



PAWS ITIVELY IRRESISTIBLE

DOGS & RESIDENTS CHANGE
VETERANS' LIVES

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

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Annual subscriptions to *The ECHO* can be purchased for \$12. Money orders or personal checks must be made out to *The ECHO*/Windham and sent to:

The ECHO
Attn: Subscriptions
P.O. Box 40
Huntsville, TX 77342-0040

ISSN 1530-7298

Find the digital versions of *The ECHO* online by searching: *The ECHO* newspaper at Windham's website: wsdtx.org.

the echo

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Dear Darby,

I read a magazine that recommends people consider getting a “glow up” to look better. First, what in the world is a glow up? Second, do I need one? And third, how do I get one of these while I’m living in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice?

**Need A Glow Up
Ferguson Unit**

Dear Positively Glowing,

Really, is this what Darby has been reduced to—I get questions about where and how to get a “glow up?” Oh well, I’ve answered where the term “Johnny” comes from at least a hundred times, so I guess I can answer one letter about a glow up.

First, according to my sources, a “glow up” is a term used by social media influencers to describe a significant and positive outer transformation, such as changing one’s hairstyle or skincare routine in order to improve their appearance, increase confidence and promote personal growth. It can also be connected to improving the inner person. Old schools, like the Darbster, would simply call this growing up and acting your age. Second, yes, yes, a thousand times yes, you definitely need one. Not only you, but every person needs one! The good news is that you can get your own personal (inner) glow up right there on your unit. If you need to finish your education, enroll in Windham School District’s academic program or maybe some college courses. There are faith-based classes and programs available through the chaplaincy department that deal with spiritual, emotional and cognitive growth. Finally dude, for the love of all that is glowy, please stop reading the beauty magazines!

Dear Darby,

I would like to express what I feel about people misusing the word mistake as a means of justifying the things they did voluntarily. Anytime a person has made up his/her mind to carry out a mission — whether it was premeditated or not — you cannot turn around and claim that as a mistake. You did that. You knew in advance exactly what you were about to do. An example of a mistake is something along these lines: you and your family are going on a vacation. Your spouse is reading the map that clearly provides accurate directions to your destination. They had given you great directions but somewhere they had missed a turn and caused you to get off track. That is a mistake. When people write in talking about the hundreds of mistakes they’ve made in life, read this to them.

**David Joiner
Hughes Unit**

Dear DJ,

At first I thought it would be a mistake to answer this letter, then I realized that my actions would be intentional, so according to your letter that would NOT be a mistake. While I agree with your premise, I think that folks sometimes just use the term “mistake” as a way of sayin’ “I’m sorry,” but I could be mistaken. Wait. My mistake. Er, my bad. Now I’m just confused! Anyway, I agree with what you’re sayin’!

Dear Darby,

Since you’re the ice cream expert, what do you think of the new Blue Bell flavor, Pecan Pie? How can I get it?

**Blue Bell Lover
Allred Unit**

Dear Blue Bell Lover,

What did I think of the new Pecan Pie pint flavor? It’s like the fairytale marriage of two of my favorite desserts: pecan pie and Homemade Vanilla ice cream! When I was but a wee tot, Mama used to make pecan pies during the fall/holiday season. After taking one out of the oven, she’d let it cool a bit, then serve it up with a big ol’ scoop of Homemade Vanilla on the side. It would melt a little to make a pool of liquid ice cream mixing with the still-warm pie. Awesome! Anyway, this pint flavor is kinda’ like that, minus the meltin’ part, unless it takes a while for you to get to the house before you get the opportunity to enjoy your ice cream. How can you get it? Put it on the top of your commissary slip the next time you go to the store!



JOB OPENINGS

TCI

Wynne Sign and Plastics Factory

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Unit List: Wynne Unit
Workers for the Following Position:
Sign Painter

Minimum Requirements:


- Must be classified as G2 or G3 status
- Have experience with airbrush painting and fine detail hand painting
- Have experience painting on wood and sign foam
- Must have a good attitude and work ethic
- Must be able to work 4:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

- Must be able to accept constructive criticism
- Have a minimum of two years left in TDCJ
- Have no major disciplinary cases within the past year
- No medical/work restrictions that would prohibit performing job duties

Attention:

Applicants:
If you are interested, send an I-60 or letter with all of your work experience to:
Wynne Unit Sign and Plastics Factory
Ms. Whitney, Plant Manager
810 FM 2821
Huntsville, Texas 77349

All eligible workers are encouraged to apply.



JOB OPENINGS

TCI

Wynne Sign and Plastics Factory

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Unit List: Wynne Unit
Workers for the Following Position:
Carpenter

Minimum Requirements:

- Must be classified as G2 or G3 status
- Must be skilled in usage of woodworking tools (table saw, chop saw, planer, joiner and router etc.
- Must have a good attitude and excellent work ethic
- Must be able to work 4:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Monday-Friday

- Must be able to accept constructive criticism
- Have a minimum of two years left in TDCJ
- Have no major disciplinary cases within the past year
- No medical/work restrictions that would prohibit performing job duties

Attention:

Applicants:
If you are interested, send an I-60 or letter with your qualifications to:
Wynne Unit Sign and Plastics Factory
Ms. Whitney, Plant Manager
810 FM 2821
Huntsville, Texas 77349

All eligible workers are encouraged to apply.



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Life of a Coach

“Whatever that giant is in your life, you have the power to remove it with a decision today.”

By **Jerome Rosette**
| Wynne Unit

I’ve had a few men speak into my life,

but none like Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division (CVSD) Director Chris Carter. He always took the time to listen and give sound advice — he is the sole reason that I became a Life Coach for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

Presently, I teach G-4 life skills classes Monday through Friday. This is such a rewarding job — an opportunity to pour into these men, giving them something positive.

I have come to learn that people can only give you what they have. The “bad game” they may possess came from someone else, which was taught to them by someone else — and so forth. For example, every Thanksgiving we have watched as grandmother cut the legs off the turkey before she places it in the oven. That’s learned behavior. She was doing that because her mother was doing the same thing — because her oven was a lot smaller than today’s ovens.

“

I have come to learn that people can only give you what they have. The 'bad game' they may possess came from someone else, which was taught to them by someone else.

Over the course of my life, I have unfortunately impacted many lives in negative ways. Living wrong has absolutely not gotten me anywhere. I've had many sleepless nights, crying when I was alone. The old me was wanting to die because I knew that I was living wrong. My family didn't "give me bad game"—it was because of the time I spent in the streets with my peers while Momma was at work.

Life skills curricula teach us to look back and find the root of the problem. For example, why do we think the way we think? Why do we act this way? If you don't like something about yourself, it's your responsibility to change it now that you are aware of it.

Today, not tomorrow, not next week and not next year. It starts now! You procrastinated about getting in school, taking Life Skills and telling your family that you are sorry and that you love them. Get off the couch, get off the bunk and get away from the domino table.

Stop giving your family's hard-earned money to the dope man. That person doesn't care about you. I love me, and now it's vital that you learn to love yourselves.

I'm going to close with this quote: "If you want something you have never had, then you have to do something you have never done." Whatever that giant is in your life, you have the power to remove it with a decision today. €



If you don't like something about yourself, it's your responsibility to change it now that you are aware of it. Today, not tomorrow, not next week and not next year. It starts now!



ROSETTE WITH CVSD DIRECTOR
CHRIS CARTER



Mentoring Tomorrow's Leaders

By Kelly Roddy
ECHO Staff Writer



I have a secret to tell.

It's not an overwhelmingly profound mystery, but is mostly considered to be a social faux pas to share. Nonetheless, this year I will turn 50 and officially be considered middle age. Please do not try to convince me that I passed middle age in my 40s.

Needless to say, I may have grown up in a different era than some of you. As a young girl, I was expected to play with dolls while sports participation was limited to cheering on the sidelines. We had track, tennis and even golf at my high school, but team competitions in sports like basketball and soccer weren't common in my adolescent years. As much as I wanted to be accepted, I never fit into the girly mold society wanted to shape me into.

This got me thinking about how competitive sports mold the minds of young men to release competitiveness in a healthy way, while also forming bonds of brotherhood and team family dynamics. The instinct to prove one's superiority is released in a controlled setting, while key fundamental traits like teamwork, reliability and accountability are developed.

Women instinctively possess an innate desire to compete as well. Without the direction of competitive sports, I believe we turn that rivalry towards every other woman

around us. These underlying traits display themselves in critical comments, judgmental scrutinizing and in the way we underhandedly try to cross one another out.

As women, we don't need to seek out an opponent "out there," as we are our own worst enemy. And if that wasn't enough, when we get into a quiet place by ourselves, we tend to destructively look in the mirror and tear apart every detail of ourselves.

Where could we be collectively if we became "our sister's keeper" and were willing to help a woman up when she stumbles and falls? What if we were able to come together and compete for real issues in the world, as opposed to trivial differences? What if, in lieu of trying to find a way to manipulate the next person to perpetuate our own desires, we mentored younger women into becoming the leaders of tomorrow?

My challenge to the women of today is to become an instrument in building up the women of tomorrow. Allow the ties that bind us together to define us, rather than divide us. By developing alchemy and turning adversaries into advocates, we can join forces to accomplish meaningful change in the way we see the world. €

By Rico Luis Amezcuita

| Clemens Unit

When he visited, it seemed to bring him happiness and help him relax, as he sounded like a songbird while whistling melodies of classic songs. You never forgot he was around with tidbits of music in the air as if he was an old record player.

My grandpa Joe had a soothing voice when he would say, "Mijo (my son, in Spanish) and Mamitas (a term of endearment for daughter, granddaughter, mother or wife in Spanish). His voice was deep, yet soft and a pinch raspy.

Standing about 5 feet 5 inches with an average build, he had receding black and white hair for as long as I can remember. His complexion was different than mine, being a darker, mid-brown like that of the skin of a potato. Like a Mr. Potato Head. He would have laughed at that one — I love that guy.

Most often he would wear faded blue jeans, a t-shirt tucked in and a trucker-style hat with positive or spiritual based words or quotes. Nothing ever too expensive — or what might be considered to be.

Grandpa was a simple man when it came to his desires of paperbacks, green-stamped with past politicians. Money to him was just a tool for survival. Yet with what little he had along the way, he made movie-like moments in my life.

I remember one particular Christmas Eve where all the grandchildren, aunts, uncles, parents and grandparents gathered at my parents' home to celebrate. Grandfather shows up with presents wrapped in colorful newspaper comic strips.

My younger siblings, a sister and two brothers — plus cousins — loved that creativity far more than the overly-expensive wrapping paper. Then again, most kids play with the empty boxes more than the actual toys. Talk about making a dollar out of 15 cents. Grandpa Joe would make little miracles feel larger than life, and he created memories that have lasted my entire life.

The kids really had fun reading the comics before opening them, even sharing with one another while laughing. To this day, nobody really remembers what we got for gifts that year — but we have never forgotten that comic strip Christmas.



Comic Strip Christmas



Henry Rollins at Wacken
Open Air 2016

By Frank Schwichtenberg - Own
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php?curid=53114204](https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=53114204)

MUSIC FUELS POSITIVE ENERGY

By Robert Gonzales
Contributing Writer,
Ramsey Unit

Finding a positive, encouraging source of inspiration is important for everyone because it is a driving force throughout each person's lifetime. Inspiration's presence in each philanthropic act of kindness cannot be denied.

Inspiration works in binding us together into a tighter knit group capable of withstanding impossibly unimaginable adversity. Everyone experiences adversity, but inspiration exists in its limitless forms to fuel our compulsion to persevere, survive and share our essence moving forward.

Wise words were passionately pronounced by singer Henry Rollins in the second verse of the final track, "Shine" on his band's sophomore album, "Weight": "If you think you've got 100 years to mess around, you're wrong! This time is real. Your time is now. It's hero time! Yeah! Hero time. Hey, time to shine!"

