Reporter

YOU JUST HAVEN'T lived until you've attended the awesome spectacle that is a graduation of Guide Dogs of America and Tender Loving Canines (GDA/TLC). On full display are many of the very best features of the human and canine experience. By the end of the ceremony, there's not a dry eye in the house.

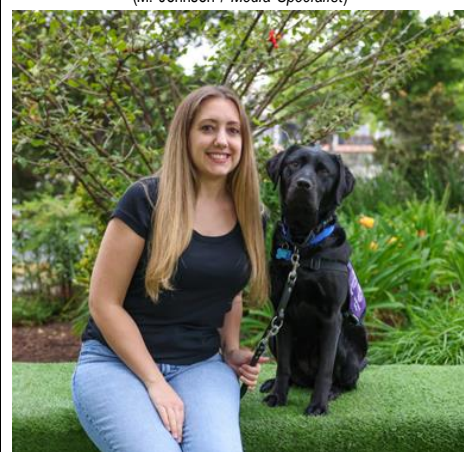
The commencement of the loyal and well-trained canine companions of GDA/TLC, held at the Mule Creek State Prison on Wednesday, Aug. 6, 2025, began with an invocation from Tony Blevins, the director of GDA/TLC. He framed the compassionate beginnings of the 77-year-old Guide Dogs of America program through its foundation by Joseph Jones in supportive service of veterans with disabilities — a core value still expressed today.

The graduation program was a thoughtful and well-organized multimedia event. Graduated dogs were individually featured in brief video appearances with their grateful recipients. Two of the dogs are now sworn officers; one was sworn into service by the governor of the state in which the dog serves. In these videos, the trainers were mentioned by name. After viewing the new bond of the dog and its destination, and experiencing the dignity and gratitude of their recipient companions, the trainers were invited to the podium to share their own bonding and training experience.

The trainers celebrated their prior experience of the dogs in their care, recounting each human and canine detail of what, in the moment, was their story. The trainers thoughtfully remembered the men who preceded them as
(continued on page 2)



Bruin and Desmond Perry.
(M. Johnson / Media Specialist)



Service recipient Michelle and Bruin.
(M. Johnson / Media Specialist)



(continued from **Tender Loving Canines**, pg. 1)

their trainers, along with men who paroled while training dogs, men who transferred or moved on to other jobs, and, in the case of Clarence Sargent, men who passed on while in the service of training their dogs. Sargent, who passed away in 2025, was commemorated throughout the graduation ceremony for the outstanding work he did in the program. He was celebrated not just for the many dogs he worked with, but also for his unselfish contributions in supporting other trainers in the program. His ability to connect with others was well regarded. His living social legacy includes the many lives impacted through his efforts.

Trainer Damin Pashilk was grateful and reflective. “This program saved my life; I had no direction or purpose,” he said. “I have gained the things I didn’t have before. I have become passionate about the work. I have learned to be compassionate, patient, and a [now have a] deeper understanding of what it means to feel connected.” Jason Beck shared his experience as a trainer: “This program taught me patience, understanding, and how to work in a team setting. I have learned to rely on others and a deeper understanding of the responsibility and the importance of having the life of an animal in my care.”

“It has changed my perspective and how to form stronger bonds with people and with the dogs. I have become more compassionate in my daily life,” shared trainer Daniel Arevalo-Sarvia. Trainer Kenneth Carroll courageously shared his thoughts: “The [my] drug addiction really affected my life and this program has given me a way to give back and changed the way I think. I am no longer damaging others but contributing. I would like to continue training dogs and transforming lives. To me any way I can give back to my community is a priority today.”

Personal transformation and a renewed commitment to community are descriptive of the trauma-informed and peer-supported normalization outlined in the California Model. The daily manifestation of these restorative values as articulated in the trainer, staff, canine, and recipient experience of the GDA/TLC program at the Mule Creek State Prison transformed this graduation ceremony into a sober, dignified, and simple celebration of life and love.



Clarence Sargent (M. Johnson / Media Specialist)

2024-2025 GDA/TLC GRADUATES

- Frank Lanear and Izzy
- Gabriel Garcia and Kynsi
- Joshua Thomas, Kenneth Carroll and Oslo
- Jason Beck, Mario Lawson and River
- Arturo Castro and Shane
- Jason Beck, Mario Lawson and DeeDee
- Ramon Navarro and Duncan
- Darren Dennison and Sasha
- Matthew Warner and Anna
- Clarence Sargent and Earl
- Frank Rojas, Jerry King and Gretel
- Jacob Robles and Nickel
- Damin Pashilk and Adora
- Gilbert Galvan and Journey
- Robert Young and Rookie
- Chester Coker, Mark Lim and Vera
- Robert Yim and Wyatt
- Moises Tejeda and Zach
- Ronald Prasad and Dumping
- Ezakiel Johnson and Flower
- James Rimbey, Gabriel Pineda and Vaquito
- Gabriel Garcia, Carlos Quezada and Bodie
- Desmond Perry, Daniel Cruz and Bruin
- Daniel Arevalo-Sarvia and Dancer



THE MULE CREEK POST MISSION STATEMENT AND STAFF

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

Administrative Editor..... AW R. Viera
Supervising Editor..... J. Iniguez
Publisher..... J. Mitchell
Media Specialists..... M. Johnson, H. Kim

Additional Research
Pamela Cipriotti, Sandra Viens Davis,
Claudia Pérez, Prayer Warriors Alliance



Editor-in-Chief..... Jesse Carson
Production Editor..... Marty Williams
Copy Editor..... Al Rice
Lead Reporter (Interim)...O. Rick Bridges
Feature Reporters

D. Razor Babb, Bob Gay, Philong
Huynh, Daniel Larson, Gerald McKoy,
John L. Orr, Rob Sharp, F. Orlando
Wells

Spanish Reporter..... Fabián García
Reporters
Nemo Burgos, Dale Hurd, Jason Rosacia,
Dortell Williams

Columnists
Mark Daigre, Walter Deckert, Maya Em-
ig, Joseph R. Haytas, Fred Munch, Sean
“Sharif” Neal, Daisy Switzer,
Leah Ward-Lee, Carolyn Warren

Contributors
Omar Azeez, Shawn Brusacoram, Mi-
chael Dominick, Matthew Feeney, Wil-
liam Green, Mike Johnson, Sinque Mor-
rison, Prison Policy Initiative, Tomas Ro-
driguez, Jacob Rowan, Jennifer Swokla

The *Mule Creek Post* • Mule Creek State
Prison • % MCIC Associate Warden •
P.O. Box 409090 • Lone, CA 95640

www.ledger.news (“Archives” tab)

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

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

Ledger Dispatch

Amador & Calaveras Objective Regional News



jstor.org/site/reveal-digital/American-prison-
newspapers/mulecreekpost-
30018421?so=item_title_str_asc



pollenpress.org/mule-creek-
post



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



Creative Commons License CC BY-NC-ND: Readers are free to copy, display, and distribute the *Post* and its articles, as long as the work is attributed to the author(s) and *Mule Creek Post*; it is distributed for non-commercial purposes only; and no alteration or transformation is made in the work. More details are available from creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/. All other uses must be approved by the author(s) or the *Mule Creek Post*.



California Model



The California Model

By Tomas Rodriguez,
Valley State Prison

ON APRIL 4, 2023, Secretary Jeff Macomber and federal health care receiver J. Clark Kelso sent out a memorandum to all California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) and California Correctional Health Care Services (CCHCS) staff titled, "The California Model: Changing Lives One Conversation At A Time." A lot of us inside the CDCR have seen this memo, some have heard about this memo, and some have taken the time to read this memo. The memo mentions four pillars that form the foundation of the California Model:

1. Dynamic Security
2. Normalization
3. Peer Support
4. Trauma-Informed Organization

When this memo came out, I was a member of the Men's Advisory Committee at the Valley State Prison (VSP). I remember reading this memorandum repeatedly, making numerous copies, distributing them everywhere, giving a copy to anyone who was interested. I saw this new direction CDCR was taking as something encouraging and long overdue. To this day, many have not seen the memo, are unaware of it, or just don't care.

The previous secretary of the CDCR, Kathleen Allison, visited VSP in 2021 and had a roundtable discussion with the entire advisory committee. She informed us of the changes that were going to take place inside the CDCR, and the future direction the department was taking. Norway was a big topic of discussion, and correctional officers from Norway were visiting the institution around the same time.

The talk at this discussion from some staff and residents was that this new direction would never work in California. Both sides expressed that California has more complexity, more gangs, and more violence than Norway.

I spoke about the California Model to whoever would listen,

and expressed my opinion on how it could work and how it is working. I bought in right away because for years there was no mention of change, no rehabilitation, nothing. I strongly believe that in order to change our environment for the better, it starts with us, with the incarcerated person.

The Valley State Prison is one of the institutions that have been implementing the four pillars that form the foundation of the California Model. The building I live in on Facility C has a big sign on the outside of the cop shop that reads "California Model." It also has the four pillars written on the side of the podium. How awesome is that? I have seen some of the changes firsthand since this memo came out, and I have seen some of the four pillars manifest in front of me. Peer support is one of the four pillars of the California Model; CDCR has rolled out a program called the "Peer Support Specialist Program," providing the opportunity to be certified through the California Mental Health Services Authority.

I am one of the fortunate ones to be selected and assigned to the Peer Support Specialist Program here at VSP. The job, the training, and working with the population have been amazing. Dynamic security is another pillar, and something we know is not going to happen overnight; but it will eventually happen over time. I have witnessed officers deescalate situations not with batons or pepper spray but with professionalism, positivity, and respectful communication. I have seen some staff try to build that positive relationship between staff and incarcerated people.

This system-wide change, the California Model, begins with incarcerated people. We are the ones working on ourselves, taking all these self-help groups, gaining insight about ourselves — not staff. We have to be the ones to believe in the California Model in order for it to work. I know there are some who do not want this system-wide change to move forward. They are doing all they can to sabotage anything associated with the California Model. They have this fear that one day we will be eating at the same table and addressing each other on a first-name basis. They have this fear that they will be shutting down prisons, facilities, and will be out of a job.

Look around. I know you see the changes. The conversation now is about what you can do to contribute, and what you can do to inform those around you about this system-wide change.

A California Model in Texas

By Jacob Rowan, Mark W. Michael Unit, Texas

THE RECOVERY HOUSING Opportunity Program (RHOP) started on the Mark W. Michael Facility with the vision of two residents, S. Flynn and M. Resendez, who pitched the idea to then-Warden Townsend. The warden accepted and a solid foundation was built. Today, three years in the making, RHOP is operative on over 20 prison units in both men's and women's facilities.

The culture that incarcerated people in Texas are subjected to involves drugs, violence, and chaos. The RHOP is created to reshape that culture like nothing in Texas before, a complete transformation through and by the program's own community. RHOP is housed with people who care, a community lifting each other up, and a support system where one is likely to meet like-minded peers for support even upon release. It cultivates a brotherhood or sisterhood from different strokes of life, striving to construct a better tomorrow, not only for themselves but for their families and communities.

RHOP is a peer-driven, safe, drug- and alcohol-free environment conducive to long-term sobriety and restoration. The focus is on a mission statement of improving character and correcting self-defeating behaviors to create a servant-leader mentality, restoring lives through structure. The participants take classes Monday through Friday, with a community-building House Meeting on Saturdays. There are approximately 20 classes over the course of a year, ranging from Alcoholics Anonymous to Victims Impact, which educates participants on how criminal actions have ripple effects throughout society.

The classes are being taught by volunteers, peer support coaches, and mentors who were once participants. Every member keeps others accountable, using tools like accountability boards and chore boards to identify areas they fall short to correct behaviors. RHOP provides many tools to prevent relapse of criminal behavior in prison, to promote successful reentry into society, and to combat recidivism.

By changing the lifestyles of the participants the Recovery Housing Opportunity Program has been most effective, and it promises to be the greatest rehabilitation program to ever grace the Texas prison system.

Data Breaches

An Increasing Problem for the Incarcerated

By F. Orlando Wells, Feature Reporter

THE NATIONAL DATA Breach Law was designed for companies that possess personal information; when they experience a data breach they must inform affected persons as a matter of law. This law addresses the reasons for informing potential victims of identity theft due to data breaches so that they can protect themselves. Companies that have experienced data breaches have invested millions of dollars to improve data security within their systems to prevent further breaches, and to minimize liability suits from affected parties.

Recently, the California Correctional Health Care Services issued notice of a data breach to an undisclosed number of incarcerated people, as required by law. For this writer, it is the fourth time personal information has been exposed or lost in a data breach in eight years. In such cases, what options do incarcerated people have whose information is continually breached?

The answer is none, and one recent case settlement seems to offer a minimal amount of compensation for such breaches; however, the reality of this particular settlement is that if money is accepted, then any liability claims are forfeit. This seems to be OK with most of those affected, since the quick money is desirable. Yet, there is a significant pitfall to this scenario: If the information is used and the perpetrator runs up an enormous amount of debt, there is no recourse to recover the losses. In essence, a little money has been accepted in lieu of potentially huge loss, and the hit to one's credit score and future financial well-being can be hugely impactful.

The affected incarcerated population is vulnerable and has no way to protect itself from the pattern and practice of an entity in charge of personal information such as name, birthdate, Social Security number, and health information. At what point should officials question the services of a government entity that continually exposes

vital and supposedly protected information? At what point should this government entity invest appropriately in better and more secure services to protect those who cannot protect themselves?

Source: Kim Jeong-Bon, Wang Chong, and Wu Fang, "Privacy Breaches and the Effect of Customer Notification," *MIS Quarterly*, Dec. 2024.

Correctional Health Care: A Cost Control Service for Departments of Corrections

By Brian Nam-Sonenstein, Prison Policy Initiative

While people in the U.S. have long struggled with cost, quality, and access to health care, the crisis is particularly severe for people confined in jails and prisons. Since 2000, roughly half of all state prison systems have been court-ordered to improve mental and medical health care, according to our analysis of data from The Civil Rights Litigation Clearinghouse. These court orders cover a wide range of health care issues, including insufficient policies, understaffing, failure to provide medication and treatments, and lack of quality monitoring and reporting.



STATE AND LOCAL governments are on the hook for funding medical care for people in their custody. However, they're blocked from receiving crucial federal subsidies to fund that care. While governments can and should invest more in the health care of incarcerated people than they do right now, it's undoubtedly challenging to meet the level of need in prisons without the federal government's assistance. As a result, their need to control medical spending overrides a concern with providing patient-centered medical care.



Indeed, correctional health care represents a serious financial burden even for large cities and states, but especially for smaller and more cash-strapped jurisdictions. For fiscal year 2015, Pew Charitable Trusts and the Vera Institute of Justice estimated that the typical state department of corrections spent \$5,720 per incarcerated

person to provide health care services including medical, dental, mental health, and substance use treatment. Overall, they estimated that 49 state corrections departments collectively spent nearly \$8.1 billion on health care that year. In terms of the range of health care spending in prisons, California, New Mexico, Vermont, and Wyoming spent over \$10,000 per incarcerated person, while Alabama, Indiana, Louisiana, Nevada, and South Carolina spends less than \$3,500 per incarcerated person.

In the free world, Medicaid provides essential federal funding for hospitals, community health centers, physicians, and nursing homes serving over 82 million people — funding that smaller governments could not come up with on their own. However, corrections departments are blocked from receiving these crucial federal health care subsidies because of Medicaid's Inmate Exclusion Policy, which prohibits the use of Medicaid funds to pay for the health care of an inmate of a public institution.

Private correctional health care providers see this funding dilemma as key to winning and maintaining lucrative contracts, and design their offerings around keeping costs down above all else. There are two implicit components to these offerings: (1) Daily practices that actively limit the care provided to incarcerated people, and (2) Reimbursement models where profits hinge on cost cutting and financial restraint rather than care outcomes. When it comes to reimbursement models, legal scholars Micaela Gelman and Dan Weiss have explained in detail how correctional health care business models directly link their profits to their ability to pass savings on to departments. Three of the most common business models — fixed rate, cost-plus, and aggregate cap — each have different payers and produce different financial incentives, but they all effectively prioritize contractor profits and corrections' budgets over the actual health care needs of incarcerated people.

Proponents of privatized correctional health care argue that free market competition weeds out bad actors and punishes those who deliver poor care, rewarding firms that provide the best quality and most economically efficient delivery of health care. While it sounds nice, in practice it's demonstrably false.

Men's Health Awareness Month Diabetes and Nutrition

Tips for following a diabetes meal plan:

- Eat meals and snacks at same times each day
- Avoid long periods without eating
- Eat foods high in fiber
- Eat 4 to 6 ounces of lean protein each day.
- Eat some foods each day that contain healthy fats

Elsevier Patient Education
©2024 Elsevier Inc.

