

A Roadrunner's Wardrobe



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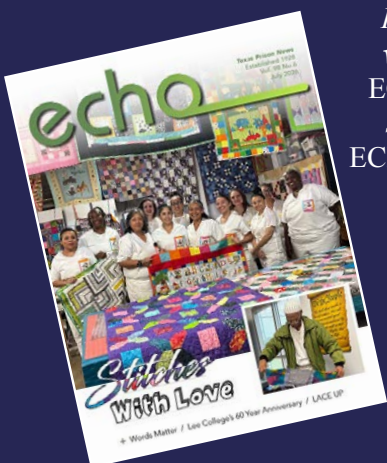
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Dear
Darby

Letters
to the
Darbster

Dear Darby,

Stickability? What is that, oh Wise One? Is that even a word? I saw it used in *The ECHO* article “Be Gritty” (July 2026). I am a two-time spelling bee champ. I won back-to-back in the fourth and fifth grade, so I know words. Usually, *The ECHO* does a fairly decent job of editing stuff, at least sometimes. Just giving you a heads up. Maybe the writer meant “stability” or something. Keep up the good work, and just pay better attention next time.

**The Spelling Champ,
Telford Unit**

Dear Champ,

Hmmm. Fourth and fifth grade spelling bee champ? Maybe you’re a tad bit old, but nowhere near as old as the word “stickability.” First used in the 1850s — see, it’s older than you! — stickability means to stick with something, to persevere, to press on. Kinda’ like you pressed on like that word wasn’t a word! If someone sticks to it, they have stickability. Kinda’ like I’m stickin’ to answerin’ this letter, even though they started runnin’ chow and it’s chicken day! Anyway, congrats on your wins back in grade school, and remember — most libraries have a really good, giant dictionary just waitin’ for you to have some stickability and stick your nose in it! Aaahh, now it’s time to stick a spork in that chicken!

Letters
to
D-Best

Dear
Darla



Dear Darla,

Congratulations on having your personal banner. It’s my first time writing into *The ECHO*, and I wanted to talk about fasting. I have fasted for spiritual well-being. During this process, I have compared fasting to sacrifice.

I want to ask you, Darla, have you fasted or made sacrifices? I want D-Best advice from D-Best Cousin Ever.

**Israel Avila,
Hughes Unit**

Dear Israel,

Thank you for your congratulations. My banner is a huge accomplishment in my esteemed opinion. Your question about fasting made me sit here and ponder for a moment on the first time I tried fasting. I tried to give up cookies. Needless to say, it didn’t work. Since then, however, I’ve succeeded in fasting for spiritual and fitness reasons.

Let’s take a look at the word sacrifice. Webster’s dictionary refers to sacrifice as a surrender of something for the sake of something else. In the context of fasting, either for health or spiritual reasons, you are denying your fleshly appetite in order to see health benefits (intermittent fasting) or an opportunity to strengthen your spiritual self, so I see how you connected the two. However, it’s important to note it’s not a way to manipulate your higher power into granting a request or a way to gain the attention of those around you. Ultimately, fasting is a very personal decision to abstain in order to achieve individual improvement.

*I agree it would be impactful for people to think of what sacrifice means to them and make positive change. For first time fasters, *cough* *cough* (Darby,) D-Best thing to do is keep your health in mind, as fasting incorrectly can cause bigger health problems.*

**Sincerely,
D-Best Cousin Ever, Darla 😊**

Letter to the Editor

Bambi Kiser | Managing Editor

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



To the editor,

I am writing to inquire about a computer science/information technology (IT) intern program that I saw mentioned in *The ECHO* several months ago. Can you also provide me with any information about computer science or IT opportunities for residents in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ)? Thank you and have a great day!

Gabriel Neas,
San Saba Unit

To the reader,

Unfortunately, there are no computer science/information technology intern positions available to the resident population. There are, however, computer-related Windham School District and postsecondary programs. There are also some jobs that use computers where an apprenticeship is available. To find out what programs are available to you, send an I-60 to your campus student advisor. To learn more about apprenticeship programs, send an I-60 to Windham's Apprenticeship and On-the-Job Training department. To find out what computer-related jobs are available through TDCJ's Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics (MAL) Division, send an I-60 to IWTP. Good luck with your career growth through future programs, and thank you for writing.

TDCJ Worker Job Openings = ★ = **Texas Department of Criminal Justice**

Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) – Garment Factory Unit: Hightower

Positions: Sewing Machine Operator, Garment Inspector, Quality Assurance Technician, Material Coordinator, Accounting Clerk

Minimum Requirements:

- Basic literacy and numeracy are necessary, as is the ability to learn and follow production instructions.
- No major cases within the last 12 months.
- Maximum sentence time: 50 years.
- No work restrictions which limit the ability to perform the position desired.
- If applying for clerk, you must meet the job DOT codes regulations for this position.

ATTENTION APPLICANTS:

Hands-on training is provided by TCI; however, prior career and technical education or sewing experience may make a resident a more competitive candidate. Residents must maintain consistent attendance (1 year full-time attendance before eligible for any other TCI-related transfer), meet safety and productivity standards and adhere to workplace rules — failure to do so can result in disciplinary actions and/or ineligibility in the TCI transfer program.

Eligible residents interested in transferring to this facility for assignment in the Garment Factory are encouraged to submit an I-60 directly to the Hightower Garment Factory or to the Inmate Work and Training Program. All transfers are subject to current eligibility requirements and agency approval.

TDCJ Worker Job Openings



Texas Department of Criminal Justice

Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics (MAL) Unit: Terrell

Position: Diesel Mechanic

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- Repair fuel, oil, cooling and charging systems on various diesel and gasoline engines.
- Use proper hand and air tools on engine components.
- Diagnose equipment to look for problems.
- Weld and cut using arc-welding and flame cutting equipment-preferred.
- Perform brake jobs on diesel and gasoline heavy duty trucks and buses.
- Replace wheel seals and bearings on diesel trucks and buses.
- Demonstrate knowledge of R-134A air conditioning systems preferred.

Minimum Requirements:

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

ATTENTION APPLICANTS:

An I-60 should be mailed to:
MAL HQ/IWTP
P.O. Box 4011
Huntsville, Texas 77342

Position: Automotive Mechanic

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- Repair and overhaul automotive vehicles.
- Repair or replace defective parts and reassembles.
- Repair or replace brake shoes and cylinders, adjusting is required.
- Repair or replace brakes and components.
- Replace and adjust headlights.
- Repair or replace shock absorbers.
- Rewire ignition system, lights and instrument panel.
- Replace spark plugs, ignition wiring, coil packs and filters as required.

Minimum Requirements:

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

ATTENTION APPLICANTS:

An I-60 should be mailed to:
MAL HQ/IWTP
P.O. Box 4011
Huntsville, Texas 77342

Texas Correctional Industries (TCI) Unit: Wynne

Position: Sign Painter (Sign and Plastics Factory)

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 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 work experience to:
Wynne Unit Sign and Plastics Factory
Ms. Whitney, Plant Manager
810 FM 2821
Huntsville, Texas 77349

Position: Carpenter (Sign and Plastics Factory)

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 work experience to:
Wynne Unit Sign and Plastics Factory
Ms. Whitney, Plant Manager
810 FM 2821
Huntsville, Texas 77349

Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics (MAL)

Unit: Wynne

Position: Diesel Mechanic (Tire Shop)

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- Repair fuel, oil, cooling and charging systems on various diesel and gasoline engines.
- Use proper hand and air tools on engine components.
- Diagnose equipment to look for problems.
- Weld and cut using arc-welding and flame cutting equipment-preferred.
- Perform brake jobs on diesel and gasoline heavy duty trucks and buses.
- Replace wheel seals and bearings on diesel trucks and buses.
- Demonstrate knowledge of R-134A air conditioning systems preferred.

Minimum Requirements:

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

ATTENTION APPLICANTS:

An I-60 should be mailed to:
MAL HQ/IWTP
P.O. Box 4011
Huntsville, Texas 77342

Position: Diesel Mechanic (Mechanical)

Skills/qualifications needed to apply:

The ability to:

- Repair/maintain diesel and gasoline engines used in machines including buses, trucks and construction machinery, using hand tools, precision-measuring instruments and machine tools.
- Diagnose trouble, disassemble engines and examine parts for defects and excessive wear.
- Recondition and replace parts.
- Utilize hand tools and precision-measuring instruments.
- Use technical manuals to check tolerances against manufacturer's specifications.
- Test/calibrate fuel injection systems used on various diesel engines.
- Use job specific personal protective equipment.
- Locate/repair using diagnostic equipment.
- Work on A/C and auto electrical systems.
- Repair medium duty diesel/gasoline class 7 & 8 vehicles.
- Perform other tasks when assigned by staff.
- Maintain good working relationship with fellow resident workers and supervisors.
- Adhere to all safety rules and regulations.

Minimum Requirements:

- Must be classified as a G2.
- No medical/work restrictions.
- No major disciplinary cases within past year.

ATTENTION APPLICANTS:

An I-60 should be mailed to:
MAL HQ/IWTP
P.O. Box 4011
Huntsville, Texas 77342

Facilities Division

Maintenance — Asbestos Operations

Unit: Statewide

Position: Asbestos Workers

Minimum Requirements:

- Must be able to understand written instructions and also write.
- Must be classified as G1.
- Have no medical or work restrictions that would prohibit performing job duties.
- Have no major disciplinary cases within the past year.
- Must be able to pass a physical and X-ray test.
- Must be able to pass written exam at the end of 32 hours of training.
- Extensive travel is involved.
- On-the-job training will be provided by an outside instructor.

ATTENTION APPLICANTS:

An I-60 should be mailed to:
Asbestos Operations
P.O. Box 4011
Huntsville, Texas 77342

Facilities Division

Wastewater & Water Attendant

Unit: Statewide

Position: Wastewater & Water Attendant

Minimum Requirements:

- Must be able to understand written instructions; have basic math skills (add, subtract, multiply and divide).
- Wastewater/water experience preferred but not required.
- Must be classified as G1.
- Have no medical or work restrictions.
- No major disciplinary cases within the past year.
- Knowledge of mechanical repairs.
- Ability to use or learn to use testing equipment such as pH, DO, chlorine and ammonia.

ATTENTION APPLICANTS:

An I-60 should be mailed to:
Wastewater/Water Operations
P.O. Box 4011
Huntsville, Texas 77342

All eligible workers are encouraged to apply.

