THE ECHO

Created by incarcerated people

NEWS FROM THE INSIDE

WINNER OF AMERICAN PENAL PRESS AWARD FOR BEST NEWSLETTER 2025

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Luther's Boots

Portland-based Band Luther's Boots Holds Rock Concert at EOCI, 14 Adults in Custody Attend

Written by Carston Quinn with contributions from Jamil Chavis



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

GYMNASIUM, EOCI — Guitars squealed and drums reverberated off the walls. Band members thanked the audience after an energetic set. But this wasn't a bar or a music venue. Concertgoers were not wearing band t-shirts. There were no drinks, and no lighters held high. This was the gymnasium at EOCI, and attendees were incarcerated people.

On the evening of Sept. 29, folk rock band Luther's Boots played for a handful of concertgoers. Finding a seat was not difficult, however, because what normally would have been a large event turned out to be an intimate show. When Luther's Boots came to EOCI in 2018,

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CLEAR CLINIC VISITS EOCI

Legal Workers Aid Incarcerated People with Reentry

Written by Carston Quinn

LAW LIBRARY, EOCI — On the morning of Sept. 10, a team of four legal workers from Portland-based CLEAR Clinic visited EOCI. They had made the long drive up I-84 on a mission: provide free legal services for incarcerated people nearing release. A one-time grant allowed the nonprofit organization to make the rare visit, but administrators hope they will become more common.

Hand-picked attendees met with lawyer J.J. Caufield and other volunteers one-on-one in the Law Library to discuss each person's specific needs.

"The services we provide here are focused on reentry," Caufield said.

Those services included expungement of criminal records, requests for waiving money owed in criminal cases, and a search for any evictions that could be cleared. Clinic facilitators had documents ready for each attendee based on their background and the services they required.

"We prepared some paperwork for people today, we looked into their background to see what we can do for them and we've taken care of what we can today," Caufield said.

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The Echo
Est. 2018

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The Echo Mission Statement

To serve the incarcerated community by providing monthly news and other important information, while highlighting the human experience in the carceral setting.

Direct questions and comments to EOCI Institution Work Programs (IWP). All views and opinions expressed are those of the contributing writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Corrections.

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AROUND EOCI

SUICIDE AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WALK CANCELED

Incarcerated People Donate to Cause

Written by Alex Dewhurst

EOCI — A suicide awareness and prevention charity walk at EOCI was scheduled for Sept. 25, but administrators canceled it due to the impending replacement of both recreation fields.

But despite the cancelation, the fundraiser remained. Incarcerated people could purchase cups, water bottles, folders and meat sticks, as well as donate. The money raised will go toward the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, according to Getting Out by Going In, the cognitive behavioral group that organized the fundraiser.

Some, however, feel administrators could have rescheduled the event rather than cancel it.

"You don't have to cancel the walk, you can just cancel the location or change it," said Shane Goins. "We have [the gym], we have the D2 courtroom, we have space to walk or even just sit and talk."

The Center for Disease Control reported suicide is the ninth leading cause of death in the United States. There are an estimated 1.6 million suicide attempts per year. Within the carceral setting, however, attempts occur at a higher rate.

According to a 2021 press release from the U.S. Department of Justice, in the last 20 years, "the United States has the highest number of prison suicides with 10,453, followed by Russia with 2,408."

With those numbers, Goins believes every dollar spent on suicide prevention counts.

"I know [our donations don't] seem like much, but to me it feels like a million dollars," said Goins, who participated in the fundraiser.

Goins said every time the prison puts on a suicide prevention walk, his family donates, as well. Suicide prevention means a lot to them, he said, and he was disappointed when he found out the 2026 walk was canceled. He and his family have been significantly impacted by suicide.

Three months after his father passed away, Goins lost his cousin Devon to suicide.

"We never knew he struggled with depression," he said.

Less than six months later, and while still processing grief, he received a call from his aunt about another cousin, Jesse. He had committed suicide, too.

"It hit me really hard because me and Jesse grew up together, and Devon was our little cousin," he said.

From the outside, Jesse had a happy marriage, good kids and a well-paying job. But depression can go unnoticed, Goins said, and that's why awareness walks are important, especially in prison. Self-isolation and segregation, both relatively common in prison, are contributing factors to suicide.

"Everybody goes through rough patches," said Goins. "Find somebody you feel like you can trust and somebody who's not going to judge you and talk to them."

Miguel Madden, who donated $10, said he was looking forward to walking in honor of his friend Chris. He said Chris committed suicide because of social stigmas and how people judged him — he was a gay Black man from Utah, and they had spent two years together in rehabilitation treatment.

"The way he talked to people, he didn't let anything bother him, but that's why it was so shocking," Madden said.

At EOCI, incarcerated people can access Behavioral Health Services, which is prison mental health services. Around 70% of incarcerated people at EOCI access BHS in some capacity, and the service is available 24/7.

For those outside prison, the AFSP national suicide prevention lifeline is 1-800-273-8255. Call, text 988, or text TALK to 741741. | ECHO

LEGAL AID CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Caufield took an interest in record expungements after law school, which eventually led him to join CLEAR Clinic. He has been with the organization for five years.

"I didn't like law school. I felt the legal system wasn't really designed to help people or set people up for success," said Caufield, who was dressed in casual jeans and a T-shirt. "Then I got connected with some folks who were doing some expungement clinics for free in basements. I thought, 'Oh, this is actually helping people and making a difference in people's lives.'"

He cautioned, however, that criminal record expungement is not guaranteed.

"The law is very specific as to what is permitted to be expunged. Things that you end up spending more time in prison for, you also end up not being able to expunge," Caufield said. "It's a little unfortunate."



Photo by Logan Gimbel/The Echo

Incarcerated person Jason Whitman works with a CLEAR Clinic volunteer on Sept. 10, 2026 to prepare for his release. The meeting was set up in the Law Library at EOCI.

By helping adults in custody with record expungements and court fine relief, CLEAR Clinic aims to reduce barriers people face when trying to find jobs and housing after prison.

According to a 2022 study by Prison Policy Initiative, formerly incarcerated people struggle to find regular work and earn less than their peers — many companies and housing facilities turn away people with felony records.

Jimmie Champion attended the event. He is scheduled to be released in less than five months.

"The restitution would have been a huge barrier for me when I got out, and it seemed like I was eligible for a lot of that being waived," he said. "I had a couple of evictions on my record as well that they said were eligible to be expunged."

Jason Whitman, another attendee, said the clinic came "out of left field." He praised the CLEAR Clinic staff and was impressed with their preparedness. Whitman is scheduled for release within six months.

"They were very professional," he said, holding up a sheet of paper from the meeting. "They had their homework done — I got an entire printout."

But even though most incarcerated people will eventually return to their communities, the September clinic was limited to just a handful. Lack of time and space prevented a larger event. Kelly Hodney, operations and policy analyst for the Oregon Department of Corrections, explained the criteria used to determine who was invited.

"The services are most beneficial to those preparing for release," she said. "We worked with Transition Coordinator Sue Robson to obtain names of people who were enrolled in or on wait lists for Road to Success classes."

Road to Success is a life-skills and transition course held at EOCI.

Lack of funding also limited the scope of the clinic. The September EOCI clinic was funded by a grant from the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission. Because CLEAR Clinic is located in Portland, trips out to rural institutions such as EOCI are costly and rare.

Hodney wants that to change. She helped to organize CLEAR Clinic's trip out to EOCI, calling it a "fantastic one-time opportunity," and she hopes the state can make the clinics a regular event.

"I'd love to get funding from the legislature to make this happen on a monthly basis in all of our institutions," she said.

CLEAR Clinic's executive director Leni Tupper urged people to reach out after release.

"Even if we can't meet with people on the inside, our services are free and available to all on the outside," Tupper said.

Thanks to those services, attendees like Whitman and Champion said they walked away with more hope for their future.

"The fact there's light at the end of the tunnel is a great thing," Whitman said. | ECHO

CONCERT CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

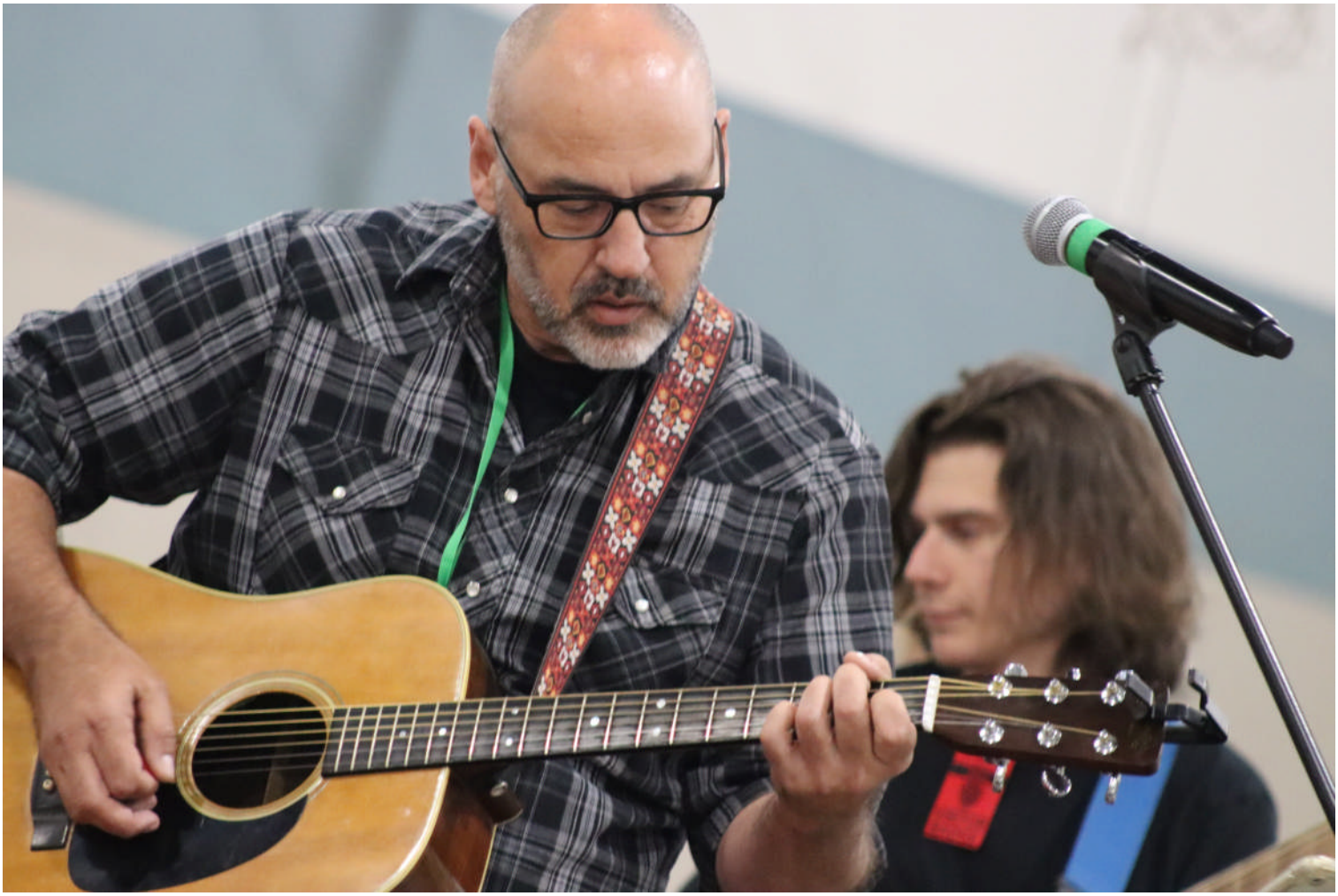


Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Danny Wilson, vocals and guitar for Luther's Boots, plays at the concert on Sept. 29, 2026. Wilson is also one of the founding members of PonyXpress, a traveling creative writing workshop that tours Oregon prisons.

about 200 people turned out. The final tally for the show was 14 people.

"I wish we could have advertised a bit better," said Danny Wilson, front man of Luther's Boots, before the show began.

The concert was organized by EOCI and PonyXpress, a writing workshop founded by Wilson and Tracy Schlapp. The initial advertisements did not clearly indicate that Luther's Boots was a band and the event was a live music concert. The advertisements also lacked the show's date.

An updated advertisement was posted to housing unit bulletin boards, yet the advertisement still lacked crucial information and many EOCI residents thought the event was a writing workshop. The result was a concert that took up a small fraction of the cavernous gym.

But as guitarist Zach Holden said, "There's plenty of people to play for." And the show went on.

The concert marked the start of the band's first eastern Oregon prison tour since the COVID-19 shutdown in 2020. The performance at EOCI was the first stop of the four-prison tour.

"It felt like this was the right time to try to do a concert," Schlapp said.

These Boots Were Made for Walking

Wilson formed Luther's Boots in 2017 with the goal of bringing live music to incarcerated people in Oregon. The band's first tour in 2018 recreated Johnny Cash's "At Folsom Prison" record to commemorate its 50th anniversary. Wilson, who was in a Cash cover band at the time, recounted how the concert came to be.

"I had mentioned to [Schlapp] that I wanted to play the whole record somewhere," Wilson said. "She said, 'Oh you should do that in a prison.' She saw a better place for it than a bar."

They called the concert Folsom 50. The tour started with visits to Columbia River Correctional Facility and Coffee Creek Correctional Facility, but the popularity soon led to a second tour at other prisons. As they toured the state and met with incarcerated people, the

“It was really cool to have people come in and actually play music. It gives us an opportunity to decompress. For me, live music was a big deal in my life outside of here, and you don’t realize how much you miss it.”

- Theo Thornton, concertgoer

project evolved.

Cash’s legacy runs deep in the band, including the band’s name. “Luther’s Boots” comes from a line on the “At Folsom Prison” record, where Cash said the prison water looked like it had run off of his guitarist Luther’s boots.

Since that first Folsom 50 tour in 2018, Luther’s Boots has released multiple albums of original music, including 2020’s “Darkened Road Ahead” and 2024’s “Everything’s Gonna Turn Out Fine.” Both albums can be found on Edovo, a free education application available on institution tablets.

