

Quarterly Update | September 2022

Creating A Safer Montana Through Accountability, Rehabilitation & Empowerment

DOC Employees Recognized With Governor's Awards for Excellence

Two individuals and one team of Montana Department of Corrections' employees were recognized recently with Governor's Awards for Excellence.

"We're extremely proud of these employees for their willingness to go above and beyond to serve Montanans and make a difference for our offender population," said DOC Director Brian Gootkin. "They truly live by the department's mission to create a safer Montana through accountability, rehabilitation, and empowerment."

Winners include:

Great Falls Probation and Parole Officer Michael Stimac – Officer Stimac was nominated for his actions in the early hours of July 15, 2021 when he responded with members of the U.S. Marshals Fugitive Task Force to assist in the search and apprehension of an offender who was accused of kidnapping his significant other and shooting and killing her mother. Law enforcement

located the suspect and a pursuit ensued ending on Highway 200 in Flathead County, eight counties away from where it began. Officer Stimac was assigned to stay with the victim in the incident once she was assisted from the vehicle, offering her much-needed support as she waited for additional services to be provided.

Dr. Paul Rees – Dr. Rees is known among his colleagues for his dedication to his profession and the patients he helps. Not only does Dr. Rees personally deliver patient care at Montana State Prison, but he nurtures strong relationships with community partners to make sure patients receive excellent emergent and specialty care when services can't be provided inside the prison. In addition, Dr. Rees is committed to sharing his knowledge with the next generation of medical professionals by mentoring physician assistant students and hosting their clinical rotations.



Probation and Parole Officer Mike Stimac



MSP Doctor Paul Rees

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~ DOC Director Brian Gootkin

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Domestic Violence Supervision Team (Heather Martin, Great Falls Probation and Parole Officer; Cory Purves, Great Falls Probation and Parole Officer; Charlie Martin, (retired) Great Falls Probation and Parole Officer; Monica Huffman, DOC Victim Liaison; and Jamie Rogers, DOC Victim Services Bureau Chief

– This team was nominated based on its innovative work to more effectively address the unique challenges posed by domestic violence offenders, and in so doing, support victims of this type of crime. By opening the lines of communication among stakeholders and facilitating closer collaboration, the team is being successful in interrupting the domestic violence power and control cycle.

Congratulations to all our DOC Governor’s Award for Excellence winners!



Domestic Violence Supervision Team L-R: Jamie Rogers, Charlie Martin, Monica Huffman, Cory Purves, and Heather Martin.

DOC: Taking a Specialized Approach to Supervising Domestic Violence Offenders

Montana Department of Corrections’ employees and community service providers who work with domestic violence offenders are taking a new approach to addressing these unique crimes through the establishment of the Domestic Violence Specialized Caseload Team.

“We are extremely proud of the innovation demonstrated by the members of the DV Specialized Caseload Team,” said DOC Director Brian Gootkin. “By strengthening the lines of communication among stakeholders to ensure follow through on the part of offenders, this team is helping to disrupt the cycle of domestic violence and make our communities safer.”

offenders and victims (if they are residing together), visiting with new romantic partners, checking in at job sites, and ensuring offenders are participating in Batterers’ Intervention programming.

This attention to program participation has increased Batterers’ Intervention programming attendance by offenders from about 50 percent to 95 percent since the DV supervision strategies were implemented, according to team members.

DOC Victim Liaison Monica Huffman is encouraged by the forward progress she has witnessed since the team’s inception.

“I believe this will do what we intend it to do – reduce the number and severity of violent episodes in the homes where we are providing these services,” she said. “It will improve the lives of offenders and victims of record or new partners and/or children.”

Initiated through the Great Falls Probation and Parole Office, the team combines the efforts of P&P officers, DOC victim liaisons, the courts, and service providers in the community to help ensure offenders are adhering to guidelines, and create safer outcomes for victims, families, and the community.

