

the echo

Texas Prison News

Established 1928

Vol. 98 No.08

September 2026



The ECHO is a criminal justice publication produced by the publisher and staff for use by those confined within the TDCJ. Submissions and letters may be sent via regular mail to:

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

Permission is granted for the reproduction of non-copyrighted materials, provided credit is given to author and publication. Due to the volume of submitted material, unused material will NOT be returned to the sender. The publisher reserves the right to edit all materials for content and space. Any references to Internet sources have been provided by Windham employees.

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

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

ISSN 1530-7298



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

the echo

MANAGEMENT

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

Bambi Kiser
Managing Editor

Blair Dupre
Assistant Managing Editor

STAFF

Todd Carman

Fabian Flores

Robert Gonzales

Steven Hamilton

Robert Morgan

Ashley Morrison

Kelly Roddy

Joshua Schnizer

CONTRIBUTORS

Restin Burk — Lynaugh Unit

Jesse Castillo — Briscoe Unit

Robert Fridell — Roach Unit

William Hill — Wynne Unit

Daniel Meehan — Connally Unit

James Noer — Hightower Unit

Tim Scoggin — Wynne Unit

Vincent Smith — Hightower Unit

UNIT REPORTERS

Allred Unit — Patricio Sevillano

Bartlett Innovative Unit — Phillip Lockhart

Beto Unit — Josue Garcia-Morales

Boyd Unit — Joseph Dauben

Bridgeport Unit — Shawn Zabick

Clemens Unit — Lawrence Burks Jr.

Clements Unit — Johnny Wooten

Coffield Unit — Mark Brock

Cole Unit — Doyal Garrett

Coleman Unit — Cheryl Jackson

Crain Unit — Rhonda Orr

Dalhart Unit — Patrick Bentley

Diboll Unit — Robert Jones

Dominguez Unit — Fernando Garcia

East Texas Treatment Facility — Steffan Kelly

Ellis Unit — Daniel Lagrone

Estelle Unit — Ervin Kay

Ferguson Unit — Adam Eannarino

Fort Stockton Unit — Jaime Stewart

Goree Unit — Patrick Russo

Hodge Unit — Wyatt Proud

Hughes Unit — Toby Rod

Huntsville Unit — Bryan Horton

Kyle Unit — Dustin Haggerty

LeBlanc Unit — Cedric Clark

Luther Unit — James Swarthout

Lynaugh Unit — Jose Ramos

McConnell Unit — Cody Davis

Mechler Unit — LaWarren Davis

Montford Unit — Jason Ishee

O'Daniel Unit — Misty Weaver

Pack Unit — Quintrick Bickham

Pack Unit — Shane Hale

Polunsky Unit — Robert Arroyo

Powledge Unit — Josh Garrison

Ramsey Unit — Rocky Valdez

Ramsey Unit — Christopher Washington

Roach Unit — Jose Martinez

Robertson Unit — Gabriel Esquivel

San Saba Unit — Jay Morgan

Smith Unit — Harvey Hodo

Stevenson Unit — William Bondurant

Stevenson Unit — Landon Brook

Stiles Unit — Arthur Sterns

Stringfellow Unit — Damion Faulkner

Telford Unit — Christopher Lewis

Torres Unit — Stephen Unger

Wainwright Unit — Thomas Bradley

SUPPORTED BY



Contents

Vol. 98 No. 8 / September 2026

departments

Dear Darby and Darla	04
Build a Badge Competition	06
Opinion	08
Recognizing Dolly Parton	13
You Can Draw: Dolly Parton	14
Lace Up	30
Sports View: Houston Texans	44



pg. 42

features



Tank Radio Spotlight	16
EWOP Supports Graduates	20
Interview: Ian Bick, Podcaster	23
Wynne Unit Talent Show	25
13th Coffee Bean Cohort Graduates	26
MI City: Sobriety is Contagious	42
Pro Football Players Motivate Residents	46

Letters to D-Best

Dear Darla



Dear Darla,

So, I started thinking the other day about who I'd want as a roommate if I could choose anyone. Now this started off as a somewhat legit thought about those I live around on my unit. Then it morphed into what if it could be anyone. Or better yet, which fictional character would be the best? Then I had another thought: Which fictional character would be the worst? Now I pose the questions to you, Darla, because I'm curious and excited to see what you would think.

Nothing To Do But Think

Hobby Unit

Dear Nothing To Do But Think,

First off, are you OK? That much thinking sounds detrimental to your health. Secondly, such randomly-interesting questions! The worst would definitely be Miss Piggy. She needs all the attention, has a short temper, thinks fighting solves her problems and is always experiencing drama between her and Kermit the Frog. Sound like anyone you know? D-Best (besides me) would be the Fairy Godmother from Cinderella, because she would grant all your wishes.

Granted, they would expire by midnight, but once you ate all the honeybuns you wished into existence, you'd want that weight magically

gone. Now, I have a random question for your overthinking mind: Is cereal a soup?

Sincerely,

D-Best Cousin Ever - Darla ☺



Dear Darby

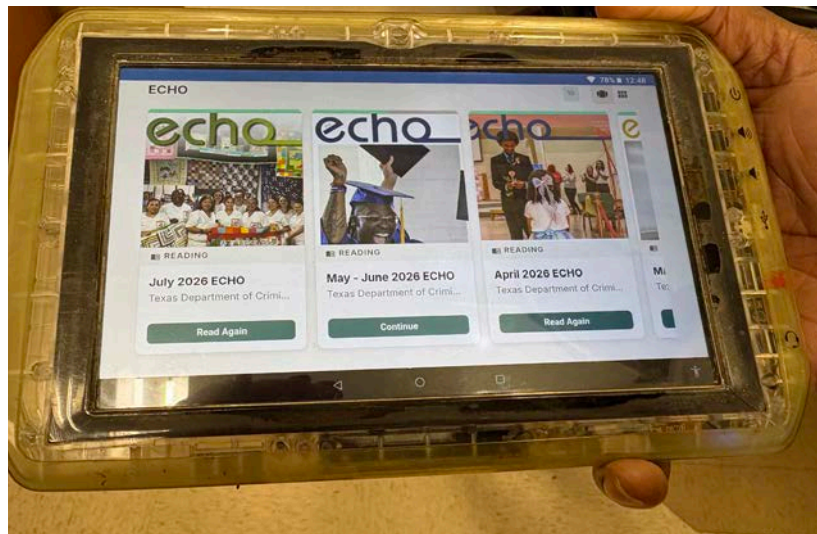
Letters to the Darbster

Dear Darby,

I've been down for a while and all this new-fangled tablet stuff has me confused. I want to see *The ECHO*! They say it's on the tablet, but I can't find it. What gives? Help me out, Darb!

An Old Timer

Coffield Unit



Dear OT,

*Ah, technology giving you the runaround? So, you don't know your IDKs (I don't know) from your OMGs (oh my God) or LOLs (laughing out loud)?! I feel your pain, havin' been down a minute myself. Good news, though — there's a short how-to article in this here issue, explainin' how to access TDCJ content in the EDOVO app. It will guide you through the steps to be accessin' *The ECHO*'s digital in-color version on your tablet, along with a bunch of other helpful content. Good luck and happy readin'!*

TDCJ Content Moves to Edovo App

By Todd R. Carman — Staff Writer

Agency content previously only available on the FYI app is being made available on the Edovo app. To access this content, type "TDCJ," scroll down to the TDCJ icon and click "explore," then click "seasons" on the lower left to see the different types of available content, which will include:

- TDCJ Videos
- TDCJ Bulletins
- Windham Higher Education
- Windham Content
- MAL Jobs
- MI City Podcast
- Ladies of the Tank Podcast
- TANK Nation Podcast
- *The ECHO*



Click on the content type you want to see — such as "ECHO" to reach *The ECHO*'s digital issues — and you will be able to scroll through icons of what's available.€

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 and share your idea or information with *The ECHO* readers throughout Texas.



Preparing for inclement weather: Recognition of cold-related illness, injury

Editor's Note: The following information was provided by TDCJ Risk Management.

Frostbite

Not only can wind chill cause a rapid body heat loss, it also can cause frostbite—the freezing of body tissues. Frostbite can occur in 15 minutes or less at wind chill values of 18 below zero or lower. Residents can be at an increased risk to frostbite because of factors such as exhaustion, hunger and dehydration, which further lower the body's defenses against cold.

Hypothermia

Hypothermia is a condition occurring when the body loses heat faster than the body can produce it. With the onset of this condition, blood vessels in the skin constrict (i.e., tighten) in an attempt to conserve vital internal body heat, thus affecting the hands and feet first. Hypothermia, the severe or prolonged loss of body heat, begins when a person's body temperature falls below 95 degrees. Because the temperature drop may be gradual, and an early symptom of hypothermia is mental confusion, the victim may not know a problem exists. If one's body continues to lose heat, involuntary shivers begin. This reaction is the body's way to produce more heat and is usually the first real warning sign of hypothermia. Further heat loss produces speech difficulty, forgetfulness, loss of manual dexterity, collapse and finally death.

Some residents can be at an increased risk to hypothermia if they have predisposing health conditions or take certain medications. Some of these conditions include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, hypertension, poor physical condition, poor diet and/or advanced age.

Watch for the following symptoms of frostbite:

- * cold, white and hard skin;
- * pain;
- * itching;
- * loss of feeling in the affected area;
- * spots or blotches on skin;
- * swelling and blistering;
- * skin becomes red and blotchy; and
- * tissue loss, depending on the severity of the frostbite.

Watch for the following symptoms of hypothermia:

- * confusion;
- * drowsiness;
- * slurred speech;
- * a drop in blood pressure;
- * shallow breathing; and
- * a pinkish tint to the skin.

Report all incidents of cold-related illness to a staff member immediately. €

Peer-to-Peer Educators Compete to Build Badge of Honor

By Robert L. Gonzales
Staff Writer

The Health Services Division (HSD) and the Administrative Review and Risk Management Division (AR-RMD) recently shared a milestone moment within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). Peer Education Coordinator S. McCray directed a collaborative endeavor for peer-to-peer educators across TDCJ to create a graphic as a backdrop for their identification badges.

Peer educators' primary responsibility is teaching health-care



awareness and also sexual-abuse and assault awareness. This creative competition gave them an opportunity to express the pride they take in filling their positions. Uniting peer to peer educators who work tirelessly to motivate, empower and assist the resident population, this competition to build a badge was the beginning of a tradition to inspire creativity, connection and friendly challenges for years to come.

continued on next page

Contest winners from the Estes Unit (center) are congratulated by (l. to r.) Estes Unit Senior Warden B. Price; Wainwright Unit Correctional Officer K. Tillis; Health Services Division Peer Education Coordinator S. McCray; Estes Unit peer-to-peer educators Demarcus Jackson, Martin Gonzales, Willie Washington, Juan Martinez and Richard Hood; E. Poole and J. Black of the Administrative Review & Risk Management Division and Estes Unit Assistant Warden J. Jones.



First Place Winning Badge

“Growing on the Road to Freedom”



continued from previous page

Excitement about this contest spread like wildfire from the Texas Panhandle to the southernmost part of Texas,” McCray said. “We had over 50 entries from 104 facilities. ... Competition was fierce.”

Executive leadership of the HSD and the ARRMD wanted to give peer educators an opportunity to be part of something bigger than themselves by creating a visual representation unifying them throughout Texas. Unit peer educators were invited by the Safe Prison Program managers to submit one original drawing representing the motivation, collaboration and enhancement of program efficiency strengthening a message of safety within TDCJ.

“We wanted to give them something a little bit more empowering when it comes to the educational part of [health-care awareness],” McCray said. “It’s very motivational for the next set of individuals who decide to become involved as peer-to-peer educators.”

The Estes Unit Peer Education department earned first place in the competition, and each of the unit’s peer educators contributed to the final graphic submission. Their work was praised for originality, skill and the way it captures the spirit of the contest.

