

THE ECHO

The October Issue:
Graduations,
Family Events,
Donations,
Interviews
and Much More



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CLIMATE

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The cover photo is titled:
"JLAD - the only group of people that still own chambrays"

- photograph by Phillip Luna



Ryan Belt tosses a ball to his son in the West yard.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Family Event 2023

The Outdoor Family Picnic Returns

Written by Phillip Luna

T

he best part of the event was I felt free with my family. It's the best day I've had in 5 years," stated Robert Makinster, a participant of the September 30 Family Picnic.

More than

500 people were in attendance (AICs and families combined), likely a result of the absence of outdoor family events over the past few years; a welcome return with many AICs eager to participate. There were many logistical challenges with an event this size – getting all the visitors checked in and out, serving more than 500 people lunch, popcorn, sno-cones, cotton candy, and not to mention

“It’s the best day I’ve had in 5 years.”

the photography. When asked what could be improved for future events, AICs and their families almost unanimously gave the same feedback: shorter lines for everything, earlier or faster check in for family, and to have coffee available. But as Makinster stated, it *felt free*, and there is not much that can overshadow that feeling.

In the multi-purpose building dozens of tables were set up for family to sit and socialize. Kaliq Mansor and Ricardo Lopez-Sosa played DJ for the event, keeping the music lively throughout the building. The multi photographers took pictures with a variety of backdrops. Popcorn and beverages were served.

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Joseph Teters hugs his family at the start of the visit.

Unlike a typical visit, AICs and their families were able to walk freely between the multi-purpose building and the west yard. *“It’s great to see my family in a relaxed setting among other families. Sitting down for a hot meal, then getting up and taking a walk while talking,”* stated Steve Larson, a participant in the event.

In the west yard, AICs and their loved ones were treated to sno-cones and cotton candy. Some families played spirited games of cornhole, while others tossed a frisbee or a football with their child. *“Being able to throw the football to my son and running around just enjoying time together was great,”* said James Renfro who was visited by his mother Kay and son Logan. *“I’m very happy that my family was able to come and spend time with me, not just sitting at a table.”* And the Renfros did much more than just sit at a table. During the event, James could be seen losing a foot race to his son. *“We raced the straight away on the track and he beat me. On Friday we arm wrestled in the visiting room and he beat me at that too. But, I did win at cornhole.”*

Another feature exclusive to outdoor family events is that AICs are able to meet each other’s friends and families. As Patrick Gazeley-Romney stated, *“It is encouraging to look around and see the artificial prison facades melt away from people’s faces, seeing people enjoying time with their family, not worried about appearances or drama. We need more events like this. The family events leave us all feeling connected and valued.”* Traditionally, in the EOCI visiting room interacting with other people’s families is somewhat of a social faux pas and not necessarily encouraged

by staff. However, during the Family Picnic many AICs take the time to introduce their visitors to their friends, cellmates, or even staff members they know well. Staff are often seen walking around the event, talking with AICs and their visitors alike.

Food Service Manager Liza Emory’s team produced a lunch of barbeque burgers, macaroni salad, water-



James Renfro with his son, Logan and mother, Kay.

melon, and cookie sandwiches – all of which was served by staff members or kitchen workers. Ms. Sobotta, the Grievance Coordinator, and her team of volunteers churned out popcorn, sno-cones, and cotton candy.

“The most important part was the sheer joy expressed countless times by visitor’s and their loved ones as they entered multi and re-united, many for the first time in years.”

The event ended around 2:00 pm, allowing time for families to be checked out of visiting and for AICs to be processed out before the 4:30 pm count time. While the event was short, with some visitors not arriving in multi until after 11:00 am, it was certainly worthwhile according to AICs. The number of participants and families, coupled with the institution’s rules and processes, created necessary constraints in portions of the event. But in terms of quality time over length of time the event was an undeniable success. Participant Tim Taylor stated, *“The most important parts of the family event to me were the opportunity to see and touch family and friends for an extended period of time, the freedom to mix and mingle in a relaxed environment, and the sheer joy expressed countless times by visitors and their loved ones as they entered multi and re-united, many for the first time in years.”*

Photos continued on next page...



David Washington makes cotton candy for the event.



Clark Fisher and family pretend to warm their hands over a fire in front a scenic winter backdrop.



Families and AICs are served lunch by Ms. Truman and various EOCI Staff Members.



Tammy Heath talks with AICs and families

“ I am most grateful for spending fun, free feeling time with my wife and little girl. ”

- Robert Makinster, G3



Troy Kirk celebrated his birthday on September 30 with family.



Ms. Sobotta and her volunteer workers: Williams, Giles, Washington, Conley, Hoyle, and unknown AIC.

“ I really liked being outside with my family and eating some good food. Also, it was nice to see other AICs having a good time, laughing, smiling and so on. I would like to thank all of the COs that treated us all with respect, that was nice. ”

- Kyle Markee, F2



Counselors Joe Byrnes and Key talk with Paul Ropp and family.

Family



Gazeley-Romney with girlfriend and his cousins.



Anthony Mathis puts arm around family member.



I am thankful for the memories I have with my family as a human being, not just an AIC.
- Ernest Baker , G4



A family embraces at the start of the visit.



Mike Epperson plays a spirited game of cornhole with his parents and grandmother.

Picnic 2023



Christopher Perry and girlfriend share sno-cones.



James Paulk and son.



Counselor Zhu gets to know families.

“ The best part of the event was having normal interactions with loved ones... And being able to interact with other visitors and let the kids make friends. ”

- Corey Bock, B1



Zack Schrader visits with his family.



Tariq Knapper embraces family.



Cabrera enjoys time with old friends.



Jason Hogan and girlfriend (the always photo ready couple) with Antone Bernal and wife.



Staff members preparing to serve food for the event.

It was an amazing event. That ability for my visitors to see the places I walk, work out, and talk to other AICs that spend each day with me was good for my family. Thank you.

- Brandon Murdock James, B1

Staff made this day possible and the staff that were at the event treated us and our families like humans. The vibe was great... being able to interact with my son and wife. Feeling the closeness of just spending the day with them was the best part of the experience.

- Peter Cuddie, H1



The Echo



TALK OF THE TOWN

Backpacks and School Supplies For Kids

Unique Donation Offers Insight on Enrichment Club Perspective

Many Family Picnic participants received a welcome surprise this September as a result of an Enrichment Club donation. The club voted earlier in the summer to purchase and donate backpacks and school supplies for all kids attending the event. Fifty backpacks were acquired with more than a thousand school (and some non-school) items purchased to be placed inside - gel pens, glue sticks, composition notebooks, mechanical pencils, crayons, markers, ear buds, water bottles, toys, knick knacks and much more. Each backpack was filled according to age group.

Many of the supplies purchased were Color Swell brand. For every purchase made with Color Swell they will donate art supplies to children in need.

