

THE ECHO

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution Newsletter

Apprenticeship Programs Receive High Praise

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A photo of welding shop worker, Gerry Hight titled, "I'm Gerry."
Photo by Patrick Gazeley-Romney



AROUND THE STATE

Governor Kotek Appoints Mike Reese to Direct the Oregon Department of Corrections

Department of Corrections Communications Office

Salem, OR - Governor Tina Kotek announced that she has appointed Mike Reese to head the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). Reese brings over 30 years of experience in the public safety sector to the position. Most recently, he served as the Multnomah County Sheriff.

“I am grateful to Acting Director Heidi Steward stepping up to lead and staying the course through the pandemic,” Kotek said. *“I have confidence in incoming Director Reese’s ability to bring a clear vision and advance the organizational and cultural changes needed to bring forward the next chapter at DOC. He has an unparalleled record within the public safety sector for being a collaborator and a problem solver, guided by justice, equity, and a commitment to uphold the public’s trust.”*

Incoming Director Reese began his career in law enforcement over 30 years ago as a deputy for the Multnomah County Sheriff’s Office in 1989. Five years later, he joined the Portland Police Bureau and rose through the ranks to serve as one of the longest-standing police chiefs in the City in recent history. In 2016, he was elected Multnomah

County Sheriff where he managed a \$175 million dollar budget and 800 employees and the largest jail system in Oregon. He served until 2022.

Incoming Director Reese holds two degrees from Portland State University including a Bachelor of Science in Psychology and an Executive Master’s in Public Administration. He also attended the DEA Drug Unit Commanders Academy and the FBI National Executive Institute. In addition to public safety, Director Reese has held paid and volunteer positions for non-profits, including working as a counselor, director and later serving as a board member of the Boys and Girls Club of Portland. He has also served as a board member of Transition Projects, the Irvington Community Association and the First Christian Church.

“As DOC Director, I will do my very best to lead this department, our staff, and adults in custody towards better outcomes. The Department of Corrections is a core pillar of our public safety system. Our ability to adequately rehabilitate adults in custody and recruit, train and retain a skilled workforce driven by accountability, integrity and professionalism has a direct impact on Oregon communities and I am resolved to ensure these standards are met.”



TALK OF THE TOWN

EOCI Celebrates Apprenticeship Programs

A Vital Piece of Our Rehabilitation Efforts

Written by Phillip Luna

Twain once said, *“The two most important days of your life are the day you’re born and the day you find out why.”* While the well-known writer may not have had skilled manual labor in mind, many justice-involved individuals find the field provides a sense of purpose and opens obtainable career pathways despite their criminal records. Individuals such as Anthony Hill find purpose here. Hill is a welder six months shy of completing his 2000 hour certification for structural welding through Cascade JTC. He stated, *“I had no idea what I was going to do when I came to prison... I had no experience. It was hard at first, starting in the Physical Plant.”* Hill is one of sixteen AIC apprentices at EOCI, each with similar stories.

On Wednesday, November 15, the Physical Plant AIC apprentices and staff supervisors gathered in the welding shop for a celebration. A capacious room

shrank as the attendees filled in around a podium, with late arrivals finding only standing room available. The event featured former and current AICs as well as EOCI staff. In attendance was Christina Stephenson, the Commissioner for the Bureau of Labor and Industry (BOLI) and Karlee Demos, BOLI Operations and Policy Analyst. The purpose of the event was for the AICs to share the impact apprenticeship programs have made in their lives.

EOCI Superintendant Dave Pedro spoke at the podium first, calling the apprenticeship programs, *“...a vital piece of our rehabilitative efforts and successfully preparing people for the community.”* Superintendant Pedro introduced Physical Plant Supervisor Greg Carlson, who led the remainder of the event and introduced the guest speakers.

Commissioner Stephenson attended the event to highlight a program that addressed an underserved population. She explained to the audience, *“My family is like a lot of families and has been touched by*

incarceration. I take it personal that nobody is left behind and everybody is valuable, everybody can contribute to this State ...That's why we want more programs like these ...They are the very foundation of our State." The Physical Plant offers a wide array of opportunities for AICs to develop technical job skills. Specifically, there are five apprenticeship programs: electrical; plumbing; welding; boiler operation; and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning technician.

Carter Bell is an Apprentice in the Plumbing Shop. He spoke at the podium about his experience, "Personally, this program has changed my life. I make the most of my time and it's given me a positive direction to follow." He further stated, "For anyone who is here in prison, whether you think you should be here or not, a time comes when you feel the guilt of all the people you've hurt and let down, it takes you to rock bottom...This apprenticeship has given me the confidence and ability to rebuild my life and be the man I want to be... someone my family can be proud of again."

The Electrical Program is the longest standing and most well established of the apprenticeship programs. Electricians Steve Larson and Peter Cuddie were speakers that represented this department. Cuddie shared his personal experience: "I'd have to say this is the greatest thing that has every happened in my life. I got my license about a year ago ... I was kind of a knuckle head before, they took a chance on me and hired me as an apprentice. My life has changed. Some people come from broken homes and bad background...This apprenticeship has given me unlimited opportunity."

Johnny Ramirez spoke on behalf of the Welding Shop's program. He has already completed his certification. "I'm a certified welder now. I was just doing time like everybody else. I had no skills, no direction. I could barely read a tape measure. It wasn't until Mr. Marlett got me out here as an orderly that I learned I had an interest in welding."

While AICs from several shops addressed the audience and shared the influence these programs have made in their lives, the most impactful speeches came from the formerly incarcerated. Four individuals who completed programs at EOCI were able to attend the event via video conference - all four of which are now gainfully employed. Former AIC Jason Matthews was in attendance via video conference. After 28 years of incarceration, he was released with his Plant Journeyman Electrician License. Jason went through the program at EOCI from 2013 until 2019. Jason stated, "The program was phenomenal for me. Doing that much time, not understanding what life was going to be like when I

got out. This program has given me opportunities I never thought I would have." Jason described making more than \$70,000 in the last four months. "I never thought I would make that kind of money."

By focusing on developing valuable job skills, some AICs find they can create a path forward and break the cycle of incarceration and recidivism. As many know, at EOCI the path into any apprenticeship program starts at the ground level. AICs

must work for six months as a physical plant orderly before they will be considered for one of the shops. When asked what that experience is like, James Renfro, the current physical plant orderly, said, "I quit my job in the Garment Factory to clean toilets and sweep floors in the Physical Plant. I had one of the highest paying jobs. But I've saved the money I need for release. Now I want to work my way into a program so I have a career when I get out. It is worth it to me."

The career pathways offered in the various apprenticeship programs may start at the ground floor of Physical Plant, but with enough patience and hard work the ceiling appears to be quite high.

(Photos continued on next page...)

“
**Programs like
these are the
very foundation
of our State.**”



Carlson addresses the audience

“Your efforts do not go unnoticed. We want you to know we are very proud of what you are accomplishing here.”

