Corrections Connections

Illinois Department of Corrections | *Monthly Newsletter* November 2018

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Message from the Director

Director John R. Baldwin

The Illinois Department of Corrections is proud to employ a number of staff who have served or are currently serving in the armed forces. It is important we show gratitude to these individuals and recognize their courage and sacrifice.

A number of facilities go the extra mile to pay tribute to staff who are military veterans. At Vandalia Correctional Center and Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center, designated parking spaces are reserved for Purple Heart recipients. At Shawnee Correctional Center, veterans are presented certificates every November. On Veterans Day, servicemen and women at Menard Correctional Center and Western Illinois Correctional Center wear baseball caps with their branch insignia. Many facilities have walls, murals, banners or bulletin boards dedicated to recognizing staff who are veterans or active duty military members.

We also cannot forget the men and women who lost their way after serving our country. I commend the facilities that offer programming for incarcerated veterans so they may be supported in their journey to successful rehabilitation.

Thank you all for your commitment to the Illinois Department of Corrections. I wish you and your families a happy Thanksgiving!

John R. Baldwin

An Attitude of Gratitude

In the spirit of the holiday, we asked these IDOC staff members what they are most grateful for this Thanksgiving.

"I am thankful for my two daughters who have given me the strength and courage to keep going even in the worst of times. I am also thankful for a job that allows me to provide for them."

-Correctional Counselor II
Katie Davidson
Southwestern Illinois Correctional Center

"I am so thankful for the challenges I face each and every day in the natural and spiritual life. Without these challenges I would not be the person that I am today. They have helped me to grow along the way".

-Correctional Officer Flo Thomas
Decatur Correctional Center

"I am thankful for the Department approving an Emergency Response Team at Dixon Correctional Center. I am thankful for the improved staff cooperation, staff from all departments working together to prove that we can reach our goal of decreasing staff assaults in our Psychiatric Unit. "

-Correctional Officer Scott Meyer
Dixon Correctional Center

"I am thankful for my husband of 29 years, my children, grandchildren, and my 19 years of rewarding employment with the Illinois Department of Corrections."

-Corrections Residence Counselor II
Patricia Jones
Fox Valley Adult Transition Center

"I am thankful for my family and friends, the life I have been able to provide for them, and the time we get to spend together."

-Correctional Officer Phil Sudlow
Danville Correctional Center

"I am thankful first and foremost to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who has blessed me beyond belief with good health and a wonderful life with loving family and friends. Secondly, I am thankful for my wife and family for being there for me through all the ups and downs of my career, even when they did not understand. The support and love that they have given to me is priceless. Thirdly, I am thankful to my work family who make my job easy. We take care of each other in good times and bad. We work together to get what sometimes seems to be an impossible job completed, then do it again and again. Without all of these people that I have mentioned, I would not be half the person that I am today. With that being said, thankful does not even come close to the true fact that - I AM BLESSED!"

- Major James B. Studer
Big Muddy River Correctional Center

Department of Defense Honors Illinois River Major

Major Cally Stein of Illinois River Correctional Center was recently honored with the Patriot Award from the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve, also known as ESGR. ESGR is a Department of Defense program that was created to promote cooperation and understanding between Reserve Component Service members and their civilian employers. ESGR grants a series of Department of Defense awards to recognize employers who support their Guard and Reserve employees. The Patriot Award reflects the efforts made to support our servicemen and women, including allowing time off prior to and after deployments, flexible schedules, granting leaves of absence and caring for the families of Guard and Reserve members. Correctional Officer Jesse Jump, a member of the Illinois National Guard, nominated Major Stein for his support of active duty military members at Illinois River. Major Stein works closely with the service men and women at the facility to ensure they are able to schedule drill weekends and annual trainings with ease. He goes above and beyond to support these employees, ultimately strengthening the relationships between service members and facility management. Major Stein is familiar with the sacrifices members of the military make, because he served in the United States Marine Corps from 1992 to 1998. Major Stein still holds the values he gained while serving, and now works to take care of the service members he supervises.

