

THE ECHO

TEXAS PRISON NEWS

FEBRUARY • 2024



In Your Court

A Unique Writing Experience:
In Your Court: Part II



Success Story:
Graci Earhart,
Windham Alumna

Eat Up!:
Chow Hound
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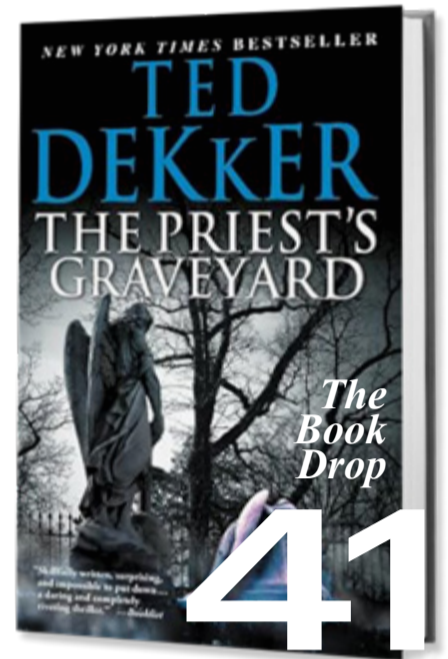
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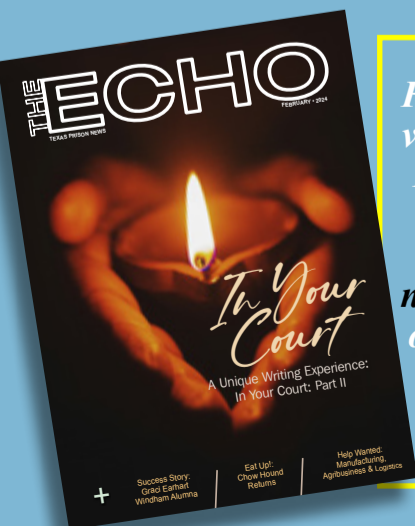
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THE ECHO

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Letters to the Editor

The ECHO
c/o Windham Admin. Bldg.
P.O. Box 40
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040



To the editor,

I am writing to express interest in the Jordan Unit reporter position. I am embarking on multiple writing endeavors and believe this would greatly add to my skills and experience while providing a service to my community. Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. I look forward to your response.

Timothy Orta
Jordan Unit

To the editor,

Hello, I am interested in getting information about how to become a unit reporter for The ECHO for the Plane State Jail.

Heather Crain
Plane State Jail

To the reader,

Thank you both for your interest in becoming an ECHO unit reporter. The first step on this journey is obtaining permission from your unit's warden. After you have the administration's approval, you need to find a sponsor to act as a liaison with The ECHO. This sponsor is an employee such as a teacher, library assistant, chaplain or someone who will be able to assist your accessibility to events and help with photography and sending in information. Once you've acquired both permission and a sponsor, send the I-60 or letter of approval to:

Managing Editor
c/o Windham Admin. Bldg.
P.O. Box 40
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040

You can also have your sponsor contact The ECHO for more information via email to Managing Editor Bambi Kiser at Bambi.Kiser@wsdtx.org. Good luck, and thank you for writing! We hope to soon welcome you to our reporting team!

To the editor,

I'm a middle-aged man tired of word searches. I've been inside since 2010, and I've never seen a crossword puzzle in *The ECHO*. Is there any chance to have crossword puzzles in the paper in the future? My family used to clip out puzzles from the Bryan Eagle and send them to me, but the mailroom on my unit denies clippings. The puzzles are very relaxing and help to take away a lot of the worries in here.

Donnie Adams
Lewis Unit

To the reader,

*Unfortunately, there are currently no plans on placing a crossword puzzle in *The ECHO*. There are, however, crossword magazines available that your family or friends can purchase and have sent to you. In addition, crossword puzzles may now be found with the gold level game subscription on the tablets. Thank you for making time to write!*

To the editor,

I am writing to request the address to write *The ECHO* contributor Damon West.

Sayantana "Sy" Ghose
Memorial Unit

To the reader,

*Damon West is a motivational speaker and author of the *Change Agent* book. He welcomes correspondence from residents and can be reached at:*

Damon West
P.O. Box 1451
Nederland, TX 77627



Dear Darby,

Why did you take the recipes out of *The ECHO*? I'm very acquisitive when it comes to recipes explaining ways to make awesome meals out of commissary items, and I feel like you've taken that away from me. What gives? I want my Chowhound back!

**An Aspiring Rachel Ray
O'Daniel Unit**

Dear Ray-Ray,

I was gonna' get all snarky with you, but I'll play it straight (as in a line, not George Strait) — sometimes we run out of room for content when we're finishing the print edition, so we pull things out and bump 'em to a future issue. Submissions such as recipes, short stories and poems are easy to bump when we need room. We had some very long features in the past few issues, so the Chowhound's section was held for the future. Good news, though — we have an entire page devoted to the Chowhound in this issue, so plug in your hot pot, get out your white bowl and spoon, and get ready to cook up culinary delights! Oh, and if you need a little taste testin', I've got a few hungry coworkers who would love to oblige! Thank you for writing.

Dear Darby,

The jig is up! I recently went on medical chain to John Sealy in Galveston where I met a guy from the Wynne Unit. I asked him if he knew your coworker, Will Hill, because I enjoy reading the Sports View. He said that Will Hill isn't a real person. He explained that the Sports View column is a compilation of writings from all the staff writers, each of whom report on their favorite teams/sports.

**Duped No Longer,
Ellis Unit**

Dear Duped,

*Hmmmm! Oh, sorry, I was just sitting here contemplating how quiet *The ECHO* office would be without Will Hill's yammering all the time. Although it sounds tempting to not hear him predict how the Dallas Cowboys are going to the Super Bowl every year, I still wouldn't want to live in that universe. That would require more work and less coffee drinking for yours truly, and that's not happening. The Darbster is built more for comfort than speed. Don't cha' know? Sorry to disappoint you, but Will Hill is an actual person. When we told him that there was someone who thought his articles were compilations from the rest of *The ECHO* staff, he got this really smug look on his face and said, "Yes, my prodigious knowledge of sports is both a gift and a burden." Great, now we are going to be subjected to soliloquies about his sports knowledge. Thanks for writing — and getting Mr. Hill started up again.*

Dear Darby,

I thought that I'd take the time to ask the Darbster a worthy question: if a pal offers you a bowl of food that he couldn't quite finish himself, what is the proper etiquette? Am I obligated to clean the bowl after I'm finished, or not? Personally, I feel that I don't have to clean the bowl if it is a friendly offer. Please share your wisdom with us bowl scratchers out here.

Andres "Sergio" Ayala
Allred Unit

Dear Sergio,

The eatin' etiquette of old was that if one person is doin' the cookin', the other one is doin' the cleanin'. I think your scenario would fall under that category. Is it required? Of course not... although it's also not required that your associate give you leftovers! Gratitude and manners go a long way. Just sayin'.

Dear Darby,

I am writing concerning the four-part series "Breaking Strongholds" videos on the FYI app (under religion on the electronic tablets). Can you update us on when season two will start, or do we have to remain in a state of anticipation? Also, I believe that two old movies "The Days of Wine and Roses" and "To Sir With Love" should be included on the FYI app since they are rehabilitating. What do you think? Finally, I will leave you with a word of wisdom from the eighth chapter of an ebook titled "Aliens or Americans?" It says, "The greatness of the opportunity is the measure of obligation."

William Ted Ballard
Powledge Unit

Dear B,

You have a great opportunity to tell the right folks about what you want on the tablet. Securus receives requests. You can send your request via the Comm Center app on the second screen. Others have requested movies and TV shows with positive results. Our Staff Writer Will Hill is waiting for the tablet to open up the "Star Trek Next Generation" universe to those within TDCJ, while I, myself am lookin' for the "In Living Color" reruns!

Dear Darby,

While talking to my mom on the phone, the officer called "Count Time! Everyone off the phones!" The guy next to me began a small 'You can't make us get off the phone' disagreement, and I joined in. When Mom asked me what all the commotion was about, I explained that the officer was trying to make me get off the phone during count time. I thought she would be proud of me for standing my ground, but instead she said, "Son, get off the phone. It's count time!" before she hung up on me. Darby, am I missing something?

Mr. Brain Washed

Dear Brain Washed,

Normally I would make some snarky comment about your willingness to follow the lead of some yahoo standing next to you in a prison dayroom. However, I believe your mom said it better than I ever could. The Darbster's number one rule for life is this: listen to Mom more and follow knuckleheads less.



TDCJ Updates Digital Mail Exceptions

TDCJ recently clarified its new Digital Mail policy regarding what should and shouldn't be sent to the Digital Mail Processing Center in Dallas. Both requirements and exceptions to the Digital Mail policy are outlined in the table below. This information is also available to residents on their tablets under the Digital Mail section in the FYI app and to those in the community at TDCJ.texas.gov.

Type of Document	Where to Send
General/personal mail from family and friends	Digital Mail Processing Center
Greeting cards	Digital Mail Processing Center
Photos	Digital Mail Processing Center
Documents that require resident's signature	Unit Law Library
Refund checks from outside vendors	Unit
Legal mail	Unit
Special mail	Unit
Media correspondence	Unit
Correspondence from organizations, businesses, and agencies	Unit

Mail that should be sent to the Digital Mail Processing Center is to use this address:

TDCJ
Resident Name and #
P.O. Box 660400
Dallas, TX 75266-0400

Indigent Fan Program

The Indigent Fan Program will supply indigent TDCJ residents with a Registered Property fan for FREE from the commissary. The program runs from Jan. 1 to June 30 each year.

To qualify for a FREE fan from this program, you must meet ALL eligibility requirements listed below:

1. Have less than a \$5 balance in your Trust Fund account.
2. Be classified with an indigent status for more than 180 days.
3. Have never purchased or received a fan through a TDCJ Program.

You must submit an I-60 to:

**Commissary & Trust Fund /
 Indigent Fan Program
 P.O. Box 60
 Huntsville, TX 77342**

Information provided within your I-60 must include the information below:

I would like to request a fan from the Indigent Fan Program.

Name: _____

TDCJ# _____

Unit: _____



Note From The Editor:

*Thank you for your many great comments concerning
The ECHO's new digital magazine format on the tablets!*

FYI: Traditional newsprint issues are still being printed and delivered in smaller quantities to the units and to other interested stakeholders. For readers outside of TDCJ, such as family members, friends and others, *The ECHO* is now offered as a worldwide publication, available for free on the internet via the Windham School District website: wsdtx.org. Readers who search for "The ECHO Newspaper" will be treated to the latest edition and recent back issues. Please let your loved ones know this is where they will find news of your accomplishments and success stories, along with creative efforts, opportunities for growth, and agency updates. They can see it at the same time as you!

The ECHO has been serving readers since 1928, bringing news and tools needed to change futures. We appreciate the unique opportunity to write and publish for the men and women of TDCJ — along with those who care about them.

Please keep writing! Your input is awaited, valued and enjoyed!

*Best regards always,
Bambi Kiser
Managing Editor
The ECHO*

Regular Mail:

*The ECHO
P.O. Box 40
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040*

Truck Mail:

*The ECHO
c/o Windham School District
Windham Administration Building
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040*



Women's Perspective Needed!

The ECHO is looking for women to contribute articles for the Women's Perspective section of the Opinion page! Articles can be on any publishable topic of any length. Pull out that pen and paper and share your thoughts with *The ECHO's* readership. All submissions are subject to an approval process and may be edited for content or length.

Rebuilding Lives. Reducing Crime.

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MANUFACTURING, AGRIBUSINESS & LOGISTICS (MAL)

Huntsville Mechanical Tractor Shop is seeking applicants

for the following positions:

JOHN DEERE TRACTOR MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Specialize in the diagnosing of mechanical failures and repairs of large John Deere tractors and tractor components according to manuals, factory specifications and knowledge of engine performance using hand tools, power tools and testing equipment.
- ★ Specialize in the removal and disassembly of large John Deere engines, transmissions and clutches, using hoist, jacks and hand tools.
- ★ Inspect parts for damage and verify dimensions and clearances of parts for conformance to factory specifications.
- ★ Replace or repair worn or damaged parts.
- ★ Operate motorized tractors.

TRACTOR MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Diagnose mechanical failures and repairs tractors and tractor components according to manuals, factory specifications, and knowledge of engine performance, using hand tools, power tools and testing equipment.
- ★ Remove and disassembles engine, transmission, and clutches, using hoist, jacks, and hand tools.
- ★ Inspect parts for damage and verify dimensions and clearances of parts for conformance to factory specifications.
- ★ Replace or repair worn or damaged parts.
- ★ Operate motorized tractors.

CONSTRUCTION-EQUIPMENT MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Analyze malfunctions and repair, rebuild, and maintain construction equipment.
- ★ Operate and inspect machines or equipment to diagnose defects.
- ★ Dismantle and reassemble equipment, using hoists and hand tools.
- ★ Examine parts for damage or excessive wear, using micrometers and gauges.
- ★ Replace defective engines and transmissions.
- ★ Test overhauled equipment to insure operating efficiency.
- ★ Weld broken parts and structural members.

Huntsville Mechanical Gas Garage is seeking Applicants

for the following positions:

AUTOMOBILE BODY REPAIRER

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Repair damaged bodies and body parts of automotive vehicles according to repair manuals, using hand and power tools.
- ★ Examine damaged vehicles and estimates repairs.
- ★ Remove upholstery, accessories, electrical and hydraulic window and seat operating equipment, and trim to gain access to vehicle body and fenders.
- ★ Position dolly block against surface of dented area and beat opposite surface to remove dents, using hammer.
- ★ Fill depressions with solder or other plastic material.
- ★ Remove damaged fenders, panels, and rills, using wrenches and cutting torch, and bolts or welds replacement parts in position using wrenches or welding equipment.
- ★ Straighten bent frames, using hydraulic jack and pulling devices.
- ★ File, grind, and sand repaired surfaces, using power tools and hand tools.
- ★ Refinish repaired surfaces, using paint spray gun and sander.
- ★ Remove broken glass, replace with new glass, and seal it.