Olympics Return in 2026

By Gerald McKoy, Feature Reporter

THE 2026 WINTER Olympics in Milan and Cortina, Italy are almost here. With over 100 winter sporting events across more than a dozen categories, it's shaping up to be a heated contest that will keep warm contenders and viewers alike.

The opening ceremonies will begin Jan. 6, 2026, on NBC. Here are some of the most anticipated sports and their tentatively scheduled dates.

Event	Dates
Alpine Skiing	Feb. 7-12 Feb. 14-16
Biathlon	Feb. 10-11 Feb. 13-15 Feb. 17-18
Bobsledding	Feb. 16-17 Feb. 21-22
Cross Country Skiing	Feb. 7-8 Feb. 10 Feb. 12-15 Feb. 18
Curling	Feb. 4 Feb. 10 Feb. 20
Figure Skating	Feb. 9-14 Feb. 16 Feb. 18-20
Freestyle Skiing	Feb. 6-11 Feb. 14-19
Ice Hockey	Feb. 8-20
Luge	Feb. 7-12
Nordic Combined Skiing	Feb. 9-11 Feb. 13 Feb. 14-19
Short Track Speed Skating	Feb. 12 Feb. 14 Feb. 16 Feb. 18
Skeleton	Feb. 9-15
Ski Jumping	Feb. 5-10 Feb. 12-16
Snowboarding	Feb. 5-7 Feb. 9 Feb. 11-12 Feb. 15-19
Ski Mountaineering	Feb. 19 Feb. 21
Speed Skating	Feb. 7-9 Feb. 11-15 Feb. 17

A New Kind of Hard Time

Making the decision to “drop out” from mainline population to PC/SNY/NDF is not an easy choice, and many individuals resisted the move for up to several decades. This series explores the reasons individuals chose to remain in the stressful and toxic environment for as long as they did; what prompted them to change; what the actual process looked like for them; and what they see as the benefits and drawbacks of being on “the other side.”

By Sinque Morrison, Mule Creek State Prison

IN 2005, I was arrested for a gang retaliation shooting on rivals. Me and 12 co-defendants were convicted; I was convicted for being a shot caller and major participant for my role in the crime.

I was familiar with the prison system; this would be my third prison number. Yes, I was a knucklehead. Like my mother would always say, “A hard head makes a soft ass.” Those words turned out to be true. The retaliation that I and others were convicted of turned out to be the killing of an innocent girl and the wounding of her sister.

We didn't intend to shoot or kill either one of those girls, but when you act recklessly by brandishing firearms in an occupied apartment complex ... we should have known things could go wrong. Today, I take full responsibility for the role I played in my life crime.

Starting my new life term at the Kern Valley State Prison's Facility A, I had to be “turned-up.” There are things I had to do to people when I felt disrespected that I am not proud of today. I wish I could take back all that anger toward others I had at the height of my life term. As we all know, it's victimize or become a victim on the mainline, or so I thought at the time. For me, there was no going to groups or trying to better myself at that time. The prison stayed on lockdown, because back then weeklong lockdowns weren't the reality.

I was caught up in criminal thinking and following the convict code, which is now in the wind for me. My lifestyle and life-course shift happened suddenly, and took place in 2019 when I was in the hole for battery on a peace officer. I was serving a 12-month SHU term for the assault. The night my sudden transformation took place, it was in mid-summer and extremely hot at the Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility. I remember it vividly.

It was difficult to sleep because of the heat. I'd been tossing and turning all night and finally fell into a fitful slumber and began to dream. It was one of those dreams that are more real than dream-like. My victim appeared, pointedly blaming me for killing her. I pleaded with her, trying to convince her that I wasn't the person who shot her, but she wouldn't relent, saying, “You brought all those guys to my house with those guns and that is why I'm dead!”

She was right, of course. I was to blame. It didn't matter if I wasn't the actual shooter; I was as much and more to blame than any other. I promised her in the dream that I would change my life and start making a difference by giving back. I awoke with tears gushing out of my eyes. Since that night I have never gotten in trouble again — no rules violation reports since 2019. I now have multiple vocational trades and am an active civil rights advocate, like getting new policies instituted here at Mule Creek on Juneteenth meals. I have published a series of children's books, titled *San Bernardino Man*, meant to provide guidance and encouragement to at-risk youth. In 2024, my victim's brother and I organized a fundraiser on Facility B for Shriners Children's Hospital.

The environment on this Level II yard at Mule Creek is so much better. It has allowed me opportunities to work on myself, engage with others more freely, and get work done. To my younger self, I'd say, “Power and force do not make a leader. Only if your actions inspire others to dream big, learn big, do big things, and become better than you have been will you truly become a leader.”



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:

- Lt. B. Cochran (President)
- Cpt. B. Campbell (Vice President)
- CCI R. Dawson (Treasurer)
- CCI J. Greathouse (Secretary)
- Sgt. J. Villanueva (Sergeant-at-Arms)
- Dr. S. Johnson (Communications Chair)
- Dr. S. Rosenlof
- Sgt. E. Broussard
- CCI M. Mendoza
- Sgt. G. Perez
- HPM III M. Riley
- CCI C. Armenta
- CRM J. Ross



MULE CREEK POST Submissions

Freelance writers, staff, and others may submit articles or material to the *Mule Creek Post*, % MCIC AWs Office, P.O. Box 409090, Ione, CA 95640, or by interdepartmental mail if living at MCSP. Submissions may be edited for length (please keep under 600 words) 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.



News and Happenings

MCSP Earns Consecutive Nursing Awards

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

THERE'S JUST SOMETHING special about nursing culture at the Mule Creek State Prison that seems to breed excellence. In fact, nurses at Mule Creek have won Nurse of the Year, a statewide program, three years in a row. The most recent winner, a licensed vocational nurse on Facility D, won the award twice in her 17 years with the department.

Make no mistake; there are easier institutions to work as a nurse in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Those places don't have a high-risk medical population like Mule Creek, where nursing staff have an innate understanding of the needs of its residents. It's not easy to work here as a nurse; it requires a different sort of mentality. Probably this mentality makes them the best nurses in the state.



Men's Health Awareness Month The ABC's of Diabetes

A1C

- Blood test that measures blood sugar level over three months
- Different than daily blood sugar checks
- Usually less than 6.5% in people without diabetes
- Goal is less than 7-8% in people with diabetes

Blood Pressure

- High blood pressure can cause heart attack, kidney disease, or stroke

Cholesterol

- LDL or bad cholesterol can clog blood vessels

If You Have Diabetes:

- Don't smoke
- Take medications
- Control weight
- Exercise 30 minutes daily
- Eat healthy
- Lower stress

CHCS Care Guide Type 2 Diabetes

Resident Makes Amends Through Fundraiser for Shriner's Hospital

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

ON THE EVENING of Nov. 13, 2005, gunshots erupted in San Bernardino, California, aimed at an apartment complex on Citrus Street. The attack was a gang-related shooting in retaliation for the murder of gang member Barry Jones four days prior. As a result, two young girls were shot: 11-year-old Mynisha Crenshaw and her sister, 16-year-old Jaynita McWilliams. Jaynita survived, but Mynisha was tragically killed in the assault.

Community outrage followed Mynisha's death, forcing city leaders to scramble for solutions to the city's growing gang-related crime outbreak. San Bernardino had become one of the country's most murderous cities, and the killing of young Mynisha became a rallying cry for residents fed up with random gang violence. It led to the formation of Mayor Pat Morris' intervention-based crime-fighting program called Operation Phoenix.

The incident became a lightning rod for change and a group was formed called Mynisha's Circle, dedicated to fighting crime in the community. Local politicians created a bill called Mynisha's Law to help provide funding for communities to battle gang violence. Sen. Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.) folded Mynisha's Law into the Gang Abatement and Prevention Act of 2007, which was authored by Sens. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Orrin Hatch (R-Utah).

In early 2024, one of the 12 gang members responsible for Mynisha's death, Sinque Morrison, was housed on Facility B at the Mule Creek State Prison, and heard that Mynisha's brother, Joseph Williams, had arrived on the same yard. Morrison sent word for Williams to meet him on the yard to talk, emphasizing that he was coming in peace. When the two met, tension was high. Several incarcerated individuals from both men's neighborhoods were present in order to keep peace, although under the circumstances nothing was assured.

Morrison told Williams how sorry he was for Mynisha's killing, accepting full responsibility for his part in the shooting. He further explained that if it wasn't for his insistence on pushing fellow gang members in seeking retaliation, Mynisha would still be alive. What he didn't share at that meeting was the fact that in 2019, while confined in administrative segregation for battery on an officer, Morrison had an experience that completely altered the course of his life. During a dream, Mynisha had come to him, asking why he had killed her. In anguish and a feeling of deep remorse, he responded that he hadn't meant to harm her, vowing that he would change his life and start giving back. From that moment forward, he has not been in any trouble and has committed his life to giving back.

Confronted with his sister's killer — who admitted complete culpability and exhibited sincere contrition — Williams and Morrison hugged, and Williams told Morrison that he forgave him. In December 2024, the two facilitated a Shriners Children's Hospital Fundraiser sponsored by CalPIA supervisor James Knowles that raised over \$700.

In January 2025, Morrison transferred to Facility E and continues a life of amends, writing a series of children's books for disadvantaged youth with a message of positivity and self-worth, and is active in pro-social events and causes.



Joseph Williams, Sinque Morrison, and Scott Peterson. (Photo courtesy of S. Morrison)



**Shriners Hospitals
for Children®**
Love to the rescue.®

Using Bleach as a Disinfectant

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

CHLORINE BLEACH HAS been used as a disinfectant for decades — yet it is not the best product for the job. There are many products on the market today that are safer and do a better job. That said, bleach is still a common go-to disinfectant used for infection prevention and control of norovirus, COVID-19, and other microorganisms.

Guidelines for Use of Chlorine Bleach as a Disinfectant

- Mix one gallon of pure water with 1/3 cup of bleach, or one quart of pure water with four teaspoons of bleach.
- Mix new batch daily, as it loses its potency.
- Follow instructions on label and wear gloves.
- Use in well-ventilated area.
- Do not mix with anything but water.
- Bleach is a disinfectant, not a cleaning product. Wash area first with soap and water, then disinfect with bleach.
- Ensure contact time of at least five minutes before wiping dry.

Do Not Use Bleach On These Surfaces

- Wood surfaces
- Stainless steel and most metal surfaces
- Stone surfaces
- Grout
- Painted surfaces
- Surfaces near children, pets, and plants

It's important to remember that chlorine bleach emits toxic fumes dangerous to the user and others nearby. Fumes can cause irritation to the skin, eyes, and airways. Prolonged exposure can damage the lungs.

In addition to the harm chlorine bleach can cause to humans, pets, and plants, too strong solutions can damage surfaces and equipment, and can cause cracks in certain materials that thus provide reservoirs for microorganisms.

Source: gamahealthcare.com

MCSP Updated Channel Lineup

By Mike Johnson, Media Specialist

Channel	Station	Network
2	CDCR Mandated Content	MCSP
3	Informational Slides	MCSP (Radio 102.5 FM)
4	3.1	NBC
5	6.1	PBS
6	10.1	ABC
7	40.1	FOX
8	13.1	CBS
9	58.1	The CW
10	19.1	Univisión
11	33.2	Telemundo
12	64.1	Unimás
13	29.1	ion
14	29.4	Bounce
15	CDCR-Mandated Content	(Español)
16	Movie A	(8am, 11am, 2pm, 5pm, 8pm)
17	Movie B	(9am, 12pm, 3pm, 6pm, 9pm)
18	Movie Shuffle	MCSP
19	Community Resources + Education	MCSP
20	Vision	MCSP
21	DRP TV-Education	CDCR
22	DRP TV-Wellness	CDCR
23	DRP TV-Freedom	CDCR
24	DRP TV-Employment	CDCR
25	6.2	PBS 2
26	6.3	PBS World
27	10.5	Quest TV
28	58.2	Heroes & Icons
29	64.7	MovieSphere GOLD
30	10.4	Laff TV
31	13.3	DABL
32	3.3	Story
33	TBN Satellite	TBN USA
34	TBN Satellite	Church Channel
35	TBN Satellite	PosiTIV
36	31.1	KMAX



Bonafide provides gate pickup, a backpack with supplies, and transition assistance for those being released from prison. To request a pre-parole questionnaire, write to:

Bonafide
548 Market Street
PMB 33356
San Francisco, CA
94104-5401
BonafideLife.org
(415) 659-8406

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

California Coalition for
Women Prisoners

The Wordsmith

By Rob Sharp, Feature Reporter

DO YOU EVER have the feeling that something is about to happen, or that something is coming that you would like to avoid? Well, that is a *presentiment*, which is this month's first word.

One dictionary defines *presentiment* as "a feeling that something will or is about to happen. A premonition." It comes from the French *pressentiment* arising from the Latin *praesentire* (*prae*, "before" and *sentire*, "to feel"). It was first used in English in 1714. Here's an example of how it might be used: "She was deeply troubled by a presentiment of danger."

Here are some synonyms for *presentiment*: *premonition*, *foreboding*, *prognostication*, *presage*, *forewarning*.

Our second word for the month is *portentous*, from the Latin *portentus*, meaning "warning." First used in English in the 1400s, we generally understand it to mean "giving a sign or warning that something bad or unpleasant is going to happen."

One dictionary defines *portentous* as "of, relating to, or constituting a portent; eliciting amazement or wonder; prodigious; being a grave or serious matter (portentous decisions); self-consciously solemn or important; ponderously excessive."

Here's one example of how *portentous* could be used in a sentence: "A solemn and portentous silence filled the encampment after the king's wounding."

Here are some synonyms for *portentous*: *dire*, *foreboding*, *illboding*, *inauspicious*, *ominous*, *threatening*, *menacing*, *direful*, *baleful*, *doomy*, *sinister*, *minatory*, *ill-wind*.

Sources: Merriam Webster's Dictionary; Dictionary of Word Origins.



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

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

The Uncaged Writer

Voices from the Shadows Reports on Writing from Inside

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter



WRITING AND PUBLISHING a book from inside prison walls has very distinct pros and cons. On the pro side, we have the luxury of time to write which authors on the outside might envy. Plus, if you're writing about the ill effects of mass incarceration, what more apt setting could you ask for than from inside the steel and concrete tomb of an American penitentiary — even if it is a Level II programming facility with college classes, a bocce ball pit, and its own hometown style prisoner-produced newspaper.

For the past two years, *Voices from the Shadows* has progressed from hopeful beginnings as a college class project to writing, researching, collecting, and typing essays on a worn-out typewriter in a crowded dayroom. Pages were formatted at 1.5-line spacing (instead of the usual double spacing) in order to squeeze as much content as possible into the final manuscript, and every conceivable landmine and roadblock popped up at exactly the right time in order to prove the idiom "Whatever can go wrong ..."

For instance, my long-time publisher announced they no longer accept typed manuscripts, only digital submissions, and they have a multi-month backlog. The party who agreed to scan the manuscript into digital became indisposed, and once another volunteer was found to scan 300 pages in their spare time, their full-time life somehow kept getting in the way. Oh, and a minor stroke in December didn't help. Thanks, Universe.

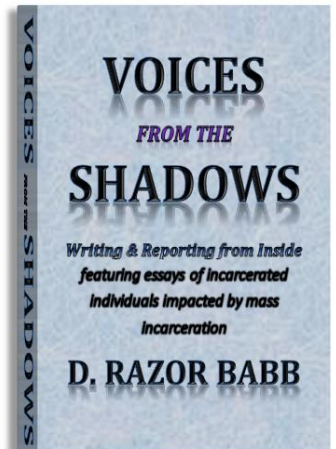
In desperation and from memories of a past working relationship, I reached out to Linda at Midnight Express Books, who couldn't have been more gracious. Not only would she accept a typed manuscript, but she'd knock off one-third of the publishing fee if submitted digitally. Print-on-demand self-publishing allows two rounds of editing. From the scanned version, a proof copy was provided to edit and mail back. The mailroom didn't want to cooperate in sending out a full book, so I cut out the pages from the book binding and mailed it. The next proof arrived in two weeks, prompting another read through and final edit.

In order to upload to the Amazon self-publishing platform, you need to provide a bank name and account number, a Social Security number, date of birth, and a determination of who will be responsible for paying income tax. In this instance, all sale proceeds above print cost and shipping go to charitable causes delivered through a nonprofit, which also handles the finances. You may choose to handle your own financials and take responsibility for taxes.

Print-on-demand self-publishing is a time- and cost-effective avenue for prison writing if you feel relatively competent in composition, editing, layout, and marketing. Editing and other services are available at some places, but can be expensive. Publishing from inside can be a daunting process, but help is available.

For information and assistance, contact your local hometown prison newspaper, or write to:

Midnight Express Books
P.O. 69
Berryville, AR 72616



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



Prison Hacks

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

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

Spillage People

MY STUDIOUS BUT slightly disorganized cellmate wakes up at 5 a.m. and has his college-issued laptop booted up and running before the sun rises. He uses half of his cluttered locker as a workstation; he sips coffee with one hand while soundlessly typing with the other.

