

## CHANGING LIVES, BUILDING HOPE

POLUNSKY UNIT HOSTS FIRST  
FATHER-DAUGHTER DAY

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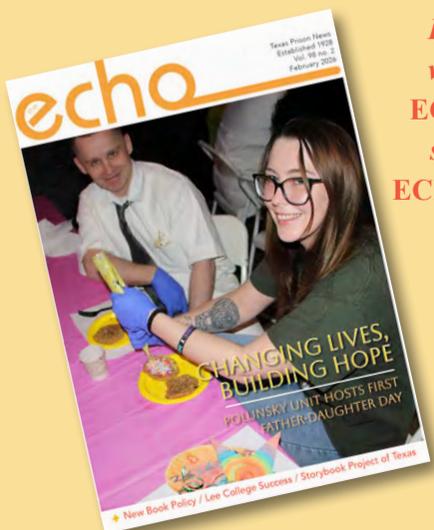
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# the echo

## MANAGEMENT

**Kristina J. Hartman, Ed.S.**  
*Superintendent / Publisher*

**Bambi Kiser**  
*Managing Editor*

**Blair Dupre**  
*Assistant Managing Editor*

## STAFF

**Todd Carman**

**Fabian Flores**

**Robert Gonzales**

**William Hill**

**Pricila Maumalanga**

**Robert Morgan**

**Ashley Morrison**

**Kelly Roddy**

**Joshua Schnizer**

## CONTRIBUTORS

Jesse Castillo—Briscoe Unit  
 Ashley Dack—O'Daniel Unit  
 Robert Fridell—Roach Unit  
 Brandon Hayes—Wynne Unit  
 Lisa Jackson—O'Daniel Unit  
 Daniel Meehan—Connally Unit

James Noer—Hightower Unit  
 Andrew Reynolds—Wynne Unit  
 Tim Scoggin—Wynne Unit  
 Vincent Smith—Wynne Unit  
 Michael Wiese—Scott Unit

## UNIT REPORTERS

Allred Unit—Patricio Sevillano  
 Bartlett Innovative Unit—Phillip Lockhart  
 Bartlett Innovative Unit—Tommy Schlett  
 Beto Unit—Josue Garcia-Morales  
 Boyd Unit—Joseph Dauben  
 Bridgeport—Shawn Zabick  
 Clemens Unit—Lawrence Burks Jr.  
 Clements Unit—Johnny Wooten  
 Coffield Unit—Mark Brock  
 Coleman Unit—Cheryl Jackson  
 Crain Unit—Rhonda Orr  
 Dalhart Unit—Patrick Bentley  
 Dominguez Unit—Fernando Garcia  
 Ellis Unit—Daniel Lagrone  
 Estelle Unit—Ervin Kay  
 Ferguson Unit—Adam Eannarino  
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 Hughes Unit—Toby Rod  
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 Montford Unit—Jason Ishee  
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 Pack Unit—Walter Lindberg  
 Polunsky Unit—Robert Arroyo  
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 Ramsey Unit—Juan Munoz  
 Ramsey Unit—Quincy Patterson  
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 Robertson Unit—Gabriel Esquivel  
 Smith Unit—Harvey Hodor  
 Stevenson Unit—William Bondurant  
 Stevenson Unit—Landon Brook  
 Stiles Unit—Arthur Sterns  
 Stringfellow Unit—Damion Faulkner  
 Telford Unit—James Carter  
 Torres Unit—Stephen Unger  
 Wainwright Unit—Thomas Bradley

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# Letter to the Editor

Bambi Kiser | Managing Editor

The ECHO  
c/o Windham Admin. Bldg.  
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To the editor,

I want to share the wonderful life-changing experience I had. It all started when I heard the testimony of Lady K. Harris at the Crain Unit. During the service, she mentioned a program that she was starting called Survive. I signed up for the program the next day in the dayroom. I am so grateful that I was selected.

The Survive program is for those who have survived life on the streets and other challenges we faced in life that left scars/wounds. The first thing I had to deal with was getting to the root of my issues. The facilitators provided a safe place for me to release my guilt, shame and pain. Lady K. Harris and staff showed unconditional love and made me feel that I wasn't alone. What I learned also is how to apply the tools that I learned to continue my spiritual growth and continue to utilize my time wisely in order to revive myself with positive affirmations.

I am no longer a victim; I am a victor. I'm inspired now to

follow my dreams and to impart my skills. I am investing in me because I am worth it. I believe that Philippians 4:8 is actively working in my life. I have found virtue, and I am working in integrity knowing that everything has an expiration date. We also had a beautiful graduation with caps and gowns. I have never experienced that before, and I am 61 years old.

I would like to close by offering a special thanks to the warden for selecting me for this class.

**Katrina Lloyd**  
**Crain Unit**

To the reader,

Thank you for writing and sharing your experience. There are many programs and activities available to the resident population across TDCJ — all one has to do is look! We applaud you for participating, and we applaud the volunteers and speakers who enter TDCJ facilities to make a positive difference.

## 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 January 1 to August 31 each year, and you must submit your request within this time period.

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 received a fan through the TDCJ Indigent Fan Program.

You must submit request through truck mail or regular mail to:

Commissary & Trust Fund /  
Indigent Fan Program  
P.O. Box 629  
Huntsville, TX 77342

Information provided must include:

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

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

TDCJ# \_\_\_\_\_

Unit: \_\_\_\_\_



## JOB OPENINGS

MAL  
Transportation & Supply

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Unit List: Statewide  
Workers for the Following Position:  
Class A CDL Drivers

### Minimum Requirements:

- Must have knowledge of commercial driving regulations
- Must be able to operate a tractor trailer combination
- Must be able to perform pre-and post-trip inspections and submit reports indicating truck condition
- Must be able to assist with loading and unloading products and know proper load securement practices
- Must have a good attitude and excellent work ethic.
- Must adhere to all safety rules and regulations
- Must be able to perform additional tasks when assigned
- No medical/work restrictions
- Have no major disciplinary cases within the past year
- Must be eligible to be classified as an OT/G1
- Must have a valid State of Texas Class A Commercial Driver's License (CDL)

### Attention:

Applicants:  
If interested, send an I-60, including your driver's license number, a list of all previous experience and a preferred (not guaranteed) location of assignment to:  
Transportation & Supply  
C. Jones  
P.O. Box 4013  
Huntsville, Texas 77320

All eligible workers are encouraged to apply.

Please note: If you have never held a CDL, you must successfully complete a commercial vehicle operator class offered by either Windham School District or Lee College prior to applying. An application will NOT be considered if you have never held a commercial driver's license.



# TDCJ Revises Book Policy

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) is implementing new measures to combat illegal narcotics entering its facilities. Effective April 1, all books mailed to residents must be softback and in new condition. TDCJ will no longer accept hardback books or books in used condition.

TDCJ Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin said corrections agencies across the nation are fighting to stop contraband from entering facilities and prevent drug-related incidents, overdoses and homicides — and TDCJ is no different. He said book policy changes are vital to keeping staff and residents safe. Over the years, TDCJ has witnessed a rise in contraband smuggled into correctional facilities through books. In many cases, contraband is found hidden inside hard covers and bindings, or pages are soaked in the substance. All of these are difficult for staff and technology to detect, posing serious safety risks to employees and incarcerated individuals.

“As a life-long reader, and, yes, a life-long reader of not just screens but actual books, including hardback textbooks,

novels, and non-fiction, it truly pains me to think that we are being forced as a Board to put any restrictions on the ability of members of our populations in TDCJ to any type of reading material,” Texas Board of Criminal Justice Chairman Eric J.R. Nichols said. “But what pains me even more, and what frankly keeps me up more at night than anything else with the agency that we oversee as a Board, is the fact that there are illegal and dangerous drugs that are being introduced into our TDCJ facilities and that are causing overdoses and, yes, overdose deaths in our facilities.”

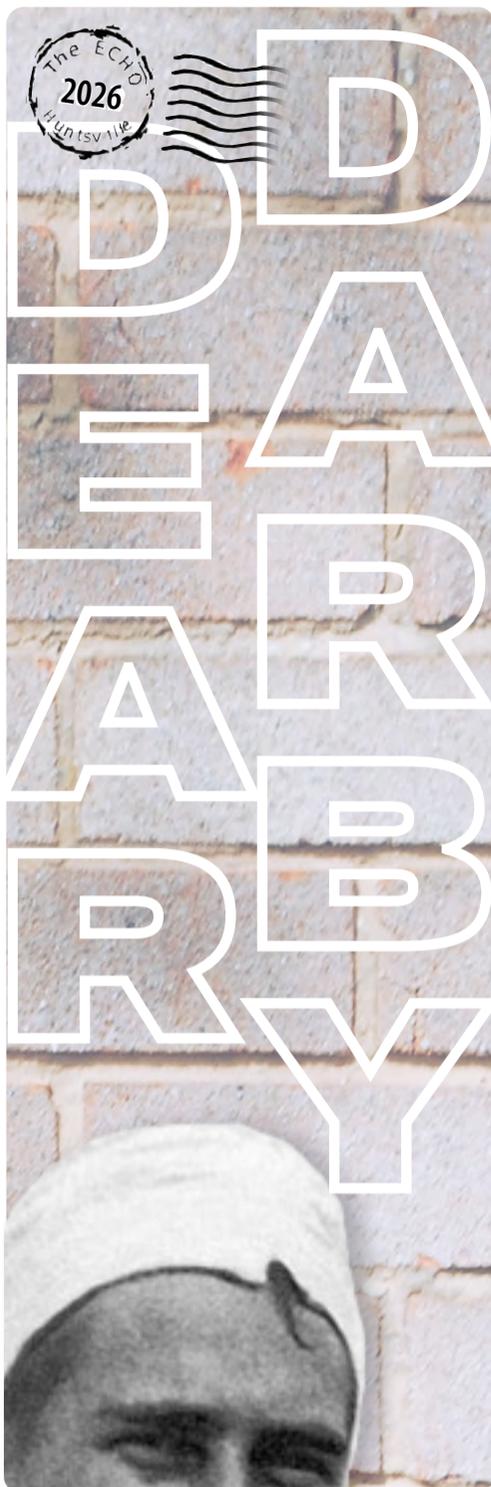
Additionally, Windham School District is partnering with TDCJ to manage book donations. Effective April 1, 2026, donated books should be sent to the Windham School District, who oversees all libraries across the agency and has a process in place to accept and distribute donations. Books donated by a volunteer organization to a specific individual can still be mailed to the unit, but they must be softback and in new condition.

Looking forward, the agency is developing an online portal for senders to reg-

ister and provide basic information about the book or magazine they are sending. Similar to the current visitation system, this portal will allow staff to verify senders, prepare for the incoming publications and streamline processing.

The agency has worked diligently over the past few years to implement numerous programs, policies and procedures to reduce substance use and contraband entering TDCJ facilities. Since 2023, the agency has made changes to resident mail policy; expanded programming to help those battling addiction; and launched unit-level rallies to promote a drug-free environment, inspire sobriety and provide helpful resources.

“We are exploring every avenue to reduce, and ultimately, halt illegal narcotics from entering our facilities,” Chief Programs Officer Jason Clark said. “These changes are designed to protect the health and safety of our population and staff, and create an environment where individuals have a real opportunity to focus on treatment, personal growth and successful reentry.” €



**Dear Darby,**

I was at the commissary the other day and was all upset because they had run out of summer sausages — one of my favorite things to cook with. While I was standing there sulking, I saw something come out of the commissary window that I hadn't seen before. I asked the guy next to me what it was, and he said, "Chorizo!" I hurried up and added it to my list, got some and took it home and cooked with it. Darby, I have a new culinary love, and it's called chorizo. Do you know about this? It almost made me forget about them being out of summer sausages! You've gotta' give us a heads-up about new things like this, Darb.