AUTOMOBILE MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Repair and overhaul automotive vehicles.
- ★ Repair or replace defective parts and reassemble.
- ★ Repair or replace brake shoes and cylinders, adjusting as required.
- ★ Repair or replace and fill master cylinders for brakes.
- ★ Replace and adjust headlights.
- ★ Repair or replace shock absorbers.
- ★ Rewire ignition system, lights, and instrument panel.
- ★ Set timing as prescribed by appropriate manual, replacing spark plugs, ignition wiring, distributor parts and filters as required.

CLERK, GENERAL

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Sort and file records, either numerically or alphabetically.
- ★ Fill out all inside and outside purchasing forms and follows correct procedures associated with each form.
- ★ Use computer and 10 key calculators.
- ★ Complete required reports without supervision.
- ★ Prepare inventory.
- ★ Copy documents, using office duplicating equipment.
- ★ Perform general maintenance on duplicating equipment.

TRANSMISSION MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Repair manual and automatic transmissions in automobiles and light trucks.
- ★ Use hoists and jacks to raise vehicle to remove transmission.
- ★ Disassemble transmission unit and replace broken or worn parts.
- ★ Adjust pumps, bands and gears as required, using proper tools.
- ★ Install repaired transmission and fill it with proper fluid.
- ★ Adjust operating linkage and test operations.

Huntsville Mechanical Machine Shop is seeking Applicants for the following position:

MACHINIST

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Set-up and operate machine tool and fit and assemble parts to make or repair metal parts, mechanisms, tools, or machines, applying knowledge of mechanics, shop mathematics, metal properties and layout and machining procedures.
- ★ Position and secure work piece in holding devices.
- ★ Measure, mark, and scribe dimensions and reference points to lay out stock.
- ★ Turn down or mills stock to specifications.

Huntsville Mechanical Metal Fab is seeking Applicants for the following position:

WELDER, COMBINATION

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Weld metal components together to fabricate or repair products as specified by layout, blueprints, diagrams, work orders, welding procedures, or oral instructions, using brazing and variety or arc and gas welding equipment.

- ★ Perform related tasks, such as thermal cutting and grinding.
- ★ Repair broken or cracked parts.
- ★ Fill holes and increase size of metal parts.
- ★ Accomplish flatwork, using spot/bead welding.
- ★ Cut iron material according to specification or prints.
- ★ Weld pipe, galvanized material, and stainless-steel material.
- ★ Reassemble broken parts by appropriate welding.
- ★ Inspect material for required repair.
- ★ Ensure smooth weld, using power grinder.

Huntsville Mechanical Outside Service Center (OSC) is seeking Applicants for the following positions (MUST be classified as a G1 Outside Trustee for these two positions):

AUTOMOBILE MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Repair and overhaul automotive vehicles.
- ★ Repair or replace defective parts and reassemble.
- ★ Repair or replace brake shoes and cylinders, adjusting as required.
- ★ Repair or replace and fill master cylinders for brakes.
- ★ Replace and adjust headlights.
- ★ Repair or replace shock absorbers.
- ★ Rewire ignition system, lights, and instrument panel.
- ★ Set timing as prescribed by appropriate manual, replacing spark plugs, ignition wiring, distributor parts and filters as required.
- ★ Must be a G1 Outside Trustee.

FRONT-END MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Align wheels, axels, frames, torsion bars and steering mechanisms of automotive vehicles.
- ★ Drive vehicles onto wheel alignment rack and tests vehicle for faulty wheel alignment, bent axle, worn ball joints, and bent steering rods, using alignment testing machine.
- ★ Straighten axle and steering rods and adjusts shims, tie rods and adjoining pins to align wheels or installs new parts.
- ★ Place wheel on balancing machine to determine where counterweights must be added to balance wheel.
- ★ Hammer counterweights onto rim of wheel.
- ★ Install shock absorbers.
- ★ Maintain a log work performed on vehicles.
- ★ Must be a G1 Outside Trustee.

Applicants for all the above must meet the following requirements:

- ★ Must be classified as a G2, except for the two Outside Service Center positions — those are both G1.
- ★ No medical/work restrictions.
- ★ No major disciplinary within past year.



If interested, send an I-60 or letter with all experience to:

**Huntsville Mechanical
Huntsville Unit
Attention: R. Tubb**

Beeville Mechanical is seeking applicants for the following positions:

AUTOMOBILE MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Repair and overhaul automotive vehicles.
- ★ Repair or replace defective parts and reassembles.
- ★ Repair or replace brake shoes and cylinders, adjusting is required.
- ★ Repair or replace and fills master cylinders for brakes.
- ★ Replace and adjust headlights.
- ★ Repair or replace shock absorbers.
- ★ Rewire ignition system, lights, and instrument panel.
- ★ Set timing as prescribed by appropriate manual, replacing spark plugs, ignition wiring, distributor parts and filters as required.

FRONT-END MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Align wheels, axels, frames, torsion bars and steering mechanisms of automotive vehicles.
- ★ Drive vehicles onto wheel alignment rack and tests vehicle for faulty wheel alignment, bent axle, worn ball joints, and bent steering rods, using alignment testing machine,
- ★ Straighten axle and steering rods and adjusts shims, tie rods and adjoining pins to align wheels or installs new parts.
- ★ Place wheel on balancing machine to determine where counterweights must be added to balance wheel.
- ★ Hammer counterweights onto rim of wheel.
- ★ Install shock absorbers.
- ★ Maintain a log work performed on vehicles.

WELDER, COMBINATION

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- ★ Weld metal components together to fabricate or repair products as specified by layout, blueprints, diagrams, work orders, welding procedures, or oral instructions, using brazing and variety or arc and gas welding equipment.
- ★ Perform related tasks, such as thermal cutting and grinding.
- ★ Repair broken or cracked parts.
- ★ Fill holes and increase size of metal parts.
- ★ Accomplish flatwork, using spot/bead welding.
- ★ Cut iron material according to specification or prints.
- ★ Weld pipe, galvanized material, and stainless-steel material.
- ★ Reassemble broken parts by appropriate welding.
- ★ Inspect material for required repair.
- ★ Ensure smooth weld, using power grinder.
- ★ Must be classified as an Outside Trustee or G1.
- ★ No medical/work restrictions.
- ★ No major disciplinary within past year.



Applicants for Beeville Mechanical must meet the following requirements:

- ★ Must be classified as a G1.
- ★ No medical/work restrictions.
- ★ No major disciplinary within past year.



If interested, send an I-60 or letter with all experience to:

**Beeville Mechanical
Attention: P. Garcia**

Asbestos Workers

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

- ★ Must be able to write and also understand written instructions.
- ★ Must be able to pass physical, pulmonary and X-ray tests.
- ★ Must be able to pass a written exam at the end of 32 hours of training.
- ★ Extensive travel is involved.
- ★ Workers will learn to do a job that they can also do when released.
- ★ No prohibitive work or medical restrictions.
- ★ Must be classified as a G1.
- ★ Training will be provided by an outside instructor.

Interested applicants should send an I-60 or letter to:

Asbestos Operations
P.O. Box 4011
Huntsville, TX 77342

Wastewater & Water Attendant

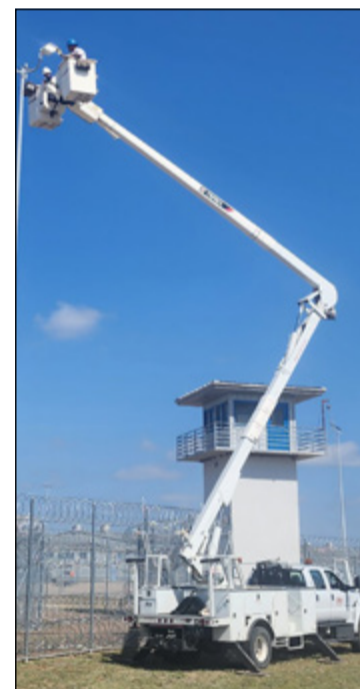
Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

- ★ Must be able to understand written and verbal instructions, have basic math skills (add, subtract, multiply, and divide).
- ★ Knowledge of mechanical repairs.
- ★ Wastewater/Water experience preferred but not required.
- ★ Ability to use or learn to use testing equipment (such as P.H., DO, chlorine, and ammonia).
- ★ Work in inclement weather may be required.
- ★ No prohibitive work or medical restrictions.
- ★ Must be classified as a G1.

Interested applicants should send an I-60 or letter with all experience to:

Water/Wastewater Operations
P.O. Box 4011
Huntsville, TX 77342

Facilities Division job positions include electricians, highline workers, A/C technicians, plumbers, kitchen laundry technicians, carpenters, welders and general maintenance. Applicants must meet minimum following requirements:
No medical/work restrictions.
No major disciplinary within past year.



Facilities Division Application for Job Placement

THIS IS NOT AN APPLICATION FOR WINDHAM OR COLLEGE VOCATIONAL TRAINING

Submission of a completed application does not guarantee job placement or placement at requested location.

The Facilities Division will make every effort to assign applicants into a requested position within Unit Maintenance. The Facilities Division reserves the right to assign applicants where needed.

INSTRUCTIONS: Fill out application form completely. Applicant is responsible for submitting all documentation of experience or education claimed with the completed application (transcripts, certificates, military, and/or community work experience, etc.). Completed applications may be submitted via **truck mail** to Facilities Division Headquarters, Attention: Maintenance Director or **U.S. mail** to Facilities Division Headquarters, Maintenance Director, Two Financial Plaza, Suite 400, Huntsville, TX 77340.

Name: _____ TDCJ#: _____
Last First Middle

Current Unit: _____ Current Job Title: _____

Requested Job Placement:

**** NOTE ****

Region Maintenance positions require G1/OT status
Unit Maintenance positions require G1/G2 status

Preference	Unit or Regional Office	Specific Job
1 st		
2 nd		

Education: High School Diploma Yes No GED Yes No

List College or Vocational Schools	Hours Completed	Type of Degree or Diploma

Work Experience: List all job-related experience. If additional space is needed, attach an additional application form.

Job Title	Company Name, Address and Telephone Number	Employment Dates	Job Duties

License/Certification: List all job-related licenses or certifications.

License/Certification	License Number	Date Issued	Date Expires

Date: _____



**Byrd Unit Modular is seeking applicants
for the following positions:**

CNC OPERATOR

DETAIL DRAFTER

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

- ★ Have completed Computer Numerical Control (CNC), Computer Aided Drafting (CAD), Industrial Design Drafting or Advanced Industrial Design Drafting.
- ★ Have experience with creation of 2D and 3D models and transforming them into front, top and right isometric and exploded views, then breaking the model into its component parts so each piece may be annotated in detail.
- ★ Have experience in carpentry, modular furniture or non-modular furniture.
- ★ Must be able to work well with others as a team.
- ★ Must be able to understand written and verbal instructions and have basic math skills (able to add, subtract, multiply and divide).

Applicants for all the above must meet the following requirements:

- ★ Be classified as a G1 or G2 custody status.
- ★ Not have restrictions that would prohibit performing job duties.
- ★ Have no major cases within the past year.

If interested, send an I-60 or letter with all experience to:

**MAL HQ/Inmate Work and Training Programs
Huntsville, Texas**



**Estelle Unit Textile Mill is seeking applicants
for the following position:**

WEAVER APPRENTICE

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

- ★ Be trained on the job.
- ★ Work and turn out daily.
- ★ Preferably not enrolled in any kind of school, classes or programs that would interfere with work schedules.
- ★ Lift at least 20 lbs.

Applicants for all the above must meet the following requirements:

- ★ Must be classified as a G2 custody status.
- ★ Must not have any work or medical restrictions that would prohibit performing job duties.
- ★ Have no major cases within the past year.

If interested, send an I-60 or letter with all experience to:

**Estelle Textile Mill
Attn: T. Grimes, Plant Manager**



**The Wynne Unit License Plate Factory is seeking
applicants for the following positions:**

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

LICENSE PLATE DIGITAL PRINTER OPERATOR

SMALL AND LARGE MACHINE MECHANIC

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

- ★ Proficient in the use of Microsoft Office, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator (Graphic Designer).
- ★ Knowledgeable in general maintenance and electricity (Mechanic).
- ★ Willing to learn.
- ★ Able to work well with others.
- ★ Able to troubleshoot.
- ★ On the job (OJT) will be offered for each of these positions.

Applicants for all the above must meet the following requirements:

- ★ Must be a G2 or G3.
- ★ Must not have restrictions that would prohibit performing job duties.
- ★ Have no major cases within the past year.

If you are hardworking, motivated, and interested in coming to work at the only place that makes license plates for the State of Texas, then send your I-60 with your detailed experience and state why you should be considered to:

**Wynne Unit License Plate Factory
Attn: M. Thomas, Plant Manager**

Getting Old — or Not?

Submitted by Larry A. Harris

Lynaugh Unit Reporter

“

With age comes knowledge, and I encourage you to share it with those younger than you. We are in this together.

Have I been gone too long or am I just getting older? Maybe both! Have you noticed the prices of everything in the communities have gone through the roof? It's all in the news. I thought the world was crazy before I came to prison. I remember going into a store that sold nothing but shoes. A young lady walks over and asks, "What brings you in today?" I looked at her and said as sincerely as I could, "I'm interested in buying a refrigerator." She didn't quite know how to respond. She had that deer-in-the-headlights look!