**CRIME
STOPPERS**

Missing Person

Thomas Clyde Pittman

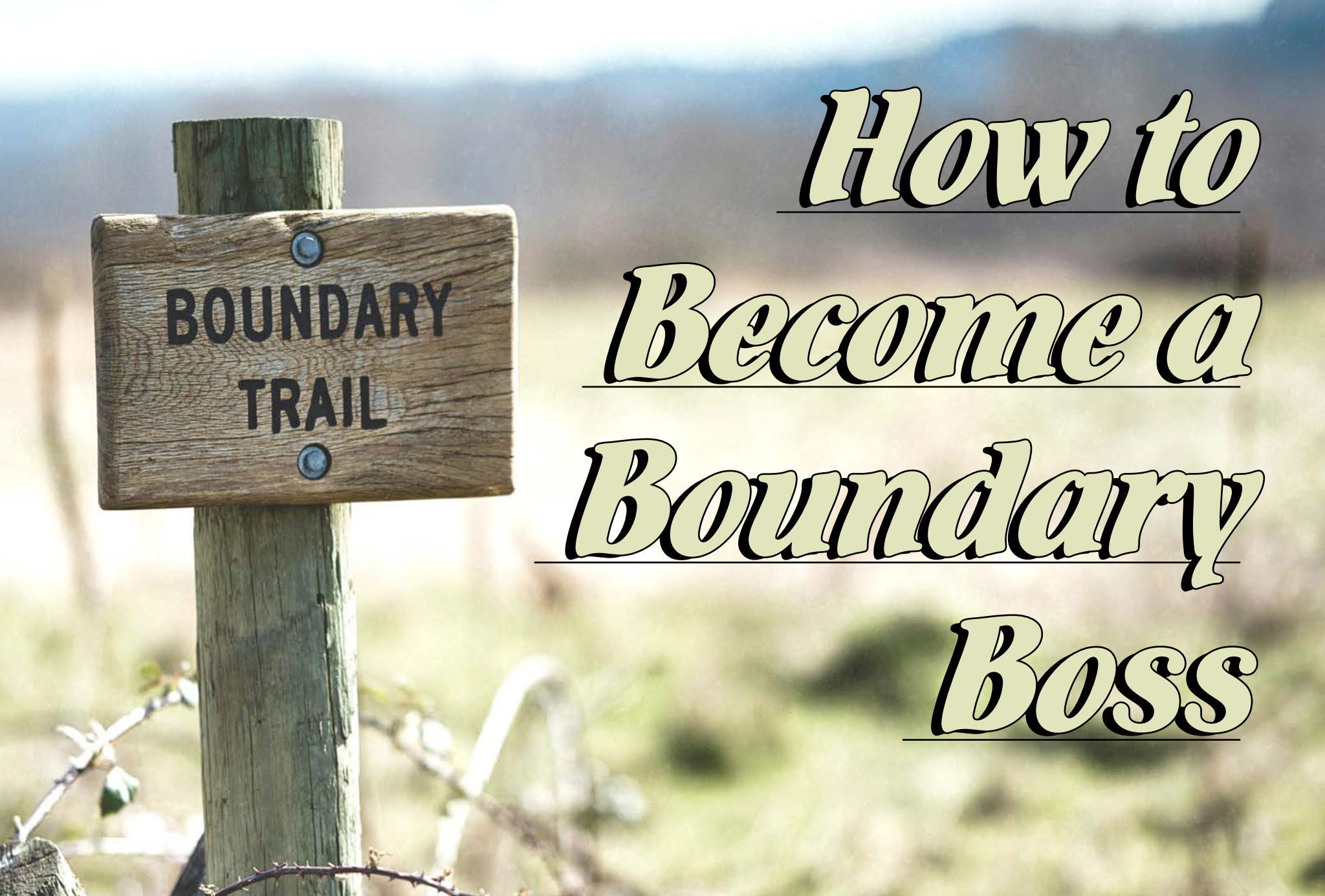


Thomas Clyde Pittman

Thomas Clyde Pittman, now 64, has been missing for nine years after last being seen on May 18, 2017, in Huntington, Texas (Angelina County). He was last in contact with family on the same date. Relatives found his truck parked with the driver's door open at the residence where he was staying. His keys were in the ignition, his cell phone was on the charger and his cigarettes were left inside the vehicle. At the time he was staying with friends in the 900 block of Lloyd Walker Road, a rural area near Huntington. Pittman is a white

male who went missing at the age of 55 and was last seen wearing a white t-shirt, tan shorts and camo hiking boots. Pittman wore glasses and was known to wear rings and necklaces.

If you have any information on this missing person, please contact the TDCJ Crime Stoppers Office at P.O. Box 1855, Huntsville, TX 77342-1855. 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.



How to Become a Boundary Boss

By Kelly Roddy | ECHO Staff

I have made a mistake. Actually, I've made this mistake many times throughout my lifetime. Now, I realize this admission isn't entirely noteworthy, but those who know me best will mark this date on their calendar. Here it is: I've lived most of my life with disorderly boundary skills.

In recent years I have spent a considerable amount of time analyzing and transitioning into the type of woman that I would like to be. Part of this self-discovery process led me to find that unhealthy boundaries have been repeatedly problematic for my health and well-being. In his book "Boundary Boss," author Terry Cole describes repeating boundary problems as unresolved childhood emotions that cause us to recreate similar situations with the hope of creating better outcomes. This perspective has allowed me to

release the limiting belief that I can change others, putting in the work to change myself instead.

Part of developing healthy boundaries is knowing my boundaries are meant for me. For my desires to be met, I have to be specific about communicating what it is I actually want in life and then be unwilling to compromise that. Each time I step away from people or situations that are harmful to my goals, I take a step towards loving myself.

"If you want to maximize happiness and minimize stress, you have to be intentional about surrounding yourself with people who embody the traits you want to create in your own life," Andy Stanley said in his course on boundaries, entitled "Guardrails" (available on Edovo).

Neurologically, our brainwaves tend to align with those we spend time with. This makes it increasingly

continued on next page

necessary to surround myself with people whose attributes and goals align with my own.

Authenticity and transparency have been crucial in developing the boundaries that support my growth. Separating myself from cultures that romanticize impulsivity and living in the moment mentality allows me to consider the impact of con-

sequences in my choices. I have learned to be unwilling to compromise who I am or where I am going.

“The ability to set healthy boundaries in any situation is about harnessing and communicating the power of your own truth,” Cole said.

This realization has allowed me to surround myself with people who contribute to and bring out the best in me rather than drain my emotional resources. My journey is not over, but my destination is guarded with intentionality and transparency. €

“Part of developing healthy boundaries is recognizing my boundaries are meant for me.”

Working on Character Change

By Amon C. Temple | Clements Unit

Confusion rests on my family's faces. My peers are still trying to understand. I hear the question: How can you stay so positive?

In October, 2024, a Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) officer approached my cubicle carrying a single white piece of paper. As she handed me the mail, I noticed the title, “Parole Review.” Ripping the tape and unfolding the mail with excitement, I slightly tore the paper. My eyes began to search for the word “Granted.” Instead, I saw “Next Review Date 2027.” My immediate thought that drove my next action was, “I get the opportunity to finish

my bachelor's degree!”

“What?” most people would ask.

Here is my response to them: When you are laser-focused on growth and self-development, you begin to understand requirements. You not only begin to understand what is required of you, but you also start understanding where to focus your energy.

I can say my character has changed. My new character has to show every day in every choice and in every action. My values reflect in my character. Of course, I would give anything to be home with my sons and daughter. However, I refuse to let that desire drive my emotions.

While studying business management at Lee College, I began to see the relationship between outcomes

and choices. I learned that to change myself, I truly had to change what I value, which would drive my choices. Guess what? Today, my outcomes are different. I have to mention the key drivers: I wanted to change, so I sought change. Today, I understand I am responsible for coming to prison, and today I understand I am responsible for my outcomes.

Today, I want to thank TDCJ for program opportunities to become better. Because of available opportunities combined with my choices, I now know integrity. Today, I know principles of leadership. Today, I know how my choices reflect my values. Today, I am a better father. Today, I am a better business leader. Today, I am a better man. €



MURRAY CELEBRATES RHOP GRADUATES



By Kelly Roddy | ECHO Staff

The Recovery Housing Opportunity Program (RHOP) recently celebrated the second annual GRAMMYS Awards Ceremony at the Murray Unit.

Representatives from the Rehabilitation and Re-entry Division (RRD), unit administration and special guests celebrated the RHOP graduates as they were introduced by resident recovery support peer specialists Mienyon Lane and Dorothy Wyatt. Each graduate walked the red carpet and gave acceptance speeches.

Lane, one of the emcees for the event, opened the ceremony sharing the meaning of the GRAMMYS acronym: Getting Recovery at Murray (and) Maintaining Your Sobriety.

“We are making history,” Lane said. “Each of you women winning an award tonight made a choice to make a change. You committed 365 days to an intensive program with [curricula] such as anger management, victim impact and relapse prevention.”

RHOP is a community-based, peer-led recovery

program that provides knowledge about addiction and the effects of substances on the brain while cognitive-based curriculum allows participants to take ownership of their choices with tools to navigate life in sobriety.

“I am very grateful for the program because I learned cognitive thinking, steps to remain sober, anger management and tools to stop my criminal behavior and thoughts,” graduate Beatriz Jimenez said.

The cognitive aspect of the program impacted many of the graduates, allowing them to combat problematic thinking that led to maladaptive behavior.

“There have been many challenges [in life], mainly a lot of thinking errors and wrong beliefs, which have resulted in my poor choices that have cost me dearly in all areas of my life,” graduate Wendy Grubbs said. “I am

grateful to have been part of a community that wasn’t afraid to be transparent, to work hard, to make sacrifices and to be accountable.”

The graduates expressed not only the triumphs of completing the program, but also their requests

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GRAMMYS:

Getting
Recovery
At
Murray &
Maintaining
Your
Sobriety



“Even the hardest day sober is so much better than the easiest day in active addiction.”

-Cealy Nations

to be a part of something that could provide them hope for a future.

“I was asked in my entrance interview why I needed the program,” graduate Shannon Nolen said. “I was a woman who had run out of chances. Now I have gained the confidence that I never have to risk hurting another person again as long as I don’t pick up a drink. Furthermore, I have the ability to [choose to] not pick up a drink.”

Graduates also shared what it means to be a part of the RHOP community.

“This is your community right now,” graduate Monica Gonzales said. “This is an opportunity to serve, pour into others and be a positive example.” Recovery is a journey through self-discovery. RHOP’s curriculum allows participants to take this knowledge and construct a plan to use when they are struggling to avoid destructive habits.

“Even the hardest day sober is so much better than the easiest day in active addiction,” graduate Cealy Nations said.

Keynote speaker and Recovery Support Peer Specialist for the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, Trisha Bos, said RHOP encourages participants to make good choices through community.

“It connects you to one another and forms a com-

munity for sobriety,” Bos said. “Knowledge is power. The more you know and understand what’s going on, the more you have the ability and adaptability to make a positive choice.”

