

Quarterly Update | December 2021

Creating A Safer Montana Through Accountability, Rehabilitation & Empowerment



New mustangs arrive at Pine Hills Correctional Facility

When it comes to making connections, sometimes it's easier for individuals to relate to animals than other people. Licensed addiction counselor Abby Ryman has seen

how animals can regulate the emotions of residents at Pine Hills Correctional Facility (PHCF).

"The adults feel a sense of freedom when they get out there and work with the horses," Ryman said. "They're not inside the big barrier fence, and they're allowed a chance to reach out and feel a sense of freedom."

For the past three years, the horse gentling program at Pine Hills has helped youth and adult residents make connections on the road to rehabilitation.

Pine Hills received its first two wild mustangs from the Bureau of Land Management in Nevada in November 2018. Ryman said PHCF Superintendent Steve Ray saw a need and opportunity for the residents at Pine Hills to participate in a unique program.



The gentling process includes teaching the horses how to wear a halter, be led, accept brushing, and let people pick up their feet before Pine Hills offers them for adoption by the public.

In November, Pine Hills received three new wild mustangs for the program.

"It's exciting to see their colors and what they'll be like," said Ryman on the addition of the new horses. "It's followed by a period of frustration because the horses won't come up to residents. They have to

earn their trust. It's interesting to watch what the residents do."

The horses are also used in equine therapy for youth and adult offenders.

Ryman and her coworker recently became Equine Assisted Growth and Learning Association (EAGALA) certified. EAGALA is a mental health treatment model that incorporates horses to offer a safe space for clients. The EAGALA and gentling programs have two different purposes.



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“EAGALA is about the residents,” Ryman said. “It’s about the residents connecting with the horses, and applying their time with horses and processing feelings that way. Gentling is about training the horses. However, it takes emotional control and regulation to train a horse.”

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Congratulations to Recent Graduates of MWP’s HiSet Class

Congratulations to the graduates of Montana Women’s Prison’s inaugural HiSET class! This was the first HiSET class at MWP since the DOC’s Montana Correctional Enterprises began coordinating education at the facility this summer. The six graduates have now moved onto career readiness programs at MWP or in the community. We are so proud of our teachers and our graduates and look forward to our next quarterly graduation.



Pictured (left to right): Teacher Joan Pratt, Graduates Samantha Phelps, Allissa Desjarlais, Erin Worth, Ashley Howard, Hayley Kelm and Teacher Jacqueline Smith. (Photo used with permission.)

New Faces at the DOC

As part of Director Brian Gootkin’s reorganization of the Montana Department of Corrections, the DOC welcomed two new employees recently — Chief Executive Officer of Public Safety Jim Anderson and Chief Financial Officer Natalie Smitham.



Anderson comes to the department from the Gallatin County Sheriff’s Office where he was the jail commander and managed detention center operations. There, he oversaw a best practice, behavior-based inmate management system and programs aimed at reducing recidivism and improving re-entry services. Anderson also served as executive director of CIT Montana – a state-

wide organization which trains first responders to better manage individuals with mental health and/or substance abuse disorders.

The public safety chief position is responsible for oversight of the department’s prisons (Montana State Prison, Montana Women’s Prison, Pine Hills Correctional Facility); contracted prisons (Crossroads Correctional Center and Dawson County Correctional Facility); Probation and Parole operations; and services that support those areas.



Smitham comes to the department from the Montana Department of Labor and Industry, where she was chief financial officer. There, she served on the department’s leadership team; prepared the biennial budget; presented and explained it throughout the legislative process; designed financial plans to enable the execution of short-term and long-term strategic goals; and more.

At the DOC, Smitham’s efforts will be focused on the department’s budget and working with the Governor’s Office of Budget and Program Planning, along with providing oversight of department contracts.

Squires Receives Service Award from Governor Gianforte

In October, Governor Greg Gianforte recognized Montana State Prison (MSP) Registered Nurse Bruce Squires with the Outstanding Service Commendation Award for coming to the aid of a correctional officer who was being assaulted by an inmate.

Squires has worked for the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) for more than 19 years.



Governor Greg Gianforte recognized Montana State Prison Registered Nurse Bruce Squires with the Outstanding Service Commendation Award.

In May, as a correctional officer escorted three inmates to MSP's infirmary for treatment, one of the inmates attacked the correctional officer while the group stood in the infirmary waiting area. When he noticed the activity in the waiting room, Squires entered the room and helped subdue the aggressive inmate before he could cause more injury to the correctional officer. He administered medical aid to the officer and helped prevent a potentially more severe outcome.

“We’re here at Montana State Prison to honor Bruce Squires as a nurse for going above and beyond in intervening in an altercation, and honestly saving a correctional officer’s life,” Gianforte said. “It was really my pleasure to come here and honor him today in the presence of his family to say thank you for his service to his fellow officer and to the state.”