Beyond Cash, Wilson said he finds inspiration in a variety of folk rock and Americana bands.

“We’re all kind of rock guys,” Wilson said, referring to the other members of the band: guitarist Holden, bassist Wyatt Unger and drummer Jared Bozza. “The first album was so Johnny Cash related, it had a little more of his kind of country feel. The last two records have been a little more rock, if you will.”

(Continued on next page...)







Photos by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Various photos of Luther’s Boots, who played a concert for about two hours on Sept. 29, 2026, in the gymnasium. They traveled from Portland and stopped at EOCI on their tour of Oregon prisons.

CONCERT

(...continued from previous page)



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Guitarist Zach Holden solos during one of the songs at the Sept. 29, 2026 concert.

Standing in Line for the Show Tonight

Back at EOCI, the audience bobbed their heads to the songs, applauding after each. One audience member, Theo Thornton, was grateful for the band and opportunity to hear live music.

"It was really cool to have people come in and actually play music," he said. "It gives us an opportunity to decompress. For me, live music was a big deal in my life outside of here, and you don't realize how much you miss it."

The band kicked off with a song called "Roots of a Tree," an upbeat original that got heads bobbing and feet tapping. They followed that up with a rendition of Cash's "Folsom City Blues." The remaining set was a mix of music, some familiar and some original.

For concertgoer Wayne Cummins, the emotions he felt throughout the set were powerful, he said.

"They played everything from songs that evoke deep heartfelt-ness to excitability and joy to angst," Cummins said.

Several songs were directly influenced by incarcerated people Wilson and Schlapp have worked with. One of the surprise songs of the night was a tribute to Jacob Harper, an EOCI resident who passed in early 2026. Wilson took some of Harper's writing from PonyXpress and turned it into the song "Once We Were Great."

> **"They played everything from songs that evoke deep heartfelt-ness to excitability and joy to angst."**
>
> - Wayne Cummins, concertgoer

"I'm not going to get choked up," Wilson said, choking on some words as he talked about Harper's influence in the writing workshop.

Justin Waldrip, a friend and bandmate



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

From left: Danny Wilson, vocals and guitar; Tracy Schlapp, inspirational support; Wyatt Unger, bass; Zach Holden, guitar; and Jared Bozza, drummer pose for a photo after the concert on Sept. 29, 2026.

of Harper's, said he appreciated the song and thought it was a tasteful tribute.

"It was good to hear, I think he would have liked it a lot," Waldrip said.

The band also played "Gone," which was written in part by Luis Rodriguez, a member of PonyXpress at EOCI. With permission, Wilson took a portion of Rodriguez's song "Miles Apart" and worked it into what would become "Gone."

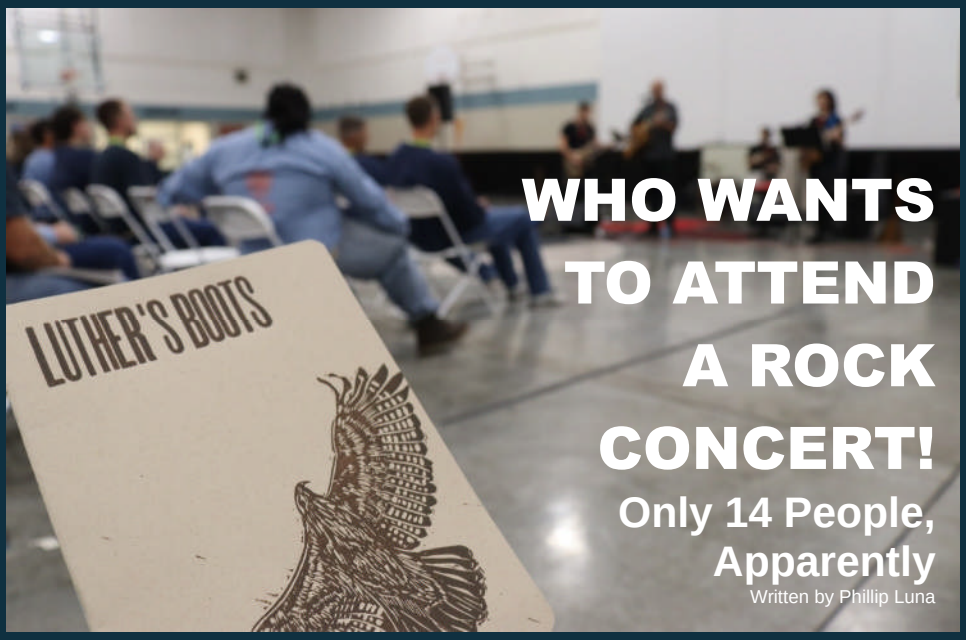
Other songs based on creations by Oregon's incarcerated people included "As Far as Far Can Go," a cover of a song written by Le'Var Howard of Oregon State Penitentiary, and "I Remember," which is adapted from recordings by another OSP resident.

Like so many aspects of Luther's Boots, Wilson's reasons for putting on the show circle back to Cash.

"It's the way that we show how we value the population. We take a lot of inspiration from why Cash did what Johnny Cash did. He was trying to bring a little bit of humanity and light inside the dark places."

- Danny Wilson,
Luther's Boots vocals and guitar

"It's the way that we show how we value the population," he said."We take a lot of inspiration from why Cash did what Johnny Cash did. He was trying to bring a little bit of humanity and light inside the dark places." | ECHO



WHO WANTS TO ATTEND A ROCK CONCERT!

Only 14 People, Apparently

Written by Phillip Luna

EDITORIAL

EDITORIAL — In September 2018, Portland-based band Luther's Boots played a concert at EOCI as part of their "Folsom 50" tour celebrating 50 years since Johnny Cash played in Folsom prison.

I had started with The Echo earlier that year, and the concert was an exciting, major event for our newsletter to cover. The multi-purpose building was packed with a few hundred people and they talked about the event and the music for weeks afterward.

This September, eight years later, the band returned to EOCI. Yet, only 14 people attended the concert.

Why So Few People Attended

The original flyer, which we published in the September Echo, didn't indicate the event was a concert. We requested additional information and, after The Echo published, another flyer was added to housing units.

However, that flyer didn't make it to some units and was still missing crucial information. EOCI residents were confused — many thought it was a writing workshop for PonyXpress.

The Echo hoped to create another flyer to provide clarity, but ultimately this did not happen. As a news publication, we take responsibility for the incomplete information. Clear information should have been provided in last month's Echo.

Communication in Prison

In the more than eight years that I've been working for The Echo, I have learned that communication is particularly challenging in the correctional setting. When you are producing news each month, that's quite a problem!

But here's the real rub. Tracy Schlapp and Danny Wilson, the folks who run PonyXpress and brought Luther's Boots to EOCI, are volunteers — some of the best volunteers we have.

Tracy and Danny are, frankly, too nice to say anything. Well, I'm not, so allow me — that was embarrassing and we need to do better by our volunteers.

What Can We Do?

I'll be the first to say that The Echo does a poor job of communicating with other departments. We live in our silo, cover our stories and talk to departments when we need them. And the Recreation Department lives in a silo, as does the Physical Plant, the chaplains, the counselors and the list goes on.

The disappointing part is that there are lots of folks doing meaningful work, but they rarely share that with the other silos and it often goes uncovered by The Echo. As a news publication, we have a platform to highlight that work and share it with the larger community. Imagine what could happen if we worked together? | ECHO

AROUND EOCI

ENRICHMENT CLUB FUNDRAISER RAISES $2,000

Giant, Bacon Burgers and Fruit and Yogurt Meal Helps Buy Backpacks and School Supplies

Written by Alex Dewhurst



Photo by Logan Gimbel/The Echo

Burgers on a grill outside of EOCI's multipurpose building on Sept. 10, 2026. The Enrichment Club grilled for most of the morning to feed around 400 fundraiser participants.

GYMNASIUM, EOCI — The juice from sizzling beef patties drizzled over the fire of a charcoal grill outside the gymnasium on Sept. 10.

To pair with the patties, smoked applewood bacon was seared on a flat-top. The scent of barbeque wafting through the compound reminded residents of their support for the Enrichment Club, the prison's fundraising group. The fundraiser went off with one hitch: the blackberries had molded.

More than 400 incarcerated people purchased barbequed burgers and a yogurt and fruit platter as part of a fundraiser for the club, which raised about $2,000. The money will buy backpacks and school supplies for children attending the 2027 family event, according to the club's president Ben Edwards.

Club member Branch Niehouse said fundraisers for children are the most rewarding. In 2025, the club bought 37 backpacks for children attending the family event. Each backpack was filled with school supplies.

"It was the most humbling experience I've had in prison — filling a backpack to hand out at the family picnic," Niehouse said as he handed out food. "That's what we do these fundraisers for."

The club hoped to donate backpacks in 2026, but state-wide budget cuts stymied their plans. Edwards said the club determines fundraisers for the whole year in December, and the backpack donations were cut because the family event was on the chopping block. Although the family event was saved, it was too late to save the backpack fundraiser.

At the food pickup, participants expressed gratitude for being able to contribute through their purchases.

"I have a son and I wasn't able to really be there for him through my incarceration, so being able to participate in something like this and help the kids out — it's a good feeling," said Willie Tanner after picking up his food. "It lifts your heart up."

Rodolfo Cervantes said it feels good to give back after taking so much.

"I think we live in a society that takes, takes, takes, so if we are giving back, that shows an improvement of who we are as a people," Cervantes said.

Food Frenzy

Food pickup started at around 2 p.m. and participants funneled in and out of the gym. Club members, however, had been preparing since the night before. In the main kitchen they grilled 1,200 pounds of applewood smoked bacon and deep-fried 450 pounds of tatertots.

Starting at 6 a.m. on the day of pickup, outside, club members grilled 850 half-pound Angus beef burgers. In the gym, they prepared clamshell containers of cheese, condiments and "buns the size of your head," said Edwards. Participants reacted positively to the heaping portions.

Shane McGann said he was excited for the Angus beef because the burgers served at EOCI typically are made with a portion of soy. Tyler Younk said he was looking forward to real bacon. But real meats coincided with a real big price tag — $33.

"If you look at it percentage-wise, that's about 50% of my [monthly] paycheck," said Jacob Stursa. "If you compare that to an average wage on the outside, I'm not going to pay $1,200 for a meal."

In addition to burgers, participants









Photos by Logan Gimbel/The Echo

The Enrichment Club fundraiser in September helped raise funds for a donation of backpacks and schools supplies to kids attending the family event in 2027. The event raised about $2,000 and allowed incarcerated people to purchase a meal they don't usually have in the correctional setting.

received a bottle of Minute Maid lemonade and Barq's root beer, as well as two cups of yogurt and around 20 ounces of fruit, which included grapes, strawberries, blueberries and raspberries.

Blackberries Gone Bad

One fruit missing from the meal, however, was blackberries.

On Sept. 9, the club announced the blackberries they ordered had molded. The announcement was broadcast on the institution's TV channel by a familiar voice. Recreation department staff, who run the channel, used artificial intelligence to replicate Samuel L. Jackson's voice.

As a consolation for the loss of blackberries, participants received larger portions of the other fruits. | **ECHO**



Photo by Logan Gimbel/The Echo

Incarcerated person Willie Tanner poses for a photo while he picks up his fundraiser meal on Sept. 10, 2026.

SCHOOLS USING DRONES TO DETER SHOOTINGS

Florida, Georgia and Texas Among States Using Drone Defense Systems

Written by Brian Daniel Bement

TEXAS — In 2026, public schools in three states installed remote-piloted drones to intercept active shooters, and one more state is planning the same. The drones will be used in K-12 schools, where 81 incidents of gun violence took place this year. Some parents, however, have concerns about using weaponized robotics around their children.

The schools contracted Mithril Defense, a Texas-based drone company, to install non-lethal security drones. The drones, called Campus Guardian Angel, are used in three counties in Florida and five schools in Georgia. This year, Colorado will be deploying drones in one charter school, and Texas is looking for ways to fund this defense technology in their school districts as well.

The drones sit in secure docking stations in school hallways. When staff trigger an alarm, the drones deploy and stream data to pilots in a Mithril control center in Texas. The goal is for pilots to engage an active shooter within 15 seconds, Justin Marston, CEO of Mithril Defense, told Australia Community Media.

"In a school shooting, most of the death happens in the first 120 seconds, so it's really about how quickly can you get there to engage the shooter," said Marston.

When engaging a threat, the pilot attacks with the drone's sirens, strobe lights and pepper spray and can ram a person at up to 60 miles per hour while providing a live feed to law enforcement.

The pilots are professional drone racers and esports competitors. The drone pilots train using real and simulated buildings to practice controlling drones at high speeds.

Each drone costs about $20,000 a year to operate in an 80,000-square-foot school. But, that is less than it would cost to pay a security officer. Some schools will use state funding, others private.

Even with security officers present, there have been 27 deaths and 46 injuries from gun violence in U.S. schools in 2026 so far, according to the K-12 School Database.

But, the technology is unproven in a school setting. While drones have been used in the military, they have never been deployed against active shooters. Some experts argue the money would be better spent elsewhere.

"It's a really impractical approach that's based on assumptions about how these events actually go down that does not match reality," said school safety consultant Michael Dorn in an interview with Education Weekly. "My first question is going to be, 'Have you done all of the other things that are far more likely to prevent deaths?'"

Some critics said children would be at greater risk of injury from the drone than an active shooter. The pilots could misidentify a threat and injure children, parent Kim Carroll said to ABC news.

Jennifer Depaoli, senior researcher at Learning Policy Institute, told CBS News, "It makes me really nervous when you hear that billions and billions of dollars are being spent on things that we just don't know that actually work."

Because of long response times by police, U.S. schools already spend around $4 billion annually on securing their facilities with metal detectors, surveillance cameras and other technology, said Urban Institute.

"I think every parent will want to feel that there is some type of capability at their child's school to confront and stop an active shooter threat versus having to wait the five to eight minutes for police to get there," Marston told CNN.