Rollins' band's sound is not easily described: hard-hitting synchronized drumming drives the melody of their funk-infused bass guitarist, and their lead guitarist utilizes sonic distortions as if exclamation to the song's rhythm.

Inspiration blasts through my ear buds into my ear drums, aggressively filling my brain with common sense and provoking a personal call to action. I decisively take responsibility for the condition of my life, and as if with new eyes, I see flourishing opportunities to create the precise life I want to live.

**INSPIRATION
CAN BE FOUND
EVERYWHERE AND
IN EVERYTHING,
BUT ESPECIALLY
THROUGH MUSIC.**



**EVERYONE EXPERIENCES
ADVERSITY,
BUT INSPIRATION
EXISTS IN ITS LIMITLESS
FORMS TO FUEL OUR
COMPULSION TO
PERSEVERE, SURVIVE
AND SHARE OUR
ESSENCE MOVING
FORWARD.**

Guidance through the voice of Henry Rollins has worked as a salve to my soul. It instantaneously rejuvenates my temporarily-stilted inner sense of positive vigor. True enough, investing my time and attention into formal education has buoyed my existence over the duration of my stay in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), and it has served in empowering my ability to communicate comprehensive ideas; however, nothing super fuels my invigoration to take initiative in my life as much as Rollins' music.

Not everyone will share my opinion and appreciation of Rollins' band, yet inspiration presents itself in many other forms. Inspiration can be found everywhere and in everything, but especially through music, at least for me.

Even if I am unsuccessful winning anyone over to favoring the merits of inspiration found in Henry Rollins' music and lyrics, I encourage everyone to broaden their awareness of the limitless sources surrounding us. Acknowledge whichever form of positive inspiration as it speaks to you. Though our lifetime is limited, infinite possibilities are accessible through inspiration.

"Get up! Get up! Get up! It's time to SHINE!" €

Parole Review Process



- The Parole Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice identifies inmates six months prior to their initial parole eligibility, and four months prior to subsequent review dates, and directs the case file to be pulled for review.
- Notice is sent to trial officials, victims and victim family members.
- An Institutional Parole Officer (IPO) of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles interviews the inmate and prepares a parole case summary for the Board.
- The inmate's file is sent to the designated board office for review and vote by a Parole Panel.

Standard Parole Panel

A standard parole panel consists of three voting members, usually one board member and two parole commissioners; a majority of two votes is needed for a final decision. Panel voting is sequential, with one panel member recording their vote and passing it to the next panel member. If the first two votes are the same, the vote is final. If the first two votes differ, the third panel member reviews the case and breaks the tie.

- An interview with the inmate is at the discretion of the Parole Panel member, as are interviews with individuals in support or protest of an inmate's release to parole.
- Parole Panel members must grant an interview to victims, as defined by statute, upon request.
- The inmate is notified of the Parole Panel decision via correspondence. A denial will include the next review date.

- An approval may include special conditions.

Full Board Parole Panel

A full board parole panel consists of parole board members only; parole commissioners do not vote these cases. A two-thirds majority vote of the Board (five out of seven voters) is necessary for a positive parole decision for the following:

- Inmates convicted of or serving a sentence for a capital felony
- An offense under Penal Code section 20A.03 [Continuous Trafficking of Persons]
- An offense under Penal Code section 21.02 [Continuous Sexual Abuse of Young Child or Children]
- An offense under Penal Code section 21.11(a) (1) [Indecency with a Child]
- An offense under Penal Code section 22.021 [Aggravated Sexual Assault]
- Inmates required under Texas Government Code Section 508.145(c) to serve 35 calendar years before becoming eligible for release on parole.

These inmates, except capital felons serving a life sentence and those convicted of or serving a sentence for Aggravated Sexual Assault, are eligible for a minimum of a 3-year up to a 5-year set-off. Capital felons serving a life sentence and those inmates with Aggravated Sexual Assault offenses are eligible for up to a 10-year set-off.

Source: <https://www.tdci.texas.gov/bpp>

Parole Review Status Line

A parole decision status can be checked by family, friends and loved ones at:
<https://inmate.tdcj.texas.gov/InmateSearch/start.action>
 or call: 844-512-0461



General Office

Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles
 P.O. Box 13401
 Austin, Texas 78711-3401
 E-mail: bpp_pio@tdcj.texas.gov



Support Letters and Parole Packets

TDCJ — Review and Release Processing
 8610 Shoal Creek Blvd.
 Austin, Texas 78711



Reasons for Approval and Denial



Key: “A” - Approved; “D” - Denied

▼ 1. CRIMINAL HISTORY

- A.** The record does not include a documented pattern of violent or assaultive arrests or convictions.
- D.** The record indicates that the inmate has repeatedly committed criminal episodes that indicate a predisposition to commit criminal acts upon release.

▼ 2. NATURE OF OFFENSE

- A.** The record indicates non-violent offenses and the instant offense indicates no tendency toward violent/assaultive behavior, with limited potential for future assaultive type offenses.
- D.** The record indicates the instant offense has elements of brutality, violence, assaultive behavior, or conscious selection of victim’s vulnerability indicating a conscious disregard for the lives, safety, or property of others, such that the inmate poses a continuing threat to public safety.

▼ 3. DRUG OR ALCOHOL INVOLVEMENT

- A.** The record indicates limited or noninvolvement with substance use.
- D.** The record indicates excessive substance use involvement.

▼ 4. INSTITUTIONAL ADJUSTMENT

- A.** The record indicates that the inmate has maintained a satisfactory institutional adjustment.
- D.** The record indicates that the inmate has an unsatisfactory institutional adjustment.

▼ 5. ADJUSTMENT DURING PERIODS OF SUPERVISION

- A.** The record indicates successful periods of supervision on probation, parole, or mandatory supervision.
- D.** The record indicates unsuccessful periods of supervision on previous probation, parole, or mandatory supervision that resulted in incarceration, including parole-in-absentia.

▼ 6. PARTICIPATION IN TDCJ PROPOSED OR SPECIALIZED PROGRAMS

- A.** The record indicates participation in and completion of TDCJ-CID programs and activities in the individual treatment plan that should

enhance chances to obtain and maintain full-time stable employment.

- D.** The record indicates that the inmate refused to participate or intentionally failed to complete TDCJ-CID programs and activities in the individual treatment plan.

▼ 7. TIME SERVED

- A.** The record indicates that length of time served by the inmate is congruent with offense severity and criminal history.
- D.** The record indicates that length of time served by the inmate is not congruent with offense severity and criminal history.

▼ 8. FELONY OFFENSE

- D.** The record indicates that the inmate has been charged before a magistrate, indicted, or convicted by a court of competent jurisdiction, with a felony offense committed while incarcerated.

▼ 9. DISCRETIONARY MANDATORY SUPERVISION (DMS)

For a vote not to release, it is necessary to vote both D1 and D2, along with any other reasons that may apply.

- A.** Release to Discretionary Mandatory Supervision.
- D1.** The record indicates that the inmate’s accrued good conduct time is not an accurate reflection of the inmate’s potential for rehabilitation.
- D2.** The record indicates that the inmate’s release would endanger the public.

▼ 10. GANG AFFILIATION

- A.** The record indicates that the inmate is not a confirmed member of one of the TDCJ-CID designated security threat groups.
- D.** The record indicates that the inmate is a confirmed member of one of the TDCJ-CID designated security threat groups.

▼ 11. OTHER

- A.** or **D.** — Write an explanation.

Parole Panel Has Many Voting Options



The voting panels of the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles do not just vote “yes” or “no” — they also vote the type of parole approval or denial, length of set-offs and any stipulations upon release.

The board’s parole panel approval vote options:

FI-1 — (Further Investigation 1) — Release inmate on parole supervision as soon as eligible.

FI-2 — Release on parole on a specified future date.

FI-3R — Transfer to a TDCJ rehabilitation program. Release to parole only after program completion and not earlier than three months from specified date. Such TDCJ programs may include either CHANGES/Life Skills, Voyager, Segovia Pre-Release Center (Segovia PRC), or any other approved tier programs.

FI-4R — Transfer to a TDCJ rehabilitation program. Release to parole only after program completion and not earlier than four months from specified date. Such TDCJ program shall be the Sex Offender Education Program (SOEP).

FI-5 — Transfer to a DWI Program and release to a continuum of care program.

FI-6 — Transfer to the DWI rehabilitation program and release to continuum of care program.

FI-6R — Transfer to a TDCJ rehabilitation program. Release to parole only after program completion and no earlier than six months from specified date. Such TDCJ programs may include the Pre-Release Therapeutic Community (PRTC), Pre-Release Substance Abuse Program (PRSAP), In-Prison Therapeutic Community Program (IPTC) or any other approved tier program.

FI-7R — Transfer to a TDCJ rehabilitation program. Release to parole only after program completion and not earlier than seven months from the specified date. Such TDCJ program shall be the Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative (SVORI).

FI-9R — Transfer to a TDCJ rehabilitation program. Release to parole only after program completion and not earlier than nine months from specified date. Such TDCJ program shall be the Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOTP-9).

FI-18R — Transfer to a TDCJ rehabilitation treatment program. Release to parole only after program completion and no earlier than 18 months from specified date. Such TDCJ program shall be the Sex Offender Treatment Program (SOTP-18).

CU-FI — Designates the date on which the inmate serving consecutive sentences would have been eligible for release on parole if the inmate had been sentenced to serve a single sentence. This date shall be within a three-year incarceration period following the panel decision.

RMS — Release to mandatory supervision.

The board’s parole panel denial vote options:

NR (Next Review – Month/Year) — Deny parole and set a time for next parole consideration. State law requires annual reviews except for inmates serving a sentence for an offense listed in Section 508.149(a), Government Code, or for an offense punishable as a felony of the second or third degree under Section 22.04, Penal Code. For these inmates, the next review date (month/year) may be set up to five years from the panel decision date, but in no event shall it be less than one calendar year from the panel decision date.

SA (Serve All) — Deny parole with no regular subsequent review, requiring inmate to serve balance of sentence, unless eligible for mandatory supervision consideration prior to projected release date.

CU/NR (Month/Year-Cause Number) — Deny favorable action and set the next review date at one year from the panel decision date. If the inmate is serving a sentence for an offense listed in Section 508.149(a), Government code, or for an offense punishable as a felon of the second or third degree under Section 22.04, Penal Code, the next review date (month/year) may be set at any date in the five-year incarceration period following the panel decision date, but in no event shall it be less than one calendar year from the panel decision date.

CU/SA (Month/Year-Cause Number) — If the inmate is serving a sentence for an offense listed in Section 508.149(a), Government Code, or for an offense punishable as a felony of the second or third degree under Section 22.04, Penal Code; deny release and order serve-all, but in no event shall this be utilized if the inmate's maximum expiration date is over five years from the date of panel decision. If the inmate is not serving an offense under Section 508.149(a), Government Code, deny release and order serve all, but in no event shall this be utilized if the inmate's maximum expiration date is over one year from the date of the panel decision.

DMS (Month/Year) — Deny Release to mandatory supervision and set the next mandatory supervision review date one year from the panel decision date. This decision denies mandatory supervision (and sets next review date) because inmate's accrued good conduct time does not accurately reflect the potential for rehabilitation and the inmates release would endanger the public.

The board's parole panel set-off options:

From three to 10 year — Inmates convicted of an offense listed under Tex.Gov. Code §508.046 are eligible for a three-year up to a 10-year set-off.

From one to 5 year — Inmates convicted of an offense listed under Tex.Gov. Code §508.149(a) are eligible for a one-year up to a five-year set-off.

One year — Inmates convicted of other, non-aggravated offenses are eligible for a one-year set-off.

