



correctional **Newsfront**

Employees Revamp Mission Statement

By Susan McNaughton

Several months after Secretary of Corrections John Wetzel took office, he mentioned to me that he wanted to update our agency's mission statement.

This made sense to me, because the Department of Corrections had gone through a number of changes, and the last mission statement was updated in the mid-1990s.

We brought into the project Launa Kowalcyk, who serves as the curriculum development unit supervisor at the DOC's Training Academy and has a background in helping companies and other government agencies develop mission statements.

So Launa and I met with the secretary, where he dropped the bomb.

"I want a committee of employees to meet for only one day and to come up with suggestions by the end of that day," Wetzel said.

I sort of giggled to myself when I heard him say this, because, really, what committee could achieve such an aggressive goal in one day? But we took his challenge seriously.

In July 2011, the secretary issued a memo that said:

"In my first seven months of being secretary, I have expressed to everyone with whom I have come into contact that I believe staff is our most valuable resource; we are a leader in corrections; and the public counts on us for safety and our continuing efforts to reduce criminal behavior in our inmates.

"Now I would like to organize written language to communicate to our staff and the public a current and meaningful mission statement. As you may know, our current mission statement is dated and does not reflect our most current practices. Under my direction, a new mission statement for our department will be created to focus on these important areas and incorporate input received from

In This Issue...

New Law to Save Money.....	7
Helping Incarcerated Vets.....	7
Peer Support Specialists.....	8-9
Legislative Process Overview.....	10
Right-To-Know.....	11
General DOC News.....	12-17
Obtaining Re-entry Documents.	18
Re-entry Recognition.....	19

(Continued on Page 3)

Secretary Wetzel Talks About...

A New Mission

January 2012 marked one year since I became secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections.

Over the course of this year we, as a team of dedicated corrections professionals, have accomplished a lot, such as seeing legislation passed in which hospitals and treatment providers charge the DOC and county prisons at Medicare rates. This accomplishment alone, is expected to save taxpayers approximately \$4.5 million.

But I want to be clear that while we are charged with reducing costs, I am never going to implement a change that would put the public or our employees at risk. What we need to do is be smart about crime -- to continue our effective programs and eliminate wasteful spending without jeopardizing public safety.



Newsfront

Volume XXXVIII, No. 1, 2012

Newsfront is published by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections' Press Office, P.O. Box 598, Camp Hill, Pa.

ADMINISTRATION

TOM CORBETT
Governor

John E. Wetzel
Secretary

Susan McNaughton
Press Secretary/Editor

Susan Bensinger
Deputy Press Secretary/Writer

www.cor.state.pa.us

Over the next few months, you are going to hear a lot about something called Justice Reinvestment. Essentially this is an initiative involving all aspects of the Pennsylvania criminal justice system that uses data to drive policy and legislative changes. These changes will improve our system and reduce future crime. Public safety will be based upon facts and data rather than reactions to situations. An expected side benefit will be our ability, in the long run, to save money and reinvest that money into community programming that will treat criminal behavior in the community.



Mission Statement Committee Members

the field. I want it to succinctly describe what it is we do on a daily basis so every employee not only knows and works our mission statement but takes prideful ownership of its meaning."

Wetzel's memo continued to say that he wanted to provide every DOC employee the to opportunity to contribute to the process.

This memo essentially kicked-off the mission statement project.

From that point on, Launa and I, along with help from the Academy's Clerk Typist 3 Samantha Bergantine, began the process of notifying the field of this project.

We solicited names of employees from the superintendents and CCC regional directors. We wanted a wide range of employees – those with many years of service and those with only a few; people from all geographic areas of the state; varying classifications, ranging from officers and clerk typists to counselors and school principals; and a varying ethnic make-up.

Finally, after reviewing some 50 individuals, we narrowed the group down to 24 that we believed provided a true representation of our diverse workforce.

At the same time we were collecting and reviewing potential committee members, we also created a special mailbox for employees to submit ideas for mission statements and mottos. Over the course of four weeks, approximately 150 mission statement suggestions were submitted.

Samantha, assisted by Training Academy staff member Vickie Shenberger, gathered the information and put it into a spreadsheet to help us arrange for the committee's work.

Once the committee was set, Launa and Sam sent the spreadsheet of suggested mission statements to the committee members. Upfront preparation was the key for a successful one-day meeting, and we wanted them to have all of the information so they could hit the ground running on the one day the committee was set to meet.

Starting at 9 a.m. on Nov. 2, the work began. Secretary Wetzel personally addressed the group and laid out his expectations for the new mission statement.