Marston envisions Campus Guardian Angel could one day be as commonplace in buildings as fire suppression systems. | ECHO

EDITORIAL STAFF OF 'STARS AND STRIPES' FIRED

Department of Defense Fires Leadership for U.S. Military News Outlet, Fired Employees Allege First Amendment Violations

Written by Carston Quinn

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Stars and Stripes, a U.S. military news outlet, has a long history of independent reporting. But that independence was challenged by recent changes from the Department of Defense, which led to the firing of a writer and senior editorial staff. Those staff members are suing the department, claiming censorship and First Amendment violations.

Publisher Max Lederer, editor-in-chief Erik Slavin and Middle East reporter Lara Korte were fired on Aug. 21 by the DOD. The firings come at the end of a year-long back-and-forth between the department and the paper. The three filed a lawsuit in Washington, D.C., against the DOD alleging, among other issues, retaliation for reporting on poor conditions aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, according to The Associated Press.

Slavin has been with Stars and Stripes for 21 years, Lederer for 25. Korte has been a writer for the paper since 2024.

First printed during the Civil War, the paper has been published consistently since World War II. Their mission statement is to represent "the free thought and free expression of a free people."

In January, Pentagon spokesperson Sean Parnell announced changes were coming. The Pentagon then removed a rule that allowed Stars and Stripes to operate "without news management or censorship," according to CBS News.

"We are bringing Stars & Stripes into the 21st century," Parnell wrote on social media. "We will modernize its operations … and adapt it to serve a new generation of service members."

In March, the Pentagon restricted the

paper from publishing comics or running news from services such as The Associated Press, Slavin told CBS News.

But the newspaper did not take the changes quietly. In response, Jaqueline Smith wrote a column that began with "[Defense Secretary] Pete Hegseth doesn't want you to see cartoons in this newspaper anymore." Part of her role at the paper was to ensure it remained an independent publication.

Smith was fired two weeks later. She filed a separate lawsuit challenging her firing, according to CBS News.

"By having a government agency say, 'You cannot print this,' it's the beginning of saying more — 'You cannot print that,' or 'You must print this,'" Smith said to CBS News. "It's editorial control."

In July, Korte and Slavin appeared on CBS Sunday Morning to discuss potential censorship issues at the paper following Parnell's statement, the Pentagon's restrictions and Smith's firing.

"We need to be able to provide independent news to service members," Slavin said during the interview.

The tipping point would come a month later. In August, Korte wrote a story reporting on poor conditions and sailors' mental health struggles aboard the Lincoln. Multiple news outlets reported similarly. The aircraft carrier had been deployed since November 2025, according to Al Jazeera, an international news organization.

"Everyone deserves the right to a free and independent press, especially our service members"

- Lara Korte, Middle East reporter

Following the story's release, the DOD instructed Lederer to fire Slavin and Korte. Instead, Lederer announced he would be retiring in September. Before he could retire, however, the DOD fired all three for not following orders, Al Jazeera reported.

"Defendants are attempting to fire Plaintiffs for speaking up as private citizens in support of the press's freedom to cover military operations," the lawsuit filed in response stated.

Korte posted on social media explaining the reason for the lawsuit.

"Everyone deserves the right to a free and independent press, especially our service members," Korte wrote.

The Pentagon declined to comment on the lawsuit, according to the AP.

This is not the first time the paper has come into conflict with military command. During World War II, General George Patton wanted the newspaper banned due to cartoons depicting U.S. troops as dirty and disheveled instead of crisp and clean. General Dwight Eisenhower stepped in to save the paper.

"These were the kind of cartoons … soldiers loved because it depicted how war was," said Catherine Giordano, who formerly managed the paper's history, to CBS News.

On Aug. 20, the Lincoln set sail for home, first stopping in Thailand on Sept. 2 after more than 200 days since its last stop at port. | **ECHO**

ICE AGENTS TO BE ISSUED BODY CAMERAS

Experts Are Skeptical Body Cameras Will Impact Use of Force

Written by Alex Dewhurst

TEXAS — For 35 years, Lorenzo Salgado Araujo had been working to support his family. He put his three sons through school and wanted to give them the American dream. But on the morning of July 7, a fatal encounter would end his efforts.

At around 6:50 a.m., Salgado was driving his brother and coworkers to a job site in Houston, Texas, when U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents pulled him over. During the stop, agents allege Salgado tried to run them over. They shot and killed him.

Salgado, however, was not ICE's target. They were conducting an operation on someone they thought resembled their target; they had received a tip from local law enforcement.

In addition, the incident was unrecorded, despite the nationwide rule to wear body cameras.

A Department of Homeland Security spokesperson said they were behind schedule in issuing cameras to ICE field offices due to multiple government shutdowns.

"Body cameras have been deployed to more than half the field offices with the remaining half to receive them in the next 60 days," the spokesperson for DHS said to ABC News.

Public criticism over ICE's lack of transparency and accountability

In April, Congress allocated $20 million to equip every agent with a body camera. Agents must record during field operations, arrests and enforcement activities, such as vehicle stops.

Although ICE agents may use deadly force when they believe someone poses an immediate threat, critics say unrecorded fatalities let bad actors off the hook. Without footage, when families of victims seek closure or justice, it is often ICE's word against a dead person's. But a body camera may make policing the

(Continued on next page…)

police a little easier.

Footage may even protect agents from false accusations and highlight the difficult situations they can be put in.

But experts say body cameras will have little effect on interactions between ICE and the public. The National Institute of Justice analyzed about 70 studies and predicted body cameras will have "no effect" on use of force, arrests and civilian complaints.

RAND, a nonprofit global policy think tank, had similar findings. They said ICE's body camera pilot program in 2021 made insignificant change in complaints or uses of force. In addition, a review of 30 studies by the Campbell Collaboration in 2020 found body cameras "do not have clear or consistent effects" on behavior.

Remaining Questions

ICE reported Salgado tried to weaponize his vehicle against its agents. However, according to State Watch, the other men in the van and a lawyer for Salgado's family opposed that account.

"My dad had no criminal history," Ronaldo, one of Lorenzo Salgado's three sons, told ABC News. "We still don't have any answers. All we have to go for is their statement that they released."

Lorenzo Salgado had been in the United States for nearly 35 years. ICE said he was undocumented, but ABC News reported he was in the process of getting a work permit.

"I just want all Americans to know that my dad was a hardworking man, a family man who wanted nothing more than to put food on the table and watch his sons achieve the American Dream," Ronaldo said.

Salgado's case was not an isolated incident. About a week after Salgado's death, ICE agents killed a man in Maine in a nearly identical case.

> **"… My dad was a hardworking man who wanted nothing more than to put food on the table and watch his sons achieve the American Dream."**
>
> - Ronaldo Salgado, son of Lorenzo Salgado who was killed by ICE agents

Johan Sebastian Guerrero was shot in his vehicle after he "attempted to flee the scene and, fearing for public safety, an officer discharged his weapon," according to DHS.

ICE agents were conducting "targeted surveillance on the last known address" of a migrant without legal status, but, like Salgado, Sebastian was not the target.

He was 26 and had a work visa and Social Security number. | ECHO

SOUTH AFRICA USES ART TO REDUCE RECIDIVISM

Incarcerated People Develop Mindfulness Skills and Earn Income

Written by Alex Dewhurst

SOUTH AFRICA — Much like in the United States, prisons in South Africa are using art programs to reduce recidivism, according to The Associated Press.

The country has one of the world's highest crime rates and its prisons are overcrowded and violent. The AP reported that recidivism rates in South Africa reach as high as 95%. However, nine art galleries in South Africa have been opened in the last three years through a program helping incarcerated people develop mindfulness skills and earn income.

"I get a peaceful and healed mindset when I do my art," incarcerated person Freddy Mongkoai told the AP. "It encourages me to be strong and present. I can focus, so it gives me peace of mind."

Mindfulness is the ability to stay present and engaged with thought, emotions and sensations. When the skill is used in tandem with art, it can be therapeutic.

"Art uses metaphor, symbolism and dynamic thought to represent the human experience in a way language cannot," Kelly Lynch, a certified mental health counselor told Healthline, a digital health and wellness website. "This is particularly important for people who feel out of touch with their emotions or sense of self."

Unathi Mahlati, an officer who works with the artists, told the AP the program is designed to be therapeutic and casual. Although art therapy is typically clinical and conducted by a doctor, Mahlati said the program is informal and focuses on developing mindfulness.

"A lot of them have experienced a lot of trauma before coming into the facilities, but there's not a lot of services for them to process and metabolize that trauma," Mahlati said. "We emphasize that it's not about skill. It's a creative expression to process trauma."

Mahlati added that prisons are "rigid" and "dogmatic," but the art program gives participants "a chance just to be."

Incarcerated people in the program can also sell their work to the public. Prices range from about 50 rand, or $3, to more than 2,000 rand, or $120.

The proceeds replenish art supplies and a portion goes to the incarcerated artists.

"For them to see that this can be a way of living," said Makgothi Thobakgale, national commissioner of the Department of Correctional Services. "It helps because now they are able to manage their own finances, albeit at a small scale." | ECHO

FACEBOOK AND INSTAGRAM OWNER, META, SUED

Meta Agrees to Settlement Despite Denying Allegations

Written by Logan Gimbel

CALIFORNIA — In the era of right versus left, several states have finally agreed on something — suing social media titan Meta.

A coalition of attorneys alleged Meta intentionally designed the apps Facebook and Instagram to be addictive to the nation's youth. The federal trial started Aug. 17 and was expected to last until October. Meta, however, agreed to settle during the second week – despite denying all allegations.

"We will continue fighting for the individual families whose children will never come home...

Meta agreed to add various safety features to its apps along with paying out $17 billion over the next 10 years. The money will be paid out to individual state governments to be used for mental health programs, crisis hotlines and educational programs. Individual users will not be receiving any funds.

"Meta has agreed to make massive transformations that will reduce the risk of harm from its platforms," said Rob Bonta, the California attorney general, in a press release.

The changes will be made within months, Bonta added.

Meta has begun designing various safety features that increase parental control. The changes include disabling the apps between midnight and 6 a.m., muting notifications during school hours, banning certain filters and the option to disable the personalized feed algorithm.

Most of these features can be turned off or on via parental controls. Preventing late night access and lessening distractions during school hours may allow the minors a break from screens and social media.

Research by MCHC Health Centers, a non-profit health care center, found that using technology before bed leads to less sleep, worse sleep quality and more fatigue the following day.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, children between the ages of 14 and 17 averaged about eight-and-a-half hours of screen time a day in 2021. Pew research found that in 2024, 46% of 13 to 17-year-olds were online "almost constantly."

Banning minors from using the cosmetic surgery filters may help prevent them from becoming obsessed with their physical appearance. Banning the "like" display may also help curb cyberbullying, which has seen a drastic increase over the years.

Disabling the personalized feed algorithm will help minors from being targeted by ad companies.

"[These changes] will empower parents to easily manage how their children access our platforms," said C.J. Mahoney, Meta's chief legal officer, in a statement.

The changes made to the apps will happen over the next few months. Many states are already making plans for their portion of the settlement.

... and for those still struggling with mental health crises caused by these platforms."

- Matthew Bergman, Attorney for Social Media Victims Law Center

According to Leitia James, New York's attorney general, money from the settlement will help states provide mental health services for young people. That money will also be used to educate the public about the potential dangers of social media.

Two countries, Australia and Brazil, already responded to those potential dangers. Australia banned social media for children while Brazil added restrictions for users under 16.

The United States has no restrictions on social media. However, Meta has restrictions aimed at preventing children under 13 from joining their apps, but many minors register using false birthdates. In 2000, legislators implemented the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, which prevents personal data collection on children 13 or younger.

During the trial, attorneys alleged Meta knowingly collected data on children under 13, violating federal legislation.

Arturo Béjar, a former Meta employee, said internal studies done by Meta showed that young users were exposed to harmful experiences at higher rates than what was reported publicly. Béjar said Meta was aware of the potential harm, but continued to focus on increasing user numbers.

"If you step away from the product, they are not going to make any money," said Béjar in an interview with MoneyWatch.

The $17 billion settlement may seem like a lot, but to Meta, it's less than 10% of its yearly revenue. In 2025, Meta reported making $205 billion.

Matthew Bergman, the founding attorney at the Social Media Victims Law Center, called the settlement against Meta a "watershed moment." Bergman said in a written statement, however, that the work is far from over.

"We will continue fighting for the individual families whose children will never come home and for those still struggling with mental health crises caused by these platforms," Bergman said. | ECHO

STARTING OVER

After Segregation, Many Struggle to Find Meaningful Work

Written by Brian Daniel Bement and Alex Dewhurst

EOCI — They may call it different names, but every prison has one — the hole, the bucket, the shoe, and in some Illinois prisons it's even called the tombs. In Oregon, it is simply disciplinary segregation, and it is where adults in custody go when they have violated the prison's rules.

For many, however, the real challenge begins when they exit segregation. Starting over is hard and means working the most menial prison jobs for little pay.

The Kitchen Work Environment

Levi Denison, an incarcerated person at EOCI, worked in the kitchen's scullery off and on for three years. He often spent time in segregation after getting in fights or using drugs and was constantly starting over.

Scullery, kitchen and orderly positions are considered Level 1 work assignments, which is Oregon DOC jargon for entry-level jobs.

For Denison, working in the scullery is a risk. It can be a hot environment — physically and emotionally. Temperatures in the scullery can soar over 100 degrees and tempers flare even hotter.

He is surrounded by people who get in trouble because Level 1 jobs are mostly for people released from segregation. The jobs do not pay well, he said. An entry level job earns around $35 to $40 a month, with a caveat.

People released from segregation for a violation must work for 30 days before they are eligible for pay. But, Denison said Level 1 jobs can be a gateway to better assignments.

Joshua Endersby, Assistant Food Services Manager, plays a role in hiring and promoting kitchen and scullery workers.

"If they work hard, have a good attitude, work well with others and are respectful to staff and AICs, they will move up faster," he said.

Tami Clark, another correctional staff member, worked in the Food Services Department for several years. She said Level 1 work assignments give people the opportunity to demonstrate their work ethic.

"A Level 1 job is going to tell me if a guy's a hard worker or not," she said. "That shows me you want to work hard and don't want to stay in that position the rest of your time."