**A Sausage Lover,  
Hughes Unit**

**Dear Chorizo,**

*Yeah, the Chow Hound laced me up about the new chorizo on commissary. There's two meat sticks per pack for \$3, and they have quite a spicy, delicious kick to them. They're a nice alternative to turkey bites, chicken bites, Klements sausage and summer sausage offerings. And don't forget: pork skins can be used as a meat pack, too! The Chow Hound says that he is lookin' for fresh recipes showcasin' the new chorizo — send him what you've come up with.*

**Dear Darby,**

I'm getting ready to discharge my sentence, and one of my purposes in life is to give back knowledge, wisdom and guidance.

Stay blessed throughout your circumstances! You may feel hopeless, lonely, depressed and broken, but one thing about life is that nothing/nobody can break you unless you allow it to. Your thoughts, feelings and actions are always in your control and power. Stay blessed, find your spiritual awakening and establish your spiritual connection on a strong foundation. The physical things are temporary, but the spiritual are forever. God bless y'all!

**"Goofy" Soto  
Telford Unit**

**Dear Mr. Soto,**

*For someone with the nickname Goofy, your advice is anything but! Good luck with your reentry, stay the course and thank you for your letter.*

## HELP SHAPE THE ECHO CONTENT

Do you want to be part of *The ECHO*? There are several ways of getting involved.

1. Showcase your artistic talent! Send in examples of your artwork to be highlighted in the Art Expo issues.
2. Send in a delicious recipe for the Chow Hound section.
3. Need advice or want to give out some? Write advice columnist Dear Darby who is ready and willing to help with questions about relationships, daily concerns, general life and prison etiquette.

### PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE:

Have you learned something in a class that you want to share with the rest of the readers? Are you getting closer to your reentry date and want to leave some parting words of wisdom? Send a copy of your submission to:

The ECHO  
c/o Windham Admin. Bldg.  
P.O. Box 40  
Huntsville, TX 77342-0400

### ATTENTION STAFF:

Do you spend your day repeatedly answering the same question? Is there something you wish the resident population understood better? Are you a facilitator of a graduating program or class? Contact [Bambi.Kiser@wsdtx.org](mailto:Bambi.Kiser@wsdtx.org) and share your idea or information with *The ECHO* readers throughout Texas.



## EVERY STORY MATTERS

**The ECHO's Newest Members Expand Coverage in Texas**

Writing a New Chapter

In the past, women have contributed to *The ECHO* in a plethora of ways, however, there was no office established on a women's unit to collaborate with the team at the Wynne Unit. This changes with a new office staffed by three women at the Murray campus.

This new chapter in the partnership between the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and Windham School District (Windham) allows for an strategic blend of ideas, perspectives and talents.

"This endeavor creates new opportunities for women residents to create content and provide different perspectives, which will allow readers to learn more," *ECHO* Assistant Managing Editor Blair Drape said. "The staff will be new to the new *ECHO* office preparing for upcoming coverage, and we are hitting the ground running."

Priscilla Maumalanga, Ashley Morrison and Kelly Roddy were selected from among several qualified candidates to become the first women serving as resident staff members of *The ECHO*. They are eager to be part of the exciting undertaking while working long distances with the Wynne Unit team.

**"This endeavor creates new opportunities for women residents to create content and provide different perspectives, which will allow readers to learn more."**

—Blair Drape, *ECHO* Assistant Editor

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**CHANGING LIVES, BUILDING HOPE**

POLUNSKY UNIT HOSTS FIRST FATHER-DAUGHTER DAY

• New Book Policy / Lee College Success / Storybook Project of Texas

**Polunsky Unit Hosts First Father-Daughter Day**

By Robert L. Gonzales  
Staff Writer

A special father-daughter event at the Polunsky Unit recently created positive, life-altering changes for several residents in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), generated positive media attention and strengthened families.

When Warden K. Smith opened the unit's doors for its first Father-Daughter Day, three hours of laughter, emotional reunions, games, music and dancing were cherished by 20 resident fathers.

The date greeted their adult daughters with corsages made by hand out of flowers provided by the unit, and father-daughter teams competed in cookie decorating, a hula-hoop contest and dancing.

»FATHERS continued on pg. 4

Father-Daughter Day nurtures special family connections.

**Lee College Students Choose Success Through Postsecondary Opportunities**

By Ashley Morrison  
Staff Writer

For residents within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), success is available even before entry to society. Students Eliza Garcia at the Coleman Unit and Jason Munoz at the Fergusson Unit are taking advantage of opportunities presented to them through Windham School District (Windham) and Lee College.

»SUCCESS continued on pg. 5

Eliza Garcia  
Jason Munoz

**Build-A-Bond Mothers Reach Children Through Women's Storybook Project of Texas**

By Priscilla Maumalanga  
Staff Writer

The Women's Storybook Project of Texas, also called "Storybook," allows mothers at the Murray Unit to maintain contact with their children through recorded storybook readings and personalized messages.

"Storybook has to be the most exciting thing to do while being an incarcerated parent," said Tiquasha Robinson, Storybook participant. "You can show your love through Storybook. You're able to record a short message [to your child] before and after the reading."

»STORYBOOK continued on pg. 5

**TDCJ Begins Operating Giles W. Dalby Unit**

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) held a grand opening on Feb. 24 to mark the opening of the Giles W. Dalby Unit in Post, Texas. The agency began populating the unit in January, following a \$110 million acquisition approved during the 89th legislative session.

TDCJ Executive Director Robby Lumpkin said the acquisition allows the agency to effectively manage the growing population of TDCJ while providing essential rehabilitation programs.

The 251,000-square-foot facility, built between 1997 and 1998 by Garza County, will house approximately 1,900 residents when filled. The Dalby Unit, named after the late Garza County Judge, is fully air conditioned and sits on 72 acres of land.

»DALBY continued on pg. 4

**TDCJ Announces Revised Book Policy to Enhance Safety, Reduce Contraband**

Story on page 2

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AVAILABLE ONLINE AT WSDTX.ORG AND THE FYI APP ON TDCJ TABLETS



# A Tale of Two Paths

By Brandon Hayes | Contributing Writer

Let us all take a moment to ponder the path that we are on. Are we heading toward progress, i.e., going somewhere, or are we still stuck on the dark and lonely path that has continued to leave us stranded, lonely and destitute? Any way you slice it, we all have seen the scenery and dilapidation of the dark paths in life. No matter how much we try and glamourize it, and adorn it with glittery, fancy signage, the paths we chose to go down in life led us here.

There came a point in my traveling where I reached a fork in my road. I began to see glimpses and snapshots of what lied just out of my reach. Like a house on a hill, set among stately trees and greenery, I began

to contemplate on how to get there, while realizing that the road I was on continued toward the same dead end that it always led to.

## The Turn-Off

This may come as a big surprise to many of those who are reading this, but the same exit I took to reach the house on the hill is available to every one of us. However, as you come to the point of cognitively acknowledging that you are in need of a new way in life, all that matters is that you get there. Many of us take more of a circuitous route than others, but the direction (moving forward) is all that matters. Once we have made the turn, that is, the monumental turn in the right direction, we are headed towards restoration, reformation and personal betterment. We can all agree that the trails we once blazed were not so golden after all. Just like the old song says, “I beg your pardon; I never promised you a rose garden,” the right path is a

steep, arduous climb. And many times, you will walk this path by yourself. I may be a tad more thankful than most, because I am ever-remembering and mindful of the veritable wasteland I plodded through in my years of errant wandering.

The right path is filled with obstacles and hurdles that seem to impede us every step of the way. Many of us throw in the towel at the first sign of a detour or the first significant test that is thrown our way. Have you thrown in the towel? It is hard enough getting on the right path in the first place, but staying on it while taking the dings that come with it is harder than many give it credit for. Realizing that there will be trying times and pitfalls ahead, you will be ready to face them when they come your way. This is your cue to pick your head up and push a little harder. One thing we can all agree on is that the choice to go backward through the mess is undeniably insane. This requires a “burn the ships” mentality, with no option of going backwards. Are you finding yourself moving backward? Are you taking unneeded directions from someone just as lost or more lost than you are?

## Leaders

The good news is that there are people who have been on this path. People who have been grinding and doing what it takes to remain focused and resilient while doing their time. What it takes is leadership. Showing the way and leading the way can provide the critically-needed impetus to motivate someone into action. Without someone lighting the way, this

“The right path is filled with obstacles and hurdles that seem to impede us every step of the way.”

path to redemption can seem far-flung, distant and out of reach.

In my personal journey, I have been mentored and trained by true leaders that have blazed the trail before me. In turn, I find myself blazing the same trail. One thing I have come to realize is that it doesn't hurt to ask for directions. If you are aimlessly wandering the path that you know all too well leads to a dead end, turn around! If you have breath in your lungs, you still have time to get back on the trail to betterment. The good path leads in many directions. Sometimes it leads right through the education building, making its way through the chapel or a program outlined in an Individualized Treatment Plan. It can meet the students' needs and then move on towards betterment. Remember this, one day on the right path is more rewarding than five years spent lost and destitute on the wrong one. €



**Happy Trails!**

# SPRING INTO A NEW SEASON

By Kelly Roddy | ECHO Staff



**“**You wouldn’t wear a wool coat in July or flip-flops in a blizzard. When a season arrives, walk into it dressed and ready for what’s coming,” said author Valorie Burton.

Our lives have seasons, too. Coping mechanisms that may have worked in one season of life, like a three-year-old throwing a temper tantrum at the grocery store for a candy bar, may not be appropriate for the 20-year-old trying to get out of a traffic ticket. When life gets cluttered with unnecessary distractions, tolerations or extra chaos, it can feel impossible to find your way forward. It is vital to take time to spring clean and make room for what you want.

- 1.) What project, issue or “to-do” list item keeps getting rolled over into the new season? What are these procrastinations telling

**“Clear space for what you want to see in the next season.”**

you? If tackling the project seems too complicated, break it down into manageable segments, specific actions and get started one at a time. If it is something that no longer serves a purpose, then drop it. Whatever the case, either do it or move on.

- 2.) What could you declutter in 15 minutes? Take just a small segment of time weekly to get rid of the things in your life that no longer serve a purpose.
- 3.) What ties need to be cut? Relationally speaking, are there people or organizations that no longer contribute to the person you are striving to become? Making room in your life often means letting go of stale or inauthentic connections.
- 4.) What apology is overdue or forgiveness that is still being withheld? Holding on to something — a grudge, bitterness or anger creates a burden in your life that weighs down future growth. Even if you think the other person is responsible, you bear the burden alone. Forgive, or ask forgiveness and lay down the emotional burden that prohibits maturity.

- 5.) How do I want to use this season to prepare for the next? You should be learning, growing and developing now for whatever challenges tomorrow may bring. This enables you to lay the groundwork for a smooth transition.

Clear space for what you want to see in the next season. A mentor once told me, “You can’t add dessert to your plate if it’s already overflowing with food.” I understand I must make room for what tomorrow may bring. If that means I can no longer entertain mediocrity to make room for greatness, then spring cleaning, here I come. €

# Shining



By Elvin Hogue | Wheeler Unit

A common fear is not being inadequate, but rather being powerful beyond measure. It is the light, not the darkness, that may intimidate us. Playing small does not serve the world, and there is nothing enlightening about shrinking so that people won't feel insecure around you. We were all meant to shine as children do. It is not just in some of us — it is in all of us. As we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.