Maintenance Craftsman Dedicated to Memorial Upkeep

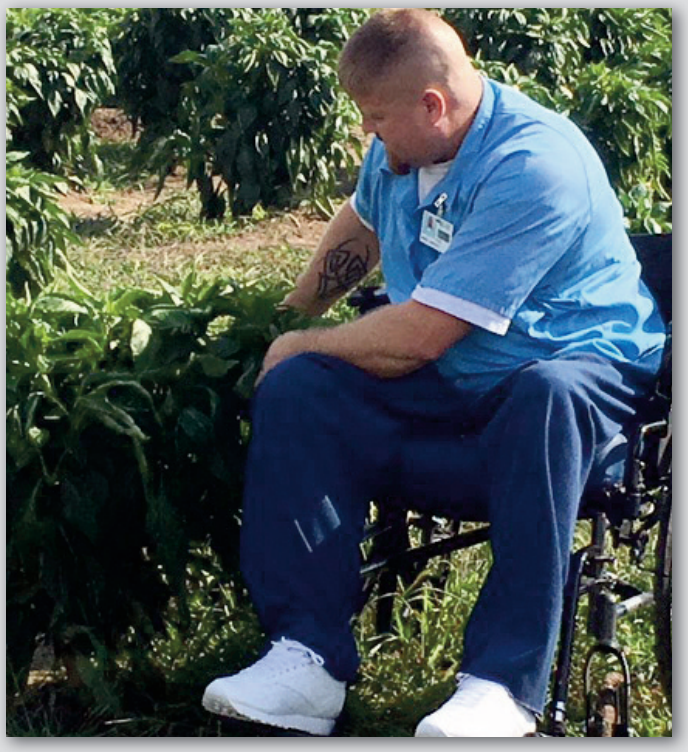
Every year, Terry Carrier, a recently retired maintenance craftsman from Hill Correctional Center, has donated an entire day of his time to make the memorial in front of the facility look new again. This year, AFSCME donated gift cards so Carrier could purchase mulch and other supplies for the project. The memorial is in honor of a correctional officer who was killed oversees while serving in the military.

Incarcerated Veteran Provides Peer Support

Ella Baker, a civil rights and human rights activist, once said, "Give light and people will find their way." This quote describes how Joshua Jewell, an offender at Robinson Correctional Center, has chosen to live his life.

Jewell joined the long line of military men and women in his family when he enlisted in the Marine Corps in 1997. He said he strived to be a good role model for his siblings and the military gave him a sense of pride, honor and respect. While in the Marines, Jewell said he drank heavily, but it didn't start becoming a problem until after he left the military in 2006. It was then that he used alcohol as a coping mechanism to compensate for a failed relationship and detachment from family and friends. Jewell said his drinking escalated after his brother's death in the military. He had several run-ins with the police and was eventually arrested for home invasion. During the home invasion, Jewell was shot twice. Ten days later, he woke up in the hospital and learned he was paralyzed and would have to use a wheelchair.