Squires’ family members drove from Dillon for the award ceremony.

“Today was extra special,” Director Brian Gootkin said. “Bruce obviously went above and beyond helping that officer and probably saving his life. For the governor to take time out of his busy schedule to give Bruce that well-deserved award is what it’s all about.”



Registered Nurse Bruce Squires with DOC Director Brian Gootkin.

“It’s kind of overwhelming,” Squires said about the recognition. “I’ve been working here for almost 20 years. I’ve seen a lot of emergencies. But this last one I felt like I was really able to help a person out. It really made me feel like my career is worth it and everything I put into it.”

Governor Gianforte Submits PREA Compliance Letter to U.S. Department of Justice

Governor Greg Gianforte recently submitted a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice certifying Montana’s compliance with the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) standards, a measure that protects the state’s full receipt of STOP Violence Against Women funding.

“The Montana Department of Corrections is proud to provide this letter to the governor for his signature,” DOC Director Brian Gootkin said. “This demonstrates the department’s ongoing commitment to maintaining a zero-tolerance policy for sexual assault and sexual harassment throughout Montana’s correctional facilities.”

sexual harassment in all correctional facilities in the nation. Federal PREA audits of secure facilities occur on a three-year cycle.

To ensure ongoing PREA compliance between federal audits within the three-year cycle, DOC PREA Coordinator Michele Morgenroth works with PREA staff at each facility to conduct a “local” PREA audit.

The department also performs PREA spot checks and offers mock audits at each contract prerelease center, treatment center, transition/sanction center, and regional and private secure facility on non-federal audit years.

The next federal PREA audit is scheduled for March 2022 at Pine Hills Correctional Facility. Upon the successful completion of that audit, the department expects to certify full compliance for the third PREA audit cycle.

“I credit our staff – whether they are working at our facilities or our other offices – for their adherence to the PREA regulations and their dedication to ensuring the health and safety of our employees and the offenders under our care,” Gootkin said.

PREA was signed into law in 2003 for the purpose of addressing the detection, prevention, reduction and prosecution of sexual abuse or



DOC: Pursuing Second Chance Pell Grant Opportunities for Montana Inmates

Montana Department of Corrections’ staff is looking forward to January when they expect a response to a letter of interest sent to the U.S. Department of Education requesting that Montana inmates be allowed to participate in the Second Chance Pell Program.

The Second Chance Pell Program was established in 2015 to provide Pell Grants to people in state and federal prisons so they can participate in postsecondary education programs. Prior to the creation of this program, incarcerated individuals were not eligible for this type of educational funding.

Montana Correctional Enterprises offers everything from basic education to pre-apprenticeship certification to inmates at Montana State Prison and Montana Women’s Prison. The DOC is exploring methods to offer additional programming.

“Having access to Second Chance Pell funding would expand opportunities for inmates hoping to continue their education while in one of the department’s secure facilities,” Gayle Butler, Administrator at Montana Correctional Enterprises, said. “We’re already engaged in discussions with several institutions about providing educational programming should this come to fruition, and we’re ready to expand those conversations if we get word we can move ahead.”

If the letter of interest is accepted by the U.S. Department of Education, the DOC must apply for participation in the Second Chance Pell Program by March 2022. As part of this process, the department will begin applying for specific programs with colleges and universities based on what types of programs best fit each DOC facility’s needs.

Butler said the department will focus on stackable and industry-recognized credentials — which allow individuals to progress on a career path — to fill the employment gaps in Montana. By ensuring inmates have access to these types of learning opportunities, the DOC can better ensure they have marketable skills for when they return to Montana communities.

Britton-Bostwick Appointed to U.S. Department of Education’s Subcommittee on Prison Education

Marisa Britton-Bostwick, education director at Montana Correctional Enterprises, was recently appointed to the U.S. Department of Education’s Prison Education Program Subcommittee.

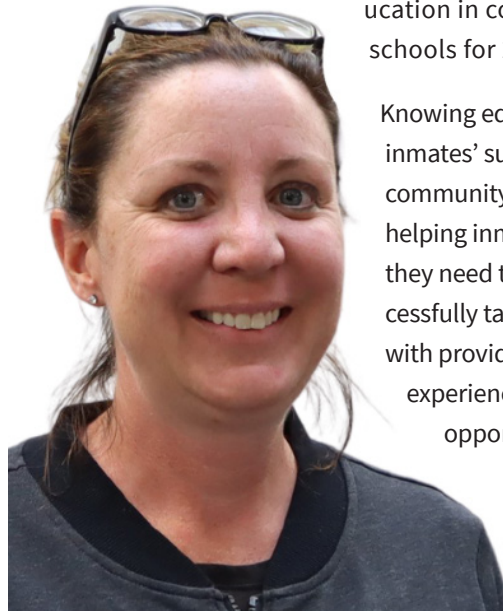
In that position, she will participate in negotiated rulemaking to prepare proposed regulations addressing issues related to affordability and student loans, specifically Pell Grant eligibility for prison education programs.