- Greg Carlson,
Physical Plant Manager



Johnny Ramirez marks a measurement



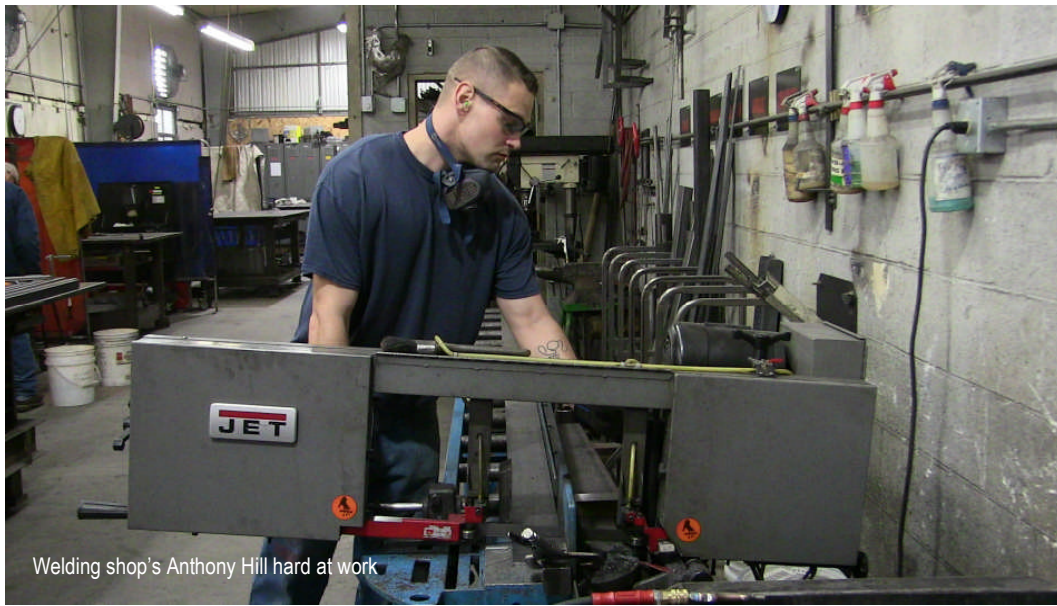
Commissioner Stephenson speaking with plumbing shop's Dion Patino and the electrical shop's Tariq Knapper

“There is a workforce shortage out there, and the skills you are building are what we need to help our economy grow and make sure Oregon is the best place to live in this country.”

- Christina Stephenson,
Commissioner BOLI



Plumbing shop's Carter Bell shares his experience



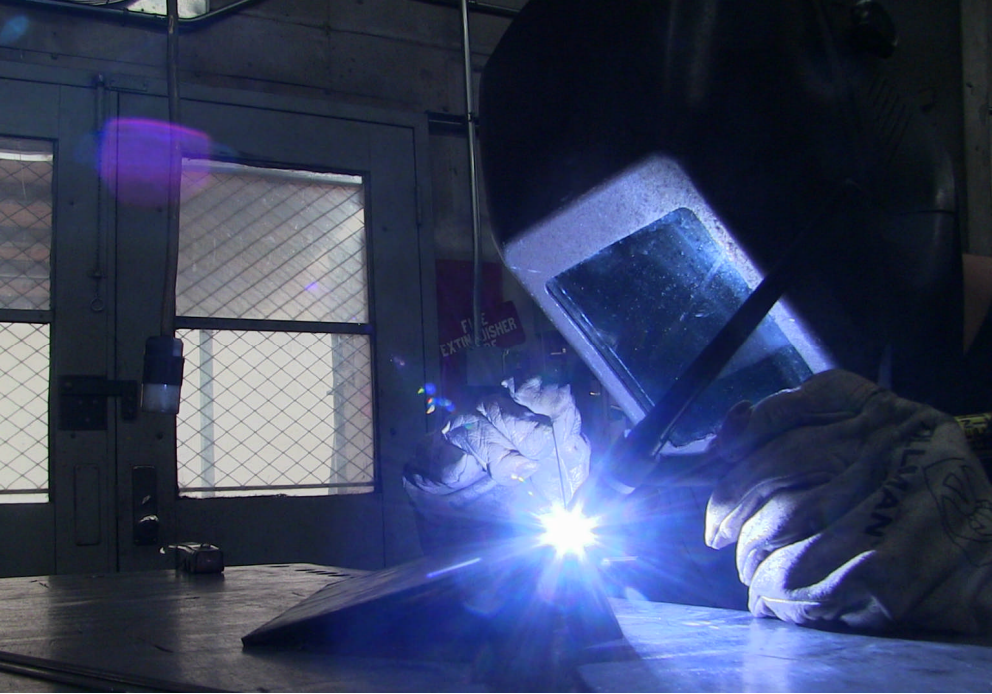
Welding shop's Anthony Hill hard at work



Peter Cuddie speaks with BOLI Commissioner

“ Some people come from broken homes and a bad background... This apprenticeship has given me an unlimited opportunity. ”

- Peter Cuddie,
Journeyman Electrician



Brian Butterfield at the podium

It's a relief when I get someone from your program, because I know your foundation is solid.

- Brian Butterfield,
Co-owner of Green Ridge Solar,
currently employees 3 former AICs

A lot of people helped me along the way. That's my next chapter. I want to be able to help the next guy.

- Johnny Ramirez,
Certified Welder





HVAC's crew doing rooftop work.



“
**Everyone of these guys
in here are driven.
They know they have
an opportunity to do
well after release.**”

- Marlett
Electrician Supervisor

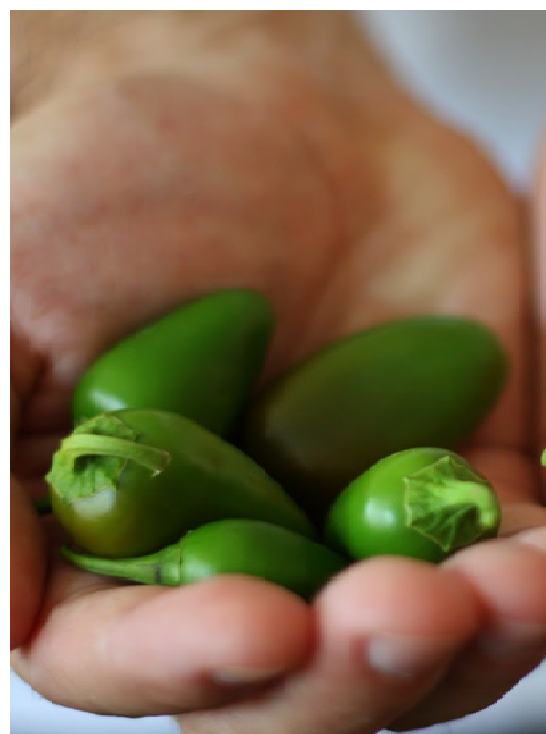
Plumbing shop's Hardegger and
supervisor Hardiman



Electrical shop's Steve Larsen shares his thoughts on the apprenticeship programs



A view from outside the EOCI greenhouse



TALK OF THE TOWN

Supplementing the Population

EOCI Grew More Than 39,000 Pounds of Produce in 2023

Written by Phillip Luna

I magine working in a restaurant that serves upwards of 4,000 meals per day - every single day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year. This Sisyphean task is what EOCI's Food Service department is thrust against year after year in order to support the population of nearly 1,300 AICs as well as staff dining. Add in a limited budget and the ever-rising cost of goods and this task might seem insurmountable - not exactly like trying to roll a boulder up a hill, but more like trying to roll a boulder up the wrong side of an escalator. But somehow, someway, the Food Service department manages. To accomplish this considerable task, more than 39,000 pounds of fruits and vegetables were produced on EOCI grounds in 2023, much of which supplemented AIC meals and all of which is part of the ODOC sustainability initiative. *"Almost all of the food produced at EOCI supports the mainline meals,"* stated Liza