“What was done was from the heart and that’s as good as you can ask for.”

“My little girl thought it was amazing!” said Robert Makinster, whose daughter received a backpack this September. *“What was done was from the heart and that’s as good as you can ask for.”* For the Enrichment Club the most important part of this donation was the family connection it might create. Since the backpacks were distributed outside of visiting, the club was

unable to be part of the handout process. The items were handed out by staff members Mrs. Stewart, OSII; Mrs. Johnson, Law Library; and Andrea

Neistadt, Assistant Superintendent of Correctional Rehabilitation. However, the club gave some important instructions beforehand. *“I really wanted to make sure that every kid was told their backpack was from their loved one (father, uncle, brother, whomever they were visiting). This wasn’t from the Enrichment Club and it wasn’t from the DOC. It’s not about us, it’s about the family connection,”* stated the Enrichment Club President. *“We weren’t able to do it this year, but our goal is to allow AICs to fill the backpacks for their kids.”* When asked what their family thought about the items they received, participant Corey Bock echoed the same thought, *“The kids were very happy to receive their backpacks and supplies. They were especially happy to know it came from me so it would have been nice to be able to pick out some of the items for them myself, or even purchase them.”*

Overall the donation was a success achieving the intended purpose and with a lot of positive feedback coming from AICs. *“My kids loved them. They spent the car ride home digging through their backpacks.”* said Beau Wilcox, whose children attended the event.



“My 15 year old sister was shocked! She’s needed a new backpack for months now.”

Anthony Hill, who was visited by his mother and younger sister, stated, *“My 15 year old sister was shocked! She needed a new backpack for months now. Our families go through a lot along with us during our prison time, I think it’s an awesome thing to be able to give back to a good cause.”*

When asked what his nephews thought of their backpacks, Gonzalo Barbosa-Salgado stated, *“They loved it. The kids couldn’t stop talking about it that night when I called home.”*

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From left to right: Phillip Luna; Gerry Hight; Gonzalo Barbosa-Salgado; Seth Mathews; Romil Arcinas; Richard Fay; and Ben Edwards.

Barbosa also shared that the supplies came in a time of need for his family and really helped out.

While most donations involve raising funds and sending out a check, this one was more complex. After the club approved the donation and received the approval of administration, the Club Vice President Ben Edwards obtained a school supply list from his mother, who was a school teacher for 35 years. Working with that guideline, Club President Phillip Luna met with Club Staff Liaison S.Cunha to order the items, a very time consuming process. From there, Officer Wells was responsible for the intake and delivery of the items to IWP where they would be stored. OSII J. Stewart assisted with the inventory of items, while the club president created multiple item lists based on age group and arranged the structure of the backpack filling process by item type - a process which Cunha later referred to as “annoyingly organized.”

As an added bonus, one of the items provided in the backpacks sparked an idea with another AIC in a

different program. A member of *Dads4Life* is hoping to use the self-guided journal, *Tell Me Your Life Story, Dad* (pictured on page 10) as an activity in their program. This book offers children a chance to get to know their fathers, with a Q&A style journal. “When you do something kind you hope it resonates outward and leads to more good things,” stated Club President Luna. “It’s really cool to see an immediate ripple effect. I hope the Dads4life program decides to use that book and kudos to Cunha for finding it.”

For the Enrichment Club this event marks one of the few times they are able to make a tangible donation - something they can physically put together, with donation recipients they can see and talk with first hand. “Every AIC I’ve spoke with that had a loved one receive a backpack was very appreciative.” said club Vice-President Ben Edwards. “One AIC told me that from now on, he would participate in every club fundraiser because he could see first-hand how the club impacted others around them.

The Enrichment Club hopes to make more donations like this next year.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Joy of Living Assistance Dogs Program

Passing of the Leash Ceremony

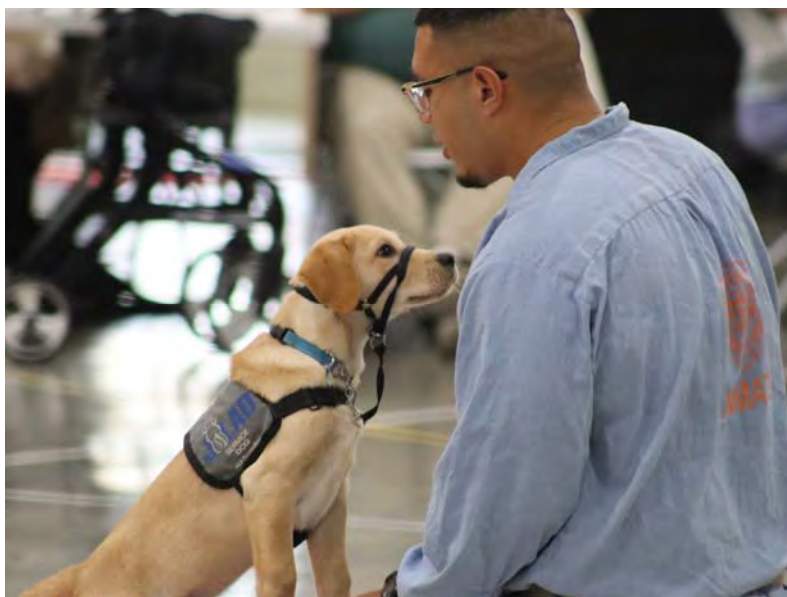
Written by Phillip Luna

Companionship. Obedience. Usefulness. Affection. Assistance dogs provide the perfect combination of qualities to bridge the gap between disability and ability. Persons with disabilities rely on these highly trained canines for specialized support and assistance and for many people life would be drastically different without the aid of their service dog. There are roughly 500,000 service dogs working in the U.S. – a large gap compared to the 61 million Americans living with disabilities, according to the CDC. Naturally, with so many disabled individuals in need of a service dog, the demand for these useful canines far outweighs the supply. The average wait time for a well-trained service canine is about three years.

This high demand makes the *Joy of Living Assistance Dogs* (JLAD) program - a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to raising and training assistance dogs - a highly valuable and important service. Founded in 2004 by Joy St. Peter, JLAD has helped hundreds of people to receive training and assistance dogs throughout the country. The program first arrived at EOCI in 2016 and is currently located on the H2 housing unit. Each dog is paired with a training team (a primary and a secondary handler) that will take him or her through the 18-month program to the point of graduation.

On October 2, 2023 the JLAD program held a graduation and *Passing of the Leash* ceremony, the fifth graduation since the program's implementation. The JLAD Trainers (some with friends and family), EOCI Staff and Administration, JLAD Program Founders, community socializers and assistants were in attendance at the event. JLAD Trainer Stranger Davis served as Master of the Ceremonies, introducing several speakers and leading the audience through the training demonstration put on by various AIC trainers.