What is your personal deepest fear? Is it being noticed or ignored? If your fear is being ignored, can that somehow translate into a fear of being noticed? Fred Rogers, the host of the PBS television show “Mister Rogers’ Neighborhood,” tells his viewers that each of us are special in our own way. That we matter and deserve to be noticed and praised for “being the best you that you can be,” essentially, allowing ourselves and others to shine and be noticed.

The idea that as we shine, we un-

consciously give others permission to do the same, can sometimes be the thing that holds us back. As we move through our lives, giving others permission to shine can feel like we are giving away our moment, that recognition or attention meant for us. This is not true. As we shine, we are giving an example to those around us that they can shine as well. Not by making others look small, but by shin-

“All that is required is to recognize the opportunity to bring others with us...”

ing as bright as each of us can.

Look at the stars in the sky. Some are brighter than others, but none intentionally black out other stars. We can do the same. All that is required is to recognize the opportunity to bring others with us — not step on each other to get ahead.

How does playing small affect the world around us? How could

playing small have a detrimental effect on others? The answer is by not playing to our potential and allowing others to shine, we deny giving them a chance to be noticed. When working as a team, we shine by supporting our teammates.

Michael Jordan spent a large portion of his basketball career passing the ball to his teammates, allowing them to do their jobs. Imagine if Jordan tried to do everything all the time in every game. Instead, Jordan made a conscious choice to engage his teammates, allowing them to fulfill their roles. He not only allowed them to shine but also in making sure that they got the opportunity to shine. One could argue that someone in Jordan's position would shine no matter what. However, while he was an incredibly talented basketball player, he left a lot to be desired on the baseball diamond. Once the novelty of his name recognition wore off, he was largely passed over in the world of baseball.

“As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others,” is probably the most important part of the above column. That is what Jordan did on the basketball court, and it is what is asked of us each day. Shine on! €



A ribbon cutting ceremony opens the new Dalby Unit.

# TDCJ Begins Operating Giles W. Dalby Unit

**T**he Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) held a grand opening on Feb. 24 to mark the opening of the Giles W. Dalby Unit in Post, Texas. The agency began populating the unit in January, following a \$110 million acquisition approved during the 89th legislative session.

TDCJ Executive Director Bobby Lumpkin said the acquisition allows the agency to effectively manage the growing population of TDCJ while providing essential rehabilitation programs.

The 251,000-square-foot facility, built between 1997 and 1998 by Garza County, will house approximately 1,900 residents when filled. The Dalby Unit, named after the late Garza County Judge, is fully air conditioned and sits on 72 acres of land.

Educational opportunities at the Dalby campus available through Windham School District (Windham) include academics and life skills programs such as

Changing Habits and Achieving New Goals to Empower Success (CHANGES) and the Cognitive Intervention Program. Additionally, career and technical education programs offered by the district include Introduction to Construction Careers and RV Service Technician.

To help combat substance use and addiction, residents who arrive at the unit will have an opportunity to enroll in a Recovery Housing Opportunity Program (RHOP). This program helps residents build character, correct self-defeating behaviors and practice self-examination and servant leadership to achieve long-term sobriety. Led by peer recovery specialists, participants learn from a holistic curriculum and live in a zero-tolerance environment that together promotes health, accountability and lasting recovery.

After completing RHOP, individuals are moved to a Sober Living dorm, where they can live in a supportive environment that provides structure, accountability and a community focused on recovery and maintaining sobriety.



Windham Superintendent Kristina J. Hartman visits with Ware Advanced Culinary Arts students at the Dalby opening.

## TDCJ's operation of the Giles W. Dalby Unit underscores our commitment to the public safety of our State.

- Eric Nichols, chairman of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice

The Dalby Unit will also have a housing area for the Substance Use Education Program (SUEP). This six-month, parole-voted program uses modified therapeutic community methods to promote positive behavior through education, peer support and accountability.

The Corrective Intervention Pre-Release Program is a four-month program designed to transition individuals from restrictive housing to general population. The program, built on the principles of motivational interviewing and cognitive behavior therapy, helps participants build self-awareness, make healthier decisions and learn empathy for their impact on others.

Additionally, certified mental health peers, life coaches and field ministers will be assigned to the unit, providing the population with more opportunities to transform their lives.

"TDCJ's operation of the Giles W. Dalby Unit underscores our commitment to the public safety of our State," said Eric Nichols, chairman of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice. "We very much appreciate the support of State leadership and the Legislature in funding the acquisition and operation of a unit that will focus on preparing individuals to make a successful and positive transition from incarceration to responsible and positive reentry into our Texas communities." €



### Unsolved Homicide

#### Fulton Honeycutt



On April 29, 1989, 56-year-old Fulton Honeycutt was found deceased in the doorway of his garage apartment at 121 1/2 East Berta Street in Tyler, Texas. Police discovered evidence indicating a homicide, with signs of a struggle inside of the apartment prior to his death. If you have any information on the following homicide, please contact the TDCJ Crime Stoppers Office at P.O. Box 1855, Huntsville, TX 77340. TDCJ Crime

Stoppers will pay \$50 up to \$1,000 for information leading to the arrest, filing of charges, or indictment of person or persons that committed a felony crime or is a wanted fugitive. Crime Stoppers guarantees your anonymity.



### Missing Person

#### Christine Starrine Byrd



Christine Starrine Byrd has been missing since May 27, 1992 from Tyler, Texas. She was 42 years old, 5'1-5'3, 160 lbs. She was last seen wearing a yellow shirt, blue denim shorts and approximately \$25,000 worth of jewelry, including a diamond-encrusted bracelet, two diamond rings and a diamond pin. If you have any information on this missing person, please contact the TDCJ Crime Stoppers Office at P.O. Box 1855, Huntsville, TX 77340. TDCJ Crime Stoppers will pay \$50 up to \$1,000 for information

leading to the arrest, filing of charges, or indictment of person or persons that committed a felony crime or is a wanted fugitive. Crime Stoppers guarantees your anonymity.



# FINDING JOY IN EDUCATION



LEE  
COLLEGE

LEE COLLEGE  
STUDENTS  
CHOOSE SUCCESS  
THROUGH  
POSTSECONDARY  
OPPORTUNITIES

BY ASHLEY MORRISON  
STAFF WRITER



**F**or residents within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), success is available even before reentry. Students Elisa Garcia at the Coleman campus and Jason Munoz at the Ferguson campus are taking advantage of opportunities presented to them through Windham School District (Windham) and Lee College.

Garcia earned an associate's degree in business management from Lee College. She said taking a logistics class helped her find joy in education again.

"It helped me reconnect with my love for education, and it helped clear the fog I had going on," Garcia said.

She continued developing skills in communication, organization and professionalism through her business management degree. With these skills and her natural desire to help others, she became a peer tutor.

### Passing It On

"Now I'm able to pass on all that I learned to the people who need help," she said. "The way they respond is to tell me how I've impacted them positively. Some are on the verge of giving up, but when I'm able to give them my experiences and help them through. It is so amazing."

Munoz is also a peer tutor. He earned his high school diploma through the Matthew Gaines High School at the Ferguson campus with dual enrollment in Lee College. This achievement led to more, as he has also earned his culinary arts certificate. Currently, he is working on an associate's degree in business management. These classes helped him see himself in a positive light.

"I don't have to live the lifestyle I was living anymore," he said. "I actually have the opportunity and tools to move forward in my life doing positive things."

### Inside, Outside

Thanks to their achievements and willingness to help others, they were chosen to be part of the Inside Student and

Outside Alumni panel at the 11th Annual Education in Corrections Conference in October 2025.

The Inside Student and Outside Alumni panel was the first of its kind. It expressed the positive impact of educational programs on students' lives. Garcia and Munoz both spoke on their personal success and what it meant to have the opportunities to grow. The conference was held in Huntsville for educators, administrators and other postsecondary supporters. However, Garcia and Munoz were able to share their stories from their campuses in an online meeting set up by Windham at Lee College's request, with TDCJ approval and support.

"I really feel that through programs like Windham, and everything we're learning here, this [education] really allows residents to not fall into the cycle of recidivism," Garcia said.

Both residents have plans to use the skills they've learned through the classes they've completed. In the future, Garcia plans to use her business management degree to open a food truck and continue advocating for the education of residents in TDCJ. Munoz plans to earn a bachelor's degree next. Currently, both residents enjoy their jobs as peer tutors. They use their job and experiences to encourage others to look for self-growth.

"Instead of putting yourself in the same bad position, let's get you involved in [academics]," Munoz said, "then from there, a trade or college. Let's see how far you can really go."

"The people I'm around have so much potential, so much promise," Garcia said. "They just sometimes need that extra push. For anybody considering education programs, or who is already in them and may be having doubts: just keep pushing. At the end of the day, it's going to make all the difference." €

"I actually have the opportunity and tools to move forward in my life doing positive things."

- Jason Munoz





# BUILD-A-BOND

## MOTHERS REACH CHILDREN THROUGH WOMEN'S STORYBOOK PROJECT OF TEXAS

BY PRICILA MAUMALANGA  
STAFF WRITER

**T**

he Women's Storybook Project of Texas, also called "Storybook," allows mothers at the Murray Unit to maintain contact with their children through recorded storybook readings and personalized messages.

"Storybook has to be the most exciting thing to do while being an incarcerated parent," said Tarquasha Robinson, Storybook participant. "You can show your love through Storybook. You're able to record a short message [to your child] before and after the reading."

## READING, RECORDING

Once a month, for six months, the mothers meet with volunteers and record themselves reading a book for their children, up to the age of 14. Participants choose one book per child on their list and record a 10-minute reading as well as a personalized message. A new copy of the book and the recordings are mailed to the child's caregiver.

Vanessa Barton, Murray resident and mother of two, has participated in the Storybook Project multiple times over the last six years.

"It's kept me connected to my kids throughout my time, whether I'm in their life physically or not," she said.

According to the National Institute of Justice, "Research shows that, in general, children whose parents are incarcerated are at a higher risk for increased antisocial behaviors and psychological problems, such as depression."

The strength of the child-parent relationship can mitigate negative effects of incarceration if the child is afforded opportunities to maintain contact with the parent and receives support throughout the incarceration.

"That first experience — it was very emotional for me," Barton said. "But it started a bond with my kids."

This chance to continue a relationship with their children through reading also helps to strengthen the bond between mother and child. According to the Child Mind Institute, the sensory experience of hearing their mother's familiar voice and having a physical book in their hands is important for a child's development.

"It helps you help [the child] learn to read," Robinson said. "It also shows them that they are not forgotten."

## EXPRESSING FEELINGS

Books help children handle their feelings in healthy ways and develop empathy. By seeing characters in books experience tough emotions, children learn these feelings are nor-

**"DON'T LET THIS TIME  
PASS YOU BY. BUILD A  
RELATIONSHIP, A BOND,  
AND I PROMISE YOU  
WON'T REGRET IT."**

**- TARQUASHA ROBINSON,  
STORYBOOK PARTICIPANT**

mal and it gives them a chance to express their own difficult feelings with their parents.

"There's only so many things that you can do in prison to keep in communication with your children or to build and continue building a relationship with your children," Barton said. "It's going to show your children that you're still trying."

Maintaining these relationships encourages a positive attachment and promotes a healthy relationship after reentry. Letter writing, visits and other forms of contact can play a positive role in a child's life. Some children may even develop resilience with a strong support system, despite the effects of incarceration.

"Don't let this time pass you by," Robinson said. "Build a relationship, a bond, and I promise you won't regret it."