(Continued on Page 4)

Launa took over from there and facilitated a great experience and process.

The room was set with four tables of six and one center table which was empty.

After everyone was comfortable, she had them pick colored cardstock, which would determine where they would be moving. Everyone thought the choice was limited to the color of the cardstock, but not so! Launa had stickers on the backs of the cardstock, and that determined their groupings and where they would sit.

Once everyone was in place, Launa asked for one volunteer from each table to serve as table leader. This was an interesting experience, and each table quickly had a leader.



Launa provided every member of the committee with six cards on which they were to write key words or phrases that they best believed should be in a mission statement. After everyone at each table did this, each table was tasked with discussing the words or phrases and eliminating any repeated ideas or phrases.

Once the duplicates were tossed on the floor, each table then used colored stickers to vote for the most relevant words/phrases to use in their upcoming project work. From there the words were put into an initial draft order.

So now we had four tables, with each beginning to frame the major points of a mission statement.

The next step was to actually begin joining the key words and phrases together into a statement. Each table had an easel pad and markers and used the index cards to write their first draft.

After lunch, the committee returned and moved from table to table reviewing each other's initial mission statement draft.

At this point, the tables were instructed to fine-tune their versions.

Launa now took one person from each table and brought them together at the center table. These





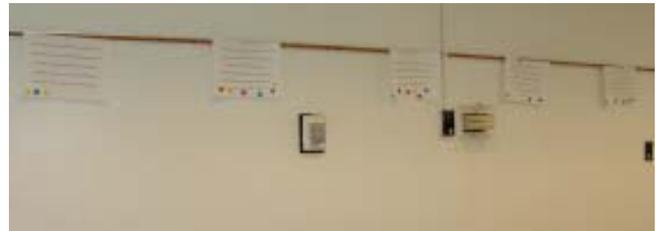
individuals reviewed all four statements and worked to combine them into one document. The rationale for this was to have the participants determine the strongest statements from the four groups to have a more cumulative submission.

Finally, the initial four versions along with the combined version were posted on the wall. Each person was given a sticker to place their vote for their favorite version.

They had done it! In one day, using individual and group exercises and motivational techniques led by

Launa, the group stayed on task and within the secretary's expected timeframe.

The top two versions were given to the secretary the next morning. Secretary Wetzel shared the submitted versions with key staff and tweaked them a little and combined them into one final draft.



The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections new mission statement is:

The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections operates as one team, embraces diversity, and commits to enhancing public safety. We are proud of our reputation as leaders in the corrections field. Our mission is to reduce criminal behavior by providing individualized treatment and education to offenders, resulting in successful community reintegration through accountability and positive change.

Committee Members

Jackie Vogt, counselor, Albion; Judy Jackson, counselor, Albion; Bob Volciak, center director, Harrisburg CCC; Jaime Luquis, unit manager, Allentown CCC; Kerry Kerschner, center director, Wernersville CCC; Ken Rideout, drug and alcohol treatment specialist, Progress CCC; Kenneth Jordan, monitor, Scranton CCC; Susan Swanson, applications developer, Central Office BIT; Tom Greishaw, executive assistant to the executive deputy secretary, Central Office; Sharon Buchanan, EOS, Central Office; Andrew Barnes, director, Victim Services; Wanda Manson-Hicks, CO1, Chester; Joseph Soltis, HR officer, Cresson; Brian Keller, major, Frackville; Matt Mauriello, psychological services specialist, Graterford; Sue Fazzini, drug and alcohol treatment specialist, Greene; Cindy Harper, clerk typist 2, Huntingdon; Arvil Chip Lovett, counselor 2, Huntingdon; Bernadette Mason, unit manager, Mahanoy; John Graham, ABE/GED teacher, Mercer; Joseph Peles, CO1, Pine Grove; Susan Darr, mailroom supervisor, Somerset; and Jane Hilligoss, food service instructor, Somerset.

Comments from committee members:

I would like to thank all of you for an inspiring day in Corrections! Thank you for this opportunity to participate in this historic endeavor. It was so awesome the way this organized process unfolded! I believe we walked away from this event with a sense of accomplishment for a One-Day Mission Statement. I met so many nice people who share the same sentiment. The high morale and adrenaline rush followed me right back to my "Home Institution of Somerset!" Thank you for your time, thoughtfulness and dedication to complete our DOC Mission Statement. And just as important, how you made each one of us feel "a part" of this historic event. I believe our DOC realizes that each person is an asset to Corrections and has something positive to offer! So, when we read our new DOC Mission Statement, we can only anticipate that all corrections employees will appreciate the meaning and thought process of how fortunate we are to have this career in Corrections!