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After introductions, two JLAD Trainers gave speeches. Brian Sierra-Jacobo, relatively new to the program, spoke about how it has impacted his core beliefs. *“It has helped me understand core values that were never taught to me as a child,”* Sierra-Jacobo stated. *“The feeling is unexplainable.”*

Jason Jarrell was the second JLAD Trainer to take the podium. Jarrell, a member of the program for nearly seven year now, has spent more than half his life behind bars. As he prepares for his release in a mere eight months, he reflected on a lifetime of drug addiction, gangs, and violence. *“This program helped me challenge my core beliefs. This change happened for me at the first graduation. At the time I was a secondary trainer. I had trained Trek [a service dog] for a gentleman with mobility issues. I introduced myself and explained that I was one of the people who had harness trained Trek for him. The most unexpected thing happened. He shook my hand with tears in his eyes and said, ‘thank you for your service.’ He said this to me, Ja-*

son Jarrell - drug addict and violent gang member. I will never be able to explain how I felt in that moment.” Since that time Jarrell has worked with more than 12 canines that have graduated the JLAD program.

“...He shook my hand and said, ‘thank you for your service.’ He said that to me, Jason Jarrell - drug addict and violent gang member. I will never be able to explain how I felt in that moment.”

The *Passing of the Leash* is a symbolic gesture where the trainer hands the service dog’s leash to their recipient. At the ceremony, eight service dogs graduated and were or will be delivered to their respective owners: Troop; Leroy; Hazel; Maverick; Jesse; Mable; Shelby; and Hero. These skilled, devoted companions will assist those in need, helping them find a new and profound sense of independence and an empowered way of living. While their journey of support and service is just beginning, they leave behind countless incarcerated men

whose lives have been changed for the better and an impact that will resonate at EOCI for years to come.

Several trainers achieved a remarkable milestone which was acknowledged during the ceremonies. Michael Bremont, Paul Reyes, Antone Bernal, Jesus



Villarreal, and Jose Correa received certificates for various lengths of service.

When asked about the program in a interview, Captain Frazier stated, *“Twenty-five years of doing this [working in the DOC], it’s one of the most beneficial programs that I’ve seen as far as change. It’s a benefit all the way around. It’s a benefit to the institution because it lowers the tensions, it’s a benefit to the recipients because they’re getting an animal that’s going to change their lives and it’s a benefit to the AICs because it actually changes their lives and gives them the opportunity to give back.”*

The JLAD program consists of primary handlers, secondary handlers, and alternate handlers - some of the primary handlers who demonstrate a high degree of acumen also serve as program facilitators. Program facilitators are responsible for teaching classes for primary, secondary, and alternate handlers; disseminating new program updates to the group and tutoring on an individual basis.



Each dog is paired with a training team (primary/secondary handlers) that will take him or her through the program to the point of graduation.

Trainers who graduate the program receive JLAD certificates for the level of training they have achieved. The skills learned in the JLAD program are very valuable for those who wish to enter the K9 field after release. Skills and knowledge gained in the program include obedience training, proper walking and play techniques, cue training, grooming, dietary knowledge, K9 first-aid, knowledge of K9 biology as well as whelping techniques.

To be eligible for work assignment as a dog trainer, AICs must have at least two years left on their sentence and must be willing to stay in the program for at least two years. A GED or High School diploma is required, as well as incentive

level 3 status. Dog trainers are housed on H-unit. Several other facilitates have opened JLAD programs, most recently OSCI.

TALK OF THE TOWN

Getting to Know Opportunity Oregon

Opportunity Oregon Co-Founder Nancy Pance Visits EOCI

Written by Phillip Luna

The first thing you need to know about Opportunity Oregon is that it is free. It doesn't cost anything to apply. It doesn't cost you anything to use their service. Opportunity Oregon is a 501(c)3 non-profit that helps the formerly incarcerated find a job upon release. They work in every county, throughout the State of Oregon. Essentially they are a work placement company, a recruitment agency that pairs someone just getting out of prison with Fair Chance Employers in the county of their release.

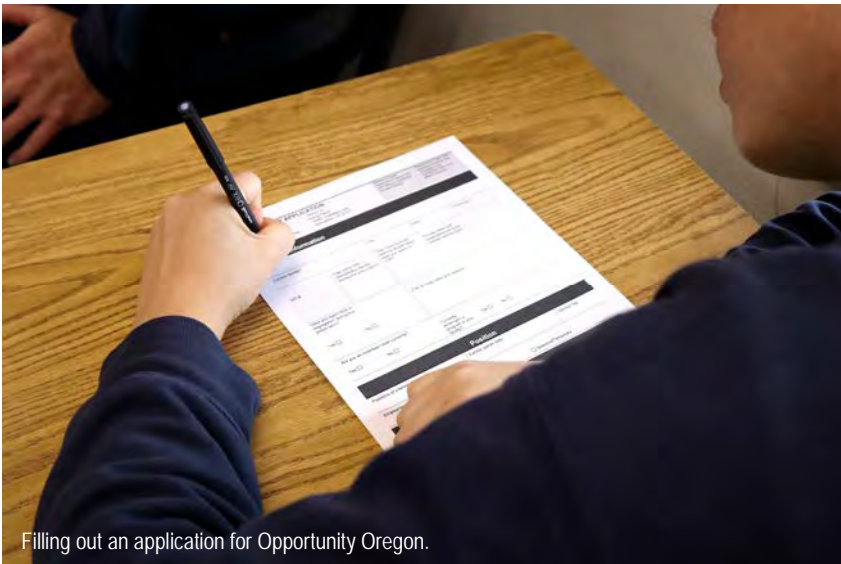
On Tuesday October 3, Opportunity Oregon Co-Founder Nancy Pance held an informational Q&A session with members of the AIC population. The purpose of this session was to generate awareness of what the organization provides, have AICs fill out an application for the program, and for Pance to tell her story.

Pance found herself incarcerated in 2007 after her part in a gas station robbery. She was an addict at the time - a heavy drug user for 14 years. She led a difficult life but found reform during her incarceration. *"My time in ODOC helped me form good work habits,"* Pance stated. *"I worked in Canteen Warehouse. I surrounded myself with the right people who didn't glorify their crimes."* She further recounted that her time incarcerated was initially challenging, and she was not always a model AIC. A program like Pathfinders helped change her mindset, *"I felt like a changed person coming out of the program."*

Pance had a track record of being hardworking and successful while incarcerated, but this didn't translate to an immediate job upon release. *"I was released and I was so excited to be free. I remember riding the bus with my CL-20s on,*



Opportunity Oregon Founder Pance talks with AICs.



Filling out an application for Opportunity Oregon.

thinking of all the things I was going to do.” She recalled. “For months I couldn’t find a job anywhere. No one would hire me.” She decided to go to school, considering that an education and enough time out of incarceration would increase her likelihood of employment. “I remember thinking, someday I’m going to help other people like me.”