I was thinking about old-age and came up with several observations. For example, I decided that old age is when you can still hold a ball, but you're just too old to bounce it. Also, on job applications, they always ask who should be called in case of an emergency. Wouldn't it be funny if someone wrote, "an ambulance"? I also noticed the older you get, the tougher it is to lose weight,

because by then your body and your fat have become good friends.

I had the following thought about aging. Eventually you will reach a point when you stop lying about your age and instead brag about it. Some people try to turn back their odometers. Not me. I want people to know why I look this way. I've traveled a long way and on a lot of roads that were not paved, so I wear my scars proudly. They are the evidence



of the battles I've fought and won. So, for all of those getting old and thinking perhaps they have nothing meaningful to offer, think again. With age comes knowledge, and I encourage you to share it with those younger than you. We are in this together. ●

A New Journey

William Hill

Staff Writer

“

Learning is not relegated to a finite period of time, but instead it is a lifelong pursuit, and that if I apply myself, I can learn new things.

When I entered prison almost 29 years ago, my only accomplishment of note was being kicked out of two armies: the United States' and the Salvation one. I admit that's not much accomplishment for 27 years' worth of life. For the first couple decades of my incarceration, I was adamant about doing my time my way. In case you are wondering how that worked out, I can tell you in two words: not well. My determination to “do me” as the young people say, only led me to “doing” a long stint in Restrictive Housing. That “time out” turned out to be a blessing in disguise because it was there that I encountered the real me, and I did not like the person I met very much.

It was that epiphany that was the impetus for me taking the first positive step I had taken in a very long time — signing up for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice's (TDCJ) Gang Renouncement And Disassociation (GRAD) program.

It was in GRAD that I learned about the Franklin Reality Model, and the need of examining potential decisions in the light of whether they would meet my needs over time. When I accepted the truth that most of my past decisions did not meet that criteria, I was able to also recognize that there was nothing I could do to change them. I resolved to try and make the best decisions I can going forward.

I also learned that learning is not relegated to a finite period of time, but instead it is a lifelong pursuit, and that if I apply myself, I can learn new things.

After completing GRAD, I was transferred to the Wynne Unit, where after a brief stint of scrubbing pots and pans in the kitchen, I got a job with The ECHO. I still

remember my first day at my new job, when I sat down at an empty desk and suddenly realized that my only experience with computers was (almost) rescuing Princess Peach while playing Donkey Kong.

Too embarrassed to ask my coworker how to boot up the computer, I instead surreptitiously watched him out of the corner of my eye and did what he did. Long after my coworker was logged in and working, I continued to stare at a blank computer monitor. I asked if the computer I was using was slow or something. My coworker took one look at my computer and told me that I had only turned on the monitor. I truly was on the path to learning new things.

When Windham School District offered The ECHO workers the opportunity to enroll in a Graphic Design apprenticeship program, I jumped at it. I knew the basics of graphic design programs such as Adobe InDesign, Adobe Illustrator and Adobe Photoshop, but I also knew that I needed to be more proficient with them if I wanted to work in that field upon reentry.

After completing the necessary hours, this former high school dropout proudly received his Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship through the United States Department of Labor at Windham's Wynne campus January 2024 graduation.

I don't know what the old me would think about all of this, and truthfully, I no longer care. The person I was when I entered prison is gone, and I am much too busy on my new journey of being a lifelong learner to waste time thinking about him. ●

Better Person, Better Plan

Brandon Hayes

Contributing Writer, Wynne Unit

“

Life when lived to the nth degree, to the extreme, can render even the most prudent-minded person frayed and off-balanced.

It's no secret that many of us arrived here broken by various wayward lifestyles. Life when lived to the nth degree, to the extreme, can render even the most prudent-minded person frayed and off-balanced. Not to mention what it can do to a person enmeshed in an extreme lifestyle of drugs, crime and vice. Oftentimes, this has left us pounding our heads against a cell wall, blowing up a bail-bondsman's phone — or worse.

You have all heard my mantra stated in a myriad of different ways: prison, if and when used positively, can produce life changing results. What is totally mindboggling is the fact that doing time can render our lives down to the most simple and basic of forms. Rock bottom for some of us has actually borne us vast improvements once we came to a state in life where the only direction left to go is up. Well, there is still the option to wallow in the refuse of pain, shame and the aftermath of our bad decisions.

Improvements made over the course of time can revamp even the most dilapidated of structures. Time can heal, and oftentimes, it does heal the individual by forcibly removing them from the caustic environment they were trapped in.

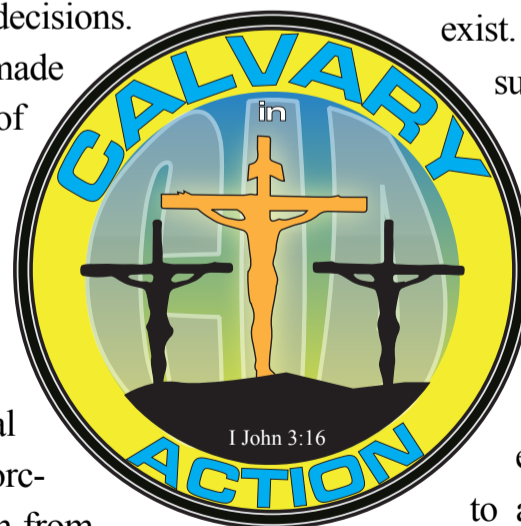
Now, we have all heard the glamorization of the often-peddled ideal where everyone is a kingpin, everyone has a Mercedes and a Porsche, and everyone has it made

in the shade. The stark reality is that many of us were products of very shortsighted and badly-made plans. The trappings of our former lifestyles, however rosy and grand we may choose to paint them, were just that: trappings. Many reading this have ignored the warning signs, dodged the red flags and cut the lifelines that were intended to impede their descent into the depths of personal chaos. Thankfully, those of us lucky enough to still be alive, now have an opportunity to hold up the warning signs, throw the red flags and answer the call on the lifeline when someone else is up against the ropes of life. We are not dead, and that in itself is nothing short of a miracle.

The same sad pathetic scenarios that played us out are still playing today. There's a different cast of characters, maybe even a few left-over players from yesteryear, but those same scenes definitely still

exist. Today a wave is surging through the seas of TDCJ, and the tides of the time are bringing life-changing programs — life preservers, if you will — to anyone willing to grab ahold of them. We are

seeing never-before-seen changes implemented right before our eyes. Most of all, there is a major culture shift occurring where people are presented with options not only to succeed, but to thrive. ●



Honoring the Complicated Truth:

Embracing Complexity in a Simplistic World

Landon Brook

Stevenson Unit Reporter

In a world that often seeks simplicity and quick answers, it is crucial to honor the complicated truth. Life is rarely black and white, and oversimplifying complex issues can lead to misunderstandings, division and even injustice. By embracing the complexity of the world around us, we can foster empathy, understanding and a more-nuanced perspective.

The first step in honoring the complicated truth is acknowledging that it exists. Many of the issues we face today are multifaced with various factors and perspectives at play. Whether it's social, political or personal matters, understanding that there are often multiple sides to a story is essential. By recognizing this complexity, we can avoid falling into the trap of oversimplification and embrace a more comprehensive understanding.

Embracing the complicated truth also means being open to different viewpoints. It is easy to surround ourselves with like-minded individuals and echo chambers that reinforce existing beliefs. However, by seeking diverse perspectives and engaging in respectful dialogue, we can gain a deeper understanding of complex issues. This openness allows us to challenge our assumptions and broaden our horizons.

Honoring the complicated truth requires us to resist the temptation of quick judgement and snap decisions. In a fast-paced world driven by instant gratification, taking the time to gather information, analyze different perspectives and consider

the nuances of a situation is crucial. This approach allows one to make more informed and thoughtful decisions and to avoid the pitfalls of knee-jerk reactions.

Another aspect of honoring complicated truth is recognizing that people are complex beings. Each individual has a unique set of experiences, beliefs and values that shape their perspective. By acknowledging this complexity, we can approach others with empathy and understanding even when we disagree. It is essential to resist the urge to label or stereotype individuals based on a single aspect of their identity or opinion. Instead, we should strive to see the whole person and appreciate the richness of their experience.

However, embracing the complicated truth means being comfortable with uncertainty. Life is full of gray areas and not everything can be neatly categorized or resolved. It is okay to acknowledge that some questions may not have clear-cut answers or that certain issues may require ongoing exploration and discussion. By embracing this uncertainty, we can foster a culture of curiosity and continuous learning.

In conclusion, honoring complicated truth is a necessary step toward a more inclusive and understanding society. By recognizing the complexity of the world we live in, we can navigate the complexities of life with empathy and wisdom. Let us strive to embrace the richness and diversity of the world around us, and in so doing, create a more nuanced and compassionate society. ●

“
By seeking diverse perspectives and engaging in respectful dialogue, we can gain a deeper understanding of complex issues.”



Change Agent Graduate
Chad White

Coffee Bean Banter

By Edgar Arturo Sazo

“Being a Change Agent is really about interacting with the environment in one of two ways. You can be someone that is going to conform to the environment, or you can be someone that is going to affect the environment,” said resident Jason Chad White of the Wynne Unit.

White was already a life coach on the Wynne Unit when he enrolled to take the Change Agent class. He had previously taken classes in behavioral and cognitive modification on his journey to becoming a life coach. Change Agent was simply meant to reinforce the curriculum he had already been taught. As the class progressed, however, he began to feel like the Change Agent course was teaching him additional information.

“I learned that having emotions and feelings is really okay; it’s just a part of being human. It is what you do with those emotions that make you who you are,” White said.

One of the tenets of the Change Agent program is the Coffee Bean message: affect the proverbial water around oneself. To do that, “coffee beans,” those people with positive attitude and influence, are encouraged and expected to engage with others to affect positive change in their lives. As the only Life Coach at the Wynne Unit trusty camp, White interacts with many residents and their challenges. He often coaches and guides residents going through tough situations or emotional difficulties.

“Sometimes you might pour into a guy and think nothing you say is getting through to him, and a month later he comes up to you and says, ‘Hey, you didn’t just throw me to the side like everyone else did,’” White said. “It’s things like that, that motivate me. Even if it is only one person, it matters.”

“
I once had someone else there to be a Change Agent for me. They were that coffee bean in my life, and I want to be that person for someone else.

Change Agent Graduate
Chad White

As is the case with many residents, White had to move from one mindset to another.

“When I first came in here, I was the person that infected my environment [negatively]. I drug other people down with me,” White said. “My [attitude]change started back in 2017, and since I have made that change, when I see others caught in that destructive behavior, I feel a need to pull them up. I once had someone else there to be a Change Agent for me. They were that coffee bean in my life, and I want to be that person for someone else.”

The Change Agent curriculum includes a component outlining the importance of integrity in a person’s life. The participant is asked to analyze their own core values. The participant must then look at all their decisions through the lens of these values. Integrity demands an honest reflection of a person’s life against their own declared values.

“When your words and your actions don’t add up, then what you’re saying is void. Your words no longer have meaning,” White said. ●

Editor’s note: Coffee Bean Banter is a new feature designed to highlight the Change Agent program and its impact on the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) population. The message of the program is we can deal with our environment and circumstances in one of three ways. We can be like a carrot in boiling water by turning soft and weak, like an egg which becomes hard and unforgiving, or like a coffee bean, which instead of being changed by the boiling water, changes the water into coffee.

Graci Earhart Windham Alumna

William Hill - Staff Writer

For Graci Earhart, prison was a defining time in her life, yet it is not what defines her. During her incarceration at the Hilltop Unit in the early 2000s, Earhart recognized an opportunity to rewrite the narrative of her life. Instead of complaining about her circumstances, she looked for Windham School District (Windham) programs in which she could enroll.

“I saw a poster announcing the creation of a new computer class, and the other classes had waiting lists,” Earhart said, describing one of the determining factors that directed her choice of signing up for Windham’s Business Information Management (BIM) class. “Plus, I thought it sounded like it would be something interesting to learn.”

Today, Earhart works at Mission Waco, where she assists those experiencing homelessness by utilizing the technical and interpersonal skills she learned in BIM. The most rewarding part of her job is being able to conduct internet job searches and assist people with obtaining paperwork for identification purposes and employment.

“That one Windham class [BIM] has opened a lot of doors for me,” Earhart said. “Learning the skills necessary to be able to do this type of work was important, but it also taught me people skills and how to ask the right questions.”

Part of controlling the narrative of her life was putting the past behind her. She views this as an important aspect of the reentry process, but she sees many former residents neglecting it.

“I am grateful to have received another chance and to be able to put that part of my life behind me,” Earhart said. “I see women who are out of prison, yet that is still their identity. I try to help them see that they need to put that part of their life behind them and move forward.”

Earhart admits that before her conviction and subsequent incarceration in the early 2000s, she preferred to work alone, and she rarely asked for help.

“One of the hardest things for me to learn was that it is okay to ask for help,” Earhart said. “I was always of the mindset that I could figure things out on my own. After going through the BIM class, I see how important a strong support group is

in being successful.”

Earhart credits Windham BIM instructor Pam Patterson with showing her how to work with others. Although she did not like doing it at the time, she now recognizes the importance of that job skill.

“In Ms. Patterson’s class, you had to work in teams, brainstorm together and come up with solutions to problems together. She knew that those were the skills a person must have in today’s workplace,” Earhart said.

The BIM class teaches students how to use the programs that are most in demand in

most business settings. When Earhart was taking the class years ago, one of the software applications she learned how to use was PageMaker, a professional graphic design product. Earhart now recalls that volunteers and working professionals sometimes visited the class to discuss popular business products, such as this software.

Following her reentry in 2005, she was talking to a friend at a local church who mentioned they were looking for a secretary. They wanted someone who knew how to use the PageMaker software.