Realities of Prison

One challenge for incarcerated workers is that prison work assignments lack the benefits of normal jobs. The assignments do not come with vacation days, sick leave or bereavement periods after the death of a family member.

"[Correctional staff] don't necessarily understand the mindset of someone who has to live within these walls 24/7," said Joseph Marsala, an incarcerated kitchen worker. "They don't really see all the things we have to go through in here."

Marsala said when he was incarcerated at Snake River Correctional Institution in Ontario, he had a family member pass away. He had to go to work as usual. In dealing with his grief, Marsala was underperforming at his job and his boss had taken notice.

"I came into the kitchen and had to hold everything together," he said. "My boss yelled at me in front of a bunch of people. He didn't realize I was in grief."

Marsala said the disconnection goes both ways.

"We don't understand what [correctional staff] are going through either," he said. "They could be having trouble with a relationship or struggling with bills."

Endersby said a major part of moving up from a Level 1 assignment is developing rapport with correctional staff. Marsala also said building good relationships was part of his success. He has worked his way out of a Level 1 assignment, and currently is a specialist for vegetarian meals in the kitchen. He makes around $80 per month, the most he has made during his 16 years of incarceration.

> **"The effort doesn't pay off tomorrow, or a week from now, or a month from now. It pays off five years from now. That's when you hit your goal."**
>
> - Joshua Cordova, Correctional Officer

Orderly Jobs

Entry-level kitchen jobs are one half of Level 1 assignments and orderly positions on housing units are the other half.

Joshua Cordova is a correctional officer. He regularly hires orderlies for janitorial work when working on a housing unit. He said many AICs struggle to see the big picture — a Level 1 job is a path to something better.

"Cleaning is cleaning," he said. "But it is also true in life that we all start out with entry level jobs."

There will be hard days, he said, but every day is a step towards another opportunity.

"I like to use the analogy of working out," he said. "You come in benching 135 lbs and you work up to 315 lbs. That didn't just happen — you had to put in the daily work to get there."

Cordova said when he hires people, the first thing does is make sure there is not a direct conflict with other workers. Next, he reviews applications and interviews candidates.

Cordova said he puts a lot of effort into hiring for entry level jobs because he wants to help people succeed. After the interview, he offers advice.

"The effort doesn't pay off tomorrow, or a week from now, or a month from now," Cordova said. "It pays off five years from now. That's when you hit your goal." | ECHO

THE EOCI CUP ADDS THROWING COMPETITION

The Cup Events Extended to December, G4 Continues to Lead

Written by Alex Dewhurst

RECREATION DEPARTMENT, EOCI — The 2026 EOCI Cup should have ended with a throwing event, but the cup competition has been extended to December.

Since the start of summer, adults in custody competed in a variety of games to win points for their housing unit. At the end of the competition, the first-place team will win a prize, according to the prison's recreation specialists.

On Sept. 7 and Sept. 19, about 100 participants threw neon-yellow softballs, flung colorful frisbees and tossed partially deflated footballs at three trashcans to earn points for their unit. The farthest target awarded the most points.

"People don't understand how hard this is," said AIC Shane Goins, who helped referee the competition on the east recreation field.

Some participants criticized the throwing event, however, because they felt its scoring system made the previous events pointless.

Participants threw from a pink spray-painted line in the grass toward targets 50, 65 and 80 feet away. Up to 50 points were awarded for hitting the farthest target and as few as 5 points for the closest. AIC Matthew Gilbert, who scored zero points, said he and other participants struggled to hit the targets.

Since many struggled, self-proclaimed nerds such as Nickolas Vega were able to keep up.

"I feel like a champion," said Vega, who earned 46 points. "Now people will say, 'that dude's not just good at Mario Kart.'"

Benjamin Guaydacan said he participated in the competition as a way to connect with people.

"It's about more than just the football," Guaydacan said. "It's a way to interact with people in my community."

Some participants have criticized the EOCI Cup as a foregone conclusion because G4 has such an extensive lead. Before the throwing competition, G4 had 1,327 points, 393 more points than the second-place unit, B1. The throwing competition widened the gap to 943 points — a 40% difference.

Now, after the throwing competition, G4 has 2,432 points in the cup, which is almost four times the cup-wide average of 621 points per unit. Sports commissioner Ben Edwards said the extension of the cup will give other units a chance to catch up, however.

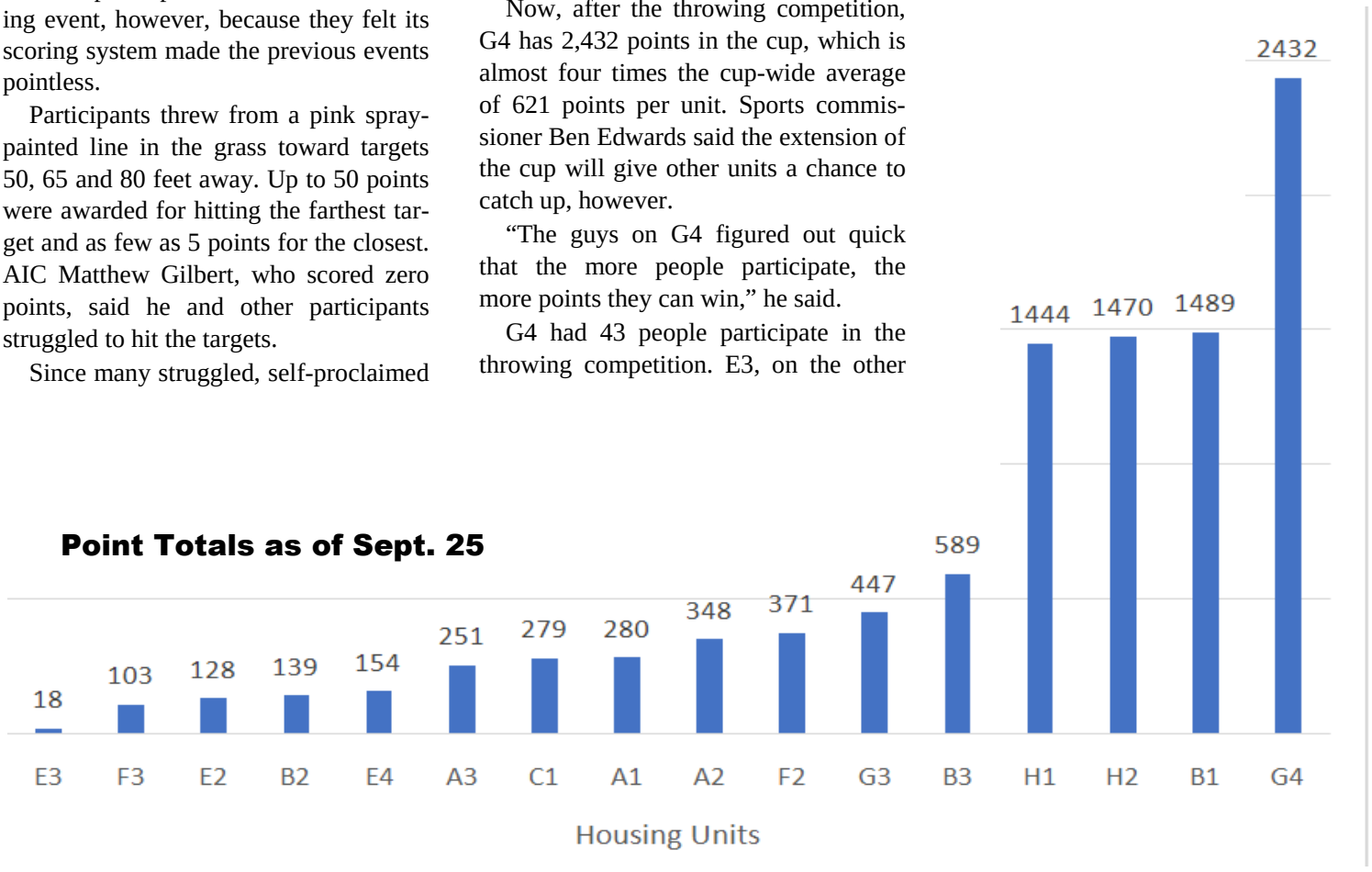
"The guys on G4 figured out quick that the more people participate, the more points they can win," he said.

G4 had 43 people participate in the throwing competition. E3, on the other hand, had no participants in the softball and frisbee portion of the competition and earned zero points.

Although G4 has a large first place lead, the race for second and third place is tight. Second, third and fourth place are within 45 points of each other. Although second and third place will not receive a prize, the competition for bragging rights continues.

According to Edwards, future games held in the gymnasium will include trivia, bingo and game nights. The first-place prize, a hot dog barbeque with chips and soda, remains the same.

The recreation department will post flyers on housing unit bulletin boards for upcoming games. The department also plays ads for the games on the institution's TV channel. | ECHO



AROUND EOCI

MOTIVATING AND INCENTIVIZING

Food Service Department Finds Success Motivating Employees with Food, Improves Hiring Pool

Written by Brian Daniel Bement





Photos by Kurtis Thompson/The Echo

Left: Acting Food Service Manager Sallie Roberts poses for a photo with kitchen worker Earl Woods during an appreciation meal handout on Oct. 1, 2026. Right: Jamiel Smith poses with his appreciation meal. The meal included chocolate chip cookies, cupcakes with mocha frosting and espresso beans, and key lime pie.

KITCHEN, EOCI — The Food Services Department is giving out appreciation meals to its workers in hopes of driving up employment and incentivizing good work ethic. And it's working.

"Most guys are working in the kitchen for the appreciation meal," said Jason Garmoe, a bakery worker and staunch supporter of the incentive program.

Garmoe said the meals caused workers to show up early for work and he has seen improvements to team morale.

A study by the Incentive Research Foundation said workplace incentive programs such as this can increase employee performance by 44%.

Anthony Betts, a kitchen worker, said when they had their first incentive meal, a pizza with high-quality ingredients, the smell of pizza drove people to apply for jobs in the kitchen.

"When people heard the kitchen was giving out real food for working, people's stomachs led them to seek employment," he said.

Betts said the pizzas had real cheese, pepperoni, ground sausage and Canadian bacon, and a crispy, brown crust.

When he received his appreciation meal, Betts grabbed two slices of pizza and pulled them apart, stretching the cheeses two feet in between. He told people of his cheese pulling experience and they signed up to work in the kitchen shortly afterward, hoping to get on the list for the next meal.

The meals happen three or four times per year, but workers have to meet strict criteria and must have worked for at least 90 days to be eligible.

Betts said the kitchen coordinators keep the appreciation meals a mystery which causes some workers to become excited with anticipation in the days before the meal is served.

"The incentive meal is a big secret and it drives people crazy," said Betts.

Staff do notify workers one day in advance, he said. But for months the workers play a guessing game.

Playing the Guessing Game

Shane McGann, a Prison Brews barista, guessed the first pizza appreciation meal correctly. McGann said his next guess, for the Oct. 1 meal, was some other variation of a pizza.

Garmoe said he wishes appreciation came in the form of pay raises.

"Paying people more money for their job is way over my head," said Assistant Food Service Manager Joshua Endersby. Kitchen PRAS awards are set by Salem. "This is the reason the kitchen brought back the appreciation meal. People love pizza and we purchase ingredients from Chef's Store, an outside of the prison store."

The Oct. 1 meal included six chocolate, chocolate chip cookies, two chocolate cupcakes with mocha frosting and espresso beans, and one slice of key lime pie.

Betts, who guessed the incentive meal was cookies and donuts, said he is a master at the food guessing games. He said cupcakes are kind of like donuts.

Overall the meal was a huge success.

"The kitchen blew our minds with the appreciation meal," said Garmoe. "This might be everyone's new favorite." | ECHO

WELDER MAKES MOCK MOTORCYCLE FROM SCRAP METAL

A Creative Arts Project by Welder Charlie Huffman

Written by Kurtis Thompson





Photos by Kurtis Thompson/The Echo

Above: The motorcycle made by Charlie Huffman sits in front of EOCI's electrical shop on Sept. 8, 2026. Right: Huffman poses with his creation.

PHYSICAL PLANT, EOCI — In EOCI's welding shop, one man's scrap is another's treasure. Welders made several creative projects this year, but one unusual creation stole the spotlight recently — a model motorcycle.

Lifelong welder Charlie Huffman styled the mock-motorcycle after an Easy Rider and 1977 Harley Davidson chopper. He used dozens of scrap pieces — some from broken tools, others leftover from official projects. Despite the creation's complexity, however, Huffman built the bike without a reference.

"I just did this out of my head," he said. "That's how I do these kinds of projects."

Huffman said he made seven or eight other pieces since starting at the welding shop in 2025. He made a turkey, dachshund, giraffe and others, but his most ambitious project was the motorcycle. It took about three weeks to complete.

The mock-motorcycle's wheels spin, the kickstand works, the handlebars turn and the engine block has real spark plugs. From a distance, security might ask if it were an unsecured vehicle. But, no, it's just art.

"I've been welding most my life," he said. "My dad was always doing something, so I started building stuff at a real young age."

"There's been so much tearing apart in the world … I'd rather just build stuff."

- Charlie Huffman

For Huffman, welding and motorcycles have always been connected.

Huffman began learning to weld at age 7 after he was gifted a Yamaha 125 Enduro motorcycle. He used the knowledge his dad taught him to modify the Yamaha and has welded ever since. When Huffman became an adult, he took his welding skills to the next level.

"I became a certified welder in 2007 for structural steel," he said. "Now in [EOCI], I'm just renewing my certifications."

He said structural steel welding is like working on the bones of a building. At most jobs, he was being paid about $65 an hour, he said.

"Right now, there's a huge demand for welders," Huffman said. "You'll do especially well if you get into a union."

According to Indeed, an employment information website, union welders in Salem earn between $23 to $31.50 per hour. Specialized trades, such as industrial and oil pipeline welders, however, often make significantly more.

But wages aside, Huffman said creative welding is a good way for people to express themselves.

"I like to build stuff and put things together," he said. "There's been so much tearing apart in the world and throughout my life. I'd rather just build stuff." | ECHO

ADVERTISEMENTS



Now Hiring: Barista
Interested in working in a coffee shop and learning barista skills? Send a communication form to Ms. Hungerford, Food Services Department. Applicants will be provided a two-week training course with a test to follow. Positions start at 12 PRAS points.