## SOURCES

National Institute of Justice

<https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/hidden-consequences-impact-incarceration-dependent-children>

Child Mind Institute

<https://childmind.org/article/why-is-it-important-to-read-to-your-child/> €





# POLUNSKY UNIT HOSTS FIRST FATHER-DAUGHTER DAY

BY ROBERT L. GONZALES  
STAFF WRITER



A special father-daughter event at the Polunsky Unit recently created positive, life-altering changes for several residents in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), generated positive media attention and strengthened families.

When Warden K. Smith opened the unit's doors for its first Father-Daughter Day, three hours of laughter, emotional reunions, games, music and dancing were cherished by 20 resident fathers. The dads greeted their adult daughters with corsages made by hand out of flowers provided by the unit, and father-daughter teams competed in cookie decorating, a hula-hoop contest and dancing.

**“I LOVED JUST SITTING THERE, SEEING MY DAUGHTER PAINT, THEN DECORATE COOKIES.”**

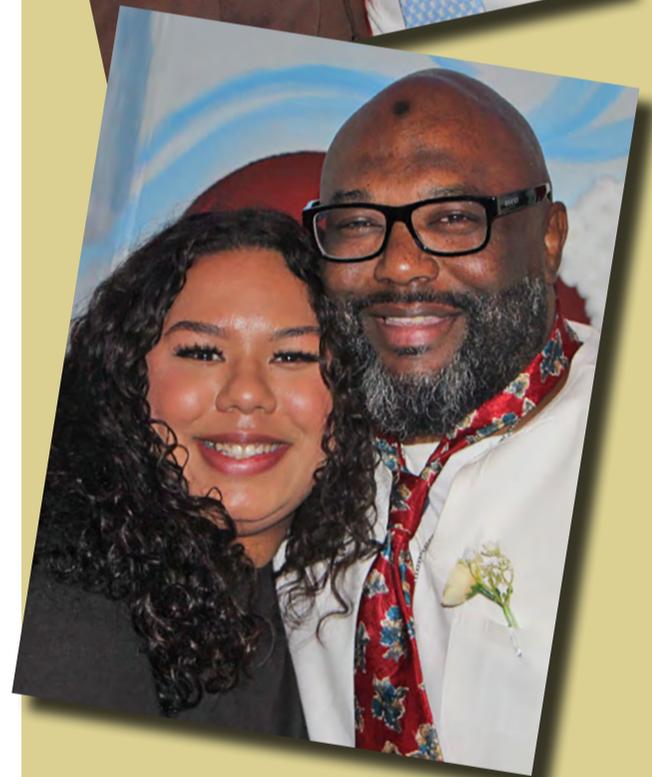
**- JOSEPH GARLINGTON, PARTICIPANT**

At the end of the day, the teams were awarded ribbons and certificates for each event.

“I loved just sitting there, seeing my daughter paint, then decorate cookies,” participant Joseph Garlington said. “And I knew when we were dancing, that was her moment, but little did I know it was mine, also. I thank everyone who put this together, who gave me a chance to have that time with my baby. It meant a lot to me. It really did. I’ve only seen my daughter three times in 27 years, but now she has the phone set up and we talk every night.”

Another Polunsky father, Davey Crockett, also did not know his daughter for many years.

“My daughter was born 10 days after I got to TDCJ, yet I didn’t learn about her for 20 years,” Crockett said. He said he missed his daughter and wanted to spend time with her, becoming excited when he saw a notice posted about the upcoming event. Months ago, Officer S. Smith encouraged residents to apply to participate in an event called Father-Daughter Day. Crockett decided to see what might happen by signing up, never guessing the positive impact this opportunity would create for each of them.



Davey Crockett and his daughter enjoy their time together.



“I believe in rehabilitation,” event facilitator Smith said, explaining her motivation for creating character-building settings for residents. She said participation in this event was determined through a demanding process requiring completion of two Individualized Treatment Plan programs, no major disciplinary cases within the past five years and no minor disciplinary cases within the past two years. Smith said it is her personal calling to model positive behavior and to provide positive opportunities.

“My whole job involves changing their lives,” she said.

The fathers’ stringent application process encouraged them to make positive choices to be considered.

“The lesson is ‘Just be resilient,’” Crockett said. “Stay out of trouble because you never know if you might miss an opportunity [for a positive event]. If I’d been in trouble at the time, I’d never have received this experience.”

Gaining this momentary glimpse of a strong and healthy relationship with his daughter reinforced Crockett’s resolve to remain on a positive path, investing himself in a hopeful future.



Polunsky's Officer Smith facilitates Father-Daughter Day.

“It’s kept my mind straight and given me something to focus on,” Crockett said. “It’s done a whole lot of good for my daughter, too, because she was glad to sit down and talk to me. She also caught the event on the news (KTRE - ABC 9, Lufkin) and recorded it to share with all my family, telling them how happy she was to spend time with me.”

“It’s also been good because it makes me think about why I’m doing the right things,” Crockett said. “I remember praying to God to change me. I realized I could have missed so much of this, and it’s kept me from getting in a lot of trouble.”

**“IT’S KEPT MY MIND STRAIGHT AND GIVEN ME SOMETHING TO FOCUS ON. IT’S DONE A WHOLE LOT OF GOOD FOR MY DAUGHTER, TOO.”**

**- DAVEY CROCKETT, PARTICIPANT**

Garlington also said the event has affected the choices he makes.

“You begin to value things more,” Garlington said. “You don’t want to take chances anymore. I’m not going to disappoint my family. I’m not going to do this to myself.”

*Author’s note: Facilitating father-daughter days builds bonds contributing to healthy emotional development and well-being of participants. Numerous studies indicate children who have solid connections with fathers living in incarceration are more likely to break the cycle of inter-generational entanglement in the criminal justice system. In addition, the 2024 release of “Daughters,” a documentary directed by Natalie Rae and Angela Patton about this same topic, continues to inspire events in various correctional facilities in the United States. Facilitating and encouraging father-daughter relationships is a win for everybody, and a daughter’s love can be a father’s key to freedom from the past.*



Joseph Garlington and his daughter decorate cookies.



# *The Art of* REHABILITATION

By J.P. Schnizer  
Staff Writer

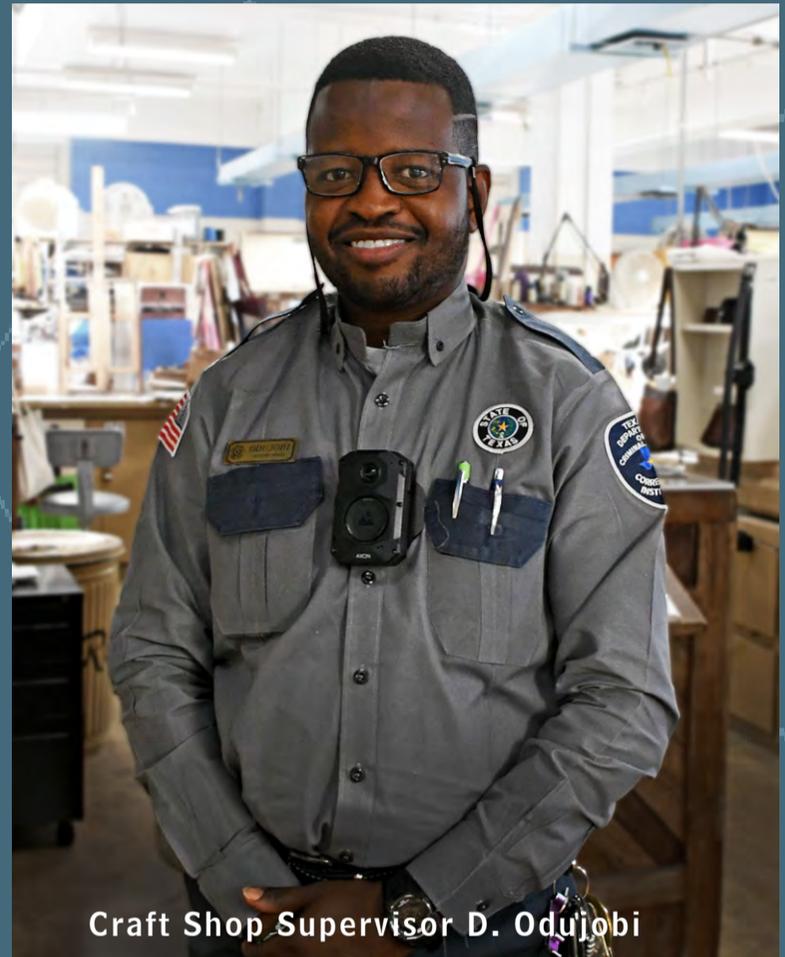
## An Interview with Wynne Craft Shop Supervisor D. Odujobi

Recently *The Echo* was invited to interview Wynne Unit Craft Shop supervisor D. Odujobi to get his perspective on the potential benefits and skills residents can obtain from the recreational program.

Step inside a Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) unit craft shop, where the room is filled with the strong smells of leather, sawdust and paint, and visions of artistic creativity are displayed everywhere from floor to ceiling. Original paintings and drawings stand tall amongst counter tops covered with hand tooled belts, bags, caps and scraps of suede. Metalwork, one-of-a-kind jewelry and belt buckles are being shined not far from the steady assembling of custom frames and stained woodwork. Linking the chaos together is a noisy soundtrack of work, laughter and hustle – all overseen by the TDCJ supervisor who manages the shop. Move into the supervisor's office for a moment to understand more about on the daily details of a craft shop – and its offerings to those who enter. Wynne Unit Craft Shop Supervisor D. Odujobi shares his perspectives in a Question and Answer session describing the benefits and skills residents can obtain from the craft shops.

### **Q: What is a craft shop?**

**A:** The craft shop is a unique recreational and rehabilitative program for residents who have decided to channel their energy and creativity in a positive way. Participants must be willing to spend time and



Craft Shop Supervisor D. Odujobi

money to learn or advance in a craft and accumulate materials and tools through the approved vendors. It requires focus and sacrifices, along with a determination to stay out of trouble and become an ethical, responsible and creative person.

### **Q: What are some of the requirements to participate in craft shop?**

**A:** The requirements for participation in a craft shop are straightforward. These include a clean disciplinary record for at least one year and the appropriate account balance for the craft of interest. There is a waiting list for Wynne residents, and I encourage hopeful candidates to be patient and wait for their turn. Participation in the craft shop is a privilege and I expect everyone to main-



Painting by C. Warnock

tain a mature and respectful attitude toward staff and other residents.

**Q: Do you believe that engaging in arts and crafts like we see in the craft shop is a healthy form of rehabilitation?**

**A:** Along with education and career and technical education training, the crafts and skills that residents can learn in the craft shop are key to rehabilitation. Many residents have artistic abilities, but other intangible skills can be acquired and exercised in this program. It is important for participants to gain a sense of what they are capable of and how skill sets can be improved. If residents can learn to apply this in a hobby or a job, it can benefit them while incarcerated and out in the community.

**Q: How is the craft shop important in preparing residents for reentry?**

**A:** Coupled with learning craft skills as mentioned earlier, residents need to learn communication and interpersonal skills. Craft shop participants need to interact effectively and professionally with each other and with staff. Residents who make custom items for sale to staff need to manage work materials, craft

quality handmade items and successfully negotiate and complete sales contracts. These soft skills that residents acquire through communication and interaction will help them in becoming functional and successful outside of this setting. This is important in rehabilitation while incarcerated and for reentry into the community.

**Q: What advice would you give to someone who wants to participate in the craft shop program?**

**A:** Make sure you sincerely want to improve yourself. If your mindset is still caught up in the behavior that led you to incarceration, or you are involved in negative activity inside the facility, the craft shop is not for you. This program can be an important part of your rehabilitation, but your self-improvement starts with you and your mindset. Your past mistakes should not continue to define who you are in the present. Be ready to expect more from yourself and be willing to work for what you want in life. If you want to learn a craft and skill that can help you redefine yourself, the craft shop program may be right for you. €



Leather portfolio by D. Hawkins

# Artist SPOTLIGHT Rudy Resendez



"Rehabilitation is the goal of incarceration... come out better than you were when you came in."