“They were having such a difficult time finding someone who knew how to use that program,” Earhart said. “That was just one of those ‘I will never use this stuff’ moments that helped me get a job.”

Earhart’s successful reentry into society did not just happen, and she has a very important message for all Texas Department of Criminal Justice residents who believe their lives ended when they came to prison. Earhart said, “Incarceration doesn’t have to be a hurdle, unless you make it one.” ●

One of the hardest things for me to learn was that it is okay to ask for help.



THE JUKE BOX

Bruce Ruckman
Contributing Writer, Clements Unit



This list is intended to help residents navigate through the music app featured on the tablets. Consider it something like a “Top 40.” Depending on the subscription, all songs may not be available. FYI: Just type the listing on the search bar and enjoy!

Here is a Top 40 List:

1. 100% Rock ‘N’Roll of 1999
2. 13 4U
3. “1964,” The Tribute
4. The Acoustic Collection
5. All the Hits, Vol. 1: Greatest Tribute to AC/DC
6. All the Hits, Vol. 2: Greatest Tribute to AC/DC
7. All the Hits: Greatest Tribute to Def Leppard
8. All the Hits: Greatest Tribute to Kid Rock
9. The All-Time Greatest Hits: Bachman-Turner Overdrive (live)
10. The All-Time Greatest Hits: Kool & the Gang
11. The All-Time Greatest Hits: Leann Rimes
12. Best of Blues from Cell Block D
13. Cool Country Hits, Vol. 1 – Vol. 4
14. D’rive, Vol. 1 – Vol. 7
15. The Earth, Wind, and Fire Experience – Live in Europe
16. Essential Pop Songs of the 80s: Greatest Hits of 1980
17. Essential Pop Songs of the 90s: Greatest Hits of 1991
18. Essential Pop Songs of the 90s: Greatest Hits of 1997
19. Essential Pop Songs of the 90s: Greatest Hits
20. The Foreigner Experience
21. Golden Hits Forever, Vol. 1 (re-recorded)
22. Golden Hits Forever, Vol. 2
23. Golden Hits Forever, Vol. 3
24. Golden Hits Forever, Vol. 4
25. Golden Hits Forever, Vol. 5
26. Golden Hits Forever, Vol. 6
27. Golden Hits Forever, Vol. 7 (re-recorded)
28. The Great Pretenders
29. Greatest Hits (not just ours)
30. A Greatest Hits Unplugged Tribute
31. Hits (America)
32. Improvisations
33. Infinite Impressions of Eagles
34. Infinite Impressions of Guns n Roses
35. Infinite Impressions of Madonna
36. Infinite Impressions of Phil Collins
37. Infinite Impressions of Rolling Stones
38. Infinite Impressions of Police
39. Infinite Impressions of U2
40. Infinite Impressions of Elton John ●

In Your Court



A Unique Writing
Experience:
In Your Court: Part II

Andrew R. Reynolds
Contributing Writer, Wynne Unit

Editor's Note: The ECHO continues a creative partnership with readers to write a unique fiction story that grows across new issues. The ECHO issued a writing prompt challenge (Part I) a few issues ago, and writers quickly responded with their work, continuing this unpredictable story. It's time to announce the selected writer for Part II, and invite others to work on Part III. Read on!

Welcome back!

Whew! There were many submissions to review, and it was difficult to decide who would be the author of the next segment of *The ECHO's* collaborative creative story.

Thank you so much for all the positive feedback. It seems quite a few people enjoyed the concept of In Your Court. If you are a new reader, let me explain how this section of The Pen works.

The collective writers of TDCJ are writing a unique story together, 500-1,000 words at a time. Each segment is going to be written by a different resident author. So far, we have two sections written. One, the intro, was written by me, the next by ... Brandon Goshorn of the Hightower Unit. Both of those are in the section following this.

Now, that's not to say that all of the other submissions weren't good. In fact, some of them were so excellent that it made it difficult for us to decide which to use. There were "Wows!" in *The ECHO* office as the new submissions were opened and read. The pieces were fun to read, well-done, and unpredictable in their themes and plot development. Props to Leticia Arcos, Darius Davis, Ahmad Muneeb, William Dee, Robert Mielnicki, Ray Bobby Card and Trey Boone for submitting their writings! What a great bunch of writers. If it were up to me, you would all get a place. Sadly, we can only pick one. But, please, write again. And again. And again.

For the future, *The ECHO* would like to see a bit more collaboration from the populace. That being said, even if you don't intend on writing your own response, please send in a comment or two about the story and let us know what you think.

If you are considering submitting some of your own writing for the following segment of In Your Court, here are guidelines: First, keep it short. A good length is 500-1,000 words. Second, be prepared to have your work edited for content, grammar, style, etc. There may also be additions or subtractions to your submission for the sake of continuity. Remember, this is a collaborative project and melting pot of many ideas and styles. Third, when it comes to subject matter, keep it clean. Drug use, violence and darker themes may be part of life, but use your best discretion when it comes to whether to incorporate this into your story. It may be great writing for a different venue. That's pretty much it. Your submission



will be reviewed with all the others and, if chosen by *The ECHO* staff, it will be published in the next edition of In Your Court. We will also include the previous section so readers can enjoy a sense of continuity.

If your story is not published, don't be disheartened! Write again!

Submissions may be mailed one of two ways:

Via USPS:
The ECHO
P.O. Box 40
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040

Or
Via Truck Mail:
The ECHO
c/o Windham School District
Windham Administration Building
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040

In Your Court: Part I

The rain gurgled as it swept down the gutter.



Leaves and garbage. Walmart sacks and twigs. The usual detritus of the city flowing on by in a tiny river.

Elaine plodded in her boots, the hood of her poncho turned up and her body braced against the wind. The sky was gray and the sun a pale yellow golf ball endlessly falling from the sky. A car drove by her and didn't slow. A wave of rainwater washed over her and soaked through the tops of her boots and her already soaked socks now swam. She stood there for a moment and let the flood subside, then wiggled her toes inside her boots and felt them squish.

She sighed and plodded on.

Ten minutes later, she was in front of the house. She hoped so, anyway. She reached into her pocket and unfolded the sheet of paper and tried to read it, but the ink was smudged and she could only make out the name at the top. The only thing she needed no help in remembering.

She looked up at the light that was on in a window on the second story. If it wasn't for that, she would have said that the house were empty, and had been for years. The porch was empty of any furniture. No curtains or blinds adorned windows,

the windows themselves filmed with translucent patinas of dust. Weeds everywhere. Overgrowth coated the place like green moss.

But there was the light. A silhouette cast against the glass. The soft barking of a dog deadened by the patter of rain in the streets and on the eaves.

Someone was home.

She cranked on the gate till it swung open, her hands numb of from the cold, and ran the last twenty feet up to the doorstep. Even under the sagging awning, the rain continued to pelt her from behind with the slant of the wind. Just when she thought that she was out of the rain.

Not that she expected any different. Not the way the way today had been going.

Shivering, she rang the bell. She heard nothing, so she banged her fist against the door as hard as she could.

“Come on,” she muttered under her breath. “Come on.”

Shivering, she rang the bell. She heard nothing, so she banged her fist against the door....



In Your Court: Part II

Brandon Goshorn
Hightower Unit



Elaine stepped back to look up at the light in the window.

Water dripped from her hood into her eyes and stung. She shook her head and blinked until she could see again. Once her eyes were clear, she looked back up.

The light was no longer on.

Just then, the door creaked open with someone standing in the darkness behind it: a figure whose features were hidden by a hoodie and a swoop of dark bangs. The figure's jeans were stained, loose-fitting and full of holes and covering spindly limbs.

Elaine reached out and started to walk through the doorway. The person started to close the door on her.

"Wait! I need to talk to you! Please! I'm wet and cold and I walked 10 miles to get here, just to talk to you, and you're going to shut the door in my face?"

"What do you want?"

A woman's voice, soft and angry.

"I'm looking for Elaine Zimmerman. Is that you?"

The stranger stared at her for a long breath, then slowly backed away, walking deeper into the house, leaving the door open but not saying a word.

"Um ..."

She paused at the entryway. The house was dark and musty, and she could hear a cacophony of arrhythmic plinks as rainwater leaked through the home's swollen frame. Elaine looked back over her shoulder into the rain,

then back into the darkness — it was a lot darker than it had seemed a moment ago. Maybe she wasn't as cold and wet as she thought. But she had come all this way...

“Wait!”

The entryway was bare, and what furniture lay scattered down the hallway hardly looked worth its weight in kindling. From a distant doorway, light flickered to life, casting long shadows.

A dining room sat behind the doorway, filled with a long dinner table surrounded by chairs, the set up probably worth more than everything else in the house. A candle flickered at one end of the table. As she walked in, another light rose to life at the other. The figure sat there, holding a match to another candle, shielding the flame with a small hand. The shadow doused the match, then gestured for her to sit.

As she sat, her eyes adjusted and the stranger's face coalesced out of the dim. Elaine gasped, covering her mouth with her hand.

A scar ran down the woman's face, from her nose to her right ear. Woman? No, she was merely a girl about Elaine's own age. Other than the scar, it was like looking in a mirror.

“My name is Elaina,” the woman said. “Elaina. Not Elaine. If you're looking for Elaine Zimmerman, you're in the wrong place. You're welcome to get warm until the

The figure sat there, holding a match to another candle, shielding the flame with a small hand.





“Elaine made to get up, but the woman’s hand shot across the table and snagged her wrist. Hard.”

rain stops. Then I’d like you to leave.”

“Please, she was my mother.”

The woman said nothing, the flickering of the candle dancing across her marred features.

“Fine then, I’m sorry for bothering you.” Elaine made to get up, but the woman’s hand shot across the table and snagged her wrist. Hard.

The woman let go.

“Sit,” she said. She shook her head so that her bangs fell and covered the scar. In the light of the candle Elaine could see that even the woman’s eyes were the same color as her own — the same deep mossy green.

Elaine sat back down, rubbing her wrist. The woman continued to eye her, and then her features softened.

“Not another one.”

“I’m sorry, what?”

The woman sighed. “I think you and I may have quite a lot in common. The woman you’re looking for lived here until several years ago. Then... something happened. She left. Left me here alone to fend for myself. Every piece of furniture sold so I could keep from starving to death. And I can’t leave until she comes back. And more of you keep showing up. Acting like she owes you something. Well, she owes me, too.” ●

Skills Demonstration & Career Expos:

WORKFORCE READY

**TDCJ, Windham Partner
to Increase Future
Employment Possibilities**

Edgar Sazo — Staff Writer



Empowering students to showcase their talents and expertise to a multitude of employers is a cornerstone of our mission at Windham School District.

- Kristina J. Hartman,
Windham Superintendent

As part of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice’s (TDCJ) 2030 Plan, the agency is striving for 95% of its residents to have jobs secured prior to reentry, according to TDCJ Executive Director Bryan Collier (*The ECHO* Interview, January 2024, Vol. 96, No. 1).

This challenging effort has been supported by extensive collaboration with other entities such as the Windham School District (Windham). In particular, Windham is partnering with TDCJ to offer Skills Demonstration and Career Expos featuring students in ongoing events. One recent Expo featured the Stringfellow, Ramsey and Terrell campuses in Rosharon, Texas. Students who are either enrolled in Windham’s Electrical, Welding, Construction Carpentry and Automotive Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs, or have obtained work experience through job assignment, demonstrated skills they acquired in their courses to

prospective employers attending the event. This Expo provided employers and students with valuable opportunities for networking and open discussions about navigating employment in the workforce.

“Empowering students to showcase their talents and expertise to a multitude of employers is a cornerstone of our mission at Windham School District,” Windham Superintendent Kristina J. Hartman said. “The district is enthusiastic about collaborating with TDCJ to host these events, not only to offer essential resources for students preparing to rejoin Texas communities, but also to play a pivotal role in addressing industry employment shortages by supplying a pool of well-trained and qualified candidates.”

The recent Expo in Rosharon featured various tours and demonstrations of training, including welding presentations, automotive students actively repairing disabled vehicles, and students showcasing



Students speak with potential employers at a Skills Demonstration and Career Expo.



electrical work skills. Employers had the chance to engage directly with students, offering insights into current industry processes, procedures and valuable experience in communication and interview tactics. Additionally, interview spaces were available, and employment documentation, such as resumes and work histories, were prepared and available to employers. Windham offers approximately 40 CTE programs spanning 11 career clusters. This diverse offering equips students with the tools to navigate various workforce environments while supported by essential hands-on training tailored to meet industry demands. Windham enables students to earn industry-based certifications, providing a distinct advantage in competitive fields. Notably, in the 2022-2023 school year, 87% of eligible students successfully earned Windham CTE certificates upon completing their respective programs, highlighting the program's effectiveness and students'

commitment to achieving employable skills.

In the past, a Skills Demonstration and Career Expo at the Crain and Hilltop units in Gatesville allowed women to showcase newly-acquired career skills for prospective employers from throughout the region. A total of 59 students participated in demonstrating training in culinary arts (cooking), electrical work, welding, and truck driving for dozens of second-chance employers. Expos have also taken place at Dominguez State Jail and the Wynne Unit, with more than 150 residents showcasing their skills to approximately 40 second-chance employers. They have shown their talents in the areas of automotive work, construction carpentry, culinary arts, network cabling, diesel mechanics, electrical, truck driving and welding.

Expos offer students enhanced opportunities to secure and sustain employment upon integration into their communities. The Expos were designed to instill confidence in students, empowering them to showcase their abilities with assurance and broaden their employability. The opportunity to demonstrate career skills

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In the 2022-2023 school year, 87% of eligible students successfully earned Windham CTE certificates upon completing their respective programs, highlighting the program's effectiveness and students' commitment to achieving employable skills.