Anyone interested in the RHOP program availability on a unit may send an I-60 to the unit coordinator to receive a program application. This program is a yearlong commitment with a mission to: “improve character, elevate the mind, identify and correct self-defeating behaviors and instill the self-examination, which will create a servant leader mentality as participants build the road to long-term sobriety and restoration.”

Bos closed the ceremony by encouraging everyone to “Dream big and recover out loud.” €

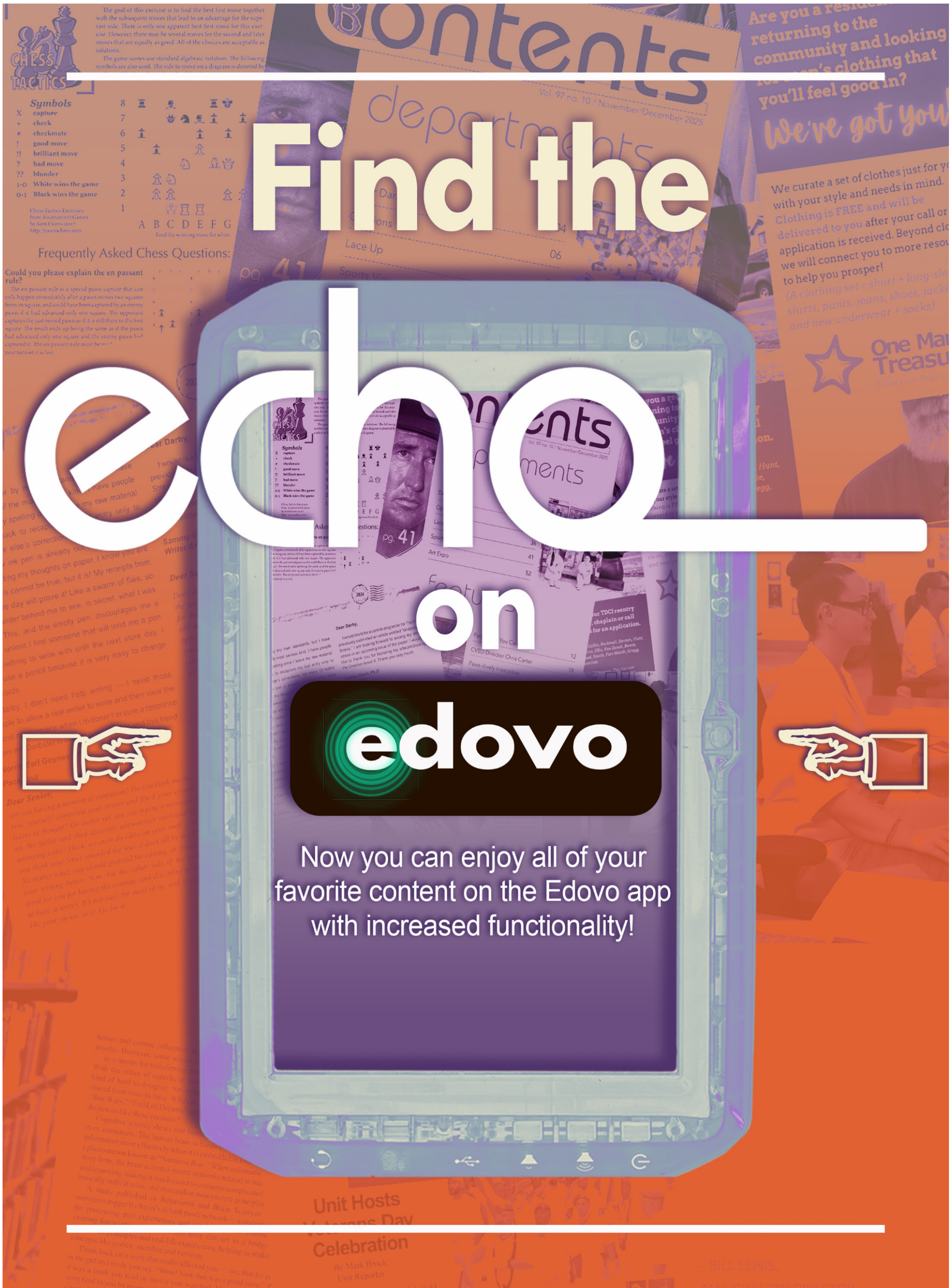
RHOP graduate, Sarah Lopez waves to attendees and graduates.



Keynote speaker and Recovery Support Peer Specialist Trisha Bos speaks to RHOP graduates and attendees during graduation.



RHOP ACADEMY GRAMMY AWARDS



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A Roadrunner's Wardrobe

By Doyal Garrett
Cole Unit Reporter



Fort Stockton's most photographed local, a fiberglass road runner statue named Paisano Pete, is having his custom wardrobe designed and produced by the Laundry department of the Lynaugh Unit. Under the lead of Captain A. Quezada, laundry supervisors and volunteer tailors have taken on the challenge of creating and sewing attire for the roadside feature.

Since 1980, Pete has been the beloved mascot of Fort Stockton and was once the world's largest road runner statue. The bird is a common sight in the area, and local mayor, G. Cummings, thought the statue would be right at home perched in the center of town. Standing 11 feet tall and 22 feet long, Pete is one of many nearby attractions that make road trips so great for those passing through.

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Teamwork and coordination between Lynaugh staff and resident volunteers have been crucial to this project, along with photos taken by town officials. According to the volunteer tailors G. Silva, J. Cortes and D. Aguirre, a measuring application generated the blue prints used to create the clothing patterns from scratch for the large bird.

Pete's first outfit was a Texas Department of Criminal Justice officer's uniform that Quezada said was intended to honor fallen officers and staff. The second installment of Pete's wardrobe was completed just in time for the 250th anniversary celebration of our nation's independence. On July 4, the statue was decked out in an Uncle Sam suit and top hat, proudly displaying the red, white and blue for all to see.

The unit's volunteer tailors and supervising officers put in approximately 60 hours per outfit, and all said they are proud to contribute to the local community.

"I really enjoy the challenges that come with every idea," Silva said. Paisano Pete's attire continues to grow, thanks to the effort of the Lynaugh Laundry department. A planned addition is a football uniform in support of the local school district. The team is also considering concepts for upcoming holidays.

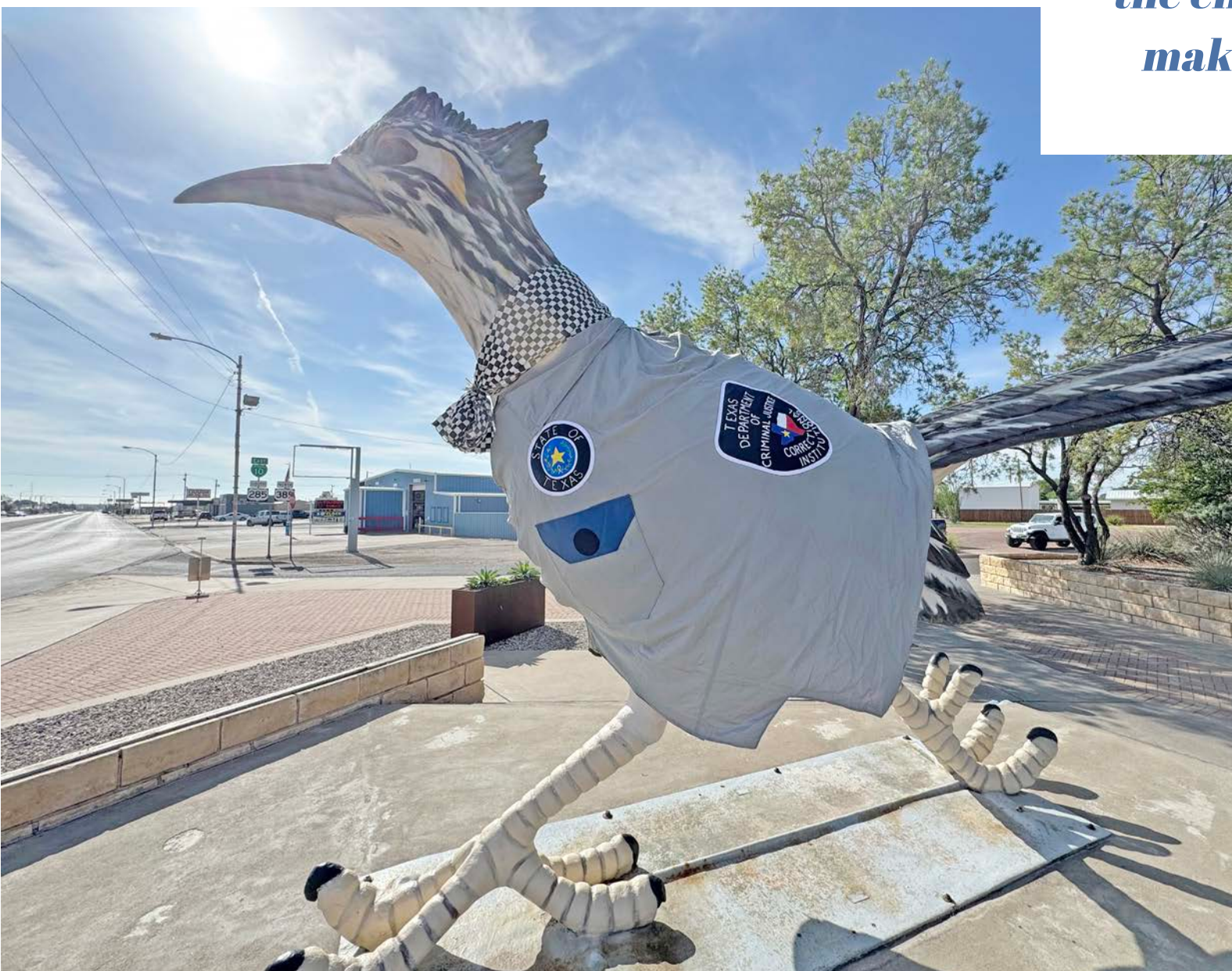
"Visualizing an idea is challenging, a lot of trial and error, but in the end, that's what makes us better at what we do," Aguirre said.

This contribution of support for the Fort Stockton community is crafted by the hands of residents, enabled by the staff and administration. €



“Visualizing an idea is challenging, a lot of trial and error, but in the end, that’s what makes us better at what we do.”

***D. Aguirre,
volunteer tailor***



Oaks of Righteousness Helps Rose Cultivate

By Robert Morgan
Staff Writer

Successful Reentry



Charity Fyke

Since 2014, Oaks of Righteousness has been impacting the lives of women living in incarceration. By visiting sites and building bonds early on, this group walks alongside residents, providing support for them along their journeys back to their communities.