Requirements to Apply:
- Must be Incentive Level 3
- No escape and/or arson charges
- Able to take directions from AICs and staff

Preferred Qualifications:
- Friendly
- Detail Oriented
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Learn the following:
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Notes:
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- Classes are held 7 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Must have permission from supervisor to attend.

Send a communication form to IWP to sign up.

We need your brain power!

The writing team for the 1664 magazine is looking for submissions for the "From the Readers" section. Submissions must be non-fiction narratives, 500 to 1000 words and related to the theme of the magazine.

Next issue: Winter 2026
Theme: Life
Deadline to submit: Oct. 31, 2026

Contact the Journalism Department, IWP to learn more.



NOW HIRING TUTORS

IT'S TUTOR TIME!

PRAS starts at 14 points with an opportunity to increase to 16.

Typical work hours are Mon-Fri, 8:15-11 a.m. and 12:30-3 p.m.

The Education Department is hiring tutors

Tutor requirements are:

1. Have a high school diploma or GED
2. No misconduct reports or program fails within a year
3. A CASAS reading score of 242 or higher
4. A current CASAS math score

Be a Part of Change

Correctional educations programs lower recidivism rates of formerly incarcerated people by

43%

according to a 2013 study by the RAND, a nonprofit focused on public policies.

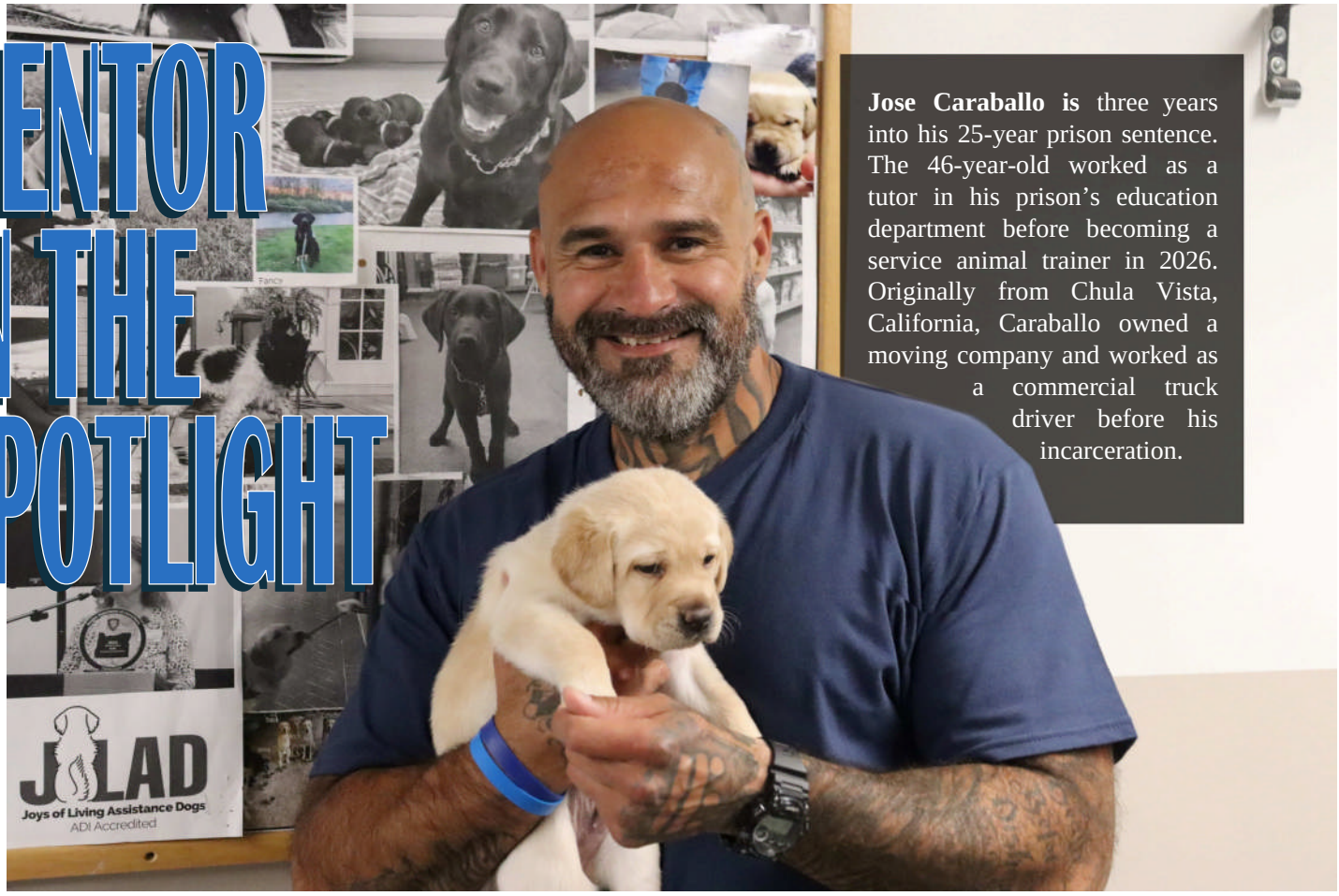
To apply:
Contact Mrs. Fitz in the Education Department

What to expect:

Tutors are usually hired in groups. Applicants take an exam similar to GED testing and must meet a scoring minimum to be eligible. An interview is conducted to determine general knowledge and interpersonal skills. Hired applicants complete a one week introductory training.

COMMUNITY VOICES

MENTOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT



Jose Caraballo is three years into his 25-year prison sentence. The 46-year-old worked as a tutor in his prison's education department before becoming a service animal trainer in 2026. Originally from Chula Vista, California, Caraballo owned a moving company and worked as a commercial truck driver before his incarceration.

Interview by Brian Daniel Bement

Photo by Logan Gimbel/The Echo

Before prison, I was the kind of person who cared about what I could gain. Very selfish. With family, I had the desire to be loved and be a family man, but I loved addiction.

But now, I am a person who wants to serve others. I want to give to others, be selfless. Everything I do now is genuine. I want to help others and gain nothing in return.

I am this new man because I realized I was a dirtbag. I am here for the murder of my wife. I killed the woman who relied on me. After that, I took a look at myself and changed.

My first step towards change was becoming a Christian. When I was in county jail facing murder, I fell down on my knees and prayed to God. I surrendered to Him and cried and felt peace. This was the first time in my life I found peace.

I think the most important things are family, friends, honesty, integrity and God. Friends can see things I cannot see. This is why family and friends are important — they keep me accountable. With honesty and integrity, you can be a better person, be a better worker, friend and husband. Honesty and integrity is about what you do when nobody's watching.

Even though someone is in prison, they can still change. People learned bad behavior, which means they can unlearn it. Being in prison doesn't mean people are bad. Once this is realized, people need to stop making bad choices like gangs and drugs. It starts by acknowledging you need help to make the change.

When I get involved in someone's life, I care and am passionate about helping them. Not a yes-man, I tell people what they need to hear, but I am careful on how I talk to them.

While I am in prison, I plan to get my doctorate degree. My parole board hearing is 2048. That is enough time to earn one.

If I could change prison living, I would have conjugal visits for lifers. Other than that, I have done time in the federal, California and Arizona prisons. This place is easy time. I am sure it is not the best place to be, but I know it is not the worst place to be.

I became a mentor because I have a lot of street knowledge to help people struggling with change. I can be a positive influence.

At EOCI, there is a lot of movement, recovery programs, dogs and education. There are a lot of tools here that can really make a difference in a person's life. There are staff who really want to help people change their lives.

If I weren't in prison, I would visit my son, go on a cruise ship to Mexico and get some good food. | ECHO

STEP THREE, TURNING OVER TO A HIGHER POWER

It Was Religion for Me, But It Doesn't Have to Be for You

Column by Brian Daniel Bement

EOCI — In 2024, I was in disciplinary segregation for the eighth time in 20 months. I was caught in a cycle of drug use and exhausted beyond hopelessness. So, I had snuck a razor blade into segregation with me and planned to end my life.

When I got in my empty cell, I broke down and prayed to God, who I wasn't sure existed. He answered my prayer by sending me a cellmate named Shawn Vincent. Vincent gave me a Bible, and it changed my life. I was able to let go of my guilt, and I flushed the razor blade down the toilet.

I've struggled with addiction for most of my life, and reading the Bible helped me come to terms with an abusive childhood. Then, Narcotics Anonymous helped me stay clean.

When I was released from segregation, I had a new perspective. I went back to NA meetings and worked the steps.

The third step, turning over your will to a higher power, had always been difficult for me. But now, I had God to put above my addiction.

Sometimes people struggle with the idea of a higher power, but in NA's third step, a higher power can be anything that is greater than addiction. For example, people can choose family, hope or service to others as their as spiritual higher power, or they can create their own.

Mickey Moore, incarcerated at EOCI since 2025, made family his higher power. He said family support helps him stay sober, and focusing on them gave him the drive to change. He started going to NA meetings and eventually became a sponsor in the institution.

Another resident, Mychael Lee, said his higher power is hope and the service to others.

When he turned his will and life over to helping others, Lee said he was no longer burdened by his past. His higher power healed him from childhood abuse, he said.

Theo Thornton took a different route to find his higher power.

Thornton read books on Buddhism, Christianity and other religions, searching for a higher power until he found his own version.

"My higher power is Gus, which stands for Great Universal Spirit," he said. "A higher power can be anything that brings change."

Just like the other men, when I turned my will over to my higher power, I let go of a lot of the guilt, regret and shame I was holding inside. It allowed me to grow spiritually and maintain sobriety. | ECHO

EXPRESSING INDIVIDUALITY WITH HAIRCUTS

Five Tips to Get the Best Haircut from a Barber

Contribution from Aleksei Wright

EOCI — Here are five steps to get the best haircut from your barber.

1. The best and probably most difficult option for adults in custody is to show a photo of the haircut you want to your barber. It may be difficult to get a photo because you'll have to find it in a publication or have someone mail it in to you. But a photo can cut through translation difficulties and show the barber exactly what you want from them.
2. The next best option is to know the lingo. If you know what to tell the barber, it can speed the process up. Some words to know are: a high fade, which is a haircut that goes all the way around the head and near the top; a mid fade, which is a haircut that goes around the head above the temple area; a low fade, which is a haircut that goes around the head near the top of the ear; and a taper, which is a small fade just in the temple areas and the nape of the neck.
3. If you don't have a photo or are unsure how to describe the desired haircut, find someone who does and ask them to describe it. This is also helpful for overcoming language barriers.
4. You can also try using your hands to show the barber the height and shape of the haircut you want. This is a pretty efficient way to get what you want.
5. If you just don't know what would work for you, just ask the barber. This is the simplest option and can be effective for anyone. Plus, if the barber has been cutting hair for a while, they've probably come across someone else with similar hair to yours and a haircut that was good on them may be good on you, too.

Barbering and hairstyles help support individuality. Don't be afraid to try something new and maybe find a new way to express yourself. | ECHO

Aleksei Wright said he earned his barber's certification while in the Oregon Youth Authority and has been cutting hair ever since. He gave five tips to get the best haircut from a barber.

GAMES, GAMES AND MORE GAMES

Adventure, Racing, Role Playing and Sports Games

Written by Alex Dewhurst, Carston Quinn, Kurtis Thompson and Logan Gimbel

IWP, EOCI — The Echo does not advertise for Fully Loaded Electronics, Oregon DOC's game supplier, or test any Nintendo Switch games. The information provided here is based online reviews and only meant to be informative. If you have a game you would like to see a review about, send a kyte and let us now. Purchase at your own risk.

Stray

It's a third-person story adventure game developed by BlueTwelve Studio. In Stray the player controls a ginger cat trying to escape a post-apocalyptic cybercity. The player must navigate the cat — along with its small, sentient flying drone companion — through a dense 3D environment full of aggressive robots, machines and a dangerous mutant bacterium called Zurks.

Gameplay includes realistic feline movement, playful cat behavior and environmental puzzles.

The stray cat can traverse vertical spaces, squeeze through tight corridors and leap across platforms. Even in a post-apocalyptic world, however, cats like to scratch doors and knock objects off shelves. Curiosity will help players solve interactive puzzles in the grungy, neon-lit city.

Stray was released in 2022 and is available from FLE for $58.

Spiritfarer

This game is a cozy 2D management game about dying, according to developer Thunder Lotus Games. Accompanied by her black cat, Daffodil, Stella is a ferry master for the deceased. She took over Charon's duties of delivering lost souls to the afterlife and she also says goodbye to friends she made along the way.

Gameplay features ship building, resource management and exploration.

Players can construct and arrange buildings on their ship like puzzle pieces. Spirits, which take on human-like animal forms, may have special requests for the ship. To upgrade the ship, players can farm, fish, mine, cook and craft materials found throughout the mystical sea. Islands found in the sea have unique resources, and some let the player unlock movement abilities, such as double-jumping and gliding.

Spiritfarer was released in 2020 and is available from FLE for $54.

Lego Worlds

This game invites players to flex their creative muscles, providing a 3D sandbox for exploring and building with Lego bricks. Worlds are randomly generated in a variety of different environments and made entirely of Lego bricks. Players can place premade constructions or build their own creations brick by brick using the available pieces.

The game's general setup will be familiar to Minecraft players, but with a Lego spin. The game includes Adventure and Sandbox modes; the Adventure mode gives the player quests to complete with items and bricks to unlock, while the Sandbox mode provides complete access to all tools and Lego pieces to allow complete building freedom.

Players can manipulate the Lego world around them by digging and building. The game also features a variety of animals and vehicles for the player to ride, including horses, cars and helicopters. In Adventure mode, players will encounter enemies like skeletons and zombies that can be fought with swords, bows and other weapons.

Lego Worlds is available from FLE for $58.









NBA 2K26

The newest release in the popular NBA 2K basketball series, 2K26 is known for realistic 3D graphics and in-depth player controls. While the full game boasts a variety of improvements over last year's edition, EOCI Switch owners should be aware that only Exhibition mode is available. All other modes and features require updates installed to an SD card, which is not possible for EOCI Switch owners.