Estes peer educators titled their winning badge, “Growing on

the Road to Freedom,” because “the road is a passage where nothing is expected to grow. Not only did we grow, but we also survived and flourished through life’s tribulation, becoming a covering and role model for those that follow us.”

“Winning the badge contest meant a great deal to all the Estes Unit peer educators,” peer-to-peer educator DeMarcus Jackson said. “It represents all the time, hard work and energy we put into encouraging, influencing and empowering our fellow peers to see their worth and feel the value we all share.”

The selected badge will be worn by peer educators throughout TDCJ. McCray said this first contest was the start of a tradition that can continue to grow, and she thanked TDCJ leadership for support with judging. TDCJ contest judges included Deputy Director of Health Services C. Black-Edwards, Correctional Institutions Division Director M. Martinez, AARMD Director M. Dunbar and AARMD Deputy Director L. Eschessa. Also supporting the contest were AARMD Manager H. Boanen and Safe Prison’s J. Back and Monica Kukua.

“Every participant brought something remarkable to the table,” McCray said. “Whether they placed or not, their contributions helped shape this event into something truly memorable.” €



By Vincent Smith
Contributing Writer

Coffee Bean Culture Brews Better Perspective

Editor's note: the following personal perspective was adapted from a speech given by Vincent Smith at the Change Agent cohort 13 graduation.

A while back, I came across an old photograph of a young boy wearing a black cowboy hat, cowboy boots and cool sunglasses.

He was sitting on a horse, and standing next to him was an older man who obviously knew that boy wasn't ready for such a ride.

The old man had one hand on the boy and his other hand was holding the reins, ready to rescue the boy at the first sign of danger.

That boy was me.

I remember him teaching me how to care for these horses, how to feed them, how to clean their stalls and even how to groom them, so they would stay healthy and ready to ride.

I must have thought I was a real cowboy, because those days made a lasting impression on me.

Each of us have benefited from someone teaching us important lessons that we could incorporate into our lives.

This is exactly what the Change Agent program did for us.

It has fed us new and better ways of thinking. It has cleaned our minds of the beliefs that got us here, and it prepares us to succeed one day in the outside community.

But it can only do so much — the rest is up to us.

One of my favorite sayings is, "Learn from the mistakes of others, because you will never live long enough to make them all yourself."

Whoever said that obviously didn't know me.

A while back, as Life Coach Molina was teaching one of our classes, he said something that really hit me.

He pointed out that we had failed our younger generations and he didn't intend to continue failing them.

That simple statement made an impression on me.

While we are sitting here, who is holding their reins?

This is why the things we learned in the Change Agent class are so important.

This is the time for us to get ourselves right so we can stop failing our sons and daughters.

Throughout this course a couple of ideas really resonated with me.

The first thing is identifying my core values.

I must admit, core values weren't always important to me. If they had been important, I wouldn't be standing here today.

continued on next page

**"This is the time for us to get ourselves right
so we can stop failing our sons and daughters."**

Values like integrity, honesty and kindness are important to me now.

I was also reminded how important it is to choose our circle of influence wisely.

Who do I call my friends? Who do I trust to hold my reins?

Am I the kind of person others can trust to hold their reins? Do

the people I let in my circle share my core values?

Thought leader and author Roy T. Bennett said, “The strongest people find the courage and caring to help others, even if they are going through their own storm.”

My hope is for each of us to take the things we learned in our

Change Agent study guide and use them to help others.

We need to find opportunities to pass this information on to those we have failed.

Let us be the agents of change. It is now our responsibility to keep these lessons alive by passing it on to somebody, in some way, every day. €



So, Things Didn't Work Out for You? Try Again!

By Restin Burk
Contributing Writer

Did your life fall apart on you? Has your heart been broken? Okay. Now pick up the pieces and try again.

Do you know how many times my life has fallen apart, or how many times my heart has been shattered into oblivion? No? Neither do I.

I've found myself at the end of my rope, hanging on for dear life more times than I can recall.

It makes no difference. I'm still getting back up and I'm still trying again no matter what it is I'm facing or how many times I've gotten it wrong.

I'm getting better as I go, and so will you. Eventually, you will stop making the same mistakes and life will open up a whole new world for you.

What you should do is adopt the mindset and the resilience of an infant, who will continuously make attempt after attempt until they accomplish

their desired goal.

That's one of the lost secrets of success. Keep trying. Somewhere along the way, we lost this part of ourselves.

The time to wake up and remember that we can ultimately realize any dream or that hope has come.

When a child is learning to walk, they do not care how many times they fall down because they want to walk so bad.

The secret to getting is wanting. You have to really want it.

When a child falls down, they get right back up every single time. You could not stop them if you wanted to.

Their spirit is unstoppable. It wouldn't matter if anyone else believed in them or not, because they believe in themselves.

That child knows instinctively that since they have seen others do it, they can do it. They care nothing about anyone else's opinion on the matter either. No consultation is necessary.

No matter how difficult the

struggle, no child ever just gave up and resorted to a lifetime of crawling because it was difficult to learn how to walk.

When you were a baby, you learned an entire language, having never spoken anything in your life.

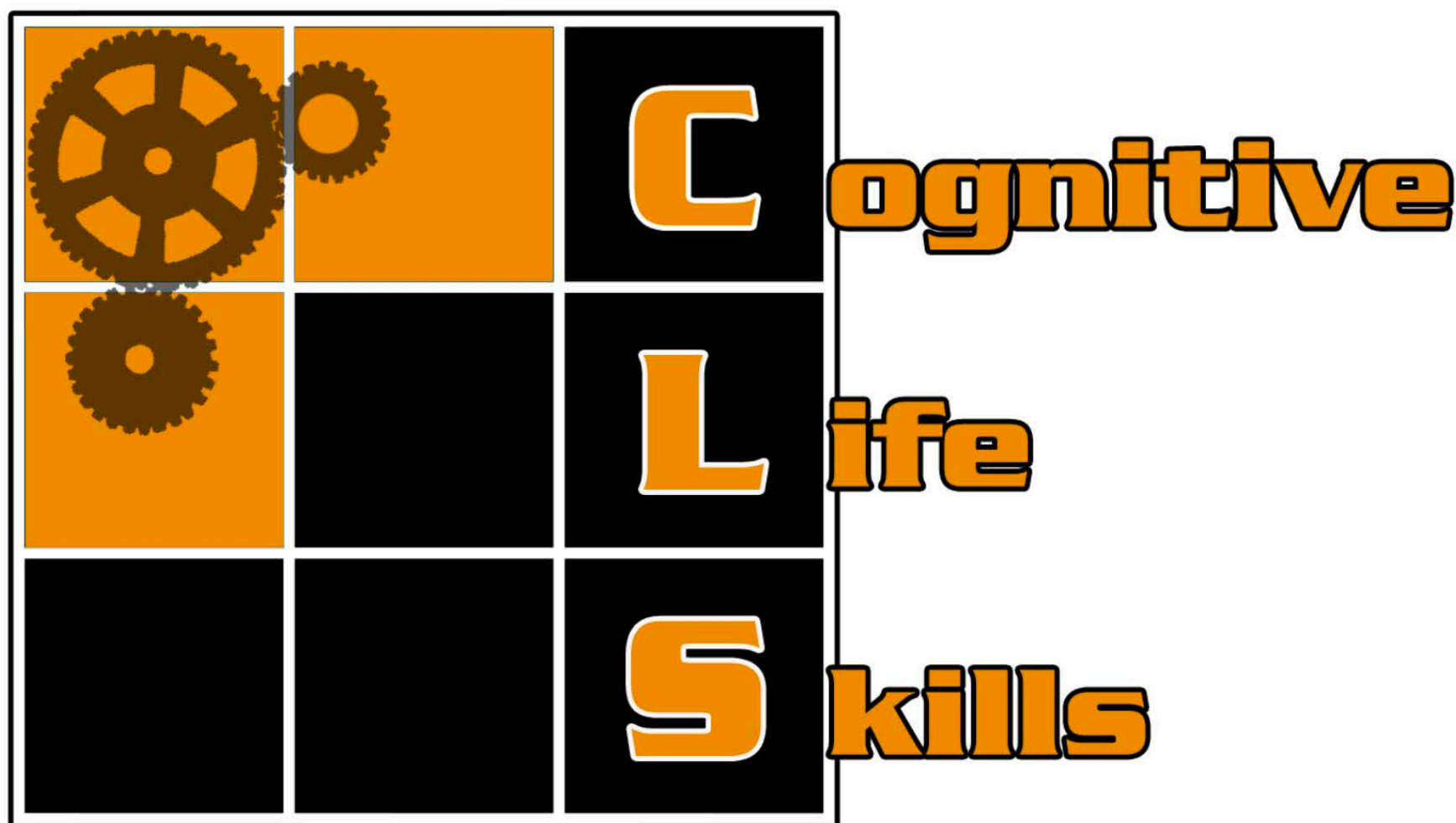
Do you realize how incredible that is? You were once capable of doing, learning and accomplishing absolutely anything you set your mind to — and you still are.

That ability to create the miraculous is still alive and well inside of you. Nothing stops you from rising above circumstances and conditions without your permission.

Whatever problem, pain or issue you are facing right now, you can overcome. There is most certainly a way.

Now, you have got to keep going until you find the solution and figure it out.

The point is: You are capable of accomplishing anything you commit your mind to. You can do it! €



Experiencing CLS

By Courtney Dunkin

Murray Unit

I did not take the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) Cognitive Life Skills (CLS) just so I could check off another box on my “looks good for parole” checklist. The class helped to instill a spirit of perseverance and commitment in me.

As the class became acquainted, participants could not resist participating. Despite a hodgepodge of unique, and sometimes conflicting personalities, my CLS classmates chose to rise above differences, strive for excellence and inspire those around

us by adhering to the tools we learned in the curriculum.

It’s easy to attend a class, but applying those learned skills was no easy feat.

CLS aims to combat problematic thinking patterns and behaviors by helping to identify, challenge and change “triggers” (addictions and maladaptive thought patterns) to change our responses to difficult situations.

It helps change current behaviors which tend to get us into trouble by utilizing specific techniques and strategies that allow us to develop new, positive emotional and behavioral responses.

CLS illuminates the critical role of replacing wrong ways of thinking and

bad behaviors with healthier choices, altering the trajectory of our lives. The choices we make today determine the outcome of our future.

The life coaches and my classmates established a community with emphasis on unity.

Together, everyone learned how to foster empathy and build confidence by offering a safe, supportive and confidential environment to effectively address substance use struggles and emotional issues.

Most importantly, in CLS I learned we are not defined by our past mistakes; we are reinvented by the actions and choices we make in our future. €

“CLS illuminates the critical role of replacing wrong ways of thinking and bad behaviors with healthier choices, altering the trajectory of our lives.”



“Once you are free in the mind
and heart with certainty of
saving grace, you’ll never return.”

Relinquishing Control, Finding Victory

By Jennifer Taylor
Coleman Unit

Choices! Whether we make good or bad ones, we all have to make choices.

Minor choices may include how to style your hair, which street to take or even at what store to shop.

Major choices could include who to marry, which professional path to pursue or the decision to change careers.

We can also choose to be kind, generous, intuitive, educated or open-minded.

When life is throwing uppercuts at you, how you choose to counter the attack indicates where your future is headed.

In the past, I would throw my hands in the air aimlessly trying to block the blows of life. I attempted to avoid pain at all costs.

That choice usually ended up causing me pain anyway.

When I came to the grand understanding that pain is not meant to be avoided but embraced, that was when I could stop running.

My worrying mind, anxiety and depressive state of emotions could finally rest at ease.

I hugged the adversity in my life, mind, attitude and yes, even my choices.

I held onto those things that kept me bound for so long that it became uncomfortable for anxiety, depression and

worthlessness to be in my presence.

They were the ones to flee.

