

## Quarterly Update | March 2023

Creating A Safer Montana Through Accountability, Rehabilitation & Empowerment

### Governor Gianforte signs House Bill 3, CO wage increases effective in March

Governor Greg Gianforte inked his signature on House Bill 3 at a ceremony and roundtable at Montana State Prison recently, increasing correctional officer (CO) wages at Montana Department of Corrections' secure facilities. Correctional officers will see this pay raise reflected in their paychecks this month.

"We are extremely appreciative of the support Governor Gianforte and Montana legislators provided for this bill and other wage-related bills this year," DOC Director Brian Gootkin said. "These increases to correctional officer pay acknowledge the difficult work correctional officers do and bring their wages to a level that is competitive, improving opportunities for recruitment and retention."

HB 3 allows CO wage increases (\$2/hr at MSP and \$3/hr at Montana Women's Prison



and Pine Hills Correctional Facility) to take effect upon signing rather than on the July 1, 2023 effective date included in HB 2. HB 2 includes ongoing funding of those raises and is under consideration by the House Appropriations Committee.

At the beginning of 2022, the starting wage for a correctional officer at MSP was \$16.46/hr. Should the Montana Legislature pass HB 2, which includes correctional

officer raises, and HB 13, which includes raises for all state employees, that starting rate will be \$24.01/hr beginning on July 1, 2024.

Governor Gianforte encouraged legislators to pass the budget bills mentioned above and support bills that include funding to repair the state's secure facilities.

"I've heard loud and clear that repairing the state prison and increasing correctional officer wages are priorities," Gov. Gianforte said. "Our budget invests nearly \$200 million to repair the state prison, expand capacity, and make the prison, and our communities, safer. We're also investing in the hardworking employees who serve in our correctional facilities."

“

*“Our budget invests nearly \$200 million to repair the state prison, expand capacity, and make the prison, and our communities, safer. We’re also investing in the hardworking employees who serve in our correctional facilities.”*

*~Governor Greg Gianforte*

# Budget dominates first half of Montana Legislative Session for DOC

As budget subcommittees grappled to wrap their arms around all the factors affecting agency budgets in the first half of the 68th Montana Legislative Session, the Montana Department of Corrections was front and center, working to make sure they had all the information necessary to make informed decisions.

“We greatly appreciate the time and effort – including visits to Montana State Prison – that Governor Gianforte and our legislators have invested into fully understanding the DOC’s budget requests and needs throughout the interim and during this session,” DOC Deputy Director Cynthia Wolken said. “With their assistance, we look forward to providing our employees with the tools they need to do their jobs safely and efficiently.”

Employee wages were of utmost importance to the DOC, drawing agency focus to HB 2, HB 3, and HB 13. Wage increases are anticipated to assist the department with recruitment and retention efforts, and help ensure staff safety in secure facilities that are experiencing high vacancy rates.

**HB 2** – includes wage increases of \$2 for correctional officers at Montana State Prison, and \$3/hr for correctional officers at Montana Women’s Prison and Pine Hills Correctional Facility.

**HB 3** – allowed the wage increases explained above to take effect in March (upon signing by Governor Gianforte) rather than July 1, 2023, HB 2’s effective date.

**HB 13** – includes wage increases for all state employees. If passed, state employees would receive a \$1.50/hr or 4% raise (which-

ever is greater) in July 2023 and again in July 2024. In addition, the bill includes no increases in health care for Fiscal Year 24/25, and a one-time payment prorated to a 40-hour work week and worth up to \$1,040.

The DOC has also been working hard to usher some significant infrastructure projects – both physical and technological - through the legislative process, totaling about \$218 million.

**HB 5** - includes replacement of Low Side Housing at MSP; construction of a staff services addition at MSP; construction of new multi-purpose program buildings at MSP; roof replacements, repairs for MSP, MWP, and PHCF; and more. If passed, the infrastructure projects would provide a

safer, more modern environment in secure facilities.

**HB 10** – would provide funding for a new Offender Management System (OMS). This system would allow for greater efficiency and would be instrumental in the collection and dissemination of data by the DOC.

The department also has several policy bills in play, which will receive more attention in the second half of the session.