Emory, Food Service Manager. *"Everything works together - the greenhouse, the grounds crew, and classes like the OSU Master Gardener."*

As Emory stated, the Food Service department operates successfully by having symbiotic relationships with other departments, programs, and classes. For starters, and for starts, the EOCI greenhouse is stage one for supplementing AIC meals. This 4,700-square-foot hub of the institutions garden program is operated by a handful of AICs. *"Working in the greenhouse is a gift,"* stated greenhouse worker Rocky Hutchinson. *"I've been to a lot of places [correctional facilities] and most don't grow their own produce. The fact that we are able to grow our own produce and it is served on the mainline is amazing."*

Vegetable starter plants are germinated during the winter and spring months for late spring to early



Zucchini starts, early spring

summer planting in the vegetable beds throughout the institution. The plants and herbs produced are used in both staff dining and on the main serving line. Some herbs such as fennel, garlic, and basil are used in salad dressings and as seasonings. The greenhouse also has a small composting operation coupled with a vermiculture (worm castings) program which gives the operation just enough nutrient-rich soil for their seeds to propagate.

Vegetables like tomatoes, radishes, carrots, and cucumbers are started in the greenhouse - all of which are served as part of veggie trays or cooked and served with the main meal. The most common vegetable produced is squash which comes in many varieties: yellow, green zucchini, butternut, and acorn. These plants have a high yield which makes them ideal for supporting the more than 1,300 residents here at EOCI.

The Grounds Crew is an AIC work crew that completes year round landscaping

EOCI produced
25,084
 pounds of zucchini
 in 2023

Earlier this year
 the grounds
 crew planted

40
 apple trees on
 the compound

To support mainline
 veggie trays

575
 pounds of celery
 was produced

and manages the various crops grown on the compound. They are stage two in the process of supporting EOCI food production. Once vegetable starts are ready to plant, the grounds crew takes over, transplanting thousands of seedlings in a single season. *“It’s hard work, and it’s not for everyone,”* said experienced grounds crew worker Joe Tuttle. *“But there is a sense of satisfaction. Everyday you are outside. At the end of the day you are tired, but you feel like you’ve accomplished something.”*

Adding to the diversity of the grounds crew workload and further supplementing food production, 100 apple trees were recently donated to ODOC. Forty of the donated trees were planted at EOCI earlier this year. The new trees are dwarf honeycrisp apple and are expected to grow to a height of only six feet. Food Service Manager Emory said, *“They will take approximately two to five years to produce apples. We have added them in several different areas around the institution between the East and West sides.”*

Continued on next page.....



Sunflowers in the class garden



Student Shawn Weisner working garden plot

EOCI produced

2,226

pounds of tomatoes in 2023

Since 2019 EOCI has graduated

263 Students

from programs that support agriculture or food production

According to the State of Oregon Employment Department, no formal education is required to work in a landscaping position, however some employers may ask for demonstration of basic landscaping principles and techniques. Working on the EOCI grounds crew or in the greenhouse can give an AIC an advantage in the hiring process by providing them valuable on the job experience in the field.

EOCI offers educational programs that support food production. The Gardening Program consists of two complimentary educational curriculums that will provide AICs with knowledge of gardening techniques, basic plant biology and horticultural science. Seed2Supper (S2S) is a beginning level gardening class provided by the Growing Gardens organization. S2S is a prerequisite for the Master Gardener class offered through Oregon State University.

The EOCI Beekeeping Program endeavors to educate and certify AICs through Washington State Beekeepers Association (WSBA) in the skills of apiary work. The apiary manages between four and 15 hives at any given time. Honeybees are plant pollinators that account for one-third of the total food consumed in the U.S. each year. When EOCI adds a bigger variety of crops, such as the newly acquired apple trees, it serves to bolster the program. *“The apple trees are complimentary to the Beekeeping Program,”* stated Beekeeping Program Facilitator Patrick Gazeley-Romney. *“Bees are pollinators for trees. An apiary and an arbor have similar and interdependent underlying systems.”*

While the greenhouse and the grounds crew serve as the first two stages of food production at EOCI, educational programs supplement the process by



Honeybees are responsible for pollinating

One-Third

of the food we eat

encouraging better quality crops with higher yield. In the third and final stage, the Food Service Department is responsible for utilizing the harvested produce. “We use the blast chiller to IQF [individually quickly frozen] vegetables,” said Emory. According to Emory, this allows the vegetables to be used on the mainline year-round.

While food production is the primary objective, an intended side effect is the softening of the correctional setting. The greenhouse grows much of the decorative foliage that can be seen on units or around the compound, helping to mitigate a traditionally austere atmosphere. Additionally, while the grounds crew carries a bulk of the workload, AICs have the opportunity to participate in the volunteer gardener program each year. “AICs who are level 3 can volunteer their time to garden each week,” said