Source: <https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp> and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles

FY 2020-FY 2024 Parole Consideration and Approval Rates

	FY 2020	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024
Cases Considered	77,530	65,488	62,579	64,785	66,204
Cases Approved	29,919	25,190	24,604	22,465	25,875
Approval Rate	38.59%	38.47%	39.32%	34.68%	39.08%

FY 2024 Parole Considerations and Approvals by Board Members and Parole Commissioners

	TOTAL VOTES	NUMBER APPROVED	APPROVAL RATE	DENIAL RATE
Adams, M.	6,588	3,091	46.92%	53.08%
Aiello, R.	5,009	2,060	41.13%	58.87%
Bishop, J.	6,911	2,552	36.93%	63.07%
Brito, E.	7,356	3,226	43.86%	56.14%
Butler, J.	6,704	2,580	38.48%	61.52%
Davila, E.	5,936	2,452	41.31%	58.69%
Eck-Massingill, L.	7,265	3,009	41.42%	58.58%
Farley, M.	5,194	2,429	46.77%	53.23%
Fletcher, S.	6,421	2,565	39.95%	60.05%
Fox, T.	4,165	1,489	35.75%	64.25%
Gonzalez, R.	6,421	2,329	36.27%	63.73%
Gutierrez, D.	1,349	747	55.37%	44.63%
Jones, C.	8,223	3,447	41.92%	58.08%
Kiel, J.	6,785	2,519	37.13%	62.87%
Long, B.	8,228	2,897	35.21%	64.79%
Marton, J.	6,394	2,603	40.71%	59.29%
Moberley, M.	7,738	3,257	42.09%	57.91%
Molina, L.	7,736	2,914	37.67%	62.33%
Ramirez, A.	6,172	2,014	32.63%	67.37%
Robertson, E.	7,066	2,926	41.41%	58.59%
Salcido, A.	7,310	3,068	41.97%	58.03%
Tejada, R.	6,909	2,973	43.03%	56.97%
TOTAL	141,880	57,147	40.28%	59.72%

FY 2024 Parole Considerations and Approvals by Offense Type

	CASES CONSIDERED	CASES APPROVED	APPROVAL RATE
Violent Aggravated Non-Sexual	11,075	3,982	35.95%
Violent Aggravated Sexual	3,584	1,099	30.66%
Violent Non-Aggravated Non-Sexual	11,974	3,693	30.84%
Non-Aggravated Sexual	2,023	680	33.61%
Non-Violent	37,548	16,421	43.73%
TOTALS	66,204	25,875	39.08%

FY 2024 Special Review Votes

	NUMBER	PERCENT
FI-1 (Parole when Eligible)	38	16.96%
FI-2 (Parole on Specified Date)	19	8.48%
FI-3R (CHANGES)	14	6.25%
FI-4R (SOEP)	0	0.00%
FI-5 (IPTC)	6	2.68%
FI-6 (DWI)	4	1.79%
FI-6R (PRTC, PRSAP)	12	5.36%
FI-7R (SVORI)	0	0.00%
FI-9R (SOTP-9)	2	0.89%
FI-18R (SOTP-18)	1	0.45%
NR (Set-Off)	64	28.57%
CU/NR Vote	11	4.91%
CU/VI Vote	3	1.34%
CU/SA Vote	2	0.89%
SA (Required to Serve All)	16	7.14%
RMS (Release to Mandatory Supervision)	17	7.59%
DMS (Deny Mandatory Supervision)	15	6.70%
TOTALS	224	100%

Frequently Asked Parole-Related Questions



Does an interview with a parole panel member increase the chances for parole?

No. An interview merely provides the resident, their family and/or friends the opportunity to speak with a voting parole panel member before the parole panel reviews a case.

What can family members do to help a resident gain parole?

Residents' behavior and accomplishments in prison are factors that are considered in all parole decisions. Family members should encourage residents to maintain a clear conduct disciplinary record and to participate in the educational, vocational and character development programs offered at their unit of assignment. Also, in many instances, the resident must rely on family or friends when arranging a suitable parole plan.

When does release become effective?

A parole release becomes effective when the resident signs his or her release certificate. The certificate orders the release and tells the resident in clear and understandable language where to report and to whom. The certificate lists the conditions of release and gives the date on which the resident will discharge his or her sentence and be free from supervision. The certificate also includes a waiver of extradition. The parole certificate must be signed by the resident.

Residents released on mandatory supervision are given release certificates that provide parole office information and release conditions. Mandatory supervision residents are not required to sign their release certificates, but they nevertheless must obey the rules and conditions of supervision and are subject to revocation if they violate the rules or conditions.

Will a large number of petitions and letters make more of a difference to the parole panel than just a few?

No, a few clear and concise letters stating the nature of support (financial, vocational, residential, etc.) are preferable to voluminous petitions and letters. It is not necessary to send a copy of the letter to each parole panel member. Letters are placed in the resident's file to be available to any reviewing parole panel member.

Sources:

<https://www.tdci.texas.gov/bpp>

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQ)

- **PAROLE PANEL REVIEW**
- **SUPPORT LETTERS**

Information in this section is derived from the Board of Pardons and Paroles website:

<https://www.tdcj.texas.gov/bpp>
and the Texas Board of Pardons and Paroles Annual Statistical Report for Fiscal Year 2024

Parole Contact Information



Source: tdcj.texas.gov/bpp

Amarillo Board Office

5809 S. Western, Suite 200
Amarillo, TX 79110
Phone: (806) 359-7656
Fax: (806) 358-6455
BM: Elodia Brito
PC: Jeffrey Marton
PC: Julie Phillips

Units

Allred	Roach
Clements	Robertson
Dalhart	Rudd
Daniel	Sanchez SJ
Formby SJ	Smith
Fort Stockton	Wallace
Jordan	West Texas RMF
Lynaugh	Wheeler SJ
Mechler	Wilderness III
Montford	

Huntsville Board Office

1022 Veterans Memorial Parkway, Suite A
Huntsville, TX 77320
Phone: (936) 291-2161
Fax (936) 291-8367
BM: Carmella Jones
PC: Jimmy Guyton
PC: James Paul Kiel
PC: Wadella Murphy

Units

Bell	Goree
Byrd	Holliday
Diboll	Huntsville
Duncan	Kegans SJ
Ellis	Wainwright
Estelle	Wynne
Ferguson	Federal (FCI)

Angleton Board Office

209 E. Mulberry, Suite 120
Angleton, TX 77515
Phone: (713) 982-9755
Fax: (713) 982-9775
BM: Sandra Fletcher
PC: Joel Butler
PC: Michael Hardges

Units

Carole S. Young MC	LeBlanc
Clemens	Lychner SJ
Gib Lewis	Stringfellow
Gist SJ	Plane SJ
Goodman	Ramsey
Henley SJ	Scott
Hightower	Terrell
Hospital - Galveston	Vance
Jester III	

Palestine Board Office

1670 N. Hwy. 155, Suite A
Palestine, TX 75803
Phone: (903) 723-1068
Fax: (903) 723-1441
BM: Brian Long
PC: Jacqueline Bishop
PC: Michael Adams

Units

Beto	Johnston
Billy Moore	SAFPF
Boyd	Michael
Coffield	Polunsky
East Texas	Powledge
Gurney	Skyview
Hodge	Telford

Austin Board Office

4616 W. Howard Lane, Suite 200
Austin, TX 78728
Phone: 512-671-2532
Fax: 512-671-2497
BM: Ed Robertson
PC: Richard Aiello
PC: Roel Tejada

Units

Bridgeport	Memorial
Coleman	Middleton
Crain	O'Daniel
Halbert SAFPF	Murray
Hamilton	Pack
Hilltop	San Saba
Hobby	Sanders Estes
Hughes	Stevenson
Luther	Stiles
Marlin	Travis County SJ

Gatesville Board Office

545 State Hwy 36 Bypass N, Suite A
Gatesville, TX 76528
Phone: (254) 865-8870
Fax: (254) 865-2629
BM: Marsha Moberley, Chair
PC: Mary J. Farley
PC: Clint Gunnels

Units

Bridgeport	Kyle
Choice Moore	Lindsey SJ
Cole SJ	Memorial
Crain	Murray
Havins SJ	O'Daniel
Hilltop	Sayle SAFPF
Hughes	Stiles
Hutchins SJ	Woodman SJ

San Antonio Board Office

85 N. E. Loop 410, Suite 112
San Antonio, TX 78216
Phone: (210) 342-2012
Fax: (210) 342-1421
BM: Linda Molina
PC: Raymond Gonzalez
PC: Edward Davila

Units

Briscoe	Lopez SJ
Connally	McConnell
Cotulla	Ney SJ
Dominguez SJ	Segovia
Garza West	Torres
Glossbrenner SAFPF	Willacy County SJ



By Robert Morgan
Staff Writer



CVSD Director Chris Carter

CVSD DIRECTOR CHRIS CARTER USES EXPERIENCES TO LEAD REHABILITATION EFFORTS

FOR YEARS,
RESIDENTS OF THE
TEXAS DEPARTMENT
OF CRIMINAL
JUSTICE (TDCJ)

have benefited from programs designed to empower them with the skills and mindset needed to think critically and take meaningful action. TDCJ's Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division (CVSD), under the leadership of Director Chris Carter, plays a key role in this process, managing more than 30,000 volunteers serving within 103 TDCJ facilities. CVSD facilitates religious and volunteer services that include spiritual, moral and ethical transformation. The chaplaincy, volunteer and peer-to-peer services of TDCJ are guided by Carter's leadership, which has been developed through years of experience and positive influences. Throughout his career with TDCJ, Carter has worked his way up the ranks from correctional officer, to senior warden and now division director.

Carter noted some of the more memorable people who have served as his role models and mentors. He said they have provided him with strength and guidance throughout his personal and professional challenges.

He first credited his grandfather for instilling a strong work ethic in him.

“He had a Herculean work ethic,” Carter said. “Everything about him I admired. He was an iron man, working seven days a week.”

Carter also acknowledged the impact of his mentor, Cody Ginsel, who is TDCJ’s deputy director of the Training and Leader Development Division, and others. He said that at each step, these leaders provided direction and advice, helping him navigate his more than 30-year career.

“I’ve had people there encouraging me throughout my rise within the agency — those that saw something in me even when I didn’t see it myself,” Carter said. “It seemed God always put people in the right places at the right time to put that wisdom in my ear.”

Carter then pointed to the impact that his family had in helping him get to where he is, all the while continuing to push him to be and do better.

IF YOU CAN WIN
THE BATTLE IN
YOUR MIND,
THEN THE SKY
IS THE LIMIT
TO YOUR
POTENTIAL.



- Chris Carter
CVSD DIRECTOR





Director Carter congratulates a Change Agent graduate.

YOU
HAVE TO BE THE
BIGGEST FAN
IN THE STANDS
WHEN PEOPLE ARE
DOING GOOD,
AND WHEN THEY
FALL, YOU HAVE
TO BE THE ONE TO
PICK THEM UP.

- Chris Carter
CVSD DIRECTOR



“My wife is the most important coach in the game,” Carter said. “She helped me believe that I can tackle any mountain, chop down any tree and achieve any goal.”

These influences collectively brought the CVSD director to a realization: “You have to have someone in your corner that adds value,” Carter said.

“We [CVSD] are always looking for ways to bring encouragement,” Carter said. “We want to educate you and give you options. My goal is to have everyone involved in something positive.”

In addition to CVSD staff, the division utilizes current and former residents to help spread awareness and provide model examples of success and leadership. Across the agency, peer facilitators lead by assisting with programs, providing positive support and offering advice to the resident population.

“We are looking for champions — people who have it figured out,” Carter said. “I want people [residents and volunteers] who have lived through the experience of TDCJ and have transitioned to a new way of living and are ready to serve.”

Former residents of TDCJ who have gone on to achieve remarkable success following incarceration are returning to share their stories and inspire change. One such example is Keidrain Brewster, who, after re-entering his community, founded a thriving trucking company that actively hires individuals who are formerly incarcerated. Brewster is also the founder of Big Reform, a movement dedicated to making dramatic, positive changes in individuals in prison from the inside out.