Sue Darr, Corrections Mail Inspector, SCI Somerset

Thank you so much for the privilege and honor of being a part of the DOC's "new" Mission Statement. This was the best program I have ever attended. What a well planned affair. Your work is truly an asset to the department. Please know that I am always available for any help I can be. I really want to be a bigger part of the DOC picture and look forward to working with you again.

Jane Hilligoss, Corrections Food Service Instructor, SCI Somerset

I would like to send my deepest thanks to everyone involved in the committee. I would also like to say "Thank You" for allowing me to participate in the committee. This experience was a once in a lifetime experience for me, one I will always remember and be proud to have been part of. I was inspired by the group of dedicated professionals that were involved in this committee. I do believe that we make a difference in people's lives. I believe in what we do and hopefully our work on the Mission Statement will inspire others.

Jackie Vogt, Corrections Counselor 1, SCI Albion

It was an honor to be present for the session yesterday...and very energizing as well!! I have been telling everyone at Greene how well organized the day was and what a privilege it was to take part in working on the Mission Statement.

Sue Fazzini, Drug & Alcohol Counselor, SCI Greene

I was very skeptical about being a part of this, but I can honestly say I really did enjoy it and I am very honored to be part of this process. This will be an experience that I won't soon forget. So thanks again for a very memorable experience.

Cindy Harper, Clerk Typist 2, SCI Huntingdon

I appreciate the fact that I was nominated to participate in such an important endeavor, so thank you for the opportunity!

Kerry Kerschner, Director, Wernersville CCC

I thank you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to include us as a part of this important mission. I really enjoyed my day and learned a lot from those who I worked with.

Wanda Manson-Hicks, Corrections Officer 1, SCI Chester

New Law Expected to Save \$\$\$

By Susan Bensinger

In June 2011, Governor Tom Corbett signed HB 960, the Health Care Fraud Reform Bill, into law as Act 22 of 2011.

Included in this legislation was a section entitled "Inmate Medical Costs," which was mostly developed by our department's health care, legislative and legal staff.

The law requires that the rate charged for inpatient hospital care for state and county inmates be no more than the Medicaid rate. It also provides that a health care provider of outpatient services not charge the state or county more than what is provided for under the Medicare program for services to state and county inmates.

Another portion of the legislation enables DPW to seek federal funding for a portion of the Medical Assistance rates for state inmates. This legislation caps the amount providers can bill the DOC for inmate medical costs for inpatient services at Medicaid rates and caps outpatient services at Medicare rates. The effective date of the law was July 1, 2011.

The law is expected to save taxpayers and the DOC \$4.5 million and significantly change our current billing practices with providers. Once fully implemented, there will be a decrease in inmate medical transfers for diversion of care to preferred providers. The passage of this bill is the reason that the DOC's health care budget was reduced for 2011-12.

The DOC's Bureau of Health Care Services is working with the Department of Public Welfare to create a partnership for automated inpatient/Medicaid billing. Corizon, the DOC's medical contractor, will remain our intermediary for outpatient/Medicare billing.

Helping Incarcerated Veterans

By Susan Bensinger

There is a diverse mix of inmates in the DOC. The diversity includes racial, cultural, ethnic, religious, education and life path. Currently the DOC population is approximately 51,300. The inmates arrive at the DOC doorstep with a multitude of backgrounds. Inmates may have had careers in politics, law enforcement, finance, education or served our country in the military.

Currently, the DOC has approximately 3,000 United States veterans incarcerated. As with all inmates, reentry to society is challenging. With the prevalence of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder among the veterans, placement to acceptable housing is a barrier to these individuals. Many institutions are mindful of the incarcerated veterans and provide appropriate programming in this regard. Each institution has a veterans coordinator.

At SCI Houtzdale, an initiative being spearheaded by Christopher Reed has taken shape. Reed, an activities manager 2, is an actively serving member of the PA National Guard. He understands what it takes and how to get it done. He also uses his military contacts and new people he finds to assist the vets in finding housing, health care and treatment upon their release from the institution.

(Continued on Page 19)

Certified Peer Support Specialist

By Susan Bensinger

SCI Cresson is the second institution to hold a graduation for a newly offered inmate training. SCI Greensburg was the first to complete the training class consisting of 80 hours of instruction followed by 60 days of on the job training in the facilities special needs unit. The new certification is offered to the inmates with a strict set of criteria and will assist them in their reentry efforts upon returning to society with employable skills.