Oaks of Righteousness is a faith-based, non-profit residential program that offers support for women who desire to make positive life changes and become productive members of their communities.

“We start inside the unit — through Bible studies and worship services — assisting the chaplains in locating transitional homes for women to build those relationships,” Charity Fyke, the program’s executive director said.

Every Oaks of Righteousness staff member, including Fyke, is a person who was formerly incarcerated in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and has participated in the services and completed the program. It was through one of these services that Fyke met Tosha Rose in a faith-based dorm at the Plane Unit. Today, Rose is a reentry specialist with Oaks of Righteousness.

Working for Change

Rose is no stranger to challenges, having faced multiple stints of incarceration. Rose says she began to see positive changes once she decided to change her mindset. By taking advantage of many of the faith-based programs offered to her, Rose said she experienced a paradigm shift.

“In the past, I had my struggles, and I was very self-absorbed,” Rose said. “Once I met other members of the program, I learned that I was doing things all wrong. I had a trauma mindset and an addict mindset. So, I had to change my belief system, which took a lot of practice.”

Additionally, Rose credits the educational programs she participated in as instrumental components of her growth and transformation.

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Rose said she completed the Changing Habits and Achieving New Goals to Empower Success (CHANGES) and Parenting programs with Windham School District, and really hit her stride while participating in Lee College's Horticulture program. By demonstrating previously untapped skills, Rose stood out, prompting others to take notice.

After returning to her community, she would be honored for taking these skills to another level. At this year's TDCJ and Lee College Herbs Behind Bars Awards luncheon, Rose was recognized for her accomplishments within the program by her former Lee College instructor and other attendees.

Continued Growth

"While she was enrolled in class, we noticed that she worked very well with the students and teachers," Scooter Langley, Lee College's technical chair and horticulture instructor, said. "We hired her on as one of our teacher's [aides] and she thrived, never looking back."

During her speech and later in an interview with The ECHO, Rose described how important that experience — training with Lee College — has been for her career with Oaks of Righteousness and the pursuit of a degree in Human Relation through Lone Star College.

"During the two years that I worked as an aide, I learned how to interact with people — greatly improving my interpersonal skills," Rose said. "Before taking CHANGES and Horticulture, I didn't have patience or gentleness, two vital skills needed when dealing with plants and people. Everything I learned in Horticulture is applicable to social interaction."

Reentry Support

The services provided through Oaks of Righteousness aim to lessen some of the barriers faced by program participants. Among the many things offered is safe housing. They provide accountability and support throughout the integration and parole process, ensuring that participants make their classes and appointments. They also work with second chance employers to help secure meaningful employment.

As a personal touch, Oaks of Righteousness goes a step further — ensuring the women are provided some of their needed essentials as they experience reentry.

continued on next page

*"Everything
I learned in
Horticulture
is applicable
to social
interaction."*

-Tosha Rose



Tosha Rose

continued from previous page

“Additionally, once they arrive, we provide our newest members with a personalized welcoming basket that has been prayed over,” Rose said. “It includes clothing, hygiene, new pillows, shoes and a welcome-home card that is signed by all the people involved in the process.”

This, Rose said, improves participants chances of living in success, which she said means living a life free from addiction, and negative and destructive behavior.

“Most importantly, it’s living successfully by not returning to prison,” Rose said.

Oaks of Righteousness extends an invitation to all who are interested in their services to contact them. The staff works together to respond, offering advice and words of encouragement.

“People can contact us at any time and request an application,” Rose said. “We will work with the different facilities to get information to them according to the policy.”

For those unable to join the program due to capacity or other factors, Oaks of Righteousness provides a list of vetted faith-based organizations across Texas that may also be able to provide assistance.

“We don’t just leave them hanging — we always refer them to someone that can help,” Fyke said. €

Editor’s Note: For more information, write to:

Oaks of Righteousness

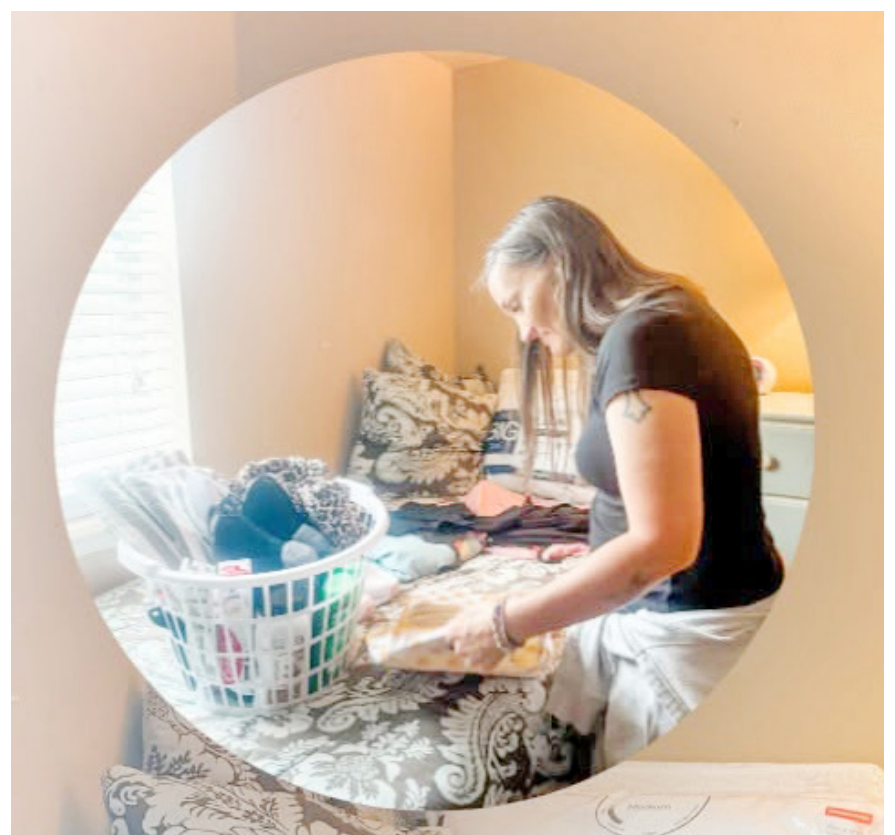
P.O. Box 1731

Humble, TX 77347



“In the past, I had my struggles, and I was very self-absorbed... I learned that I was doing things all wrong. I had a trauma mindset and an addict mindset. So, I had to change my belief system, which took a lot of practice.”

-Tosha Rose



A woman at Oaks of Righteousness receives a gift basket.

EVERY STORY MATTERS

Let's Talk About Stress

By Kelly Reddy, ECHO Staff

Stress is a natural part of life, and I feel genuinely safe saying most of us have experienced it at some point in our lives. It can create a feeling of imbalance, which when experienced for long periods of time, can take a toll on your physical, mentally and spiritually.

This is where stress management tools and self-care practices become a vital part of our daily regimen. Whether stress comes from your job, family,

people around you or your own health and wellness journey, building a toolkit of skills to help you cope with stress is essential.

Identify the Source of Stress

In times of stress, it can be difficult to take a moment to step back and really examine what is going on. We may feel the need to just keep going, adjusting and just get through the day. Revisiting the urge to let your survival mode kick in and take a step back can allow us the opportunity to reframe our thoughts and reshape the narrative of what is really going on. Give yourself time to recalibrate.

Identify Personal Triggers

Knowing your red flags can allow you to avoid triggers that may kick-start stress in your life. Journaling serves as a way to self-examine moments of stress and work back-slash to identify common situations contributing to your levels of stress. Over time, you can even challenge your thinking patterns with healthier and more constructive outcomes.

Identify Your Healthy Coping Skills

Proactively investing in a balanced lifestyle can lead to a reduced level of anxiety and stress. Having a good self-care regimen, including health and wellness, creative learning, spiritual development and community involvement, activates improved mental health and emotional regulation. This doesn't make us selfish, but instead allows us to authentically care for ourselves in a way that can benefit others as well.

continued on next page

Identify Your Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms

It is equally important to have a handle on your maladaptive coping skills. In times of stress, it can be tempting to return to familiar habits that may feel good in the moment but are ultimately at odds with the life we want to build. Naming your unhealthy coping skills will keep you accountable to your goals and remind you of your boundaries as well as your non-negotiables.

Identify Your Sources of Support

I realize asking for help can be difficult, but there is no reward for toughing it out on your own. Whether your source of support is a coach, mentor, workout partner or even a motivational podcast, identify a support system and activate it when needed. Utilize the tools that are available and make the investment into your wellbeing. **E**

Whether stress comes from your job, family, people around you or your own health and wellness journey, building a toolkit of skills to help you cope with stress is essential.

Look for the POSITIVE

By Gabriel Balon / Wynne Unit

Looking for the positive things that surround you in life can change what you experience throughout your day. What do I mean by this? If you wake up and expect only to find the things that could go wrong, nothing but the negatives, what do you think you are going to find?

I want to introduce you to a method of transferring the way you see things and approach life. When you wake up with positive energy and focus on positive things, you will likely notice that you are not giving energy to the negative things that may be happening.

Think in a positive way and see the best in each situation. There are people around you who are worse off than you. There are people in the world who are in tougher situations. When you look at things in a positive light and begin to consistently see the good around you, you can shift your mindset. Speak positive things into existence — even if only in your mind — and you will feel better about your day and about yourself.

When all you are looking for is the negative, that is likely all you are going to find. However, when you focus on what is going right and on the things that are good and positive, you will begin to see more of them. Why focus on everything going wrong and continue to give it power? It is up to you — so why not look for the positive in your life? **E**



O'Daniel Unit Color Guard Showcases Tradition

By Ashley Morrison
Staff Writer



The ceremonial significance of raising, lowering and presenting the flag is deeply embedded in American military history and is still seen today in active duty and veteran military services by the beginning of the year. "A lot of people don't know this, but the history of the color guard goes back to the beginning of the war," Veal said. "So, knowing where your flag was on the field was a significant bit of information for any battle commander to have — being able to look out and see that the flag is still standing means the Army is still alive and we still have a country. If you look out and don't see that

O'DANIEL continued on pg. 5

Lee College Huntsville Center Hosts Graduation at Wynne

By Steven Hamilton
Staff Writer



"Sometimes you can make the wrong turn to get to the right place," Jerome Barber, Lee College alumnus and former resident (TDCJ), said. Barber returned to the Wynne Lee College Huntsville Center's 2026 graduating class of 85 students. Graduates from the Ferguson, Holiday, Huntsville and Wynne campuses participated with the support of their families as well as faculty and staff from Windham School District (Windham), Lee College and TDCJ.