Damon West, another former TDCJ resident, built a successful career as a motivational speaker. West also co-created the rehabilitative Change Agent program with TDCJ, an effort based on his personal journey of transformation. This program assists residents in positively changing their conversations, thoughts and behavior.

Carter first met Brewster and West several years ago, when he served as their warden during their incarceration.

“These two men have transitioned back into society,” Carter said. “They are successful fathers, husbands and entrepreneurs.”

Brewster and West both support TDCJ-sponsored rallies and programs which seek to expand rehabilitation efforts, and they are often seen at units promoting awareness of the dangers of drug use. They share the dedication of Carter and CVSD in creating a healthy and safe community within TDCJ.

When not supporting outreach to residents, Carter spends time sharpening professional skills and emphasizing self-improvement. He leads by example,

recently becoming a Certified Professional Coach (CPC) through the University of Houston. His certification, which is backed by the International Association of Recovery Coaches, has equipped him with the key elements associated with being a life coach.

“You have to understand your own emotional intelligence before you can help someone else,” Carter said. “You have to be the biggest fan in the stands when people are doing good, and when they fall, you have to be the one to pick them up.”

Carter continues to grow in his professional roles and earned a master’s degree in Criminal Justice Administration in June 2024. He also currently serves on the American Correctional Association Board of Governors and the Texas Corrections Association Board.

Under Carter’s growing guidance, CVSD has strengthened rehabilitative programs for the TDCJ population while also recognizing and celebrating the achievements of program participants. “When you see a graduation, it’s a celebration. I want every victory to be celebrated,” Carter said. “We travel along with you and celebrate the victories, but we want to continue to look forward. We are steadily looking to elevate.”

Director Carter speaks with *ECHO* staff writer Robert Morgan.





Carter strives to develop programs elevating lives of TDCJ residents.

To achieve this goal, Director Carter extends his philosophy to all residents: the key to changing the status quo in life is overcoming one's self.

"Winning the battle of the mind is mandatory to achieve your goal," Carter said. "If you can win the battle in your mind, then the sky is the limit to your potential."

Carter also shares a special message with residents who are struggling with change or tough times.

"Life can be tough. It may seem that the deck is stacked against you. Maybe you have an addiction that you're struggling with or maybe you have lost a loved one," Carter said. "It's OK to cry — to grieve. It's just not okay to stay there. Find someone you feel safe with and talk to them."

Through his advice, Carter seeks to make the journey to a better tomorrow smoother and easier to face.

"Maya Angelou said, 'Just because you suffered a defeat does not mean you are defeated.' You have to keep going and keep believing," Carter said. "If the challenge is addiction, surround yourself with the right people and avoid your triggers. Take it one day at a time and be proud of yourself and the accomplishments you have made. Every day is a victory."

"JUST BECAUSE
YOU SUFFERED A
DEFEAT DOES NOT
MEAN YOU ARE
DEFEATED."

-MAYA
ANGELOU



Director Carter speaks at a Wynne Unit prayer summit.

“Sometimes people try to outrun their problems, but eventually you are not going to have any more real estate to run on,” Carter said. “So, go ahead and face it. Take classes such as Alcoholics Anonymous/Narcotics Anonymous or 12 Steps, read books and do things to build your knowledge base. The more you empower yourself, the better you are able to win your battles. We [the CVSD] are here for you. We are in your corner.”

Editor’s Note: For a list of programs and courses offered by CVSD, send an I-60 to your unit Chaplaincy Department. €

TAKE IT ONE DAY AT A TIME
AND BE PROUD OF YOURSELF
AND THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS
YOU HAVE MADE.
EVERY DAY IS A VICTORY.

- Chris Carter
CVSD DIRECTOR



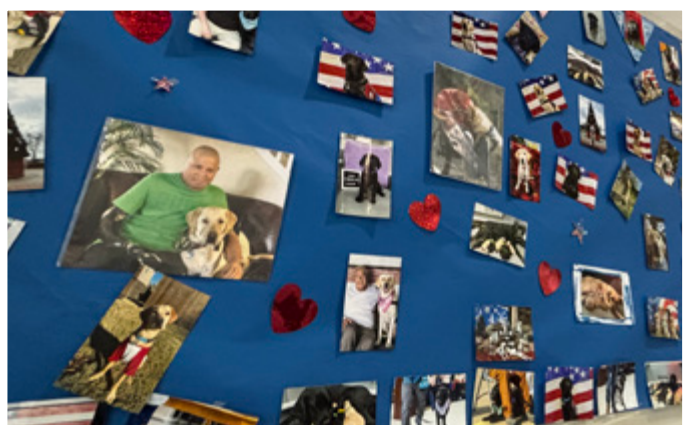
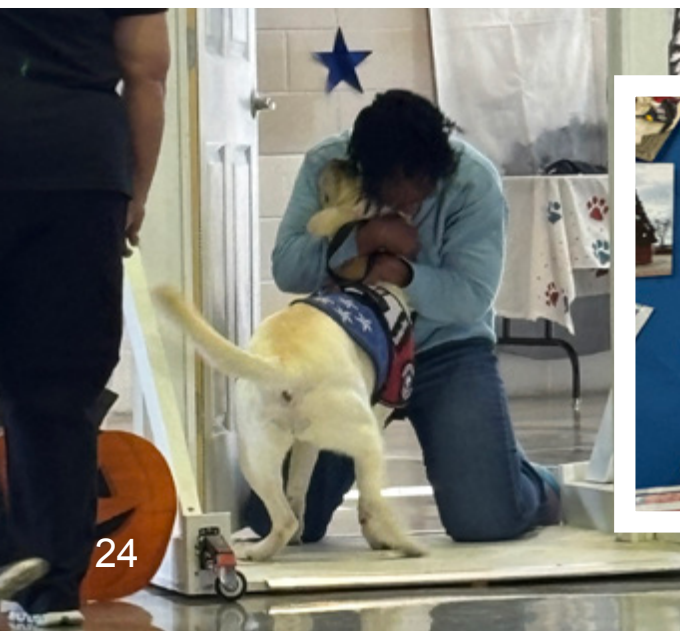


PAWSITIVELY IRRESISTIBLE

DOGS, RESIDENTS CHANGE
VETERANS' LIVES



BY KELLY RODDY
STAFF WRITER





The Patriot Paws program celebrated Halloween with costume-clad paws during a special Match Day on Oct. 31 at the Murray Unit. The heartfelt ceremony revealed the matches of resident-trained service dogs with their new owners. It included veterans with their spouses, Patriot Paws program representatives, Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) special guests, residents from multiple units and furry friends honoring the momentous occasion.

Patriot Paws is designed to provide working service dogs to disabled veterans. Currently, the program is available at the Murray, Crain and Boyd Units, providing residents the opportunity to learn how to train service dogs and give back to their communities.

Jacqueline Barnett, a resident trainer at the Murray Unit, shared her experience, noting its immense impact.



Impact

"I am super grateful for this program because I came to prison a recovering drug addict and I was completely broken," Barnett said. "This program has completely transformed and changed me. I now have confidence, purpose and a new lease on life."

Denise Rummel, a senior resident trainer, has been a part of the program since 2016. Rummel finds reward, not only in working with the service dogs, but in her ability to take the knowledge she has acquired and pass it on to others.

"As trainers, we're family, like a bunch of sisters," Rummel said. "It's a beautiful thing to be able to encourage each other and have the opportunity to serve the unit. I give a piece of me to all of them."

The dogs are purpose-bred for their genetics, temperament, work ethic and desire to serve. They are trained from 18 to 24 months in seven levels of commands. The service dog's ability to fetch items, get help, and assist in daily chores all while providing emotional support, contributes to a quality of life for veterans who have served America.

D. Lane, an outside trainer with Patriot Paws, initially chose to become part of the program because her father is a veteran. Five years later, she has since graduated college and now coordinates Texas A&M trainers with TDCJ program participants.

"These [trainers] work really hard to get the dogs to this point," Lane said. "We are all part of the puzzle, but they are a really big part of it."

"This program has completely transformed and changed me. I now have confidence, purpose and a new lens on life."

JACQUELINE BARNETT
RESIDENT TRAINER



Graduation

Graduation week began Oct. 27 as the veterans arrived at the Murray Unit to begin the training process. The Crain and Murray resident trainers worked together to teach the veterans the cue commands.

“We present classes to explain what a cue is used for, and then we teach them how to execute it,” Rummel said. “After each class, we have a practice session where the veterans get to know the service dogs.”

This is where the transformation begins in the confidence and comfortability of each veteran, while the graduating service dogs begin to choose their forever home.

“The dogs pick their person,” Lane said. “The dogs work really hard and they tell us which veteran they want to go with.”

The reveal is kept secret until the Match Day ceremony where the veterans receive their service dog.

Match Day began with the honored veterans being commemorated for their service to the nation with the presentation of the colors by the O’Daniel Unit’s veteran program color guard. Tears began to flow as a Murray resident, Courtney Rice, sang the national anthem.



Service dog graduates Hope and Kahuna then performed a fun-filled Halloween skit with their trainers, displaying their skills and individual personalities. Following the skit, each resident trainer took time to share with the veterans what the Patriot Paws program means to them.

“This is life changing,” Rummel said. “It’s a commitment and it’s selfless, and that’s the most beautiful thing.”

Match Day can be bittersweet as the trainers say goodbye to their students, but the trainers expressed that the service provided is so much greater than themselves. The bigger picture is an enhanced quality of life for a veteran who has sacrificed everything for freedom.

In the spirit of Halloween, the veterans were set up behind a door, and the service dogs rang the doorbell while their trainers said, “trick or treat.”



The veterans would then open the door to learn which service dog would be their new furry companion. Many veterans dropped to their knees, filled with emotion, to receive their service dog with open arms.

Gratitude

“I just want to say, ‘thank you’ to everyone,” veteran Kraig said after being chosen by Kahuna. “This means so much to me and this is going to make my life entirely different.”

The emotional response of the veterans spilled over into gratitude for the trainer’s tireless dedication and the program’s overwhelming contribution.

Veteran James tearfully shared with his resident trainer after being chosen by Hope, “I hope you’re proud of yourself. This is amazing. Thank you.”

The ceremony concluded with each veteran sharing how truly impactful the program has been in their lives.





“It’s an insane impact on the veterans,” Lane said. “Their life begins when they get their dog. Many don’t feel like they deserve the help the service dog will provide. Once they receive their dog, we can see it immediately.”

The positive emotion was felt by everyone in attendance and celebrated by all. The trainers’ service has transformed the quality of life for veterans.

Paws-itively irresistible.

Editor's Note: A special thanks to Donna Dickson's Photography for courteously sharing several of the photos accompanying this article.€





MAL DIRECTOR BILL LEWIS

PROMOTES OPPORTUNITIES FOR RESIDENTS

BY TODD R. CARMAN
STAFF WRITER

“ASSOCIATE WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE GOING TO BE A PART OF YOUR FUTURE,

not a part of your past,” is the advice of Bill Lewis, director of the Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics (MAL) Division for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ).

Lewis oversees an expansive TDCJ division that encompasses Texas Correctional Industries (TCI), agricultural operations that include livestock and crops and the management of transporting and storing goods throughout the system. His leadership is deeply rooted in a career with TDCJ that spans more than four decades.

“I started in 1984 at the Ferguson Unit,” Lewis said. “I ended up promoting through the ranks, from sergeant all the way up to warden. I was a warden for about 16 years on six or seven different units.”

Although Lewis found success as a warden, he felt a strong pull toward a career path that aligned more with his true self. “A job came open in agribusiness as a deputy division director, and that’s always been my passion,” Lewis said. “I got it, worked in it for three years and absolutely loved it.”

While Lewis enjoyed the deputy director position, he later saw an opening that ended up with him as the head of MAL.

“The division director position came open in January, 2024,” Lewis said. “I just felt like we were doing a lot of good things and I liked where we were [within the division]. I have a lot of experience and knowledge, and I felt like we could focus that on agribusiness, manufacturing, logistics and transportation.”