One recent morning, the tranquility was suddenly broken by his exclamation, "Crap!" This was accompanied by the clatter of a plastic cup skittering across the floor. My cellie missed the locker surface when he set down the cup, and it dropped directly below into an expanding file folder full of his school paperwork. The folder's vital contents acted as a sponge and the majority of the hot liquid simply soaked in.

Such catastrophes happen every day in our crowded cells, and most of these disasters can be averted. Paperwork, books, and documents should never be left in the open and exposed to liquid spillage of carelessness or a cellmate's inattention.

You can use a plastic bag to cover anything susceptible to spilled liquids, which can also blow your cell's electrical fuse: electrical outlets, power cords, and any electronic device are vulnerable to liquid spillage. The unused outlets of extension cords can be covered with tape for protection; just a soggy swishing mop can blow a fuse. The back of the lower-bunk TV is also susceptible from an upper bunkmate's accident: cover it with plastic or cardboard.

Waking up in the middle of the night to find an inch of water on your cell floor is a common prison experience. Keep your vital documents and paperwork in your locker and plastic bins, or line your cardboard storage boxes with plastic.



GOOD WRITING BEGINS with the basics. Here in my grammar guide are more things a writer should know. Last month, we ended a short discussion about the comma. This month, we'll begin a series on the parts of speech, beginning with **verbs**.

Big Red's Grammar Guide



Verbs

When I took beginning Spanish classes from Folsom Lake College, we learned about the present tense conjugation of verbs in the first semester. During the second semester, we learned about a whole lot of words that seemed kind of strange, like the *preterit* (a past tense), *imperfect* (another past tense), and *future* tenses. Some of my classmates asked why Spanish can't just be simple, like English. Well, it turns out that English is pretty complicated, too, but that complexity lets us be extra precise in our meaning ... *if* we know how to use the various tenses English contains. Verbs do a lot of things, but one of the most important is telling us about things that are happening. They tell us what has happened. They tell us what is happening. They tell us what will happen. They do all of this by having different tenses that let us know when the action occurs.

We are all pretty familiar with the three simple tenses: past, present, and future. We mostly talk in the past tense. For example, "I walked to the canteen, bought some ice cream, then sat down on a bench and ate it (the ice cream)." Not often do we talk in the present tense, which this sentence does: "I walk to the canteen, buy some ice cream, sit down on a bench, and eat it (again, the ice cream)." But we will often speak of the future, like in the sentence you're reading right now: "Next Wednesday, I will buy myself an ice cream." In the rest of this series, I will use a single point of view to talk about the tenses: I am fairly clumsy when handling a ball. Thus, the three simple tenses:

Past: I dropped the ball. **Present:** I drop the ball. **Future:** I will drop the ball.

Wrapping up this month, notice how the past tense describes an action that is complete as of now. Next month, we'll look at the perfect tense, which describes a completed action from the point of view of a different moment in time. Meanwhile, I think I'll enjoy this ice cream.

Generating Ideas for Your Essay

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

IN LIFE, IN college, or in a creative writing class like Lara Gularte's at the Mule Creek State Prison, writing essays is an important form of communication and something you should learn to do. But before you can write a good essay you need good ideas, and writers can get ideas through techniques such as free writing, questioning, and mapping.

Free writing is an excellent way to generate ideas. Just start at the top of a sheet of paper and write down anything related to your subject or main idea, the words, phrases, and sentences that occur to you. The important thing is to keep writing for a 10-to-15-minute period and don't stop for anything. At the end of the writing period, go back and pick out the things that seem to fit best with your intended work.

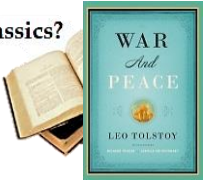
Another good technique to develop ideas for an essay is especially helpful to a journalist, and that is questioning. Try asking *Who? What? When? Where? How?* and *Why?* This works well when writing memoir, or about an event or personal experience.

Mapping uses circles and lines to connect ideas. Start with your main idea written in the middle of a blank page and circle it. Then think of things related to your idea. As you come up with related things, write them in adjacent circles and connect them to your main idea with lines. As you think of other ideas, make new circles and connect them.

Good essays begin with good ideas, and writers use a variety of ways to generate them. Three popular techniques are free writing, where one writes whatever comes to mind over a short time; questioning, where a writer asks questions; and mapping, where ideas are written in circles and linked by lines to other ideas. These techniques can aid a writer in coming up with just the right ideas to create an effective essay.

Why Read the Classics?

By Rob Sharp.
Post Reporter



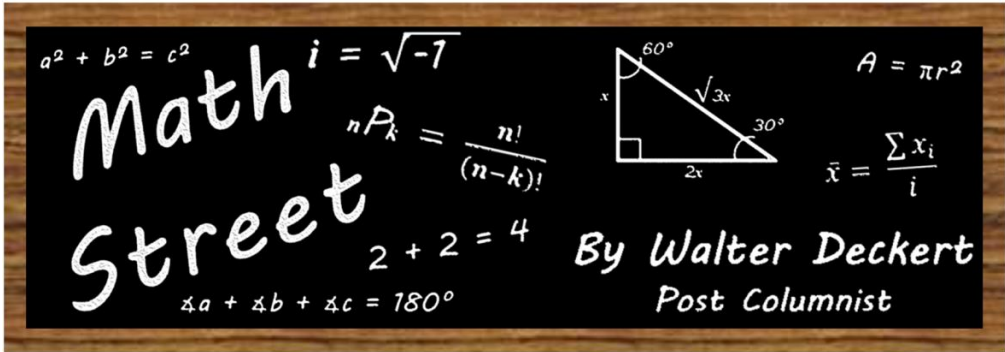
MANY PEOPLE, IT seems, are put off by the sheer length of the novel *War and Peace*, by Leo Tolstoy. However, many more of our contemporary authors pen novels at least as long, and some much longer than the 1,212 pages comprising Tolstoy’s magnum opus. Take, for example, Robert Jordan’s 14-volume *Wheel of Time* series, each book having about the same number of pages as Tolstoy’s. Or David Weber’s *Safehold* series, which contains nine volumes, each over 1,000 pages.

Part of the beauty of Tolstoy’s work is that he doesn’t stick to primary characters, but fills the story with secondary characters from all walks of life. Set in Russia on the brink of Napoleon’s invasion, it begins slowly and concentrates on the complex relationships between nobles of the Russian monarchy. The pace picks up though, and shares a richness of detail that is engaging.

Most of the story is about the 1812 invasion of Russia by the Grand Army of France, which ended in disaster for the French, and the various characters on both sides. The one major drawback to reading this great novel is the inclusion of so much of the dialogue in French, even though the translation is found at the bottom of each page. Having to move back and forth above and below the text tends to greatly slow down a reader’s progress (unless you are fluent in French) and breaks up the rhythm of the story. After a while, it becomes easier and the pace and flow will pick up.

If you have any level of fascination for Napoleon Bonaparte and his war of conquest in the early 1800s, then you will probably enjoy *War and Peace*, especially if pre-communist Russia interests you.

You can probably find a copy in your facility library. It is worth the time to read this monumental novel.



Percentages

IN RECENT ARTICLES, we have been learning how to use percentages to solve math problems, but they were all basic. So, let’s kick it up a notch ... Bam! (hats off to Emeril).

In 2022, California had a property crime rate of 2,313.6 crimes per 100,000 residents. In 2023, the property crime rate was 2,272.7 per 100,000 residents. What was the percentage decrease in property crime from 2022 to 2023?

OK, to solve this we have to first know how much of a decrease there was from 2022 to 2023. To do this, we subtract the 2022 rate from the 2023 rate:

2,313.6 – 2,272.7 = 40.9

Next, we can use the model *A of B = C* where *A* = % in decimal, *B* is the whole, and *C* is the part. The tricky thing here is figuring out the whole part. Since we are asking for the decrease, we use the larger number as the whole.

A of 2,313.6 = 40.9
2,313.6A = 40.9

Divide both sides by 2,313.6:

2,313.6 / 2,313.6 = 40.9 / 2,313.6

A = 40.9 / 2,313.6 = 0.0177

Now convert this to % by multiplying by 100, and don’t forget to put the % sign in the answer.

0.0177 × 100 = 1.77%

The decrease in property crime from 2022 to 2023 was 1.77%. We can also state that the rate of property crime changed by -1.77% from 2022 to 2023.

Source: Google (2025); Gemini (n.d.) [large language model], downloaded Aug. 28, 2025, [Gemini.google.com](https://www.google.com).

Why Not?

Nine Ways to Be Productive in Prison

By Matthew Feeney, MSOP, Moose Lake, Minn.

In prison, many ask, “What is the point of positive programming and why should I bother?” To that, Matthew Feeney, a resident of Minnesota’s carceral system serving an indeterminate term, asks “Why not?” This is the second of nine ways to be productive in prison.



#2: Just Start

READING A BOOK is a simple start. Whether it be a Vince Flynn adventure novel read purely for fun, a book on Buddhist meditation, or a college accounting textbook, the act of reading helps develop and sharpen your cognitive abilities, reasoning skills, and empathy. It also improves your vocabulary and introduces you to exciting new worlds. And, you never know where reading might take you.

I always enjoyed reading, even as a kid. In prison, I soon realized that “Intake & Orientation” really translated to being locked in my cell 22 hours a day, so I asked my mom to order me some books. Walking back from Property, the department inmates go to pick up incoming packages, with this big stack of books caught the watchful eye of a lieutenant I had never seen before. He casually commented on my being a reader and then, just like that, invited me to apply for the unposted position as a chaplain assistant in the spiritual library. I interviewed, got the job, and loved it.

When I was transferred to my next prison, that initial job experience in the spiritual library helped me get a job in the new prison’s regular library, where I worked very happily for three years. This was all because an officer I didn’t know happened to see a new guy walking down the hall with a stack of books.



Importance of Transitions Program

By F. Orlando Wells, Feature Reporter

TRANSITIONS PROGRAM INSTRUCTOR Victoria Owens knew early on that teaching was something she wanted to pursue. Her journey began with getting her teaching credentials, and then working in public schools for a number of years. Through a series of circumstances, her journey led to teaching the incarcerated.

Owens came upon the Transitions Program at the Mule Creek State Prison, where she realized there was a significant gap that existed where incarcerated people lacked important information about available resources for going home. That lack of information impeded successful reintegration of those going home. She became passionate about providing tools and resources previously unavailable. The participants could acquire what they needed with her help and be better prepared to reenter the world.

“Humanizing the incarcerated has enabled me to be very effective in helping the participants,” said Owens. “At the end of the day, I feel good about the work I do to provide them with the information they need to connect with their families and communities.”

The Transitions Program is a vital program for the incarcerated preparing to reenter society. It gives necessary skills, tools, and information so that transitioning back to life outside of prison becomes easier. It increases successful reconections to every facet of the returning person.

Those who have spent decades in prison return to a very different world where any advantage always helps. One of the main resources is access to the ARCAID (Automated Rehabilitative Catalog And Information Discovery) database system, which is available through the Division of Adult Parole Opera-

tions. One’s parole agent can help connect to the system. The site contains updated information on housing, education, jobs, mental health resources, and more. There is available access to the site through the education network. It is recommended for those preparing for the parole board to visit the site in order to track down much-needed resources, which can be listed under parole plans.

Owens is someone whose journey impacts many individuals. Her commitment to changing lives is important toward reducing the statistics of recidivism, as the person returning to society forms important and impactful relationships within the community upon their release. Her teaching matters, and it has far-reaching outcomes.

Minnesota vs. California

A Difference in Departments

By Omar Azeez, Mule Creek State Prison



ON JULY 16, 2019, I was involuntary transferred from the Minnesota Department of Corrections — where I’d been incarcerated since 1996 — to the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. Since my arrival, I’ve been comparing the prison programs and rehabilitative opportunities.

I first landed at the Deuel Vocational Institution (DVI) reception center. I was on the mainline in West Hall, and it was the filthiest place I’ve ever been, with filthy water. It was also the first time in over 20 years that I’d had a cellmate because most of the prisons in Minnesota are single-cell living. Despite the filth, there was something beautiful in DVI that outweighed it and made me think, “If this is California, Minnesota can kiss my dust because I’m not going back.” That beauty was looking out the window from the cell in West Hall and seeing that California sunset ... seeing freedom, something I’d lost sight of staring at bars and walls.

From DVI, I was transferred to CSP Sacramento’s Level IV yard. I looked out the windows there and saw a gray sky standing over cages. The change in temperament was extreme, and I could not adapt going to yard in boxers where I was strip-searched both going in and out of the building. In addition, there was no kind of rehabilitative programs there.

I jumped from the skillet into the fire when I was next transferred to Tehachapi’s Level IV. There’s no programming on these Level IV yards that I’ve seen, and it’s like walking and waiting for the confusion to eventually find you. In contrast, the closest I’ve seen in California to the program I received on the Minnesota Level IV is the Mule Creek State Prison Level II yard.

At Minnesota’s Oak Park Heights unit, there is single-cell living in a huge cell with one’s own key. There’s a chair and a trash bucket, plus cable television. You can come and go as you please until the 9 p.m. lock-in. There is dayroom all day with two washing machines; two clothes dryers; two microwaves; an ice machine; and a weight room with a Universal Machine, a treadmill, bike, and elliptical machine. Furthermore, every job assignment in Minnesota starts at \$1 per hour, and you can shop the canteen for \$160 a week.

The programming opportunities are the same at the Level IV in Minnesota as here at Mule Creek. However, Mule Creek offers more educational and college opportunities than Minnesota, especially with the seminary program and the Sac State BA program.

I’m not certain what the California Model is, but staff in Minnesota treat and speak to you with humanity. There is more interaction with staff in the Minnesota Level IV than here at the Mule Creek Level II, or anywhere I’ve been in California. Minnesota prisons aren’t as violent as California prisons, yet Minnesota is stricter with punishment. For example, if you get caught passing a kite or getting into a fight in Minnesota, you get 15 days in administrative segregation. The advantage California has is in milestone credits and opportunities for college and for lifers to go home.

Overall, if you’re trying to do time, Minnesota’s the spot. If you’re trying to go home, California has the better opportunities to make this a reality.

Men’s Health Awareness Month

Diabetes and Nutrition

People with diabetes should eat the following foods:

- Fruits such as apples, oranges, and bananas
- Vegetables such as leafy greens, beets, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, onions, and cucumbers
- Whole grains like whole-grain breads, crackers, tortillas, cereal, and pasta. Oatmeal, brown or wild rice
- Meats and other proteins such as seafood, poultry (without skin), lean beef, tofu, nuts, and seeds
- Low-fat dairy items like milk, yogurt, and cheese

Elsevier Patient Education
©2024 Elsevier Inc.

Community Clipboard

Two Laps Around with Peter Moran

By Gerald McKoy, Feature Reporter

YOU HEAR A lot of stories on the yard, plenty of them just while walking around the track. Some of these stories are more meaningful than others. As a case in point, let's take two laps around with Peter Moran and talk about his interest in art and concept design.

Mule Creek Post: When did you start drawing?

Peter Moran: Third or fourth grade. I drew anything and everything really, but I leaned toward Japanese-influenced art, anime-style like Samurai Pizza Cats and Sailor Moon. I didn't have any formal training or go to school for it or anything, just started off doodling, and kept drawing over and over; regularly, if not every day.

MCP: How did you get so good at drawing?

PM: I still don't think I'm pretty good at drawing, even after years of practice. Sometimes I think a piece came out good, other times I believe it could have come out a lot better; sometimes it just comes out amazing on its own, with little help from me. It's like the art has a mind of its own.

MCP: What helped you grow your artwork the most?

PM: Feedback helps out a lot when trying to come up with and refine my ideas. Having some sort of reference point is also extremely useful; rather than come up with something original every time, I try to look for something that's already out there, and make my own twists to it. Kinda like changing the blueprints to a house; I'm just changing things to make my house more cozy and comfortable for me.

MCP: What inspires you to put so much detail into your adventure maps?

PM: I just enjoy adding a bunch of stuff into the maps, a bunch of stuff for people to point out and interact with and explore, like a real world. The *Where's Waldo* books were always cool to me as a kid, and I try to put as much elements into my maps as their pictures did. Though sometimes I might take shortcuts here and there just because there's so much stuff.

MCP: What would you want others to know when it comes to creating art?

PM: Think of each piece as your own unique piece, a poem that only you can compose only in that moment. Don't focus on if it's similar to one thing or not as good as another. It's your art, your contribution of something cool or beautiful to the world around you. It's cool, it matters, so make it the best you can be; you can use it to make another piece later that's just as good, if not better.