Pance graduated college with a Business Degree in Specialized Accounting. Later with her brother, they franchised an *Anytime Fitness* in Lebanon, Oregon. As an educated, successful business owner (who just happened to be formerly incarcerated) Pance found herself in the perfect position to help people coming out of incarceration – people like herself all those years before. Pance and her brother co-founded Opportunity Oregon in 2021.

Two and a half years later and Pance’s non-profit organization has helped almost 300 former AICs obtain employment across the state. When asked what types of jobs are typically available, she stated, “It is more labor based. I am working on breaking through that barrier myself. If there is something else the AIC is looking for I will work hard to go get that. Primarily we have painting companies, welding, construction, mills, any type of production, a vet clinic, we have a lot.” She further added that they have been expanding their connections to peer support in treatment centers, sales, retail, optical support, barbers, and some administrative jobs. Pance reiterated that AICs may submit an application to Opportunity Oregon when they are within two years of their release date, but will only be accepted if they have demonstrated change. “There are two goals I have for Opportunity Oregon. I like to advocate for the ones who have really changed their behavior inside. Coming out of prison myself, and going through the process, having clear conduct while I was there, changing my habits while inside, it helped me get ready for out here. That’s where it starts really. Also, statistics show you are more apt to succeed. If you are walking a line inside you are going to walk the line out here. That is really what I



Pance helps AICs with their applications.

“It doesn’t matter what you did before prison, it matters what you do right now.”

am looking for. It doesn’t matter what you did before prison, it matters what you do right now.”

Again, all the work Opportunity Oregon does for the previously incarcerated is free. The employer pays 10% on top of the employee’s salary. Pance stated, “Most employers will get the fee back with the *Work Opportunity Tax Credit*.” Businesses that employ a formerly incarcerated person can receive a tax credit of \$2,400. As a non-profit, Opportunity Oregon is also eligible for grants and other funding, which allows them to remain free of charge.

Pance says her motivation is to, “...advocate for those with clear conduct. I am going to fight out here for you. If you are working hard and staying out of trouble I want to advocate for you and get you employment out here. And B, I want to advocate for changed behavior inside. I want this to be an opportunity for people to change their behavior.”

To apply for Opportunity Oregon you must send an application through the mail. Applications can be obtained by sending an AIC communication form to Peters, IWP Coordinator.



TALK OF THE TOWN

A Slow Season Results in Small Returns

Students Find Education Valuable Despite Apiary Challenges

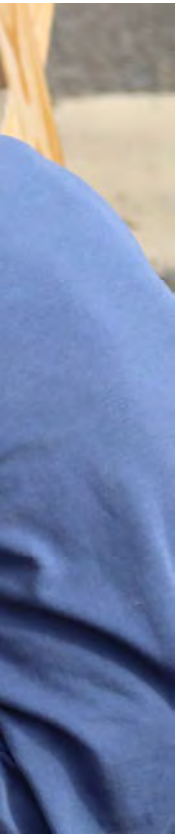
Written by Phillip Luna

The EOCI Beekeeping Program conducted their first and only honey extraction of the 2023 season, producing just four gallons of honey – a woeful result compared to last year’s 24 gallon harvest. Students of the program recently completed their Apprenticeship assessment and the honey extraction and bottling was a welcome reward to a year-long effort. The program participants developed the skills it takes to become proficient hobbyist beekeepers, despite the limitations of a down season. Not only does this new skill give them something to do in their free time after release, but it gives them an invaluable resource through which they can engage with their communities.

Charles Carnes, a recent graduate of the program said, *“The best part of the experience was becoming comfortable around the bees. I’ve always like being around insects but opening a hive or catching a*

swarm with thousands of individuals was somewhat intimidating. I helped catch a swarm between H-building and the bee yard, which was one of the greatest experiences I’ve had in prison.” For many beekeepers, swarm season (typically early to mid spring) is the most chaotic time of year. EOCI was no exception with a total of eight swarms this year from their colonies. Swarming is the natural process of reproduction for a bee colony. When the colony becomes too large, another Queen bee is produced and a portion of the hive splits off forming a new colony in a different location.

After the swarm season, activity slowed while class room time increased. *“Working with facilitators that know what they are doing made it so much easier to take in the knowledge,”* said graduate Joe Tuttle. *“I hope to one day facilitate classes, or better yet, get out of here and start my own apiary.”* This years beekeeping classes were facilitated by Apprentice Beekeepers Brett Lloyd and Phillip Luna with the



support of Journeyman Beekeepers Scott Steffler and Patrick Gazeley-Romney. Earning the Apprenticeship certification requires one year of beekeeping work, while the Journeyman certification is a three year commitment. Both Lloyd and Luna are currently working on their Journeyman certification.

Apiaries often have down years. Pests, viruses, predation, and even inclement weather can frustrate a beekeeper's best intention. Regardless of the amount of honey harvested, many students believe the experience was worth the time investment. Graduate Lucius Wilson stated, *"I think being able to engage in something positive with people from different backgrounds while learning about bees and the huge impact they have was the best part of the experience. The honey was a bonus, but it was the work we put in to get that honey that I felt was the best part."* Students of the program attend one to two hour classes on a weekly basis for about 22 weeks. During that time

they complete assessments for Beginner certification and Apprenticeship certification. Meanwhile, there are bi-weekly hive inspections, swarm management opportunities, honey extractions, and overwinterizing to keep the participants busy.

“

I helped catch a swarm between H-building and the bee yard, which was one of the greatest experiences I've had in prison.

”

Many students take the class with the intention of using their knowledge in the future. Students like Patrick Dills who said, *"Hopefully I will use what I learned in class to have a few hives of my own and share the knowledge with others."*

The students still have a graduation ceremony to look forward to, but much of the beekeeping season has come to a conclusion. AICs Patrick Dills, Paul Reyes, Cosmo Seal, Steve Shelton, Dushon Harris, Charlie Carnes, Efrain Berrelleza, Lucius Wilson, Shawn Weisner, Jeremiah Mauer, and Joe Tuttle successfully completed the beekeeping program and earned an Apprenticeship Certification through the Washington State Beekeeping Association.



THE ECHO INTERVIEWS

Get Uncomfortable

What it is Like to be Denied by the Parole Board:
An Interview with Brian “Grimace” Hardegger

Written by Phillip Luna

When I came to prison I thought, ‘I’m going to die here.’ The old timers told me, ‘get comfortable they don’t let people like you out.’ And the cops would tell me, ‘get comfortable they don’t let people like you out.’ Everyone told me I would never leave.” This is one of the first things Brian “Grimace” Hardegger tells me when I interview him, and it’s what resonates most. Brian is a lifer, sentenced when he was barely 17 years old – nearly 23 years ago. He was one of 73 juvenile lifers contacted for early parole review as part of Senate Bill 1008 – an opportunity that Brian was ill-prepared for and the result of which was a denial by the Parole Board earlier this year.