Although MAL is a sprawling division that encompasses many parts, Lewis said it can all be reduced to two main purposes.

“The first purpose is to provide job skills to those [resident] men and women who we have out there working,” Lewis said. “The second purpose is to provide goods and products for the agency.”

Lewis then explained the departments that make up MAL, including manufacturing, agribusiness and logistics.

“THE FIRST PURPOSE IS
TO PROVIDE JOB SKILLS
TO THOSE [RESIDENT]
MEN AND WOMEN
WHO WE HAVE OUT
THERE WORKING. THE
SECOND PURPOSE IS
TO PROVIDE GOODS
AND PRODUCTS FOR
THE AGENCY.”

– BILL LEWIS, MAL DIVISION DIRECTOR

WYNNE UNIT
GRAPHICS





“THERE ARE
APPROXIMATELY 100
18-WHEELER DRIVERS
THAT ARE TDCJ
EMPLOYEES. WE ALSO
HAVE 100 RESIDENT
DRIVERS ASSISTING US
WITH MOVING GOODS
ACROSS THE STATE.”

– BILL LEWIS,
MAL DIVISION DIRECTOR

“Manufacturing normally relates to what we call TCI: graphics, textile, garment, metal and other industries,” Lewis said. “We also make a lot of fence and also a lot of metal work for municipalities and other state agencies.”

He said the agribusiness aspect of MAL stretches across the state and is composed of many agricultural operations.

“In agribusiness, there’s everything from outside sales to edible crops,” Lewis said. “We have field crops, which include corn and cotton. We have livestock, which includes poultry, swine and beef cattle. We even have bees, which have a spot in my heart. We have bees on all of our main agriculture farms where we’re growing crops because they help pollinate those crops (increasing the yield), and we have bees at 30 facilities.”

However, agribusiness covers more than just food crops, Lewis said.

“Approximately 40 to 48 percent of the food produced for TDCJ we produce ourselves, from edible crops to beef, pork and eggs,” Lewis said. “On top of that, we grow 6,000 bales of cotton annually that go to the textile mill so we can make clothes at the garment factories.”

MAL also includes logistics, which involves storing and transporting goods across the agency.

“On the logistics side of it, there are approximately 100 18-wheeler drivers that are TDCJ employees,” Lewis said. “We also have 100 resident drivers assisting us with moving goods across the state, and we have eight warehouses. TDCJ is huge, so we’re moving stuff from Dalhart all the way to Edinburgh every day.”

“WHILE I’M IN THIS POSITION, I’M GOING TO DO EVERYTHING I CAN TO TRAIN EVERY MAN AND WOMAN THAT I CAN AND GIVE THEM EVERY CERTIFICATION AVAILABLE.”

– BILL LEWIS, MAL DIVISION DIRECTOR

As resident workers transition back into their communities, MAL continues to seek new drivers to support its logistics operations. “We continue to go through Windham School District to find those people who earned a Commercial Driver’s License,” Lewis said.

While Windham and postsecondary institutions like Lee College provide career-focused training through career and technical education courses such as Truck Driving, MAL complements this education by offering hands-on work experience that helps prepare individuals for real-world employment. “MAL jobs are available [for residents], and we also work to provide certifications [for those who are hired on],” Lewis said. “On the agribusiness side, we’re working with Texas A&M to come up with a certificate for working with our beef cattle. We are here to make products and help our workers improve themselves. They can seize the opportunity to gain experience and make a change in their lives.”

TDCJ’s Rehabilitation and Reentry Division (RRD) becomes involved as resident workers begin preparing to reenter the community, assisting them in securing employment opportunities. “The agency has focused on not only providing training, but also contacting outside employers who will hire those leaving TDCJ custody,” Lewis said. “We’re being highly innovative, and I think we have a culture in [the outside community] that’s receptive right now to what we’re doing. We’ve got to make those connections with outside employers. We have a collaboration between Windham School District, providing the initial training; MAL, putting workers in jobs to gain experience, and all of us, working with RRD to make sure released workers utilize those skills. RRD has roughly 1,000 [businesses] out there willing to hire former residents.”

ELLIS UNIT
COTTON GIN



“I BELIEVE THAT YOU SHOULD NOT ONLY HELP WORKERS GET CERTIFICATIONS AND ACCREDITATION, BUT ALSO MAKE IT WHERE THEY CAN WALK OUT THE DOOR WITH A JOB AND A WAY TO SUPPORT THEMSELVES.”

– BILL LEWIS,
MAL DIVISION DIRECTOR

Overall, Lewis sees his position at MAL as an opportunity to serve the state and better those within TDCJ.

“While I’m in this position, I’m going to do everything I can to train every man and woman that I can and give them every certification available,” Lewis said. “I want them to be able to talk to every industry leader out there. I want them to be able to do the kind of work they want to do [in and out of TDCJ].”

To help residents transition to their communities, MAL set up a new department within its division.

“We have a post-employment release office we started in the last year,” Lewis said. “What it does is help [residents] who work in MAL and are getting ready to go home. We start building resumes and doing interviews. The post-release office looks for certifications, most of that coming from Windham, apprenticeships and On the Job Training certifications. We’re also teaching soft skills training, where workers learn how to talk to people and how to function in a job.”

MAL tracks its workers post-reentry to monitor the success of former residents. “We monitor [residents] who worked in MAL that are released from TDCJ during a three-year time period,” Lewis said, stressing that former MAL workers have a low recidivism rate. “I think that sends



TORRES UNIT
PRINT SHOP

a message that we can get these men and women working when they're released. It gives them a better opportunity to not return to TDCJ."

Lewis expressed how the skills, work ethics and certifications residents can learn and earn in MAL will help them be successful — both in TDCJ and out in the greater community.

"I believe that you should not only help workers get certifications and accreditation, but also make it where they can walk out the door with a job and a way to support themselves," Lewis said. "Give them the opportunity to step out there and be independent, make good decisions and get a good paycheck."

Highlighting the positive effects of working in MAL, Lewis shared the example of a former resident who gained skills in TCI and turned those skills into a career outside of TDCJ.

"This woman worked in the Hobby Print Shop while in TDCJ," Lewis said. "She left TDCJ, connected with a shop in the printing industry and now has a career and is doing well."

Lewis also encouraged residents who pursue positive career paths through MAL and other avenues to stay focused and not be discouraged by criticism from those who choose not to improve themselves. "Don't buy in," Lewis said. "Instead, be positive and grow all you can."

Editor's Note: Residents interested in working in one of the many areas of MAL are encouraged to send an I-60 to: MAL Headquarters, P.O. Box 4013, Huntsville, TX 77340-4013, Attention: Special Programs. €



**"BE POSITIVE AND GROW
ALL YOU CAN."**

– BILL LEWIS, MAL DIVISION DIRECTOR



Please send us descriptions and photos of your events and achievements. Make sure photos are in color and in the highest resolution possible, and provide full names of all participants, if desired. Write to: *The ECHO*, c/o "Lace Up," WSD Admin. Bldg., P.O. Box 40, Huntsville, TX 77342-0040.

COFFIELD UNIT

Unit Hosts Veterans Day Celebration

By Mark Brock
Unit Reporter



Keynote speaker SFC Latoya Greene

Coffield Unit held a Veterans Day celebration honoring past and present service members and paying tribute to missing men and women who have served within the United States armed forces. Chaplain R. Uzzel (U.S. Army) provided opening prayer for the event while resident S. Garcia (U.S. Marines) served as host. Resident W. Jennings (U.S. Army) performed the Star Spangled Banner. Reentry and Rehabilitation Division Veteran Service Officer E. Rudder (U.S. Army Veteran) was also honored for her diligent service and imminent retirement. Animum Irae Militum (AIMVETS) volunteer J. Poe (U.S. Navy) provided a brief history of Veterans Day — sharing that World War I ended in the 11th hour, on the 11th day,

of the 11th month: November. Poe also reminded veterans in attendance that their continued servitude was "the true definition of a warrior's spirit."

Resident D. Kirby (U.S. Navy) introduced keynote speaker, retired Sgt. First Class (U.S. Army) Latoya Greene. During her time in the military, Greene served as a U.S. Drill Sergeant and won numerous medals, including three Meritorious Service honors, eight commendations and eight achievements awards. As a powerlifting and fitness enthusiast, Greene was a leading contributor in changing the way the Army measured women's body mass index. Her contributions and service led to her being inducted into the 2024 U.S. Army Women's Foundation Hall of Fame.



Coffield Veterans Day celebrators include TDCJ's Veteran Services department, AIMS VETS, Hearts For Heroes and CVSD Volunteers.

Brian Sandridge (NAVY), a former TDCJ resident and graduate of the Success Through Restoration, Independence, Perseverance, Excellence and Service (STRIPES) program, was also in attendance at graduation, and he offered hope to his audience.

"I was once in your shoes and in those very same seats you sit in," Sandridge said. "It's not always easy on the outside [in society]. However, if you give it 100 percent, you can make it. It's not about how far you have fallen, but about how fast you get up."

Unit Creates Chess Club

Coffield Unit hosted the Cultivate the Community Chess Club, led by Sgt. L. Johnson and facilitated by resident T. Dunning. The club was brought about to assist residents in coming together in

positive ways while playing chess.

"It means giving me an opportunity to converse and commune with other men who share a common bond for a game we love," resident F. Kauffman said.



COLEMAN STATE JAIL



Resident Gillian Fraser

EWOP Collaboration Supports Business Skills Development

The Empowering Women Out of Prison (EWOP) program at the Coleman Unit is transforming the lives of residents by giving them the confidence to pursue their goals. Through a recent collaboration with Texas A&M University, residents had the opportunity to showcase their new skills to business students. During the event, residents were given five minutes to pitch their business plan to Texas A&M's Mays Business School students for critiques and feedback, in preparation for an upcoming competition. This unique partnership serves to inspire and empower both residents and college students alike.

GOREE UNIT

CHARM Challenges Residents in Basketball

In a rare and high-spirited event, Christ Hope and Reconciliation Ministry (CHARM) stepped into the Goree Unit to play a basketball game against residents, creating a moment of excitement and camaraderie that transcended daily routines. The atmosphere was charged with anticipation as the Goree players gathered on the court, eager to showcase their skills. The game began with CHARM exhibiting clear proficiency, blending agility into their shots and passes. Residents, motivated by the presence of a skilled external team, responded with strong defensive strategies and coordinated plays that kept the score tight and the action intense. Beyond the action on the court, the event highlighted values such as teamwork, respect and engagement. Residents had the opportunity to interact with visitors in a structured, positive environment, promoting social skills and morale.

THROUGHOUT TDCJ

Hughes Unit drug rally



Stop the Drugs Rallies Spread Through TDCJ

Throughout October and early November, the Ellis, Estelle, Hughes, LeBlanc, Stiles, Wynne and other units held Stop the Drugs rallies to foster recovery and sobriety among residents. TDCJ leadership, guest speakers and peers shared heartfelt messages about the importance of getting help and highlighted resources available to support residents on their sobriety journey. These events are a part of TDCJ's ongoing effort to bring awareness to the dangers of substance use.

HOBBY UNIT



Stitches of Love and Hope Quilting Program Helps Children in Need

Hobby Unit residents recently donated more than 40 handmade quilts and 30 pillowcases to comfort children in the Falls, Milam and Robertson County Departments of Family Services. The project was completed through the Stitches of Love and Hope Quilting program. Residents who are part of the program dedicate three to four hours a

day to quilting. Each stitched piece of fabric reflects new skills, rehabilitation and commitment to giving back to the community.

“The [residents] love it, because even when they start picking out the material to make those quilts, they’re thinking of those children and already praying for them, throughout the entire process,”

Hobby Unit Warden A. England said in The Marlin Democrat Newspaper (Oct. 31, 2025). “Even though they don’t know the name or age of that child, they’re praying for them. The name of the quilting program came from the [residents] themselves, because they’re giving love and hope back to those children and giving them something to hold onto.”