Rudy Resendez,  
Leather Worker

**S**o often we find ourselves with an abundance of energy and limited outlets to expend it. Many of us long for the normal activities that we engaged in prior to the mistakes we made which led us here, and many of us are searching for an avenue to apply newly developed soft and interpersonal skills in a healthy, productive environment. For many such individuals their unit craft shops provide these positive prospects where residents can sharpen skills or learn new ones through engaging in the healthy activity of arts and crafts. As the landscape of modern incarceration expands further into the realm of rehabilitation, where the opportunities for personal development continue to increase, it's programs like the craft shop that open the doors for obtaining skill sets that will help residents with the reentry process.

By J.P. Schnizer  
Staff Writer

**Q: Can you tell us what inspired you to begin an artistic practice?**

**A:** I have always been fascinated with the arts. Hearing other residents speak about their projects, whether it be leather or art, made me wonder what could be possible. Creative outlets and options are limited [in this environment]. In the craft shop, the sky's the limit and that in itself is inspiring — the liberty to create at will.

**Q: How did you learn your craft?**

**A:** I had never done leather before. Honestly, it was the only available craft that I thought feasible. Turns out, it caught my interest. I became invested in it, not just to pass time, but for my future.

**Q: What do you find most challenging about your craft?**

**A:** There is a process for everything. Having to learn all of them seems daunting, but is necessary to complete complex projects. Translating ideas onto leather takes skill, patience and talent, especially when the pattern is your original creation.

**Q: What do you find most rewarding about your craft?**

**A:** Freedom of expression.

**Q: Do you have a favorite project to-date?**

**A:** My favorite project is a laptop bag I made per a customer's specific request: burgundy and black. The leather was a beautiful combination of color and textures in its complexity, with contemporary style.



Once all the pieces have been measured and cut, it's then time to begin the process of assembling the custom backpack.

**Q: What role does the craft shop play in your personal rehabilitative program?**

**A:** Rehabilitation is the goal of incarceration — come out better than when you came in. Craft shop allows me to practice skills that are vital to my successful return to society. Decision making and communication are amongst the most important skills, in my opinion. Making good choices that produce positive outcomes is one of the tenets of rehabilitation. The craft shop privilege is a direct result of choosing to make good decisions and staying out of trouble over the years. This is tangible proof of rehabilitation and its journey. Communication skills are paramount to our success in the community. From job interviews to relationships, how well you communicate will determine how well you are received. In the craft shop we get unique opportunities to communicate with officers, directors, volunteers, educational staff and visitors. These interactions help sharpen those skills.

**Q: How has being in the craft shop helped you navigate the challenges of being incarcerated?**

**A:** The craft shop has given me an incentive that many residents wait for years to have. The impetus is there, but it's not

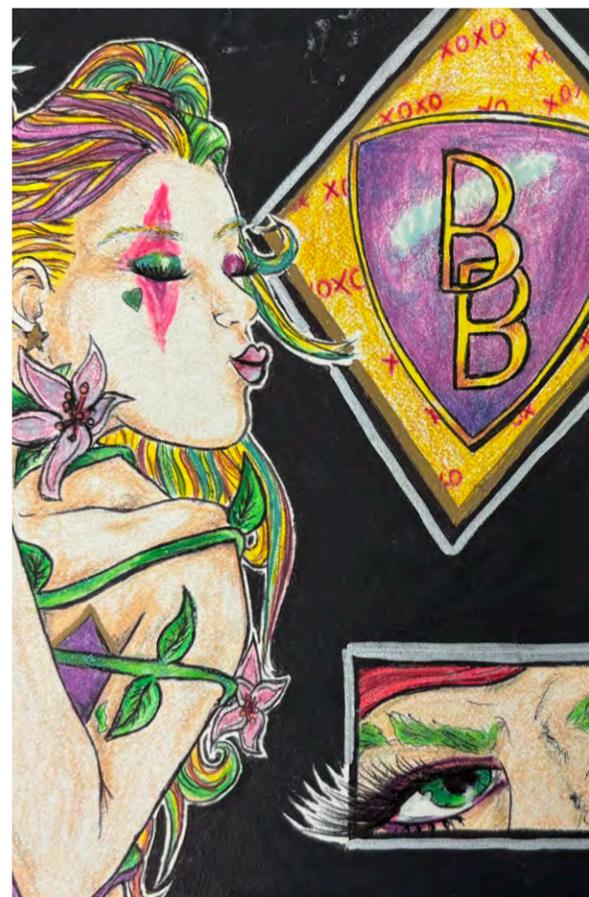
the privilege alone that helps me navigate the day-to-day. The craft shop gives me the latitude and means to bring life to ideas and thoughts. It is both an outlet and a safe space to express and expend my mental energies and focus on positive things. Having the craft shop privilege also gives me something to strive to keep. One wrong decision can mean an end to the craft shop privilege, loss of dollars invested and disappointment to my family and kids.

**Q: You have successfully employed artistic talents, managed work materials and completed sales contracts. How are these skills important in preparing you for reentry?**

**A:** The skills we learn in here directly reflect the same skills we will need to have for a successful reentry. To simply exist in the community requires skills in all forms of communication, budgeting, resource management, efficiency management, time management, punctuality, negotiating, interpersonal soft skills and more. However, the most important skill the craft shop gives us is to learn and apply. These skills are used in every aspect of our daily lives. Now, the craft shop's unique environment gives residents the opportunity to learn these skills, but if we do not or cannot apply them, then they are just information. €



Murray Unit craft shop participants display their creations while expressing themselves artistically.



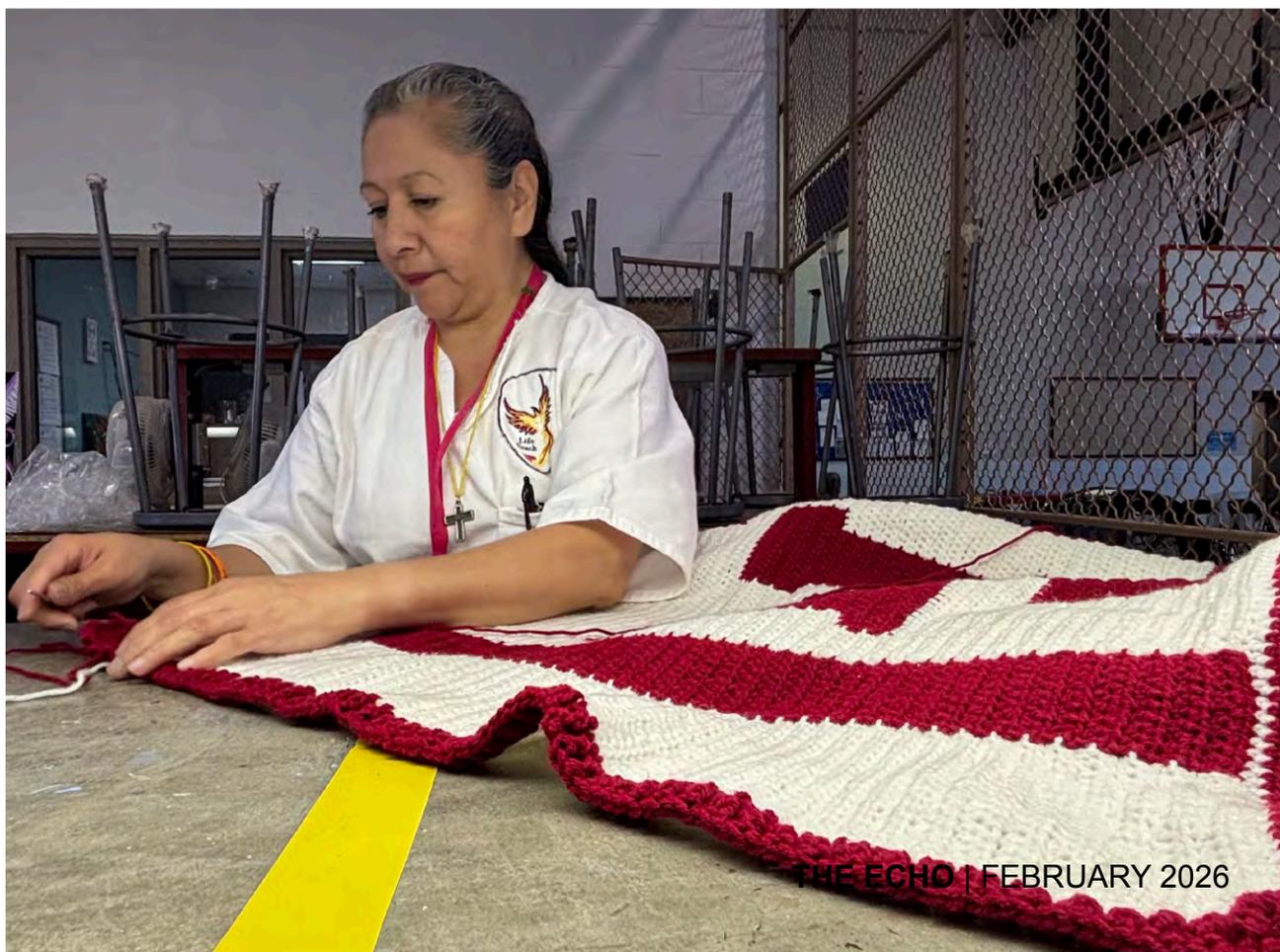
*Healing Through Art:*

# Residents Craft Wellness

By Kelly Roddy  
Staff Writer



A craft shop worker knits a custom blanket.



**M**urray Unit residents promote wellness and community through art therapy at the unit's craft shop. Participants Gretchen Richardson, Chelsea Richardson, Shamika Smith, Frances Smithwich and others create jewelry, cross-stitch, stamped leather, art boards and knitted items as a means of developing coping skills and experiencing healing from previous trauma.

Art therapy is more than just drawing. Creating art engages your brain in new and uncensored ways. Implementing art as a processing or coping skill allows participants to work through emotions and hidden turmoil that words cannot express.

"It is very therapeutic, a stress reliever and a way to cope and just create," Gretchen said.

Community-based art can enhance mental well-being, increase a sense of value and renew self-esteem. Through art as self-expression, participants become more self-aware and learn new forms of communication while interacting with other people.

"It helps to build identity," Chelsea shared. "Many of us have lost our identities due to trauma in life. It helps you to find healing."

The benefits of art therapy include reduced stress, confronting and addressing

hidden emotions that are holding you back, learning new coping skills and obtaining a better understanding of yourself and your internal motivations.

"I was diagnosed with depression when I got arrested, and this has been therapy for me," Gretchen said. "It's relaxing and pleasant. You forget where you are, and it's just wonderful."

The basis of art therapy is established on the idea that people recover and improve through artistic expression. This expression can then be shared with those we care about the most. This creates a sense of purpose and a way for residents to communicate with loved ones they are separated from.

"I've sent pillowcases to my granddaughter and crochet prayer shawls for my mom and aunts," Gretchen said. "It's nice to be able to give back, because they do so much for me."

The craft shop promotes a safe and healthy environment to express oneself artistically, and everyone has the ability to create.