COLLEGE continued on pg. 6

Life Coach Academy Recognizes Graduates

By Robert L. Gonzales
Staff Writer



TDCJ's Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division (CVSD) recently held a graduation ceremony at the Wynne Unit for Cohort 18 from the Life Coach Academy. Eighteen men participated in two months of intensive training before accepting the honor of carrying the philosophy of cognitive life skills to residents at their respective units. These men are trusted with the responsibility of teaching cognitive life skills to other residents while exemplifying TDCJ's core values: Integrity, Courage, Perseverance and Commitment. **E**

VIEWPOINTS
Residents speak: Out of this world perspectives
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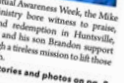
GRADUATIONS
You did it! Celebrating graduates
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SCHEDULES
Game time: Are you ready for some football?
Page 10

SPORTS VIEW
Batter up! Who were the Huntsville Tigers?
Page 12

After 40 Years

Mike Barber Ministry Still Bringing Gifts of Spiritual Guidance, Hope to TDCJ



During Spiritual Awareness Week, the Mike Barber Ministry bore witness to praise, Texas. Mike Barber and his son Brandon support rehabilitation through a tireless mission to lift those living in incarceration.

Stories and photos on pg. 8

From Trouble to Triumph George King Overcomes Past, Rises to Serve Others



Kendall Brewer and George King share details of King's remarkable journey with The ECHO.

See full article on pg. 4

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Seven New Colleges, Universities Approved Since Implementation of SB 2405

A new report from Texas 2036 finds that Texas is already seeing significant expansion in higher education opportunities for incarcerated Texans following the passage of Senate Bill (SB) 2405 by Sen. Tan Parker and Rep. Terry Canales during the 89th Texas Legislature.

The report, *Opening More Doors: Data, Progress, and Opportunities for Higher Education in Texas Prisons*, examines the state of postsecondary education in Texas prisons and documents early progress resulting from reforms that transferred administration of prison higher education programs to Windham School District. Research consistently shows that postsecondary education in correctional settings reduces recidivism, improves employment outcomes after reentry and generates returns for taxpayers through reduced criminal justice costs.

Among the report's key findings:

- Seven new colleges and universities have been approved to launch programs in Texas prisons since implementation of SB 2405 began.
- Nine institutions have been approved to offer new programming across 11 prison units, including seven units that previously had no higher education provider.
- More than 6,200 postsecondary enrollments were recorded in Fall 2025 across 15 higher education institutions operating in Texas prisons.
- While expansion is underway, approximately 60 percent of incarcerated Texans remain housed at units without access to post-

secondary programs offered by institutions of higher education.

The seven new institutional partners approved to begin programming are Frank Phillips College, Lamar State College–Orange, Sam Houston State University, Southwest Texas College, Texas State Technical College, Victoria College and West Texas A&M University.

“Research consistently shows that higher education in prison settings reduces recidivism, improves employment prospects after release and ultimately lowers costs for taxpayers,” said Luis Soberon, Senior Policy Advisor and In House Counsel at Texas 2036 and author of the report. “A 2023 meta-analysis found that prison college programs reduced the likelihood of recidivism by more than 40 percent, making these programs one of the most effective tools available to support successful reentry.”

SB 2405 implemented recommendations from the Sunset Advisory Commission and established a new framework for administering postsecondary education programs across Texas prisons. Among other reforms, the legislation transferred day-to-day administration of prison higher education programs to Windham School District while maintaining oversight through the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

“Windham School District is proud of the ongoing advancements and new partnerships with institutions of higher education supporting students in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice,” Windham Superintendent Kristina J.



Hartman said. “Collectively, we are increasing opportunities for high-quality, credit-bearing certificate and degree programs aligned with in-demand careers, and we remain committed to building momentum that supports student success during incarceration and positive outcomes upon reentry.”

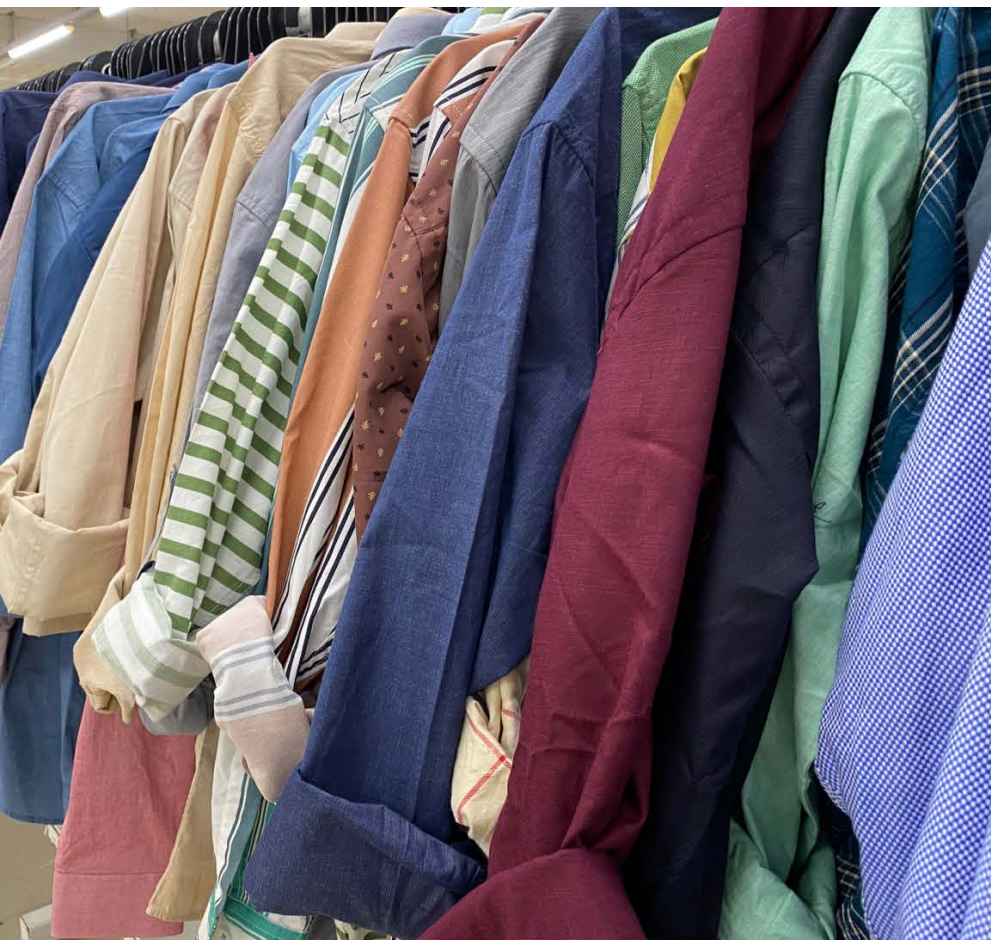
The report credits Windham’s outreach efforts and engagement with colleges and universities across Texas for helping accelerate expansion. As of April 2026, additional institutions were already exploring opportunities to establish prison education programs.

“Texas has an opportunity to connect more Texans in prison with the education and workforce skills they need to successfully reenter society,” Soberon said. “The early results following SB 2405 show what can happen when institutions work together to expand access. While significant gaps remain, Texas is already making meaningful progress in bringing higher education opportunities to more prisons and more students.”

“The data show encouraging momentum across Texas, with new institutions and prison units gaining access to higher education opportunities following the passage of SB 2405,” Carlo Castillo, senior research analyst at Texas 2036 said.

About Texas 2036

Texas 2036 is a nonpartisan public policy organization dedicated to improving lives and opportunities for all Texans through 2036, Texas’ bicentennial year, and beyond. €



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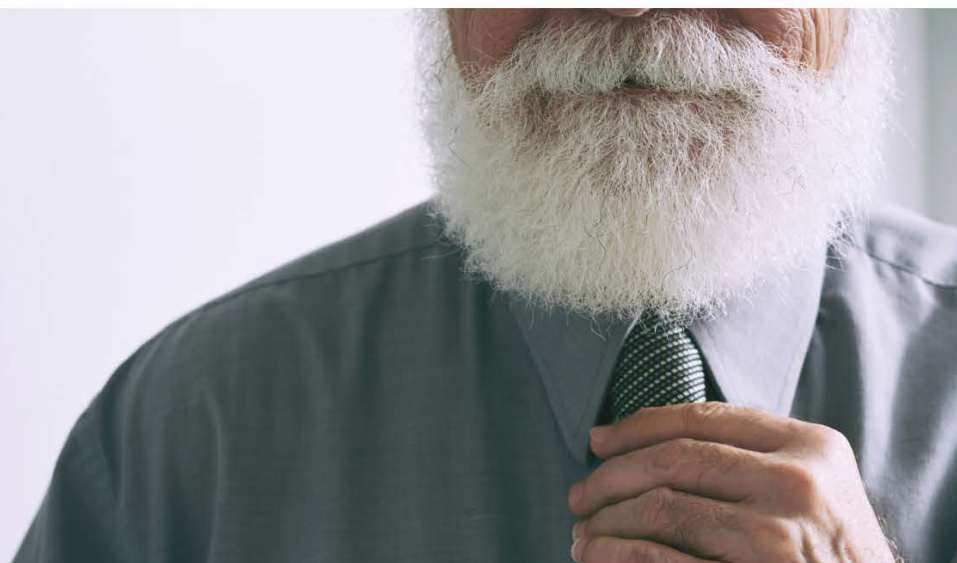


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New Life Coaches Train to Support Peers

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) recently honored Cohort 19, the latest group of graduates from the Life Coach Academy at the Wynne Unit. Participants came from 17 TDCJ facilities for weeks of training.

“You [graduates] are stepping up to the plate,” said B. Smith, Wynne’s senior warden. “You will make a huge impact amongst the population. So, I want to encourage you, to say congratulations and to wish you good luck.” €

Editors Note: Follow future issues of The ECHO and read the full story.

Tips for prevention and recognition of heat illness

Due to the high temperature, residents and staff are encouraged to be aware of the types of heat illnesses.

Higher risk conditions for heat illness include:

- ✿ Being newly assigned to a job outside
- ✿ Receiving psychiatric medications or certain other medications, or having certain medical conditions
- ✿ Being elderly
- ✿ High temperatures and humidity
- ✿ No significant breeze

Prevention of heat illness includes:

- ✿ Increasing frequency of fluid intake when working in hot environments
- ✿ Taking advantage of the supplemental water provided
- ✿ Taking a break every 30-60 minutes
- ✿ Decreasing intensity of work under extreme conditions
- ✿ Access to cold water showers
- ✿ Access to respite areas
- ✿ Allowed fans for all residents
- ✿ Following preventive measures on heat posters

Types of heat illness:

Heat Cramps: Can be painful and intermittent, involving involuntary muscle spasms following hard physical work or exercise in a hot environment. Cramps usually occur after heavy perspiration and typically occur after heavy perspiration and typically occur in the abdomen, arms and legs. The cause is inadequate replacement of electrolytes (sodium and potassium).