Students prepare to demonstrate career training.



to potential workforce employers is invaluable, according to TDCJ leadership assisting with coordination of the events.

“You can tell employers as much as you want to, but when you actually bring them and show them what somebody is capable of, that’s really where you see that leap from ‘Maybe I’m on the fence on hiring, but this is something I’m willing to invest in,’” said Deputy Director of Programs Jessica O’Donnell, Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics Division (“TDCJ Invites Employers to Prison in Effort to Help Inmates Land Jobs: ‘There’s Hope,’” by Nick Natario; ABC News-Channel 13, Houston; Jan. 10, 2024).

TDCJ Executive Director Collier emphasizes the value of the opportunity for residents and potential employers to interact at these events.

“The Skills Demonstration and Career Expo gives employers the opportunity to observe residents highlighting their job skills in a hands-on environment,” he said. “This gives incarcerated individuals the chance to promote themselves as work-ready upon their release while also helping increase employment opportunities for them in their communities. TDCJ’s vision is to continue holding events like this so more employers can see the great things happening” (From TDCJ’s Criminal Justice Connections, Jan. 24).

Editor’s Note: TDCJ residents interested in applying for a CTE program should send an I-60 to the Windham student advisor on their unit for more information.

Information for this article was obtained from Windham and TDCJ news releases along with cited sources. ●



Employers discuss potential employment with students.

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The Expos were designed to instill confidence in students, empowering them to showcase their abilities with assurance and broaden their employability. The opportunity to demonstrate career skills to potential workforce employers is invaluable.



Students showcase skills learned to increase employability.



Poetry Corner

I'm in the Verse

Submitted by:
Michael Wiese
Ramsey Unit

I'm a part-time psychologist,
watching Man's mind unwind,
like a spool of ebony thread —
energy spun from dark matter,
bouncing through the verse.
I'm a sociologist sometimes,
learning human ways.
Like eagles on the heights or
roaches in the dark:
flying, crawling and bringing it round,
living in the verse.
Mainly, I'm a full-time warrior,
sifting through ember and ash.
Like a survivor in Chernobyl —
a melted but mending free radical,
fighting not for country, kin or cause.
But for life, liberty and the pursuit
of hope among the verse.

Submit your poems to: The ECHO, c/o "Poetry Corner," WSD Admin. Bldg., P.O. Box 40, Huntsville, TX 77342-0040.

What's the Antidote?

Submitted by:
Willard Lee Brown
Hughes Unit

What can cure a heart
that's overwhelmed with pain?
What can relieve a mind
that no longer thinks sane?
What can restore a man who's lost all hope?
What's the antidote?
What is the remedy for a third world country that
grows no vegetation?
What can help the people there
dying of starvation?
What can cause that country and its people
to be rejuvenated?
What's the antidote?
What can change a man who's
built his empire exploiting others?
What can deceive a man who's
been exploited into not blaming the other?
What can crumble deception
like summer leaves?
What's the antidote?
What can soothe a baby
who's been neglected?
What can teach a child who's gifted?
What can give all people hope?
What's the antidote?

Memories

Submitted by:
Cynthia Phillips
Murray Unit

The book of my memories is full to the brim,
with hopes, dreams and plans
that best might have been.
The pages are yellowed and covered with dust.
Not many have seen it, so few do I trust.
I keep it high, way back on the shelf.
Well hidden from all; yes, even from myself.
Yet here I am now, doing nothing but time.
Wondering what ever happened
to the life that was mine.
So, sometimes at night, when no one's around,
I search through the pages to see
what can be found.
There it all is: every bit of who's me.
It hurts sometimes to see what
was taken from me.
From a sweet little child with
a gleam in my eye —
to what I've become, and I have to ask, "Why?"
It's all in there: the good and the bad.
It makes me laugh, cry and feel,
both happy and sad.
All the tears I've held in I now let freely flow.
I'm getting to know me; just taking it slow.
There are so many things that I'd like to forget,
but these feelings and memories
have an emotional debt.
You may explore my feelings that
I've locked deep inside,
I may fool other people, where
they believe I'm fine.
But they don't know I'm dying inside,
my future uncertain and my time standing still.
Things will be what they will.
I can't change the past or who I am,
but I can work on myself.
Like who I am, my book isn't finished.
Oh no, I'm not through;
my past forms my future.
I should know what to do, so
I turn the pages slowly.
It's going to take time, but I know I'm worth it,
and that I'll be just fine.

The Lonesome Tear in Me

Submitted by:
Mark A. Perez
Powledge Unit

There's a lonesome tear hidden within me,
and no one can hear it.

No one can hear it, and nobody can see it.
There's a lonesome tear flowing down
upon me.

If you should see it, then please don't
allow for it to fall to the ground.

Catch it if you can, and don't let
the sun go down on me.

Lord, Heavenly Father, my heart feels
like it's melting hot wax.

There's a lonesome tear in me,
but I'm certain that God's grace can save me.
I'm standing in this prison cell all alone, but
I know God's love is present here with me.

He will wipe these lonesome tears from
my eyes because He will not forsake me.

Thoughts

Submitted by:
Sam Brown
Polunsky Unit

If we could buy things with just
thinking our thoughts,
there would come a time when
nothing could be bought.
For all things would be gone in
the blink of an eye,
just as fast as our lives are passing us by.
"There's nothing left to be had,"
surely someone would say.
We would all be the 'haves', and no
'have nots' today.

Then maybe we would notice: there's something wrong
with our thinking.

For we've acquired so much that
our ships are all sinking.
What we thought was much needed
is now our burden to bear.
When everyone has everything,
then what's left to share?
But somewhere I've read
(that has caused me to grieve):
It is more blessed to give,
than for us to receive.
For if the whole world has everything,
then where do I start?
Could it be that I've been wrong,
and I must change my heart?
Truly we have all erred
and have missed the big picture
by wanting more and more
and getting richer and richer.
Oh, God! How did this happen,
to someone like me?

This has caused me to stumble,
so blind I can't see.
"My thoughts are not your thoughts,"
says my God from above.

"While you were purchasing greed,
I was giving my love.

"I've already sent to you Jesus,
my just and holy one,
because you need nothing else,
but my only begotten Son.

For I require nothing, at my altar to lay,
but to do justly and love mercy,
I own it all, anyway."

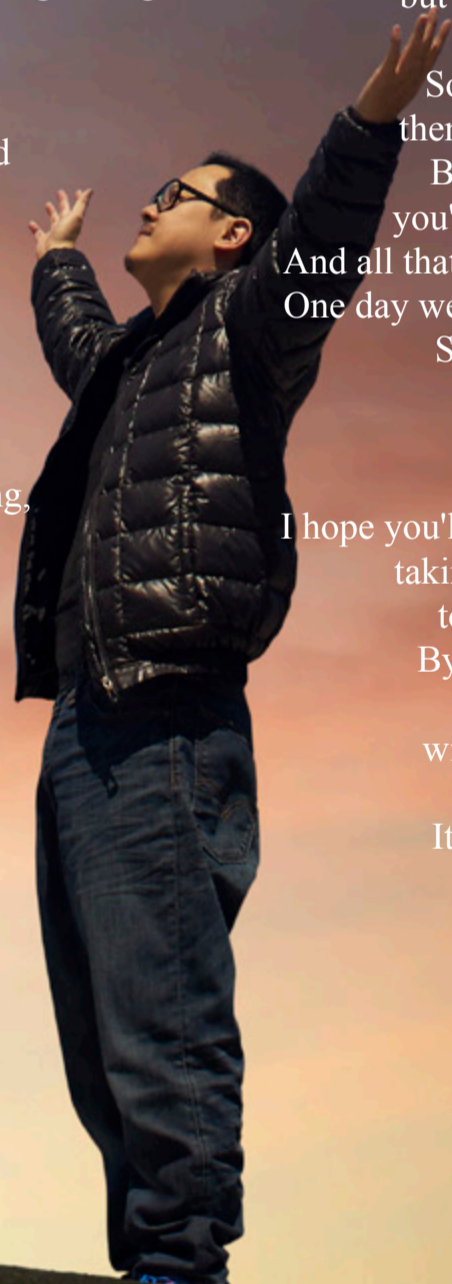
So, when you start thinking,
then you had better think twice.

By this deed that was done,
you've been bought with a price.

And all that you have, you must lay at His feet.
One day we'll appear at Christ's judgment seat.

So, when you start looking
at all that you've got,
it's best to buy the truth,
and you must sell it not.

I hope you'll remember His blood and sacrifice,
taking all your thoughts captive,
to the obedience of Christ.
By being baptized into Jesus,
and yes even His death,
with His resurrection power,
you will enter my rest.
It is contained in my Word,
and it all shall be done.





My Addiction

Submitted by:
Tracilee Hippe
Released

If my addiction were a lock,
it would have no key.
Refusing to let me be;
holding not only me
but my family in captivity.
If my addiction had sight,
it would see me scream up at the stormy sky:
“I wish I may, I wish I might,”
each and every Texas night.
If my addiction had a voice,
it would tell me
that using is my only choice.
Whispering to me,
“Rehab is made for the weak;
go ahead and try to let me go,
but in your mind, I’ll always creep.
Our relationship is far too deep.”
With the help of God,
my family and MTC*,
I can see this isn’t how it has to be.
This year welcomes a brand-new Tracilee.
Addiction, I’ve watched you take out my
friends left and right,
why did it take so long
for me to see the light?
With my support system I’ll be alright.
Without a doubt,
I can and will win this fight.
I’m keeping the armor of God on me tight.
**Management and Training Corporation*

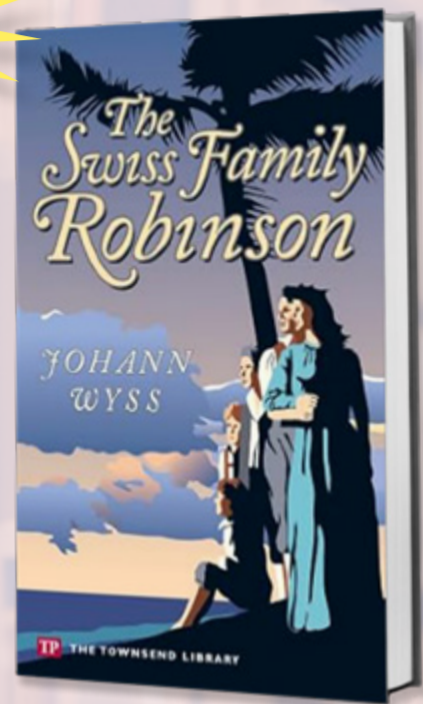
THE BOOK DROP

FABIAN W. FLORES
STAFF WRITER

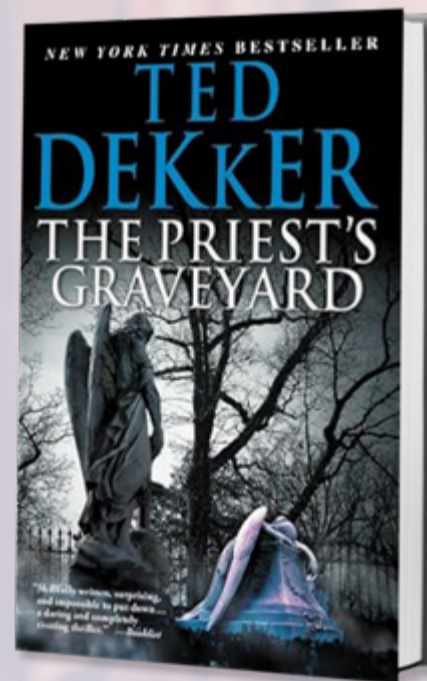
Disclaimer: Reviewed books may not be in your campus library. If you have suggestions for books—old or recent—that can motivate, inspire and educate your broader community, drop a letter to The Book Drop, c/o The ECHO. Enjoy—and remember: READ BETTER—BE BETTER.

*Book reviews contributed by
Deidre McDonald*

Classic!

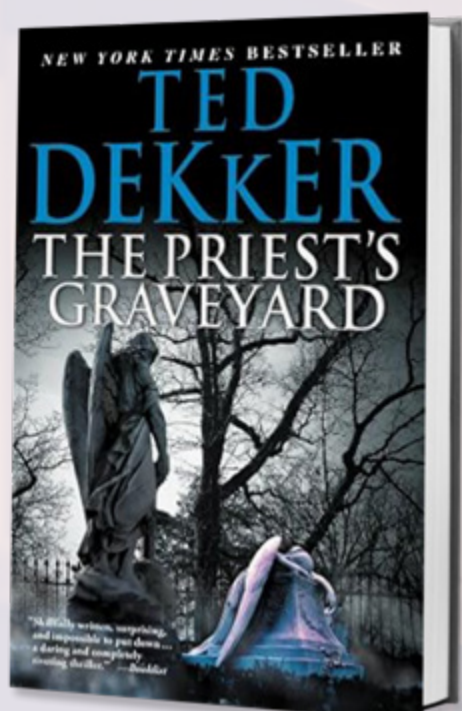


"The Swiss Family Robinson"
By Johann Wyss



"The Priest's Graveyard"
By Ted Dekker

Fiction

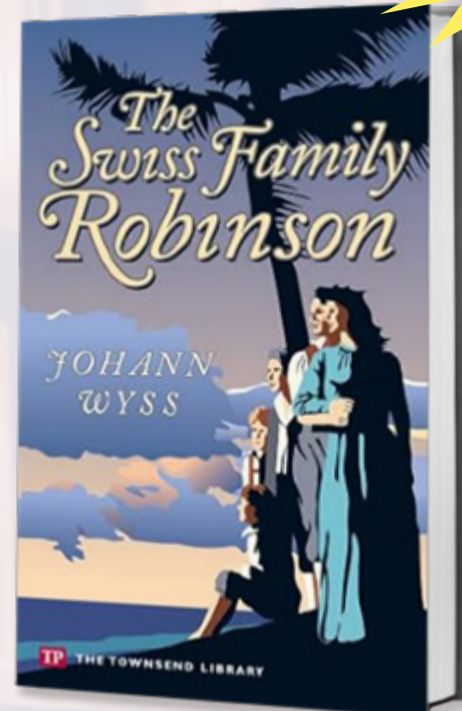


"The Priest's Graveyard"
By Ted Dekker

W

When heroin addict and prostitute Renee Gilmore is rescued from a life of self-destruction by Lamont Myers, she soon worships the ground on which he walks. But his secretive life and obsessive compulsions bleed into Renee's psyche. When Lamont disappears and Renee is determined to investigate, she meets priest Danny Hansen, who teaches her his ethical code based on consequential moral reasoning and hatred for injustice. Danny soon realizes his self-acclaimed judge, jury and executioner has created a monster in Renee and a graveyard full of his attempts to fix the world. But when Danny uncovers the truth about Renee's beloved Lamont and unveils a shocking realization, will Renee still seek justice? Even if it means Danny was involved?