Unit Advocates for Recovery From Substance Use

The Hobby Unit recently celebrated the Recovery Housing Option Program’s (RHOP) first cohort graduation. The program is a peer-based initiative designed to assist individuals in recovery and sobriety, and graduation is a milestone reflecting positive self-transformation. That same day, Hobby hosted its Big Texas Rally for Recovery event, joining other units in promoting substance use recovery, healing and fresh starts.

HUGHES UNIT



Unit Begins Veterans Program for Residents

The Hughes Unit recently started its first veterans program. This program is designed to support individuals in their transition and reentry into the community. Unit artists created murals in the housing areas to transform the space into a welcoming and motivational environment that uplifts the spirit of the entire unit, while honoring those who served this country.

HUNTSVILLE UNIT

Lee College Challenges Lone Star College Debaters



Lee College's Huntsville Center Debate team recently outdueled opponents from Lone Star College (CyFair) in their latest meet. The Lee College team, consisting of residents of the Huntsville Unit, successfully won four out of six possible rounds. These debaters were selected by Lee College faculty and unit wardens. The visiting team, comprised of college students from various disciplines, entered the Huntsville Unit chapel to debate the opposing Lee College team. Community judges and an audience of educators and unit personnel observed the contest to offer constructive observations. Officials said this event empowered individuals on both teams to reach personal capabilities and potential.

"I am so proud of our team. They handled themselves with poise and professionalism," Lee College professor and team coach Dr. J. Sanchez said.

Members of the Lee College Huntsville Center Debate team include Reaz Ahmed, Judge Modesto, Lance Burress, Andraïs Greer, Jonathan Hardin, Eric Hardwick, Chon Dimas, Johnny Blevins, Levi Flores, Bryan Horton and Earl Madison.

O'DANIEL UNIT

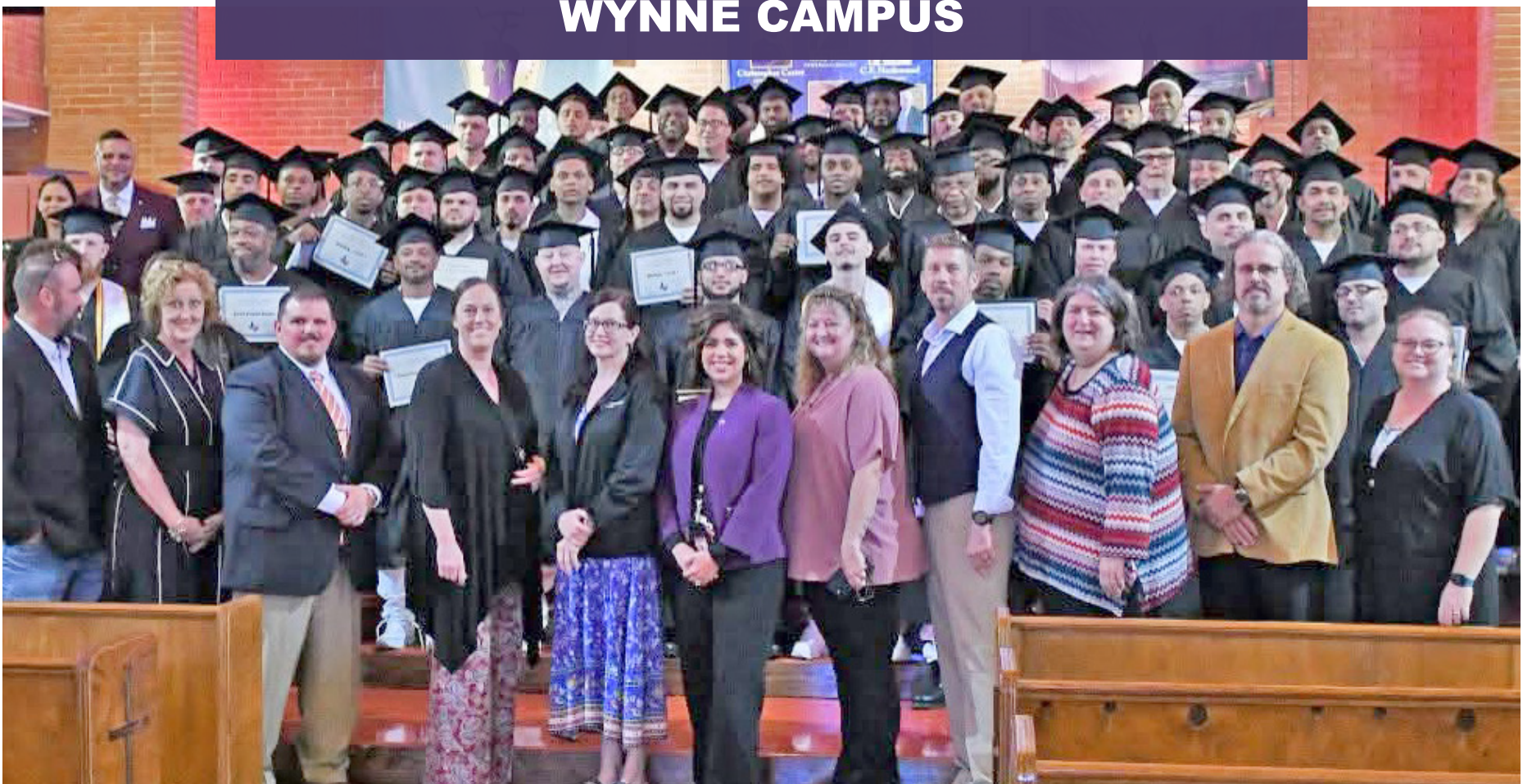


WOW Dorm Graduates Second Cohort

Windham School District's (Windham) Recreation and Wellness department, in partnership with TDCJ, launched the Women of Wellness (WOW) program at the O'Daniel campus. The program empowers residents to embrace healthy lifestyles. With dynamic exercise classes, ed-

ucation on the Eight Dimensions of Wellness and dedicated mentors, participants in the dorm are committing to personal development while building stronger, more active lives. Windham Superintendent Kristina J. Hartman joined the celebration and personally presented certificates to each of the graduates.

WYNNE CAMPUS



Windham Fall Commencement Honors Graduates

Earlier this month, Windham honored 72 graduates at its fall graduation at the Wynne campus. The graduates completed various programs, including high school equivalency, apprenticeships and career and technical education courses in Small Engine Repair, Welding, Graphic Arts Design and Diesel Mechanics. Educators congratulated all graduates for their hard work.

Editor's Note: Some Lace Up photos are courtesy of Windham or TDCJ social media postings. €



THANKFUL IN NOVEMBER

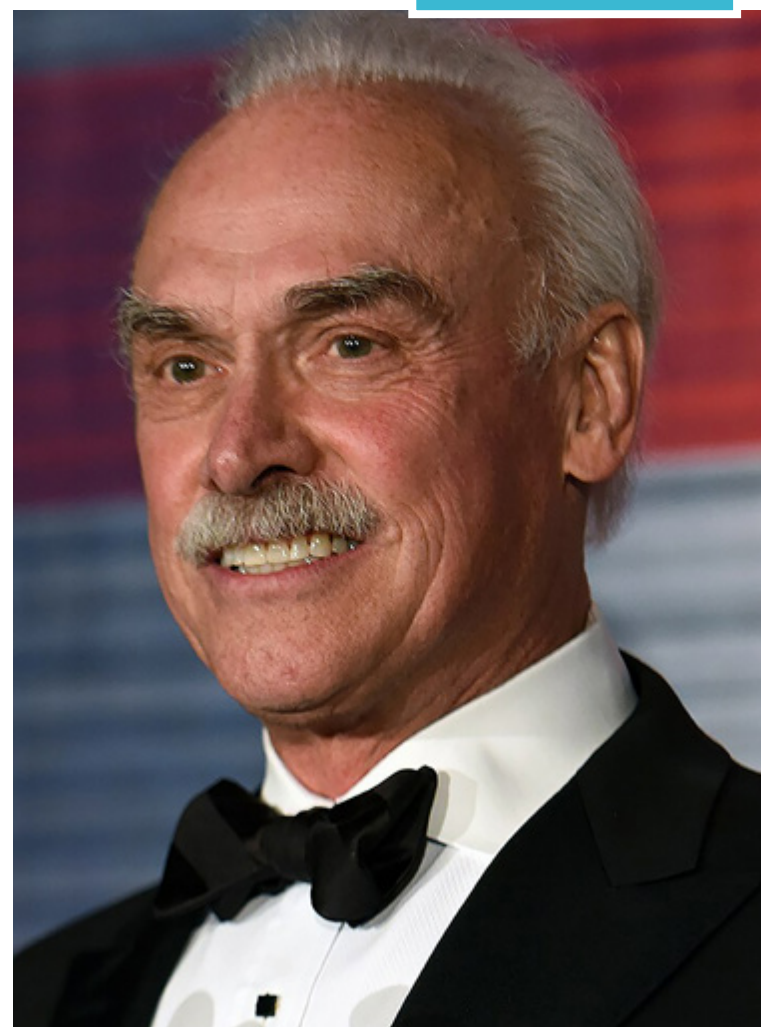
In the United States of America, the month of November holds two very important dates for me: Veterans Day and Thanksgiving. Veterans Day, or Armistice Day, as it was originally called, recognized the armistice signed on Nov. 11, 1918, which ended the first World War. It became a national holiday in America in 1954 and has been celebrated annually, honoring all who have ever served in this country's armed forces. Veterans Day is special to me because my dad was a decorated soldier who fought in Europe as a combat engineer during World War II. The second November date that many Americans recognize is Thanksgiving Day, observed on the final Thursday of the month. It remains special to me because of all the fond memories of time spent with my family. We would start the day playing backyard football, then we came inside to eat a huge meal that my mom cooked, which was followed by watching the annual Dallas Cowboys game in the afternoon. Finally, I would cap off the night by watching the Texas Longhorns lay their annual beat-down on the hapless Texas A&M Aggies. Sadly, the Longhorns and Aggies no longer play on Thanksgiving night due to a mixture of corporate greed and larger ratings.

I thought it would be fitting to remember both days in one column by honoring two athletes who also served our country — National Football League (NFL) player Rocky Bleier, and Baseball Hall of Famer Ted Williams.

ROCKY BLEIER

Four Super Bowl titles in a six-year period cemented the Pittsburgh Steelers' claim to the team of the decade in the 1970s. Even casual football fans recognize the names of the team's stars such as Terry Bradshaw, Franco Harris, Lynn Swann, Jack Ham, Jack Lambert and of course, "Mean" Joe Greene. However, even teams with a roster full of star players need gritty, hard-nosed role players. Players who do all the things that often go unnoticed by the casual fan but are critical for team success. For the Steelers, Rocky Bleier was one such player. Even the most ardent of Steelers fans would be hard pressed to remember the name of their former fullback, Bleier.

ROCKY BLEIER





TED WILLIAMS

Ted Williams is almost universally recognized as baseball's greatest hitter ever. It would be difficult to argue against that proposition, considering his career stats: Williams played 19 seasons in the major leagues where he amassed a lifetime batting average of .344, clobbered 521 home runs, drove in 1,839 runs, scored 1,798 runs and drew 2,019 walks.

The majority of Williams' life was spent hitting baseballs. A playground director in Williams' hometown of San Diego, Rod Luscomb, would

throw to him during batting practice a couple of times a week. A friend named Wilbert Wiley shared Williams' obsession with baseball and they took turns pitching to each other. Williams' uncle Saul Venzor would also pitch to him and offer advice, which Williams always ignored.