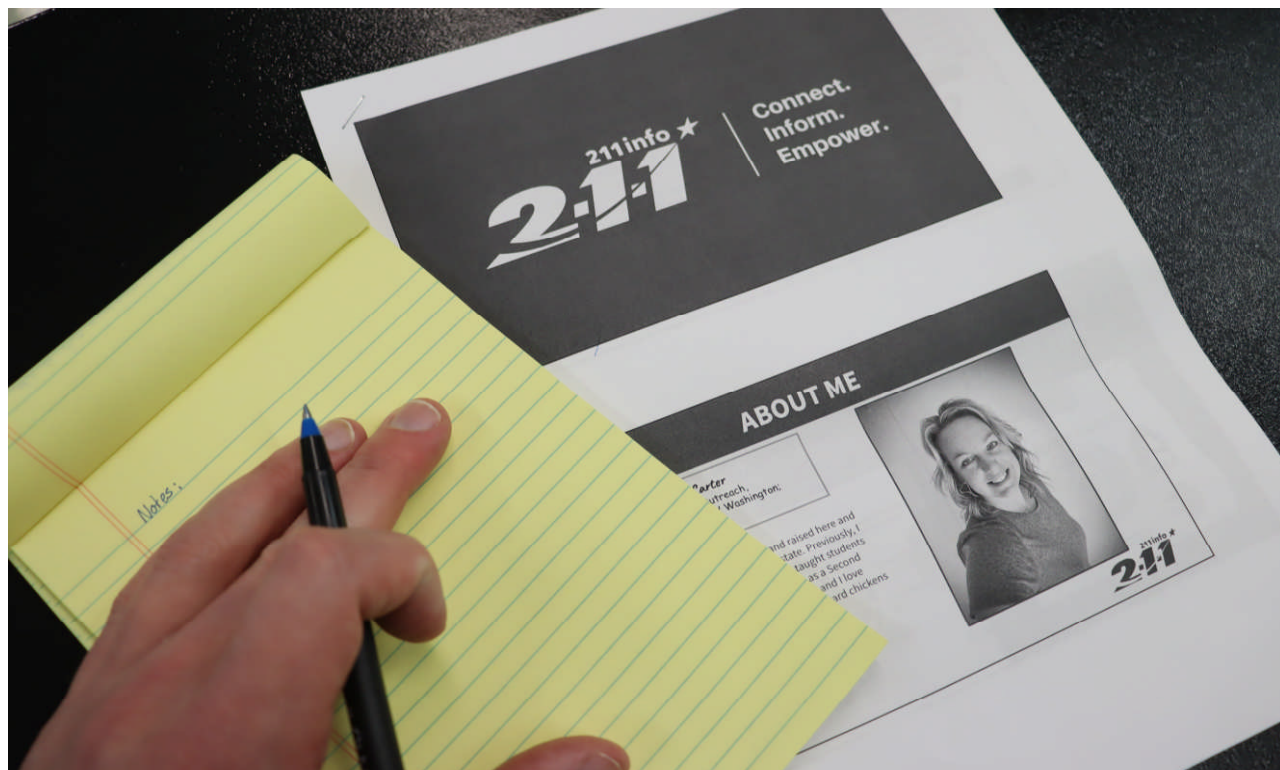
In 2023 EOCI produced a total of

39,030

pounds of various fruits and vegetables

Emory. “They have up to four call outs per week. They can come out in shorts and just spend some time gardening. When they complete the season they receive a certificate.” According to the Mayo Health Clinic, gardening can reduce stress and anxiety over time.

Each year, tens of thousands of dollars are saved as a result of food produced at EOCI. The process is also part of the Oregon Way initiative in an effort to normalize the environment. The greenery and foliage around the compound helps to soften the setting, while the opportunity to garden has a therapeutic quality. Greenhouse, grounds crew, and kitchen workers gain valuable experience, while the various classes offered provide relative, useful knowledge. And the most important part - all EOCI residents have access to fresh, locally grown produce with their mainline meal.



TALK OF THE TOWN

211info.org

Resource Center Gives Presentation to AICs

Written by Christian Reyes

On December 5, AICs gathered in the visiting rooms to interact with Nickie Carter, the Director of Outreach for 211info. 211 is a national program offered in all 50 states providing an easier way to navigate an extensive database of nonprofits and programs available to individuals within their communities. 211info, Oregon’s branch, services the entire State of Oregon and four counties in Southwest Washington. Director Carter has been with 211info for the last two years informing various communities on the impact 211info can have on their lives.

“Connect. Inform. Empower.” 211info seeks to provide opportunities for individuals and their families to build a relationship with one of their over 30,000 resources in the community to help overcome a challenge in their life. They assist families struggling with basic needs from food scarcity and childcare, to

rental assistance. This is accomplished by offering a service that is accessible via telephone, text, email, and on their website at 211info.org

211info’s platforms are unique in that they have a live person respond to every inquiry regardless of method every day 24/7. Director Carter described it as, “An easy to remember phone number with a great personal touch.” Many staff members are bilingual and able to provide assistance in languages from Chuukese, to Spanish, to Vietnamese and more.

These team members aren’t just mechanically connecting you with resources. They think creatively to best service each situation. Sue Robson, EOCI and TRCI’s Transition Services Coordinator, offered a story of a former AIC who secured a job ready upon release. Unfortunately, he did not have the resources to purchase a pair of work boots for this job. By utilizing 211info, they found a local provider who

had the ability to offer him work boots so he could start on time when he released.

Director Carter is proud of the post-incarceration and reentry connections her organization has made. Being a justice-impacted individual herself, she *“...knows what it feels like to be in this situation and what it means to overcome the challenges felony convictions bring.”* According to Carter, resources in Oregon for those currently incarcerated are limited, but 211info is actively broadening their database of providers as they become available.

While they may not have the bandwidth to support incarcerated individuals, they can offer support and resources for our loved ones. This allows us to focus on what is most important – our relationship with them.

211info boasts community resources in every county across Oregon that want to empower members of their community. Each partner and resource is verified at least once a year, if not more. It is with this tenacity that they have a 97% accuracy rating when connecting families to these organizations.



Nickie Carter, Director of Outreach

“We’re all about looking for the helpers – and all about connecting members of our community with that help for free,” stated Dan Herman, CEO of 211info on their website. They have a pedigree of servicing Oregonians for years. Since 2020, they have provided tens of thousands of Oregonians access to their expansive network of partners and providers, generating solutions for many community members.

211info also works closely with emergency management organizations to help provide a unified

front in the face of a disaster or local, regional and statewide emergencies. In fact, during the COVID-19 pandemic 211info was the main resource the Oregon Health Association (OHA) used to share information on testing and vaccines.

There are many untapped resources in the State of Oregon. 211info is a great starting point for connecting AICs transitioning back into their communities with partners who can provide the things that are essential for their future success.



Approximately 30 AICs attended the informational sessions



James "JP" Paulk

COMMUNITY VOICES

Overcoming a Factionalized Society

An Interview with James Paulk

Written by Phillip Luna

Prisoners are one of the few places left in the United States where segregation by race is openly tolerated. When a man comes to prison he is expected to sit, eat, and live with people of his same color or ethnicity – this is an unwritten, but understood rule of prison culture. In a diverse country often considered the melting pot of the world, it is this incongruity I find most interesting. When we are faced with the uncertainty of our identity, stripped of individuality and confronted with a fear that only razor wire perimeters and armed guard towers can bring, we as people revert to our most primitive of instincts. Simply being in this place engenders a near tribal mentality – it's *us* versus *them*, with *them* being anyone who looks different, prays different, or doesn't wear a state-issued blue shirt. As an incarcerated person of Hispanic and white heritage, this is a concept I

have personally struggled to understand. Like most mixed race people in prison I am often unsure of where to fit, like a square peg among round holes. It is because of my interest in this topic that I agreed to interview James "JP" Paulk - a former white supremacist serving a 25 year sentence for murder.

James arrived at the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution (EOCI) earlier this year after 17 years of incarceration. Most of his time was served at the Washington State Penitentiary (WSP) in Walla Walla – one of the most notorious and dangerous prisons in the Northwest. I know JP through associations; he's a friend of a friend. And I've interacted with him enough to know he is a social person, but he has the type of tattoos that make me avoid him - most notably a portrait of Adolf Hitler scarred across his back. When my co-worker suggested he would make a good profile piece for *The Echo* I was

skeptical, but as a “prison journalist” skepticism is my inoculation against the much-to-common half-truths, omissions, and outright lies of the world. Overcoming my apprehension, I conducted a couple of interviews with James, and I have to say I find his story compelling. James is someone who was once immersed in a harsh prison culture that glorifies violence and encourages apartheid, and now, after nearly two decades of incarceration has found his true self to be a person of inclusion, compassion and empathy. His journey is one of self-discovery, of overcoming the *us* versus *them* mentality that we are all casualties of at one point or another, and finding an identity all his own.

The first time we met it was a Friday afternoon. James is employed in the Garment Factory and our meeting was scheduled for the latest time possible, to avoid impacting his work and pay. We met in the IWP building, the hub for *The Echo*.

JP was incarcerated in 2007 and described an atmosphere that is difficult to understand from (what would comparably be) the comfort of a place like EOCI. James explained, *“They have a different system in Washington. If you are white and you are in close custody prison, you may not be affiliated with a gang, but you will be. Over there they fight over showers, they fight over tables, they fight over a pull up bar. Not fist fights, 80-man fights.”* He spent 10 years at WSP. *“More than one time on the yard I see my friend is in a fight, and then I see four guys are running at me. Suddenly the whole yard is fighting. It’s that quick,”* he said, snapping his fingers for emphasis.