Fiction



"The Swiss Family Robinson"
by Johann Wyss

T

First copyrighted in 1949, this 388-page classic tells the tale of a family of five shipwrecked alone on a rich desolate island for over a decade. As mother, father and four sons explore the island — hunting, building dwellings and domesticating exotic birds and animals — the enormous amount of work necessary to maintain the comforts and conveniences of life at home doesn't escape them. Father Robinson, being fully aware of the importance of constant employment as a means of strengthening and maintaining of mind and body, finds that the consciousness of continual progress constitutes the main element of happiness. But when a mysterious ship appears on their beloved "New Switzerland," and a final chance to be rescued encroaches upon them, will they stay or will they go? The elegant and wordy style of 100-year-old English writing will make readers realize just how simplified the American literature has become. ●



Eat Up!

Please send us your recipes. Write to:
The ECHO, c/o "The Chow Hound,"
WSD Admin. Bldg., P.O. Box 40,
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040.



Tailgate Poppers

Curtis McGuire — Scott Unit

Ingredients:

- 15 pickled jalapeño peppers
- 1 pk. brisket
- 2 pk. of cream cheese
- 1 pk. ranch dressing
- 5 pinches each of pepper, onion powder and garlic powder
- ½ bag white rice

Directions:

Slice the peppers in half and scrape out the pulp into a bowl. Place the sliced peppers on an opened chip bag or in a bowl. Cook the rice in the rice bag and allow it to soften in the hot pot. Place the brisket in the hot pot, also. While these are cooking, take the jalapeño pulp and smash into mush with a spoon. Mix in one packet of ranch dressing, a pinch of pepper, onion and garlic powder. Place rice in a separate bowl and smash into paste. Add cream cheese and brisket. Mix well and then scoop into the jalapeño slices. Garnish the top with the pulp, then enjoy.

Enjoy!

Cold Tuna Pasta

Ceyma Bina — Crain Unit

Ingredients:

- 1/3 bag pasta shells
- 1 pk. ranch dressing
- ¼ pickle, diced, reserve pickle juice
- 1 pk. Sunkist tuna, flavor of choice
- No-salt seasoning
- Salt & pepper
- Onion powder
- Garlic Powder
- Bowl
- Bag or hot pot insert

Directions:

Cook pasta shells until just about done in either a bag or hot pot insert. Pour out hot water and rinse shells twice with cold water from sink, then rinse a final time with water from a cooler or water fountain. Be sure to drain well. Pour shells into your big bowl. Dump ranch, diced pickle plus juice, tuna, a desired amount of no-salt seasoning, salt & pepper, onion and garlic powder. Mix ingredients well. Taste and adjust seasonings to preference. Tuna can also be swapped with a chunk chicken or mackerel.

Queen Anne

Bobby Jo Lottes — Hobby Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 Fruit Punch electrolyte mix
- 1 spoonful creamer
- 2 spoonful French Vanilla Cappuccino

Directions:

Mix all ingredients in cup with hot water and enjoy. Tastes like Queen Anne chocolate-covered cherries. Enjoy!

No Bake Cookies

Kenny Purtell — Polunsky Unit

Ingredients:

- 4 pks. regular oatmeal
- 4 pks. maple & brown sugar oatmeal
- 1 bag hot chocolate
- ½ jar peanut butter

Directions:

Mix all ingredients together in large mixing bowl and form into balls. If needed, add more peanut butter or water to help firm mixture. Let sit overnight. Enjoy!



Pork & Rice Day Tacos

Sidney Denbina — Released

Ingredients:

- 1 pk. Hot n' Spicy taco meat
- 2/3 cup refried beans
- 1 jalapeño, diced
- 1 pk. chili soup seasoning
- Pinch garlic powder
- Pinch onion powder
- 3 Klement's original flavor sausages, quartered
- 1/2 bag white rice
- 1 pk. flour tortillas

Directions:

Put taco meat in hot pot. Add hot water to beans with diced jalapeño pepper, all the seasonings and the sausages cut into quarters. Cover until thickened. Cook white rice and add to beans when ready. Add taco meat to beans. Mix all ingredients thoroughly. Add to tortillas to make approximately nine tacos, or make tacos and insert into two rice bags for later consumption. You may also put them tacos in hot pot for approximately two hours.

Buttercrunch Cheesecake

Natalie Zembro — Hilltop Unit

Ingredients:

- 2 Butterfingers, crushed
- 1 pk. duplex cookies
- 1 pk. powdered milk
- 2 pks. Cream cheese
- 2 white mixing bowls
- 1 commissary spoon

Directions:

Separate the cream filling from cookies and set aside. Crush cookie pieces, place in bowl and add five spoonsful of water to make crust. In bowl with cookie cream filling, add one cream cheese pack and whip until there are no lumps. Add second cream cheese pack and repeat. Add one crushed Butterfinger into cream cheese filling. Crush powdered milk to get rid of any lumps, then pour entire bag into filling, fold until completely mixed. Make into a ball, place in crust and level out with spoon. Sprinkle the second crushed Butterfinger on top. Set entire thing aside for an hour, then slice and enjoy!



Chicken Dressing

Nancy Gelber — Murray Unit

Ingredients:

- 1/2 bag corn chips
- 1 pkg. chicken chunk-drained
- 3 pkgs. chicken soup seasoning
- 2 pkgs. ranch dressing
- Garlic powder, to taste
- Onion powder, to taste
- Salt, to taste
- Jalapeño, optional

Directions:

Add water to 1/2 bag of corn chips and let sit for 10 minutes. Drain and mash well in bag. Put in large bowl and add rest of the ingredients one at a time. You may have to add small amounts of hot water to mix well. Add a chopped jalapeño to spice it up a little. Enjoy!

Strawberry Chocolate Hazelnut Pie

Ceyma Bina — Crain Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 pk. creamer
- 2 pks. cream cheese
- 1 bag vanilla wafers, crushed fine
- 1 jar hazelnut spread
- 1 pint strawberry ice cream, melted
- 4 spoonsful strawberry preserves
- 1 dental flosser
- 2 big bowls
- Water

Directions:

Pour melted ice cream into big bowl. While stirring, pour in creamer. Mix very well. Add cream cheese and chip mixture thoroughly. In second bowl, pour crushed vanilla wafers and add water a spoonful at a time while mixing with your hands until you have firm dough. Mold dough in bowl to create a pie crust. Be sure to go up high on the sides. Pour strawberry mixture into crust. Shake out any air bubbles. Pour a generous amount of hazelnut spread on top and use dental flosser to swirl the hazelnut spread into the strawberry mixture. It will look marbled. Pour the strawberry preserves on top and use the dental flosser to swirl preserves into mixture. Top with more hazelnut spread (because it's just that good). Let set until mixture is firm.

Eat Up!



Chocolate Mousse Pie

Bobbi Lotter — Carol Young Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 pint vanilla ice cream
- ½ jar Nutella
- 2 pks. powdered milk
- ½ pk. creamer
- 4 pks. cream cheese
- 2-3 pks. peanut M&M's

Directions:

Let ice cream melt, then mix with Nutella and packets of cream cheese. Mix thoroughly and stir in powdered milk. Make sure there are no chunks of milk. Then, add creamer in same manner. In separate bowl, crush up the cookies (cream filling included), and add water to make the crust. Pour mixture into bowl with crust and allow to sit for 20 minutes. Crush up the packages of M&M's and completely cover the top of pie, then lightly press into pie so they cover the entire top. Allow to sit for six hours.

Eat Up!

Big Country's Chicken Ball

Brian Fore — Garza West

Ingredients:

- 2 pks. Chunk Chicken
- 1 sleeve saltine crackers (crushed)
- 1 bag Shebang chips (crushed)
- 1 pickle, chopped (to taste)
- 1 jalapeño, chopped (to taste)
- Onion powder (to taste)
- Garlic powder (to taste)
- Salt-free seasoning (to taste)
- Hot sauce (to taste)
- 1 pk. chili soup
- 1 pk. ranch dressing

Directions:

Mix chicken, crackers, Shebang chips, pickle, jalapeño, ramen noodles and seasoning together in large mixing bowl. Mix and mash ingredients together until all blends into one consistency. Roll into several small balls then drizzle with ranch dressing, hot sauce, cheese and salt-free seasoning over the top. Serve with rice and mashed potatoes. Enjoy!

Chicken Alfredo

Kewana Gray — Ferguson Unit

Ingredients:

- 2/3 bag pasta shells
- 1 pk. chunk chicken (optional)
- 2 pks. ranch dressing
- 1 pk. chicken soup seasoning
- Garlic powder, to taste

Directions:

Pour pasta shells and chunk chicken (if using) into an empty chip bag. Add hot water to bag (enough to cover the shells) and place bag in a hotpot to cook until pasta shells are tender. In a white bowl, mix together ranch dressing, garlic powder and chicken soup seasoning. When pasta shells are tender, pour into bowl with the ranch dressing mixture and stir well. Bon appétit!

S'mores

Shari Eggum — Crain Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 pk. Maria's cookie
- 1 box chocolate Moon Pies

Directions:

Create s'mores by placing one whole Moon Pie between two Maria's cookies. Place s'mores inside rice bag and cook in hot pot for 20 minutes. Eat ASAP!

Chicken Spaghetti

Emma — Plane State Jail

Ingredients:

- 1 pk. chunk chicken
- 2-3 pks. chicken Ramen noodles
- ½ cup jalapeño squeeze cheese
- ½ spoonful onion powder

Directions:

After preparing Ramen noodles in hot water as usual, drain all the water. Place chicken along with the broth in separate bowl and smash. Add dry ingredients into chicken and stir well. Add cheese and mix again. Add in Ramen noodles and stir until completely covered in sauce.

Enjoy!



Amazing Tater Tots

Lily Archuleta — Murray Unit

Ingredients:

- ½ pk. four-cheese potatoes
- 1 pk. chicken chili
- ¼ bttl. jalapeño squeeze cheese
- 1 pk. cream cheese
- 3 pks. regular potato chips
- ¼ - ½ cup hot water

Directions:

Mix potatoes, chicken chili, cheese, cream cheese and water in large white mixing bowl. Mix well. Consistency of mixture should be firm enough to mold. In separate bowl, crush potato chips to coat potato balls. Mold 12-16 balls from the potato mixture, roll each in crushed chips-set on platter and fry for 25 minutes. Let set longer for crunchier texture. Cover with either ketchup or ranch. Enjoy!



Chicken Alfredo

Ceyma Bina — Crain Unit

Ingredients:

- 1/3 bag pasta shells
- 1 pk. chunk chicken, drained
- 1 pk. ranch
- 1 pk. cream cheese
- Pepper to taste
- Salt-free seasoning (to taste)
- Garlic powder
- Big bowl
- Bag or insert cup

Directions:

Cook pasta shells until just about done in either a bag or insert cup. Pour off hot water and dump shells, ranch, cream cheese and desired amount of pepper, no salt seasoning and garlic powder. Mix well and adjust seasoning to taste. Eat with garlic bagel chips for an Italian feel.

Pickle Salad

Ceyma Bina — Crain Unit

Ingredients:

- 2 pickles, chopped
- 1 pk. peanuts
- 1 bag sunflower kernels
- 1 bag pork skins, semi-crushed
- 1 bag turkey bites, chopped
- 6 spoonsful no-salt seasoning

Directions:

Rinse pickles at least three times to avoid overpowering pickle taste. Once pickles are thoroughly rinsed, add the rest of the ingredients and mix well. This is a great recipe to use with Christmas and Thanksgiving meats.