But the seed of this article begins months before. It’s a Thursday afternoon early in the summer. We’ve just finished another session of the National Career Readiness (NCRC) Prep Course – a class in which Brian is a student and I am the facilitator. He stays after to speak with the Work Programs Coordinator, Ray Peters. I didn’t know Brian well prior to the start of the NCRC class – although like most people I knew of him. Brian is one of the most well-known AICs in the institution. In fact, I’d be hard-pressed to find a person, staff or AIC, that doesn’t know the ashen-haired, burpee-machine that goes by Grimace. I wasn’t sure what to expect of Brian the student. He’s a social person, full of energy – perpetually and infectiously positive. He’s what I would call *the life of the party* and what others might call a *class clown*. But a question lingered

with me – does he take this seriously? Does he want to be in the class or is this just another certificate in a folder somewhere? He struggled in the math section, which should be expected from someone who has been incarcerated since age 17. But he stuck with it and I respect that.

The subject of today’s meeting, the reason Brian stayed after class, is not the NCRC program – rather that Ray has the novel idea to feature him in a newsletter article about being denied by the Parole Board. The conversation is jovial, playful banter and humor masking what is probably a painful and open wound. They joke about Brian’s picture with a red “DENIED” stamp on its face as the lead-in photograph. For an outsider this may seem like some off-brand attempt at humor, but I’ve known my boss long enough to know when he’s latched on to an idea.

Initially I decline to write the article. I’ve never been asked to write an article like this before. Normally for *The Echo*, we highlight success. You graduated college? You were granted early parole? Wrote a book while incarcerated? Let’s interview you for the newsletter. Stories of the little man rising up against insurmountable odds and overcoming barriers to achieve the impossible are the bread and butter of a human interest piece. Everyone loves an underdog. Everyone loves a happy ending. But here, Grimace has essentially told me, *Hey, I failed at this. Do you want to interview me?* And I can’t

shake some questions – *does he take this seriously? Is he sincere?* I’ve made a categorization of this person and it’s hard to break.

Later, in one of several interviews with Brian, he’ll tell me how he got his last DR nearly two and half years ago by stealing from the kitchen. *“When I got stressed, I stopped caring. I self-destructed. I didn’t care about losing a job. I’ll just go be a yard orderly. It’s then that I realized how institutionalized I’d become. It’s not normal to steal. It’s not normal to not care about a job.”* In this moment he describes the person I have pre-conceived – someone who doesn’t care or take much seriously. And it’s also in this moment and his incredible display of self-awareness that I realize my categorization of Brian was wrong. This is a person who cares a great deal, but perhaps lacks the means of expression.

But currently, and months prior to any interview, I hold on to my reservation. It is two months before we broach the subject of an article again.

Brian and I live on the same unit and after a few conversations he has convinced me of the value the article. It’s not highlighting a failure; it’s sharing an experience in hopes to better inform other AICs. He tells me, *“I just want people to learn from my mistakes.”* I tell him I’ll prepare some interview questions and he asks for them in writing ahead of time, so he can think about his responses. Smart.

Continued on next page...



Hardegger working with Bell.

We approach the subject of topics and what may be off limits. *“Honest questions get honest answers,”* he declares. My first batch of questions feels like a hostile profile – very pointed and direct. I scrap them. I come up with about ten questions that are deliberate but still open enough to invite longer responses. I write out most of them, but keep a couple to myself. I’ve done enough interviews to know a few well placed and unexpected questions produce a more relatable article.

We meet at a small table in our dayroom one evening. I am expecting Grimace to take my written questions, review them, and schedule another time to discuss. Instead he sits down, reads the first question and starts answering. I’m fortunate I have a pen and paper handy.

“When I started, I saw people down for 30 years flopped [denied parole]. Nothing mattered. No matter what programs they did. Nothing mattered.” He explains that parole was not something he considered early into his sentence and he further recounts having the perspective that the Parole

Board offered no chance for lifers. He states, *“Parole wasn’t even a consideration. You’re not thinking about 5, 10, 15 years away. Just right now.”* But over the past few years, Oregon lawmakers have pivoted, creating opportunities for people like Brian. Opportunities he wasn’t prepared for.

A central theme begins to emerge – Brian wants to share his story in the hope that his experience might influence other AICs. *“Clear conduct is huge when seeing the Parole Board,”* he says. *“When I was younger I didn’t care about anything. I understand the anger. If you don’t have a positive outlet, what you do early on can affect you for a long time. Find a way to accept your time and make peace with it.”*

Brian’s record reflects a fatalistic view of incarceration; he amassed 22 Disciplinary Reviews (DRs) in less than 23 years. And while that is significant on its own, it does not account for the numerous times he was placed in segregation under investigation. He explains, *“I was never a gang member, but affiliated. I was always getting investigated. Three to*



Hardegger preps water heater parts for Westgate.



The Hardy Boys.

“ **I’ve been incarcerated over half my life. That’s pathetic. It’s not the life I want for myself. It’s not the life I want for anyone else. If I can change that for even just one person...** ”

seven days in seg here and there. It was a hard way to do time.”

It’s like a flood gate has opened. He’s reading the written questions aloud and answering them while I scribble in short-hand as quickly as possible. It’s loud in the dayroom and hard to keep up, but the cardinal rule of interviewing is – when the subject is talking, let them.

“I was sitting in IMU [Intensive Management Unit] after the 2011 riot at Snake River. I was left hanging. I didn’t want to do that anymore... I was tired of beating my head against the wall.” He further emphasizes, *“...there is no benefit in going to the hole. None.”* Brian recognizes how difficult changing one’s mindset can be and that it sometimes takes a catalyst. He believes sharing his experience

can be that catalyst for another AIC - perhaps shortening for others what was a long road for him. *“I’ve been incarcerated for over half my life. That’s pathetic. It’s not the life I want for myself. It’s not what I want for anyone else. If I can change that even for just one person...”*

In Brian’s view, it has been challenging to maintain social and family relationships while in prison. While these relationships play a role in Parole Board reviews, the nature and structure of incarceration creates barriers in maintaining those relationships. *“When I fell my family was there – aunt, grandma, cousins. Then they fell off after about five years. An old timer told me, ‘Youngster, the first five years people will be there then start to fall off after that.’ And that’s what happened.”* Feelings of isolation played a considerable role for Brian.

Continued on next page...



From left to right: Rodriguez, Molina, Hardegger, Patino, and Bell.

One of the hardest things I've had to deal with is my grandma passing while I was in IMU. I would write her often. I sent her a Mother's Day card with a letter and got a return to sender. That was hard, knowing that she probably died alone. That was hard. I think a lot of my actions came from immaturity, loneliness, and anger."