Peter Moran and the map he created. (See page 25)
(J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)



Guide Dogs of America (O. Bridges / Mule Creek Post)



Guide Dogs of America
(O. Bridges / Mule Creek Post)



Slide by Mike Johnson, Media Specialist



Gerald McKoy. (J. Carson / Mule Creek Post)

Doing Time

Illustration by M. Williams



Mural by Jeff Cattera (G. McKoy / Mule Creek Post)



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/bph
 (916) 445-4072



The mind is furnished with ideas by experience alone.

— John Locke

A Programming Roadmap (Part 6)

By Maya Emig, Post Columnist

LAST MONTH I began tracing out the linear way of understanding your criminality in order to be able to explain it to the parole board and adequately address what needs changing.

Step # 2: Taking a 360-degree view of your life crime/commitment offense and identify your victims:

- ☐ Describe your crime in detail and what occurred — from your perspective.
- ☐ Describe your crime in detail and what occurred — from your victim's perspective.
- ☐ Take denial management.
- ☐ Take criminal thinking.
- ☐ Read your probation officer's report and the facts in your appellate decision (if you have one).
- ☐ Understand that your recollection of the facts of the crime may be different from the official version for a number of reasons — memories change over time, denial, trial strategy, etc.

Step # 3: Identifying your character defects that made you dangerous at the time of the life crime/commitment offense:

- ☐ Figure out what a character defect is and what it is not (you can find a definition in the PJW videos as well as in the context of the fourth step of a 12-Step program).
- ☐ Figure out what your character defects were at the time of the commitment offense.
- ☐ Order your character defects listing the worst one first — list the worst one that made you the most dangerous. Then go to the second, third, etc.

Step # 4: Tracing the development of each of those character defects:

- ☐ With your list — begin examining each of the character defects and see at which time each originated, because at 2 years old you were not violent, callous, manipulative, vengeful, etc.
- ☐ Write about the progression of each of the character defects as you grew older through when the commitment offense occurred.

Step # 5: Examining your childhood & adolescence & adulthood including choices and values:

- ☐ Do a thorough examination of your childhood — and write about what your home was like growing up. Was there abuse, and if so, what kind of abuse? Write about how that affected you, your decisions, and the way you acted. Examine the choices you were making, both good and bad decisions. Look at your values and write about what you valued most, and what you valued least. Look at your choices you made and why you made them. Examine the character defects in this context again.
- ☐ Do a thorough examination of your adolescence — and write about what was going on with you during those adolescent years. Who were your friends, what was the family dynamic, what was going on with you and your actions and decisions? Was there abuse, and if so, what kind of abuse and in which relationships? Write about how that affected you, your decisions, and the way you acted. Examine the choices you were making, both good and bad decisions. Look at your values and write about what you valued most, and what you valued least. Look at your choices you made and why you made them. Examine the character defects in this context again.
- ☐ Do a thorough examination of your adulthood leading up to the commitment offense — and write about what was going on during those years. Who were your friends, what was the family dynamic, what was going on with you and your actions and decisions? Was there abuse, and if so, what kind of abuse and in which relationships? Write about how that affected you, your decisions, and the way you acted. Examine the choices you were making, both good and bad decisions. Look at your values and write about what you valued most, and what you valued least. Look at your choices you made and why you made them. Examine the character defects in this context again.

Step # 6: Identifying your causative factors:

- ☐ Figure out what causative factors are and what they are not (you can find a definition in the PJW videos).
- ☐ Figure out what the causative factors were for the commitment offense.
- ☐ Figure out what the causative factors were for all your previous criminality as well.

Step # 7: Listing all of your issues up to and including the life crime/commitment offense:

- ☐ Create a numbered list of all the issues that were going on in your life up to and including the time of your commitment offense (domestic violence, criminal thinking, substance abuse, impulsivity, anger issues, gang involvement, mental health issues, issues managing stress, manipulation, entitlement, vengeance, etc.).

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

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



AN INMATE'S GUIDE TO NAVIGATING
THE PAROLE SUITABILITY
PROCESS IN CALIFORNIA

36 STRATEGIES of SUITABILITY

BY JOSEPH R. HAYTAS

Restitution Reality

RESTITUTION IS A big thing. If you have any chance of a grant, the commissioners will ask questions about circumventing the restitution process. Many incarcerated individuals have done it and along the way it got normalized by most of the population. However, the board is taking a close look at your trust account records to see if you are involved in any activities that can be interpreted as circumventing the process.

Commissioners see this as re-victimizing the victim. The upside is that if you have done this, let's say, three years ago and stopped as soon as you realized it was the wrong thing to do, you should be OK. Commissioners look at the recency and number of times it went on. Also, the attitude of the person addressing the issue in the hearing is important.

Another thing to remember is that if you are asked about circumventing restitution, putting money on another's books or having funds credited to your account, don't panic and come up with an arbitrary number of times when you don't actually recall how many times. For instance, if they ask, "How many times?" and you say, "Maybe five," when the actual number is 25, this will be seen as minimizing and lying. You are better off admitting that you don't recall exactly, but it is either a lot or not often.

The board has investigators who will find out how many times and from where money is being sent or accepted. Honesty is always the best policy.

Joseph R. Haytas is an attorney who represents candidates at the Board of Parole Hearings, and is the author of 36 Strategies to Suitability, available on Amazon.com.



JOSEPH R. HAYTAS
517 NORTH MOUNTAIN
AVE. #237
UPLAND, CA 91786
JRHAYTAS@HAYTASLAW.COM

Una Mapa de Programación (Parte 6)

Por Maya Emig, Post Columnist

Traducido por Fabián García, Spanish Reporter

EL MES PASADO comencé a trazar la manera lineal de entender tu criminalidad para poder explicársela a la junta de libertad condicional y abordar adecuadamente lo que necesita ser cambiado.

Paso #2: Adoptar una perspectiva de 360 grados del delito de vida/delito por el cual te encuentras detenido e identificar a tus víctimas:

- ☐ Describe tu delito en detalle y lo que ocurrió — desde tu perspectiva.
- ☐ Describe tu delito en detalle y lo que ocurrió — desde la perspectiva de tu víctima.
- ☐ Acepta la gestión de la negación.
- ☐ Acepta el pensamiento criminal.
- ☐ Lee el informe de tu oficial de libertad condicional y los hechos en tu decisión de apelación (si tienes uno).
- ☐ Comprende que tu recuerdo de los hechos del delito puede ser diferente de la versión oficial por varias razones: los recuerdos cambian con el tiempo, la negación, la estrategia del juicio, etc.

Paso #3: Identificar tus defectos de carácter que te hicieron peligroso en el momento del delito de vida/delito por el cual te encuentras detenido:

- ☐ Averigua que es un defecto de carácter y que no lo es (puedes encontrar una definición en los videos de PJW, así como en el contexto del cuarto paso de un programa de 12 Pasos).
- ☐ Averigua cuales eran tus defectos de carácter en el momento del delito por el cual te encuentras detenido.
- ☐ Ordena tus defectos de carácter, enumerando el peor primero — enumera el peor que te hizo más peligroso. Luego, pasa al segundo, tercero, etc.

Paso #4: Rastrear el desarrollo de cada uno de esos defectos de carácter:

- ☐ Con tu lista — comienza a examinar cada uno de los defectos de carácter y observa en qué momento se originaron, porque a los 2 años no eras violento, insensible, manipulador, vengativo, etc.
- ☐ Describe sobre la progresión de cada uno de los defectos de carácter a medida que creciste hasta el momento en que ocurrió el delito por el cual te encuentras detenido.

Paso #5: Examina tu infancia, adolescencia y adultez, incluyendo elecciones y valores:

- ☐ Realiza un examen exhaustivo de tu infancia — y escribe como era tu hogar mientras crecías. ¿Hubo abuso y, si es así, que tipo de abuso? Escribe sobre como eso te afectó a ti, tus decisiones y la forma en que actuaste. Examina las elecciones que tomaste, tanto las buenas como las malas. Analiza tus valores y escribe sobre lo que más valorabas y por qué las tomaste. Examina nuevamente los defectos de carácter en este contexto.
- ☐ Haz un examen exhaustivo de tu adolescencia y escribe sobre lo que te estaba pasando durante esos años de adolescencia. ¿Quiénes eran tus amigos, cuál era la dinámica familiar, que te estaba pasando a ti y a tus acciones y decisiones? ¿Hubo abuso, y si fue así, que tipo de abuso y en qué relación? Escribe sobre como eso te afectó a ti, tus decisiones y la forma en que actuaste. Examina las elecciones que tomaste, tanto las buenas como las malas. Analiza tus valores y escribe sobre lo que más valorabas y lo que menos valorabas. Mira las elecciones que tomaste y por qué las tomaste. Examina nuevamente los defectos de carácter en este contexto.
- ☐ Haz un examen exhaustivo de tu vida adulta hasta el delito cometido y escribe sobre lo que estaba pasando durante esos años. ¿Quiénes eran tus amigos, cuál era la dinámica familiar, que te estaba pasando a ti y a tus acciones y decisiones? ¿Hubo abuso, y si fue así, que tipo de abuso y en qué relaciones? Escribe sobre como eso te afectó a ti, tus decisiones y la forma en que actuaste. Examina las elecciones que tomaste, tanto las buenas como las malas. Analiza tus valores y escribe sobre lo que más valorabas y lo que menos valorabas. Mira las elecciones que tomaste y por qué las tomaste. Examina nuevamente los defectos de carácter en este contexto.

Paso #6: Identificación de tus factores causales:

- ☐ Averigua que son los factores causales y que no lo son (puedes encontrar una definición en los videos de PJW).
- ☐ Averigua cuales fueron los factores causales del delito cometido.
- ☐ Averigua cuales fueron los factores causales de toda la criminalidad anterior también.

Paso #7: Enumera todos tus problemas hasta e incluyendo el delito:

- ☐ Crea una lista numerada de todos los problemas que existían en tu vida hasta e in-

cluyendo el momento de tu ofensa de compromiso (violencia doméstica, pensamiento criminal, abuso de sustancias, impulsividad, problemas de ira, participación en pandillas, problemas de salud mental, problemas para manejar el estrés, manipulación, derecho, venganza, etc.)

The Anatomy of a Civil Commitment

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

IN 1998, AT 31, John was in the U.S. Army for eight years and was stationed at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. He served in Desert Storm and Bosnia, and subsequently graduated from Penn State with a degree in history. One night in 1998, John met Indy-Girl on the internet. Unknown to him, Indy-Girl was an undercover cop. Long story short, he took the bait and agreed to meet Indy-Girl and her underage sister for a tryst. Upon arrest, a search of his computer yielded child porn and off to federal prison he went for 53 months. Rachel Aviv, who interviewed John for *The New Yorker*, chose not to reveal his last name.

On federal probation, John relapsed and began to download adult porn. Soon 20 questionable images were discovered on his computer by his probation officer, along with letters he had written and received from an old prison pal. Off to prison he went the second time. This time it was decided to civilly commit him right before he was to be released from prison.

In 1999, a task force created by the American Psychiatric Association, which has repeatedly objected to the civil commitment of sex offenders, wrote, “confinement without a reasonable prospect of beneficial treatment of the underlying disorder is nothing more than preventative detention.” Six years later, another task force report posited that the laws represent a “serious assault on the integrity of psychiatry.”

The diagnostic criteria for sexual disorders were conducted on only three patients before being added to the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder* (DSM) in 1980. As of 2013 when the latest DSM was released, no field trials have been conducted. Michael First, the editor of two editions of the DSM, said that there is no scientific research establishing that abnormal desires are any harder to control than normal ones. “People choose to do bad things all the time,” he said. “Psychiatry is being co-opted by the crimi-

nal justice system to solve a problem that is moral, not medical.” Most treatment programs consist of cognitive behavior therapy with lessons about empathy and anger management. The release rate in 2007 for the 4,500 committed sex offenders nationwide was 10%. Minnesota had one of the largest commitment programs with 670 inmates (in 2013) working on distorted thoughts about sex. This was at a cost of \$120,000 per person annually. In 18 years, from 1994 to 2012, the state released only one man from civil commitment. Civil commitment only ends when the mental health provider, a court, or both determine that a person can be released. The field of forensic psychology involving sex offenders has become one of the most lucrative. Busy expert witnesses can make half a million dollars a year by testifying at hearings.

After he was found suitable for commitment, John was transferred to Butner, a unit in a federal facility for treating sex offenders. The program’s emphasis on confession led several inmates to remember imaginary crimes that were later disavowed.

Andres Hernandez, the program director, said he created “systematic pressure” to make inmates “put all the cards on the table.” Every few months, patients were required to update lists of people they had sexually harmed. When they didn’t have anything else to disclose, other prisoners accused them of being in denial or “resistant to change.”

Each day, the group meeting begins with a pledge to accept responsibility for their behaviors and actions. The patients kept arousal logs of magazine articles, television scenes, or dreams that inspired inappropriate sexual thoughts. Improvements in their arousal patterns were assessed through phallometric testing with a rubber gauge measuring arousal while they listened to audio recordings called “preschool persuasive,” “grammar-school coercive,” and “female infant.”

John has since confessed to molesting four boys even though his apparent preference for his commitment crime was girls.

One child pornography convict, Markis Revland, was encouraged by the psychology staff at Butner to “get it all out,” and he came up with 149 victims. There was no evidence of these crimes other than these so-called confessions, and 34 crimes were not possible as they would have occurred during a time when Revland was incarcerated.

At his hearing, the judge concluded that his crimes were the “product of his imagination, not actual events.” The judge ordered his release after he had spent five years at Butner. The federal government loses about half the cases it takes to trial for civil commitment.

Sources: Rachel Aviv, “The Science of Sexual Abuse,” *New Yorker*, Jan. 14, 2013; California Welfare & Institution Code 6601.

Psych View

By Daisy Switzer, Post Columnist

Developmental Disability

IAM SORRIER than I can speak for those of you for whom this is a factor. Some of you were born with intellectual and developmental limitations. You may share cells with those who acquired similar symptoms later due to injury or trauma.

None of you can read this. So it’s for those family and friends who can, those people who love you and feel as I do when they see you in the cages or on the yards in your helmets as you slowly bang your heads into cement. Some of you don’t even know who you are.

Your evaluation is different because your abilities are different. Please find an evaluator who understands this and can work with you. In many cases, your crimes are different. I have seen developmentally disabled people abused by more savvy perpetrators, as mules or assistants in crime.

If you are to parole, where will you go? Some families have resources to care for a parolee, or have community services to help. What happens if this family help terminates? What if you are too much for the family to care for? This is a special circumstance where parole plans must be extremely well detailed, not only because there is a perceived risk from release of a person with such disabilities, but because there is a risk to that person as well.

There are incarcerated people who are not able to care for themselves. What will their plan be? If you love such a person, or want to help that person, monitor care and make the best choice. Such a person needs somewhere safe to go.



BPH Proposes Commutation Regulations

By Jesse Carson, Editor-in-Chief

IN AUGUST, THE Board of Parole Hearings proposed new regulations that would spell out its process for recommending a commutation or a recall of an incarcerated person's sentence. The regulations would add Chapter 7.1 to Division 2 of the California Code of Regulations Title 15, which covers the parole board and its processes.

Under the planned procedure, a person incarcerated in the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation is eligible for review once they have served 25 years of continuous custody. The exceptions are those individuals sentenced to death; those who can otherwise expect to be released within the next three years or who have a parole hearing within three years; those whose parole eligibility date has already passed; those who have already had their sentence commuted; and those who have been convicted of a sexual offense that would require registration under Penal Code §290. The process is open to those serving determinate sentences, indeterminate sentences, and those serving life without the possibility of parole.

The review consists of a meeting with a parole commissioner or deputy commissioner, scheduled within one year of the individual's eligibility date, or by the end of 2035 for those who would be eligible by that time. Within 30 days, the hearing officer will make their recommendation, including suggestions for the individual regarding rehabilitative programming that would make them more suitable for release.

If the incarcerated person is not recommended for the full "C&R hearing" (commutation and recall of sentence hearing), they will be eligible for another review within three years. Otherwise, the incarcerated person will receive a full hearing before the parole board, after an evaluation (the comprehensive risk assessment, or "psych eval") conducted by the board's Forensic Assessment Division. Under the proposed regulations, a per-

son evaluated as a high risk for future violence will have their C&R hearing cancelled, and a new review will be conducted within three years; a guilty finding for any serious rules violation report will also lead to a cancelled hearing.

A C&R hearing uses the same criteria and processes in place for the Board of Parole Hearings to evaluate suitability for parole. This includes the presence of an attorney for the incarcerated person, a representative from the prosecuting agency, and any victims or next of kin who wish to attend. The parole board will make a determination as to whether the individual poses an unreasonable risk of danger to the public; this includes the consideration of whether the person will commit anti-social acts, such as violent or financial crimes or noncompliance with parole conditions.