Bleier was a member of the University of Notre Dame's 1966 National Championship football team. He was drafted twice, once by the Steelers in the 16th round of the 1968 annual draft and again by the United States Army in 1969. After training, he was assigned to the 196th Light Infantry Brigade of the Americal Division. On Aug. 20, 1969, Bleier was wounded during combat in Hiep Duc when he was hit with shrapnel from an enemy grenade. He was awarded a Purple Heart and a Bronze Star, a U.S. military decoration awarded for heroic or meritorious achievement not involving participation in aerial flight. The injury to his lower leg may have caused others to give up their dream of playing professional football, but not Bleier. Although he could not walk without pain, Bleier spent the 1970-71 seasons on Injured Reserve and the Steelers Taxi Squad, which is a group of players who take part in team practices, but who do not count against the roster limit. In 1972, Bleier won a spot on the team's opening day active roster, playing mostly on special teams and occasionally seeing time as a running back. Two years later, he earned a spot in the starting backfield alongside Hall-of-Fame running back Franco Harris, and he helped lead the team to its first Super Bowl. The next season, Bleier had his best game as a professional when he rushed for 163 yards against the Green Bay Packers.

Bleier retired from competition in 1980 as a four-time Super Bowl champion with 3,865 career rushing yards, 136 receptions for another 1,294 yards and 25 touchdowns. While he was never the star of the team, Bleier helped build one of the greatest dynasties in NFL history.

ON AUG. 20, 1969, BLEIER WAS WOUNDED DURING COMBAT IN HIEP DUC WHEN HE WAS HIT WITH SHRAPNEL FROM AN ENEMY GRENADE. HE WAS AWARDED A PURPLE HEART AND A BRONZE STAR, A U.S. MILITARY DECORATION AWARDED FOR HEROIC OR MERITORIOUS ACHIEVEMENT NOT INVOLVING PARTICIPATION IN AERIAL FLIGHT.

However, Williams took most of his swings alone, whether it was in front of a mirror, in his driveway or on the playground. In those solitary batting practices, he was swinging at pitches no one else could see: pitches thrown by major league ghosts with blinding fastballs and knee-buckling curves. Williams would swing until he hit them all because when he walked down the street, he wanted people to say, “There goes Ted Williams, the greatest hitter who ever lived.”

Williams collected nicknames like he collected hits — by the bunches. During his career, he was known as “The Splendid Splinter,” “Thumper,” “Teddy Ballgame” and simply “The Kid,” which was bestowed on him by his teammates because of his youthful exuberance and confidence. In his first season in the majors, Williams led the American League in runs batted in. His second season, he led the league in runs and on-base percentage. In the third, 1941, Williams enjoyed his greatest season, which was also the greatest season of any baseball player to many fans. Williams hit .406 and led the league in



TED WILLIAMS

TED WILLIAMS IS ALMOST UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED AS BASEBALL'S GREATEST HITTER EVER. IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO ARGUE AGAINST THAT PROPOSITION CONSIDERING HIS CAREER STATS: WILLIAMS PLAYED 19 SEASONS IN THE MAJOR LEAGUES WHERE HE AMASSED A LIFETIME BATTING AVERAGE OF .344. CLOBBERED 521 HOME RUNS, DROVE IN 1,839 RUNS, SCORED 1,798 RUNS AND DREW 2,019 WALKS.

home runs, runs, slugging percentage, on-base percentage and walks. The next season, he did not hit for a .400 average, but he did manage to win the Triple Crown of batting, leading the league in batting average (.356), home runs (36) and runs batted in (137). In 1943, Williams put down his baseball bat and picked up his Marine Corps airman wings to serve his country. How good of a pilot was he? John Glenn, the future astronaut, chose Williams to be his wingman. So, yeah, he was that good. He served his country from 1943-1945 during World War II, and most of the 1952 and 1953 seasons, serving in the Korean War. Williams missed approximately four full seasons in the prime of his career to serve in the Marine Corps. If not for his time away from the game, Williams' stats would have been even more impressive.

Ted Williams and Rocky Bleier have received more than their 15 minutes of fame for their military service, and this article is not intended to single them out from the hundreds of thousands of Americans who have honorably served their country. So, to all the veterans of the United States military, whether you served in peacetime or during combat, thank you for your service — always.



**Tribute
to a
Rock
Icon**

**SONGWRITER,
PERFORMER**



ROCK LEGEND

BY ROBERT MORGAN
STAFF WRITER

THE MUSIC WORLD RECENTLY LOST

legendary icon John Michael Osbourne (12/3/48 – 7/22/25). “Ozzy,” as he was famously known, was the co-founder and lead vocalist of the rock band Black Sabbath. Furthermore, he was labeled the “Godfather of Heavy Metal” by musical contemporaries and millions of fans across the world.

This English singer became a pioneering force outside of music due to the popularity of “The Osbournes” (2002-2005), an Emmy-nominated reality television show that followed the daily life of him and his family. Additionally, as both a member of Black Sabbath and a solo artist, the talented musician won numerous

Grammy Awards and other performance accolades.

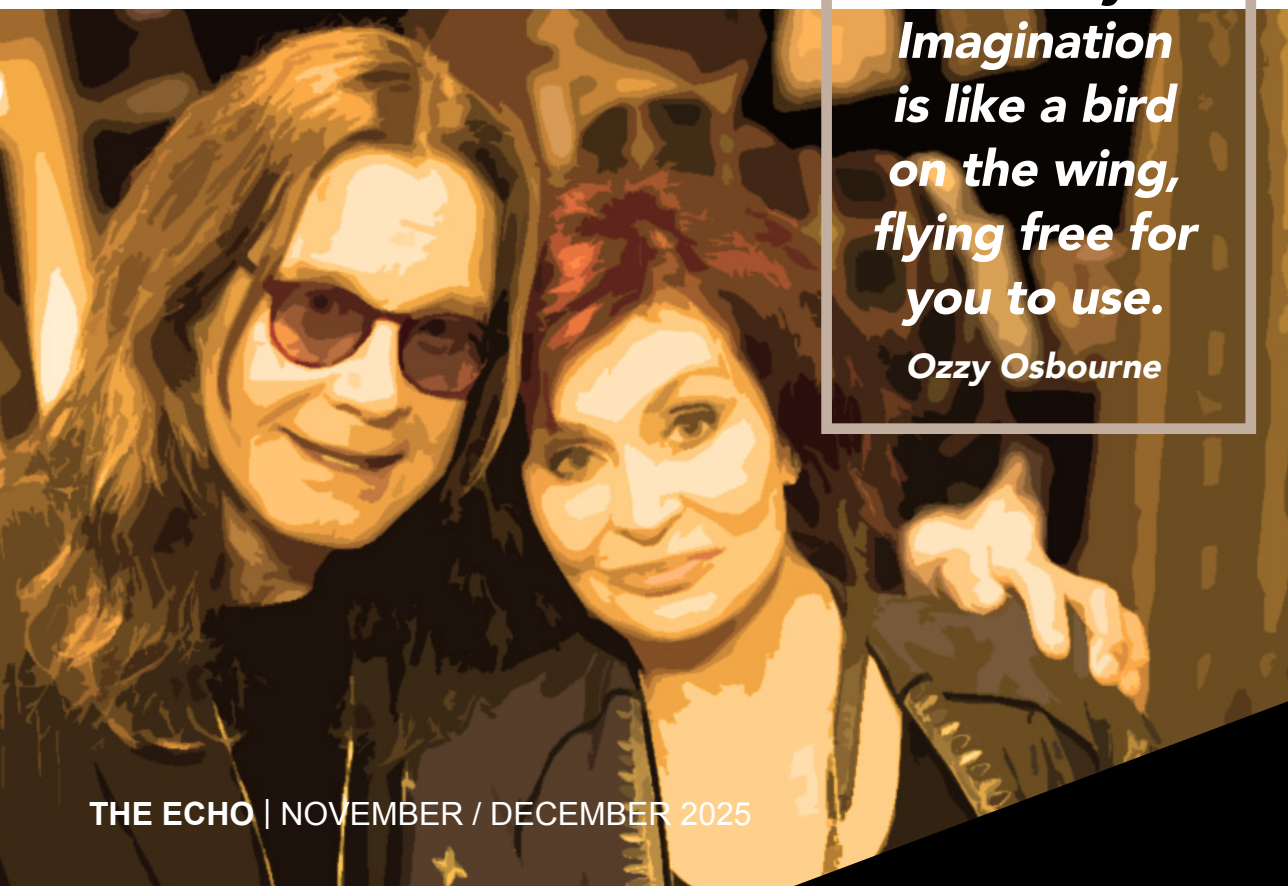
Ozzy’s storied career is filled with many famous — and at other times, infamous — moments. Here follows a list of his more notable accomplishments. €



You've got to believe in yourself, or no one will believe in you.

Imagination is like a bird on the wing, flying free for you to use.

Ozzy Osbourne



2002
Hollywood Walk of Fame

2005
UK Music Hall of Fame
(both as a solo artist and with Black Sabbath)

2006
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
(with Black Sabbath)

2007
Birmingham Walk of Stars

2010
Guinness World Records
(Longest Scream by a Crowd)

2014
Global Icon Award (MTV)

2015
Ivor Novello Award
(Lifetime Achievement)

2020
GQ Men of the Year
(Lifetime Achievement)

2021
WWE Hall of Fame

2023
Icon Award
(Rolling Stone)

2024
Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
(as a solo artist)

Career
**OVER 100
MILLION ALBUMS
SOLD**

*Information courtesy of
Sony Music*

YOU CAN DRAW: OZZY OSBOURNE

BY **ROBERT MORGAN**
STAFF WRITER



AS AN ODE TO THE CREATIVITY

that Ozzy Osbourne displayed throughout his musical career, let's tap into our creative side and have a little fun as we pay homage to a musical icon.

Hopefully, you completed, or at least tried, the first installment of the You Can Draw: Drawing Elvis Presley series (*The ECHO* May/June 2025). If so, then you are familiar with my technique, which will make this drawing a piece of cake. If not, you can still complete it, but may not initially understand basic concepts.

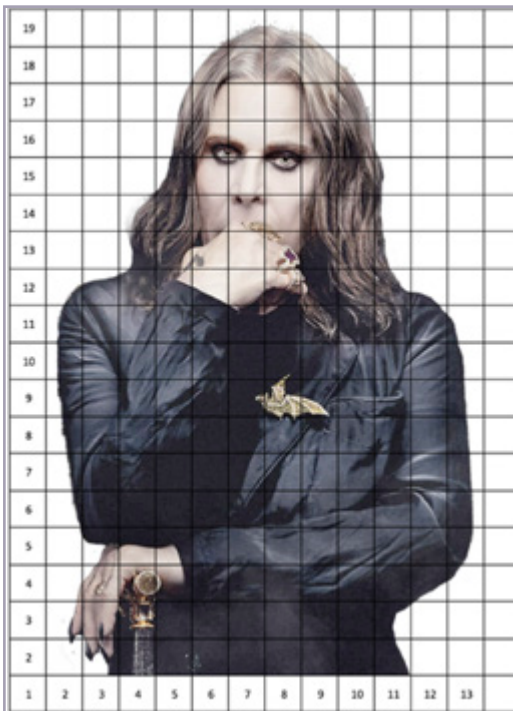
The key to successfully completing the project is following along step by step. Similar to the first installment, this edition features streamlined and easy-to-follow-steps. They are designed to assist you in building your art on solid foundations.

Remember, these steps will work on any and every thing you want to draw, be it a person, animal or object. So, let's gather our supplies and pay tribute to Ozzy.