"Even if you don't have access to a craft shop, I encourage you to create," Chelsea said. "Come up with a routine, write songs or draw pictures. You never really know what is going to touch someone else. Art gives you purpose, an outlet, stress relief and a coping mechanism." €

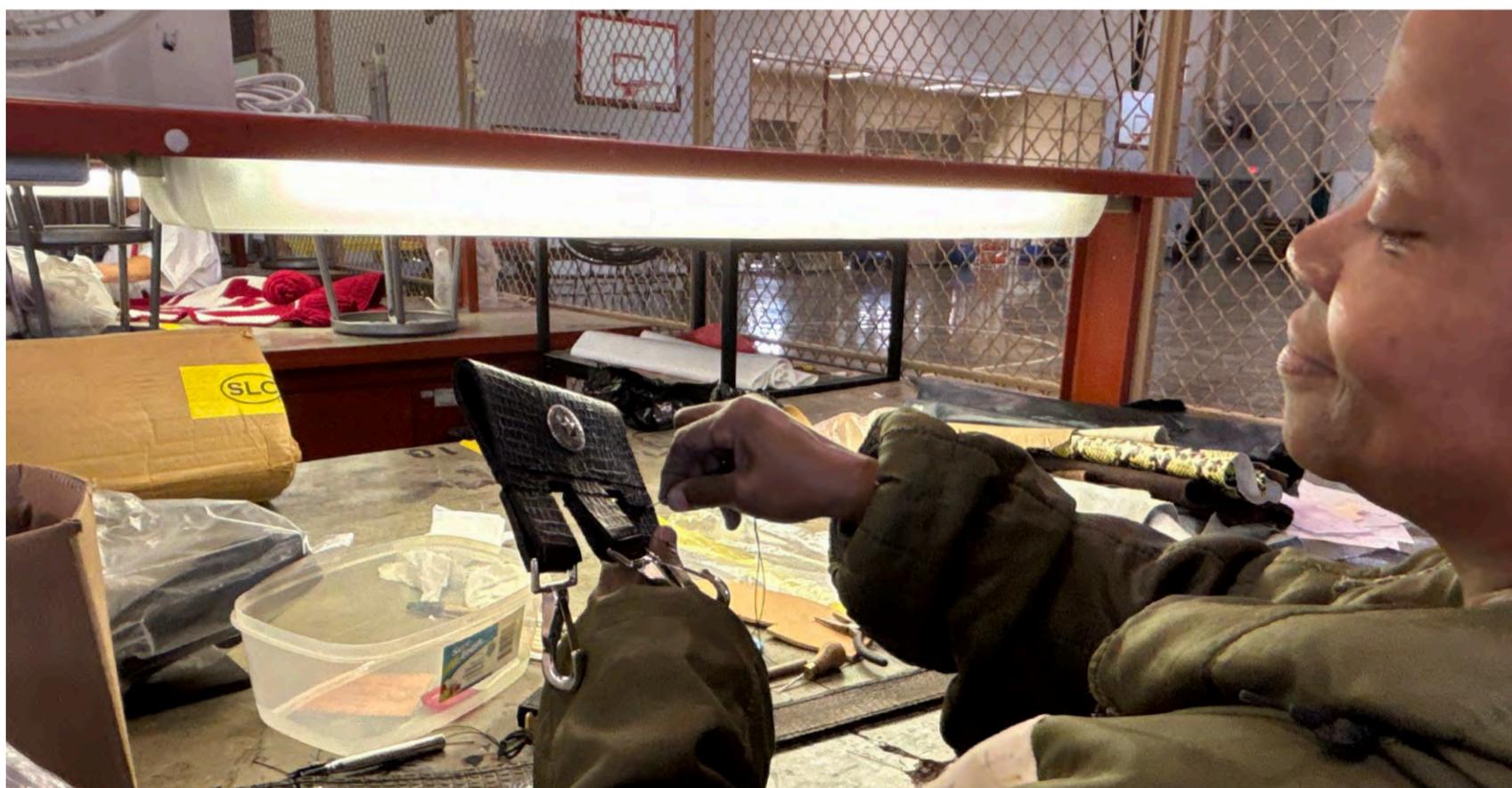


Jewelry is crafted at the Murray Unit Craft Shop.



Knitted caps are created by residents.

A leather worker finishes her project.



# SPORTS VIEW



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!

## AGAINST ALL ODDS:

### A History of Winter Olympic Underdogs By William E. Hill | ECHO Staff

This month's column is about the Winter Olympics and a brief account of the Games' three biggest underdogs during my lifetime: the 1980 USA Men's Hockey Team, the performance of a British ski jumper nicknamed Eddie the Eagle and the 2026 comeback of Lindsey Vonn.

of patriotic, religious and athletic festivals observed every four years. The first recorded games occurred in 776 B.C. when the Greeks began to keep their calendar by Olympiads (four-year spans of time), which was the time between games. The Roman Emperor, Theodosius I, abolished the Olympic Games in A.D. 393 until brought back by Coubertin.

### MODERN GAMES

The modern Olympic Games were established in 1896 by a French educator, Baron Pierre de Coubertin, to promote international understanding through athletic competition. He modeled his games after the ancient Greek Olympic Games, which was the most well-known of the four Panhellenic (relating to, advocating or denoting the idea of a political union of all Greeks) celebrations.

The modern Olympic symbol consists of five rings representing five areas of the world: Africa, America, Asia, Australia and Europe. Each ring is a different color: blue, yellow, black, green and red which along with white represents the colors of the world's flags. The interrelation of the rings represents the connection that sports competition provides.

According to "100 Years of Olympics," an article posted on olympics.com, the first official Winter Olympic Games were held in Chamonix, France during the 1924 Paris Olympic Games. The 10-day event was originally called the Winter Sports Week of the VIII Olympiad.

Olympic Games were celebrations of a combination





However, in 1926, the event was recognized as the first Winter Olympic Games. Only 16 nations sent athletes to the first Winter Games, while today more than 90 countries typically compete.

group stage of the tournament was a moral victory for the young squad. However, they made it to the semi-final round against the mighty Red Machine, and it was truly a David versus Goliath match.

## BOYCOTTED OLYMPICS

The 1980 Olympic Winter Games held in Lake Placid, N.Y. were contested during the height of the Cold War between the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The USA boycotted the Summer Games held in Moscow, Russia in retaliation for the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and many experts expected the USSR to return the gesture for the Winter Games; however, they chose to participate.

Professional athletes were not allowed to compete for their country in the Olympics during this era, and the USSR's Olympic Hockey team was considered the best in the world. Their team roster consisted of veterans who played for their team year-round, while Team USA was a ragtag collection of college players thrown together for only a few months.

The fact that the Americans even made it out of the

## USA! USA! USA!

The Americans prevailed against their country's archrival. Jim "Mooney" Craig, the American's goalie, outplayed his Soviet counterpart, Vladislav Tretiak, who was widely considered the best player on the Soviet's team. Most hockey experts believe that Soviet coach Viktor Tikhonov, made the wrong decision when he pulled his star goalie after the first period. With the Americans leading four goals to three and the seconds ticking down, Al Michaels began counting down the time remaining then made his famous call, "Do you believe in miracles? — Yes!" Then he went silent as the crowd began chanting, "USA, USA, USA!"

The game against the Soviets was only a semi-final game, meaning that the Americans had one more game to play for the gold medal. Spoiler alert: America won.

Author's note: The United States Men's Olympic



## VONN'S COMEBACK

Unlike the 1980 USA Olympic Hockey Team and Eddie the Eagle, Lindsey Vonn was already an Olympic champion when she began her comeback. This was not your average comeback. Vonn is returning to World Cup skiing at the age of 40 — and with a new titanium knee. She was forced into retirement in 2019 due to a broken-down body, but not due to diminished performance. Vonn's storybook comeback did not end the way she or any of her fans wanted.

Vonn wasn't only competing on a titanium knee, but also with a torn Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) suffered a few days before the start of the 2026 Winter Olympics. Her first run in the downhill event lasted only 13 seconds before she went head over heels in a crash that resulted in a complex tibia fracture of her left leg, requiring multiple surgeries. Vonn secured her status as one of Alpine skiing's best, as well as one of the most courageous athletes in any sport.

All three of these stories exhibit the spirit of the Olympic creed Coubertin wrote more than 140 years ago: "The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well." €



Hockey Team won the gold medal at the 2026 Milan/Cortina Winter Olympics for the first time since 1980. There is one caveat to this victory: unlike the 80s, the '26 team was composed of veteran National Hockey League players. Due to the professionalization of the Olympics, there will never be a true underdog victory like the "Miracle on Ice" team.

## FLYING GOLD

I didn't think another story in the Olympics could grab the attention of a nation the same way ever again. I was wrong.

The record book shows that Matti "The Flying Fin" Nykaenan of Finland won the gold medal in both of the individual ski jumping events at the 1988 Winter Olympic Games in Calgary, Alberta Canada. However, what the record book does not show is how the conversation surrounding the ski jumping competition was dominated by the tale of the British ski jumper Michael Edwards, who the media affectionately nicknamed "Eddie the Eagle."

Spoiler alert: Eddie did not win. He didn't even come close to winning, but that wasn't the point — Michael "Eddie" Edwards achieved his lifetime dream of becoming an Olympian.

**"The most important thing in the Olympic Games is not to win but to take part, just as the most important thing in life is not the triumph but the struggle. The essential thing is not to have conquered but to have fought well."**



## WORKER JOB OPENINGS

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Facilities Regional and Unit Maintenance

is seeking applicants for the following position: General Office Clerk

**Minimum Requirements:**

- Must be classified as a G1 or G2 to work in unit maintenance.
- Must be classified as G1 or OT to work in regional maintenance.
- No medical/work restrictions that would prohibit performing job duties.
- No major disciplinary cases within past year.

**Skills/Qualifications needed to apply:**

- Skilled in the use of computers, copiers and other related equipment.
- Skilled in maintaining records and files and performing other clerical duties.
- On-the-job training provided.

**Attention:**

**Applicants:**  
If you are interested, send an I-60 with all experience to:  
Facilities Maintenance Division  
Two Financial Plaza, Suite 400, Huntsville TX 77340  
Attention: Director of Maintenance & Operations

All eligible workers are encouraged to apply.



## WORKER JOB OPENINGS

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Facilities Regional and Unit Maintenance

is seeking applicants for the following positions: Electricians, Highworkers, AC Technicians, Plumbers, Kitchen & Laundry Technicians, Carpenters, Welders and General Maintenance

**Minimum Requirements:**

- Must be classified as a G1 or G2 to work in unit maintenance.
- Must be classified as G1 or OT to work in regional maintenance.
- No medical/work restrictions that would prohibit performing job duties.
- No major disciplinary cases within past year.

**Skills/Qualifications needed to apply:**

- Skilled in the use of hand and power tools related to construction and maintenance.
- Highline positions must be skilled in maintenance and repairs of high voltage equipment and construction.
- On-the-job training provided for some positions.
- Apprenticeships available for some positions.

**Attention:**

**Applicants:**  
If you are interested, send an I-60 with all experience to:  
Facilities Maintenance Division  
Two Financial Plaza, Suite 400, Huntsville TX 77340  
Attention: Director of Maintenance & Operations

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.



## JOB OPENINGS

TCI

Wynne Sign and Plastics Factory

Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Unit List: Wynne Unit

Workers for the Following Position:  
Sign Painter

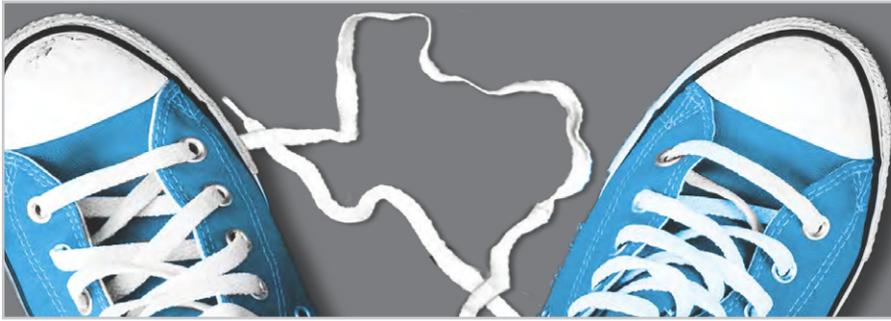
**Minimum Requirements:**

- 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.