He shares that being incarcerated for a longer sentence can make it difficult to connect with anyone, even other incarcerated people. *"People come and go. Sometimes it's like you are just a piece in other people's time. When they leave, you feel forgotten."* It's a relatable sentiment that any AIC with a longer sentence has experienced.

Brian will have more opportunities to see the Parole Board in the future, but his past activities while incarcerated will continue to be a subject of discussion during these reviews. *"I wish earlier in my time I would've found a more positive outlet for the anger and isolation. I've found working out helps me break down and analyze situations. Working in the Physical Plant, being trusted with tools, those are good feelings. Everything is less stressful now. When you have a long set it is easy to feel left behind. Seeing people go is hard. You develop friendships. But over the past 5 to 8 years there have been a lot of people who've been positive people in my life – Cuddie, Ben, Cam, Gordo, Dougie, Seth, Cal, Timbo and others. There have also been a lot of staff also - people that saw the change and encouraged it. I really saw it when I went to the Board, how many were willing to help."*

I ask what he thinks about how many staff members were willing to help him. Often times younger AICs have an adversarial view of officers and staff members. He says, *"Yeah, I was that guy. Everything was a problem. Everything was an argument."*

He describes that having support from many sources - staff, supervisors, other AICs – only helps him achieve his goals.

I raise the topic of his recent denial by the Parole Board. He tells me the parole review process required a psychiatric evaluation, a review of his conduct history, vocational training, programs completed, and parole plan. *"They really hammer you in the psych eval. Mine took four hours, but some guys took six or seven hours,"* he states. *"They ask about everything, even from way back when you were a kid. It's very intense."* He further affirms

that his conduct over the years played the most significant role in his denial. *"When I went in front of the Board I was denied due to my past conduct and lack of programming. The way the deferral papers read are harsh, like being sentenced all over again. But they do give you feedback – they wanted me to do more programs like Pathfinders, DBT, drug and alcohol programming, and show more empathy."*

Brian talks about the steps he has taken, and will take based on the Parole Board's feedback. He's optimistic and I make a note to follow

up on this subject. Weeks later, I'll meet with Brian's Plumbing Shop Supervisor, Allen Iverson. Iverson says, *"When he was denied parole, he came back and said, 'this is what they asked me to do.' He was just as positive as ever. He always has a positive outlook."*

After the initial interview I have several pages of notes. We decide it would be best if I came out to his work and took a few photographs for the article.

Brian started an apprenticeship in the Plumbing Shop three months ago and has been working in the shop since April of 2022. He is working towards a license, which Shop Supervisor Iverson estimates will take five years to complete. In total the certification takes 7700 hours of on-the-job experience and 517 hours of class time.

“
**I wish earlier
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a more positive
outlet...**
”

On the morning of Wednesday September 7, I join Brian, his co-worker Carter Bell, and one of their Shop Supervisors, Shawn Hardiman, as they work on the new Westgate building. I've met with Brian several more times over the last month, following up on lines of questioning. We walk down the breezeway towards the Westside and I ask him if he enjoys this line of work. *"I've found my sense of purpose,"* he says. *"Everyone should find something positive to devote yourself to."*

At the worksite, the first thing I notice is Hardiman calls him by his first name - not Brian, but Grimace (a moniker he picked up in 2003 on account of being heavier-set at the time). And he calls his boss Shawn, not Mr. Hardiman. They have inside jokes. They call themselves the Hardy Boys in reference to their similar last names. They look like a couple of guys just working a job, and if they were wearing different clothes it would be difficult to know who was whom. I'm surprised most by the investment, the genuine interest Hardiman seems to have in Brian's success.

The following week I speak with Brian one last time and introduce the subject of why he is incarcerated in the first place. I know he is here for taking a life, but it's not something we have covered so far. When I bring up the subject he answers before I can finish the question. *"Not a day goes by that I don't regret it. That I don't think about the people I've affected. When the board denied me they said I don't have enough empathy for others. It made me sit back and reflect on what I've done and how it affects people."* Brian says, *"In*



prison we are taught to suppress emotions – to stuff them down, bottle them up. I don't always know how to express my emotions. I know I have it in me to get out and do well, but you can't untake a life."

As the final step I meet with one of Brian's other Supervisor in the Plumbing Shop, Allen Iverson. *"The amount of time he has been in prison from how old he was when he came to prison is astronomical,"* says Iverson. He further describes Brian as being energetic and always positive and someone who does take his work seriously. But mostly I want to know motive – why do Iverson and Hardiman take such a vested interest in their worker? Iverson answers, *"That's part of my job, to make him uncomfortable. To push him out of his comfort zone. That's how people grow. If we don't challenge them they won't be prepared for experiences that life has to throw at them. They won't know what to do with challenges."* It's a full circle moment and makes me wonder, what would an impressionable 17 year old Brian Hardegger be like now, at age 39, if he had someone like Iverson or Hardiman to push him out of his comfort zone? Instead he

had influences that told him the opposite, to *get comfortable*. From my perspective the only certain thing is - telling someone to get comfortable in prison is bad advice. Be uncomfortable. Change your mindset. Learn a trade. Educate yourself. As Grimace says, *find your sense of purpose*. Do the things that are hard to do because becoming institutionalized is easy. Too easy.

Grimace is due for another parole review in 2026.



TALK OF THE TOWN

Food Services Work Assignments

Too Many Job Openings Cause Change in Hiring Process

Written by Phillip Luna

As many now know, due to worker shortages individuals in the work-pool (AICs who are able to work but not currently in a work assignment) may be placed in Food Services without having requested the assignment. For most AICs this change has no impact. But some may find themselves in the uncomfortable position of making a choice between working the assignment or receiving a Program Fail. According to Work Programs Coordinator Ray Peters, *“For people who are not currently in a work program assignment, they may find themselves assigned to work in the Food Services area. Some of these people may have medical issues, security issues, or other situations that make those assignments unsuitable. They will need to verify with the responsible departments that their restrictions are still in place and communicated to IWP. For those that are assigned to work, if they refuse, they will be considered non-compliant with their*

case plans. We’ll try to have conversations and encourage people to do their fair share. But if someone outright refuses, a Program Fail is likely to be issued.” A Program Fail means a loss of incentive level and can affect earned time (good time).

Food Services Manager Liza Emory has committed to making the Food Services area more worker-friendly and looking for ways to reward workers for doing their part. The dining room shift schedule has changed as well, with the bulk of the Food Service workers scheduled from 10:30 am to 6:30 pm to allow the AICs to attend morning yard, should they choose.

Additionally, the Physical Plant will be looking for AICs to complete six months in Food Services prior to being hired – which now makes Food Services a pathway towards vocational training. EOCI offers many different opportunities for employment that translate well to the job market outside. However, for those interested in a food or service industry job



upon release, EOCI Food Services itself is a great avenue for learning skills that can make a standout candidate for a job opening.