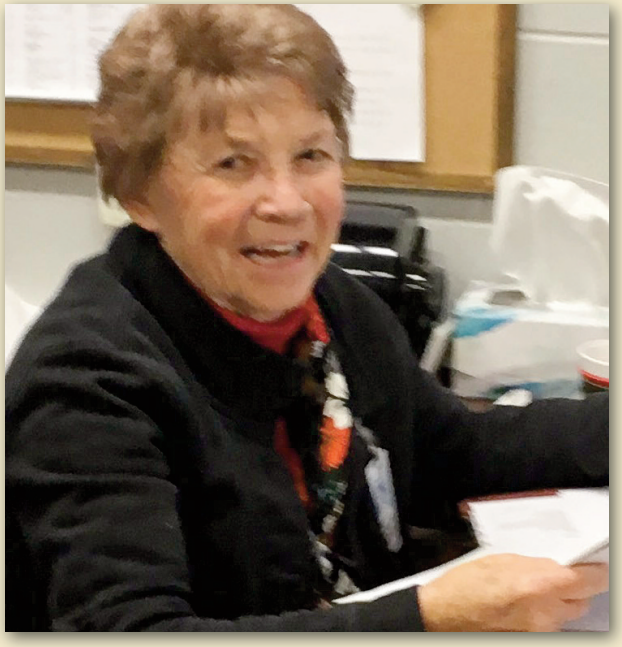
Jewell was admitted into Illinois Department of Corrections in 2015, but he did not let that hinder his desire for self-improvement and giving back. He has completed a number of college classes, vocational training, programming, and religious groups/services. Jewell is always willing to help out fellow veterans and offenders with physical disabilities. For example, he recognized that a young offender with a disability was having difficulty with exercising and took the initiative to educate him on the proper technique. He has volunteered countless hours in the facility's veteran garden and mentors and tutors other offenders.



Graham Offenders Raise Funds For Domestic Violence Victims

Offenders at Graham Correctional Center took part in a 5K to support domestic violence awareness. The event raised $110 for the Elizabeth Ann Seton Program (EAS) of Central Illinois. EAS is a multi-faith based local non-profit organization whose mission is to embrace the sanctity and dignity of life by nurturing pregnant and parenting women. EAS provides a wide range of support and practical assistance to low-income women, including mentoring, domestic violence, employment counseling, tutoring, computer training, and monthly educational meetings.

Records Office Coordinator Makes Big Impact



At Western Illinois Correctional Center, Carol McCartney is admired by her fellow staff for the work she does both inside and outside the facility. McCartney started her career with IDOC in 1993 and is currently the Office Coordinator for the Records Office at Western. Even after a long, tiring day at work, McCartney still finds time to focus her love and attention on her community. She is the Newburg Township supervisor, treasurer for a multi-township assessor district, secretary for the Pike County Historical Society, secretary of the New Philadelphia Association; and secretary of United Methodist Church Trustees. McCartney is also a freelance writer for a bi-monthly column in the Pike County Express newspaper. McCartney volunteers at the Historical Museum and sings in her church choir every week. On top of all that, she has even authored and published a number of books: Pike County, Soul of Western Illinois, The Last Recitation Bench, Bulletin Board Ideas, Vol 1 and 2, and Family Recollections.

Staff at Western say McCartney comes in everyday with a smile on her face. “She cares about everyone around her and asks how they are doing,” said Tracey Harrison. “Her over-pouring of love and affection for the people around her is amazing! She is kind, compassionate, and listens when most others are too busy.”

When asked about the many years McCartney has worked for the State of Illinois, she simply stated “I never wanted to be known as a state worker who only leaned on her shovel.”

Kewanee Offenders Give Back to through Art

Offenders at Kewanee Life Skills Reentry Center recently took part in a special project to support a toy drive in the community. The men spent their spare time painting bag boards in a patriotic theme. The boards were donated for a silent auction benefitting Patchy’s Red, White and Blue Toy Drive. The silent auction was held in conjunction with Schuyler’s Last Ride, a memorial ride honoring Sgt. Schuyler Patch who died while serving in Afghanistan. The proceeds that were raised from the event will be used to purchase Christmas presents for children in Kewanee.

Chart-topping Christian Artist Visits Stateville

Contemporary Christian artist Lauren Daigle made a visit to Stateville Correctional Center in October. The singer performed a concert for nearly 200 offenders.

"To see the men worship has always been my dream," said Stateville Senior Chaplain George Adamson. "The power of the Holy Spirit was evident on the stage. It was so worth it to see the men who basically have nothing and little hope become energized and let go for a brief moment. This will be talked about for a very long time."