Exhibition mode allows the player to select the team they want to play as and the team they want to play against. The player is then given a single regulation game to play against that CPU opponent. There are no persistent franchise modes, unlocks or customization. Dedicated basketball fans may find something to enjoy thanks to the updated rosters, but otherwise there's very little here on offer.

NBA 2K26 is available from FLE for $69.

WRC 10

A 3D racing game based on the 2021 World Rally Championship season, WRC 10 combines historical racing with modern rally simulation.

Developers included 19 historical races, from 1973 to 2021, a management system and lively editor to design a team's colors, 52 official teams and 20 cars from manufacturers such as Audi, Lancia, Alpine and more. Gamers can race across multiple world locations, including Estonia, Croatia, Belgium, Spain and others.

WRC 10 is available from FLE for $92.

Fantasian Neo Dimension

This 3D turn-based role-playing game made by Final Fantasy creators allows gamers to play as Leo, travelling across dimensions to recover his memories and save the world from a fatal disease called Mechteria.

During turn-based combat, players can curve physical and magical attacks like artillery to strike multiple targets. There is also a "Dimengeon" system, where players can banish random enemy encounters to a separate dimension, creating a fight-free experience for a period of time. Up to 50 enemies can be banished, then fought all at once later.

Fantasian has more than 150 real, physically built miniatures as pre-rendered 3D backdrops and full English and Japanese voice acting.

Fantasian Neo Dimension is available from FLE for $58.

Dragon Quest Monsters: The Dark Prince

The Dark Prince is a 3D role-playing game where players collect and battle more than 500 different monsters from the Dragon Quest franchise, along with new additions. Players can select two of their monsters to create a new one. This feature allows players to select which abilities and traits the new monster inherits.

As players travel across Nadiria, shifting weather and seasons will open new pathways and cause different monsters to appear. The game also features various ranked monster arenas for players to battle in.

Dragon Quest Monsters: The Dark Prince is available from FLE for $69.

Burnout Paradise Remastered

Burnout is a 3D open-world racing game where players are free to race in various locations around Paradise City. Players have several racing options available, from traditional races to cops-and-robbers style racing similar to Need for Speed.

The remastered edition includes eight additional content packs that add more than 130 different vehicles, including motorcycles, and the Big Surf Island map. This is the series' first entry on the Nintendo Switch and has been praised for its performance, maintaining 60 frames per second.

Burnout Paradise Remastered is available from FLE for $46.









See how many points you can score in one word!

Scrabble Board: October 2026

Scrabble Basic Rules

No proper nouns like names or places

No contractions like “it’s” or “that’s”

No abbreviations like “app” or “spec”

Board Scores

TW = Triple Word Score

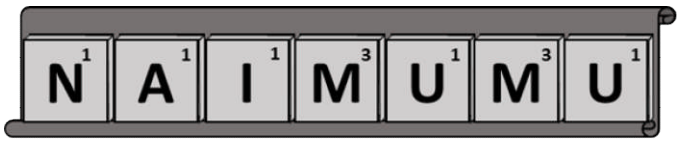
DW = Double Word Score

TL = Triple Letter Score

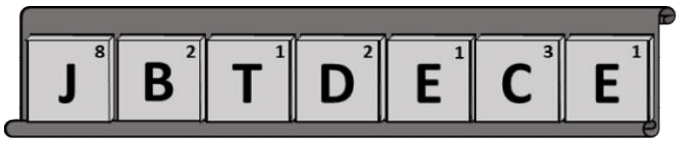
DL = Double Letter Score

TW			DL				TW				DL			TW
	DW				TL		I¹		TL				DW	
	L¹	I¹	G²	H⁴	T¹	E¹	N¹	DL				DW		
DL	A¹		DW				I¹				DW			DL
	S¹			DW			T¹							
O¹	T¹	T¹	E¹	R¹	TL		I¹		TL				TL	
		DL				DL	A¹	DL						
TW			DL				L¹							TW
		DL				DL		DL				DL		
	TL				TL				TL				TL	
				DW						DW				
DL			DW				DL				DW			DL
		DW				DL		DL				DW		
	DW				TL				TL				DW	
TW			DL				TW				DL			TW

PLAYER 1



PLAYER 2



Survival of the Fittest Sudoku

Puzzle One: Demanding

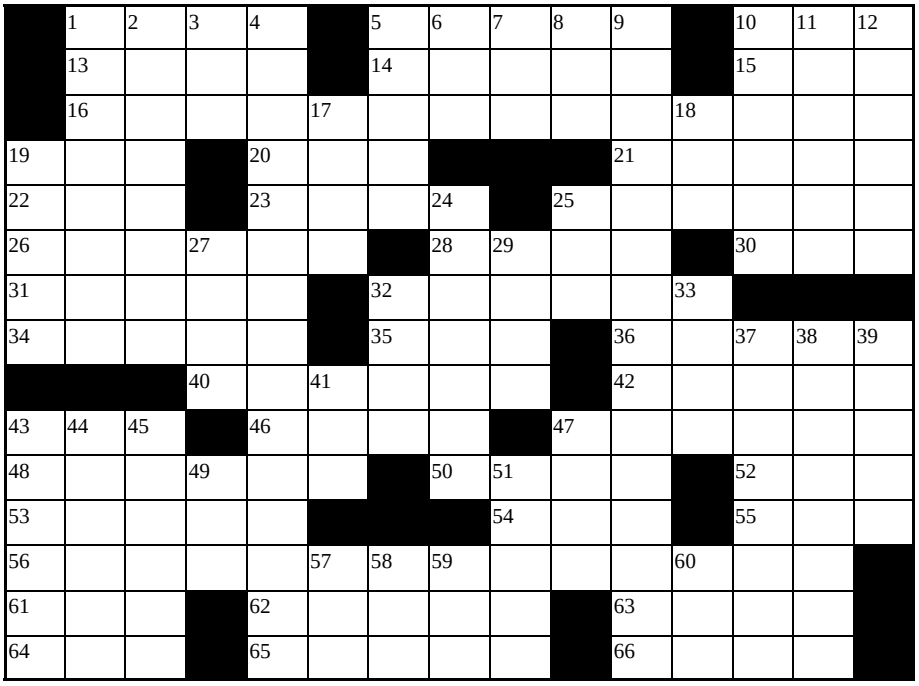
	5		2			9		
3				6	1			
8			3			7		
	1	5			6		4	
4							9	2
								3
9		1				6		
		4						5
					2			

Puzzle Two: Very Challenging

			8			3	7	
3				5				6
			7	8	6	9		
	6				9	8		7
						2		
	8			6			5	
				3	2			9
4	1							

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Theme: Have A Clue?



From USAtoday.com

Puzzle created by: George Shayler

ACROSS

1 Sprint
5 Entetes
10 Computer keyboard key
13 Carmela portrayer on HBO
14 Up to this point
15 XIII x IV
16 Answer: Aloe
19 Abroad broadcaster, briefly
20 Verizon, once
21 Church doctrine
22 Valiant's son
23 1947 Oscar winner Celeste
25 Super thin
26 Group with a lot of bills
28 Cultural introduction?
30 Buffalo-to-Chesapeake Bay dir.
31 City on the Nile
32 Sport with schussing
34 Words with "a kind" or "many"
35 Violin part
36 Beat the pants off
40 Coat ___ (family insignia)
42 Human resources person, at times
43 Good thing to give your child
46 "Dragowyck" author Seton
47 Go on a pension
48 Discord
50 Pull your weapon
52 Platoon members or "Platoon" extras
53 Full of chutzpah
54 Clean Air Act org.
55 Good serves, but not necessarily aces
56 Answer: Reno
61 My ___, Vietnam

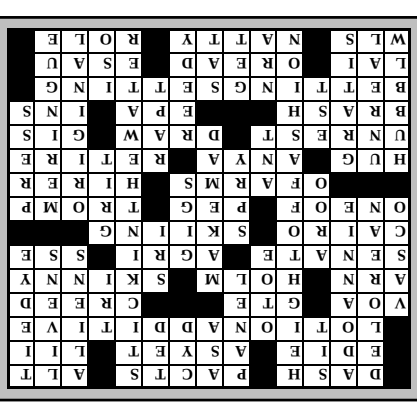
ACROSS CONT.

62 Greek nymph
63 Jacob's twin
64 They loop the Loop
65 Smartly dressed
66 Actor's desire

DOWN

1 1980s auto with gull-wing doors
2 "Oklahoma!" character
3 Pose for an artist
4 Answer: Hem
5 Discussion group
6 White-sheet connector
7 Dancer Charisse
8 Spread grass for drying
9 Answer: Oar
10 Border control concerns
11 Perks (up)
12 Hippie coloring method
17 Platte River Sioux
18 Prefix meaning "three"
19 Explorer Balboa
24 Answer: Incense
25 Lanka lead-in
27 Buck's finish
29 Bookings
32 Lively
33 "True ___" (John Wayne movie)
37 Not a fake
38 Pie topping
39 Fourth estate
41 Tiny symbol of industriousness
43 Telescope name
44 Artificial
45 Free of charge
47 Engrossed
49 Guinness suffix
51 Tall and thin
57 Gun owner's org.
58 Understand
59 Gathered dust
60 Prefix with metrics

Answer Key



Puzzle One

5	7	8	6	4	2	3	1	9
6	3	4	1	9	8	2	7	5
9	2	1	5	7	3	6	8	4
7	8	9	4	2	5	1	6	3
4	6	3	8	1	7	5	9	2
2	1	5	9	3	6	8	4	7
8	4	6	3	5	9	7	2	1
3	9	2	7	6	1	4	5	8
1	5	7	2	8	4	9	3	6

Puzzle Two

4	1	9	5	7	8	6	3	2
7	5	6	1	3	2	4	8	9
2	8	3	9	6	4	7	5	1
8	9	7	4	1	5	2	6	3
5	6	4	3	2	9	8	1	7
1	3	2	7	8	6	9	4	5
3	4	8	2	5	7	1	9	6
6	2	5	8	9	1	3	7	4
9	7	1	6	4	3	5	2	8

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rules Update

— Administrative Rules Program

PROPOSED RULES:

291-105 Prohibited Conduct and Processing Disciplinary Actions

Amends rule to update or add definitions (Money, certain types of sexual content); create new subsections in Contraband I and Staff Assault II; clarify Extortion and Distribution categories; specify when reports must justify delays; allow Hearings Officers to merge cases from a single event; update the administrative review process; and align page limit requirements with grievance and discrimination review procedures.

Comment Period: Comments must be received by the Rules Office before 12:00PM (noon) on 11/4/2026.

PERMANENT RULES:

291-065 Parole and Probation Officer Duties

Amends rule to remove the definition of an unused term; clarify role of the local state director; and make other minor housekeeping fixes.

Effective: 8/24/26

291-078 Community Case Management (Community Corrections)

Amends rule to implement the revised Public Safety Checklist (PSC-r); clarify the entities responsible for development of the Public Safety Checklist; update the minimum required supervision contacts based on assigned risk level; and make minor grammatical or punctuation edits.

Effective: 9/1/26

291-167 Jail Inspections

Amends rule to change of the term "inmate" to "adult in custody"; for consistency with other department rules; and make minor grammatical or punctuation edits.

Effective: 8/24/26

Letters of Incarceration

— Offender Information and Sentence Computation Unit

Effective October 1, 2026, the Offender Information and Sentence Computation (OISC) will assume responsibility for providing Letters of Incarceration (LOI) to adults in custody (AICs).

What Does This Mean for You?

LOI at Release: Starting November 1, 2026, an LOI will automatically be included in your release packet. You do not need to request one.

LOI Upon Request During Incarceration: Starting October 1, 2026, if you need an LOI and you are more than 30 days from your release date, you may request one through your Institution Records Office. Please note, only one copy will be provided.

What Information Appears on a LOI?

- AIC Name
- AIC SID Number
- DOC admission date(s)
- DOC release date(s)
- All dates held in physical DOC custody.

If you have questions about obtaining a LOI, please contact your Institution Records Office.

A partir del 1 de octubre de 2026, la Unidad de Información del Infractor y Cálculo de Sentencias (OISC) asumirá la responsabilidad de proporcionar las Cartas de Encarcelamiento (LOI) a los adultos bajo custodia (AIC).

¿Qué significa esto para usted?

LOI al momento de la liberación: A partir del 1 de noviembre de 2026, se incluirá automáticamente una LOI en su paquete de liberación. No es necesario que solicite una.

LOI durante el encarcelamiento, previa solicitud: A partir del 1 de octubre de 2026, si necesita una LOI y faltan más de 30 días para su fecha de liberación, puede solicitar una a través de la Oficina de Registros de su institución. Tenga en cuenta que solo se proporcionará una copia.

¿Qué información aparece en una LOI?

- Nombre del AIC
- Número SID del AIC
- Fecha(s) de ingreso al DOC
- Fecha(s) de liberación del DOC
- Todas las fechas en las que estuvo bajo custodia física del DOC

Si tiene preguntas sobre cómo obtener una LOI, comuníquese con la Oficina de Registros de su institución.

Holiday Cards Available Soon

— Commissary

Starting Thursday, Nov. 1, holiday cards will be available for purchase from commissary. The cards do not count against the spending limit. Holiday cards will be $3.03 for one or buy 10 and get two free for $30.30.

Flu and COVID Vaccine Clinics

— Health Services Department

It is that time again. Beginning in October, we'll be offering influenza and COVID vaccines to everyone. You will be approached by Health Services and asked if you would like a vaccine. We encourage you to say yes.

Both flu and COVID are highly contagious viruses that can lead to serious health issues. They spread through respiratory droplets and can be passed on even before symptoms appear. Vaccines work by making the body's immune system stronger and helping it to recognize and fight viruses. Vaccines reduce the risk of getting sick, and if you do get

sick the symptoms are likely to be much milder and shorter in duration. Getting vaccinated helps to not spread flu or COVID to others.