James described a place of unnerving energy, a place with a palpable buzz in the atmosphere as if any moment could be electrified at the flip of a switch. When prison norms dictate racial segregation and violence is a constant presence, it is hard to imagine anyone not being swept up into prison culture – if not simply out of self-preservation.

Prior to interviewing James, I researched theories on origins of racism, bias, and discrimination. This would serve as a baseline for my questions. According to the American Psychological Association, most prejudice and bias is learned early in life. For this

reason, I believe James’s story must have begun before his incarceration. When I asked about his youth he revealed an extensive history of trauma and abuse. *“Most of my childhood I really don’t remember. It was really violent,”* he said. *“My parents were really abusive and I spent a lot of time in foster homes. When I was nine my mom got sober and ran from my dad. We moved to The Dalles and I wasn’t allowed to go to school or tell people my name.”* JP was also exposed to prejudice from a very early age, *“My dad was, for the lack of a better term, he was a bigot.”* He described his father as overbearing and judgmental, *“If he didn’t hit you he would get in your face and use power and control to intimidate you. It’s bullying and it’s disgusting. You see a lot of that in here, in prison ... I despised both my parents for a really long time.”* Despite his childhood experiences, he has made several unsuccessful attempts to reconcile with his father over the past few decades.

During our first interview, James’s level of candidness surprises me. James chronicled a childhood of mistreatment and neglect, the unvarnished truth of which would not be appropriate to print here, but all of which significantly impacted his formative years. When I asked how his upbringing shaped him as a young adult, he stated simply, *“I spent a lot of time doing a lot of bad things.”* It is difficult to imagine a different outcome – James’s parents’ perspective and their actions funneled his view and his time in prison only served to validate this view. Like many who have experienced trauma in adolescence, he also found himself in a constant struggle with drug and alcohol addiction, *“When I used drugs I was a different person. I know that my addiction stems from trauma in my past.”*

There were good moments in his life too. Before he was incarcerated there was a period of clarity.

During a time when James was clean and sober he was married, bought a house, and had a son. A relapse in his addiction brought him back in with the wrong crowd, which ultimately led him down the pathway to incarceration. He took a person’s life and eventually agreed to a plea deal for a flat 25 years.

Continued on next page...

The first few years of his incarceration went as expected with the majority of his time spent in segregation or IMU (Intensive Management Unit). James's longest stint in IMU was a straight 22 months.

In 2010 he lost his mother suddenly, *"My mom committed suicide that year. She struggled with drug addiction her whole life and I think she had finally just had enough. The sad thing about when people die suddenly is that you don't get a chance to fix things or say things. For a long time I beat myself up about that."* The subject produced conflicting feeling for James. Although he had a difficult childhood and his relationship with both his parents was strained, even the most flawed people are multidimensional - his mother was a person who had impacted his life. He explained her passing as part of an emotional turning point, but like most incarcerated people he bottled up his emotions and ignored them. For four more years JP stayed the course, repeating cycle after cycle of segregation time, *"I allowed myself to stay in that misery."* He further shared something with an epigrammatic quality, *"They threw me in a pit and rather than find a ladder I found a shovel and dug myself deeper."*

The last time he was placed in segregation was in 2014. He recalled, *"I was blaming everybody else. It's the cops, and it's this person, and it's my dad. I*

was in my cell and I had nothing. I was so miserable ... I couldn't live like that anymore." This was the moment that something gave and James made the decision to change his situation. It was not an easy transition and to keep with his metaphor: when you've spent a long time digging deeper in a pit, it takes a really tall ladder to get out.

After so many conflicts and trips to segregation, the security staff in Washington did not trust James. Once in general population, it took some time before he was allowed to complete any off unit programming. *"Finally after a year of staying out of trouble I was able to leave the unit and go to a program."* It wasn't just one program or one experience that changed his outlook. Each program had a role in his personal development. In a program called *Writer of Wisdom*, he described writing letters to kids in juvenile institutions. At the time he didn't have any contact with his own children and writing to other kids was cathartic. Later in a program called *Thinking about Your Thinking*, he was offered a role as a facilitator after completing the course. From there, doors began to open.

JP eventually became a mentor in a class called *New Freedom*, which is a peer intervention program. *"New Freedom is a program I'd like to see at EOICI. Programs like this taught me not to be afraid of being vulnerable. Toxic masculinity is a huge thing for me, because for years I struggled with it. A*



James driving forklift at his job



James facilitates *Mindfulness* in the segregation unit's classroom. Brian Hardegger (center) and Steve Larsen (right) are in training.

lot of men, we don't talk about our issues. We would rather tell people we are mad, than say 'I'm scared. Or I'm hurt. Or I don't know what's going on but I feel insecure right now.'" James considers the ability to be vulnerable and express emotion crucial in the changes he has made. "Guys should not be afraid to be vulnerable ... Getting out of the lifestyle was one thing. Once I was out I realized I had a lot of baggage to unpack. I realized I am not racist. And then it's like, man, I am insecure. My ego is driving my life."

Like most men, James has been fed a diet of stereotypes his whole life: men are genetically drawn to conflict; men are stoic; men have fewer emotions than women. He explained, "As men when we have a problem, we beat our chests, we punch something, lift weights, or buy a bigger truck. We avoid talking about what is going on." In prison, stereotypes are often amplified, but James aims to redefine his masculinity as more than overflowing testosterone and hypercapitalism.

He took several more classes and programs over the next few years. In each program he faced challenges and had set backs, but made incremental gains.

One class he recalled focused on victim impact. The

course required James to sit face-to-face with families that had lost a loved one to a violent crime, while the families explain how their loss had impacted them. "It's not the victim of your crime," he stated, "but you can understand how it was. It was crushing. It was crippling. I had my guard up, I wasn't fully ready yet, but their message was getting through. Now, I'd like to hear from [my victim's] family and know what they have to say."

I realized I am not a racist. Then it's like, man, I am insecure. My ego is driving my life.

James mentioned the victim of his crime by name, and it stuck out to me (I've omitted the name as a courtesy). This is the first time he mentioned this person by name. Seventeen years is a long time and when I asked, James does not try and conceal or palliate his past, "He was 32 years old and I was 28 when I took his life. When I was 32 I didn't have a clue yet. Now I am 45 and I've changed my life. Thank God I've had the opportunity to change and my family can see that side of it. But I took that opportunity to change from him. That sits heavy on me. No matter who the person was, if you've taken their life you have taken away the opportunity for that person to change."

It is a very thoughtful perspective on rehabilitation and his time in prison. Next to all the programs,

Continued on next page...



to be facilitators



James working in the Garment Factory

“When you take the ‘us versus them’ mentality away, we are just human. We are all just human.”

classes, self-reflection, and life changes he has made there is and always will be an indelible asterisk. Because these programs, these classes, these changes - they are not available to the person whose life he took.

Up until this moment I have not asked about his tattoos and we have only broached the subject of race indirectly. So far his experiences and the programs he has taken have aided in his personal development, not necessarily to broaden his once insular thinking.