I got to this point because I got angry that my life was in shambles.

I wanted to fight off the feeling for so long, but I couldn’t because it was my own strength I was looking to use for the defeat.

When I began relinquishing control over my life, attitudes, thoughts, actions and choices to the only one who can make an everlasting change in my heart and character, I was victorious in life.

Once you are free in the mind and heart with certainty of saving grace, you’ll never return. €



Unsolved Homicide

Dannarriah Finley



On July 4, 2002, four-year-old Dannarriah Finley was reported missing to the Orange Texas Police Department. She was last seen sleeping in a bedroom at her mother's house with her siblings and cousins. Three days later, her mostly nude and decomposed body was found approximately 27

miles away, near a dredge pipeline ditch, off State Highway 82 in Port Arthur in an area known as Pleasure Island. The case remains unsolved.

If you have any information on this homicide, 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.



Dolly Parton collage provided by graphic artist Jay Vanstory.

Recognizing Music Legend Dolly Parton

By Quincy Patterson
Staff Writer

1946-2026

Dolly Parton's story is one of those legends from rags to riches, from dreamer to dream-giver and from a nobody to a musical legacy in American history. Dolly was born Jan. 19, 1946, in a one room cabin. Counting her parents and 11 siblings, there were a total of 14 individuals living in that single room cabin in Locust Ridge, Tennessee. Although this singing family was poor, it was affluent in spirit, with music often filling the cabin regardless of financial circumstances.

Dolly Parton's father was unable to read and write, and this too was remedied by his daughter's creative spirit. In honor of her father, Dolly started the Imagination Library literacy program in 1995, which began sending free books to children. A recent 2026 report from Y! Entertainment revealed that the Imagination Library has gifted over 330 million books.

Not only was Dolly's philanthropic nature revealed when she launched the Imagination Library, she often displayed it through her personality, words and actions. Dolly founded three different scholarship programs (Dollywood Employee Tuition Program, The Dolly Parton Scholarship and

Dolly Parton Songwriters Award). During the pandemic, Dolly donated \$1 million to COVID-19 vaccine research. When wild-fires ravaged her home state of Tennessee in 2016, Dolly started a fundraiser program to help people who had lost everything. For decades, she was also a mentor and songwriter for many singers, assisting those artists in attaining their dreams. Each time Dolly sang, it was a gift to herself and fans. She vocalized her aspirations and life-lessons in her music, transmuting her own personal harmony through a musical conduit to others.

Dolly's music career flourished over the span of six decades. At five years old, she created her first song, "Little Tiny Tassel Top." Her love for song writing began during those formative years. At 13, she made her first debut performance at the Grand Ole Opry. The day after completing high school, Dolly rushed to Nashville, where she quickly earned recognition as a talented songwriter. Years later, she earned superstar status and was called the Queen of Country Music. Dolly earned a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in 1984, and she was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 1999, the Songwriters Hall

of Fame in 2001, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2022 and the Musicians Hall of Fame in 2026. Dolly received her 55th Grammy Award nomination in 2025. She was not only known as a gifted musician and writer, but there is also a list of achievements for her as an actress, author, entertainer, hostess and humanitarian.

Dolly adored butterflies. She told stories of how she imitated, dressed like and chased them as a young girl in the Smoky Mountains. In an interview with W Magazine, she explained that she loved butterflies because they don't sting, bite or hurt people. She said they are colorful, gentle and match her own personality. Accordingly, her Tennessee theme park, Dollywood, was designed with butterfly displays throughout the estate. Like butterflies, Dolly offered a creative display every day. Now, when her fans see butterflies, they may reminisce about the philanthropist and music legend Dolly Parton. €

Sources:

1. dollyparton.com
2. "CBS Evening News with Norah O'Donnell," Nov. 7, 2023

YOU CAN DRAW: DOLLY PARTON

By Robert Morgan — Staff Writer, Artist



Original Image

For over seven decades singer, songwriter and actress, Dolly Parton, entertained the world spreading joy and wholesome authenticity to her fans. Today, *The ECHO* pays homage to the iconic heroine in the latest installment of You Can Draw. In this series, we pay our respect to Dolly by creatively illustrating one of her most iconic photos.

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

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

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

Needed Supplies:

- illustration board or art paper
- 2 pencils (one really sharp)
- eraser
- pencil sharpener
- 1/2 inch graph (8 1/2" x 11")
- shader (tightly rolled paper)
- 1 square toilet paper (folded into a tight square)

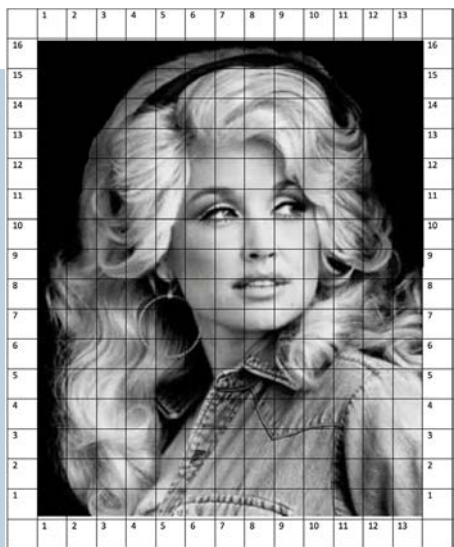
The Five-Step Process

I have added this helpful five-step process to assist you throughout your journey. It will also remind you of how simple it is to recreate anything you see. Repeat these steps as needed until you are satisfied with the image.

1. Create a line drawing of image.
2. Apply graphite to shadowed areas.
3. Blend the graphite using shaders.
4. Smooth the graphite using toilet paper.
5. Use eraser to "lift" or lighten areas to reestablish any highlights.

Editor's Note: If you decide to try any of these techniques on your next masterpiece, send your art to The ECHO, c/o Windham Admin Bldg. P.O. Box 40, Huntsville, TX 77342-0040 for review and possible inclusion in The ECHO Art Expo. Submissions cannot be returned.

STEP 1

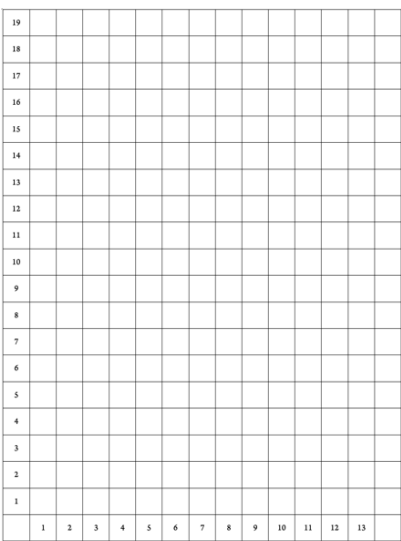


6 1/2" x 8 1/2"

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

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

STEP 2

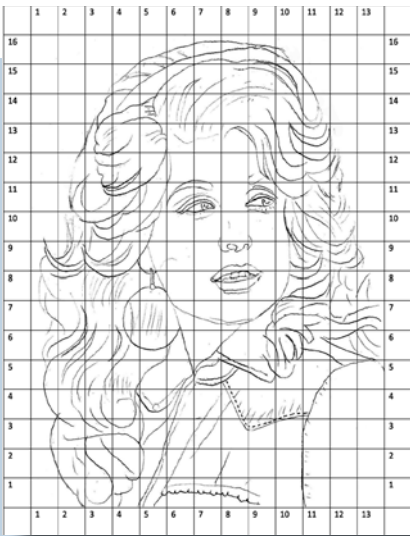


6" x 8"

Draw a corresponding graph onto your illustration board or paper.

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

STEP 3



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

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

STEP 4



Erase and remove the graph lines and reshape any lines of the drawing that may need it.

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

STEP 5



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

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

STEP 6



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

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

STEP 7

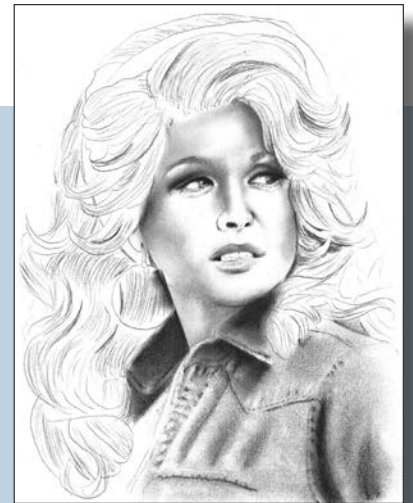


Continue to repeat steps five and six — adding graphite and going darker in the appropriate areas.

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

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

STEP 8



Begin laying down the hair. Lay your pencil strokes in the direction that the hair flows and then lightly blend. Use the edge of your eraser to create the lighter highlights and strands of hair. You will have to repeat this process numerous times.

Tip: A head of hair is composed of thousands of strands of hair, so it's nearly impossible to draw all of them. The trick is to lightly brush your soft shader over the hair. This will give the illusion of a full head of hair.

STEP 9



This is what my drawing looks like after completing step eight. Even though it is darker, it's exactly where I want it. All the graphite needed is on the board, with the correct textural effects. Now it's time to make fine details, using my eraser to lighten and create highlights.

Tip: Add the background to correctly gauge the light and gray tones of her hair and clothing.

Tip: To go this dark with regular pencils, crosshatch the graphite as you lay it. Then use your shader to blend and smooth.

STEP 10



In the final step, repeat any prior steps as needed. Erasers are wonderful tools and with strategic use you can mimic amazing effects throughout your art. It's good to think of it as drawing in reverse, technically called indirect rendering. All the marks made earlier in the process are still there underneath the darker toned graphite. So, as you employ your eraser, the marks will be revealed, especially in the hair.

Tip: As you begin to put the finishing touches on your drawing, ask yourself if the shadows and marks are accurate. If a shadow is incorrectly shaped or toned, then fix it. While nothing is ever 100 percent correct, try to be as accurate as possible. An incorrectly-shaped shadow can give features a weird look, even though it is correctly proportioned.

Tip: Using a soft touch throughout the drawing allows you to more easily lighten dark areas and create highlights throughout your artwork. Use varying pressure as you erase to create different tones. **E**

The Tank Radio Station, Podcasts: Change Culture, Bring Hope

By Kelly Roddy | ECHO Staff

Implementing tablets as a centralized communication platform has revolutionized the way Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) residents spend their time. Securus began its initial rollout of the tablets in 2021, and by January 2023, the very first video podcast was filmed at the Polunsky Unit.

Tank 106.5 Podcast is Born

The Tank radio station 106.5, hosted at the Polunsky Unit, began its broadcast in February 2020. The station began to build in popularity, interviewing guests such as billionaires, National Basketball Association players, TDCJ leaders and reentry success stories.

Polunsky resident Clinton Owens originally rejected the opportunity to work for The Tank.

“I am a hands-on type of person,” Owens said. “I was teaching classes, on the prayer team, mentoring and interacting [directly] with people. I didn’t want to lose that connection.”

COVID-19 changed everything. Movement became restricted, classes were halted and the ability to make a positive impact on the community became challenging.

“I couldn’t visit the G4s and G5s,” Owens said. “I realized [The Tank] provided an opportunity to reach the population.”

The first video podcast was filmed Jan. 31, 2023, when now-Director of the Chaplain-

cy and Volunteer Services Division (CVSD) Chris Carter brought Keidrain Brewster, former resident and transformational speaker, into the station for an interview. The video interview was recorded with a camera and a simple microphone, immediately transforming The Tank into a podcast platform.

“You learn from your mistakes,” resident and radio station operator Shane Holmes said. “I made plenty of mistakes early on, but it helped me to become better. I’m the type of person who, if I make a mistake in one area, I do not want to make the same mistake again.”

The popularity of the show grew as the outreach stretched to county jails, federal facilities and platforms in 12 other states.

“I would say one of the most rewarding things is to have someone share their testimony on air,” Field Minister Gilbert Cavazos said. “This gives them the platform to be able to share.”