A grant was received in December 2010 from PA Commission on Crime and Delinquency which enables the DOC to implement Certified Peer Support Specialists training for inmates in six state correctional institutions. The grant will allow for the payment of the vendor to train the inmates and also pay the inmate certified peer specialist salary until the grant money is depleted. The wages will then be absorbed into the institutional budget.

The inmate population is approximately 51,300 with 43 percent now having or having had mental health issues and/or treatment in their lives. Special Needs Units (SNU) house the mentally ill and segregate them from the general population. Staff on the SNU's must be trained to deal with the volatility of the inmates.

Peer assistants will be trained to assist staff in providing direction in a housing community or program setting. This type of peer support is already in place in the DOC therapeutic communities with success.

The expectation is that by utilizing inmate peer specialists on the SNUs it will result in less disruptive behavior among this population. The approach is expected to increase stability of psychiatric symptoms among the SNU inmates. The anticipation will be a reduction in incidents and misconducts. The training and skills received will benefit the peer support specialists by providing a useable job skill in a desirable market.

Jobs in this field have been expanding and many agencies hire peer support specialists. Many agencies provide mental health services in a plethora of settings including residential programs, consumer and family satisfaction teams, advocacy organizations and drop-in centers. The PA Department of Public Welfare has established Peer Support Specialists as a civil service position with the PA Civil Service Commission to promote job creation in the private sector.

As with all employment, barriers exist. Inmates are cognizant of the criteria for this type of job position and that a variety of clearances are required. While it will not be a fit for all ex-offenders, the training will be beneficial to others.

Using Peer Support Specialists at SCI Cresson

By Michelle Houser, SNU Unit Manager

Since graduating our first class of peer support specialists in September 2011, SCI Cresson has been busy brainstorming ways to best utilize them in the facility. The goal is to hire all trained peers in creative ways and to best meet the needs of inmates in general. So we are excited to report that there have been several peers hired and there are plans for several more.

The peers hired to work on the Special Needs Unit (SNU) assist with a variety of tasks including basic life skills, paperwork and listening when someone is having a bad day. These individuals are becoming well known on the unit and the inmates housed there have begun to seek them out for assistance. SNU staff also refers inmates when additional support may be needed. In addition, the peers do a great job facilitating an educational group for inmates with hygiene issues.

Peers are also being utilized in the Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Department, including the AOD therapeutic community, outpatient programs and dual diagnosis programs. Peers participate in groups facilitated by staff and model appropriate group behavior. They share their experiences as a way to encourage inmates to open up and discuss their own issues. They also assist with treatment homework and provide additional assistance with anyone struggling with concepts presented in the group sessions. These peers facilitate the self help groups (AA/NA) on the special needs unit. The peer support specialist that has recently been hired in the Sex Offender Therapeutic Community also offers services similar to those in the AOD Department.

The role of the peer assigned to the Education Department is to provide support in the classroom for those students having difficulty attending to the material presented. The peer also assists inmates that would like to access library services, such as using the library computers or locating books to read, but do not always feel comfortable doing so. Another peer has been assigned to the general population housing unit that houses the medically infirmed. In addition to the aforementioned duties of the Education Department peer, this peer also assists with the delivery of meals and helps those with mobility issues.

Finally a peer has been hired in the Secure Special Needs Unit. At this time, this peer does tutoring for educational programming but will soon be participating in groups and in the future may do rounds and speak with the program participants. Future plans for the certified peers at SCI Cresson include hiring a peer to assist with re-entry issues and utilizing peers in all standardized groups in general population.

An inmate who had been assigned to a peer recently commented "this is a really good program." Staff agrees and hopes to make it an even greater success at SCI Cresson by utilizing our certified peer support specialists in the best ways possible.

Like Making Sausage

By John Coyne, DOC Legislative Liaison

Democracy and the legislative process have been described in this fashion -- It's messy, but the end result will hopefully be worth it.

In Pennsylvania, the State General Assembly conducts its business during a two-year legislative session. Currently we are in the 2011-2012 session, which begins the first Tuesday of January of the first year and concludes the last day of November of the second year. During the course of these two years lawmakers may introduce as many as 4,500 bills. Of these, possibly 200 may be signed into law.

Every agency in the Commonwealth has a Legislative Office which is the point of contact for lawmakers with that agency. The office is also responsible for tracking and influencing legislation that impact the respective agency.

During the course of a session the Department of Corrections tracks about 200 bills that in some way impacts the DOC. Of these 200 bills, about 20 actually are signed into law. During the process these bills are analyzed to determine the impact to the department.