James wanted to focus on the changes and progress he has made as a human being in hopes of inspiring other incarcerated people to make their own changes, which is important and commendable. But there is an equally important component to this story. A question that must be answered: How does someone once saturated in factionalized prison culture become the thoughtful and reflective person sitting before me today? His tattoos are a good segue to the subject. *“I don’t like my tattoos, most of them, and I don’t identify with them,”* he said. *“Once upon a time they told a story of who I portrayed myself to be, not who I was. I was doing a lot of time. I was doing it in a place where it is really racially segregated. I’m not going to blame peer pressure, but you do things to fit in. Today, they don’t tell my story. For the last decade they haven’t ...they are repulsive to me.”*

During his incarceration in Washington State James took a college class called *Race and Public Policy*. It was taught by Annie Williams, a professor and former Black Panther Party member. He described this class as one of the more challenging experiences in his life, although he understood that true change of character is not without challenges.

The course covered topics like systemic racism, classism, and mass incarceration. *“I was the only white person in the class ... I went there ready to learn, but I was still somewhat indoctrinated in the stuff from before. My guard was up and I didn’t even realize it.”* It was ultimately the commonality he found with other incarcerated people that was pivotal in his changing view, *“Even when I did well in life, I was still broken inside. You start talking to people and you realize that other people are broken too.”* He recalled interactions with people of different colors and ethnicities, and realizing they had more similarities than differences. *“When you take the ‘us against them’ mentality away, we are just human. We are all just human. One of my best friends, we got real close when we were mentors for the New Freedom program, and he happens to be a Black man. He was just like me - similar personality and experiences ... Realizing there are people out there like me who don’t look like me, it was huge.”*

It was a collection of experiences, not a single class or program, that led JP to where he is now – and according to him, there is still plenty of growing left to do. James took advantage of each program he was offered and what is most clear is that meaningful change is often a slow and incremental process.

Today, James continues to take college courses and is pursuing a degree in Psychology. He hopes to work with victims of trauma after he is released. Much of his free time is spent studying or maintaining his physical fitness – JP is a certified fitness instructor. While he has not been to segregation for disciplinary reasons since 2014, he does return every Thursday night of his own free will. James facilitates a *Mindfulness* class to those housed in segregation.



James with his son Brayden at the September, 2023 Family Event.



In April, James meets daughter Daija for the very first time.



Now, James labels himself most prominently as a father and as a mentor for others. He takes his experiences and the harsh lessons he has learned and uses them to be a positive influence. He has reconnected with both his children, *“I’m big on unconditional love. I tell my son Brayden this: it does not matter what you do, I may not like it, but I am still going to love you. I grew up with conditional love and I don’t want my son to know that.”*

He recently connected with his daughter after nearly 16 years. *“I just met my daughter for the first time.”* he stated, *“I came to prison when my daughter’s mom was three months pregnant. I finally met her in person in April. Now we talk all the time. She is in a really good, safe home.”*

James Paulk is one of the more open and honest people I have met. There is a sincerity that is more than the sum of his words; there is a credibility that

only comes from words that contradict the tattoos displayed on his skin. It shouts, *“I’ve lived this life and you don’t have to.”* James, perhaps, is a square peg that has squeezed into a round hole, only to realize after some time that the space doesn’t quite suit him. Perhaps the square pegs are not so uncommon. Perhaps there are just a few round holes among buckets of squares – or triangles, trapezoids, or rectangles.

James’s story will continue, but he feels more in control of the narrative now, *“For years of my life, somebody or something owned me – whether that was my ego, addiction, a criminal lifestyle, or a toxic relationship.”* He now focuses on controlling only what is in his circle of influence, and hopes others might find the same insight, *“You can only control yourself. Figure out what is important to you, figure out your circle of influence, and just focus on that.”*



CREATIVE ARTS

Artist Highlight

Caleb Asher

Written by Phillip Luna

Ink, graphite, oil, acrylic, water-color, or even coffee for some - with so many different mediums to choose from, what draws an artist to one or the other?

For AIC Caleb Asher working with the permanence of ink pens is most similar to his experience as a tattoo artist - much like a tattoo, there are no erasers when working in ink. Every line counts.

Art is one of the most common pastimes among AICs. While some prefer portraits or landscapes, Asher favors the eerie and surreal; his artwork is a bizarre combination of velvety smooth lines, celeb-

rity portraits, and baleful themes. One piece, featured top right, depicts "The Butcher", a memorable character in the film *Gangs of New York*.

I use cross hatching mostly. When I tattoo I would whip shade and hatching is the closest thing to it.

Most of Asher's art requires layers upon layers of line work to create depth and texture. "I don't use circles," he explains, "I use cross hatching mostly. When I used to tattoo I whip shade and hatching is the closest thing to it." He also avoids breaking open pens and using the ink to "paint" as many pen artists do.

Another unusual technique employed by this artist is creating smudge sticks from envelopes or any glossy paper. He explains that glossy paper does not absorb ink

the way a regular shader stick does, which makes it a useful tool for spreading ink.

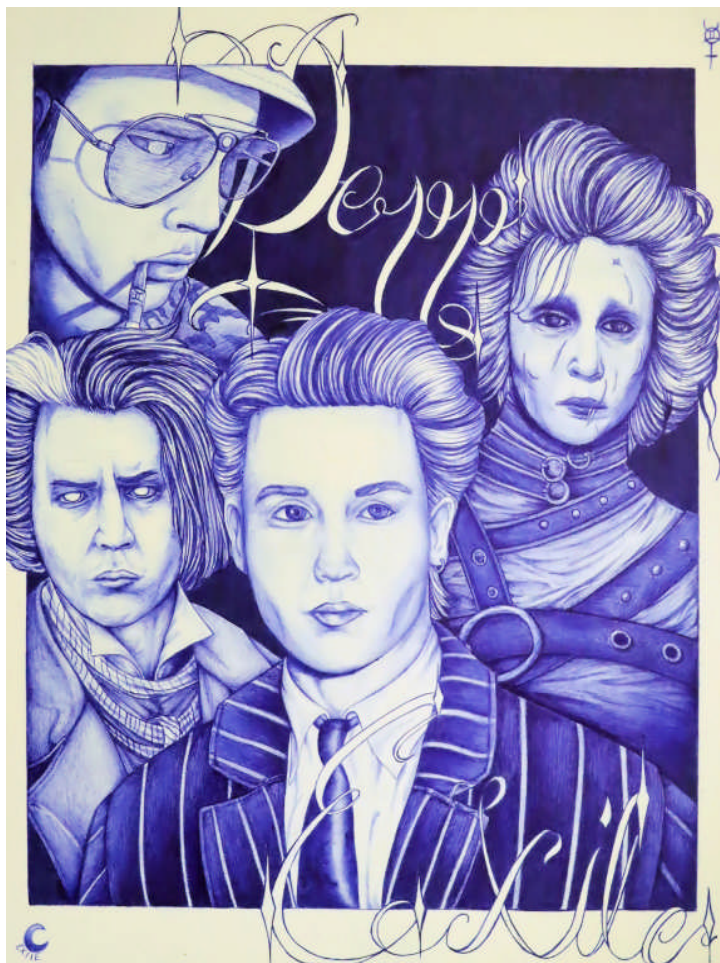
When asked where he draws his inspiration he says, *“It’s hard to say. I like to draw celebrities, sometimes I use a reference, sometime it’s freehand. I draw whatever comes to mind.”*

“Draw everyday. Every day I am drawing. If you don’t know what you are doing pick up a book or find an artist to help you. But draw every day.”