Heat Exhaustion: The most common form of heat illness is caused by depletion of water and salt. Symptoms include weakness, anxiety, fatigue, dizziness, headache and nausea. Signs include profuse perspiration and rapid pulse and breathing. Confusion or loss of coordination may also be present. Heat exhaustion, if not treated, may lead to heat stroke.

Heat Stroke: While it may be preceded by signs of heat exhaustion, the onset of heat stroke is often sudden. Symptoms include diminished or absent perspiration, and hot, dry and flushed skin. Other conditions that may be present include increased body temperatures, delirium, convulsions, seizures,

rapid pulse, weakness, headache, mental confusion, dizziness, extreme fatigue, nausea/vomiting and incoherent speech progressing to coma. Medical care is urgently needed. Death may result if left untreated.

Treatment: Seek medical attention as soon as possible. Move the person out of direct sunlight into an air conditioned environment if possible, remove clothing while maintaining modesty and provide water to drink if conscious. Liberally apply cold water on them, and if possible, fan them if there is no breeze.

Access to Respite Areas: During times of extreme temperatures, offenders must be allowed access to respite areas. Employees and offenders will be trained to be compliant with heat precaution procedures including knowledge of respite area locations and resident access. The location of each respite area is also posted in resident housing areas and other common areas on the unit. Please consult unit staff regarding directions to the respite areas if needed.

Report all incidents of heat-related illness to a staff member immediately! ★



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- Amarillo College
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- Clarendon College
- Dallas College
- Frank Phillips College
- Lamar State College - Orange
- Lamar State College - Port Arthur
- Lee College
- Sam Houston State University
- San Antonio College
- Southwest Texas College
- Texarkana College
- Texas Woman's University
- Trinity Valley Community College
- University of Houston-Clear Lake
- University of Texas - Austin
- University of Texas - San Antonio
- Victoria College
- Western Texas College
- West Texas A&M University

Need More Information? Send an I-60 to Education*

*Programs vary by campus. Enrollment depends on program availability and student eligibility.

Expressing interest does not guarantee enrollment.

Updated August 2026

Best in Grow

David Anderson has lent his skills and passion to Robertson Unit's *Herbs Behind Bars* program for nearly 20 years.

Anderson Leads Winners in Annual Horticulture Contest

By Joshua P. Schnizer

David Anderson is no stranger to growing herbs and vegetables. Now a retired field officer for the Robertson Unit in Abilene, he supervised the unit's Herbs Behind Bars program. He recently closed his career with the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ), and also added first place winner of the 2025-2026 Herbs Behind Bars competition to his growing list of accomplishments.

A fresh idea, along with a willing crew of 11 hardworking resident gardeners at the Robertson Unit, enabled the win.

"It was a team effort," Anderson said. "Our achievements in the Herb Garden program are because of determined residents who kept on working, because they were given the opportu-

nity to show their skills and be proud of their accomplishments. I told these men that we needed to come up with something new, something good, so the people would actually see what we're doing."

This was no easy task for Anderson and his team at the Robertson Unit in Abilene, Texas, where the climate is hot and dry during the peak growing season. This challenge did not deter Anderson

and his group of dedicated horticulturists. The resulting contrast from the surrounding landscape, and the garden within is very noticeable.

"You go up [to Abilene] in July or August and everything is brown, then you walk into the unit and it's completely different from the outside," Anderson said.

continued on next page



continued from previous page

Anderson said that he and his team had a lot of support from Robertson Unit’s administration, as well.

“I’d like to thank our wardens,” Anderson said. “I think the [administration] saw what was going on and really liked what they saw.”

The Herbs Behind Bars program is a part of the TDCJ’s Laundry, Food, and Supply Department, which supports the herb garden projects and competition.

“Home grown herbs help the kitchen and the quality of the food,” Anderson said. “They make the food taste better.”

The herbs Anderson and his team grew in their garden included thyme, lavender, tarragon, rosemary, savory and cilantro.

“There’s nothing like giving fresh produce or herbs to someone,” Anderson said, Currently, the Herbs Behind Bars program is available on several units with hopes in the future to include more. Horticulture classes through Windham and college affiliates are also a great way for students to get their hands in the dirt.

Since 2007, TDCJ and Lee College have collaborated to host the annual Herbs Behind Bars competition. Units compete in three categories based on their size. Each unit keeps a detailed journal marking the year’s agricultural progress, such as planting data, harvest totals, photos showing various stages of growth and accounts of how the herbs are being used. Judges’ picks are based on

garden design, planting and harvest success, usage of herbs in meals and feedback from kitchen staff.

The Herbs Behind Bars program helps residents to develop skills they might not otherwise learn which could develop into employment opportunities when they reenter their communities. Participants involved in these horticulture projects learn responsibility, patience and agricultural skills, which are instrumental in supporting mental health and well-being, affording them the soft skills necessary for future employment.

The program and the competition both continue to illustrate the ways in which gardening can effect positive change in individuals who participate. €

GROW YOUR KNOWLEDGE

Health & Wellness

Garlic contains allicin, a compound with broad-spectrum antibacterial and antiviral properties.

Rosemary may help improve memory and focus; even the scent boosts alertness.

Lavender is clinically studied for anxiety and improves sleep when used as aromatherapy.

Peppermint is a natural antispasmodic and is clinically shown to relieve symptoms of irritable bowel syndrome.

Garlic

Fennel seed Tea

Bitter Herbs

Thyme

Cayenne

Fennel seed tea is traditionally used to ease gas and bloating after meals.

Bitter herbs like gentian, dandelion and artichoke leaf stimulate digestive enzymes and bile.

Thyme is a powerful antimicrobial used for chest coughs and throat infections.

Cayenne pepper increases circulation and may support sluggish or cold extremities.

Information from Napiers.com

7 Things Every Herb Gardener Should Know

1. Plant fennel by itself. Fennel creates a chemical in the soil called juglone, which can interfere with the development of other plants around it.
2. Plant mint, lemon balm and other mint family members by themselves. They are VERY aggressive spreaders!
3. Basil, cilantro, dill and marjoram are annuals. That means they produce well in one season but do not survive the winter.
4. Parsley is a biennial. It grows well the first year, but in the second year, it grows for a month or two, then bolts (goes to seed) and dies.
5. Rosemary and lavender are perennials, but only certain varieties make it over the winter. The varieties of rosemary called “Arp” and “Hill Hardy” are the hardiest. For lavender, you can’t beat Munstead, Hidcote and Phenomenal.
6. Sage, rosemary, thyme and lavender can be planted together because they have similar requirements—lots of sun and to dry out partially.
7. Parsley, chives, mint and lemon balm do well in part-shade.

Information from Meadow Farms.com

Sowing Seeds For the Future

Lee College, TDCJ Promote Herb Gardening Contest

By Joshua Schnizer – Staff Writer

There is something profound about planting a tiny seed, watering the soil and returning days later to find that first thin green shoot reaching up toward the sun. That is merely the beginning. With a little know-how, some elbow grease and a pinch of good fortune, the things that blossom can be very rewarding.

This is the theme of a collaboration between the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) and Lee College, who partner to host the annual Herbs Behind Bars competition. This longstanding event began in 2007, and it recognizes TDCJ units that design and cultivate the most productive and well-maintained herb gardens. The competition celebrates the employees and residents who dedicate their time and effort to the program, according to the “Annual Herbs Behind Bars Competition” (TDCJ News, June 10, 2026).

Following this year’s Culinary Herb Garden Awards Luncheon, Scooter Langley, 18-year technical chairman and lead horticulture instructor for Lee College at the Ellis Unit, spoke about how this fruitful program came to life.

“It started as a vision: ‘What can we do to enhance the food experience for staff

and residents?’” Langley asked. “We could also save money by growing our own herbs instead of going out and purchasing them.”

According to Executive Director of Lee College Huntsville Center Donna Zuniga, the program started around the same time as the Lee College culinary program.

“Part of the program’s start was to enhance the food using herbs filtering into the kitchen,” Zuniga said. “I wanted to bring the two entities together to create something that was positive for the officers and the residents. I just saw it as a very positive relationship we could develop.”

Lee College helped cultivate this program from the ground up, donating seeds and literature to participating units and encouraging residents to learn about gardening.

“We visited some of the units, went to Gatesville and saw that the field captain had the most beautiful garden,” Zuniga said. “[The residents] working on the garden were creating something really cool, and it was obvious in the food and the seasoning.”

Celebrating its 20th anniversary, the herb garden program continues to thrive. While its two original goals are still the foundation of the program, it has evolved into much more.

“I just see the effort as a morale builder, something everyone can be proud of.”

– Donna Zuniga



*Horticulture
Instructor Scooter
Langley and Former
Student Tosha Rose*



“We’re looking at what kind of hands-on experience we’re offering to those who are working in these gardens—an extra skill, a chance to learn something new,” Langley said.

He explained that residents involved in the horticulture projects can learn responsibility, patience and practical agricultural skills that prepare them for future employment.

Their projects pass through a thorough evaluation process. Each participating unit compiles a detailed book documenting its annual horticultural accomplishments in the herb gardens. Entries include planting data, garden photos made during various stages of growth and information concerning how the harvested herbs are used, which includes in the unit kitchens. A panel of judges with experience in horticulture and gardening related areas review the submissions.

To celebrate and showcase annual efforts, Lee College partners with TDCJ to host its the Culinary Herb Garden Awards Luncheon. First, second and third place awards are handed out at this event, along

with two honorable mentions. Retired TDCJ correctional officer David Anderson accepted this year’s first place award on behalf of the Robertson Unit (see story and list of winners on previous page).

Event organizers say pride in accomplishment is something promoted by the program.

“I just see the effort as a morale builder, something everyone can be proud of,” Zuniga said. “It’s something that benefits so many people: the officers, the TDCJ kitchen staff and the residents. It’s something the units look forward to and take tremendous pride in.”

The Herbs Behind Bars program is currently active on nearly half of the units in TDCJ, and sometimes geography plays a role in participation.

“In some regions, it’s hard to grow herbs. It’s dry, or sometimes, too wet. Sometimes the soil isn’t right,” Langley said. “We’re not on 100% of the units, but it’s most definitely a future goal.”

Langley’s goals don’t stop at expanding the Herbs Behind Bars program to every unit across the state and providing

jobs for residents looking to be a part of something productive. It is to also expand what the program does with the herbs.