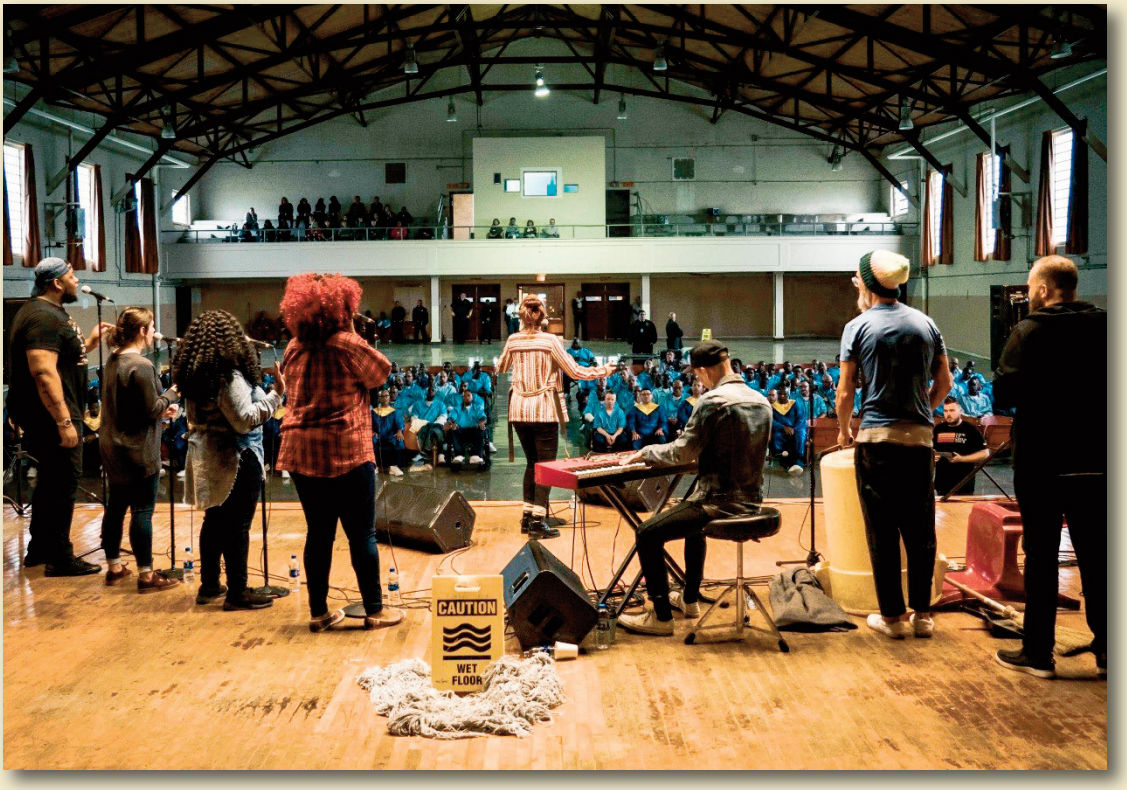
Daigle closed the concert with the Gaither hymn, Something Beautiful, a song which speaks of brokenness transformed into hope and healing.

After the performance, Daigle toured the panopticon; commonly referred to as the roundhouse.

While standing in the building that formerly housed hundreds of offenders, Daigle sang Amazing Grace.

After her visit, Daigle shared her experience on social media. She wrote, "Yesterday was one so unexpected. It was a day that was more than I can articulate. It was a day my eyes had never seen and will never be able to un-see. We sang songs with inmates whose voices carried deeper into our hearts than the echo of a microphone will ever release. I saw hope in the face of the hopeless, joy in the wake of sorrow, wealth in the gap of depravity, and life in the midst of death. These people have stories, and they also have souls. I watched heaven befriend those who are often forgotten."

The visit gave the singer a new appreciation of the gift of freedom many of us take for granted. She further stated; "With each day that passes, may I never take for granted what it is to walk around as a free man. I held a bottle of cold coffee upon pulling out of Stateville Correctional Prison. My hand had never remembered that bottle being so cold."