SUPPLIES

- Art Board or Art Paper
- 2 Pencils (one really sharp)
- Eraser
- Pencil Sharpener
- 1/2 inch Graph (8 1/2" x 11")
- Shader (Tightly rolled paper)
- 1 sq. Toilet Paper (Folded into a tight square)

STEP 1



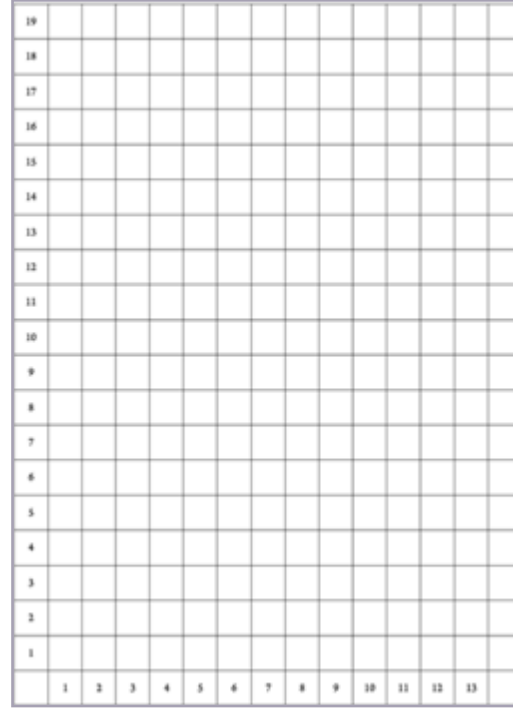
Place your graph over your reference photo. I use small pieces of tape to secure mine.

Tip: Place the graph so as many lines as possible cross the eyes, nose and mouth. This will help with your accuracy.

6 1/2" X 8 1/2"

1/2 INCH

STEP 2



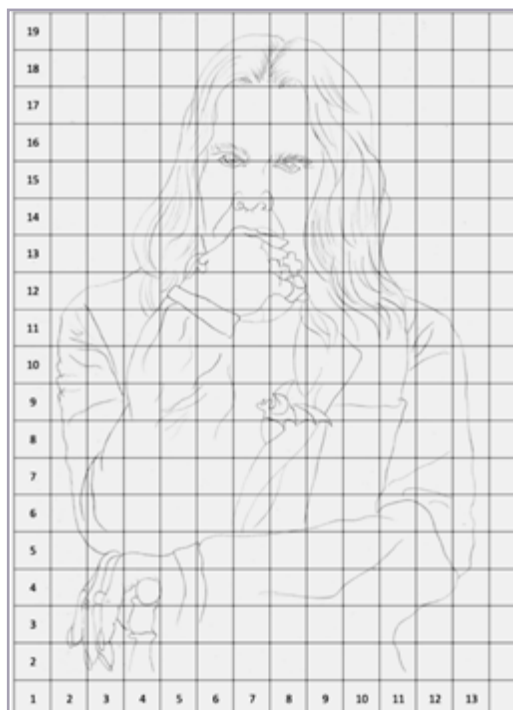
Draw a corresponding graph onto your artboard or paper.

Tip: You can make the squares of your graph as large or as small as you want, depending on the size you want, as long as the size is squared. I enlarged mine using one-inch squares. Remember, always use a soft touch when drawing your graph and the line drawing.

13" X 19"

1 INCH

STEP 3



Draw the figure using the corresponding lines on the graphed reference photo as guides.

Tip: You can begin anywhere, but a good habit is to start opposite your drawing hand and move from top to bottom. (i.e. Right handers start from left to right. Left handers start from right to left.)

STEP 4



Remove (erase) your graph and reshape any lines that may need it.

Tip: Use nearby features (lines) as landmarks to get the line drawing as accurate as possible.

STEP 5



Apply graphite to the shadowy areas, then use your shader to push and blend the graphite into an even tone.

Tip: The softer the shader, the smoother the finish. I use a square of toilet paper as my softest shader. It's a soft, yet semi-rough material that creates a smooth, yet textured, finish.

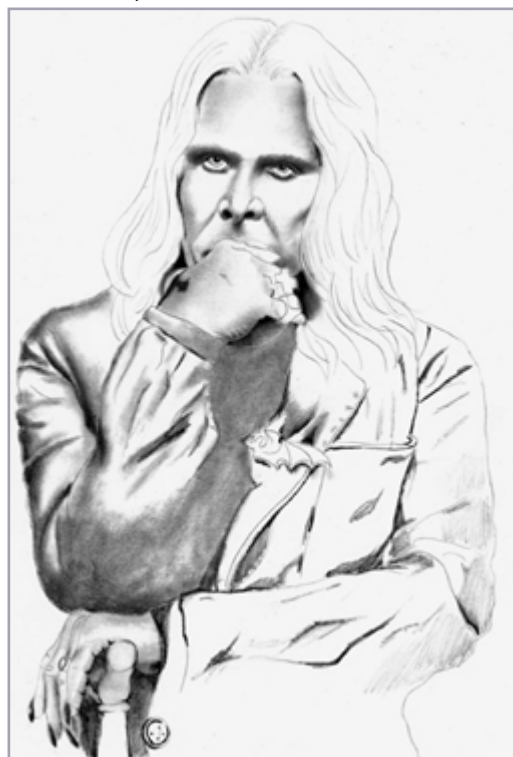
STEP 6



Using your shader, lightly shape and add tone around the contours of the facial features (i.e. nose, eyes, mouth, jaws, etc.).

Tip: Shade in the direction of the feature (shape) you're on (i.e. You shade around the nose/cheeks/eyes and you shade across the forehead/body).

STEP 7

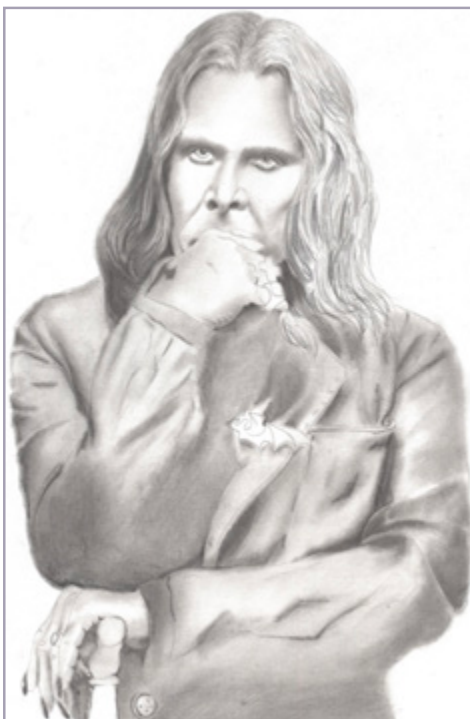


Continue to repeat Steps 5 and 6 — adding graphite and going darker in the appropriate areas. Also use these steps for the hands.

Tip: When drawing clothing, you can use these same steps. Begin by applying a dark shade of graphite to the crease first.

Tip: Use sharper pencils to go darker, crosshatching the graphite as you apply it. Crosshatching is laying the graphite in one direction, then laying the next layer in the opposite direction.

STEP 8



Begin laying down the hair. Lay your pencil strokes in the direction that the hair flows and then lightly blend.

Use the edge of your eraser to create the lighter highlights and strands of hair. You will have to repeat this process numerous times.

Tip: A head of hair is composed of thousands of strands of hair, so it's nearly impossible to draw all of them.

The trick is to lightly brush your soft shader over the hair. This will give the illusion of a full head of hair.

STEP 9



In the final step, repeat steps seven and eight until you are satisfied with the tone, then use your eraser to appropriately lighten the lighter areas of the figure.

Tip: Using a soft touch throughout the drawing allows you to more easily lighten dark areas and create highlights throughout your artwork.

Use varying pressure as you erase to create different tones. €

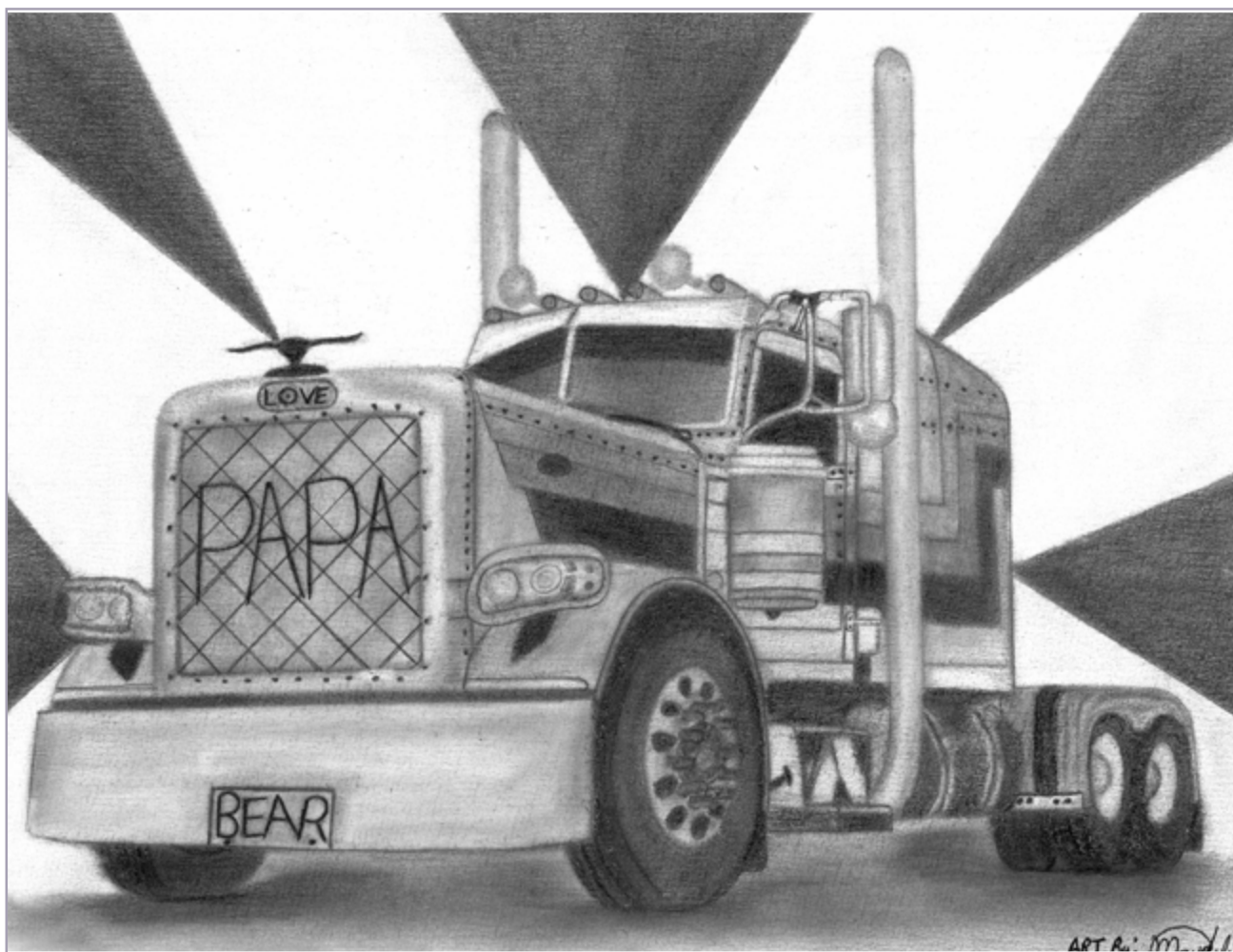
FINAL MASTERPIECE!

Editor's Note: If you decide to try any of these techniques on your next masterpiece, send your art to *The ECHO* at c/o Windham Admin Bldg. P.O. Box 40, Huntsville, TX 77342-0040 for review and possible inclusion in *The ECHO* Art Expo.

ART EX PO



Space Unicorn | Marvin Curry
Colored Pencils on Illustration Board | 11" x 14"



PaPa Bear | Charles Mayo
Pencil on Illustration Board | 15" x 20"

**Want your art featured in
The ECHO? Send it to:
The ECHO c/o WSD Admin.
Bldg., P.O. Box 40, Huntsville,
TX 77342-0040.
Drawing pads and/or
illustration boards preferred.
Half and quarter boards welcome.
Artwork cannot be returned.**



Tom Petty | Fermin Zepeda
Pencil on Illustration Board | 15" x 20"



Stevie Ray Vaughan | Aaron Striz
Pencil on Illustration Board | 15" x 20"

echo

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Holidays
& Happy
New Year!
from
The ECHO*