The legislative process is designed to be deliberative. With 203 members of the House of Representatives and 50 Senate members elected from urban, rural and suburban areas of the Commonwealth, this naturally represents a wide range of views and interests indicative of their constituencies. Because of this, debate and deliberations can be lengthy, controversial and at times heated. Legislation can be introduced by any member of either chamber or party. As bills are introduced they are assigned to the appropriate committee for their consideration. The agenda for each committee, meaning what may be considered by the committee, is pretty much determined by the majority chairman of that committee. (For our purposes, most of the legislation of interest to the DOC and tracked by the department are assigned to either the House or Senate Judiciary Committee.) When a bill in either committee comes up for a vote, and if it is successfully voted out of the committee, this is the first step in the process of a bill becoming a law. While being considered in committee, members of that committee have an opportunity to amend the bill, meaning make changes which will also be voted up/down by the committee. There are occasions when a piece of legislation or an issue is of significant importance, of a complex nature, or particularly controversial, requiring a public hearing to further educate the members by providing testimony of varying views about the legislation.

When a bill is finally voted out of the committee it is placed on the calendar of the respective chamber (Senate Bills on the Senate calendar/House Bills on the House calendar). Many of these bills are subsequently sent to the Appropriations Committee which may require a fiscal analysis before it is put back on the session calendar for a vote. The bill may remain on the calendar for several days before being considered, at which time there are opportunities for any member of the chamber to offer amendments to the bill, which also must be voted for by a majority of the members.

The session calendar and what comes up for a vote is pretty much at the discretion of the majority leader who controls the calendar. When the bill eventually is voted on, and if it passes by a majority vote, it then is sent to the other chamber (Senate Bills to House/ House Bills to Senate). It is then assigned to the appropriate committee, and for all intent and purposes the bill follows a very similar procedure in the opposite chamber.

If any changes (amendments) are made to the legislation, the legislation following passage in that chamber, must then return to the chamber of origin for another vote which is referred to as a vote on concurrence. It is only when a bill passes both chambers with language agreed upon and voted by a majority of both chambers that it will then be sent to the governor for his signature and ultimate enactment as a law. If the governor vetoes the bill, the veto can only be overturned by a two-thirds vote of both chambers.

As you can see, not all legislation completes the process to become law. The bottom line is that legislation is reached by consensus and agreed upon by a majority of members. Very often, due to the many varying views and issues that arise during discussion and debate, compromise and the language in the bill takes a turn from the original intent. In the process of a bill becoming a law, varying policy views, political leanings, special interest influences, constituent needs and the unforeseen but very really human element all have an influence on the final outcome of the legislation.

Right-To-Know

By Susan Bensinger

The DOC's Agency Open Records Office, the office that processes requests submitted under the state's Right To Know law, is a busy one. The office has five employees which includes three attorneys, one paralegal and one legal assistant.

With changes to the Right To Know law that were made in 2009, these requests for information pertaining to the DOC have increased, as many Pennsylvania citizens are curious about how the DOC operates and how officials spend taxpayer monies.

In 2009, 970 RTK requests were received. The following year the requests increased to 1,107. In 2011, 1,249 requests were received.

What group of citizens is the most likely to request information? You guessed it; inmates. In 2011, 828 requests for information were from inmates. That is approximately 66 percent of the total number of requests.

The citizens of the state have the right to know and understand where tax dollars are being spent. They can rest assured that the DOC's RTK Office is hard at work providing accurate information to keep requestors informed.

SCI Camp Hill's New Superintendent

In December, Rick Southers was named superintendent at the State Correctional Institution at Camp Hill. He succeeds John Murray, who transitioned to the department's Central Office as a regional deputy secretary.

Southers began his career with the department as a corrections officer in 1990 and was promoted to the rank of sergeant in 1996. In 1999, he became a corrections counselor and then transitioned to unit manager. From that position, Southers was appointed to major of unit management. Southers was named SCI Camp Hill's deputy superintendent of facility management in 2008. A veteran of the U.S. Army, Southers served in the military police. He attended Harrisburg Area Community College and Central Texas College.

Virtual Visitation

A change in the provider of virtual visitation has occurred. The DOC has recently begun utilizing the services of ScotlandYard Security Services to assist the inmates and their families in maintaining contact. Locations are available in Philadelphia, Pittsburgh and Erie. Inmate friends and family members can contact ScotlandYard toll free at 877-658-8474. Within the DOC, virtual visitation sites are located at SCIs Albion, Cambridge Springs, Coal Township, Dallas, Mahanoy, Muncy and Pine Grove and for inmates presently housed out-of-state in Virginia.

Virtual visitation enables inmates to keep in touch with their families and friends who are unable to travel to the institution through the use of videoconferencing equipment.