IDOC Staff Member Represents USA in International Powerlifting Competition

On October 17, Tamecia Robinson, Northern Coordinator of IDOC's HIV Unit, competed in the WUAP World Powerlifting Championship in Trnava, Slovakia. "It was a long road and took a lot of additional training and discipline," Robinson said. "It was an awesome experience." Robinson was one of seven athletes representing the United States. There were more than 500 competitors from all over the world, including Poland, Czech Republic, Germany, and more. Robinson won the national competition in May, which secured her spot in the international contest. "My winning total was 803 pounds. I had a squat total of 286 pounds, bench press of 143 pounds and deadlift of 374lbs," said Robinson. Robinson took up weight training to improve her boxing performance, but instead discovered a new passion.

Rapid Results

IDOC and Sheridan Correctional Center Honored with Sustainability Awards

The Illinois Department of Corrections and Sheridan Correctional Center were among 27 companies and organizations honored with a sustainability award by the Illinois Sustainable Technology Center.

Recipients were selected for their significant achievements in protecting the environment, helping sustain the future, and improving the economy. The winners were announced in October during a ceremony at the Union League Club in Chicago.

Sheridan Goes Green

Sheridan Correctional Center's engineering department used their knowledge and expertise to identify areas where energy costs could be reduced. The facility partnered with engineers from University of Illinois, The Savings through Efficient Products Program, Midwest Energy Efficiency Alliance and the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity. Through these partnerships, the facility obtained $288,175 in free products.

New LED lighting and low flow water fixtures were installed by in-house engineering staff. The estimated savings in gas, water, and electricity is $120,188 per year. Sheridan Correctional Center also received, at no cost to the facility, 51 aerators, 115 showerheads, 236 exit signs, 198 indoor LED lights, 191 outdoor LED lights, 672 occupancy sensors, and 13 vending controls. "Engaging in energy efficiency strategies has been a proven method of controlling costs," said Warden David Gomez. "Sheridan Correctional Center has taken a systematic and strategic approach to energy management and has since reaped the benefits and savings."

Be Well

Chief of Staff's Message:

To my corrections family,

After working in the corrections field for more than 23 years, I understand how difficult it is to not bring the stressors of the job home with you. This profession will test you physically, mentally and emotionally, which is difficult for many of our families to understand. We encourage you to make every effort to spend time outside of work participating in activities you enjoy, talking with your spouse, and making memories with your children. Especially during this holiday season!

Wellness of staff is a priority at IDOC. As you all know, correctional employees often experience high levels of burnout, which can take a toll on your health and wellbeing. Over the last two years, the Department, with the help of several dedicated staff, has implemented Staff Wellness Response Teams. These teams provide peer support for employees who experience traumatic incidents. In addition, "Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™" (CF2F) has been implemented as a recurring workshop that is available to all staff. These initiatives, in conjunction with the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and AFSCME Personal Support Program (PSP), are valuable resources that can assist you in having a long, rewarding career in corrections.

I have shared many holiday dinners with some of the most heroic, hardest working, men and women in this profession. Sometimes the turkey was tough, but the fellowship was always the best! During this holiday season I would wish you all peace, love and prosperity in the coming year. After a meal with friends and family many will doze in the warmth of a fire, or enjoy the traditions we create. Those who serve on Thanksgiving and Christmas will remain steadfast, serving justice and the people of Illinois. For that, I am grateful!