Tomato Thai noodles

Nancy Gelber — Murray Unit

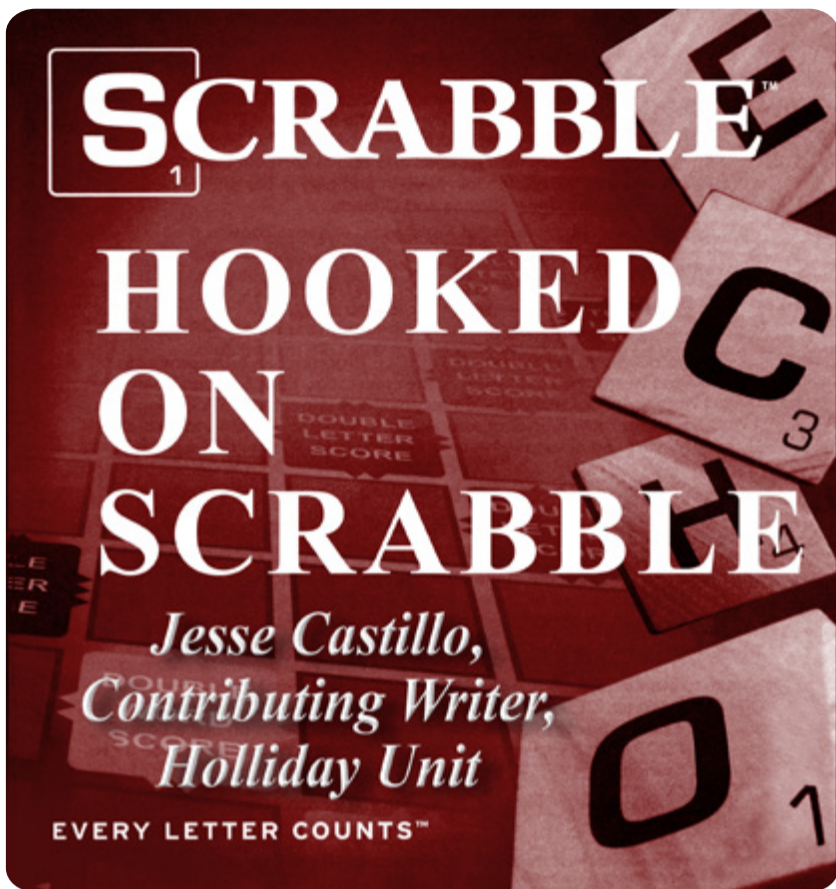
Ingredients:

- 1 pk. Thai noodles
- 1 can V8 juice
- Cheese puffs (to taste)
- ½ pk. ranch dressing

Directions:

Cook noodles. Open V8 and place inside of hot pot to heat. Place cheese puffs in bowl and pour hot V8 juice over to dissolve. Add ranch dressing seasoning packs, noodles and mix well. Enjoy!





Confessions of a Scrabble Fanatic

I am very passionate, and some of my closer friends would say obsessed, concerning the game of Scrabble. It is my desire to share my knowledge and love for this game.

As I have mentioned before, I arrived at the Fort Stockton Unit in the middle of a snowstorm in December, 2012, and there I was introduced to this wonderful game. The beginnings were rather humble — as in no Scrabble dictionary, just an old Merriam-Webster — but this didn't stop us from engaging in some epic matches.

I moved to a 14-man tank and began playing with an older man who was willing to learn everything about Scrabble. Since English was not his native language, I allowed him to use the dictionary to come up with words to play. I can still see the joyful look on his face when he played and said the word “VIBRATO” with gusto. He taught me the word “RATTOON” and together we learned the fourth edition Scrabble Dictionary. Basically, José would draw seven letters, shuffle the tiles around to form a word and then check the dictionary to see if it was a real word. Scrabble is all about finding solutions to problems. Problems are just opportunities to think outside the box.

I was on a tight budget after my mom died in 2015, and then my wife died in 2017. My solution was to contact prison bookstores and ask for anything Scrabble-related, and these items came to my bunk for the price of a stamped envelope. I also had a couple of friends in the community, and I would ask for a Scrabble book for my birthday from one and then another Scrabble book from the other one for Christmas. It's all about having and executing a plan.

If you are shy and don't know a lot of people on your tank who will play Scrabble with you, I suggest checking out a Scrabble

game from the picket and set the board up and wait. This is the strategy I use when I go fishing. I always say, “If you want to catch fish you have to go where they are, and then put a fishing line in the water and wait.” Someone will eventually come around and play Scrabble with you if you are patient.

The Huntsville Unit is not built like any other unit. There are five tiers on each cell block on West Building. The real elite Scrabble sharks live in deep water, and they don't play with just anyone. One thing I noticed about the top players is they seem to be superstitious or quirky. Think of all the moves Rafael Nadal makes before he strikes the tennis ball. In my cellblock, I had access to playing more than 200 residents, but the elite players all had a certain quiriness.

One player would always raise the letter bag to his right eye and shake the bag exactly five times, no more no less. Another player insisted that we put the letters in a brown johnny bag; for some unknown reason, playing this way made him feel lucky. Another player only played if his back was against a wall and he had an unobstructed view of the dayroom. Another guy insisted that you wash your hands before you played him, and he had to see you go to the sink. Playing these guys with all their quiriness gave me a glimpse into the minds and style of play of some remarkable players.

My journey into the world of Scrabble may not look like yours, but wherever your path takes you, enjoy the ride, and may you always bingo.

OPTS
EPOS
TOPE
TOPS
SPOT
POSE
TOES
POST
POTS
STOP
PETS
PETS
OPES
POET
STEP
SEPT
ESTOP
TOPES
POETS
PESTO

WORD PYRAMIDS

AN
ANI
ANIL
ANILIN
ANILINE
ANILINES
BI
BIN
BIND
REBIND
PREBIND
PREBINDS

YOUR RACK

SCIEOAL
YOUR OPPONENT PLAYS: SERI-
ATED-definition to put into a
series
YOUR PLAY: COALIEST-definition
containing coal ●



HEALTH & FITNESS

Fitness Profile:

Tiana Ryder

Age: 31
Weight: --
Height: 5' 8"
Unit: Crain

Fitness Goals

I want my body to be able to do anything I ask of it, and I want to motivate others to live a healthier life-style. Plus, I like to pick up heavy stuff!

Motivation

My desire to live medication-free fuels me to work out and to keep my mind clear. When my mind is clear, I make healthier plans and decisions.

Regimen

A combination of high-intensity interval training (HIIT) workouts, strength training and yoga. Cardio is an absolute must in order to get my heart rate up and blood flowing!

Favorite exercise

T-stands. They engage multiple muscle groups at once: glutes, core and calves. Everything works together to hold balance and then set the body upright.

Least favorite exercise

Ins-and-outs. These are held in a wide squat, jumping in and out at a rapid pace. No pain, no gain.

Diet

I try to avoid ramen soups, breads and pasta. They break down into sugars that just fatigue the body. I stick with proteins, fish, nuts, peanut butter and vegetables. Oh! And lots of water, of course!

Advice for beginners

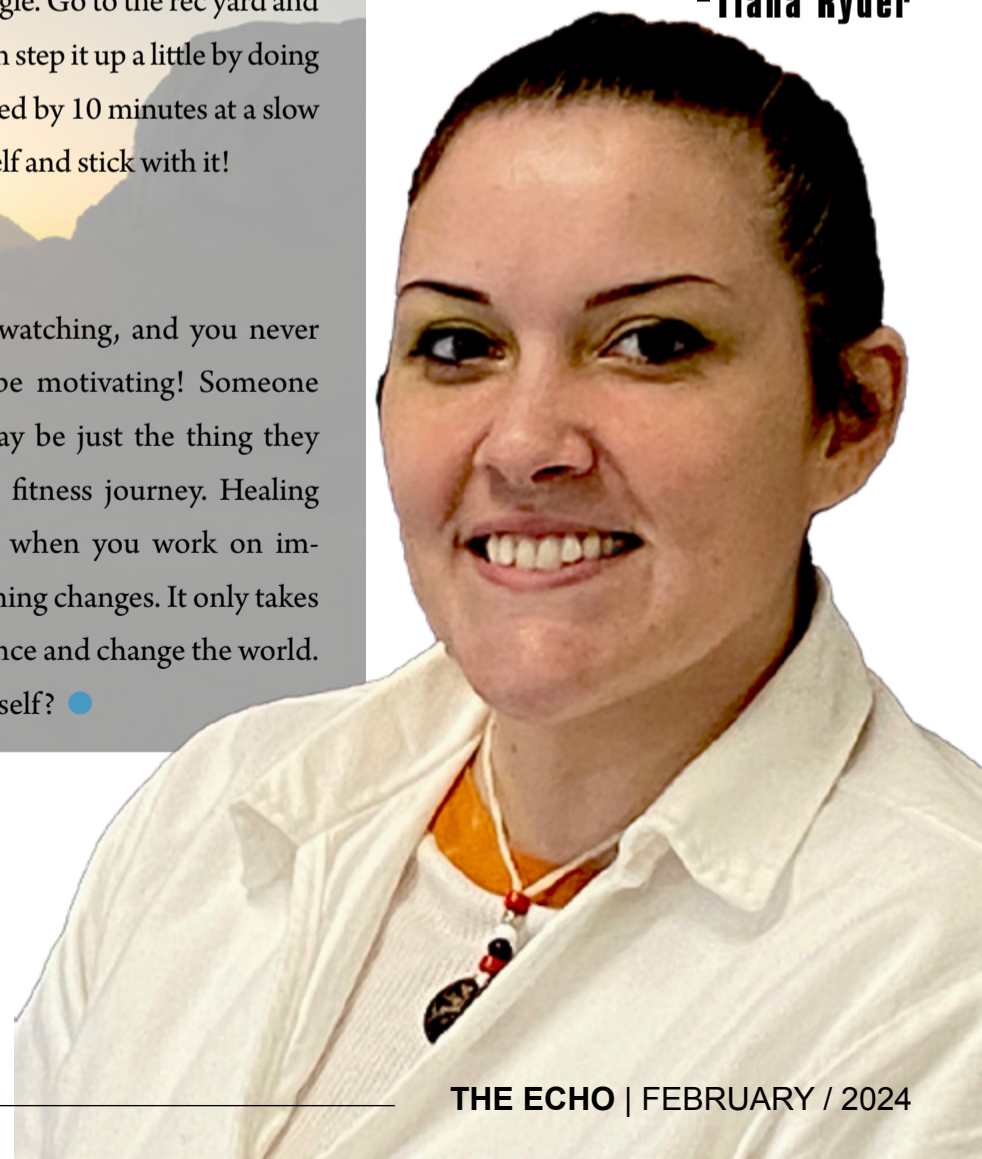
Doing a small thing is still doing something. You didn't get to where you are overnight, and neither did the men or women that do HIIT every day without seeming to struggle. Go to the rec yard and walk for 30 minutes. Then step it up a little by doing a 20-minute walk, followed by 10 minutes at a slow jog. Just believe in yourself and stick with it!

Final advice

You never know who's watching, and you never know who you could be motivating! Someone seeing you work out may be just the thing they need to start their own fitness journey. Healing starts from within, and when you work on improving yourself, everything changes. It only takes one person to take a chance and change the world. Why not start with yourself? ●

“When you work on improving yourself, everything changes. It only takes one person to take a chance and change the world. Why not start with yourself?”

-Tiana Ryder



SPORTS VIEW

By William E. Hill - Staff Writer



This sports column represents the viewpoints of sports fan and sportswriter Will Hill, reflecting his opinions and observations. These opinions do not represent official opinions of TDCJ or of The ECHO. Enjoy them; respond to them. The ECHO welcomes your letters and input!

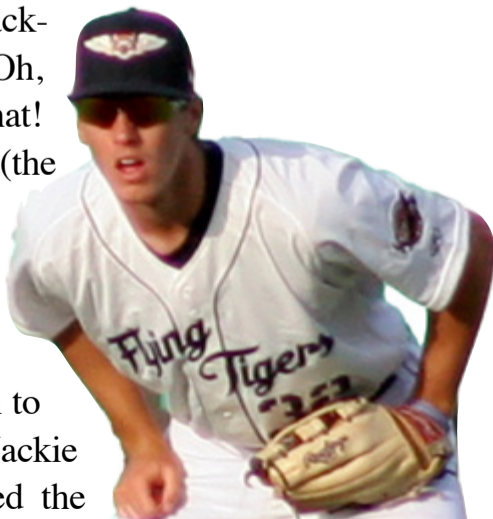
Baseball

Fox Sports Commentator Makes Inane Comments

Until recently, I had never heard the name of Fox Sports' commentator, Ben Verlander, the brother of Houston Astros' starting pitcher, Justin Verlander. Honestly, I could have lived the rest of my life without learning of his existence. Then, B. Verlander felt the need to comment on the Los Angeles Dodgers' historic signing of free agent superstar Shohei Ohtani to a \$700 million dollar contract.

However, B. Verlander's commentary that the Ohtani signing is "the most important signing in Dodgers' history" is grossly incorrect. If Ohtani had been signed by almost any other team, then he would have been correct, but not the Dodgers.

I don't know how well-versed B. Verlander is in the history of Major League Baseball (MLB). The most important signing by any team in any sport is the Dodgers' signing of Jackie Robinson, the first black player to play in the major leagues in 1947. If only there was a day every year when MLB celebrated the significance of Jackie Robinson's signing! Oh, wait! MLB does exactly that! Every season on April 15 (the day Robinson broke the color barrier) every player on every team wears a #42 jersey (Robinson's jersey number). In addition to the annual celebration of Jackie Robinson, the MLB retired the



number 42 across the MLB.

Perhaps B. Verlander simply got caught up in the excitement of the moment and did not think about what he was saying. Whatever his reasoning, the backlash to his comment was swift and constant. I agree with Justin Turner, the Dodgers' third baseman, who posted on X, formerly known as Twitter, "There is no #17 [Ohtani's jersey number] without #42."

College

Saban Retires!

With seven national championships and a career record of 297-71-1, Nick Saban was undoubtedly college football's greatest coach. He began his career in 1990 with a one-season stay at Toledo before he moved to the National Football League's (NFL) Cleveland Browns as their defensive coordinator. In 1995, he returned to college as head coach of the Michigan State University Spartans where he led the team to three bowl games in five seasons before bolting Lansing, Michigan for Baton Rouge, Louisiana and the Louisiana State University Tigers. There, he won his first national championship.

After another brief foray into the NFL as head coach of the Miami Dolphins, Saban returned to college coaching when he took over the head job at the University of Alabama Crimson Tide in 2007. His first season in Tuscaloosa did not remind anyone of Paul "Bear" Bryant, the legendary Alabama coach, as his team went 7-6. However, he quickly turned the program around and restored it to a powerhouse that won six titles during his stint there.