Law Library Vendor

The DOC has selected Lexis Nexus to provide inmates with access to legal information as outlined in DOC policy DC-ADM 007, "Access to Provide Legal Services." The previous contract with Thompson West expired Nov. 30, 2011.

Under this new contract with Lexis Nexus, the delivery of updated legal information will be done via a portable hard drive each quarter. The updated information will be sent to prison officials who will install the information on the law library server at each prison.

Blood Drives Held

The DOC's Central Office and SCI Graterford each recently held blood drives at their respective locations. At Central Office, 28 individuals donated 23 pints of blood collected. This was the third blood drive held since the new Central Office building opened. To date, a total of 61 pints of blood have been collected.

At SCI Graterford, 88 employees donating 76 pints of blood in October. Four times a year blood drives are held at the prison.

Vehicle Search Training Held

The Department of Corrections' K-9 Academy participated in Vehicle Search Techniques training in September. Held at the Quehanna Boot Camp, the training included first contact, vehicle stop tactics, low risk stops and hidden compartments. Pennsylvania State Police Corporal Tim Abbate of the Northwestern Regional Training Center in Meadville trained 21 K-9 officers using both classroom and practicum techniques.

Graduation Ceremonies Held

Recently inmate graduation ceremonies were held at two state prisons to acknowledge inmates who have completed educational and vocational programs.

At SCI Mahanoy in September, 67 inmates earned their GEDs. Three inmates scored more than 3,000 points on their GED exams. To pass the exam, 2,250 points are needed, and 4,000 is a perfect score. In addition to the GED graduates, 187 credentials for various vocational programs and certifications were presented to other inmates. Thirty-nine additional inmates received a Kutztown University Fiber Optics Installers certificate.

At SCI Fayette in November, 67 inmates received their GEDs. In addition, 102 inmates completed vocational courses in business, computer aided drafting, carpentry, fiber optics, HVAC and welding. One inmate also attained a post-secondary diploma.

Remembering Staff

Recently, SCI Huntingdon dedicated a memorial garden to honor those staff members who have died. Attending the dedication were Charles Elder and James Elder, the grandson and son of SCI Huntingdon employee Charles Elder who was killed in the line of duty in 1954.

SCI Albion staff also recently remembered their deceased staff members by dedicating a memorial wall in December. Employee volunteers prepared the site and performed the construction, landscaping and lighting work. Donations for the wall were provided by the Pennsylvania State Corrections Officer Association and SCI Albion's employee association.



Dog Training Program Begins at Mercer

SCI Mercer officials recently teamed up with a local animal shelter to help inmates learn new job skills by training dogs for adoption. A new prison program called Corrections Adoptive Rescue Endeavor (C.A.R.E.) works with Strayhaven Animal shelter to teach dogs basic behavioral and obedience skills. The program is funded primarily by the prison's Inmate General Welfare Fund and donations from Strayhaven.

Remembering an Historic Prison Riot

SCI Pittsburgh's Honor Guard recently attended a ceremony commemorating Attica prison's 40th anniversary of a horrific riot. At the ceremony, survivors and families of officers who were killed in the 1971 riot were honored.



Inmates and Staff Help Those in Need

Staff at SCI Retreat recently conducted a food and clothing collection to help local flood victims. Along with donations made by staff, the prison's Drug and Alcohol Treatment Supervisor Art Seymour, and his wife, Donna, coordinated a collection effort by Boy Scout Troop and Cub Scout Pack 34. Donated items were provided to Luzerne County Community College evacuation site, Luzerne County Children and Youth, Volunteers of America and local shelters in the communities of Mocanaqua, West Nanticoke and Shickshinny.



In November, SCI Retreat inmates, through the inmate community development organization, donated more than \$1,500 to the Wyoming Valley Chapter of the American Red Cross to aid local residents affected by flooding that happened in 2011.

Annual Day of Caring

Several SCI Rockview employees used their annual leave in October to participate in the Day of Caring for Centre County. Sponsored by the United Way of Centre County, volunteers spent the day helping those in need in the local community. The service is available for qualified non-profit organizations, community recreational facilities, historical sites and other relevant areas.

Rockview employees who participated this year included Frank Dougherty, Pam Davis, Tonya Scott, James Ashpole, Dretta Andrews, and Vicky Baney, her husband Brian, Chaplain Tom Boldin and Darrin Sergeant.

"I have participated for the past two years," said Clerical Supervisor Pam Davis. "This day is about more than just painting, washing windows, laying new tile and planting trees. It is about giving back just a little of your time and talents to help out those individuals that are not in as good a place as they could be. It lifts the spirit and helps you to remember that we have so much and so many have so little."