Edwin R. Bowen
Chief of Staff

Be Well

Beating the Holiday Blues

By Maud Purcell, LCSW, CEAP

Joy to the world! 'Tis the season to be jolly! Festive music fills the air; holiday cheer abounds. Everyone is happy at holiday time — right? Wrong. Truth be told, many people feel lonely, sad, anxious and depressed at this time of year. How can this be?
There are many reasons why people feel down at holiday time. Here are the key causes for the holiday blues:

- **Pressure to feel merry**: Do you feel joyous when holiday decorations go up and store windows fill with gifts? If you don't, take comfort in knowing that you are not alone. The disparity between how you actually feel and what you think you are supposed to feel can cause you guilt and confusion. This phenomenon can start you off on the wrong foot, even before the festivities begin.
- **Remembrances of holidays past**: Consciously or unconsciously, you have a mental record of previous holidays. Your mood may be contaminated by the specter of sad holidays past. If your current life circumstances are unhappy, however, you may long for the happy holidays you once enjoyed.
- **Reminders of loved ones lost**: Holidays are a time for reflection. All too often your thoughts turn to beloved family members and friends who have passed away. The subsequent sense of loss you feel can spoil even the happiest of celebrations.
- **Loneliness**: Holidays can be dreadfully lonely if you don't have a significant other. Additionally, separation from family members (emotional or geographic) can be particularly painful at this time of year.

- **Financial hardship**: One of the joys of the holiday season is to give to others. If your financial resources are severely limited at this time of year you are likely to feel insufficient, and as though you are "on the outside looking in."

- **In search of sunlight**: Many people are adversely impacted by the relative loss of sunlight they experience during the winter months. This phenomenon even has a name: seasonal affective disorder or SAD. Your holiday blues will only be exacerbated by limited sunshine.

Do any of these reasons for feeling bummed sound familiar? Don't despair. Here are some ways for you to effectively beat those holiday blues:

- **It's OK to feel what you feel**: If you don't feel as happy as you think you should, don't fight it. Forcing feelings that aren't there will only make matters worse, and there really aren't any "shoulds" about it.
- **Seek sun and endorphins**: If you find yourself feeling blue, be sure to get at least 20 minutes of sunlight each day. This isn't always easy to do when winter weather hits, but do your best. And don't forget to exercise. Both sunlight and exercise help to fight any chemical causes for your holiday funk.
- **Help someone else**: It's hard to feel down while you are busy helping someone else. Volunteer at a soup kitchen, wrap gifts for unfortunate kids, or spend time with an elderly relative or friend. Instead of feeling glum you'll find yourself experiencing what the holidays are really about: Giving to others.
- **Create your own traditions**: Contrary to popular opinion, there are no rules for how you spend your holidays. So if old traditions bring up unhappy memories, start new ones. If you don't have family, share the holidays with good friends. Don't wait for them to include you; make them welcome in your home instead. If cooking a Christmas dinner feels like a drag, do brunch. If going to a synagogue or a church service dampens your spirits, have your own worship service outdoors, at home or wherever you wish.
- **Stay busy and avoid unstructured time**: If you know the holidays are difficult for you, why not plan ahead and minimize your difficult feelings. Try to fill your calendar with fun events. Too much time spent alone may bring you to an old, familiar place: down.

Now here's the most important thing you can do to beat those blues: No matter what is happening in your life, think of the blessings you do have. Taking stock of all of the positives in your life — right here and now — can go a long way toward ending your "bah humbug" mood.

With a little bit of planning and forethought, the holidays can be wonderful — and not because they are supposed to be.

Maud Purcell, LCSW, CEAP, (2016, July 17). Beating the Holiday Blues. Retrieved November 14, 2018, from https://psychcentral.com/lib/beating-the-holiday-blues/

AFSCME Illinois Personal Support Program

The professional staff of the AFSCME Personal Support Program (PSP) is ready to help you or a member of your family with personal concerns or problems, whether they occur at home or at work. The PSP offers services statewide through a network of licensed professionals who are specially trained to provide confidential assistance on a wide variety of concerns and problems, including stress, marital/partner problems, parenting, grief, and elder care concerns.

You can reach the PSP from 8:30 Am through 4:30 PM, Monday through Friday, at 1-800-647-8776.

State of Illinois
Illinois Department of Corrections

Story ideas, feedback and comments can be submitted to Lindsey Hess at **lindsey.hess@illinois.gov**
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