What Cancer Steals

By Marty Williams, Production Editor

MY STEPFATHER WAS Dick Pickens, who later in life would rebrand himself as Richard. The name Richard never stuck with me; for the 12-odd years he served as my surrogate father, he was always Dad, and Dick to everyone else.

Growing up, he was the image of big man-ness; a bricklayer, in the sun all day, hands grey from cement and callous. The house we lived in was a veritable construction yard, with a huge pile of sand here, bricks there, cinderblocks, wheelbarrows; stacks of thin metal flashing leave scars on five-year-olds.

He divorced my mom in the mid-1970s, a really ugly thing involving affairs and shootings and forced poverty; mom was in the early quixotic frenzy of sobriety while trying to attend to the endless frailties that drove her alcoholism in the first place. Dick, or Dad, was not on board, and wanted a world of things that weren't that. The last time I saw him as a kid I was throwing rocks at his pickup as he drove off.

Years later, after surviving teen angst and four years of the U.S. Marines, I found him in Sacramento. He was living as Richard in his deceased parents' house, trying to sell it, about to get married for the third time. We got drunk and trolled Auburn Avenue for hookers at two in the morning (no luck). Months later, I went to his wedding.

When I was about to get married a year later, I found out that Dick was in the hospital with spinal cancer. On the last leg of my honeymoon, my wife and I went to see him.

The "big man-ness" was gone. The white sheet only peaked at his toes and chest, the rest of him shriveled unseen, already receding into the other world. A tube pumped morphine into his head, his man-voice a thin imitation of himself. He floated in memories, afraid of both what he was and what he would soon be.

"When I first saw you," he said weakly, drifting to a time when he wooed my young divorced mother with a 2-year-old son, "I saw pounds of beauty."

Never in my life had he spoken like that. Never. Cancer was dissolving him slowly, but far too quickly, dissolving the rock of layered lives he had built. Under it was a person I had never met, a person who here, near the end, wanted to be met.

All I managed to say back was a thank you ... for a gate.

When I was 7, I had a problem running my mouth at bigger kids who bullied or harassed me. I could often outrun them through the field behind our house, but once I got to the 6-foot fence, beatings ensued. So Dick built a small gate in the fence, about 3 feet square, with a latch. If I made it there, I could be safe in a backyard with a large, overprotective German shepherd. Because of this, I almost always made it home.

I cried as we drove on to the rest of our honeymoon, to the rest of our lives. Two months later, Dick's new wife called me at one in the morning so I could say goodbye. Dick was on the other end; he wasn't speaking, just a rapid panting over the next two minutes. I said goodbye. There was nothing else I could say.

How things should have ended for Dick, I'm in no position to say. But I feel deeply that cancer not only stole his future and his life, but also stole the past. It stole what life had made him, physically and psychologically. It stole the big man-ness; it stole his hands, his voice, and his chance to get things right.

It stole his chance to be Richard.



PEN America Prison Writing Program



**120 Broadway, 26th Floor
New York, NY 10271**

Notable Drummers

(World Drummer Day, Nov. 15)



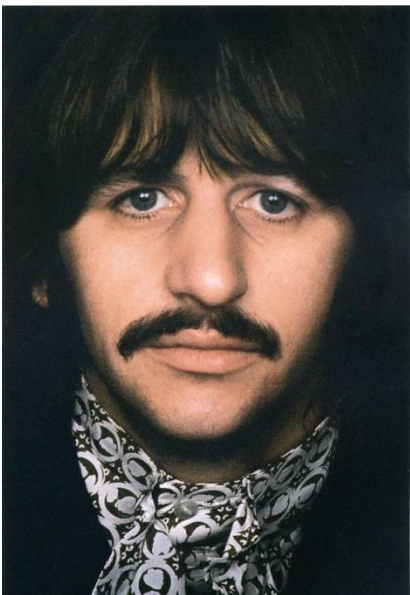
Keith Moon (Rollingstone.de)



Sheila E. (Wikipedia.org)



Tito Puente (Grammy.com)



Ringo Starr (Pinterest.com)



Neil Peart (Alamy.com)

Fac. E Hosts Cancer Screening Town Hall

By D. Razor Babb, Feature Reporter

ON FRIDAY, JULY 18, 2025, healthcare administrators and Mule Creek medical staff met with incarcerated individuals in the Facility D and Facility E visiting rooms to discuss fecal-occult blood testing to detect colon cancer. Chief Executive Officer of Health Care Bob Edwards explained that early detection and diagnosis is of primary importance. He recommends screening after age 45, on an annual basis, and wants the population to be aware. He asked everyone present to “get the word out” about colon cancer screening.

Supervising Registered Nurse II (SRN II) Douglas Walters ran down the proper procedure for fecal-occult blood testing, and advised that just because you submit a test sample doesn’t necessarily mean a colonoscopy will follow. Walters explained that the appropriate technique for securing a fecal sample doesn’t require any invasive procedures, and the brush in the sampling kit is to be used to swipe (like a paintbrush) over a stool sample (in the toilet) and then sealed inside the plastic bag provided. You may deliver the contents to any clinic staff or leave in the sample bin at the clinic.

Many of those in attendance had serious medical issues they wanted to discuss with the presenters. Medical staff were open to questions regarding a wide range of issues. Asked about thyroid and kidney cancer screening, Edwards advised that a specific blood test would need to be ordered. Suboxone and addiction issues were discussed. SRN II Melissa Davila commented that staff are aware that people with addiction issues will abuse the system, and abuses are monitored by custody and medical staff.

Following the formal gathering, presenters entertained specific inquires and set up cancer screenings for those interested.

Some in attendance felt that community focus was lost on personal issues. Attendee Jennifer Swokla commented, “Most of the speakers were sufficiently loud enough; however, most of the questions from the audience were difficult to hear, as were some of the answers. The scheduling during IST [in-service training] caused late attendance and a loss of information for the population.”

Some also commented that an open forum, with a proper public address system provided would help in future events.

The following medical administrators and staff were present at the Facility E town hall: Bob Edwards, chief executive officer of medical services; Kristen Mann, correctional health care administrator; Ashley Altschuler, chief support executive; Dr. Vaughn, chief physician and surgeon; Dr. Thompson, senior psych specialist; Elizabeth Whitlock, correctional health care administrator; Melissa Davila, SRN II; and Douglas Walters, SRN II.

Colon cancer screenings were conducted on Facility D following an awareness campaign spearheaded by the Peer Support Specialist Program. Over 70 tests were submitted, with zero positive results returned. The screening awareness initiative is currently confined to facilities D and E, with the intent to expand the initiative throughout the Mule Creek State Prison



Facts about Colon Cancer

“Colon cancer is the deadliest cancer for men under 50 and second deadliest for women under 50.” –Dr. Heinz-Josef Lenz, USC

“If caught early, your chances of surviving colon cancer are excellent at around 90%.” –Dr. Xavier Llor, Yale

Colon cancer is mostly preventable by following these guidelines:

- Eat a high-fiber diet of whole grains, vegetables, and fruit.
- Stop smoking and consume less alcohol.
- Exercise at least 30 minutes five times a week.
- Keep to a healthy weight.
- Get screened each year starting at age 45.

Source: USA Today, July 21, 2025



A. Altschuler, M. Davila, B. Edwards, K. Mann, D. Vaughn, D. Walters, E. Whitlock. (O. Bridges / Mule Creek Post)

Notable Drummers

(World Drummer Day, Nov. 15)



Jon Bonham (JamBase.com)



Phil Collins (NME.com)



Buddy Rich (LiveAbout.com)



Ginger Baker (WBgo.org)



Pete Escevedo (wolfgangs.com)

How My Life Changed with a Pre-Diabetes Diagnosis

By Michael Dominick, Valley State Prison



I WAS HAVING a difficult time with my weight; it bounced between 161 and 190 pounds. I was at a loss as to why this extreme fluctuation and finally went to see the doctor. He ran the gamut of tests and then came the news: I was pre-diabetic.

One of my biggest fears is having to get insulin shots each day. To avoid becoming full-on diabetic, I had to change my diet and begin an exercise program. My first thought was about what I eat, and sugar was a big item in my diet. The doctor told me it's not about sugar alone, it's the carbohydrates, as these turn into blood sugar. So now, I always try to eat the vegetables and the salad when I go to the dining room. It's a battle, but without constant diligence I would one day be going to the medication window and getting that dreaded insulin shot. For me, the biggest change was to eliminate desserts.

When it's hot outside and my friends are eating ice cream, all I can do is salivate over it because the desire for it does not outweigh the negative consequences.

For exercise, I walk as much as I can; each day I walk at least 20 to 30 minutes. It's not about distance, it's about time spent doing the activity.

I talked with a coworker about his diagnosis of diabetes, and how it affected his life. It came as a complete shock to him because it did not run in his family. He had to make numerous changes to his daily diet. He had to cut down on the amount he ate at one time, and the number of times a day he ate. He has to check his blood sugar each day to determine the amount of insulin he needs to maintain proper levels. Because he needs a shot once a day, he has to monitor everything he eats because it determines the quantity of insulin. As with most people with this diagnosis, they have to watch how much starch they intake. My coworker can only eat eight crackers a day, no cookies, and treats are limited to the smallest amount.

Diabetes and Nutrition

Tips for following a diabetes meal plan:

- Read food labels
- Note serving size and amount of calories, carbs, fats, and salt in each serving
- Avoid canned and processed food
- Eat baked good versus deep fried
- Cook with healthy oils
- Avoid butter, cream, and high-fat meats

Elsevier Patient Education
©2024 Elsevier Inc.

Diabetes and Nutrition

Diabetes is different for each person, and meal plans can be different due to:

- Calories needed
- Medicines taken
- Weight
- Blood sugar, blood pressure, and cholesterol level
- Activity level
- Other health conditions

Elsevier Patient Education
©2024 Elsevier Inc.

I asked him what in his diet caused him to become diabetic. He said that while at work he had access to the canteen and was eating ice cream and drinking sodas every day. He went to the doctor complaining about having to use the bathroom all the time. He had tests done and the result was he was diabetic.

The California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) has a state dietician who determines the healthy diet the incarcerated population eats. Yet, even with a registered dietician, the availability of food that a diabetic can eat comes into question. The CDCR offers vegetarian meals twice a week, so diabetics have to be careful what and how much they eat, otherwise their blood sugar levels get too high and require greater doses of insulin.

As with most things, we are mostly in charge of our health and happiness. You can tighten your belt and do the work to monitor your health, or you can stand in line every day and get your diabetic shot. For me, watching my diet is the better decision; getting an insulin shot once or twice a day scares me to death.

Missteps:

On page 20 of the July edition of the *Post*, the article "Penz's Penance" stated that Rosacia's film featured at the CSU Northridge Film Festival; he clarifies that it premiered at the festival, and was considered for the Sundance Film Festival but not selected.

Notable Drummers

(World Drummer Day, Nov. 15)



Rick Allen (ElectronicDrumAdvisor.com)



Karen Carpenter (AmoMama.com)



Tommy Lee (TVInsider.com)



Mick Fleetwood (LouderSound.com)



Animal (HighReshdWallpapers.com)



Vignettes: Shigellosis

By John L. Orr, Feature Reporter

vignette [vin-yet'] noun: a descriptive historical sketch

HAVE YOU EVER heard someone say, “Yeah, man, I got food poisoning. I bet it was that chicken last night.” Well, if he was the only one on the yard who fell ill, a more likely cause was the shigella bacteria, not bad chicken. Thorough cooking usually kills bacteria. CDCR Patient Education Materials describe shigellosis as “a bacteria that can be spread through a person’s poop (stool).” Certain species of shigella cause dysentery.

I experienced an agonizing attack of shigellosis in June 1993, just 12 hours after eating a hand-tossed dinner salad, mixed by a careless, gloveless kitchen worker. Videotape confirmed his toilet use in a stall at about 4 p.m., leaving without washing his hands and walking to a 30-gallon salad-mixing tub. Out of 600 who ate that night, 11 of my dinner mates fell ill the following morning; lab testing confirmed shigellosis as the cause. Symptoms abated within 12 hours, but we ended up in the infirmary, quarantined until testing negative five to eight days later.

Resulting symptoms of infection are severe diarrhea, pain in the abdomen, and a weak feverish feeling within 24 hours. A person infected with shigella bacteria can have no symptoms but readily transmit the disease. By not washing hands thoroughly after using the toilet, this can leave the bacteria on the skin. How often does a friend intercept you on the way to a meal and offer to shake your hand? Since you don’t know where his hands have been, maybe a fist bump is a better option.

Any surface an infected person touches can accept the shigella bacteria, such as a book lying in the dayroom or any handrail. Be careful, wash your hands before eating, and encourage cellmates to wash up after defecating. You know which ones are careless.

Joe Biden’s Cancer Diagnosis Raises Awareness for Cancer Risks

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

ON MAY 30, 2025, former president Joe Biden announced he had an aggressive form of prostate cancer that had spread to his bones. Despite the challenging diagnosis, Biden said that he was “feeling good.”

At 82, the former president is no stranger to cancer; his son Beau died of brain cancer, and his wife previously dealt with basal cell carcinoma (skin cancer).

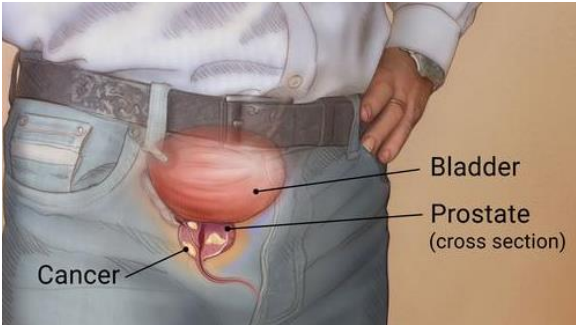
Though this is an aggressive form of prostate cancer, Biden’s doctors believe it is hormone-sensitive and can be managed. The family is weighing treatment and care options.

The cancer was discovered as a small nodule during a routine exam; however, it was noted that Biden’s doctors had not utilized the blood test for prostate-specific antigen (PSA), which might have caught the cancer before it spread. No reason was given for foregoing the test, which surprised oncologists who commented on Biden’s diagnosis.

“Cancer touches us all. Like so many of you, Jill and I have learned we are strongest in the broken places. Thank you for lifting us up with love and support,” said the former president in a post to Instagram.

The prostate is a glandular body at the base of the urethra that produces most of the seminal fluid containing sperm. The urethra is the tube that carries urine from the bladder and semen from the body.

Most men develop prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in the prostate, and most do not have to worry about developing cancer. It is when the PSA number goes above 4 or 5 that there is concern. There are other signs to look for that might indicate a problem: prostatitis (inflammation of the prostate), problems with urination, blood in the urine, or pain when urinating. While these are not necessarily signs of cancer, they should be checked out by a doctor.



Wikipedia.com



What's Body Dysmorphic Disorder?

By Rob Sharp, Feature Reporter

THIS IS A term you won't find in a dictionary: body dysmorphic disorder (or BDD). It is listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*, Fifth Edition (DSM-V). A copy can be found in your law library. Before you think this disorder may apply to you, keep in mind the very important term *excessive*, which distinguishes BDD from normal concerns about one's appearance.

The manual notes that BDD "differs from normal appearance concerns by excessive ... preoccupation and repetitive behaviors that are time consuming and difficult to resist or control and cause significant distress or impairment in functioning." With BDD, a person is constantly overwhelmed with serious issues about how they look and find fault where there isn't any. It can be about weight — and may include bulimia or anorexia nervosa — or any other body feature. One common form is excoriation (skin picking), and even trichotillomania, which is the pulling out of hair.

Often, the disorder manifests during the teen years, and mostly at around 12 to 13 years of age. It tends to affect both males and females equally, though with males it's more often about not believing one has enough muscle mass and overworking themselves to injury. Suicides do occur in a large number of these sufferers, so getting psychological help early can be lifesaving.

If you or someone you know is excessively concerned about physical appearance, often saying things like, "I'm ugly," "I'm too fat," or some other self-criticism, encouraging them to seek help could save them a lot of pain and suffering.

Source: *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder*.

Dog Trainer Forced into Retirement

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

DARREN DENNISON CONTEMPLATED an uncertain future. After the recent diagnosis that was about to end his career as trainer of service dogs, he reflected on his fate. "I'll retire soon due to kidney failure," said Dennison. "They'll put in a stent for dialysis, and I'll probably be moved to Stockton afterward."



Darren Dennison and Sasha. (M. Johnson / Media Specialist)

At 65, Dennison has served more than 43 years in prison over three terms. He has been training dogs since 2018, currently the oldest serving trainer in the program on Facility E, and was on his eighth canine partner when he got the bad news. "I've stayed with the program because it's positive," he said. "The dogs go to someone who needs them, maybe a veteran with PTSD or a child with autism. Like any parent who wants the best for a child, it's the same with dogs; you want them to be successful — for the dog and for the client."