# DOC Purchases Acadia Building in Butte to Deliver Reentry Services for Montanans

The Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) recently finalized the purchase of the former Acadia building and campus in Butte to provide community re-entry services to individuals under department supervision.

Previously used as a residential psychiatric treatment facility for children, the property offers space for residents along with area to accommodate a wide range of programming essential to preparing offenders to return to Montana communities.

“COVID-19 helped us identify some safety and health limitations related to our contracted prerelease provider’s facility in Uptown Butte,” DOC Director Brian Gootkin said.

“The Acadia building was available and offers us an opportunity to address those concerns along with provide a centralized location for programming and job readiness services to help our population be successful.”

The current Butte Prerelease Center, operated by Community, Counseling, and Correctional Services, Inc., is located in a cluster of buildings constructed more than 120 years ago. The structures’ age makes it cost-prohibitive to bring them into compliance with ADA, ventilation, etc. standards. Space restrictions limit programming opportunities.

The Acadia building provides sufficient space to accommodate the male and female population of the Butte Prerelease Center — almost 200 residents.

“Obviously having a modern facility is to the benefit of staff and residents alike,” Mike Thatcher, CCCS’s CEO, said. “CCCS has proudly operated in Butte for almost 40 years and we look forward to continuing to be a good neighbor to the Butte community in this new location.”

The DOC and CCCS will follow the process outlined in Montana’s Administrative Rules for public involvement in this project.

J.P. Gallagher, chief executive for Butte-Silver Bow, said he appreciates the collaboration on the project with the DOC and CCCS so far.

“As chief executive of Butte-Silver Bow, I am pleased about this move and I am encouraged by positive feedback it has been receiving from the public,” Gallagher said. “Not only will the move put the vacant Acadia building to good use to benefit Montanans, but it fits with Butte-Silver Bow’s Uptown Master Plan to revitalize our Uptown area. CCCS has been, and continues to be, an asset to our community providing close to 300 jobs in Butte-Silver Bow and Southwest Montana. This purchase will ensure that CCCS will be able to continue their long partnership with BSB and the DOC. This is a good thing for our community!”

“*As chief executive of Butte-Silver Bow, I am pleased about this move and I am encouraged by positive feedback it has been receiving from the public.*”

~J.P. Gallagher, chief executive for Butte-Silver Bow



# Cooking Up Success: Prerelease culinary arts program preps students for careers

A group of women from Passages, a Billings prerelease center, are busy cooking in the industrial kitchen at the Lewis and Clark County Fairgrounds in Helena. The women are students in the facility’s Culinary Arts Program (CAP) and are prepping appetizers for a reception at the state Capitol. The reception is an opportunity for the students to interact with legislators, flex their culinary knowledge, and grow as individuals as they prepare to reenter Montana communities.

This is the fourth time Passages and CAP have hosted a reception for legislators during the legislative session in Helena.

“One of the great things about the Culinary Arts Program is that many of our women have not had opportunities to interact with community members or attend events like this,” Passages Director Gina Poor said. “And so, for them to have something like this to show the work that they do, a lot of them will just tell you, ‘It just made me feel so good about myself.’ That’s something that a lot of them haven’t had.”

In 2010, Passages was awarded the culinary arts pre-apprenticeship certification from the Montana Department of Labor and Industry. The program has up to 15 students. Students receive classroom instruction, in-house food service experience, community work release, and job placement assistance.



The event for legislators was the brainchild of the Montana Department of Corrections and Passages staff.

“We’ve had women leave this program and be sous chefs and work into chef positions,” Montana Correctional Enterprises Bureau Chief Gayle Butler said. “So, it’s a great opportunity, and this is their gateway right here. This is where they get to meet legislators, meet the governor, serve and explain what the food is about, and gain confidence. It’s been amazing to watch them grow and how they unfold and open up during the time they are serving through this reception.”

For student Bridget Coulter, cooking is something she’s always enjoyed.

“I only did it for close friends and family,” she said. “But now we get to do it for Passages and the men’s prerelease. To be able to go and share that with staff and other people, it’s great to just see them smile. It’s not your home kitchen, but it’s pretty close to the same feeling like, ‘Hey, I just made that and that person’s really happy about it.’”