The Tank host Tredric “TC” Culclager



The Tank recording/production studio

continued on next page

continued from previous page

The Tank has positively impacted both viewers and those participating in the production process.

“God is able to use me to make a positive impact on others,” radio station operator Tredric Culclager said.

Inspiration for developing podcasts is taken from various articles, books, podcasts and letters from viewers. Consideration for what message to deliver and how it will impact the audience is a major part of the development process.

“I want change,” Holmes said. “How can I create an interview or segment that will challenge others to change?”

Those chosen to represent The Tank go through a meticulous interview process. Their history and character prior to The TANK position becoming available is more important than the technical skills they possess.

“The technical aspect of teaching the software, how to use the system — you can teach that. You cannot teach a person how to be the person they need to be before they get into that position,” Polunsky Chaplain S. Hubler said.



The Tank records a podcast.

Ladies of the Tank Blazes Trail

By August 2022, development was underway for a women’s version of the original podcast: the Ladies of the Tank at the O’Daniel Unit.

“The door of opportunity this job provided is much bigger than just me,” radio station operator Rosalyn “Boss Roz” Burdett said. “It was unprecedented. It was blazing a brand-new trail, and we were the first. I was honored to be a part of that.”

Gateway Ministries sponsored the Ladies of the Tank, providing them with professional grade Blackmagic Pocket Cinema 4K cameras, a Canon digital camera, two GoPro cameras and video editing capabilities with DaVinci Resolve software.

“Gateway brought the equipment and dropped it off,” Burdett said. “We said that the next time they come back, they are going to expect results. So, we just dove in.”

continued on next page



continued from previous page

The team began to develop programming that would reflect the community it represented. The “First Ladies” became a cornerstone segment presented by Burdett, Strength Through Restoration, Independence, Vision and Empowerment (STRIVE) mentors, life coaches, peer support specialists and faith-based dorm mentors.

“We wanted to represent the community as a whole and become a voice for our female region,” Burdett said. “We talk about what’s on our heart and what’s important to our listeners.”

“The Spread,” a cooking segment, was conceptualized from the very beginning. We started off gathering recipes from *The ECHO* and Misty Weaver, one of the other crew members, would demonstrate making them,” Burdett said. “We discovered it would be much more fun to bring our community into it, so we opened it up for everyone to bring their own recipes.”

Burdett said the feedback has been tremendous as viewers write and share the impact of the Ladies of the Tank, along with their personal testimonies.

“It’s humbling,” Burdett said. “I may not know exactly what is going on in their lives, but for that day, that moment, they had some hope. They had some good news. They had something to look forward to, and maybe that’s exactly what they needed to get through whatever they are going through.”

The team invites others to contribute from across their region.

“We receive content from other units and that’s great, because [the podcast] is not just about this unit, but our entire region,” Burdett said.



Rosalyn “Boss Roz” Burdett works in the Ladies of the Tank recording/production studio.

“

“We are trying to provide, through precepts and principles, how to overcome difficulties and challenge a distorted culture,” Hines said.

”

MI City Radio Joins The Tank 104.9

A collaboration between Gateway Church and 90.9 KCBI sparked the beginning of the radio station at the Michael Unit. Resident Brandon Woodruff, a volunteer at the Michael Unit Chapel of Hope, was one of the first selected to become a radio station operator.

“When they asked me if I wanted the job, I didn’t hesitate for even a second,” Woodruff said. “I knew this was something special I could pour myself into and something that could be even bigger than myself.”

The team at MI City wanted the identity of the station to be meaningful and have an impact. It ultimately chose “Free on the Inside” as the mission statement.

“This is a powerful messaging platform,” Jason Hall said. “Through this platform, we have the ability to reach the masses, not just individuals on the unit, but throughout the system, giving them hope, inspiration and encouragement.”

By embracing the MI City philosophy of being a city within

continued on next page

continued from previous page

itself, the unit cultivates a strong sense of community and accountability for its residents.

“Looking at it as a community where we are functioning together and understanding in order to be a good citizen out there [in society], you must start by being a good citizen here,” radio station operator Antonio Martinez said.

The transition into podcasting and visual media took time. The team was challenged to present content that would be different and refreshing.

Perseverance paid off as the team reached out for sponsors and presented heart-provoking content like “Enough is Enough,” with the goal of combating substance use.

“If the culture is going to change, then ultimately the people need to change,” radio station operator Wesley Hines said.

The team has presented a no-nonsense approach to submitting content ideas by being unwilling to compromise the platform.

“It’s not easy to tell people no, but we can’t provide a spotlight to someone who prioritizes bad character or has a lack of integrity,” Hall said. “This is an awesome platform, and we have the ability to help people on a mass scale, but we must protect it as well.”

One of the newest segments, “Cross Culture,” explores various organizational culture issues faced during incarceration and evaluating how these issues can serve as an impediment to long-term growth and personal development.

“We are trying to provide, through precepts and principles, how to overcome difficulties and challenge a distorted culture,” Hines said.

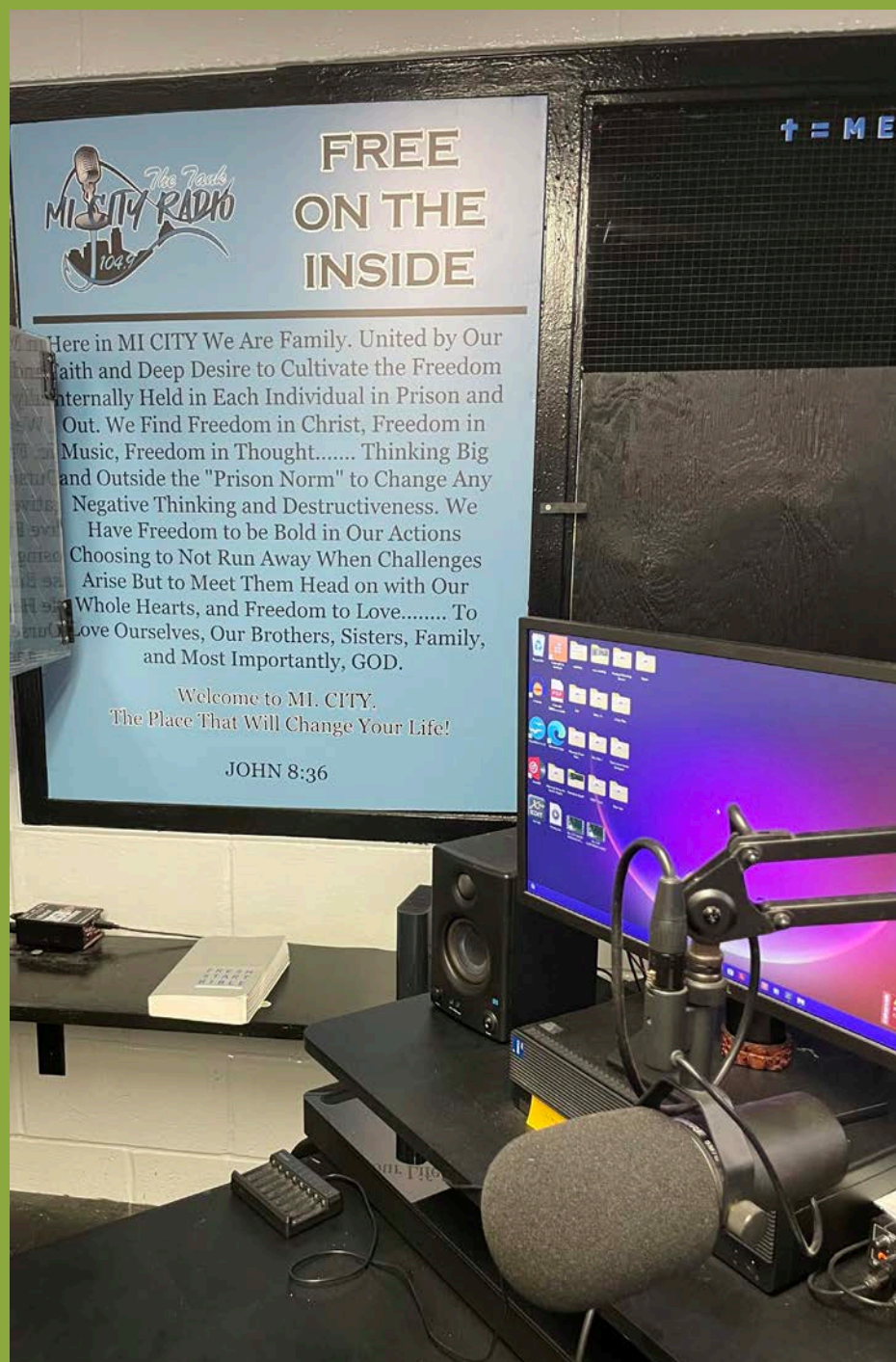
Changing Perspectives

The podcast platform provides viewers with real life success stories of experience, strength and hope. It allows residents to become part of the community and demonstrate citizenship on a larger scale.

“One of the biggest lessons I’ve learned through this experience is to never get stuck in a box,” Woodruff said. “When you allow yourself to think big, to be bold and to pursue positive change with all your heart, incredible things can happen.” €



MI City Radio recording/production studio



Organization Empowers Women Reentering Communities

By Ashley Morrison | ECHO Staff

Empowering Women Out of Prison (EWOP) is a nonprofit organization offering entrepreneurship and leadership development for women within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). For those curious about the program and ready for positive change, Executive Director P. Thomure and Director of Programs C. Trujillo offered advice, encouragement and answers to popular questions.

“We’re teaching them to find their personal purpose,” Thomure said.

EWOP began in 2019 at the Coleman Unit. It is a year-long entrepreneurship and leadership program, which covers multiple topics including personal vulnerability, business plans, marketing, reentry planning, communication and time management. These

skills are built upon the desires residents have to positively change — a key component both Thomure and Trujillo look for in applicants.

“The desire to take your goal or to have a dream and be able to make it a reality [are qualities we look for in an applicant],” Trujillo said. “Whether that is to better yourself, your family and your children or just have a clear path past incarceration and be able to take something from the past. [We want our participants] to make something beautiful of it.”

Thomure agreed.

“It’s important to us to make sure [the applicant] is a good fit,” Thomure said. “If they have too many years left, then they are learning current business skills that might be outdated by the time [they reenter society]. We look at their five-year projected release date window ... but sometimes we will look at the situation.”

With approximately 1,000 to 1,500 applicants a year, many details are taken into consideration for the approximately 100 seats available. Residents of EWOP share living quarters, class time, community and a journey. Thomure encouraged women filling out the application to be honest.

“A lot of people are afraid to answer it honestly — don’t be,” Thomure said. “We want to know your truth, because if we don’t know what your situation is or was, we can’t help you.”

The guidance EWOP offers residents starts within TDCJ and follows residents as needed when reentering the community. According to Thomure, graduates of EWOP have a 0% recidivism rate at the time of publication. Some have used their skills to start their own

continued on next page



EWOP Class 6 members participate in class at the Coleman Unit.

continued from previous page

business, while others have simply stuck to their career path goals and have reunited with family.

“We have a bunch of transitional housing partners throughout the state of Texas that we encourage our women to apply to,” Trujillo said. “We help them with transportation. Do they have a way of getting around? Can they get to parole? That’s the number one thing. Are they going to be in compliance with their parole stipulations, food security and clothing? So, we make a plan while they’re [residents]. Once [in the community], we hold them accountable to that plan.”

EWOP helps its graduates find housing, employment and more necessities during and after the reentry process. Mothers who have been successful in the community for at least six months and

have a stable job and budget may qualify for Caring for Kids — a program that assists mothers in supporting and raising their children after reentry.

Thomure and Trujillo have felt a positive impact from being a part of EWOP and watching so many women who were once residents of TDCJ become successful members of their community.