Asher describes himself as self-taught, further stating, *“I’m always evolving. I’ve been drawing since I was a kid. And you are always picking up tricks along the way.”* He intends to continue developing skills and upon release plans to open a tattoo shop featuring his own brand, *Exile Inc.* Like most artists he emphasizes practice. The first piece of advice he offers to a novice is, *“Draw everyday. Every day I am drawing. If you don’t know what you are doing pick up a book or find an artist to help you. But draw every day.”*

Currently, this ink artist says he is hooked on creating large art pieces in pen, *“I’ve done cards for a while, but I thought, ‘let me try a bigger project.’ I have all these ideas so I might as well try a bigger project. Now I’m hooked on doing these big pen pieces.”*

It is easy to see how the skills learned from working with ink pens can transfer to the tattoo world upon release. Pen requires a level of planning and forethought from the artist that parallels tattoo work - it requires Asher to identify areas of light and shadow early on in the process.



December 7



EOCI Enrichment Club Fundraiser

Deadline December 7 | Handout in January, 2024

Fundraiser Details: Terri-Lynn - Nuts, Chocolate, and Snacks. Orders are due by December 7, 2023. Handout is expected in early January. Open to all incentive levels.



The Enrichment Club is holding this fundraiser to support a variety of special projects in 2024 including; backpack and school supply handouts for kids attending the family event; the EOCI Murph Challenge; Track and Field Labor/Memorial Day events; and more. All funds raised will be used to create and encourage pro-social activities and generate positive family interactions for AICs.

December 10

Russian Baptist String Ensemble Concert

Sign up for the December 10, 2023 event. Enjoy the beautiful sounds of stringed instruments and songs of the season. The concert will begin at 2:30 pm. To attend send an AIC communication form to Religious Services. The deadline to sign up is December 7. Limited to 70 AICs.

December 11

Gospel Echoes Cookie Project

On December 11, all AICs will be called to the dining room to receive a package of cookies, a Christmas card, and a new address book from the Gospel Echoes Team. Arrangements will be made for AICs who are working. No sign up is required.



December 15

Mennonite Choir Concert

The Mennonite Choir will be singing Christmas hymns on December 15, 2023 at 6:30 pm in the Chapel. To sign up, send an AIC communication form to Religious Services by December 11. Limited to 70 AICs.

December 15 & 16

Gingerbread House Kits in Visiting

Gingerbread House Decorating Kits will be available in visiting on December 15 and 16. AICs who have visits during those day will be able to make a gingerbread house with their loved ones.

December 23

Christmas/Holiday Sing-Along

Come and sing and celebrate the season with hymns and other Christmas songs. All are welcome.

To sign up to attend the event, send an AIC communication form to Religious Services before December 20.

Limited to 70 AICs.

December 24

Christmas Eve Treat

The Christmas Eve Treat is tentatively set as a loaded chocolate rice krispy treat bar. This item will be handed out with the dining room meal.

December 25

Christmas Day Meal

Breakfast: Oatmeal with brown sugar, breakfast pastry, hard boiled egg, and fruit

Lunch: Seasoned turkey, cranberry sauce, stuffing, poultry gravy, salad, rolls, and gingerbread cake.

December 31

New Year's Eve Treat

Secrets don't make friends Ms. Emory...

January 1

New Year's Day Steak Meal

Breakfast: Breakfast pastry, hard boiled egg, and fruit

Lunch: Steak, baked potato, sour cream., rolls, salad, and berry cheesecake

February 11

Super Bowl Nachos

EOCI is tentatively planning to hand out Super Bowl Nacho Kits on February 11, 2024.

Potential Events

Lasagna Enhanced Meal- Enrichment Club

The Enrichment Club has proposed a Lasagna Meal for the end of January/ early February. If approved, this meal may cost between \$15 and \$20 and may include beverages and garlic French bread.





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Are you interesting in learning more about financial freedom?

The Dave Ramsey Financial Freedom course will be offered through Transitional Services, starting sometime after the first of the year. If you're interested in participating, please send a communication to S. Robson, Transitional Services. Class size is limited, so you will be added to a wait list if a seat is not available.

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ABOLITIONIST
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ARTIST CALL

DEADLINE JANUARY 2024

SEEKING CURRENTLY OR FORMERLY
INCARCERATED ARTISTS TO
PARTICIPATE IN A PUBLIC ART
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SUBMIT WORK DIGITALLY TO
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PLEASE SUBMIT
PREFERRED MODE OF
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Notices You May Have Missed

From Your Housing Unit Bulletin Board and Brief Announcements

Provided by ODOC and Various Sources

Phone Validation

DOC understands some people are having difficulty with the phone validation process to receive calls from adults in custody. A new customer service number has been set up for phone validation issues. Friends and family can call **503-945-0945**, and leave a voicemail. Someone will get back to them and help them through the process.

If someone is having an issue with T-Mobile, they can call T-Mobile customer service at 1-800-937-8997, or visit DOC's website at www.oregon.gov/doc/contact-inmate/Pages/phone-calls.aspx for more information.

Phone Validation (En Español)

El DOC entiende que algunas personas tienen dificultades con el proceso de validación telefónica para recibir llamadas de los adultos en custodia. Se ha instaurado un nuevo número de atención al cliente para resolver problemas relacionados con la validación telefónica. Familiares y amigos pueden llamar al **503-945-0945** y dejar un mensaje de voz. Alguien les responderá el mensaje y ayudará a lo largo del proceso.

Si alguien tiene problemas con T-Mobile, se puede comunicar con el servicio de atención a clientes de T-Mobile al 1-800-937-8997, o visitar el sitio web del DOC, www.oregon.gov/doc/contact-inmate/Pages/phone-calls.aspx para obtener más información.

Mailroom Notice

Priority mail envelopes have no weight limit. If it closes, it ships regardless of weight. Priority mail must be sent through R&D. Please allow extra time for USPS incoming mail due to the holiday season.

American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Oregon moved its office one year ago.

All letters to ACLU of Oregon should be addressed to:

ACLU of Oregon
P.O. Box 40585
Portland, OR 97240

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.

Library Services

Library Services issues DOC thumb drives for AIC use for saving and storing legal documents only. Legal documents are defined in OAR 291-139-0110 (10). In accordance with that rule, correspondence with legal counsel does not meet the definition of legal documents. Correspondence to counsel may not be typed in the library and may not be saved to a DOC thumb drive assigned for AIC use. If you have correspondence with your attorney saved to your assigned library thumb drive, please submit a Library Request

form for time to come to the library, print, and delete the correspondence.

ACRS Adjustment

Beginning January 2024, Institution Counselors' caseloads will be adjusted. The Automated Criminal Risk Score (ACRS) adjustment will take place over a period of time. The first round of adjustments is listed below. Caseload sizes will be evaluated again in June 2024 or later. The adjusted cut-offs will determine how often you see your Institution Counselor for services.

January 2024:

High/Medium Caseload ACRS cut-offs

.20 ACRS and higher for OSP, SRCI, TRCI, EOCI

.30 ACRS and higher for CRCI, OSCI, SFFC, PRCF, SCI, SRCM, WCCF, DRCM, TRCM

.15 ACRS and higher for CCCF, CCCM

Please send a kyte to the Counselor Caseload Management (CCM) Office at DOC Headquarters if you have questions.