“We’ve had women leave this program and be sous chefs and work into chef positions.”  
 ~ MCE Bureau Chief Gayle Butler

# Warden Swap: DOC bosses spend time at different secure facilities



*MSP Warden Jim Salmonsens*

Even though Jim Salmonsens has been with the Montana Department of Corrections for 34 years, he has never had an opportunity to travel to Pine Hills Correctional Facility. As the warden at Montana State Prison, he's a busy guy. But the chance finally presented itself this year as DOC wardens participated in a "Warden Swap" for one week.

The DOC has three, state-run facilities: Montana State Prison, Montana Women's Prison, and Pine Hills Correctional Facility. While Salmonsens went to Pine Hills, MWP Warden Jennie Hansen went to MSP, and Pine Hills Superintendent Steve Ray went to MWP.

"The intent was that we could share, learn new information, and have a better understanding of how our facilities function as a whole," Public Safety Chief Jim Anderson

said. "It went really well, and a lot of things were learned."

The DOC supervises around 1,800 offenders in state-run secure facilities, which include juvenile males, adult males, and adult females. MSP houses the most offenders, with an operating capacity of 1,526. Pine Hills houses up to 38 youth residents.



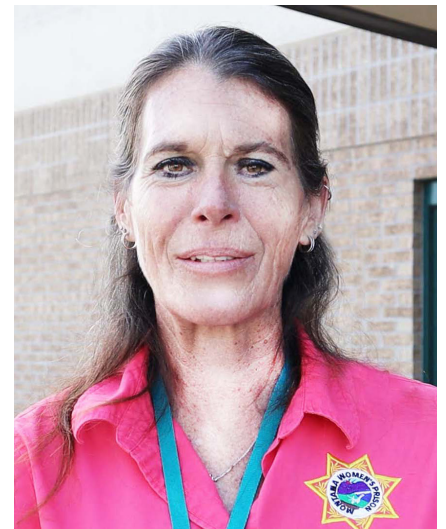
*PHCF Superintendent Steve Ray*

For Ray, it was a short trip to Billings from Miles City.

"I enjoyed meeting the staff at the women's prison and learning about their jobs and the prison operations," Ray said. "They have a great staff that cares about protecting the community and rehabilitating the women in their care."

Salmonsens, who deals with all male offenders over 18 years old, said it was a different experience being around the youth residents at Pine Hills. It put him out of his comfort zone, but it also gave him a different view from hearing their stories.

The biggest takeaway for the wardens was seeing that even though they're at different facilities, they're more similar than different.



*MWP Warden Jennie Hansen*

"Every facility has the same issues," Hansen said. "Some of them are bigger than others. But at the end of the day, we are all on the same ship taking the same voyage."



# DOC Constituent Services Manager: Lending a helping hand to inmate family, friends

While the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) is known for its work with offenders and their victims, the agency also provides important services to the family and friends of individuals under supervision through the DOC's Constituent Services manager.

"The incarceration of a loved one is an overwhelming experience," DOC Constituent Services Manager Renee Seiller-McDaniel said. "Family members and friends are scared, angry, and often, just plain confused by the whole situation. It's my job to hear their concerns and work with my colleagues to provide them with the most accurate and complete information possible to try to answer their questions and help alleviate their distress."

Seiller-McDaniel fields inquiries from spouses, parents, grandparents, and more about

topics ranging from how to send money to an inmate, to questions about inmate dietary options, to concerns about movement of inmates among facilities. She responds to all of these requests as quickly as possible, but advises that more complex requests do take more time to resolve. In addition, she

Another important component of Seiller-McDaniel's work is to recognize and document trends in the requests and feedback the department receives from members of the public. From the information she gleanes, she identifies areas in which the department could improve or be more consistent, and makes recommendations about how that can be accomplished.

Due to the difficult and emotional nature of the subject matter Seiller-McDaniel covers with many of the people she helps, every day isn't a great day. Even so, the successes remind her of how rewarding the work is.



*"By listening and letting them know I hear them, I can get to the root of their concerns and either work with our DOC team to find appropriate solutions, or help them navigate the justice system to connect with the people who can provide the answers they need."*

**~ Renee Seiller-McDaniel , Constituent Services manager**

cannot share information about medical matters without appropriate releases, or anything that could compromise security.