“The blessing for me is just seeing people be successful,” Thomure said. “[The graduates] come back and inspire the women behind them; that’s phenomenal. A greater impact than we could ever make is for somebody to come back and say, ‘You can do it too.’”

Trujillo agreed, saying it is impactful to see participants put their skills into action from their first interview through their transformation and all the way to graduation.

The assistance EWOP provides was founded by B. Smith, former chief executive officer of the Prison Entrepreneurship Program (PEP) for men. PEP has been in operation for almost 20 years and is currently offered at the Estes and Lychner units. Men and women interested in participating in PEP and EWOP can obtain an application from their unit chaplain. The address is provided on the application for either truck mail or United States Postal Service.

“One of the things that I would encourage people to do is don’t give up,” Thomure said. “We’re taking applications all year long.” €



EWOP participants in the Dare to Lead Workshop, facilitated by The Center for Change & Conflict Resolution, prepare for reentry success.

Diving Deeper:

Empowering Women Out of Prison, Q&A with Executive Director P. Thomure

Q: What does Empowering Women Out of Prison (EWOP) do?

Thomure: Women stay with us for up to a year. During the leadership and entrepreneurship academies, we're teaching participants to find their personal purpose and to write down their goals, their values and a hundred dreams. They write their eulogies day one. And so, we really want them to think about what their futures look like...During the first three months, we talk about vulnerability and transparency and how to use that in the [community]. And then in the second semester, they create an idea; they think about what they might like to do if they want to start a business. They write a business plan; they're learning marketing, finances, all the things related to business planning and they compete like Shark Tank in front of a "celebrity panel" of judges. Then, they graduate at the end of one year and get a certificate of entrepreneurship. If they graduate, do well and want to stay with us longer, they can apply to be servant leaders. Once they graduate, they have reentry services. They're already starting their reentry planning the day they start up...we help them with various things related to the pillars of good reentry.

Q: What are some specific requirements applicants should know about?

Thomure: You have to have a high school diploma or high school equivalency (HSE) certificate. If you apply to come to our program and you don't have those things, we're going to come back and encourage you to enroll with Windham to get an HSE or your high school diploma, because it is college-level curricula. You are unable to apply if you have had a minor case in the past six months or a major case in the past 12 months. We encourage people by saying, "Go do well, be motivated to not have any problems for a year, then come back and reapply." Another [requirement] that we have is [residents] come to us within that five-year window because of the projected reentry date."

Q: Do you have any success stories you'd like to share regarding EWOP graduates?

Thomure: As of today, we have 18 graduates who have started businesses. The types of businesses include everything from a food truck to senior adult care. A few women had app-related businesses and those are doing great. Many of our graduates create businesses that help others as a way of giving back to their communities.

Q: What is the meaning behind your emblem?

Thomure: The infinity circle in our logo was created by women in incarceration participating in the Prison Entrepreneurship Program pilot class of 2018. The meaning behind it represents unbreakable strength, endless possibilities for transformation and second chances, as well as continuing the journey of giving back to others coming behind them and the communities they return to. €



An EWOP participant presents in a Business Plan Competition.

Ian Bick Brings New Energy to Traditional Storytelling

By Quincy Patterson | ECHO Staff

Ian Bick, a noted podcaster and content creator, recently visited the Texas Department of Criminal Justice to share his story and serve as keynote speaker for the Change Agent graduation at the Wynne Unit. In 2022, while working at Whole Foods, he started making prison-related content on TikTok. He left Whole Foods in 2023 to begin a podcast called Locked In With Ian Bick, which discusses prison culture, crime and rehabilitation. His content has been viewed by millions of people across various social media platforms.

In response to the ever-growing number of podcasters across the world, Bick provided practical advice based on his own experiences.

“I always tell people who want to get into content media to use their story,” Bick said. “The world may be saturated with prison content, but it is not saturated with unique individual stories.”

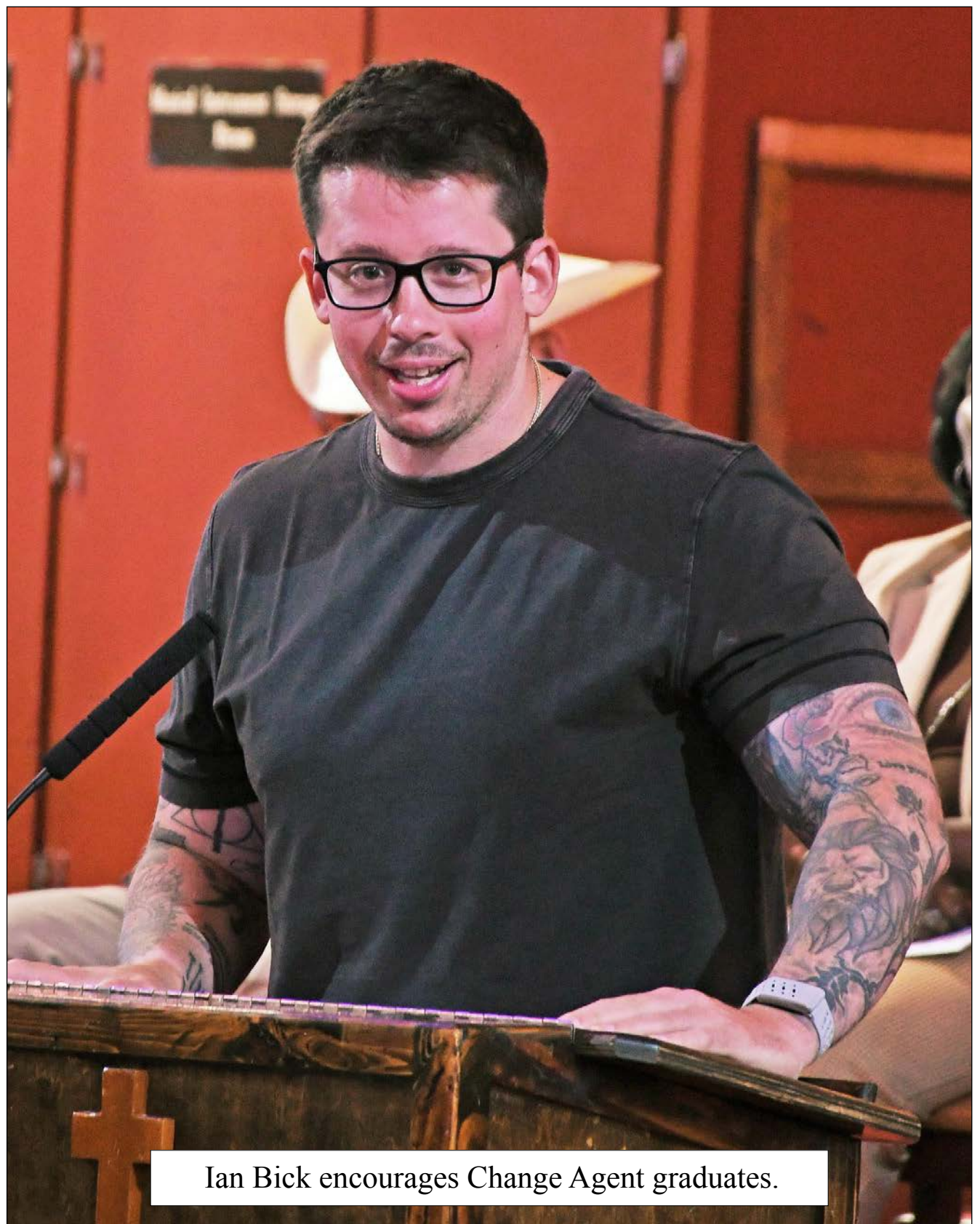
Bick’s entrepreneurial mindset stood out early when he operated a lemonade stand as a child and mowed lawns. At 18, he became the owner and manager of a nightclub.

His life story took a downturn on Oct. 26, 2016, when he was sentenced to 36 months in federal prison. A federal jury convicted him at age 21 of six counts of wire fraud and one count of money laundering.

He completed his sentence, and once released, thoughts of

shame and rejection kept him from speaking on his experiences in prison. Instead, he only told stories about being a club owner as a teenager.

During the pandemic, Bick began to share his entire story without leaving out his experiences from his incarceration. He said that is when his story became authentic, interesting and viral.



Ian Bick encourages Change Agent graduates.

continued on next page

continued from previous page

“Authenticity is the secret to the content game because a lot of people try to be something they are not,” Bick said. “Most viewers can tell whether someone is being authentic or not. In my case, I used a very vulnerable part of my incarceration story, and people loved the authenticity. Stories which most people would never share gives the audience a different perspective, and it is fresh.

At first, I did not tell my entire story, but to my surprise, the first time I talked about my prison experience it became a success. I sat the phone down, picked it up an hour later, and found it had over one million viewers. I had over three or four million viewers in the next few days. Since that day, I never missed a day posting on social media,” Bick said.

He realized that by being sincere when telling his story, people empathized and gained the confidence to tell their own stories.

“One of the most rewarding experiences about my work on the podcast is giving people an opportunity to tell their stories. I allow the guest to talk, and I only speak when they need assistance. By being a voice, I discovered my own passion: giving others a voice,” Bick said.

Bick’s podcast platform is based on stories of redemption which are therapeutic and revealing of human nature. He said his method leads others down a trail of finding their own voices, support and redemption from carrying the weight of the past alone. His work revives the potency in traditional storytelling.

As a podcaster, Bick found his passion, and he encouraged residents to find that for themselves.

“Finding your passion in life is so important,” Bick said. “If you commit to anything else, you will not be satisfied. Even people who have a six-figure job may not be fulfilled, and they will eventually get burned out if it is not their passion.” €



“Most viewers can tell whether someone is being authentic or not. In my case, I used a very vulnerable part of my incarceration story, and people loved the authenticity. Stories which most people would never share gives the audience a different perspective, and it is fresh.”

Wynne Hosts Talent Show



Roger Hinds



Charlton McCree



Adrian Olivarri and Brandon Lee



Singer Brandon Zachary won first place in the Wynne Unit's recent talent show. Attendees were treated to a variety of entertainment, ranging from comedy skits to musical performances, including a parody of a daytime talk show. See more special events and accomplishments in The Lace Up. €

The Change Agent:

New Coffee Beans Celebrate 13th Cohort Graduation at Wynne

By Robert L. Gonzales | ECHO Staff

Cohort 13 of the Change Agent program recently hosted its graduation at the Wynne Unit, celebrating the most recent graduates' decisions to become Coffee Beans.

"You're equipped with the message of the Coffee Bean," "The Coffee Bean" book author Damon West reminded the graduates during his words of encouragement. "The coffee bean is powerful — is it not?"

The foundation of this program is based on the philosophy of choosing to affect one's environment in a positive way, rather than being affected by it in a negative way.

"I believe change can happen because I'm a result of it," West said. "I was able to change myself in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, but it's something I have to work on every single day."

Graduate speaker Vincent Smith told a story about his childhood, reflecting on the value of positively impacting the environment by guiding the next generation (See related article in this issue). Special guest speaker and podcast host Ian Bick shared his perspective on the value of consistency, which he called the most important lesson in his life. (See related article in this issue.) Bick said consistent commitment to his chosen path of sharing authentic stories has determined his current level of success. Reinforcing his primary message, Bick communicated how his

journey has allowed him to experience personal purpose, increasing his sense of self-worth.

Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division (CVSD) Deputy Director Ruby Davis expressed her pride in the graduating cohort and her gratitude to the graduates' family members and friends in attendance, thanking them for their support and commitment.

CVSD Director Christopher Carter closed out the commencement, thanking every participant for their contribution to the program. He also gave everyone in attendance additional words of encouragement.

"Embracing the characteristics of a coffee bean means you will never quit. You have to have determination, optimism and grit," Carter said. "Determination: nothing is going to stop me. Optimism: I am the one. And grit: unyielding courage." At the conclusion of the ceremony, graduates enjoyed visits with their loved ones.