In addition to his skills as a service dog trainer, Dennison has worked to better himself in other ways: He's earned a GED certificate and an associate degree in business. Returning to the parent-child analogy, Dennison credits much of his success after coming to prison to his family. They have stood by him through all of it, the good and the bad. "Even though I'm still a work in progress, they love me enough to stick by me," he said.

Until the diagnosis that changed the course of his life, Dennison was nearing a court decision on resentencing under Penal Code §1170.3. "My attorney says maybe by September or October," he noted. "Really, it looks good."

Even if it did not look so good, there's a Board of Parole Hearings suitability appearance scheduled for 2027. One might reasonably hold out hope for parole, if only he didn't have to be so concerned with mortality. This is something he and other trainers have had to confront with the sudden loss of one of their own to liver cancer: Clarence Sargent. "I was in the cell when Sarge passed," Dennison remembered. "Everyone has issues, but when you live so close they become family. I've known Sarge quite a while, but I didn't know how close I was to him until he passed. Normally, we don't have feelings when tragedy happens — back in the day — but now it's different. We can show how much we care."

What's the future hold? Dennison does not know. Maybe resentencing, maybe parole, maybe a kidney transplant, maybe all three. Whatever the future holds, he's prepared to deal with it through the things he's learned in his chosen profession. "When you learn to train dogs, you learn so much about yourself," he said. "You learn empathy, patience, tolerance, love, and unselfishness. This job helped me to grow and be normal."

Dennison was keen to credit two people who believed in him and appreciated his contributions to the dog program. "Nicole Maples helped me to learn to train dogs and now I can get a job on the street," he noted. "And Sonia Parisi went through hell with us to keep this program. I want to thank them for all they've done for me. I'm really going miss them and this program."

Editor's note: Since the writing of this article, Darren Dennison has been transferred to the San Quentin Rehabilitation Center.



USC PEP

PRISON EDUCATION PROJECT

950 W. Jefferson Blvd., JEF 150 • Los Angeles, CA 90089-1293

Missteps:

On page 23 of the August edition of the *Post*, a paragraph was erroneously inserted into the article "MCSP Provides Group to Manage Denial."

The incorrect paragraph was:

So, who needs denial management? The answer is that most of us need it, and Christopher Bryson said it best in the July 2022 *Mule Creek Post*: "For most, denial is an automatic response to the reality of situations that have made us feel vulnerable or ashamed of our behavior, afraid of how we may be perceived if we accept responsibility for our harmful actions."

What it should have read was:

So who needs denial management? For example, let's look at airline pilots. The highest paid employees in aviation. They receive a first-class medical exam twice a year, regular recurrent training, tens of thousands of flight hours ... so explain "Stick shaker." Stick shaker is the system that shakes the wheel when pilots are unaware or in denial of what is taking place. Why? Because, it seems, we all need help with denial at many levels of life.

The Four Agreements

By Marty Williams, Production Editor

The Four Agreements by Don Miguel Ruiz is a wisdom book used by millions as a foundation for life, faith, and career. The principles are derived from the teachings of the Toltec guides for personal freedom.



The Fourth Agreement: Always Do Your Best

DOING OUR BEST doesn't mean doing better than everyone else ... or anyone else.

The last agreement offered to us by Don Miguel Ruiz is an intimate, realistic agreement with ourselves to do our best in every aspect of our lives, even when we aren't at our best. Being in competition with everyone and everything has become our measure of success as persons, and if we aren't winning then we're losers.

We have agreed to this our whole lives, from first seeing our parent's disappointment with our performance in school, or sports, or the friends we choose. We have agreed that our self-worth is dependent on performance, on social capital, and on being better than others. It makes us judgmental, anxious, depressed, and envious of others' accomplishments.

The fourth and last agreement with ourselves is the simplest, and most life-affirming. It is agreeing to always do the best we can do in that moment, without attaching the outcome to our self-worth. Our best today probably won't be the same best we're at tomorrow; if I have striven to be the best that is possible in that moment, I will have done all that could be expected of me. Over time, my self-value no longer hinges on competition with the world, but on trusting that I am always at my best regardless of anyone else's "best." This is mine to do; being concerned about what others are doing is not my responsibility.

Some days I can be great at the agreements — other days not so much. But, if I agree to be at my best anyway and not judge myself, the four agreements will change my life, my relationships, and my future.

What's in a Name?

A Story of Self-Actualization
By O. Rick Bridges, Interim Lead Reporter

“YOU'RE GOING TO die in prison.” That was a common blasphemy that Gregory Thomas Swokla encountered after being sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole (LWOP). Swokla listened to everything that was said to him; but selectively, and, perhaps traumatically, he took many of the toxic messages that were disseminated to heart. However, he never believed that dying in prison was an option; being murdered in prison was possible, but vigilance could and would prevent it. Driving such a determined survivor's destiny was a strong desire to acquire and reacquire freedom — it held as strong as ever.

The aggregated effect of those chaotic messages that constructed the entire imprisoned context, was an internalization of the most disturbing messaging Swokla endured. “I began to practice the art of labeling myself in some very destructive ways,” Swokla remembers. “You're nothing. You're a piece of s**t,” the list goes on. “None of these, however, was at the top of my list for self-destruction. That label, secured deeply in my gender identity closet, was, ‘You're never going to be a woman.’ It was a message that I never fully believed; but I did nothing about pursuing my true identity, and that was just as bad.”

Context does indeed matter, and in the 1990s, when he entered what at the time was the California Department of Corrections, the incarcerated male inmate Gregory Swokla had no access to rehabilitative resources. He had to survive in order to evolve into a future as “Jennifer” — a future Swokla saw as destiny. Jennifer remembers, “In 1999, I was sent to the Centinela State Prison. I resigned myself to my struggle; I shaved my head and adopted the name ‘Arizona.’ In the year 2000, I entered the Sensitive Needs Yard at the Calipatria State Prison. Unfortunately, lack of tangible help from the system broke my quest for full femininity, and the exhaustion from the struggle was too much for me. Once there, I stayed as ‘Arizona.’”

Then, finally, in 2022, Swokla arrived at the Mule Creek State Prison. Jennifer, was on the horizon. She remembers, “Access to the Global Tel*Link tablet led to the discovery of youth-related court decisions tied to California Penal Code §1172.6 for consideration for resentencing. I had to ask myself what I was going to do if I was released from incarceration. ‘I can be me!’ Faced with this new reality, I set to work on looking at what kind of help I could get to transition. As quickly as I could, I submitted my medical request to get my gender affirming process officially started. That was a very happy day for me and I marked the event by creating a poem.”

While living as Jennifer and awaiting the outcome of a request to what now was the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation for a formal name change, she happily reports, “My gender-affirming path is alive and well, and still moving forward. The many traumas that I endured affected my self-esteem, my social skills, and my abilities to pursue activities I liked; basically every aspect of my life was negatively impacted, and ‘Greg’ was doing the best he could, while I, Jennifer, was being ignored. Wanting to transition and being able to do so are two completely different experiences for a person. Of course, I didn't know this at the age of 5. In fact, I had no idea that anything even needed to be done. I just knew that I was female and that at some point I would be a full-grown woman.”

Jennifer Swokla, having prevailed in her quest to be resentenced in the Santa Clara courts, awaits her first California Board of Parole Hearings appearance.



Jennifer Swokla (O. Bridges / Mule Creek Post)

Blues into Pink

The truth that I cannot hide,
Lies deep and lonely inside.
Life's epic dream from an innocent child,
Denied through want-of-love and society's vile.
Tangent dreams beyond the scope of prejudices,
Lived only in the space between synapses.
The vibrancy of this life hidden 'neath masks,
Beaten into submission by agencies' tasks.
Strength unknown realized in the blink of an eye.
The self known from birth's door will not die.
No longer held captive inside,
The truth that I cannot hide.

—Jennifer Swokla, Mule Creek State Prison

CTF Residents Create Road to Freedom Program

By Al Rice, Copy Editor

IN 2018, A group of men at the Correctional Training Facility created a unique self-help program for sexual offenders: the Road to Freedom (RTF) Self-Awareness Program. In seven years, the program has expanded to eight classes in English and Spanish, conducted in weekly and monthly formats.

Programs such as RTF are sorely needed throughout the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, as there are few resources available for sexual offenders. Since its creation, RTF has graduated more than 500 from the program. RTF can accommodate 230 participants at a time, and has a waiting list of more than 800.

For more information, write:

Road to Freedom
Self-Awareness Program
CTF-North Facility
P.O. Box 705
Soledad, CA 93960



FACILITY E

TUE

E-21 Classroom
3:30pm-5pm

THU

E-Hobby Room
5:30pm-7pm



Prison Gardening Benefits Prisons, Residents

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

PRISON AGRICULTURE AND gardening positively influence the physical, social, and mental health of those who participate, thereby facilitating rehabilitation and successful community reentry. The produce grown may also offset the cost of institutional food. Some prisons go even further and donate foods to surrounding food banks, school lunch programs, homeless support services, and indigenous communities, allowing prisoners to experience the satisfaction of giving and helping, which opens up the possibility for future meaningful work to continue after incarceration.

Research has shown that meaningful work provides the framework within which incarcerated individuals can develop skills and pro-social behaviors that play an important role in rehabilitation. In particular, gardening has been found to decrease the effects of mental illness and substance use among inmates while fostering skills and attitudes necessary for reentry and for reducing recidivism.

Farming and gardening also provide employment. Individual behavior is improved when people are employed, and this increases institutional safety. Research by a team led by K. Timler indicates employment has a positive impact on a person's sense of self-worth, confidence, self-reliance, and responsibility while also providing opportunities to build relationships with fellow prisoners and staff, positively changing motivations, attitudes, and behaviors, and helping to develop pro-social identities that facilitate successful community reentry.

Source: K. Timler, H. Brown, & C. Varcoe, "Growing Connection Beyond Walls: How a Prison Garden Fosters Rehabilitation and Healing for Incarcerated Men," *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation*, 2019.



The Garden of Hope (J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Getting to Know Your Neighbors

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

HERE AT THE Mule Creek State Prison, there are a lot of turkeys, some of them outside the fence. The California wild turkey, though not native to California, was imported by the California Fish and Game Commission from Texas and Louisiana, beginning in 1959 until 1999. Today, wild turkeys are found in a quarter of the state, with their range concentrated in the coastal mountains and Sierra foothills.

As omnivores, wild turkeys eat seeds, berries, insects, roots, small reptiles, and amphibians. Unlike the domestic turkey, wild turkeys can fly, just not very far. As a result, they can be found roosting in trees and can fly to escape predators. They are adaptable, and live in open woodlands and urban areas.

Some drawbacks to wild turkeys as neighbors include the mess they leave on driveways, sidewalks, and patios, as well as destroyed flowerbeds and gardens. In spring mating season, toms (adult males) can be aggressive toward perceived threats; this includes people, and, as many at Mule Creek have seen, motor vehicles.

This majestic, resourceful bird was proposed by Benjamin Franklin to be the national symbol of the United States. His reasoning: Turkeys are proud and dignified. The other bird suggested was the bald eagle, a sometimes-carrion eater and thief. The bald eagle won out.

In suburban areas, people feed the wild turkeys in their yard, which can encourage aggressive behavior such as attacking people and pets who come near a tom's territory.

Overall, turkeys are considered an asset to the flora and fauna of Mule Creek, their scratching for food helps to aerate the ground, allowing water, nutrients, and oxygen to permeate the soil.

Next time you see a rafter of turkeys, ask yourself what would be different if they, not the bald eagle, were our national bird?



InspiredPencil.com

A Unique Approach

The Evolving Native American Spiritual Circle

By F. Orlando Wells, Feature Reporter

ELDER LES RHOADES explained how things were done prior to the establishment of the Native American Spiritual Circles in California prisons. “Back then, before *Inipiis* [sweat lodges] were allowed, we could only have Grass ceremonies,” he said. “Once the Lakotas established the ceremonial grounds for purification ceremonies, things changed. If an Indian wanted to become part of the Circle, he would have to prove he was Native by having a federal registration card, a tribal enrollment number, and lineage papers showing his heritage.” But things have changed dramatically over the last 40 years regarding membership in Native Circles and the way traditions are taught and practiced.

On Facility E at the Mule Creek State Prison, the Native American Spiritual Circle is unique in its view of community and service. Native brothers in the Circle have taken positions that extend beyond the needs of the local Native community, to include the broader community on the yard, reaching out to help anyone who needs or wants healing. The Circle has adopted the premise of inclusivity, believing that in order for the beauty of the Native culture to be preserved, it must be shared. The men of the Circle have intentionally created an outreach program that invites the incarcerated population to attend. The Waktah Program is designed to demonstrate how Native culture embraces hope. The word *waktah* means “hope” in the Lakota language.

Anyone on Facility E is invited to attend in the chapel on Thursdays at 11:30 a.m. The program also addresses addiction through White Bison, a 12-Step recovery program taught through ceremonial practices.

Recently, the Circle underwent a change of leadership, men who graciously sat down to speak with the *Mule Creek Post*. Joe Rodriguez spoke about what it means to be a representative of his native community. “It has taught me that it is my duty to help others beyond myself,” said

Rodriguez. “And to treat everyone with fairness and compassion.” “It is an inclusive circle, unity is primary,” said Jose Monsivais about the uniqueness of the Circle on Facility E. “I believe there is strong medicine in this Circle,” he added.

Jeremy Edwards was particularly intent on the future of the Circle and some of the goals they would like to achieve. “I’d like to see all circles be more effective working outside Native Circles, like extending our healing to anyone who needs it,” said Edwards. “I would say that it is important to follow the tradition of teaching our youth and guiding them on the Red Road, which should be the primary goal of all Native Spiritual Circles.”

Being a leader of any group entails enormous responsibility, and Jason Beck emphasized some of the traits good leaders need to be successful. “To be patient,” he said, “empathetic, and ... to see things from other people’s perspective.”

The focus of Native incarcerated citizens has steadily shifted over the past four decades. It appears that inclusivity and a return to the origins of Native culture and traditions have become the primary focus. This is because of the belief that healing belongs to all, and Native people have a long history of understanding what it takes to facilitate healing, historically, and they are reaching out to those in need to improve the environment and bring unity.

This is one of the things Native people say in the Lakota language when they start and finish prayers and ceremonies: “*Aho Matakuye O’ yasin*,” which means “to all my relations,” symbolizing unity among all living things and peoples.

Imposter!

By Mark Daigre, Post Columnist

“Wylan felt certain that at any minute a real member of the staff would enter the room, point at him and shout, ‘Imposter!’ Then again, Wylan felt like an imposter most days.”

—Leigh Bardugo, *Crooked Kingdom*

HAVE YOU EVER felt like an imposter? Do you feel like an imposter all the time, most of the time, or just occasionally? What does this look like? Are you afraid of exposing your lack of skill, ability, or belonging?



Locked in a Dark Calm ©2016.
Tameca Cole.
Courtesy of the Ellen Driscoll

For some, feeling like an imposter is a constant feeling that never goes away. This can create situations where people are reluctant to try new things for fear of being exposed as someone who doesn’t belong, who is faking it, or is unworthy. This fear is always there, gnawing away at their self-confidence.

So, how can anyone get to the point of not feeling like an imposter? The answer might lie in learning how to find that place within yourself where you do belong, that place where you recognize who you are and what your worth is.

Have you ever been in a room full of people and felt completely alone? If so, who was in the room with you? Was it a classroom, a courtroom, or maybe it was with family or friends? Looking back, can you see what it was that caused you to feel alone? For some, what allows them to feel alone in a room full of people might be that they are the only person who has had a specific experience, and, as a result, have nothing in common with those around them. This can be true, but if there are 10 people in a room, chances are someone has had an experience similar to your own that it would allow them to identify with you.

A decade ago, the Buddhist monk who regularly visited told me that I should begin to teach in our weekly sitting group. I tried to refuse. I hooked my thumb in my collar and said, “I can’t do that. Who am I to even begin to teach others about the Narrow Way?” He told me to start teaching regardless. Less than six months later, I was moved to a brand new facility with no materials: no books, magazines, newsletters, or other teaching materials. As a result, I was forced to begin teaching using only what I brought with me. For much of that first year, I was constantly afraid of someone yelling, “Imposter!” Even today, I still have a little bit of that fear, that I’m not enough or don’t belong, that I am not qualified to be at the front of the room and be who and what I know I am.



Men’s Health Awareness Month

Diabetes and Nutrition

It is important to have healthy eating habits because one’s blood sugar (glucose) levels are greatly affected by what you eat and drink. Here’s where to find more information:

- American Diabetes Association: diabetes.org
- Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics: eatright.org
- National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Disease: niddk.nih.gov
- Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists: diabeteseducator.org

Elsevier Patient Education
©2024 Elsevier Inc.

When Fiction and Facts Collide

By Matthew Feeney, MSOP, Minn.