A new hire to Food Services can expect to start in the dining room as a line backer or scullery worker before working their way into the kitchen. After working as a prep cook in the kitchen, Food Service workers may find opportunities with more specialized jobs such as veggie tray coordinators, special diet cooks or staff dining workers.

The EOCI bakery is a branch of Food Services and one of the few ODOC bakeries that supply all of the bread products and desserts served at the institution. Each day the bakery makes fresh bread products and desserts for roughly 1,300 AICs, requiring much teamwork and impeccable timing.

An entry-level kitchen worker starts at 5 PRAS points and an AIC's time in the position and achievement in skill tests through the kitchen dictates incremental PRAS raises to 17 points for more

specialized positions. There are job openings for Food Service workers 7 days a week. In most cases, Food Service workers start out in the kitchen to prove their work ethic before moving into a more specialized position. Kitchen-cleaning crew workers, cooks, clerks, fryer cleaners, pan crew workers, DSU cart preppers, scullery workers and utensil room clerks are just a handful of the positions offered by Food Services.

According to the State of Oregon Employment Department, dinner cooks and chefs may earn between \$18.03 and \$29.90. In 2023, Oregon had roughly 1,888 dinner cooks and chefs employed. Annually there are an average of 285 job openings for dinner cooks and chefs in Oregon. Generally, a two-year postsecondary non-degree award is required to be employed as a chef. Most commu-

nity colleges in Oregon offer training programs for those who wish to learn skills relevant to working as a cook or chef, and more specialized culinary schools are available at higher tuition rates.

“
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”



TALK OF THE TOWN

Monthly Gaming Challenge

Lowest Completion Challenge for Zelda: BOTW

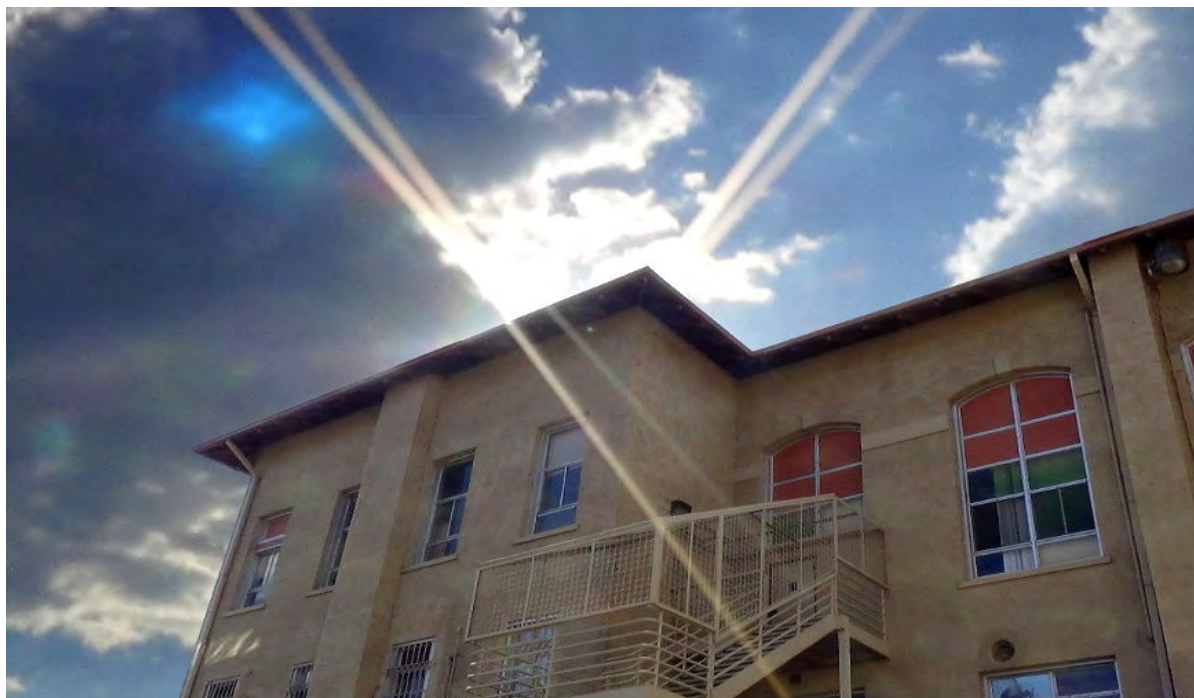
Written by Paul Ropp

This month's challenge takes us to the world of Greek mythology, no, we did not just swap Zelda with immortals unlike Ubisoft game developers. Many of us have the action game "*Hades*"- and we'll be challenging you to take Zagreus on his escape attempt from imprisonment in Hades. So, if you've taken Zagreus to the surface once, you have briefly tasted the sweet air of freedom. Maybe you even had time for a Gyro and a Greek salad. But, after these few brief moments of sweet, sweet freedom you are promptly returned to Hades. Yet in successfully escaping you have unlocked the 'Pacts of Punishment'. These pacts allow you to increase the challenge of the game and receive better rewards in exchange for tougher encounters. All of your successful escape attempts also allow you to increase your 'Heat Gauge' for future attempts. If escape from Hades is really even possible...

So here is the challenge. Who of you has the highest "Heat Gauge" limit? Are you still playing God mode? Have you restarted Hell mode? How fast was your fastest escape? We want to hear about all of your epic attempts to escape the evil and viscous clutches of Hades.

'Zelda: Breath of the Wild'
Lowest Completion Challenge

Joseph Teters managed to defeat Ganon with a total game completion of 5.62%. His strategy was to complete all of the Divine Beast powers and retrieve the master sword prior to the final encounter with Ganon. In doing so Teters unlocked only one tower, completed 28 shrines, and visited one stable. He did not collect a single pesky Korok seed. His method for beating the game and sending Ganon back to the depths from which he came was straight forward and yet challenging.



TALK OF THE TOWN

Religious Services

The Chapel Library Continues to Evolve

Excerpt From Article Submission - Religious Services

The sign up and book check out procedure for chapel library has been streamlined to simplify the process for AICs and to accommodate the increased in book inventory. Almost 1,000 books have been added in the last four months bringing the current inventory over 4,800 books. To sign up for weekly library call outs send an AIC communication From to Religious Services.

Keep in mind it is important to be patient. When Religious Services receives an add request, it may take between 7 and 10 days for the request to be processed. If you have not been added after more than 10 days, you may send a follow up request. If you are waitlisted for a service, event, or activity that means you will be added when an open spot becomes available.

Attendance is limited for classes or special events facilitated by Religious Services. Requests are processed first-come, first-serve. Once the limit is

reached for an event, the additional requests are documented in the order they are received. If a spot opens up you will be added if you are next on the list.