Graduates of the 13th cohort of Change Agent are: Issac Barboza, Kemeiom Ja Brooks, Darron Byrd, Benino De La Garza, Gary Gordon, Jerome Green, Wesley Guillard, Scott Guinyard, Davante Hedge, Donal Hewitt, Jason Hubacek, Moses Johnson, Ricky Johnson, Ulysses Lee, Tate Lewis, Mike Mathews, Michael Najera, Marlin Nelson, Richard Nichols, Tommie Nicholson, Steven Oliver, Uvaldo Ramos, Freddy Silvas, Vincent Smith, Curtis Stafford, Marvin Stafford, Domingo Trujillo, Jose Villarreal III and Quintin Wheatley. €



Change Agent's 13th cohort is honored by supporters, trainers and loved ones at the Wynne Unit.

Change Agent Guest Speakers

Provide Inspiration

Author's Note: The Change Agent program has guided approximately 400 participants to a more productive way of thinking, feeling, saying and doing. The program also provides graduation ceremonies with a wide variety of speakers, from current National Football League (NFL) quarterbacks and coaches to parole board members, brilliant artists, movie screenwriters and businessmen involved with billion-dollar companies. Here are inspirational quotes from speeches delivered over the last five years:

By Todd R. Carman | ECHO Staff

“Learning starts with failure and always leads to an opportunity to change, and change is the end result of all true learning,” **then-Texas Parole Board Member Carmella Jones** said. “Continue to make the decisions regarding change, and it will change your life. Continue to make wise choices.”



“I’m a big believer in paying it forward,” **David Aaron Cohen**, Hollywood screenwriter of such movies as “Friday Night Lights,” “The Devil’s Own” and “American Underdog” said. “I really feel a responsibility to pay it forward to help people whenever I can.”



“This program, the Change Agent, to be a ‘Coffee Bean’ — this is the epitome of [purpose]. It says, ‘I believe in you,’” **Dallas Cowboys quarterback Dak Prescott** said. “What Damon [West] has done with this program is give you a vision of what you can be, of what you can accomplish, because sometimes it’s hard in life to become something you’ve never seen. ... What’s really special is that now you guys have that chance, the opportunity to bring hope, inspiration and change to others — to become a Coffee Bean to those around you, to show others how far you’ve come and to inspire them to say, ‘I can be like that man. I can do that, too.’”

“I realized that my purpose is to serve others with everything I’ve been through in life,” **Prescott** said at another graduation. “Being an NFL quarterback was really just for God to use me to make a difference. Every day that I’m serving my family, serving you men or serving the game of football, that is truly where my happiness comes from.”



continued on next page

“We all make choices,” Notre Dame football legend Daniel “Rudy” Ruettiger said. “My life changed when I made the choice to think good thoughts, but first I had to stop thinking goofy thoughts. The first thing I would tell you is quit listening to the goofy things that control your mind. Get good thoughts in your mind and your life changes for the better.”



“Whatever path you go down in life, whether it be work or relationships, you have to be consistent,” Ian Bick, successful entrepreneur, podcaster and former Federal Bureau of Prisons resident said. “You also have to find your passion. If you have a six figure, seven figure or eight figure job and it’s not your passion, you will eventually get burned out.”

“It’s not about how you fall — it’s how you get up,” Kim Stroud, mother of NFL quarterback C.J. Stroud said. “Everyone has fallen, and anyone who says they haven’t fallen is lying, because we’ve all fallen in one way or another. We’ve all disappointed people in one way or another.”



“This class is about changing our thinking and understanding the power of influence,” former resident, published author and aspiring actor Elkanah Hendrix said. “Influence is one of the most powerful forces in nature. How so? ... By altering behaviors without being noticed. We are the sum total of the five people closest to us — our circle of influence.”

“One of the saddest things I’ve seen in life as a coach is wasted talent,” football coach and accomplished actor Scot Ruggles said. “You have to put in the effort to tap into talent and be the best you can be.”



continued on next page

“**T**he winning edge is finding opportunity in adversity and the obstacles in front of you,” **former NFL Kansas City Chiefs coach and recovery activist Britt Reid** said. “Some of the greatest seeds in life can be planted inside these walls.”



“**I** believe that things happen for you and not to you,” **Sarah Jane Ramos, model, mother and community servant** said. “Everything in a person’s life happens for a reason, and it is their responsibility to discover what that is. The important thing is embracing it. If you shift your mindset to search out where the bigger lesson is, even in the negative things, it will eventually become a good thing in your mind.”



“**I**’m a good believer in we are responsible for everything — things don’t happen to you, they happen for you,” **Bruce Cardenas, an entrepreneur who was part of Quest, a business that sold for \$1 billion**, said. “Your darkest day is not the end of the world, no matter how you feel. Build relationships here, because you never know where you’re going to end up. Realize that there is light at the end of the tunnel.”

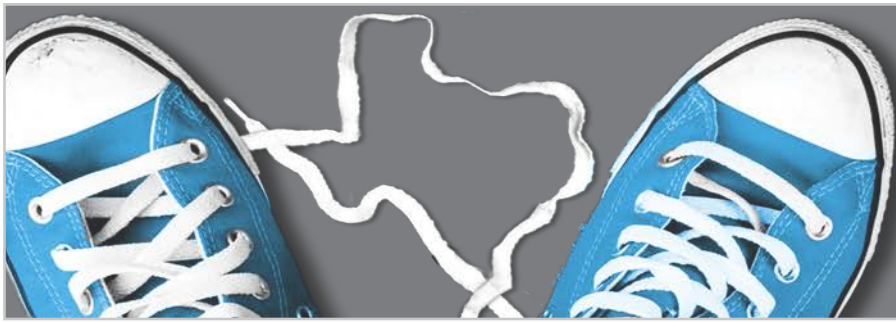


“**S**uccessful reentry begins the day we walk into prison,” **Damon West, former Texas Department of Criminal Justice resident, published author, motivational speaker and creator of the Change Agent program** said. “If you want a life different than before [you came to prison], then you have to be prepared to do things you haven’t done before — that’s what this class is about. You are also most qualified to help the person that you once were. In order to help the person you once were, you have to become the best person you can be, and that’s going to take changing the way we think.”



“**T**he power of what starts in your mind can become real in this world,” **performance artist David Garibaldi** said. “It’s the whole Coffee Bean concept.”

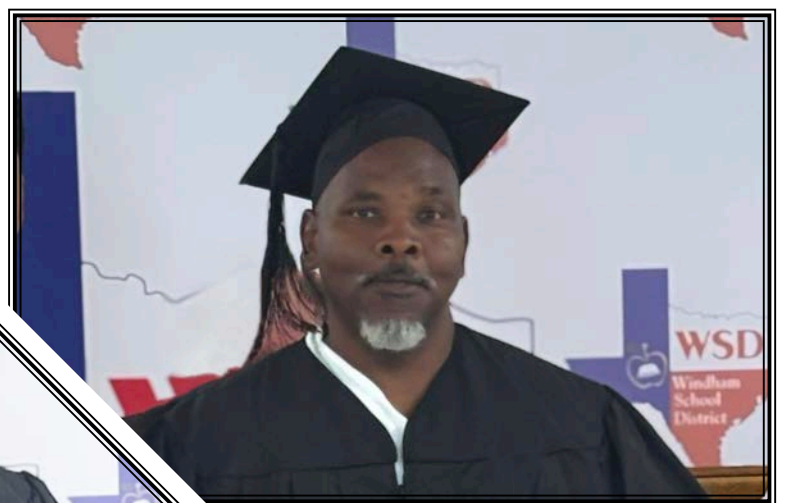


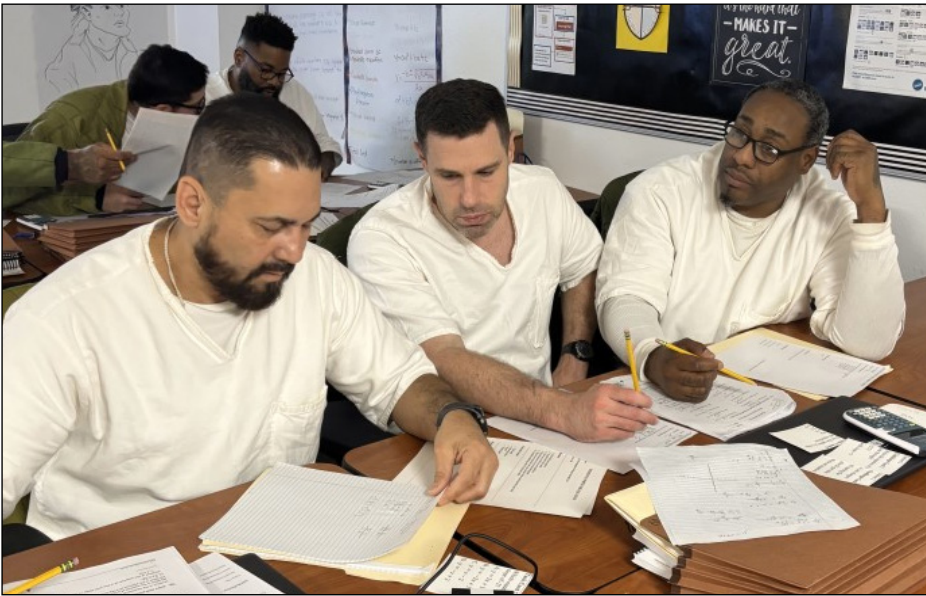


BARTLETT CAMPUS

Bartlett Celebrates Renewable Energy Graduates

Graduates from the Windham School District (Windham) Renewable Energy program were honored in a recent ceremony at the Bartlett campus. Five graduates earned their Renewable Energy career and technical education (CTE) certificates, and one graduate earned his Department of Labor Certificate of Completion of Apprenticeship.





BARTLETT CAMPUS

Bartlett Honors Peer Tutors

During a recent ceremony, 13 new peer tutors were honored at the Bartlett campus. They received a certificate of completion, Occupational Safety and Health Administration 10-hour certificates and Southwest Airlines Professional Communication certifications after completing the Peer Tutor Program.

BETO UNIT

Program Supports Veterans

By Josue Garcia Morales | Beto Unit Reporter

The Military Veteran Support Group program at the Beto Unit helps veterans in incarceration prepare for a successful reentry into the community. The program engages participants in a constructive and rehabilitative manner through classes focusing on topics including anger management, post-traumatic stress disorder and reentry. The goal is to provide veterans with a peaceful environment where they can recover from past experiences and acquire the skills necessary to be positive members of their community.



Coleman Campus Honors Graduates

The Coleman campus celebrated 79 graduates in a graduation ceremony. Windham graduates received their Texas Certificate of High School Equivalency (HSE) or Business Information Management certificates, and graduates from the Goodwill Excel Center received their high school diplomas.



Valedictorian



CTE Representative



Salutatorian



Salutatorian



CONNALLY CAMPUS

Connally Campus Celebrates Goodwill Graduates

In a ceremony, the Connally campus celebrated a combined Windham and Goodwill Excel Center graduation. Nine graduates received their HSE certificates and 25 graduates received their high school diplomas through the Goodwill Excel Center, surrounded by staff and loved ones.



CRAIN UNIT

Residents Participate In Softball Game

The Crain Crushers faced off against the Hill-top Trailblazers in an exciting softball game at the Crain Unit trusty camp field. The Crain Crushers secured a 7-4 victory, with both teams enjoying the experience and looking forward to their next game.



ELLIS CAMPUS

Ellis, Huntsville Campuses Celebrate Graduates

In a combined ceremony, the Ellis and Huntsville campuses celebrated 22 Windham graduates. Fifteen graduates earned their HSE certificates, and seven graduates earned their apprenticeship certificates as assembly technicians, horseshoers and a building maintenance repairer.