Members of the Rockview Day of Caring Team included Frank Dougherty, Darrin Sargent, James Ashpole, Dretta Andrews, Tom Boldin and Vicky Baney. Here, they start the day with a hot cup of coffee provided by the United Way at Lambrano Field.



Rockview Chaplain Tom Boldin and Computer Specialist James Ashpole lay a new tile floor at Our Lady of Victory.

Smithfield Continues Annual Project

Ten years ago SCI Smithfield employees began a project to make a positive effect in the surrounding community. The goal that year was to sponsor the single wish of a child with a life threatening illness through the Make-A-Wish Foundation. The project's first year was an overwhelming success, and a local youngster afflicted with leukemia and her family were on their way to a week long stay at Disney World, with an opportunity to escape all the doctor and hospital visits and treatments, and a chance to share a wish of a lifetime. Hence, SCI Smithfield's "Child of Dreams" was born.

The project continued to grow each year and, in December 2011, SCI Smithfield celebrated the 10th Anniversary of the Child of Dreams project. At a presentation in the prison's visiting room a standing-room-only crowd marked the special day of having now raised and donated more than \$100,000 to many organizations throughout the surrounding area. This year the Child of Dreams project sponsored a young boy afflicted with spina bifida, whose wish also was a trip to Disney World, which is the most common wish for wish kids. On hand for the special ceremony was Barbara Becker, vice president of the Pittsburgh Chapter of Make-A-Wish, who presented SCI Smithfield employees with a framed Make-A-Wish print to celebrate the 10th Anniversary of the Child of Dreams project and to express her thanks for the work Smithfield employees have done to help so many youngsters see their wish come true.

The Make-A-Wish Foundation is just one of many organizations that have benefited from the Child of Dreams project over the past 10 years. Ten area food banks have received more than \$5,000 from the project; 600 families in the community have each received a large Christmas dinner basket; The Salvation Army's "Treasures for Children" Project has received more than 400 toys; 100 toys have been donated to Toys For Tots; four area hospitals have each had their children's wings brightened by a large donation of toys, games, DVD's and DVD players, wagons, books, puzzles and many other items; 100 "Healing Dolls" were distributed to children facing surgery to help them with their recovery; 110 book bags for needy students were sent to two local elementary schools; and hundreds of gift bags have been delivered to residents of the Hollidaysburg Veteran's Home. Local radio station, Froggy 98 and their well known "Christmas Carol" program, has been a part of the Child of Dreams for many years, and SCI Smithfield has now helped to make over 100 wishes come true for needy families during the holidays.

SCI Smithfield employees are proud of their tradition of giving and plan to continue their efforts for years to come.

Veterans Day Ceremony Held

In November, SCI Pine Grove held its third annual Veterans Day ceremony. The guest speaker was the District 27 Commander of the American Legion, Chris Kough. He spoke about the sacrifices that veterans have made in defending our country. Actively deployed SCI Pine Grove employee Douglas Altmus received the Blue Ribbon Certificate, which was presented to Superintendent J. Barry Johnson by American Legion Post 141 Commander Wes Wertz. The SCI Pine Grove Honor Guard also was on hand to participate in the ceremony, which was sponsored by the prison's employee association. Funds raised benefitted the Wounded Warrior Project.

Villanova Professors - Teaching Inmates for More Than 25 Years

By Rich Jacobs, SCI Graterford

Villanova University has been donating time, talent and resources to provide post secondary education to inmates inside SCI Graterford for approximately 25 years. Despite the restrictions common to any maximum-security prison, Villanova professors continue to travel to SCI Graterford and devote their services at no cost to the inmates or the Commonwealth. There are currently three college courses being offered at Graterford that require the same demands of the courses being taught on Villanova campus. Many inmates have earned associate and bachelor of art degrees throughout the years. In fact, as recently as December, the prison's graduation ceremony included three additional Villanova graduates who have earned their associate's degrees.



Villanova professors are recognized and thanked for their many years of instruction offered to SCI Graterford inmates.

What's Happening in Community Corrections' Region I?

During the holiday season, the regional office collected approximately 30 to 40 toys which were delivered to the Salvation Army Red Shield Family Residence located at 701 North Broad Street, Philadelphia. The location serves special needs homeless families in the Philadelphia area.

The Preston Elliot and Steve Morrison Show - a morning radio comedy and variety show on WMMR-FM - has held an annual Camp Out for Hunger since 1998. During this event, both DJ's "camp out" (i.e. live in a motor home) for one week in December to raise food for Philabundance, a non-profit food bank. The event has raised hundreds of tons of food to feed families in the Philadelphia and Delaware Valleys. This year the regional office collected and donated 78 pounds of food. Last year 50 pounds of food was donated by staff.