If you are absent for three services in a row you will be automatically removed from the call out. If your housing location is changed to DSU, infirmary, or "Out to Court," your name is automatically removed from the call out. For any of these reasons, you must complete an additional add request. If you have a question about chapel rules and the proper procedure for cancelling call outs, send an AIC Communication Form.

Beginning in October the chapel will present a movie event on the last Saturday of each month. The goal is to show movies that inspire positive change and promote humility. If you have suggestions for movies, send an AIC Communication Form to Religious Services. The first movie event will be *DUMA* on October 28, 2023. Send a communication form by October 23 to sign up. Space is limited to the first 70 AICs.

Notices You May Have Missed

From Your Housing Unit Bulletin Board and Brief Announcements

Provided by ODOC and Various Sources

Health Services: Get Your Flu Shot!

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend everyone 6 months and older get vaccinated every flu season. It takes about 2 weeks for protection to develop after vaccination. There are many flu viruses, and they are always changing. Each year a new flu vaccine is made to protect against the influenza viruses believed to likely cause disease in the upcoming flu season. Even when the vaccine doesn't exactly match these viruses, it may still provide some protection. The influenza vaccine does not cause flu. An influenza vaccine may be given at the same time as other vaccines. People with minor illnesses, such as a cold, may be vaccinated. People who are moderately or severely ill should usually wait until they recover before getting an influenza vaccine. Soreness, redness, and swelling where the shot is given; and fever, muscle aches, and headaches can happen after influenza vaccination.

If you have any questions regarding flu vaccination, please kyte Health Services for additional information

¡Vacúnese contra la influenza!

Los Centros para el Control y la Prevención de Enfermedades (CDC, por sus siglas en inglés) recomiendan que todas las personas de 6 años de edad y mayores se vacunen cada temporada de influenza. La protección tarda en desarrollarse alrededor de 2 semanas después de la vacunación. Hay muchos virus de influenza y siempre están cambiando. Cada año se produce una nueva vacuna en contra de los virus de la influenza que se cree son los probables de causar la enfermedad en la siguiente temporada de influenza. Incluso si la vacuna no coincide exactamente con estos virus, esta sí puede ofrecer cierta protección. Las vacunas en contra de la influenza no causan la gripe. Una vacuna contra la influenza puede administrarse al mismo tiempo que otras vacunas. Las personas con enfermedades menores, como un resfriado, pueden vacunarse. Las personas

que están moderada o severamente enfermas normalmente deben esperar hasta su recuperación antes de vacunarse contra la influenza. Dolor, enrojecimiento e inflamación en el sitio en el que se puso la vacuna; y fiebre, dolores musculares y de cabeza pueden presentarse después de la vacuna contra la influenza.

Si tiene alguna pregunta sobre su vacuna contra la influenza, por favor contacte por escrito (kyte) a los Servicios de Salud, para obtener información adicional.

Health Care for Reentry Veterans

On October 16, 2023 there will be a reentry informational meeting for veterans that served in the U.S. Military. For full details, please see your housing unit bulletin board. Sign ups are due by October 10.

Financial Services

Information regarding AIC General Spending Accounts, Protected Spending Reserve Account, Transitional Savings Account, General Savings Account, and the Obligated Reserve Account is available on your housing unit bulletin board. This information is also in March/April, May, and June newsletters, which can be found on your housing unit and is available on the tablet.

EDOVO App:

To obtain an email PDF of certifications completed on the EDOVO App have a friend or family member do the following:

Go to Edovo.com

Click the menu

Click "Who We Serve"

Click "Justice Impact Learners"

Click "Request Transcript"

There is a form to fill out that will require the first and last name of the learner, SID number, facility, and date of birth.

CONTRIBUTORS

Join our Friends & Family email list for the inside scoop!

Get emails about institution news and events

TO SIGN UP: TEXT CORRECTIONS TO 22828 TODAY!



October 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
	JLAD Grad	Opportunity Oregon		PRAS		
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				
		Halloween				

Meet *The Echo* Team

Mr. Peters IWP Coordinator, *The Echo* Supervisor

Mr. Peters has worked in the Department of Corrections for 25 years. He has worked in Security, Inspections, and Correctional Rehabilitation. In 2016 he became the IWP Coordinator.



Phillip Luna
 Writer
 Editor
 Photographer

Juan Sanchez
 Proofreader
 Contributing Writer

Paul Ropp
 Contributing Writer

Luna is the editor of *The Echo* and a contributing writer for the Coffee Creek Newsletter. He is also a Certified *Roots of Success* Facilitator, a Beekeeping Program Facilitator, the facilitator for the NCRC Prep Course, and the mentor for the Clerk Internship Program. In his spare time he is pursuing a Bachelor's Degree and is the current President of the Enrichment Club.

A veteran of the US Marine Corps, Sanchez served as a tanker on M1A1 battle tanks. He is the proofreader for *The Echo*, manages the EOCI Institution Channel (channel 53), and runs the videogram program. He is a newly certified *Roots of Success* facilitator and occasionally writes articles for *The Echo*.

Paul is an occasional contributing writer and part of the GOGI leadership team. He is also an avid musician.

November 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
				PRAS		
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

A publication of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution, Pendleton, Oregon.

Direct questions and comments to EOCI Institution Work Programs (IWP).



Prison
Rape
Elimination
Act

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. Your family can report on your 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:
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Todas las llamadas a 'PREA' son gratis y confidenciales.

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

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

PREA Advocate:

You may write the PREA advocate at:

ODOC PREA Advocate
2575 Center Street NE,
Salem, OR 97301

Submission Guidelines

Help Shape the Content of *The Echo!*

We accept hand written articles, creative writing, poetry and artwork.

Ideas for Articles and Artwork:

- Ways to keep yourself healthy physically, emotionally, or mentally while incarcerated.
- Experiences of life before or after imprisonment.
- Places in the world you've been, or hope to see when you get out.
- What you look forward to most upon release.
- Strategies for managing your time while incarcerated/things you wish you knew your first year in prison.
- Creative or reflective writing, short stories or poetry.
- Video game reviews or book reviews.

Length:

Articles should be no more than 1000 words (about three pages handwritten).

How to Submit:

For written pieces, attach your work to a communication form and send it to **IWP - The Echo Submissions**. If you do not want your name published along with the article please indicate so. Writing samples will be photocopied and returned.

For artwork, send a communication form to **IWP - The Echo Submissions** explaining your artwork and what you would like to share. You may then be placed on a call out to bring your artwork down to IWP. Please do not attach your artwork in a communication form.

Notes on Editing:

All pieces are edited for content, grammar, and punctuation. As a Department of Corrections publication, we do not print material that may be considered inappropriate, inflammatory, or disparaging to others. **Submitting an article or artwork does not guarantee your work will be published.** We will select content that provides value to *The Echo* and is of interest to others. We do not print material that perpetuates negativity.