# Lace Up

Brief News, Big Achievements

## BARTLETT CAMPUS

### *THRIVE Prepares Residents for Workforce*

By Phillip Lockhart | Unit Reporter

Windham Career Preparation, a component of the Trust, Healing, Restoration, Independence, Vision and Empowerment (THRIVE) program at the Bartlett campus, recently attended a THRIVE Career Expo hosted by the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and the district. The event allowed participants to dress for success in suits and ties, interview with potential employers and showcase their interview skills.

“This really prepared me mentally with knowing what to expect when I go on interviews once I am released,” THRIVE participant Bowman Roger said. “The crazy thing

is that I actually obtained a job offer and can really see myself advancing with the company already.”

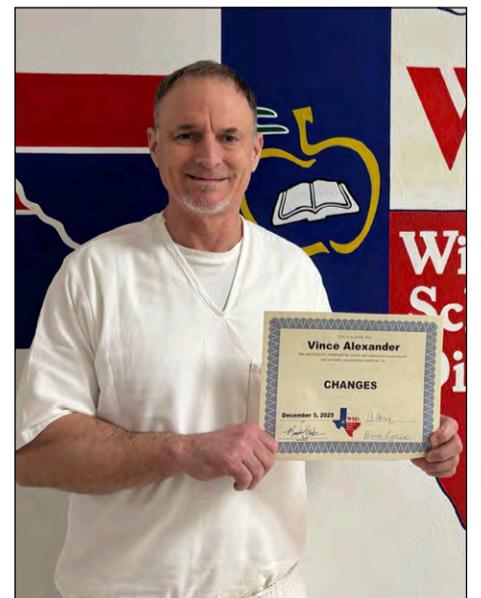
The event also fostered opportunities for participants to connect with employers and demonstrate meaningful preparation for successful reentry. This Career Expo highlights the impact of collaboration between TDCJ, Windham and many potential employers.

“I am proud to be a part of this event because it shows the men there are opportunities for success upon [reentry],” D. Bullock from the I-Hop Corporation in Austin said. “In my experience, the men here can compete with any applicant I’ve interviewed. They were all extremely prepared with professionally constructed resumes, and they were extremely well-dressed.”



### *Bartlett Honors CHANGES Graduates*

Five students at the Bartlett campus recently completed the Windham School District (Windham) Changing Habits and Achieving New Goals to Empower Success (CHANGES) program. This achievement not only demonstrates the graduates’ commitment to personal development but also ensures they are equipped with the skills necessary to successfully navigate their communities upon reentry.



# CRAIN UNIT

## Crain Life Coaches Host 'You are Not Alone' Event

The Crain Unit Life Coaches recently held the "You Are Not Alone" event. Around 30 women who are participants in the nine-month substance use program attended the event. The goal of the Life Coaches was to share their experiences while providing messages of hope and encouragement participants could carry with them throughout future endeavors. This event was held in partnership with the Hackberry Substance Abuse Program, with Hackberry being a satellite of the Crain Unit.



## Daniel Campus Honors 19 College Graduates

# DANIEL CAMPUS



The Daniel campus recently held a graduation ceremony honoring graduates from Western Texas College's Petroleum Technology program. This is the third and largest class to graduate from the program, with 19 graduates earning certificates. The program focuses on eight areas of study: Introduction to Petroleum, Petroleum Regulations, Industrial Safety, Production and Recovery Methods, Artificial Lift, Drilling, Refining and Oil Field Hydraulics, and it is taught over a four-month span.

# HALBERT CAMPUS

## Halbert Campus Honors HSE, CTE Graduates



Windham recently celebrated the accomplishments of graduates at the Halbert campus. The ceremony honored graduates earning their high school equivalency and CTE graduates who earned an industry-based certification in Customer Service Specialist.



# HILLTOP CAMPUS

## *Hilltop Holds Women of Wellness Expo*



The Hilltop campus, in collaboration with Windham's Recreation and Wellness department, recently hosted its first Women of Wellness (WOW) Expo. This event introduced and discussed the WOW program framework, aiming to recruit more peer mentors and expand participation across the housing areas. Around 200 participants attended the event, and the O'Daniel WOW Peer Coaches explained the benefits of the program, welcoming future WOW peer mentors. Events such as this help promote healthy habits and empowerment of participants.

# HOBBY AND MARLIN UNITS

## *Ambassador Siv Visits Hobby, Marlin Units*

In a recent visit to the Hobby and Marlin units, Ambassador Sichan Siv of the Texas Board of Criminal Justice and Windham School District Board of Trustees shared his story and encouragement to residents. While sharing his story, Ambassador Siv spoke of personal trials and a humble beginning, which led him to follow his dreams of serving the citizens of this country in a noble way. These visits are intended to inspire residents to persevere and rise above life's challenges to achieve great things.



# HUGHES CAMPUS

## *Barbering Class Brings Career Training Opportunities*

Windham's Barbering students at the Hughes campus are officially hitting the floor and leveling up their craft. From precision tapers to classic cuts, these students are putting in the work to master the chair. Every snip and shave is a step toward a new career and a fresh start as students learn skills to earn their Class A Barber License through the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation.



## *Windham Celebrates 38 Graduates at Hughes Campus*

By Toby Rod | Unit Reporter

Windham recently hosted the first high school equivalency (HSE) and career and technical education (CTE) graduation for the 2025-2026 school year in the Chapel of Hope at the Hughes campus. In all, 38 graduates walked across the stage in recognition of this accomplishment, taking one more step forward in their journey of personal growth.

The Automotive Fundamentals CTE course had 11 graduates, all of whom also earned an industry-based certification in Environmental Protection. Nicolas McSpadden was valedictorian of this class. The Masonry CTE program had 16 graduates.

Students in this program earned a certificate from the National Center for Construction Education and Research for Construction Site Safety Orientation, Core and Masonry Level One. Eugene Pippens was the valedictorian of this class. Furthermore, 12 students passed the General Educational Development (GED®) exam and earned HSE certificates. Joel Montoya was named valedictorian, and Alan Davidson was salutatorian. Finally, a Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship through the Department of Labor was awarded to Kenneth Millhollon for earning 600 hours of on-the-job training in the Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning trade. Congratulations to these graduates!



# MEMORIAL UNIT

## Memorial Unit Celebrates Field Ministers Program Graduates



Graduates from the Memorial Unit were recently honored for earning their Bachelor of Arts in Applied Ministry degrees from the Heart of Texas Foundation College of Ministry. This rigorous four-year program is designed to allow residents to become field ministers for TDCJ units across the state.

## MURRAY CAMPUS

### Leadership Development Training Promotes Mindset Management

#### Jovita González de Mireles High School Students Learn to Resuscitate Life

By Ashley Morrison | ECHO Staff

By Kelly Roddy | ECHO Staff

Jovita González de Mireles High School students learned lifesaving Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) skills at Windham's Murray campus. R. Croford, Windham Recreation and Wellness program coordinator for the Central Texas region, coached the participants. The students learned proficient compression skills to provide aide to someone in distress.



Coaches of all kinds gathered in the Chapel of Hope at the Murray Unit to attend a leadership development training hosted by C. Billington, a certified life coach and TDCJ volunteer of over 20 years. This training brought together life coaches, peer support coaches (sober living coaches), peer educators, footprints (mental-health) coaches, reentry specialists and faith-based dorm mentors to learn how to better coach and lead their peers.

Mienyon Lane, peer support coach, attended the training and was impacted by Billington's statements. "I look at it like a basketball game," Lane said. "The coach is not out there playing the game. They're just telling the players how to play the game. They are utilizing what [the players] have and showing them how to do it."



# RAMSEY CAMPUS



## *UHCL Transforming Lives by Degrees*

By Quincy Patterson | Unit Reporter

The Transforming Lives by Degrees program is provided by the University of Houston Clear-Lake (UHCL) on the Ramsey campus. Students in TDCJ are able to attain accredited bachelor's and master's degrees through this program. Graduates were recently honored in a commencement ceremony, with 14 students earning a bachelor's degree and eight earning a master's degree.

# WAINWRIGHT UNIT

## *Graduates Complete Therapon*

The Wainwright Unit recently held a graduation ceremony for TDCJ residents who completed the Therapon Program. This program allows individuals to pursue Christian higher education through an accredited college or institution. Graduates spent several years studying to complete two-year and four-year degrees in Biblical studies. Through peer-based support and rehabilitative curriculum, the graduates can grow into better versions of themselves.



# WYNNE UNIT

By Todd R. Carman | ECHO Staff

TDCJ's Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division recently held graduations for the new Violence Intervention Program (VIP) on the Wynne Unit. Thirty-five men graduated the inaugural class, and 39 graduated in the second cohort. These men completed a six-week course focused on identifying and understanding six types of violence (verbal, emotional, spiritual, digital, physical and sexual). The ultimate goal of the program is to stop the cycle of violence and abuse.

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# POETRY NOOK

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## THE WRONG LONELY ROAD

*Submitted by Charles Brown  
Wainwright Unit*

My life started out on the wrong tracks;  
that's why I'm taking this journey back.  
Trying to figure out where it went wrong,  
somewhere along the line  
I shouldn't have gone.  
Because when I was eight,  
I got into crime.  
Little did I know one day  
I would be doing time.  
If I would have known  
where this was going to go,  
I wouldn't have gone down  
that long, lonely road.  
It all began simple,

just stealing from stores,  
but as I grew up,  
I started kicking in doors.  
The next step along the road  
was at the drug scene,  
and that's where I lost  
all my childhood dreams.  
Because my life of crime had risen,  
the next stop I made was  
three years in prison.  
There I fought,  
because I couldn't get along.  
There was no medicating ourselves,  
and some were too far gone.  
In front of everyone, I put on a big act,  
and told them all  
I was never coming back.  
Now, that was my first time down;  
little did I know there would be a  
second time around.  
Unless you change, never say "Never."



# Three Wise Wishes to an Angel

*Submitted by Brandon Gober  
Hodge Unit*

If I met a genie and was granted three wishes,  
what would I ask for now that I feel skittish?

There are so many things that I desire:  
beauty, wealth and control of fire.

Power and freedom sound great, too,  
but I only have three, so now I am confused.

So, I close my eyes and focus my mind;  
I begin to relax and unwind.

I sift through my regrets that still hound and haunt.

Then I get the answer of what to wish for;  
I am worried and confused no more.

I first wish for knowledge that has never been known.  
Then I wish for understanding of the knowledge shown.

Last, I wish for wisdom that binds the first two.  
Now I can see and know all I need to do.

The genie then says, "You didn't ask for gold or jewels?  
So, you must not be too big of a fool.

You will receive all that you've asked for and more,  
because you are good right down to your core.

I will reveal who I am and give you hope.

I am Gabriel, Archangel of Truth;

I've come to cleanse you with heavens soap.

I will bless you and mark you as a seeker of truth,  
no matter the path you choose, you will not be forsook."

Then Gabriel touched me over my heart,  
where there appeared a finger-sized mark.

Now I hunger for nothing more,  
than truth forever whatever lies in store.

I know what I'm becoming bit-by-bit,  
when the time comes, I will be the Lord's prophet.



## Flower or Weed

*Submitted by Daniel Huffman Jr.  
Montford Unit*

A person is either a flower or weed,  
you will know them by their deed.