"I also spend a lot of time listening," Seiller-McDaniel said. "Sometimes that's just what people need. By listening and letting them know I hear them, I can get to the root of their concerns and either work with our DOC team to find appropriate solutions, or help them navigate the justice system to connect with the people who can provide the answers they need."

"It's always hard to hear the pain in family members' voices when they call regarding someone they love who is in our system," she said. "However, I appreciate the opportunity to help family members be heard and find the answers they need to attain some resolution. That end result isn't always what they want, but I think they leave our interactions knowing that we care."

The Constituent Services manager may be reached at [RMcDaniel@mt.gov](mailto:RMcDaniel@mt.gov) or (406) 444-1680.

***The purpose of the Constituent Services manager is not to circumvent processes in place for inmates to communicate with staff members, file grievances, or request medical or behavioral health care. Instead, this position provides additional support to family and friends.***



## Peer support helps DOC employees after critical incidents

Individuals in public safety positions usually see people when they are at their lowest. In a correctional setting like a prison, security staff and employees encounter various situations that most people never experience in their daily jobs. Some of the most challenging days include fights, a variety of medical emergencies, and even death.

To help staff members grapple with the effects of being involved firsthand in these types of situations, Montana Department of Corrections facilities have Crisis Intervention Services Management (CISM) teams that work with responding employees.

Montana State Prison Warden Jim Salmonsen has worked in corrections for 34 years; in that time, he's seen a lot.

"Some of the things that you see are horrific, from the self-harm to the suicides," Salmonsen said. "It bothers staff greatly in many different ways. The CISM team can come in and do an initial debrief and help them out. They help staff access appropriate resources and let them know that it's nothing to be ashamed of to ask for help."

After a critical incident, such as a suicide, staff members of the Health Services Bureau meet with inmates. While staff members work with inmates, the CISM team meets with the facility staff who responded to the traumatic incident. The CISM team includes mental health professionals and security staff.

Since many of the first responders to incidents are members of security teams, Salmonsen said, it's essential to have correctional officers on response teams.

"They know what you're going through," he said. "They may have seen the same thing. It's important that you can talk the same language, and it's talking apples to apples instead of someone who hasn't gone through that."

After an initial meeting, the CISM team continues to follow up with staff members and point them to other resources if needed. State employees can access services through the state's Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

Steffani Turner, the DOC's Behavioral Health Services manager, said offering these ser-

vices helps create a positive health culture for DOC employees.

"In corrections, there are times that staff members' work is stressful and potentially traumatic," she said. "By providing staff with the opportunity to debrief after an incident, they can mitigate stress or trauma, accelerate recovery, and assess the need for additional resources. It is a good opportunity to connect with that staff personally, offer support, and remind them of the other resources the department has made available to them."

Christine Lohof-Crago, the Montana Women's Prison mental health manager, leads the women's prison CISM team. While their first priority is employees at Montana Women's Prison, Lohof-Crago said other law enforcement agencies have called on them after their team deals with a critical incident.

"Secondary trauma or the initial trauma can affect everyone," she said. "Seeing that you have cohorts across the state that can assist is very beneficial."

## Happy Birthday Pine Hills! DOC facility celebrates 130 years

In March, Pine Hills Correctional Facility celebrated its 130th birthday and the difference it has made in the lives of juveniles and adults in Montana.

Pine Hills was established in March 1893 as the "State Reform School" with the signing of HB 184 by Governor J.E. Rickards. The original school building had three floors, electricity, and an artesian well. Originally, Pine Hills housed boys and girls until the girls left in the early '20s.

Today, Pine Hills houses juvenile offenders and adult offenders, with appropriate sight

and sound separation. The facility is the only state-operated, long-term facility for adjudicated male juvenile offenders (ages 10-17), with an operational capacity of 38.

"When you see the old pictures and read the history of Pine Hills you realize the role the Miles City community has played in its success. It's been a win for the community as the state facility has brought good, high-paying jobs and benefits to the area, and a win for the state as the facility has been blessed with a caring, compassionate work force that's taken on the task

of working with really tough kids over the last 130 years," PHCF Superintendent Steve Ray said.



400 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of \$1.748 per copy, for a total cost of \$699.30, which includes \$184.00 for printing and \$883.30 for distribution.