“I know Marisa will do an excellent job representing the DOC and citizens of Montana as she participates in this subcommittee,” Montana Department of Corrections Deputy Director Cynthia Wolken said.

“*Expanding educational opportunities for inmates in our facilities is key to ensuring their successful reentry to Montana communities and breaking the cycle of incarceration.*”

- Cynthia Wolken, DOC Deputy Director

Britton-Bostwick, who has worked at MCE since 2013, holds master’s degrees in Literacy Instruction and Educational Administration and has been involved in education in corrections and public schools for 24 years.



Knowing education is key to inmates’ successful return to the community, she is committed to helping inmates acquire the skills they need to prepare for, and successfully take, the Hi-SET, along with providing access to learning experiences and vocational opportunities that promote job readiness.

Montana Legislature: DOC Efforts Continue Between Sessions

By Cynthia Wolken, DOC Deputy Director

The 2021 Montana Legislative Session may be a wrap, but interim activities are in full swing. The Montana Department of Corrections has been busy presenting and providing information on topics ranging from education to criminal justice data to multiple interim committees over the last few months.

Criminal Justice Oversight Committee

Ensuring offenders returning to Montana communities have appropriate housing is key to their parole plans and successful re-entry, and the DOC assists with this in several ways. At CJOC's October meeting, Deputy Director Cynthia Wolken, Programs and Facilities Bureau Chief Megan Coy and Western Region Probation and Parole Bureau Chief Kim Lahiff participated in a panel on offender housing. They provided information about the history of offender housing legislation in Montana, how the department's rental vouchers and transitional assistance funds are aiding offenders, and challenges in this area, particularly related to sober living homes. The conversation about sober living homes and how they fit into reentry planning for DOC offenders is ongoing and involves including the Montana Department of Public Health and Human services stakeholders and many state entities.

Education Interim Committee

Expanding educational opportunities at Montana prisons is a priority for the DOC as it works to prepare offenders for success when they return to Montana communities. To assist the Education Interim Committee with its study of educational programs for incarcerated individuals (House Joint Resolution 47), Gayle Butler, Administrator for Montana Correctional Enterprises, and Marisa Britton-Bostwick, education director, presented to the Education Interim Committee in September about available programming ranging from basic education to pre-apprenticeship programs. The committee followed up with a tour of MSP and MCE's educational operations in Deer Lodge in November.

Law and Justice Interim Committee

As part of a panel discussion in October, John Daugherty, Chief Executive Officer for the DOC's Central Services Division, explained to

the Law and Justice Interim Committee that sharing criminal justice data has been a struggle in Montana for years. The lack of a centralized, electronically stored data repository provides challenges in the areas of communication, data consistency, and more. In HJ31, the 2021 Montana Legislature assigned the committee to study the issue, and the DOC is taking an active role in that effort. As part of its work to provide greater transparency for Montana citizens, the department developed new dashboards (cor.mt.gov) featuring information about offender population, offenses, and sentencing, with more to come. The committee is also conducting a study of Montana Women's Prison as directed in SJ26. The DOC anticipates presenting before the committee on that subject in January.

Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission

Along with drawing lines to divide the state into two congressional districts, the Montana Districting and Apportionment Commission is charged with making recommendations to the Montana Legislature for how inmates should be counted in future Census efforts. In the last Census, inmates at DOC facilities were attributed to the county in which the facility was located. However, several other states allocate inmates according to their last-known address — the method the commission is favoring at this point. In order to comply with that change should it become law, the DOC will need to make collection of inmates' last-known addresses mandatory as part of the admissions process, along with gathering that information for inmates who are already in a prison. John Daugherty, chief executive officer for the DOC's Central Services Division, provided informational testimony on this subject.



Deputy Director Cynthia Wolken

Interim Education Committee Visits MSP, MCE



Members of the Interim Education Committee get ready to begin their tour of MSP and MCE.



Director Gootkin greets members of the committee and explains how important educational programming is to the success of inmates when they return to Montana communities.



MCE is known for the craftsmanship of inmate workers who build a variety of furniture items, Industries Director Joel Miller explains.



Most students in MCE Welding Instructor Joe Weber's class have no welding experience when they arrive. However, they are willing to learn and gain skills to help them find employment when they return to the community.

Interim Committee Visit cont.



Senator Shannon O'Brien tries out the driving simulator used to help inmates attain their commercial drivers licenses.



Inmate Daniel Paulsrud talks to committee members about the hand-carved, custom bench he is building.



Legislators end their visit with a stop at the "chow hall" at MCE's Work and Reentry Center.