ACRS Adjustment (En Español)

A partir de enero de 2024, se ajustará el número de casos asignados para los Consejeros de la Institución. El ajuste al Puntaje Automatizado de Riesgo Delictivo (ACRS, por sus siglas en inglés) ocurrirá a lo largo de un periodo de tiempo. La siguiente es un alista de la primera ronda de ajustes. El número de casos asignados se evaluará nuevamente en junio de 2024 o posteriormente. Los recortes ajustados determinarán qué tan a menudo usted ve a su Consejero de la Institución para obtener servicios.

Enero de 2024

Recortes del número de casos asignados de reincidencia alta/media del ACRS

ACRS de .20 y superiores para OSP, SRCI, TRCI, EOCI

ACRS de .30 y superiores para CRCI, OSCI, SFFC, PRCF, SCI, SRCM, WCCF, DRCM, TRCM

ACRS de .15 y superiores para CCCF, CCCM

Por favor, si tiene preguntas, envíe un mensaje por escrito o "kyte" a la Oficina de Gerencia de Casos Asignados para Consejeros (CCM, por sus siglas en inglés) en la sede del DOC.

From OISC - New Ethnicity Field

Pursuant to HB 1510 (2022), the Oregon Criminal Justice Commission (CJC), in conjunction with the Oregon Department of Corrections (ODOC), is required to collect and report data concerning:

- the number of persons on supervision;
- persons revoked from supervision and sentenced to incarceration; and
- persons sanctioned for violating conditions of supervision and serving a sanction in a local correctional facility.

CJC will review and separate this data by race, ethnicity, gender, and county and will make this data available to the public.

For this purpose, ODOC has added an ethnicity field which will show on the ODOC facesheets. The available options will be Hispanic (H), Non-Hispanic (N), or Unknown (U). This information will be collected by the appropriate county community corrections agency for persons beginning a supervision sentence, and upon admission to the ODOC Intake Center for those serving a prison sentence.

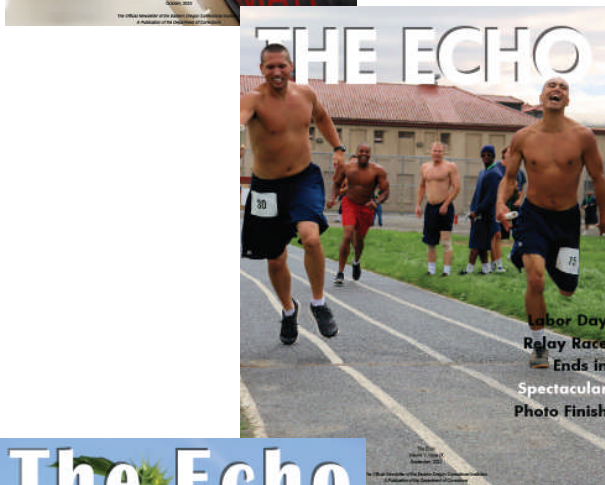
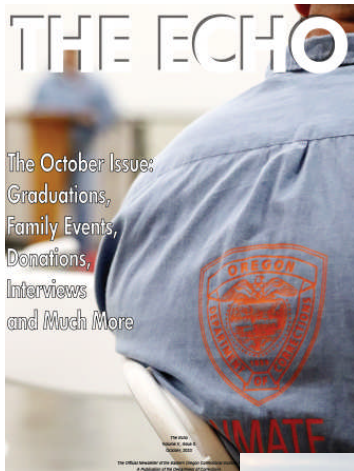
This new field will become effective on November 15, 2023. Current adults-in-custody may request to add their ethnicity to their ODOC's record after this date. To request this, please forward an AIC Communication Form (CD 214) to your institution's records office.

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Nearing the Sixth Edition of *The Echo*

Who Will Tell Our Stories?

Written by Phillip Luna



Prisons are historically places where people feel a loss of identity. We are numbered, organized, and counted every handful of hours. While the Department of Corrections does not support separation by race or ethnicity, the nature of prison and the inherent loss of self serves only to fuel this separatism. Initiatives like *The Oregon Way* aim to return incarcerated people a sense of their individuality. While it is not the intention of *The Oregon Way* to break down racial barriers within prisons, the collateral effect of preserving a sense of individuality will foster relationships beyond the color of skin and to the wider justice-involved population. As James Paulk said in the article on page 16, “*Realizing there are people out there like me who don’t look like me, it was huge.*” It takes time and a degree of open-mindedness to develop connections with different people - whether your differences are race, ethnicity, religion, or the color of your state-issued clothing. And it’s the open-mindedness of staff that allowed the interview to occur - that created the opportunity for a bi-racial writer to interview a former white supremacist and find sense of shared experience. To leave the interview believing that despite different upbringings, experiences, and life stories - we are just a couple of square pegs. No one fits. Not really anyway.

Five and a half years ago when I started writing *The Echo* I wouldn’t have even attempted to publish first-person journalism like Paulk’s story. But you build rapport and trust, you make incremental progress, eventually you get closer to your goals.

I am grateful that Grimace (Oct, 2023 issue) and JP (Dec, 2023 issue) allowed me to profile a part of their lives. Thank you. And I am interested in more articles like this: profiles of fascinating people; unique perspectives on topics that are meaningful; and stories of overcoming adversity. I believe these stories matter and they need to be told – because if we don’t tell them, who will?

We hope to employ more writers and include more volunteer writers this year. But even for those who do not wish to publish their work in *The Echo*, keep writing. Because it matters. And if you are ever feeling apprehensive or struggling to put word to page, just remember, ‘*A writer is someone for whom writing is more difficult.*’ If it is difficult, you are probably doing it well.

Thanks for reading and we look forward to the start of the sixth edition of *The Echo*, the newsletter for the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

CONTRIBUTORS

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

Get emails about institution news and events

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

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

Meet *The Echo* Team

Mr. Peters IWP Coordinator, *The Echo* Supervisor

Mr. Peters has worked in the Department of Corrections for 26 years. He has worked in Security, Inspections, and Correctional Rehabilitation. In 2016 he became the IWP Coordinator.



Phillip Luna
Writer
Editor
Photographer

Luna is the editor of *The Echo*. 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.



Juan Sanchez
Proofreader
Contributing Writer

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*.



Patrick Gazeley-Romney
Contributing Writer
Photographer

Gazeley is writer for *The Echo* and a certified facilitator for the Gardening, *Roots of Success*, and *Mindfulness* programs. He is a Journeyman Beekeeper and facilitates the Beekeeping Program. He was also the first person in the nation to complete the *Roots of Success* Apprenticeship. Gazeley has a Bachelors Degree from Portland State University. In his spare time he is the



Christian Reyes
Contributing Writer

Reyes is currently a clerk for multiple departments. He writes articles for *The Echo*.



Nick Shatlaw
Contributing Writer

Shatlaw is a contributing writer for *The Echo*. He enjoys video games, creating art in graphite and ink, video games, creating art-instructional videos for the institution channel, and video games.

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

The Echo grants permission to reprint articles, with appropriate credit given to the writer and *The Echo*.

All submissions remain the intellectual property of the writer.



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:
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 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

Upcoming Events

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.