WHAT WOULD YOU think of a movie where the main hero cited ridiculous statistics like “80% of black people are unemployed” or “80% of rapes are committed by minorities,” and no movie character corrected him? That seed of a negative and detrimental statistic is now planted in the unsuspecting viewer’s mind. Intentionally misstating facts, even in a movie, has real-world consequences.

Night Hunter, a major motion picture released by Paramount Pictures in 2018, reflects mainstream society’s loose affiliation with facts. A vigilante played by Sir Ben Kingsley, sets up “To Catch a Predator” sting operations using a female minor to lure online sex offenders. But these interactions don’t end with an embarrassing arrest caught on camera; rather, they end with Kingsley’s character surgically castrating the perpetrator in a hotel room and then blackmailing the new soprano by threatening to give the police the dirty texts if the sex offender goes to the police.

Halfway through the movie, police detective Marshall, played by actor Henry Cavill, finally catches the vigilante. Kingsley’s character happens to be a well-respected retired judge, and he explains his very rational reasons for hunting down and castrating sex offenders. The detective challenges Kingsley’s character, asking him, “Doesn’t really give you the right to run around hacking people’s nuts off though, does it?”

“If a lion eats someone and you lock it up, and you say, ‘don’t do that again,’ then 10 years later you let it out, what happens?”

“Not all criminals are animals.”

“Some are wired to be. Eighty-percent of sex offenders reoffend. Eighty-percent! Yet we knowingly let them back out onto the street. Seven this last month, released within 15 miles of this school. That’s five out of seven active predators. Unless you treat the underlying cause of their instinct to offend — hormones. When you do that, the

reoffend rate drops to just five percent.”

The fact is people who committed sex offenses have the lowest recidivism rates. The only crime with a lower recidivism rate is murder. Numerous studies over the years have consistently shown that the recidivism rate (reoffend rate) for sex offenses is between 3% and 7%. That’s the default across the country, without anyone being castrated. To have an award-winning actor like Kingsley falsely cite 80% as the recidivism rate for sexual offenses is dangerously negligent, especially in a film where the plot is based on vigilante castration.

People who commit sex offenses are real people with issues who deserve the right to seek treatment and get healthy. Critics argue that “once a sex offender, always a sex offender.” Some alcoholics say that while they’re never cured of the desire to have a drink, they can manage and control their addiction and live a normal and productive life. Sexual offending can be a mental health issue (both for the perpetrator and the victim), and having a film’s authority figure citing fake facts about people who commit sex offenses is insidiously prejudicial and inexcusable.

Arguably this movie is a work of fiction, so writer and director David Raymond should be allowed certain dispensations and suspensions of disbelief due to the entertainment value that movies are supposed to provide. But the line blurs when authoritative fictional characters (especially judges played by knighted actors) erroneously cite cold-hard numbers as facts that only serve to promote violence and discrimination against a class of people who are already one of the world’s most hated groups.

NIH, FDA, CDC Have Crucial Roles in Protecting Health of Americans

By Philong Huynh, Feature Reporter

RECENTLY IN THE news, we have heard various things, both good and bad, about federal agencies like the NIH, FDA, and CDC, but what exactly are their functions?

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) is a federal agency located in Maryland. It was created to support innovative medical research strategies to enhance health, lengthen life, and reduce illness and disability. It answers to the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), a cabinet position appointed by the president and voted in by the Senate.

The NIH approves experiments and provides grants and funding for many research projects nationally. It also provides expert guidance on funding for vaccines and vaccine development. Its panel of experts on vaccines provides risk assessments of all vaccines. It maintains a comprehensive library of published research articles accessible on its website, which also includes relevant public information on a variety of health and medical topics. It and other agencies like the FDA and CDC are all components of HHS. On its website, the department maintains the Vaccine Injury Table detailing symptoms and onset criteria that describe injuries associated with vaccines for purpose of making a vaccine-related injury claim prescribed by federal regulation, 42 CFR §100.3.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates food and drug safety, dietary and nutritional supplements, cosmetics, and medical devices. It provides benchmark regulations within which food, drugs, cosmetics, and medical device manufacturers operate to comply with standards set by these regulations covering things like food additives, vitamins and supplements, CBD (cannabidiol) ingestible products, and aseptic packaging systems to ensure their commercial sterility, to name a few. The FDA also regulates food labeling and defines bioengineered foods. It regulates the term “healthy” on food products to ensure consumers’ reliance on it is justified. It also ensures the quality and inspects the production, importation, and distribution of raw agricultural commodities like meat, milk, fruits, grains, etc. The FDA’s most well-known function is to oversee the development of and to give final approval to prescription drugs upon successful completion of clinical trials. Besides prescription drugs and controlled substances, the FDA regulates the manufacturing and labeling of over-the-counter (OTC) drugs as well. It also regulates stem-cell therapies.

No less important to the nation’s health is the role of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in preventing and controlling communicable disease by tracking disease patterns, issuing public alerts and quarantines, and providing logistical support, guidance, and public health education in preventing the spread of communicable disease and in fighting epidemics. The CDC also provides expertise on vaccines and helps procure and distribute vaccines to effect public health.

Source: www.hhs.gov.



INSPIRED BY TABLETOP and role-playing games like Dungeons & Dragons and DestinyQuest, resident nerds at Mule Creek have composed a quick, engaging adventure for readers to enjoy. By reading the story, making wise choices, and finding victory over dangerous foes, you, too, can be a hero.

Example Combat Sequence

	Speed	Offense	Defense	Health
You	3	5	4	30
Cobra	4	2	1	12

- **Your Abilities:** Frenzy. Increase your speed by 1 for one round.
- **Cobra Abilities:** Venom. Once you take damage from the serpent, lose 2 health at the end of each round.

During your adventure, you may encounter foes that mean you harm and you must defend yourself. In each combat round, you will:

1. Roll two six-sided dice (or shuffle the aces and sixes in a deck of cards and flip two at random) for your hero, adding your speed to the total. This is your attack speed.
2. Do the same for your opponent to find their attack speed.
3. Whoever has the highest attack speed wins the combat round and may deal damage. If tied, the round ends, and you start a new one.
4. The winner rolls one die, adding their offense to the total. The total result is their damage score, the damage they deal through physical or magical means.
5. The loser of the round subtracts their defense from the damage score; any excess damage is taken from their health.
6. Combat ends when one side's health drops to 0 and is defeated. If both sides are still standing, a new round begins; return to step 1. If you were victorious, you may continue on in the story at full health.



“Aaah! ... come any closer!”

A sharp cry and a loud slam wakes you, and you sit up. Old prison habits die hard, and you quickly look around...and are stunned for a moment. *This ... isn't my apartment.* You sit atop a small, grassy hill dotted with trees, dropping off into a sheer cliff behind you. Fluffy clouds float hundreds of feet below, lit by the rising sun.

What the...? A faintly colored circle with strange markings is burnt into the grass under you, rough and real. You also notice a bracer on your arm, with small divots in the leather, similar to the circle's markings. It, along with a simple tunic, vest, and jean-like leggings clothe your body.

...What is this, some sort of lucid dream or something? You try to retrace your steps yesterday ... A package arrived after work, but it was a long day; you don't remember what it was, much less opening it. *Maybe some sort of VR game or something? But ... it all feels so real.* The crisp air, the firm ground, the snug clothes ... the screeching and banging sounds that disturb you. Turning, you find the source a short distance away; a small creature with green skin and a head like a large football. It hacks into the wooden door of a small cabin; even from here you can hear fearful replies of a woman inside. “Stop, go away!”

You quickly bolt down the hillside to the hut. Part of you isn't exactly thrilled to deal with a potential danger, but you hustle to the creature anyway. *Definitely some sort of VR game, I bet. That thing looks like a goblin from some fantasy world...* Sure enough, as you approach, it turns and growls with a gurgle. It definitely looks goblin-like, with beady red eyes, sharp pointed teeth, and a dagger riddled with ridges and holes. “Hey!” The goblin snarls as you bark at it. “Kick rocks, bud, and we won't have any problems!” It shrieks in fury and dashes forward, waving its dagger! Quickly looking for something to protect yourself, you spot two items against a nearby tree stump; a gem-embedded quarterstaff, and a two-handed broadsword. As you reach for one, your bracer glows, and the sigils move; with your chosen tool, you turn to the goblin!

Combat

	Speed	Offense	Defense	Health
You	3	5	4	30
Cobra	4	2	1	12

- **Your Abilities:** Backslash (Sword Only): Roll extra d6 on one damage roll against a foe. Once per foe per battle.
- **Mage Hand (Staff Only):** Force foe to reroll attack speed and take lower result. Once per foe per battle.
- **Goblin Abilities:** Scurrying Frenzy: Every round Goblin fails, add 1 to its speed. Return speed to original score once Goblin hits.

You grab the broadsword; closer is better in your experience of fights while you did time. Metal studs and links of chain appear, overlapping your clothes, forming sturdy light armor. The sword glints as its weight shifts; while slightly too heavy one-handed, it feels just right holding it in two...Sweet. The goblin lunges, quickly deflected by your blade. You follow it up with a wide swing, knocking the creature back. Even though you've never trained with a sword other than stick-fighting as a kid, the movement feels natural to your body. “Hah, this should be a piece of—Gah!” The goblin may have been injured, but it's not down yet, and it seems like you really irritated it. It cuts at your leg before making a swift follow-up swipe. Wary of the creature now, you parry his attack and counter with a swing and a yell, knocking it to the ground. Victory!

You grab the quarterstaff. It practically screams “wizard's staff”; firing at range always appealed to you. Your vest darkens in color, lengthening to your ankles into a deep blue cloak. The staff's single gemstone glows blue, and you feel a steady energy hum within it...Nice. The goblin lunges, cutting the side of your leg with another shriek. You wince, swatting his dagger away with the side of your staff. The tip of the staff glows as you do, as does his dagger; as if repelled by a magnet. ...Did I do that? Huh...let's try something, then. You wave the staff at the goblin, shouting the first spell that comes to your head: “Fireball!” The blue gem glows, and a small blue bolt launches from it, hitting the goblin. More a magical bullet than fireball, you think, but it'll do. You fire off a few more shot at a distance, and it finally falls. Victory!

SPORTS AND RECREATION



Your Move

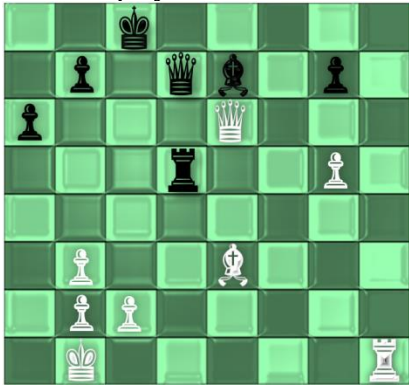
By Sean “Sharif” Neal.
Post Columnist

Chess is perhaps the most noble game in the world, played by millions across the globe in search of mental dominance over their opponents.

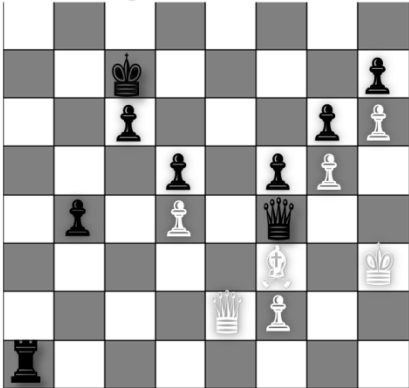
The exact origins of chess vary, some attributing its beginnings to ancient Persia and India as a means of formulating battle strategies. However, today's chess has evolved to attain a loftier goal: elevating the human mind.

White has a simple yet very elegant combination. Can you play it out to victory?

White to play



October's puzzle:



1. Qxf3+ 2. Qxf3 Ra3

Black threw away a sure victory with the above sequence, which led to a stalemate when white played 3. Kh4

Symbols

x	capture
+	check
++	checkmate
!	very good move
!!	brilliant move
?	error
??	blunder
!?	move deserving attention
?!	dubious or risky move



Facility E softball champions Stop and Frisk. From Left: Standing—Bobby McHenry, Damien Horton, Maurice Frazier, Keith Millet, Dejarne Smith, Jose Herrera. Kneeling—Demetrius Anderson, William Mooney . (G. McKoy / Mule Creek Post)



Heavy hitters Dejarne Smith and Maurice Frazier. (G. McKoy / Mule Creek Post)



- Stop and Frisk
- Bobby McHenry

Damien Horton

Maurice Frazier

Keith Millet

Dejarne Smith

Jose Herrera

Demetrius Anderson

William Mooney



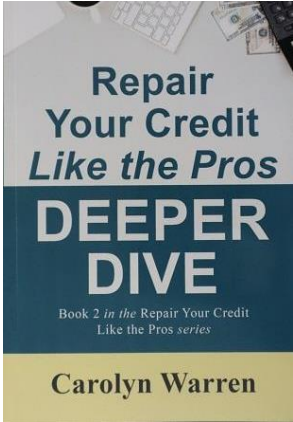
Business & Finances



Carolyn Warren



Leah Ward-Lee



ENTREPRENEUR'S WORKSHOP

By Leah Ward-Lee, Post Columnist

Debunking the Myths Myth #1

Starting a Business is Hard

FOR EACH OF the 60 businesses I've helped, I've described what it takes to get it started. None of the steps are "hard." They might require knowledge you don't have. They might require a skill you've never developed, but with the availability of information today, you can learn to do about anything. Surf the internet, read a book, take a class, and practice until you master the new skill.

Your business plan should include every step necessary to start your business. In future columns I'll provide information on how to write the plan that is your roadmap to starting and growing your business. The more thought and effort you put into it, the more you will be focused, and the fewer unpleasant surprises you'll have as you start your business.

Once you've written the plan, assign an order to the steps, estimate the time it's going to take for each one, and make a commitment for when you're going to complete each step. You can gain confidence and learn valuable information by taking a part-time job working in a business that's similar to the one you want to start. If it's a small business where you take the position, be up front with the business owner. If you can determine ways to collaborate rather than compete, you'll both benefit from the experience.

Growing and Running a Business Takes Long Hours

When I look back at the businesses I've started and consider the comments made by business owners I talked to, there is one

common theme: Most people who open businesses try, often by necessity, to make a living with their business from the start and are driven to spend whatever time it takes to get the business started. That's not the only approach.

This is your business. You can choose how many hours a day or week you put into it. It doesn't necessarily hold true that the more hours you put in, the faster it will grow and the sooner you will be making a living from the business.

Keep a journal of your progress. Take a few minutes each time you work at your new business to record the date and time, what you worked on and what you accomplished. At the end of each working session record your next steps. This simple practice will help focus your efforts.

Leah Ward-Lee is an international consultant for the airlines and aerospace industries, activist, social justice advocate, and entrepreneurial trainer. She volunteers for Defy Ventures, a prison entrepreneurial training program, and provides pro bono counseling for aspiring small business startups.

Repair Your Credit Like the Pros

By Carolyn Warren, Post Columnist

Hidden Credit Reports

EQUIFAX, EXPERIAN, AND TransUnion aren't the only sources collecting and selling your private information. They are the Big Three, the main credit bureaus everyone talks about, but there are other companies that creditors use to uncover hidden information about you. Banks, mortgage lenders, auto loan lenders, credit card issuers, and others check your identity and credit with additional sources. They check your background with other data collection companies too, and this is how they discover information (and sometimes misinformation) you did not even know was out there.

Completing a wide, clean sweep to get all of your personal information corrected is worth the extra effort. It takes time to acquire these additional reports, but you are not saving yourself any time if you don't get the desired results. It's not unusual for the top credit repair specialists to spend six weeks getting their clients' personal identifiers cleaned up with both the major and minor sources before they launch any challenge letters. In the big picture, this saves time and postage, and prevents discouragement.

Four Additional Credit Report Sources

Innovis
950 Threadneedle Street, Suite 200
Houston, TX 77079-2937
1-800-540-2505 and 1-614-223-0690

The fourth popular credit bureau and a major player in the bankruptcy scene, Fannie Mae/Freddie Mac report data on home loans to Innovis.

LexisNexis Consumer Center
P.O. Box 105108
Atlanta, GA 30348
1-888-497-0011

Not a credit bureau, but a data service. They gather information and pass it on to creditors. A major source of information on unpaid taxes, judgments, liens, and bankruptcies.

SageStream LLC
P.O. Box 503793
San Diego, CA 92150
1-888-395-0277
www.sagestreamllc.com

This is a real credit bureau owned by LexisNexis. Who uses them? Automobile lenders, utility companies, cell phone services, retail stores, and credit card companies.

Clarity Services, Inc.
P.O. Box 5717
Clearwater, FL 33758
1-866-390-3118

If you have below prime credit, Clarity claims they have the crystal ball to your future. They tell lenders they are "the crystal ball" in predicting whether or not a person with subprime credit will pay their bill in the future.