A weed will spread throughout your garden,  
then your soil will harden.

Both may produce seed,  
yet a weed will always be happy to mislead.  
Flowers brighten the day when they bloom,  
weeds just linger and bring doom.



# The ECHO Puzzles & Mind Benders

## Riddle Me This

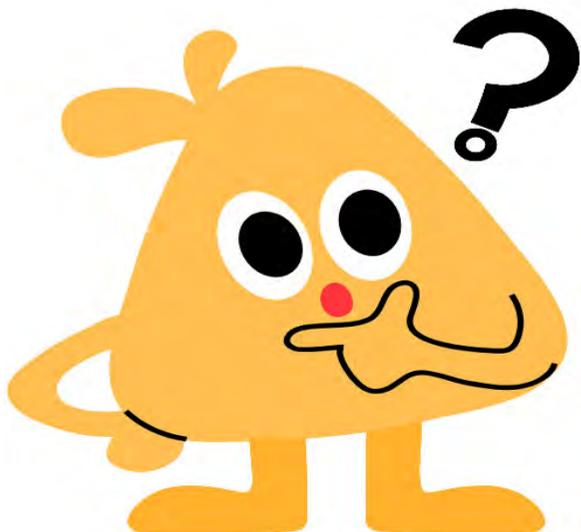
Classic riddles like this one are easier to solve if you think outside the box.

**Does England have a 4th of July?**

## It's a Grand Old Flag

Every heart beats true for the red, white and blue. But what's red and what's white? Is the statement below true or false?

**There are seven white stripes and six red stripes on the American flag.**



## Chess Tactics

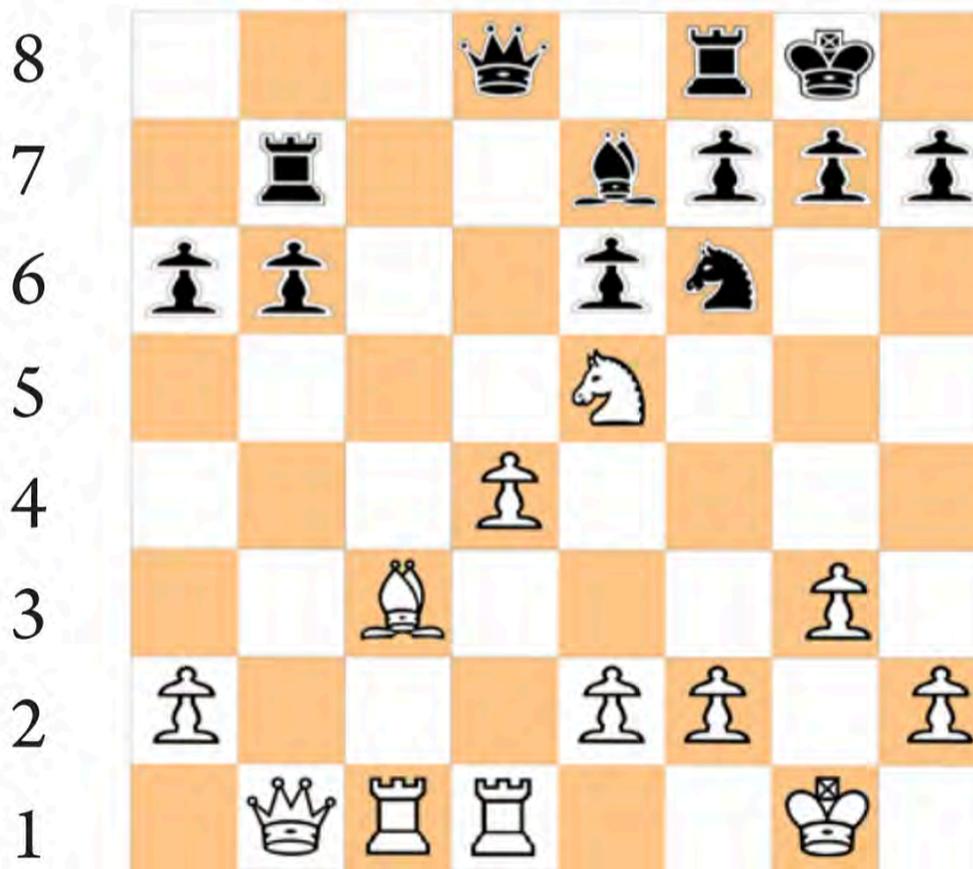


The goal of this exercise is to find the best first move, together with the subsequent moves, that lead to an advantage for the superior side. There is only one apparent best first move for this exercise. However, there may be several moves for the second and later moves that are equally as good. All of the choices are acceptable as solutions.

Symbols

X  
+ #  
!  
!!  
?  
?? 1-0  
0-1

Chess Tactics Exercises from Tournament Games by Sam Cicero 2017  
<http://cicerochess.com>.



A B C D E F G H  
Find the winning move for white.

# Trivia

## Extreme Sports

The sports featured here typically fall outside the mainstream and are celebrated for their adrenaline-pumping thrills. Just make sure you don't wipe out if you decide to test yourself with this adventurous round.

1. Which television network is credited with creating the X Games?
2. Which two extreme sports debuted in the 1996 and 1998 Olympics?
3. What's the name of the U-shaped structure many extreme sports use to showcase their daring?
4. Who is credited with creating the Boom Boom Huck-jam, a JO-city arena tour featuring some of the world's best extreme athletes?
5. Who was born Sept. 3, 1986, in San Diego, California, and went on to win Olympic gold in snowboarding?
6. Which extreme sport most resembles motocross?
7. Which extreme sport is a cousin to both snowboarding and water skiing?
8. Which extreme sport involves using an airfoil or wing as participants descend a slope on either skis or a snowboard?
9. Which host city had to build a BMX track for the first ever Olympic competition in this sport?
10. How many wheels are on a skateboard?

## Around South America

Test your knowledge of the Southern Americas.

1. Which country was ruled by Bernardo O'Higgins in the early 19th century?
2. In 1999, parts of which South American country were devastated by mud landslides?
3. In which South American country is Dutch the official language?
4. Which capital city has a name meaning "I see the mountain"?
5. In which country was Che Guevara born?
6. In which city is the Maracana soccer stadium?
7. In which countries is the Itaipu Dam located between?
8. Which Peruvian lake is the world's highest?
9. What is the main currency unit of Ecuador?
10. Which South American country is the supposed site of El Dorado, the lost city of gold?

## Celtic Myths

The Celts once occupied a territory that encompassed Britain, most of France and Spain, and even some of Greece and Turkey. Now mainly, only their heroic myths live on.

1. Which Irish saint is said to have gone on a sea journey in search of the Land of Promise?
2. According to Irish myth, how many eyes did the giant Balor have?
3. Finn MacCool gained wisdom by tasting a fabled fish—was it the Trout of Truth, the Wall-eye of Wisdom, or the Salmon of Knowledge?
4. The ferocious warrior hero CúChulain defended Ulster against what fabled queen of Connacht?
5. The Mabinogion, a 19th-century translation of the 14th-century Red Book of Hergest, collects the epic myths of what country?
6. What son of Finn MacCool was considered the greatest poet in all Ireland?
7. Which Irish fairy foretells a death?
8. Kissing which Irish stone is said to impart eloquence to the tongue?
9. Who is the Irish goddess of death in battle, who often assumed the shape of a crow or raven?
10. What is the name of the reddish stone at the entrance of Stonehenge?
11. Which island in the North Sea is sometimes known as Holy Island?
12. What Celtic sorceress was a half-sister of King Arthur and queen of Avalon, the island where Arthur was interred?



## Wagons West

There's gold in them thar hills! Can you strike gold with your answers?

1. What kind of vehicle was a Conestoga?
2. By what popular name was the gunman James Butler Hickok known?
3. On the trail or on a cattle drive, what did the wrangler look after?
4. Which famous wagon trail that began in Independence, Missouri, wound all the way to the northwest?
5. What did the settlers do with a bit of jerky?

6. In western towns, what was a circuit rider?
7. Which hills in South Dakota were thick with gold hunters in 1874?
8. What popular name was given to the mail service between St. Joseph, Missouri, and San Francisco, California, from April 1860 to November 1861?
9. In which town did the Gunfight at the O. K. Corral take place?
10. What was a longhorn?
11. How was William Bonney better known?
12. Which animal is associated with William Frederick Cody?



## International Roundup



While cheering for the home team is easy to understand in any language, the following questions are designed to see how much you know about the sports around the world as well as your own backyard. Good luck!

1. What is the Gaelic word for pole, the type that is thrown in the Highland Games?
2. What are Canada's national sports?
3. In which country did the sport of sumo wrestling originate?
4. Which sport is played by the Philadelphia Flyers?

5. Alongside Norway, which country pioneered orienteering?
6. What is the national sport of Malaysia?
7. Which American sport was allegedly invented by Abner Doubleday?
8. In which country was croquet invented?
9. In sumo wrestling, what name is given to a wrestler who has attained the rank of grand champion?
10. What is the most popular sport in Bulgaria?
11. How many players form a Gaelic soccer team?

## Solutions

**Chess Solution**  
 Answer: 1.Nc6.  
 1. Nc6 1-0  
 White wins the exchange after  
 1... Qd5 (1... Qd7 2.Nxe7 Qxe7  
 3.Bb4+-) 2.Nxe7 + Rxe7 3.Bb4  
 Ree8 4.Bxf8+-.  
 Game reference: Grove (2133) Darnell- (1979), Stockholm, 2016  
**Riddle Me This Answers**  
 Does England have a 4th of July?  
 Answer: Yes. It comes between July 3rd and July 5th.  
**It's a Grand Old Flag**  
 Answer: False. There are six white stripes and seven red stripes.

7. A banshee  
 8. The Blarney Stone  
 9. Morgan  
 10. The Slaughter Stone  
 11. Lindisfarne  
 12. Morgan Le Fay  
**Wagons West**  
 1. It was a covered wagon, named after a valley in Pennsylvania  
 2. Wild Bill Hickok  
 3. Horses  
 4. The Oregon Trail  
 5. They chewed it - it was dried meat  
 6. A traveling preacher  
 7. The Black Hills  
 8. Pony Express  
 9. Tombstone Arizona  
 10. Tough, half-wild cattle, roaming the unfenced ranches  
 11. Billy the Kid  
 12. Buffalo; his nickname was Buffalo Bill.

7. Paraguay & Brazil  
 8. Lake Titicaca  
 9. U.S. Dollar  
 10. Columbia  
**Extreme Sports**  
 1. ESPN  
 2. Mountain biking and snowboarding  
 3. Half-pipes  
 4. Tony Hawk  
 5. Shaun White  
 6. BMX  
 7. Wakeboarding  
 8. Woopy jumping  
 9. Beijing  
 10. Four  
**Celtic Myths**  
 1. Saint Brendan  
 2. One  
 3. The Salmon of Knowledge  
 4. Queen Medb (or Maeve)  
 5. Wales  
 6. Oisín

**Trivia Answers**  
 1. Caber  
 2. Ice hockey for winter and lacrosse for summer  
 3. Japan  
 4. Ice hockey  
 5. Sweden  
 6. Sepak takraw, a type of "kick volleyball" that's played on a badminton court  
 7. Baseball  
 8. France  
 9. Yokozuna  
 10. Soccer (known there as football)  
 11. 15  
**Around South America**  
 1. Chile  
 2. Venezuela  
 3. Suriname  
 4. Montevideo  
 5. Argentina  
 6. Rio de Janeiro



**"Time will magnify  
what you feed it."**

**JAMES CLEAR**  
BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF *ATOMIC HABITS*