Valedictorian



Salutatorian



Apprenticeship Graduate



HODGE CAMPUS

Hodge Campus Celebrates Graduates

The Hodge campus celebrated its most recent Windham graduates, with six individuals receiving their HSE certificates and four receiving their CTE certificates in Introduction to Culinary Arts.



JOHNSTON CAMPUS

Johnston Campus Celebrates First Telecommunication Connectivity Graduates

The Johnston campus honored over 20 graduates during a recent graduation ceremony. Alongside graduates earning their HSE certificates, the campus also celebrated its first Telecommunication Connectivity graduates.



JORDAN CAMPUS

Jordan Campus Hosts Annual Family Literacy Day

The Jordan campus recently hosted its annual Family Literacy Day. Children reunited with their fathers, engaging in literacy-focused and bonding activities.



MURRAY UNIT

Murray Unit Celebrates CLS, Above and Beyond Graduations

In a joint ceremony, the Murray Unit celebrated graduates of the Above and Beyond and Cognitive Life Skills programs.



Cognitive Life Skills Graduates



Above and Beyond Graduates

MURRAY CAMPUS



High School Salutatorian



High School Valedictorian

Murray Campus Honors Graduates

The Murray campus celebrated its most recent graduates in a ceremony. Staff and family watched 34 Windham graduates walk the stage. Ten Jovita González de Mireles High School graduates received their diplomas, nine graduates received their HSE certificates and 16 CTE certificates were collectively awarded to Electrical, Graphic Arts and Welding graduates.



PACK UNIT

Muslim Residents Celebrate Eid

By Quintrick Bickham | Pack Unit Reporter

Residents at the Pack Unit celebrated the Muslim holiday of Eid. The sermon given centered on the story of the prophet Ibrahim (Abraham) and his son Ismail (Ishmael). It emphasized the qualities of faith, obedience, sacrifice, gratitude, responsibility and devotion.

The sermon was followed by a meal filled with fellowship and conversation.

“This celebration empowers me,” resident Wilbert Lee Jr. said. “The Muslim community here at the Wallace Pack Unit means a lot to me. We support one another and help each other stay focused on becoming better men.”



SAYLE CAMPUS

Sayle Students Learn Construction Site Safety

Students at the Sayle campus completed the campus' first Construction Site Safety Orientation class, with students learning about construction site safety and how to use construction tools appropriately.



WILLACY CAMPUS

Willacy Students Conduct Experiment

Students at the Willacy campus recently participated in an engaging and hands-on lab day, led by Windham academic teacher M. Vasquez, integrating science inquiry with reading and analytical skills. The focus of the lab was understanding how matter moves across a semi-permeable membrane through the process of osmosis.

During the lab, students observed the movement of substances across a membrane and collected data using organized tables. They also applied mathematical reasoning to calculate percentage changes within their system. To deepen their understanding, students read and analyzed a passage on the mechanics of osmosis, strengthening both their scientific knowledge and literacy skills.



WYNNE CAMPUS

Graduates Earn Apprenticeship Certificates

Graduates at the Wynne campus celebrated the completion of their apprenticeship program during a recent graduation ceremony. Graduates completed the Assembly Technician, Computer Peripheral Equipment Operator and Truck Driver Heavy apprenticeship programs.



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 reassemble.
- 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

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 code 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 (one year full-time attendance before becoming 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 action 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 IWTP. All transfers are subject to current eligibility requirements and agency approval.

All eligible workers are encouraged to apply.

MI City Podcast Highlights Recovery: 'Sobriety is Contagious'

By Steven Hamilton
Staff Writer

“The person who has one year of sobriety started with one day. Staying sober is a daily [walk] for someone who has struggled with addiction. We are willing to celebrate even one day of being sober if it [can lead] to two days,” said Jason Hall, host of MI City Radio, and one of the producers of a video featured on Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ) residents' tablets: “Sobriety is Contagious.”

When former TDCJ Region II Director E. Holmes visited the Michael Unit and asked MI City how the station could help to address the drug problem that has become more pervasive over the last decade, the team was inspired to dig deep. The resulting video feature, “Enough is Enough,” was earlier released on the tablet's FYI app, and the producers feel it inspired some residents to take a hard and honest look at themselves, leading to real conversations about sobriety.

Conversation Continues

With the release of “Sobriety is Contagious” on the Edovo app (under TDCJ content), the conversation is continuing. The video intends to convey that sobriety, no matter the length of time, is something that should be celebrated. It also intends to foster empathy for those struggling with addiction. The goal is that the determination and hope of those who are actively recovering can serve as inspiration — and become contagious.

MI City's original idea for the “Sobriety is Contagious” video stemmed from a brief exchange Hall had with another resident. Their idea was to talk on camera about the resident's journey to sobriety. The young man he spoke to never followed through on the invitation, and Hall was left to consider other solutions MI City could offer to promote sobriety. He found inspiration in singer Jelly Roll's “I'm Good,” one of the songs that would later be featured in the video.

Widespread Support

Michael Unit Warden N. Martin was supportive of the vision behind the video and allowed MI City hosts Hall, Brandon Woodruff and contributors Anthony Martinez and Wesley Hines to film around the facility. The creators said everyone who was approached and asked to participate was excited to encourage other residents on their sobriety journey. The team also invited former residents now involved in ministries to share their testimonies. The video is a celebration of recovery, but it also illustrates that addiction does not discriminate.

“People everywhere ... have struggles, so we selected participants to show that and to further encourage people to continue on their recovery journey,” Woodruff said. “We need to create a culture of acceptance and understanding ... with the knowledge that addiction is a disease.”

Recovery Resources

Programming encouraging sobriety is also found in other areas of residents' tablets. The tablets offer a variety of recovery conversations, including features in the Edovo app under TDCJ content. MI City, Ladies of the Tank and TANK Nation offer recovery programming and podcasts, including information about the Recovery Support Peer Specialist program and Recovery Housing Opportunity Program (RHOP).

The Ladies of the Tank podcast recently offered a multi-part Recovery Rising series spotlighting RHOP mentors and support coaches from the O'Daniel Unit. The series gives impactful advice and commentary for people in recovery and for those seeking help. The TANK Nation podcasts have also featured “Celebrate Recovery” activities, a special “Recovery Rally” at the Polunsky Unit and coverage of TDCJ's “Stop the Drugs” rallies, which are sponsored across the state by TDCJ's Chaplaincy and Volunteer Services Division, under the leadership of Director C. Carter.

MI City's podcasters said the inspiration for “Sobriety is Contagious” occurred when “The Sit-Down” series featured a conversation with TDCJ Rehabilitation and Reentry Division Director A. Zamora. They talked about substance use challenges in TDCJ and ways they can be constructively

addressed. In part one of the podcast, Zamora said, “Sobriety is contagious,” while discussing the mission of RHOP housing at units. This statement was adapted as the title of the MI City video featuring residents, staff and volunteers celebrating the amount of time they have been substance-free.



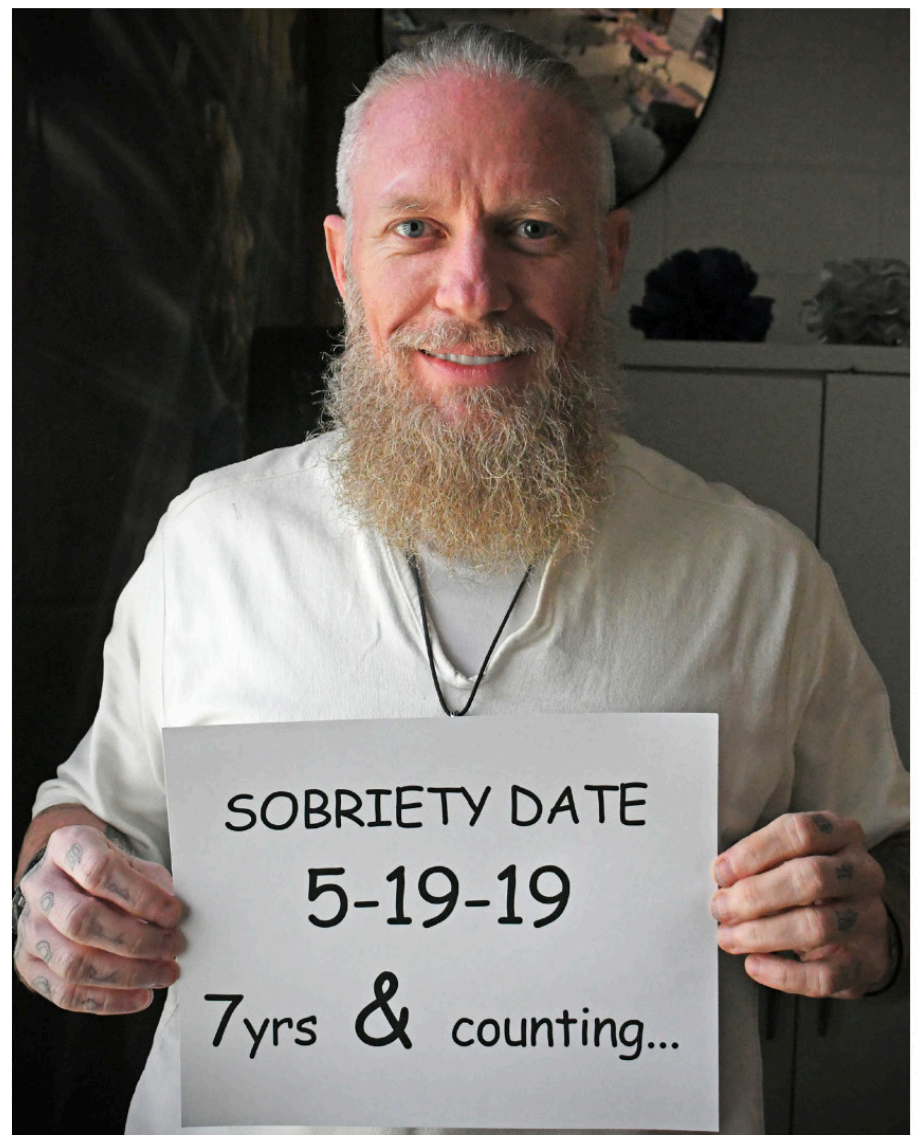
continued on next page

The intent and message of the “Sobriety is Contagious” video starts with the title, is carried by the inspirational music and is evident in the expressions of the participants. The producers believe someone reclaiming their life from substance use has an energy and joy that is evident and easily detected by others. This video displays the decision and resolve of participants to be sober, applauding the effort it takes to continue leading a sober life.

“When a person is working on their sobriety, we should celebrate it with no stigma attached,” MI City’s Woodruff said “The joy and hope will be so radiant that everyone around will see the

change, and it will become contagious. Unit by unit, city by city, we want to make being sober the new norm and by doing that, we will change the entire culture.”

Editor’s Note: “Sobriety is Contagious” is a powerful outreach to everyone struggling with addiction or fighting to maintain sobriety. The courageous participation of residents and TDCJ staff aims to encourage healing. Residents are also encouraged to take advantage of opportunities and resources TDCJ offers to aid in recovery. Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous programs, Celebrate Recovery and other chaplaincy programs are available on many units. TDCJ’s RHOP is also expanding across the agency. €



"When a person is working on their sobriety, we should celebrate it..."



HOUSTON TEXANS

One Man's Dream, One City's Pride

By William Hill

Contributing Writer — Wynne Unit

Since the Seattle Seahawks defeated the New England Patriots 29-13 in Super Bowl LX, I have been subjected to watching a seemingly never-ending litany of non-entertaining sports. Of course, by non-entertaining, I mean non-football. I watched the New York Knicks finally win their first basketball title in more than 50 years. I struggled to keep my eyes open while watching the Carolina Hurricanes skate off with the hockey championship. I cheered wildly as the Texas Longhorns Women's Softball team won its second consecutive softball championship. Finally, the sports gods have granted me the opportunity to witness another National Football League (NFL) season. Hallelujah!