Financial Corner Tracking Stocks (From Sep. 9, 2024 to Dec. 1, 2025)				
● Apollo Comm. Real Est. Fin. Inc. (ARI)	\$10.30	→	\$10.13	-1.7%
● Baxter International Inc. (BAX)	\$38.96	→	\$18.74	-51.9%
● Comerica Inc. (CMA)	\$54.87	→	\$80.38	+46.5%
● CVS Health Corp. (CVS)	\$57.75	→	\$80.36	+39.2%
● Lumen Technologies (LUMN)	\$5.84	→	\$8.11	+38.9%
● Pfizer (PFE)	\$28.56	→	\$25.74	-9.9%
● UGI Corp. (UGI)	\$23.97	→	\$39.55	+65.0%
● Wells Fargo & Co. (WFC)	\$54.00	→	\$85.85	+59.0%

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





MCSP Holds Father's Day Concert

By O. Rick Bridges,
Interim Lead Reporter,
and Bob Gay, Feature Reporter



J.D. Edwards, Desmond Perry, Gerald McKoy perform. (O. Bridges / Mule Creek Post)

THE LOCAL FATHER'S Day weekend celebration that showcased a variety of musicians at the Mule Creek State Prison on Facility E. The artistry of mostly original music was expressed on the canvas of a balmy summer day in the rolling foothills of Ione, framed by the delta breeze. It set in motion a climate of soulful reflection for the fathers, sons, and daughters in attendance, as well as the mothers, aunts, uncles, and other extended family members who enjoyed the day's festivities.

You may not recognize Omar Azeez by name, but you know who he is if you've been on Facility E at Mule Creek for even a short while. He's the big man with the big guitar strapped to his back in the big black case. Azeez picked up his guitar in early 2000.

"I taught myself how to play the guitar in prison," said Azeez. "I play a left-handed guitar, and yet I'm right-handed. Today I did



The musical group Vision performing on Father's Day. From Left—Omar Azeez, Robert Taylor, Sean "Sharif" Neal, Dewaun King, and Jeremiah Jones. (O. Bridges / Mule Creek Post)

five songs of my favorites for the yard concert. I write my own music and lyrics. A while back, in 2022, I put seven of my originals on a friend's album, *Eleuthia*."

To add a full sound to Azeez's performance, other musicians added drums and keyboard to give some of the songs a bigger sound. Azeez needs to get out ASAP so he can share his amazing sounds and songs with the rest of the world.

Clarence Butterfield spoke of the attacks on Israel and sang songs he wrote based on the Old Testament of the Bible. He also sang songs he wrote in county jail, along with some old Christian classics. This was Butterfield's first public performance with an electric guitar. He performed "Amazing Grace," and injected an original he wrote at the same time. He sang Psalm 51 put to music with a Jewish flavor to it. Butterfield tied his songs together with dialogue and kept it interesting as he went through a repertoire of Israeli sounds and words.

He played no chords, only full notes on the electric guitar, giving his performance the true sound of Israel. He said, "I sang 'One Day at a Time' while waiting in the hallway of the emergency room for 15 hours after my first heart attack." From that introduction, he rolled into his lifesaving melody that got him through the heart attack. He gave a truly unique presentation of music and memory.

As we closed our interview, Butterfield said, "Some of these songs I didn't plan on; but with the current Israel attack on Iran, slowing down their plans to destroy Israel ... I found myself focused on this group of songs."

"I don't take for granted that I'm able to express my love for music in 'E' Yard," said Andy Austin, who also performed in the concert. "I was a professional musician in a rock band from an early age. Now I apply my talents, and write original music, for the Lord in a church ministry group."

"I absolutely love music and understand the therapeutic value of listening and being able to perform as it is conducive to positive mental health," said Edward García Jr., a member of the audience. "However, I do not like religious messages being crammed down my throat."

"I was housed at 'A' Yard for five years," said Victor Aguilera. "Then I spent two years on 'C' Yard. I never thought that I would end up at a Level II. I am blessed to have made it out and enjoy what Mule Creek is giving us."



Juan Arredondo, was unexpectedly transferred in September to Stockton. For many years, Arredondo was a mainstay on Facility E, working in the music program, assisting artist Cherie Hacker in the Arts In Corrections program, and most importantly, setting up yard shows and aiding other music artists in their performances. (O. Bridges / Mule Creek Post)

Creative Arts Programs

“The day you decide to do it is your lucky day.”
—Japanese Proverb

The Trail of Tears

Their cavalry came
Took me to jail
For many moons
They set no bail
They took the hills
And swept the plains
And now we sit
In iron chains

Oo! Hi-lee hay! Ohay! Oo! Hi-lee hay!
Tankishila I go to thee!

Jackson forced us on the Trail of
Tears
But we pushed in despite our fears
We took their scalps at Custer’s Stand
But they still pushed West
Across our land
They murdered our people
Then mocked our prayers
Our skin is red
So nobody cares
Their hearts are cold
I feel the vibe
And they stole this land
From our native tribe

Oo! Hi-lee hay! Oo! Hi-lee hay! Oo!
Hi-lee hay! Tankishila I go to thee!

So put their blankets back in the box
Don’t trust their gifts they have small-
pox
They forced us on a reservation
When our tribal lands became their
nation
There was nowhere else
For us to flee
When they killed women and children
At Wounded Knee
And at that same spot
Armored vehicles cross our fence
So we shot back in self-defense
They hide the truth
When our innocent die
Because your above the law
In the FBI
They made it clear
In the message they sent
When they convicted Brother Leonard
Though he was innocent
Their eyes are closed they cannot see
But the Creator watches over me
So when you tell our story
Tell it well
And tell their white government
To go to hell!

—William Green,
Pleasant Valley State Prison

Freestyle

Greeted with a haze of hellos, we walked
through crowds of clouds. An aroma, which lingered
longer that the Cranberries song, danced gentle
gyrations toward the ceiling.
...We watched it all in awe.
Casting shadows of doubt and laughing without
smiles, somehow it all made sense. New scents
arose to dance with the old aroma ... a sweet
yet bitter musk and in the background a toilet
flushed.
...We watched it all in awe.
Drowning in dreams and the infinite possibilities
or if we lift our eye lids and watch them fall
like hopes. Like a dog chasing a ghost
or God taking a 15 minute break from his job to take a smoke.
Provoked by the thought we reluctantly woke.
...We watched it all in awe.
The Morning mourning followed a stretch
in which I felt an empty space laying 2 my left.

—Omar Azeez, Mule Creek State Prison
Detail of American Fighter, © 2022 Nathan P. Blalock.
(H. Kim / Media Specialist)



The Curse

I curse you betrayer,
to be betrayed, as you have betrayed.

I curse you betrayer,
to forever know the price of your betrayal.

I curse you betrayer,
to the memory of what you’ve done, and what you’ve chosen.

I curse you betrayer,
not what you have affectionately called with my lips:
lover,
friend,
soulmate.

Nor what I screamed at you in the raging caverns of my mind;
oath-breaker,
faithless,
liar.

No betrayer, I curse you to be named your truest name.

That which you are
have always been,
will always be.
and will always be.

I name you betrayer,
I name you true love.

—By Shawn Brusacoram, Mule Creek State Prison



Tales from the Creek

Lance Corporal Manuel A. Campos:
A Tale of Service and Sacrifice

By Dale Hurd, Post Reporter

MULE CREEK RESIDENT Manuel “Manny” Campos served as chairman of the Facility D Military Veterans Program for six years. As an honorably discharged veteran of the Vietnam War, son of WWII veteran Frank R. (U.S. Army Air Forces) and brother of veteran Richard (U.S. Army), Campos came from a tradition of service. A U.S. Marine, Campos was wounded in action during his tour of duty in Vietnam. His story is best typified by his response when asked, “What did you do in the war?” Campos simply replied, “I didn’t do anything special; I did what everybody else did, my duty.”



Manuel A. Campos
(J. Davis / Mule Creek Post)

Born and raised in Southern California, Campos enlisted and went through boot camp at the Marine Corps Recruit Depot in San Diego. He shipped out for Vietnam in 1969 aboard a Continental Airlines flight to Da Nang. Arriving on March 18, he received a warm welcome from the Viet Cong who were actively mortaring the runway from nearby Marble Mountain. Everyone was rushed off the plane, which quickly became airborne again. Thus began Campos’ tour, where he moved up from private to lance corporal in less than two months.

He was assigned to a 13-man rifle squad integrated with a platoon of Vietnamese Popular Forces to protect villages and hamlets. After a bout of malaria, he spent two weeks with an artillery battery feeding shells to gun crews. He was briefly assigned to a unit protecting a strategic bridge on Highway One, then went on patrol with dogs in the mountains. He also cleared enemy tunnels with a flashlight and a .45-caliber pistol. When on sweeps of the countryside, Chinook helicopters resupplied the patrol with field rations. These Chinooks operated out of An Hoa Combat Base, 15 miles south of Da Nang. It was at An Hoa that Daniel Bullock, a member of Campos’ Fox Company, became the youngest U.S. service member killed in action during the Vietnam War at age 15.

Campos’ service record reflects that while crossing an open rice paddy, Fox Company came under heavy, accurate mortar fire. While attempting to flank the enemy, small arms and automatic weapons opened up on the company. Campos was walking point when he was struck in the leg by an AK-47 round. He crawled into a shell crater and was later evacuated by armored personnel carrier.

Many of Fox Company patrols went into “Dodge City,” an area five miles south of An Hoa, where frequent ambushes and firefights occurred. Major battles took place in the two-square-mile center of Dodge City, which was crisscrossed by small waterways running among heavily fortified bunkers and a maze of underground tunnels. After severe pummeling by the battleship USS *New Jersey* stationed 20 miles offshore and by land-based artillery barrages, Fox Company would move in to search the waterways, bunkers, and tunnel system.

The sound of helicopter rotors was always welcome to Campos, for it meant help was on the way. To this day, the thump of a distant helicopter triggers those same emotions born in Vietnam. Not reflected in the records are excursions into Laos along the Ho Chi Minh Trail. There, patrols swept the area for hostile activity while skirting giant bomb craters left behind by flights of B-52s.

Despite contracting malaria, falling out of a hovering helicopter head first into a ravine, and being shot by an AK-47, it was in line with the arbitrary nature of war that he tumbled down a flight of stairs and broke his arm. He was flown to the base hospital in Guam, which ended his tour of Vietnam. Having already earned the Rifle Sharpshooter Badge, in Vietnam Campos was presented the following citations: the Purple Heart, the Combat Action Ribbon, the Presidential Unit Citation, the Unit Commendation, and the National Defense Service Medal.

After the service, Campos went on to become a production manager at one of the largest PVC pipe manufacturers in the U.S. In his off hours, he formed many bands over the years, including Red Bone, Connection, and Wino Boogie. He also played on the road with bands such as War and Rolls Royce.

Now 90% disabled, Campos’ service-connected disability is from exposure to Agent Orange. He stated, “I waded through it in rice paddies; I walked through it in jungles; I bathed in it in rivers; I drank it from wells, and I know I slept in it at

night because I woke up covered in mud.” Campos added, “Everywhere I went in Vietnam it was there.”

Self-medication played a large part in creating Campos’ path that led to Mule Creek. Now, his work with vets at the Creek has focused him on a path to freedom. He is looking forward to paroling with his Social Security and Veterans benefits. When asked about this story, he said, “Yep, that’s what happened.”

Sources: DD 214 MC; Service Records; Associated Press

Postscriptum

THANK YOU FOR joining us for the November edition of the *Post*. This month, I want to share the suggestion of author Ayana Elizabeth Johnson: “Act as if you *love* the future.” She encourages us to make our decisions as if we’re going to have to live with them tomorrow and next month and the rest of our lives, and to think about our future selves. Make decisions as if you love the person who’s going to have to live with those decisions, whether small choices with consequences in the near term or bigger choices that could affect you for years to come. Because, let’s be honest: We haven’t always made the kind of choices that showed any concern for our future self, right?

This goes for the people around us, as well. When we think about the people who are special to us, do we always take the time to consider the effects of our actions on them? Just as our decisions affect our own future, they also affect the futures of our loved ones. Those we care about on the streets are also doing time with us, in their own way, and they are just as affected by our choices to earn a degree or get a write-up. Even those we live with in here are affected by our choices, our cellmates, coworkers, fellow students, and peers on the yard.

Can we resolve in the coming year to be more mindful of the choices we make, and how they will affect us and our loved ones?

-JC, Editor-in-Chief

THE BACK PAGE | What you need to know about

Sources: Wikipedia; World Book Encyclopedia (2017)

MILITARY RANKS

Military ranks have been in use in since before the founding of the United States to indicate a person’s standing in the armed forces and their authority. Among those with the same grade, the date of their appointment to the rank and the length of their service determine who ranks higher. For example, a colonel outranks another if they were made colonel just one day before the other; or, if both have been colonels since the exact same day, the one who has been in the armed forces longer outranks the other. *Rank* and *grade* do not mean the same thing: officers hold *rank*, and enlisted people hold *ratings* or *grades*.

The president holds the rank of **commander in chief** of the armed forces. A **commissioned officer** holds a commission granted by the president with the consent of the Senate. A **warrant officer** holds a warrant granted by the Secretary of the Army, Navy, or Air Force, as applicable, due to their special skill in a particular field. A **noncommissioned officer** is an enlisted person who holds a grade based on skill and time in service.

COMMISSIONED OFFICERS			
Grade	Insignia	Air Force, Army, Marine Corps, Space Force	Navy, Coast Guard
*		General of the Army, General of the Air Force	Fleet Admiral
O-10		General	Admiral 
O-9		Lieutenant General	Vice Admiral 
O-8		Major General	Rear Admiral (Upper Half) 
O-7		Brigadier General	Rear Admiral (Lower Half) 
O-6		Colonel	Captain 
O-5		Lieutenant Colonel	Commander 
O-4		Major	Lieutenant Commander 
O-3		Captain	Lieutenant 
O-2		First Lieutenant	Lieutenant Junior Grade 
O-1		Second Lieutenant	Ensign 

GENERALS: The Army and Air Force have a five-star general rank overseeing operations, though the rank is not often filled; the Marine Corps and Space Force are led by four-star generals. The first General of the Army was Ulysses S. Grant (1866); the first General of the Air Force was Henry H. Arnold (1949). In 1799, Congress established the honorary rank of General of the Armies of the United States, intended for George Washington; he was finally awarded the title in 1976. The only other holder of the rank was World War I hero John J. Pershing.

ADMIRALS: The Navy and Coast Guard have a four-star admiral overseeing operations. The navy was led by captains until the rank of rear admiral was created in 1862; the first to hold this rank was David G. Farragut, who eventually became the first vice admiral (1864) and admiral (1866). The rank of Fleet Admiral was created in 1944, and was held by William F. Halsey, Ernest J.

King, William D. Leahy, and Chester W. Nimitz in World War II. In 1899, Congress established the honorary rank of Admiral of the Navy, awarded to Spanish-American War hero George Dewey.

ENLISTED SERVICEMEMBERS												
Grade	Army		Marine Corps		Navy		Air Force		Coast Guard		Space Force	
*		Sergeant Major of the Army		Sergeant Major of the Marine Corps		Master Chief Petty Officer of the Navy		Chief Master Sergeant of the Air Force		Master Chief Petty Officer of the Coast Guard		Chief Master Sergeant of the Space Force
E-9		Command Sergeant Major		Sergeant Major		Fleet/Command Master Chief Petty Officer		Chief Master Sergeant		Fleet/Command Master Chief Petty Officer		Chief Master Sergeant
		Sergeant Major		Master Gunnery Sergeant		Master Chief Petty Officer				Master Chief Petty Officer		
E-8		First Sergeant		First Sergeant		Senior Chief Petty Officer		Senior Master Sergeant		Senior Chief Petty Officer		Senior Master Sergeant
		Master Sergeant		Master Sergeant						Senior Chief Petty Officer		
E-7		Sergeant First Class		Gunnery Sergeant		Chief Petty Officer		Master Sergeant		Chief Petty Officer		Master Sergeant
E-6		Staff Sergeant		Staff Sergeant		Petty Officer 1st Class		Technical Sergeant		Petty Officer 1st Class		Technical Sergeant
E-5		Sergeant		Sergeant		Petty Officer 2nd Class		Staff Sergeant		Petty Officer 2nd Class		Sergeant
E-4		Corporal		Corporal		Petty Officer 3rd Class		Senior Airman		Petty Officer 3rd Class		Specialist 4
		Specialist						Senior Airman		Petty Officer 3rd Class		Specialist 4
E-3		Private First Class		Lance Corporal		Seaman		Airman First Class		Seaman		Specialist 3
E-2		Private		Private First Class		Seaman Apprentice		Airman		Seaman Apprentice		Specialist 2
E-1	Private		Private		Seaman Recruit		Airman Basic		Seaman Recruit			Specialist 1