The side effects of vaccines are usually mild, such as tiredness or a sore arm that generally last a day or two. Receiving a yearly vaccine is important, as protection wanes and viruses change over the course of a year, and so newer vaccines are needed to fight them. Getting vaccinated does not give you the illness, the vaccines use inactivated virus components to train your immune system safely. You can receive both flu and COVID vaccines at the same visit, but they will be given in two separate injections. Getting vaccinated is the single most effective way to avoid becoming sick from flu and COVID viruses.

Sick Call Pilot Program

— April Stills, BSN, RN
Health Services Manager

Health Services implemented the new Sick Call Pilot on Sept 8. The change is intended to improve access to health care for non-emergent health care needs. The process moves from triaging sick call by kytes and scheduling for sick call on callouts to AICs being able to have a face-to-face encounter with a health care professional within 24 hours. AICs can sign up on their unit the night before for sick call 7 days a week. This process has already been successful in access to healthcare in less than 24 hours and gives AICs the option to decide the day that would work best for them when balancing other appointments, school, work, visits, etc. During the pilot input and monitoring are occurring, and adjustments are being made to continue to provide the best access to healthcare.

How Do I Get Health Care?

Use this guide to decide what to do.

EMERGENCY – TELL STAFF NOW

- Severe chest pain or trouble breathing
- Heavy bleeding
- Loss of consciousness, seizure, or severe confusion
- Serious injury
- Severe allergic reaction
- Thoughts of harming yourself or someone else

Do not wait for sick call or send a kyte.

SIGN UP FOR NURSING SICK CALL

- You have a new or worsening health problem
- You are sick or in pain and feel you need to be assessed by a nurse
- A health problem is not getting better
- You have symptoms that concern you but are not an emergency

Sign up the night before. Do not write your medical reason on the sign-up sheet.

SEND A KYTE

- Routine or nonurgent health care questions
- Medication questions or refill requests
- Requests for routine follow-up
- Other health care requests that do not need a nurse assessment right away

Kytes are reviewed by Health Services. If nursing determines you need a face-to-face assessment, you will be called.

Not sure what to do?

If you believe you need to be assessed by a nurse, sign up for nursing sick call.
If you believe it is an emergency, notify staff immediately.

PREA INFORMATION

Sexual abuse and harassment are never okay. Tell Someone. GET HELP.

Call the Inspector General's Hotline:

1. Pick up a handset

2. Press *999 to leave a message

All PREA Calls are confidential.

Send a letter to the Governor:

Governor's Office, State Capitol, Room 160, 900 Court St., Salem, OR 97301

The Oregon Department of Corrections has a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse and harassment. AICs' family can report on their behalf by contacting the Inspector General's public hotline at: (877) 678-4222.

El Abuso sexual y el acoso sexual nunca son aceptables. Avisele a alguien. CONSIGA AYUDA.

Llame al Inspector General:

1. Al numero de ayuda:

2. Levante el teléfono, marque *999.

Todas las llamadas a 'PREA' son gratis y confidenciales.

También puede reportar a la oficina del Gobernador por escrito.

Governor's Office, State Capitol,
Room 160,
900 Court St.,
Salem, OR 97301

Sus amigos o familiares pueden hacer un reporte llamando a la linea del Inspector General al 877-678-4222.

PREA Advocate:

You may write the PREA advocate at:
ODOC PREA Advocate
3601 State St.,
Salem, OR 97301

WHAT WE'RE READING



Photo by Eli Imadali/OPB

A PRISON IN THE FOREST TRAINS INCARCERATED PEOPLE TO FIGHT FIRE

Incarcerated People Among Thousands of Firefighters Battling Oregon's Aggressive Fire Season

Oregon Public Broadcasting | Written by April Ehrlich of OPB

OREGON, SOUTH FORK—On a misty spring day in Oregon's Tillamook State Forest, a group of incarcerated men wearing yellow collared shirts and hard hats gathered around an instructor warning them about the dangers of an over-pressurized firefighting hose.

If left for too long, he said, a hose could overheat and explode, leaving those nearby with third-degree burns.

Such were the risks that these men were willing to take to avoid sleeping in a prison cell.

"It's dangerous, but that's why we train, and we train hard," said Jason Russell, a 41-year-old from Salem incarcerated at the South Fork Forest Camp, a state prison.

In a few weeks, many of them would be on fire lines alongside thousands of other firefighters battling what would become a record-breaking fire season in Oregon.

More than 2 million acres have burned in Oregon so far this year, breaking the state's record for acres burned. Firefighters, including 218 incarcerated people, have helped prevent most of the flames from reaching residential towns so far.

But while most firefighters make $25 an hour on the fire line, Oregon's incarcerated firefighters earn $25 a day. During a 12-hour day, that amounts to about $2 an hour. They can also earn a monthly award based on their performance.

Inmates earn wildland firefighting certifications and gain experience, which can help with employment opportunities after their prison term ends.

Oregon is one of seven states that use prison labor to fight wildfires. Prison rights advocates have long argued that such programs can be exploitative. While firefighting usually pays more than other prison jobs, incarcerated firefighters make significantly less money than other firefighters, but they face the same safety risks.

Even so, firefighting is among the most sought-after jobs in prison. Incarcerated firefighters spend their summer days in forests and grasslands, far outside prison walls. They earn wildland firefighting certifications and experience,

giving them a leg up while looking for firefighting jobs after their release.

Firefighting can also give incarcerated people a sense of purpose and respect from the communities they save from fire. For some, it's a way to give back for their past crimes.

"You get real skills," Russell said. "It keeps you on track when you're incarcerated. It really gives you something to be hopeful for."

Russell is incarcerated for driving under the influence while on probation for assault charges. He also served a seven-year prison sentence in 2014 after he was convicted of criminally negligent homicide.

Russell said he plans to start looking for firefighting jobs soon after his release next year.

"I've made some poor choices," Russell said. "I'm just really trying to learn the skills to be able to get back into society and not make those choices anymore."

A prison in the woods

At a training at the South Fork Forest Camp prison before the height of fire season, students climbed up a steep, fern-covered hill as they practiced clearing brush and debris.

Toward the back of the line, a few trainees lost their footing and slid down the hill, giggling along the way.

"We need another sawyer!" one person yelled, echoed by a line of his colleagues.

"Lovejoy's on his way!" another person responded.

Flynn Lovejoy is a certified sawyer, meaning he can handle a chainsaw. Like Russell, he plans to look for firefighting jobs after he's released.

"I've seen firsthand the devastation these wildfires caused to our communities," he said. "Being able to take part in saving some of those communities — it's a good feeling."

At 24 years old, Lovejoy is among the youngest trainees at South Fork. He was convicted of criminally negligent homicide in 2021, after he pleaded guilty to killing a cyclist while driving intoxicated.

"I'm someone who took a lot from my community and the town I'm from, in Bend," Lovejoy said. "The last time I think I was showcased on the news, it was for crimes I committed. Being able to do this — it's cool being able to give back to the community."

Incarcerated people climb up a steep, fern-filled slope during a training exercise.

Incarcerated people come to South Fork after spending months or years in other state prisons. They can transfer to South Fork through a referral committee if they have a clean disciplinary record. The South Fork prison typically houses between 150 and 200 incarcerated people.

It's an unusual prison. Incarcerated people sleep in cabins instead of cells, and they're surrounded by the trees and wildlife of the Tillamook State Forest. There are no fences bordering the prison, just a river and some creeks.

"It says something about the trust that we instill and have for adults at South Fork," said Chad Powell, institutions program coordinator for the Oregon Department of Corrections. "Although they could walk across the bridge any moment, we haven't had a walk-away in literal years. It's a [telltale] sign of humanization we're instilling."

Job requirements while incarcerated

All incarcerated people in Oregon are legally required to participate in full-time work or training.

Outside of the fire season, South Fork prison jobs include kitchen prep, cleaning, campground maintenance and planting trees in the Tillamook forest.

Seven other state prisons similarly provide firefighting crews to the Oregon Department of Forestry, although they look more like typical prisons with concrete walls and razor wire. Prison jobs available at other state prisons can often be less fulfilling.

Incarcerated people might work in laundry, janitorial or kitchen services. They could also sew jeans, make office furniture or work in call centers managed by Oregon Corrections Enterprises, a state agency and not-for-profit private business that sells products made by in-

(continued on next page...)



Photo by Eli Imadali/OPB

Incarcerated people climb up a steep, fern-filled slope during a training exercise.

WHAT WE'RE READING





Top: An incarcerated firefighter wipes soot from his face.
Bottom: An incarcerated person asks a question during training.

Photos by Eli Imadali/OPB

carcerated people.

The prison environment and the other job options are partly what drives some incarcerated people to join prison fire crews.

"If you make anything miserable enough, people will choose to fight fire instead," said Adam Gregg, who had worked on a fire crew while incarcerated at South Fork.

Starting in 2016, Gregg spent three years at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution in Pendleton before he transferred to South Fork. He was incarcerated for a conviction that was later vacated.

Gregg was among hundreds of incarcerated firefighters who helped battle flames during Oregon's catastrophic wildfires over the 2020 Labor Day Weekend, when more than 5,000 homes and businesses burned.

Gregg's crew worked on the Echo Mountain Complex and helped defend neighborhoods in Otis on the northern coast. He remembered what it was like when people began returning to their homes as the flames petered out.

"People had signs, and they were cheering," he recalled. "It was like we were celebrities, standing in the road in our fire gear. It was one of the most profound, meaningful things I've ever done."

Still, Gregg feels conflicted about using prison labor to fight fires. While the job helps incarcerated people build life skills and find a sense of purpose, they aren't compensated much for putting their lives and safety on the line.

"If we were getting extra days off our sentence for doing this, that would be fair compensation," he said. "But that's not how it works."

Debating shorter sentences for incarcerated firefighters

Every state has its own laws regulating how incarcerated firefighters are compensated, whether through payment or sentence reduction.

In Oregon, incarcerated people aren't paid direct wages. Instead, they earn points for their performance. Those points are converted into monetary awards at the end of each month.

Some workers could earn up to $160 a month depending on their job assignment and performance, according to Powell, with the corrections department. Firefighters make an additional $25 a day when they're fighting fire.

"That's a huge chunk, and they can make a lot of money," Powell said.

California lawmakers recently enacted legislation that addresses criticisms about low pay for incarcerated firefighters by increasing their income to the federal minimum wage of $7.25 an hour when they're on a fire. For a 12-hour workday, that would amount to $87. That's on top of a daily base pay ranging between $5 and $10.

Incarcerated firefighters in California can also have their sentences reduced by

two days for each day they spend fighting fire.

Oregon doesn't offer sentence reductions to incarcerated firefighters. Oregon governors have clemency powers that enable them to reduce sentences or pardon crimes — something that defined former Gov. Kate Brown's time in office.

Brown commuted the sentences of 41 firefighters who helped battle the 2020 Labor Day wildfires. The decision became a flashpoint years later when law enforcement arrested one of the firefighters whose sentence Brown commuted.

Jesse Calhoun, 38, was released in 2021, about 11 months earlier than his original release date for a sentence for a low-level crime. He now faces charges for five murders. The first of the string of murders occurred six months after his original release date.

Calhoun's commutation brought scrutiny to Brown and incarcerated firefighters, but local legal experts said that criticism was not founded in facts. They include Aliza Kaplan, a law professor at Lewis & Clark in Portland, who argued that crimes he's accused of took place after the end of his original prison term.

"He did well in prison," Kaplan said. "He met all the criteria to be an incarcerated firefighter, which is pretty high."

According to state data published last year, incarcerated people who were released from prison early were far less likely to commit violent crimes than standard releases.

Seeking purpose

Incarcerated people train to "mop up," which involves scattering the smoldering areas and hot spots from the perimeter of a fire inwards to cool it down, building a containment line.

During his time at South Fork, Gregg also worked in the prison law library, helping others write letters to judges, email their attorneys or set up parenting plans so they can see their kids.

That work inspired him to pursue a legal career after his release. Gregg recently earned his degree at Lewis & Clark Law School and is working as a judicial clerk.

While Gregg's time at South Fork may have helped pave his path toward a career — and recovery from drug addiction — he says that isn't the case for most people moving through the prison system.

"A lot of people I met in prison are back in prison or dead or addicted to drugs still," he said. "Prison doesn't fix addiction. I know that for a fact."

Still, he says he wishes more people in prison had opportunities like those at South Fork, where they can learn new skills and find purpose.

"September will likely present more wildfire challenges, and we need every Oregonian to do their part to prevent new fires from starting," Gov. Tina Kotek said. | ECHO





Photos by Eli Imadali/OPB

Above: Incarcerated firefighters practice firefighting strategies during training. Bottom: an incarcerated firefighter creates a handline, clearing the area around the perimeter of a fire.

"THE PULITZER PRIZE BEHIND BARS"

Annual American Penal Press Contest Results

Written by Alex Dewhurst

UNITED STATES — EOCI's journalism department won five awards at the 2nd annual American Penal Press Awards contest on Sept. 18.

San Quentin Rehabilitation Center in California hosted the contest and EOCI attended virtually alongside other U.S. prisons. The contest's judges reviewed 250 entries from 24 newsrooms across 14 states. Kate McQueen, editorial director for Pollen Initiative and host for the awards, said the contest has been described as the "Pulitzer Prize behind bars."

Logan Gimbel, who does design and layout for The Echo, said, "It's cool to see other newsrooms are growing. Last year there were only nine states — now there are 14. We saw an additional 70 submissions."

EOCI tied Louisiana State Penitentiary's publication, The Angolite, for most awards this year. The Angolite, a bimonthly news magazine, was founded in 1953, and is considered one of the country's most significant prison publications.

"I'm thankful we have competition across the country," said Kurtis Thompson, associate editor for The Echo. "Shooting for first place inevitably leads to better reporting."

EOCI's newsroom is responsible for two publications: The Echo, a monthly newsletter, and 1664, a quarterly magazine. The Echo was founded in 2018, and 1664 began in 2024.

"It's really great to see there's so much support from the staff here and countrywide for this prison journalism movement" said Carston Quinn, The Echo's newest correspondent.

Awards O' Plenty

There were many individual awards for categories, such as best opinion, best short-form reporting and best sports and recreation reporting.

The highlight of the event, however, was the three pinnacle awards: best newsletter, best magazine and best newspaper in U.S. prisons. The Echo won second place for best newsletter and 1664 won third place for best magazine.