In separate articles, I have written about the history of the NFL and then how America's Team, the Dallas Cowboys, came to be. In all the excitement, I completely forgot to write about the Houston Texans. In my defense, the

Texans have been so unremarkable, it is easy to forget about them.

It is simply impossible to write about the Texans without first mentioning their predecessors — the Houston Oilers. The Oilers began their existence in 1960 in Lamar Hunt's fledgling American Football League (AFL). The AFL and the NFL merged in 1966 to form one league, and Houston had its first NFL team. The Oilers enjoyed some success in the 1970s during the Earl Campbell era; however, they kept falling short of the Super Bowl. While Oilers fans shouted "Luv Ya Blue!" at their team, the city of Houston did not feel the same way. They refused to give owner Kenneth Stanley "Bud" Adams Jr. a new stadium, and he moved the team to Nashville, Tennessee as the rebranded Tennessee Titans.

There is an old adage that says when one door closes, another one will open. That is certainly true for Houston businessman Bob McNair's efforts to bring a professional team to his city. Originally, he wanted to bring a National Hockey League (NHL) team

to Houston, but the NHL turned him down. Undaunted by that rejection, he set his sights on an expansion NFL team. His presentation was so well done that then NFL commissioner Paul Tagliabue praised it at the league's annual owners' meeting that year. The NFL's choice for its 32nd team came down to a decision between Houston or Los Angeles. At the league's owner meeting in Atlanta on Oct. 6, 1999, the vote was 29-0 to award the new franchise to McNair for the paltry sum of \$700 million.

McNair's ownership group partnered with NFL Properties to conduct research to determine what the team's name should be. After months of online surveys, the choices had been narrowed down to five: the Apollos, Bobcats, Stallions, Texans and Wildcatters. On Sept. 6, 2000, the team announced at a downtown rally that the NFL's newest franchise would be the Houston Texans.

"The team name and logo were chosen to embody the pride, strength, independence and achievement that make the



people of Houston and our area special,” McNair explained as the reasoning that went into the decision.

The name Texans was not an original idea since it had been used in the past by several now defunct football teams. These included the San Antonio franchise of the Canadian Football League, a World Football League team in Houston and two iterations of the Dallas Texans, the latter one which became the Kansas City Chiefs. Hunt, the owner of the Chiefs, gave McNair his blessing to use the Texans name. The name also represents McNair’s honoring of his first love — hockey — and the Montreal Canadians, which also used their respective demonym (which is a noun used to denote the natives or inhabitants of a particular country, state, city, etc.).

The team’s logo is a stylized depiction of a bull’s head split to resemble both the Texas state flag and the shape of Texas itself. The bull represents the state’s history of ranching, which was a major part of its economy. The lone star of the flag depicts the eye of the bull and the five points represent pride, courage, strength, tradition and independence. Personally, I think the star is a tribute to the Dallas Cowboys. McNair described the team’s colors as “Deep Steel Blue,” “Battle Red” and “Liberty White.”

One of McNair’s most important decisions after becoming an NFL owner was to hire Charley Casserly as the team’s first executive vice president/general manager. Casserly had spent the previous 10 seasons with the then-Washington Redskins in the same role where he helped build three Super Bowl winning teams.

During the Texans 25 seasons, they have employed eight head coaches and had the number one draft pick three times. Casserly hired Dom Capers as head coach of the Texans in January 2001 even though the organization would not field a team until 2002. Leading an expansion team was nothing new to Capers, who had previously served as head coach of the Carolina Panthers during their first four seasons in the league.

The Texans’ first quarter of a century has been a roller coaster ride with exhilarating highs and gut-wrenching lows. The team selected quarterback David Carr from Fresno State University with the first overall pick of the 2002 NFL draft. The



high point of the team’s first season came in their opening game on Sept. 8, 2002 when they defeated their in-state rivals, the Dallas Cowboys, 19-10. It marked the first time that an expansion team won its first game since the Minnesota Vikings defeated the Chicago Bears in 1961. Unfortunately for Capers, that victory was one of the few bright spots during his four-year tenure at the helm of the Texans.

After firing Capers in 2006, the Texans hired Houston native Gary Kubiak as head coach. Kubiak coached the team to its first ever American Football Conference (AFC) South division title and its first playoff victory in 2011. The team followed that season with another division title and a second playoff victory in the wild card round before falling short again in the divisional round. In the 2013 season, a brutal 14-game losing streak ended the team’s playoff streak. It also ended Kubiak’s tenure as coach, although he remains the winningest head coach in Texans history. Wade Phillips, the son of Houston Oilers legendary coach Bum Phillips, replaced Kubiak as the interim head coach and went 0-3.

The Texans turned to the college ranks in search for their next head coach, and Bill O’Brien, the former Penn State head coach, took over for Phillips in 2014. The team won its third AFC South Division title in 2015; however, it lost to the Kansas City Chiefs, 30-0, in the wild card round.

When the Texans drafted quarterback Deshaun Watson in 2017, many fans believed the team had finally found its franchise quarterback. After replacing Tom Savage after the first game of the season, Watson went 3-3 before tearing his anterior cruciate ligament in practice. Although Watson enjoyed success on the field in Houston, his tenure with the team ended after a rash of sexual misconduct

lawsuits against the signal caller. The Texans dealt Watson to the Cleveland Browns in 2022 for three first-round picks, a third-round pick and a fourth-round pick. Those picks have proven to be the building blocks of the team’s recent resurgence.

In 2023, the team hired former Texans player DeMeco Ryans as head coach. That same year, the team drafted former Ohio State quarterback C.J. Stroud with the second pick of the draft and then traded up to the third pick to select Alabama Crimson Tide linebacker Will Anderson Jr. The trio of Ryans, Stroud and Anderson Jr. proved to be the right choices. Ryans was runner up for Coach of the Year honors, Stroud won the Offensive Rookie of the Year Award and Anderson Jr. won the Defensive Rookie of the Year Award.

The Texans have made the playoffs every season since 2023, although they have yet to make a conference championship game. While it took the team a while to establish its identity and to create a solid foundation for the present, the team is finally on the correct track for the future.

With the Texas Rangers winning Major League Baseball’s (MLB) 2023 World Series, the Houston Texans are the only franchise among the big four professional sports (NFL, MLB, NHL and National Basketball Association) currently based in the state of Texas without a championship. Come on, Texans! What are you waiting for? €

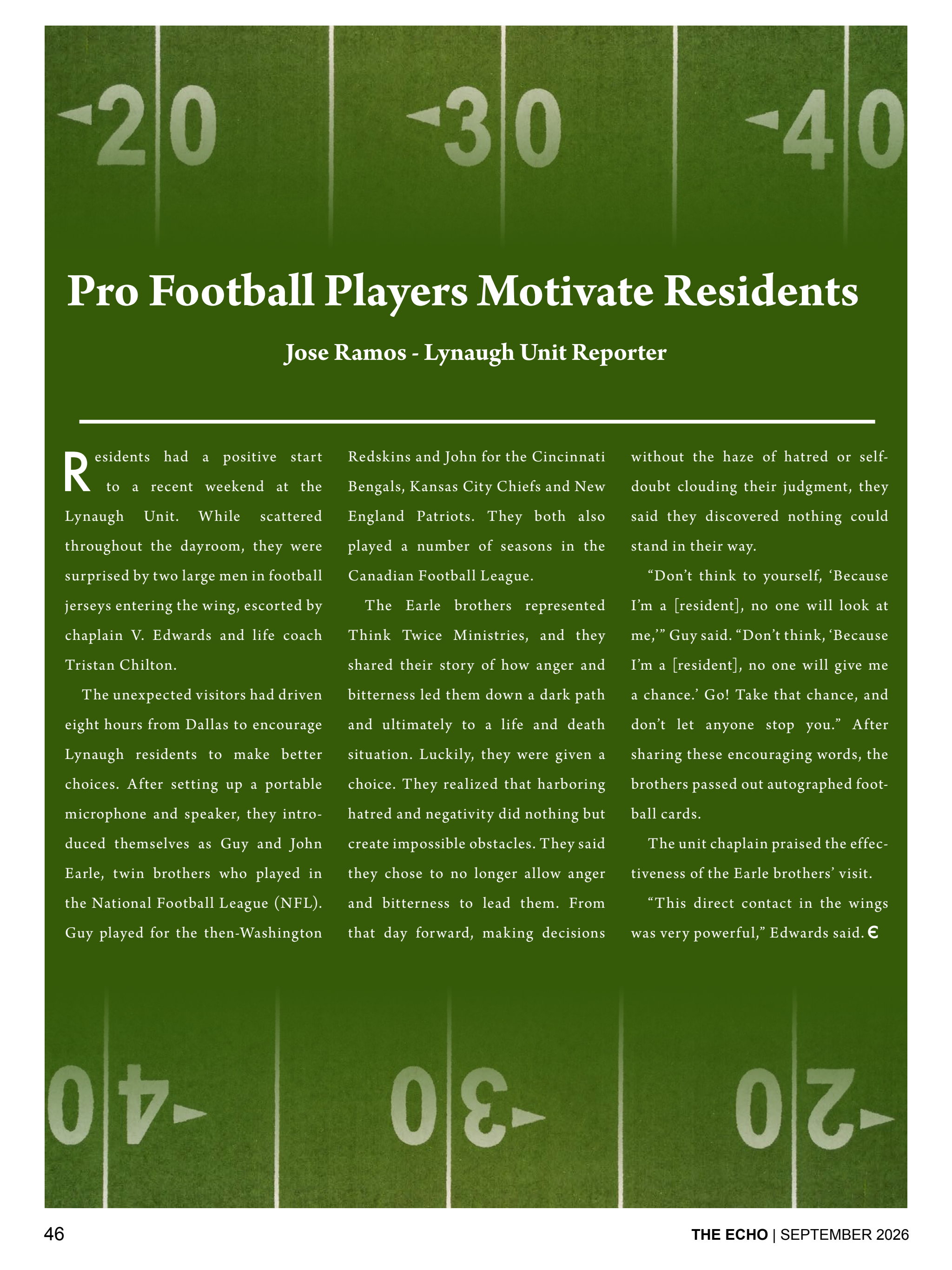
Sources:

FOXSports.com

Houston Texans - Wikipedia



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!



Pro Football Players Motivate Residents

Jose Ramos - Lynaugh Unit Reporter

Residents had a positive start to a recent weekend at the Lynaugh Unit. While scattered throughout the dayroom, they were surprised by two large men in football jerseys entering the wing, escorted by chaplain V. Edwards and life coach Tristan Chilton.

The unexpected visitors had driven eight hours from Dallas to encourage Lynaugh residents to make better choices. After setting up a portable microphone and speaker, they introduced themselves as Guy and John Earle, twin brothers who played in the National Football League (NFL). Guy played for the then-Washington

Redskins and John for the Cincinnati Bengals, Kansas City Chiefs and New England Patriots. They both also played a number of seasons in the Canadian Football League.

The Earle brothers represented Think Twice Ministries, and they shared their story of how anger and bitterness led them down a dark path and ultimately to a life and death situation. Luckily, they were given a choice. They realized that harboring hatred and negativity did nothing but create impossible obstacles. They said they chose to no longer allow anger and bitterness to lead them. From that day forward, making decisions

without the haze of hatred or self-doubt clouding their judgment, they said they discovered nothing could stand in their way.

“Don’t think to yourself, ‘Because I’m a [resident], no one will look at me,’” Guy said. “Don’t think, ‘Because I’m a [resident], no one will give me a chance.’ Go! Take that chance, and don’t let anyone stop you.” After sharing these encouraging words, the brothers passed out autographed football cards.

The unit chaplain praised the effectiveness of the Earle brothers’ visit.

“This direct contact in the wings was very powerful,” Edwards said. €

“It’s not the hours you
put in, it’s what you
put in the hours.”

JIM ROHN
MOTIVATIONAL SPEAKER