“At the Ellis Lee College Horticulture program, we’re taking it to the next level,” Langley said. “We’re going to start experimenting with different combinations of herbs to create unique seasonings. Not just a single seasoning, but five or six all put together to come up with a Mexican seasoning or an Italian blend for spaghetti or maybe a lemon pepper seasoning. Hopefully, this will expand into the field of different types of vegetables not grown in TDCJ and different types of heirloom plants as well.”

Most people agree that learning to grow food can be a healthy and cost-effective alternative to buying produce, and it is hard to place a value on the knowledge and skills one can obtain working in horticulture.

“We value that sense that you’re starting something from seed and it turns into this product that is either fresh or later dried and placed in the food you eat,” Langley said. “It’s a sense of pride.” €

ART EXPO

Want your craft shop goods or art
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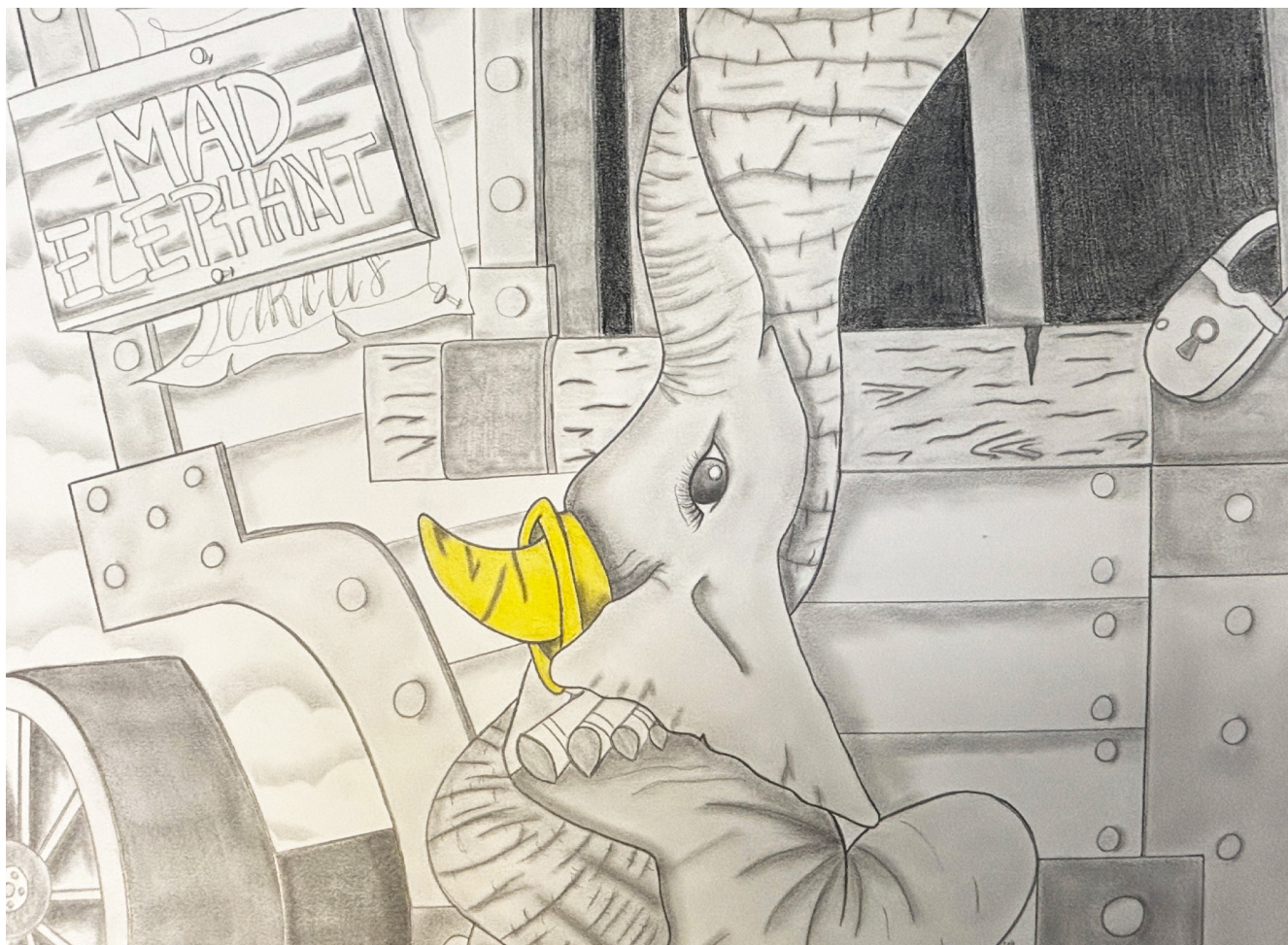
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Sublime Summer Sausage Tacos

Todd Carman
Wynne Unit

Ingredients:

2 summer sausages, diced
(sub chorizo or other sausage)

2 jalapeños, diced

1 can V8 juice

½ can water

1 large squirt ketchup

2-3 heaping spoonsful no-salt seasoning

2 heaping spoonsful onion powder

1-2 spoonsful garlic powder

1 spoonful black pepper

3-5 spoonsful diced pickle

3-4 spoonsful pickle juice

1 pk. chili soup seasoning

1 pk. vegetable soup seasoning

½ bag pork skins, crushed (optional)

¼ bag instant chili beans (optional)

3 soups, crushed

½ bag Shabang or jalapeño chips, crushed
(optional)

2 pks. ranch dressing (optional)

Hot sauce, to taste (optional)

10-12 tortillas

Directions:

Combine first 14 ingredients in a bowl, mix thoroughly and divide into two cooking bags. Cook in two hot pots for 30-45 minutes. Place crushed soups and instant chili beans in an empty bowl. Add heated summer sausage mixture, stir well, place back in two cooking bags and cook for an additional 20-30 minutes. While this taco filling mixture is heating, pre-heat tortillas. When the taco filling mixture is cooked, place in a bowl and stir; add more hot water if needed, but mixture should be somewhat dry. Take a heated tortilla, add a few spoonsful of filling, some crushed chips and a drizzle of ranch dressing and hot sauce. Repeat until all the filling is used. Enjoy!

Tortilla heating tip:

Fill hot pot half way with water and plug in. When water begins steaming remove lid and place a tortilla across the top of hot pot. When tortilla puffs slightly, flip the tortilla; remove when tortilla puffs up again. Set heated tortilla in an empty bowl and repeat with another tortilla. Heat all tortillas like this; cover the bowl of heated tortillas. Set the bowl back on top of steaming hotpot to keep tortillas warm until ready to use.

recipes continued

ORDER No.

TABLE No.

Allred Strawberry Cheesecake

Jeff McDonough
Estelle Unit

Ingredients:

1 bottle strawberry preserves

1 pk. vanilla or duplex cookies

1 pk. vanilla wafers or Maria's cookies

2 pks. cream cheese

2 pks. instant milk

Directions:

Separate cream filling from cookies and place into hot pot insert. Add both packs of cream cheese, ¼ bottle of strawberry preserves and ½ inch of water. Place in hot pot. Crush cookie pieces and ½ package of vanilla wafers in spread bowl. Add 10 spoonful of water and mix until it attains consistency of dough. In separate bowl, mix hot pot insert contents with two packs of instant milk and mix until all lumps are gone. Pour into crust then let stand for about four hours. Enjoy!

Meat and Cheese Stuffed Tater Tots

Shawna Bieber
Crain Unit

Ingredients:

1 Hot n' Spicy meat and cheddar stick

1 pk. buffalo chicken bites

1 pk. cheese potatoes

2 jalapeño peppers

1 squeeze cheese

1 pk. cream cheese

Directions:

Cut meat and cheddar stick into small pieces. Cut chicken bites into quarters. Cut jalapeño peppers lengthwise and then cut each half into thirds. Place in a bowl. Make potatoes; mix well. Roll potatoes in a chip bag, then cut into squares. Add jalapeños, cheese and meat. Fold into tater tot shape and place inside of empty rice bag, then cook for two hours in a hot pot.

recipes continued

ORDER No.

TABLE No.

Chocolate Covered Cherry Tootsie Rolls

James Andrew Becker
Ramsey Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 bag creamer
- 1 jar hazelnut spread
- 2 fruit punch electrolytes
- 3-4 spoonsful of water
- Large bowl

Directions:

Pour the creamer into the large bowl. Add half of the hazelnut spread to the creamer. Add the two electrolytes and mix well until the mixture gains a fine powdery consistency. Add the water and mix with clean hands until it becomes like taffy. Put the mixture into the creamer bag, seal the bag and flatten. Finally, cut the bag open and cut into little bite-sized pieces and enjoy. It's the real deal!

Strawberry Parfait Cake

Amanda Hallam
Halbert Unit

Ingredients:

- 1 pk. vanilla cookies
- 2 pks. strawberry oatmeal
- 1 pk. instant milk
- ½ pk. creamer
- 1 pk. strawberry Chike
- 3-4 oatmeal pies, if in stock

Directions:

Make crust with vanilla cookies (with or without cream). Mix creamer and milk; add water until a thick creamy consistency. Add Chike and oatmeal; use more water if needed. Break up oatmeal pies and fold into mixture. Pour into crust and let sit for 30-60 minutes.

recipes continued

ORDER No.

TABLE No.

Sunshine Citrus Tea

Todd Carman
Wynne Unit

Ingredients:

6 tea bags

1 lime sports drink

1 orange sports drink

12 sweeteners

Directions:

Fill a hot pot 2/3 full with water, add tea bags and heat for 20-30 minutes. Squeeze out and remove tea bags, then add sports drinks and sweeteners. Fill hot pot with cold water; stir well. Pour the tea into three empty water or green tea bottles. Fill bottles with cold water. Enjoy!

Snickle

Amanda Hallam
Halbert Unit

Ingredients:

1 pickle

1 Snickers candy bar

Peanut butter, to taste

Directions:

Cut pickle in half lengthwise; remove pulp. Cut Snickers in half lengthwise; place one half of candy bar in one half of pickle. Top with peanut butter. Enjoy!

Poetry Corner

The Sands of Time

Submitted by Amanda Bolton

Murray Unit

Many different grains of sand are the seasons of life.
Time affects them all; yet, time is unaffected
by the different seasons that life presents.

The seasons of life are affected
by the tides coming and going,
bringing to and taking away
the grains of sand of our life.

There's been many tides in my life. These tides
have scattered, grouped, relocated and solidified
my grains of sand.

All in due season, all in due time.
I pray in my future, time on my side,
and it's my season when my tide rolls in.

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

Poetry Corner

Reflection

*Submitted by Zachariah Devoss,
Gist Unit*

I sit here and ponder the thoughts in my head,
How things could have been different,
being anywhere else but here instead.

My thoughts and my actions fueled that monster inside,
If I say this time's been easy, you know I have probably lied.