Contract Facility Coordinator Zakia Johnson, Clerk Typist Jancy Christian and Field Investigator Tom Wines collected 1,200 coupons for troops overseas. The purpose is to provide military families located overseas with coupons to use in base stores while they are stationed overseas. This year, the coupons were collected and divided among three military families.

Obtaining Re-Entry Documents

By Susan Bensinger

More than 90 percent of state prison inmates will return home one day. The DOC releases approximately 18,000 offenders per year with 70 percent exiting to parole supervision. The remainder completes their sentence, others are on pre-release status in community corrections centers.

All new commitments to the DOC are asked by their counselors about forms of personal identification that they have and those they will need upon release from prison. The process to acquire appropriate ID begins during incarceration so the proper documents are received prior to their release.

Each institution has a re-entry coordinator who helps the inmates prepare for their return to society. Re-entry coordinator duties generally are assigned to the prison's corrections education/vocation coordinator. However, re-entry duties are not limited to the re-entry coordinator -- other staff also are involved.

PennDOT also plays a role in the re-entry process. Inmates need a form of identification when leaving the facility so they can access services in the community and gain employment after release from prison. At each prison, equipment, including a photo backdrop and electronic signature pad, is available for the inmates to renew a driver's license or non-driver's photo identification. The application, photo and electronic signature is then processed by PennDOT via secure e-mail and returned to the prison for safe keeping until the day the inmate is released, when it is then given to the inmate.

In addition, many inmates don't have a Social Security card or a birth certificate. These documents can be obtained by application while incarcerated also. Time frames vary depending on the documents. Driver's licenses and photo identifications can be applied for six months from anticipated release date. While birth certificates can be applied for anytime during incarceration.

Those inmates who will need follow-up care, can work with prison staff to use the Department of Public Welfare's (DPW) COMPASS system to apply for services prior to their release from prison. The application process can be started 180 days prior to release and then submitted 30 days prior to release. When processed in this manner, services can be accessed upon the date of release for those inmates requiring continuing care for chronic medical conditions or severe mental health issues. In the event the inmate needs placement in a DPW facility, the process begins a year prior to being released.

As with any commonwealth citizen, fees are charged to obtain the necessary documents. The inmates must budget accordingly in order to have the finances to pay for the paperwork. Since the documents are important and necessary in order to return to society, inmates must be made aware of the importance of applying in a timely manner and saving the money to do so. In the end, it is a choice made by the inmates to use the tools provided by the DOC and budget their money to make it happen. In the future, inmates will have funds escrowed to cover costs and fees associated with re-entry documents.

Re-Entry Recognition

By Susan Bensinger

Mary Finck, the DOC's re-entry program manager, was recently awarded the Second Chance Ministries' Outstanding Achievement Award. Presented to Finck by Former Governor George Leader, the award recognizes her commitment to re-entry services provided to inmates. Finck works closely with DOC staff, as well as many community organizations and agencies, to establish contacts that are used to streamline the inmate transition process.



INCARCERATED VETERANS - Continued from Page 7

At times the inmate is serving life or a lengthy sentence. Reed simply asks this group, "Who will bury you. Will you receive a military service?" Many times it is not something the offender has considered.

From SCI Houtzdale, three inmate vets have transitioned into a community program named Tomorrow's Hope. With the help of Reed and this organization, the transition has been successful as measured by the day-to-day progress of each ex-offender.

Are you staying informed?



Do you live or work near a state prison? Do you have family and friends who work at a state prison? Do you just want to know when a prison emergency happens?

If you have answered yes to any of these questions, the DOC has a way for you to stay informed should an emergency -- such as an escape or riot -- happen at any of the state's 27 prisons. It's called AlertPA.

By registering online with the AlertPA system, you can choose how you want to be notified of an emergency. Choices include an e-mail, a text message, a page, a phone call or all of these options.

However, the system is only as good as you make it. You need to register in order to be notified. Registering is easy by using the internet. Simply go to www.alert.pa.gov and enter your information, choose the facilities about which you want to be notified and choose the method or methods of notification.

If you don't have internet access, the registration is easy. Simply call your nearest state prison and ask for the critical incident manager. He or she will gladly take your information and enter it into the system for you. It's that easy.

For more information visit the "Emergency Notification" page of our website at www.cor.state.pa.us. To date, more than 15,600 citizens have registered for this free service.

With AlertPa you choose how you want to be informed.