Move Over Mike Krzyzewski, Tara VanDerveer is Queen of the Court

While the dean of college football coaches was retiring, college basketball discovered a new winningest coach: Tara VanDerveer, the long-time coach of the Stanford University Cardinals.



VanDerveer began her coaching career at the University of Idaho when she was only 24. After a short stint at Ohio State University, VanDerveer moved to Stanford in 1985 where she continues to coach. She has led the Cardinals to three national championships in women's basketball (1990, 1992, 2021). In addition to the national championships, she also led the 1996 U.S. Olympic team to the gold medal in Atlanta. Her overall record is 1,203-267, and she shows no signs of slowing down.

After the record-setting win against Oregon State University, VanDerveer was treated to a video tribute from such luminaries in the coaching ranks as Steve Kerr, Dawn Staley and the coach whose record she eclipsed: Mike Krzyzewski.

"I got to play for the greatest coach of all-time," said Jennifer Azzi, one of VanDerveer's former Cardinal players, perfectly summing up the night.

Football

Kansas City Chiefs Shake Off Slow Start, Become Dynasty

After defeating the San Francisco 49ers 25-22 in Super Bowl LVIII, the Chiefs have morphed from champions to a dynasty. They won three titles within six seasons, with two titles back-to-back. This places them in a rare club. They join the Green Bay Packers, Pittsburgh Steelers, San Francisco 49ers, Dallas Cowboys and the New England Patriots as a dynastic organization, winning their third title in six seasons.



Travis Kelce Apologizes for "Bad Blood" With Andy Reid

Future Hall of Fame Tight End Travis Kelce apologized for his angry in-game altercation with Chiefs Head Coach Andy Reid. He said he was frustrated with his role in the game at that point, and his emotions got the better of him. Kelce declined to reveal what he said to his coach during the sideline altercation, but I read his lips and I think he said Taylor Swift was going to allow him to sing on her next album — or maybe not.

Golf

Adios Legacy, Hello Money

When LIV Golf* began operating a couple of years ago, Jon Rahm, Brooks Koepka, Rory McIlroy and Eldrick "Tiger" Woods were professional golfers who vehemently opposed the new league. Now, all but McIlroy and Woods have signed

lucrative contracts to join the new league, and Woods' recent decision to part ways with his long-time sponsor, Nike, have driven reports that he plans to join LIV in the near future. I have explained the reasons behind most of the opposition to the Saudi-based tour in other columns, so I will not repeat those here.

When LIV began to recruit golfers from the Professional Golf Association (PGA) to join them, Rahm said that



he plays golf for legacy and history, not for money. That mindset didn't last long. After signing with LIV late in 2023, he is now playing for beaucoup money. Rahm is still in the prime of his career and is by far the brightest PGA star to defect to LIV, giving the new tour some much needed credibility. The exact terms of his deal with LIV is not known, but reports have estimated it to be in the \$500 million range and may also include equity in his own team. It is thought to be the same offer LIV extended to Woods a couple of years ago.

No one should be surprised that Rahm would join the new tour. Professional golfers are judged according to how many of the majors they won in their career. All four majors on the PGA Tour, The Masters, the British Open, the United States Open and the PGA Championship, allow LIV players to compete in their tournaments if they qualify despite being banned from the PGA Tour. LIV golfers do not receive Official World Golf Rankings points, which is the way most players qualify for the majors. Rahm has a lifetime exemption into the Masters as a result of being a past champion, a 10-year exemption into the U.S. Open, and five-year exemptions into the PGA Championship and British Opens due to his victories in the Masters and U.S. Open.

Rahm had said that he laughed when he heard reports of him possibly defecting to the rival tour. Yeah, he's laughing all the way to the bank.

**LIV Golf is a professional men's golf tour. The name "LIV" refers to the Roman numerals for 54, the score if every hole on a par-72 course were birdied and also the number of holes to be played at LIV events.*

Amateur Golfer Wins Against Professionals

When Nick Dunlap, a sophomore golfer at the University of Alabama, teed up against PGA professionals at the American Express tournament, nobody thought he had a chance to win it—not even Nick Dunlap. While amateurs routinely receive exemptions into PGA tournaments, their chances to win those tournaments are

much rarer. Dunlap became only the seventh amateur to win on the PGA tournament since 1945 and only the third since 1957. The last time it happened was 33 years ago when Phil Mickelson won in Arizona. Dunlap is only the second golfer to win both the U.S. Amateur and the U.S. Junior Amateur. The other person to do it is some guy you might have heard about — Eldrick “Tiger” Woods.

All Sports View photos courtesy of Wikimedia.●

SPORTS TALK



Dear Sports Talk,

I would like to commend you on the new digital version of The ECHO; it looks amazing. I read in the August issue where Will Hill picked the Dallas Cowboys to win the Super Bowl this season. This got me and several others wondering: Is Hill a Cowboys fan or a Cowboys hater? In some issues he writes glowingly about them, but he turns right around and writes so much “stuff” about Tony Romo, Dak Prescott or Jason Garrett that I often wondered if he was compositionally challenged.

Dazed and Confused
Wainwright Unit

Dear Confused,

First, thank you for the kind words about the digital version; we are very proud of it. We are glad that you enjoy it. You are not the only ones wondering about Hill’s fan status. We at Sports Talk were curious about the same thing, so we asked Hill whether he was a Cowboys fan or a hater. He just looked at us and said “yes” then went back to looking for his computer’s boots. He said the manual said to “reboot” it.

**SHARE YOUR SPORTS OPINIONS,
QUESTIONS & THOUGHTS!**

HOUSTON ASTROS 2024 SCHEDULE

MARCH-APRIL

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				28 3:10 NY	29 7:10 NY	30 6:15 NY
31 1:10 NY	1 7:10 TOR	2 7:10 TOR	3 7:10 TOR		5 7:05 T	6 6:05 T
7 6:10 T	8 7:05 T	9 6:40 KC	10 6:40 KC	11 1:10 KC	12 7:10 T	13 3:05 T
14 1:10 T	15 7:10 A	16 7:10 A	17 1:10 A		19 5:45 W	20 3:05 W
21 12:35 W		23 6:40 CUBS	24 6:40 CUBS	25 1:20 CUBS		27 5:05 CR
28 3:05 CR		30 7:10 C				

MAY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			1 7:10 C	2 7:10 C	3 7:10 S	4 6:15 S
5 1:10 S		7 6:05 NY	8 6:05 NY	9 4:05 NY	10 5:40 D	11 5:10 D
12 12:40 D	13 7:10 A's	14 7:10 A's	15 7:10 A's	16 7:10 A's	17 7:10 P	18 6:10 P
19 1:10 P	20 7:10 A	21 7:10 A	22 1:10 A		24 8:40 A's	25 3:07 A's
26 3:07 A's	27 8:40 S	28 8:40 S	29 8:40 S	30 3:10 S	31 7:10 CF	

JUNE

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1 3:10 TC
2 1:10 TC	3 7:10 B	4 7:10 B	5 1:10 B		7 8:38 A	8 5:07 A
9 3:07 A	10 8:45 SF	11 8:45 SF	12 2:45 SF		14 7:10 D	15 3:10 D
16 1:10 D		18 7:10 S	19 7:10 S	20 1:10 S	21 7:10 C	22 3:10 C
23 1:10 C		25 7:10 CR	26 1:10 CR		28 6:10 M	29 3:10 M
30 12:40 M						

JULY

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1 2:07 TOR	2 6:07 TOR	3 6:07 TOR	4 12:07 TOR	5 7:10 TC	6 1:10 TC
7 1:10 TC		9 7:10 M	10 7:10 M	11 7:10 M	12 7:10 T	13 3:10 T
14 1:10 T		16 ALB STAR GAME M			19 9:10 S	20 8:40 S
21 3:10 S	22 8:40 A's	23 8:40 A's	24 2:37 A's		26 7:10 LA	27 6:10 LA
28 1:10 LA	29 7:10 P	30 7:10 P	31 7:10 P			

AUGUST

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1 TB	2 7:10 TB	3 6:15 TB
4 1:10 TB	5 7:05 T	6 7:05 T	7 1:35 T		9 6:10 R	10 3:10 R
11 12:35 R	12 5:50 TB	13 5:50 TB	14 5:50 TB		16 7:10 S	17 6:10 S
18 1:10 S	19 7:10 R	20 7:10 R	21 1:10 R	22 6:15 C	23 6:05 C	24 3:05 C
25 12:35 C	26 5:40 P	27 5:40 P	28 3:05 P	29 7:10 KC	30 7:10 KC	31 6:10 KC

SEPTEMBER

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
1 1:10 KC	2 3:10 C		4 5:40 C	5 12:10 C	6 7:10 A	7 3:10 A
8 1:10 A		10 7:10 A's	11 7:10 A's	12 1:10 A's	13 8:38 A	14 8:38 A
15 3:07 A	16 8:40 SD	17 8:40 SD	18 5:40 SD	19 7:10 A	20 7:10 A	21 6:10 A
22 1:10 A	23 7:10 S	24 7:10 S	25 1:10 S		27 6:10 C	28 5:10 C
29 2:10 C	30 P					

SCHEDULE AS OF 1/9/2024
SUBJECT TO CHANGE

HOME FRIDAY NIGHT FIREWORKS AWAY MEXICO CITY SERIES

T | 2024 SCHEDULE

MARCH/APRIL

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
31	25 BOS 7:05	26 BOS 1:05	27	28 CHC 6:35	29	30 CHC 6:05
31 CHC 1:35	1 TB 5:50	2 TB 5:50	3 TB 12:10	4	5 HOU 7:05	6 HOU 6:05
7 HOU 6:10	8 HOU 7:05	9 OAK 7:05	10 OAK 7:05	11 OAK 1:35	12 HOU 7:10	13 HOU 3:05
14 HOU 1:10	15 DET 5:40	16 DET 12:10	17 DET 12:10	18 DET 12:10	19 ATL 6:20	20 ATL 6:20
21 ATL 6:10	22	23 SEA 7:05	24 SEA 7:05	25 SEA 1:35	26 CIN 7:05	27 CIN 3:05
28 CIN 1:35	29	30 WSH 7:05				

JULY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1	2 SD 7:05	3 SD 7:05	4 SD 1:35	5 TB 7:05	6 TB 3:05
7 TB 1:35	8 LAA 8:38	9 LAA 8:38	10 LAA 8:38	11	12 HOU 7:10	13 HOU 3:10
14 HOU 1:10	15	16 ALBASTAR GAME	17	18	19 BAL 7:05	20 BAL 6:05
21 BAL 1:35	22 CWS 7:05	23 CWS 7:05	24 CWS 7:05	25 CWS 1:35	26 TOR 6:07	27 TOR 2:07
28 TOR 12:37	29 STL 6:45	30 STL 6:45	31 STL 1:15			

MAY

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
			1 WSH 7:05	2 WSH 1:35	3 KC 6:40	4 KC 6:10
5 KC 1:10	6 OAK 8:40	7 OAK 2:37	8 DOUBLEHEADER OAK 2:37	9	10 COL 7:40	11 COL 7:10
12 COL 2:10	13 CLE 7:05	14 CLE 7:05	15 CLE 7:05	16	17 LAA 7:05	18 LAA 6:15
19 LAA 1:35	20	21 PHI 5:40	22 PHI 5:40	23 PHI 12:05	24 MIN 7:10	25 MIN 1:10
26 MIN 1:10	27	28 AZ 7:05	29 AZ 1:35	30	31 MIA 6:10	

AUGUST

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2 BOS 7:05	3 BOS 6:05
4 BOS 1:35	5 HOU 7:05	6 HOU 7:05	7 HOU 1:35	8	9 NYY 6:05	10 NYY 12:05
11 NYY 12:35	12 BOS 6:10	13 BOS 6:10	14 BOS 5:10	15 MIN 7:05	16 MIN 7:05	17 MIN 6:05
18 MIN 1:35	19 PIT 7:05	20 PIT 7:05	21 PIT 1:35	22	23 CLE 6:10	24 CLE 6:10
25 CLE 12:40	26	27 CWS 7:10	28 CWS 7:10	29 CWS 1:10	30 OAK 7:05	31 OAK 6:05

JUNE

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
						1 MIA 3:10
2 MIA 12:40	3 DET 7:05	4 DET 7:05	5 DET 7:05	6	7 SF 7:05	8 SF 3:05
9 SF 1:35	10	11 LAD 9:10	12 LAD 9:10	13 LAD 9:10	14 SEA 9:10	15 SEA 6:15
16 SEA 3:10	17 NYM 7:05	18 NYM 7:05	19 NYM 7:05	20	21 KC 7:05	22 KC 3:05
23 KC 1:35	24 MIL 7:10	25 MIL 7:10	26 MIL 1:10	27 BAL 5:35	28 BAL 6:05	29 BAL 6:15
30 BAL 12:35						

SEPTEMBER

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1 OAK 1:35	2 NYY 7:05	3 NYY 7:05	4 NYY 7:05	5 LAA 7:05	6 LAA 7:05	7 LAA 6:15
8 LAA 1:35	9	10 AZ 8:40	11 AZ 2:40	12 SEA 8:40	13 SEA 9:10	14 SEA 8:40
15 SEA 3:10	16	17 TOR 7:05	18 TOR 7:05	19 TOR 1:35	20 SEA 7:05	21 SEA 6:05
22 SEA 1:35	23	24 OAK 8:40	25 OAK 8:40	26 OAK 2:37	27 LAA 8:38	28 LAA 8:38
29 LAA 2:07	30					

Home Games Exhibition Games Schedule subject to change.



“
What
fingerprints
do you
choose to
leave on
this world?
— Lisa Nichols,
motivational
speaker