Three years from my loved ones have taken a toll,
Yearning for freedom, the slightest chance of parole.
I wouldn't wish this on my enemy, oh how time passes by,
I cling to my faith, still asking God why?

Why take such chances, on things like my freedom?
When it comes to the drugs and alcohol,
did I actually ever need 'em?

My most sober thinking comes when from behind these walls,
Really digging deep, to find my biggest flaws.

I ask daily for a cloak of protection and inner peace,
For I must keep Him above all, especially after my release.

To those that I love, I am forever in your debt,
Through my sins and my struggles, there is much I regret.

As I bring this to a close, I'd just like to say,
May God mold a new me, my old life to be swept away.

Poetry Corner

The Desert

*Submitted by Shannon Creevey
O'Daniel Unit*

My cold flesh yearns,
for an endless diamond sky.
For a brilliant sun that burns,
where winter goes to die.
Where lizards and rabbits
make their homes,
amid cacti and sand.
Where wild mustangs like to roam,
across the windswept land.
Heat waves create a mirage,
to trick the unprepared.
The desert is a bright collage,
of life and death compared.
Return me to the sunshine,
to the embrace of a dry heat.
The desert is no wasteland,
it is my soul's retreat.

Poetry Corner

This Course

Submitted by Aaron Canas

Beto Unit

Discussions now are different from the very first day,
they are more intense in every single way.
I now can see the program, this course seems to be fine,
you can actually improve the thoughts
that cross your mind.

I'm not saying it is easy; you need to apply the tools,
the teacher gives you what you need;
you just need to improve.

Am I ready to change? I know I really am,
I'm putting forth my best effort; doing all I can.

What I am saying is that it is up to you,
the choice is in your hands; so what are you gonna' do?

I don't know why I ask; this is really just for me,
I'm taking advantage of this course; to be the best I can be.

Poetry Corner

Inevitable

Submitted by Colt Nicholson

Estelle Unit

Ever the wintry breeze, o' chill thine heart,
two star-crossed lovers doth time and space part.
Rancor of their defiance shakes heaven and earth,
implacable desires to share home and hearth.

Willful ever, evade thy meeting,
sorrow and joy evermore fleeting.

Tempest thy passion, inexorable will,
burning hearts yearning keep thee still.

Endless, yet thy sorrows cease,
as floats lilting melody on divine breeze.
"Go forth, be one," Holy Thunder spoke,
"of two gentle hearts, one righteous make."

On hallowed wings two do soar,
broken halves in union once more.

Even as time consumed all else,
they remained.

Poetry Corner

Songs

Submitted by Hespero Jingo

Telford Unit

There are songs of joy,
and great jubilation.
Songs of love,
of enduring devotion.
There are songs of pain,
and solemn reflection.
Songs of hope,
of confident expectation.
These songs we must
sing because,
not only are they part of life.
They are what life,
is all about.
And sing we must because,
to refrain from singing.
Is to refuse living,
life itself.
So, we sing all of them,
each in its own time.
For to sing only one and not

the other,
is to unsee the colors of the
rainbow and paint it in gray.
So, there are songs of zeal,
and righteous indignation.
Songs of faith,
of godly meditation.
There are songs,
we sing with others.
Songs we sing,
when we are alone.
There were songs they sang,
when we were born.
There will be songs,
they will sing when we are
gone.
Songs of peace,
and sweet sorrow.
Songs of mirth,
of unending tomorrow.



SPORTS VIEW

Will Hill Predicts

2026 NFL Season



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!

By William E. Hill | ECHO Contributor

Yep, this is yours truly's favorite time of the year. It is the time I get to boast about how correct my predictions from the past football season turned out — and to utilize my prognostication skills in telling you exactly how the upcoming National Football League (NFL) season will play out. I am sure you all remember that I predicted the Seattle Seahawks would defeat the New England Patriots in Super Bowl LX (that is number 60 for those who are not fluent in Latin). Let's first look at each division of the National Football Conference (NFC) and American Football Conference (AFC).

NFC EAST

How bad was the Dallas Cowboys' defense in 2025? Pro Football Focus says that the 511 points they allowed was the sixth most in NFL history. The pass defense ranked 32nd out of 32 NFL teams, the rush defense ranked 23rd, scoring defense ranked 32nd and the total defense was 30th. Other than that, it was

great. If the Cowboys can play even average defense in 2026, they will win the division. If they cannot, they won't. The Philadelphia Eagles' offense was morose even with uber-talented wide receiver A. J. Brown on the team. What will it look like now with him catching passes from Drake Maye in New England? Who knows; maybe trading away your best players is a winning strategy. Super Bowl winning coach John Harbaugh left Baltimore to coach the New York Giants. Did he bring Lamar Jackson and Derrick Henry with him? No? Hmm. Remember when the Washington Commanders were relevant in this division? Me neither.

NFC NORTH

The Chicago Bears' young quarterback Caleb Williams showed a knack for snatching victory from defeat in 2025. While that is exciting for the fans, it is a tough way to win in the NFL. If the Bears can play the first three quarters of games the way they do the fourth quarter, they will clinch the division again. The Green Bay Packers must play the first month or so of

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the season without edge rusher Micah Parsons as he returns from a torn anterior cruciate ligament (ACL). Can the team win without him? They could not in 2025 following his injury. If the Minnesota Vikings' head coach Kevin O'Connell can resurrect Kyler Murray's career like he did Sam Darnold's, maybe the team has a chance to compete for a wild card berth. I feel sorry for the Detroit Lions' fans. They waited 50+ years for their team to become title contenders. Too bad those championship windows close faster than they open.

NFC SOUTH

The Carolina Panthers were gifted the division title in 2025 due to tiebreakers. Now, can fourth-year signal caller Bryce Young parlay that success into another playoff run? In this division, anything is possible. The Atlanta Falcons have all the pieces in place to win this division except the most important one — a quarterback. Neither Tua Tagovailoa nor Michael Penix Jr. have shown the ability to stay healthy. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers have a proven quarterback in Baker Mayfield, but the ancillary pieces around him are missing. The New Orleans Saints' second-year quarterback Tyler Shough is an up-and-comer, but he is still raw. Give him another year of experience, and the Saints will be legit.

NFC WEST

The Los Angeles Rams were a hair away from the Super Bowl in 2025. Their trade for defensive end Myles Garrett proves that they are all-in for 2026. The defending champions, the Seattle Seahawks, lost Super Bowl LX Most Valuable Player Kenneth Walker III to free agency and offensive coordinator Klint Kubiak, yet should again contend for the division title. The San Francisco 49ers must generate more pressure on opposing quarterbacks after generating a league low 20 quarterback sacks and only six interceptions (both league lows) in 2025. The Arizona Cardinals are about to learn a valuable lesson. There is a reason that Jacoby Brissett and Gardner Minshew are career backup quarterbacks. There is also a reason that teams that start backup quarterbacks do not win.

Division Winners: Cowboys, Bears, Panthers and Rams
Wildcards: Eagles, Packers, Atlanta

AFC EAST

Sometimes all it takes for an also-ran to get over the hill and become a champion is a change in the voice.

The Buffalo Bills are betting on that playing out after firing head coach Sean McDermott, who led the team to eight postseason berths in his nine seasons. The New England Patriots may be an even better team than in 2025 and yet still take a step back in the division. The New York Jets, and the Miami Dolphins, are vying with each other to stay out of the cellar. Who wins? Nobody knows or cares.

AFC NORTH

The 2025 Cincinnati Bengals were all gas, no brakes. Like the Cowboys in the NFC, if the Bengals can play even average defense, they can contend for the title. The question for the Baltimore Ravens' quarterback Lamar Jackson is this: If not now, when? The Pittsburgh Steelers have reunited new head coach Mike McCarthy and quarterback Aaron Rodgers with hopes that it will bring back fond memories, and it will — of Mike Tomlin and Ben Roethlisberger. The Cleveland Browns say that Deshaun Watson is in a competition to start at quarterback. My question is this: Why? Watson has played in only 19 games since Cleveland traded for him in 2022. Find out if Shedeur Sanders or Dillon Gabriel is your quarterback of the future and move on from the albatross that is Watson.

AFC SOUTH

The Houston Texans' quarterback C.J. Stroud is coming off two bad playoff performances, and Texans fans were screaming for his release. What these people need to remember is there are a lot of teams that would love to have a quarterback struggle in two playoff games. The Jacksonville Jaguars need wide receiver Brian Thomas Jr. to have a significant impact on the offense, especially since two-way star Travis Hunter is expected to spend most of his time on defense in 2026. The only reason that the Indianapolis Colts are not at the top of this list is because of the question surrounding quarterback Daniel Jones' availability after a knee injury. I'm not exactly sure how Tennessee Titans head coach Robert Saleh keeps getting head coaching gigs, but I know how he keeps losing them. I hope he is only renting his house in Nashville.

AFC WEST

I dare you to find a weakness on the Denver Broncos team. Go ahead, I'll wait right here for you. The

continued on next page

Kansas City Chiefs' Patrick Mahomes is on a revenge tour after tearing his ACL and lateral collateral ligament in his left knee and missing the playoffs for the first time in his career. The Los Angeles Chargers' head coach Jim Harbaugh is an old school, run first coach who hired the mad scientist Mike McDaniel as offensive coordinator. Interesting. Will it be veteran Kirk Cousins or rookie first overall pick Fernando Mendoza taking snaps from center for the silver and black of the Las Vegas Raiders in 2026? Does it really matter?

Division Winners: Bills, Bengals, Texans, Broncos
Wildcards: Patriots, Jaguars, Chiefs

Super Bowl LXI

If I was making this prediction with my head, I would say the matchup would be between the Los Angeles Rams and the Buffalo Bills, with Matthew Stafford riding off into retirement with his second championship. However, I am swinging for the fences with this prediction of an all-Texas Super Bowl: Dallas Cowboys versus Houston Texans. It says right here in black and white, or is that blue and silver, that the Cowboys will hoist its sixth Lombardi Trophy on Feb. 14, 2027, in SoFi Stadium.



- Offensive Rookie of the Year: Carnell Tate, wide receiver, Tennessee Titans
- Defensive Rookie of the Year: Caleb Downs, safety, Dallas Cowboys
- Offensive Player of the Year: Bijan Robinson, running back, Atlanta Falcons
- Defensive Player of the Year: Myles Garrett, edge rusher, Los Angeles Rams
- Comeback Player of the Year: Patrick Mahomes, quarterback, Kansas City Chiefs
- Most Valuable Player: Myles Garrett, edge rusher, Los Angeles Rams €





TDCJ SUMMIT 2026



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**“Do not seek success.
Seek to become a
person of value.”**

DR. MYLES MUNROE