"We had a lot of technical issues this year, so we didn't place as high as we could have. For 1664, we had one issue we could send for consideration because we missed so many prints," said editor-in-chief Phillip Luna. "I'm really excited that Logan Gimbel, Brian Daniel Bement and Jamil Chavis won an award."

"Second Chance Career Fair," published in the September 2025 issue of The Echo and written by Gimbel, Bement and Chavis, won third place for best long-form reporting. Judges noted the collaborative piece was based on strong interview material presented in a robust structure. The award was a first for the writers.

"It was validating that the effort I've been putting in over the past year and a half was recognized," said Gimbel. "I obviously didn't expect to win, despite submitting, so that was a surprise to me as much as it was for everybody else."

Bement said he was proud of Gimbel and happy to be part of the process.

"It was his first big piece," Bement said. "He was overwhelmed and stressed at first, but I saw him buckle down and I saw the training he received by the team come into action, and he wrote a really good story."

Chavis said the chance to work with Gimbel and Bement meant more than receiving an award.

"Working with Gimbel made it easy because of his precision and relaxed personality," he said. "He doesn't seem to be rattled by anything."

In addition, Luna won second place in best visual journalism for "Family Time at EOCI," published in the July 2025 issue of The Echo.

One judge who reviewed Luna's photos said, "this is beyond powerful. I was getting goosebumps looking at the photographs."

EOCI's newsroom advisor, Berit Thorson, also won an award. She was recognized as advisor of the year, and the award marked the fourth she has received this year.

Thorson earned the Oregon DOC's Outstanding Volunteer award and Operations Division Volunteer of the Year and was recognized as EOCI's Volunteer of the Year in 2026.

"Her awards were a long time coming," said Thompson. "She has significantly contributed to our newsroom's knowledge and professionalism."

Thorson has advised EOCI's newsroom since August 2024. The judges said she stood out among advisors across the country because of how she supports the team's professional development.

"Thorson not only provides feedback from her own experience as a journalist, she organizes additional workshops with professional photographers, editors, publishers, as well as with faculty from University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communication," wrote the APPA judges.

At the ceremony's conclusion, the organizations responsible for the American Penal Press Contest discussed the formation of the National Prison Press Association. The NPPA will focus on creating a national infrastructure for incarcerated press to practice ethical journalism rooted in civic engagement.

Jesse Vasquez, Executive Director for Pollen Initiative, announced that Luna was selected to be on the steering committee for the NPPA, along with seven other prison journalists, department of corrections volunteers and administrators across the United States. | ECHO

AMERICAN PENAL PRESS CONTEST WINNERS

SHORTFORM REPORTING

1st place: "The Cost of a Lifeline" by Lindsey Smith and Michelle Walker of The Mabel Basset Balance (Oklahoma)

2nd place: "Have You Had Your Mammogram?" by Michelle Walker of The Mabel Bassett Balance (Oklahoma)

3rd place: "Second Chances" by Lawson Strickland of The Angolite (Louisiana)

LONGFORM REPORTING

1st place: "Nail in the Pell" by Michelle Walker of The Mabel Bassett Balance (Oklahoma)

2nd place: "Rodriguez Sentenced" by Amber Bray of Paper Trail (California)

3rd place: "Second Chance Career Fair" by Logan Gimbel with Brian Daniel Bement and Jamil Chavis of The Echo (Oregon)

SHORTFORM FEATURE

1st place: "Father's past does not deter resident's journey" by Jason Jackson of San Quentin News (California)

2nd place: "Sentenced Too Young Brings the Next Fight for Justice" by Tyler Bowman of North Carolina Prison News Today (North Carolina)

3rd place: "Rejoining the Winning Side: Elliot Singletary's Surrender Story" by O. Rick Bridges of the Mule Creek Post (California)

LONGFORM FEATURE

1st place: "Homelessness in Prison" by Nora Igova of Paper Trail (California)

2nd place: "Filling the Void" by Simon Quinn of The Angolite (Louisiana)

3rd place: "Broken Places" by Lawson Strickland of The Angolite (Louisiana)

OPINION

1st place: "Is Prison Food Down Right Criminal?" by Tim Crow of The Elephant in the Room

2nd place: "How California Can Train More Incarcerated Firefighters" by Amber Bray of Paper Trail (California)

3rd place: "Why Incarcerated Voices Matter" by D. Razor Babb of Mule Creek Post (California)

BEST SPORTS AND RECREATIONS REPORTING

1st place: "Great Day for a 5K" by Tabitha "Angelica" Mattison of The Mabel Bassett Balance (Oklahoma)

2nd place: "One Battle After Another" by Lawson Strickland of The Angolite (Louisiana)

3rd place: "Where's the Path? DAI Bans Pathfinder Tabletop Game" by Gerald McKoy of Mule Creek Post (California)

BEST VISUAL JOURNALISM

1st place: The Nash News, 20th Anniversary Edition (Vol 21. Issue 2) by Cris Gardner, Kalab Lackey, Michael Sutton, Dominique Perry and Jason Williford (North Carolina)

2nd place: "Family Time at EOCI" by Phillip Luna of The Echo (Oregon)

3rd place: "Undisputed" by Lawson Strickland of The Angolite (Louisiana)

ADVISOR OF THE YEAR

Berit Thorson of The Echo and 1664 (Oregon)

WOMAN JOURNALIST OF THE YEAR

Nora Igova of Paper Trail (California)

NEWSROOM LEADER OF THE YEAR

John L. Orr of Mule Creek Post (California)

BEST DEBUT PUBLICATION

1st place: Inside The Walls of Anson Correctional Institution (North Carolina)

2nd place: NC Prison News Today of Nash Correctional Institution (North Carolina)

3rd place: Paper Trail of Central California Women's Facility (California)

BEST NEWSLETTER

1st place: Mountain Review of Morgan County Correctional Complex (Tennessee)

2nd place: The Echo of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution (Oregon)

3rd place: The Razor Wire of California Institution for Women (California)

BEST MAGAZINE

1st place: The Nash News of Nash Correctional Institution (North Carolina)

2nd place: Atlantian Revival of Federal Correctional Institution (Georgia)

3rd place: 1664 of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution (Oregon)

BEST NEWSPAPER

1st place: San Quentin News of San Quentin Rehabilitation Center (California)

2nd place: The Mabel Bassett Balance of Mabel Basset Correctional Center (Oklahoma)

Meet the JOURNALISM DEPARTMENT

The team that makes The Echo and 1664



CARSTON QUINN
Correspondent

Carston Quinn started as a correspondent in June 2026.

Education
Bachelor's Degree in English from Portland Sate University in 2011

Background
Carston was born and raised in Portland, Oregon. Before he was incarcerated, he was an avid hiker and worked as a professional editor for more than a decade. He enjoys playing video games, reading and describes himself as a "surprisingly decent karaoke singer."

Quote
"Reflect on the positive and negative, without fixating on either."

His Coworkers Describe Him As
Having a sports dad vibe.



BRIAN DANIEL BEMENT
Correspondent

Brian Daniel Bement has been a correspondent since May 2025.

Awards and Accolades
(coauthor credit) APPA Award, 3rd Place for Longform Reporting 2026

Education
Advanced Paralegal Certification from Adams State University 2022
GOGI facilitator and member of GOGI leadership

Background
Bement was born and raised as a Native American in West Chicago, Illinois. He started doing stand up comedy at 11 years old and has performed at Improv Olympics and Second City Chicago.

Quote
"I'm a relentless person, which could be both a great and annoying quality."

His Coworkers Describe Him As
A loveable bulldog who will chase a story to no end.



JAMIL CHAVIS
Correspondent

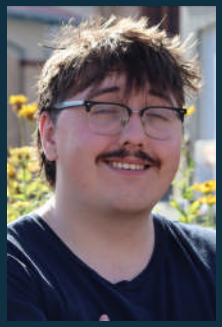
Jamil Chavis writes for The Echo and 1664. He has been a correspondent since January 2024.

Awards and Accolades
(coauthor credit) APPA Award, 3rd Place for Longform Reporting 2026

Background
Chavis is originally from the East Coast. In prison, he writes music and calls himself the best Scrabble player in any room. He currently works in the prison's garment factory for Oregon Corrections Enterprise and supports The Echo part time.

Quote
"The best ability is availability. Make yourself available for success."

His Coworkers Describe Him As
Outgoing, fun and always positive.



ALEX DEWHURST
Staff Writer

Alex Dewhurst started as correspondent in November 2025. He became a staff writer in August. Outside of prison, his work has been published with the Prison Journalism Project.

Education
Studied at Oregon State University.

Background
At 24 years old, Dewhurst is the youngest writer in the journalism department. He's a self-taught musician and an aspiring voice actor with some minor voice roles in internet projects. He is originally from the Portland area.

Quote
"Be the type of person you wish you had when you needed it the most."

His Coworkers Describe Him As
The little brother of the news team. He's a solitary caterpillar working on being a social butterfly.



LOGAN GIMBEL
Design and Layout

Logan Gimbel started as a correspondent in April 2025. He currently works in design and layout. Gimbel's writing has been published with the East Oregonian and the Washington State Beekeeper's Association bimonthly newsletter.

Awards and Accolades
APPA Award, 3rd Place for Longform Reporting 2026

Education
Certified Paralegal, Blackstone Technical Career Institute 2025
Apprentice Beekeeper, Washington State Beekeeper's Association 2026

Background
Gimbel served in the U.S. Air Force from 2012 to 2018 and was honorably discharged. He describes himself as the "king nerd" and his hobbies include playing Magic: The Gathering, reading science fictions and fantasy novels, and playing his Nintendo Switch. He is white and Native American and is originally from the Vancouver area.

Quote from Gimbel
"As my mom always told me, be like a duck; let things roll off your back."

His Coworkers Describe Him As
A nerd with quiet confidence and he's always quick to lighten the mood.



KURTIS THOMPSON
Associate Editor

Kurtis Thompson started with The Echo as a correspondent in August 2024. He moved up to staff writer and then associate editor.

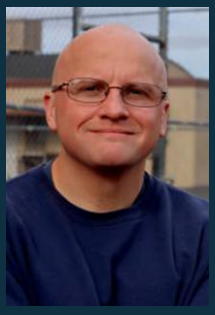
Awards and Accolades
APPA Award, 3rd Place for Best Feature Story 2025
Semifinalist in the National Systems-Impacted Writers' Contest 2025

Education
Associate Reporter for the Prison Journalism Project
ISO-certified in medical field and risk analysis
Studied at Rogue Community College

Background
Writing aside, he is a Christian, has two beautiful children and appreciates Japanese culture. His hobbies include playing video games, making mini cakes and office horticulture.

Quote from Gimbel
"Listen to your gut. Your subconscious is a powerful tool."

His Coworkers Describe Him As
The uncle you never had who is easy to talk to.



PHILLIP LUNA
Editor-in-chief

Phillip Luna is a writer whose work has been published with The Oregonian, The Marshall Project, Portland Mercury, Inside News and with the Prison Journalism Project, to name a few. He has been with EOCI's publications since 2018.

Awards and Accolades
APPA Award, 2nd Place for Photo Journalism 2026
Stillwater Award, 3rd Place for Prison Journalist of the Year 2026
Stillwater Award, 1st Place for Best Reported Essay 2026
APPA Award, 2nd Place for Best Op-Ed 2025
Stillwater Award, 2nd Place for Best Feature Writing 2025
Member of the PJP chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists
Selected to the steering committee for the National Prison Press Association 2026

Education
Senior Reporter for the Prison Journalism Project
Associate of the Arts, Treasure Valley Community College 2026
Certified Technical Educator in Environmental Literacy, U.S. Department of Labor 2024
Journeyman Beekeeper, Washington State Beekeeper's Association 2024

Background
Luna, 39, has been incarcerated since 2015. He is Hispanic and white descent and originally from the Oakland area.

His Coworkers Describe Him As
A crotchety task master.

VOLUNTEER

BERIT THORSON
Editorial advisor
2024-present

Berit Thorson is a journalist the editor of Go! Magazine with the East Oregonian. Thorson is a graduate of the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communications. She is an award-winning journalist and photo journalist, and most recently the recipient of APPA's Advisor of the Year. She serves as advisor to the journalism department.

ODOC STAFF SUPPORT

TAMI CLARK
Research and support
2025-present

Tami Clark is the office specialist in the work programs department at EOCI. She supervises the journalism department and assists with research, fact-checking and daily functions of the newsroom. Prior to working for Oregon DOC, Clark worked in the elementary school system for 24 years.

RAY PETERS
Supervising editor
2018-present

Ray Peters is the work program coordinator for EOCI. He supervises the journalism department and oversaw the creation of The Echo and 1664. Peters has worked for Oregon DOC for 30 years.

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Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution

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Pendleton, OR

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WHERE TO FIND THE ECHO AND 1664

ON EDOVO

The Echo and 1664 can be found on the Edovo application.

Readers can find the publications by typing “The Echo” or “1664” into the search bar.

ONLINE

Readers outside the correctional setting can find The Echo and 1664 at www.pollenpress.org or on the Oregon Department of Correction’s webpage under the newsletter directory. Check out www.pollenpress.org/the-echo/

Scanning the QR code will take readers to the ODOC directory of newsletters where The Echo and 1664 are available.

ON UNITS

Print copies of The Echo are available on housing units at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution. 1664 is available in limited quantities at select locations.

For EOCI, each housing unit has a magazine rack dedicated for The Echo and 1664.

ON TABLETS

The Echo and 1664 can be found in the free section on tablets under “Notices.”

The Echo is available at EOCI. 1664 is available at all Oregon prisons.

Pollen Initiative

The Pollen Initiative is dedicated to cultivating media centers inside prisons to shed light on the justice system. Through hands-on multimedia training, as well as leadership programs that facilitate personal growth and transferable skills, our team contributes to more balanced narratives about incarceration.

We support existing prison newsrooms, like the historic San Quentin News, and emerging newsrooms and media projects across the country.

HOW TO DONATE

Support The Echo and 1664 by making a donation to Pollen Initiative.

Donations can be made at www.polleninitiative.org.

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