DOC Receives \$2 Million in ARPA Funds to Improve Water System at Montana State Prison

The Montana Department of Corrections was recently awarded \$2 million in American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to improve the water supply system serving Montana State Prison.

The project – which will focus on repairing on-premise water wells – ranked 60 out of 241 grant requests submitted in the DNRC ARPA Round 1 Competitive Grant process.

Originally, the grant request was for \$10.6 million to repair the on-premise water wells, and to improve the water delivery system allowing for increased reliability, safety, and efficiency. However, awards in the first round of the process were capped at \$2 million.

“The department is extremely thankful for the funding that will allow us to make these critical repairs to the water system,” said John Daugherty, the DOC’s chief executive officer of Central Services.

“We’re working with the Montana Department of Administration’s Architecture and Engineering Division to revise the project accordingly.”



MCE Firewood Giveaway

On Nov. 5, Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) and other partners gathered for the annual firewood giveaway to the residents of Powell County. The log ends were donated by Sun Mountain Lumber, and the city of Deer Lodge and Powell County helped haul the wood. Residents picked up wood from the Powell County Fairgrounds.

The MCE fire crew cut, split, hauled and loaded firewood into community members’ vehicles. This is just one of the many community projects in which members of the fire crew are involved.



MCE Fire Crew Helps Nurses, Staff at Riverside Special Needs Unit

At the end of October, several employees and inmates at the Riverside Special Needs Unit in Boulder were affected by COVID-19. Staff members needed help performing duties on the unit and members of the Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) fire crew were available to lend a hand.

“When a large number of staff and offenders tested positive for COVID, it had a big impact on our Riverside facility,” said Connie Winner, the Montana Department of Corrections’ Health Services Administrator “We were so fortunate that MCE Administrator Gayle Butler approved sending some of the MCE fire crew and their supervisors to help with providing services at the site. All the staff and offenders were so impressed with how hard the crew worked, how willing they were to jump in and help in any way they could, and enjoyed their positive attitudes. It truly was a great example of teams coming together and helping each other out.”

In Boulder, the fire crew members assisted with everyday tasks like laundry and taking vitals. Alex Jungwirth, a first-year member of the fire crew, said he enjoyed helping at Riverside.

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“Mostly, we’ve just been taking the workload off of the nursing staff so that they can focus on the things they need to be doing,” Jungwirth said.

“We’ve been assisting in taking vitals, changing bedding, assisting with lifting, laundry, dishes, all sorts of things. Everyday type stuff.”

Any inmate who wants to work for MCE must be in good standing and apply for the job they desire. Inmates can work for the fire crew for multiple years, but they must reapply every year. Outside of fire season, the core fire crew members help with other activities in the community.

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“We do a lot of community projects and stuff to help the community,” said Aaron Oliphant, a second-year member on the fire crew. “We’ll

actually go down into Deer Lodge and help out. But for the most part, (assisting at Riverside) is the most prestigious thing we’ve done.”



DOC Announces Repurposing of Glendive Facility as Innovative Treatment Facility

The Montana Department of Corrections' WATCH East program in Glendive, Mont. will close in the coming months and be replaced with a much-needed community substance use disorder treatment facility.

The facility, owned by the state, will be leased to Community, Counseling, and Correctional Services Inc. (CCCS), which currently runs the WATCH East program, a correctional program for individuals convicted of felony DUIs. The Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) is working with CCCS to complete the licensing process so it can accept Medicaid reimbursement. Medicaid recipients often face lengthy waitlists at existing treatment facilities, and this new facility will prioritize those enrolled in Medicaid.

"This is an exciting opportunity to repurpose an excellent campus and work group in a great community to create an innovative treatment program for people in need of help, so they don't end up in the corrections system," DOC Deputy Director Cynthia Wolken

The innovative program will benefit from the Healing and Ending Addiction through Recovery and Treatment (HEART) initiative, which is a key element of Governor Gianforte's plan to expand behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment services in Montana. DPHHS has asked the federal government to waive its prohibition on Medicaid coverage for residential treatment facilities with more than 16 beds. WATCH East has a current capacity of 48.

"We are hopeful the federal government will approve this request and allow us to expand our treatment capacity in eastern Montana," DPHHS Director Adam Meier said.

In the meantime, CCCS will move toward licensure as a Medicaid-reimbursable treatment facility and begin its transition with minimal impact on current staff.

WATCH East opened its doors in 2005 as a six-month program for individuals convicted of felony DUI. The facility has seen declining use with the concurrent expansion of Medicaid and felony treatment courts around the state.

The DOC will continue to operate its other correctional treatment facilities around the state and is working to transition offenders currently at WATCH East on an individual basis.

“Creating treatment opportunities in rural Montana is critical to diverting folks from the criminal justice system.”
 -Cynthia Wolken, DOC Deputy Director