Strategies being used by the team include:

- *Concentrating DV caseloads with designated P&P officers*
- *Ensuring ongoing communication with the DOC’s Victim Services team to provide support for victims*
- *Working with the courts to implement strict requirements for offenders*
- *Connecting offenders and victims with resources in the community*

P&P officers are regularly in the field checking in with DV offenders, talking with



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~ Monica Huffman, Victim Liaison

A Second Chance: DOC Inmates Train Lewis and Clark County Rescue Horses

Last summer, the Lewis and Clark County Sheriff's Office raided a quarter-horse breeding operation seizing nearly 60 horses displaying signs of neglect. The horses were relocated to several different locations to receive care, including 36 horses that came to Montana State Prison for a second chance at life.

Lewis and Clark County Sheriff Leo Dutton said this was the first time his department has participated in a partnership like this with the Montana Department of Corrections.

"Now they're over here, still in the justice system, making people's lives change for the better," Dutton said. "People that are here at Montana State Prison are actually caring for the horses, have developed a bond with them, and they're going to make them better people. So, they were rescued, and now they're coming back to rescue people."

At MSP, the horses were cared for by the inmate "cowboy crew," a group of workers who perform ranch duties on the 30,000-

plus acre property. Once it was decided that the DOC would take ownership of 15 of the horses, members of the cowboy crew began training them.

"All the inmates on the cowboy crew were excited. They couldn't wait for the ownership of these horses to come to us," Wagner said. "Once that happened, and Dave and Evan, the supervisors, got the horses in the round (training) pen, it helped both. It gave the guys a little self worth and looking forward to coming to work every day to work with these horses."

Bill Bracha has been a member of the cowboy crew since November. As a believer in second chances, Bill was excited to work with these new horses. This project has been his favorite memory so far as a member of the cowboy crew.

"Honestly, it was these horses," Bracha said. "Breaking these colts was the most rewarding thing that anybody can ask for. It's a good way to get somebody to really rethink what they want to do when they get out."



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~Lewis and Clark County Sheriff Leo Dutton



School's in Session: Second Chance Pell Grant Program Kicks Off at MSP

This fall, students in secure facilities under the supervision of the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) will have the chance to achieve their college dreams through inmate's participation in the Second Chance Pell Grant Program in partnership with the Montana University System and the Department of Corrections.

In the 2022-23 academic year, the Second Chance Pell Grant pilot program will allow a maximum of 10 students from four DOC Facilities to take courses. The first group of 10 students from MSP began their course work through Helena College on Aug. 29 in the Certificate of Applied Science in Automotive Technology program.

“This is a great opportunity for people under our supervision to continue their education and improve their skills so they can have more employment opportunities when they leave our facilities,” DOC Deputy Director Cynthia Wolken said. “We’re excited to help these offenders fill the employment gaps in Montana with the skills they gain through training with Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) and now with additional skills from our collegiate partners.”

A Pell Grant is a type of federal funding awarded to undergraduate students with exceptional financial needs who have not earned a bachelor’s, graduate, or professional degree. Previously, incarcerated students in a federal or state prison could not access these funds. The approved prison education program colleges that the DOC can work with include Montana State University

classroom lectures thanks to smart boards and other technology while they complete the hands-on portion led by the MCE team. Bauman said this credential allows students to earn a “stackable” certificate for future usage.

“This provides the right training to get into the automotive industry, but it also provides an opportunity for anyone who wants to continue their education and earn an associate degree,” Bauman said. “From there, the sky is the limit. This is a university system program, so there is lot of transferable coursework. Students can continue to build upon that education as they like.”

Ty Jensen, who recently completed the welding course at MSP, is looking forward to taking the classes as he works toward his even-

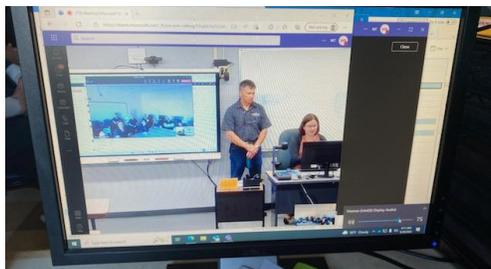
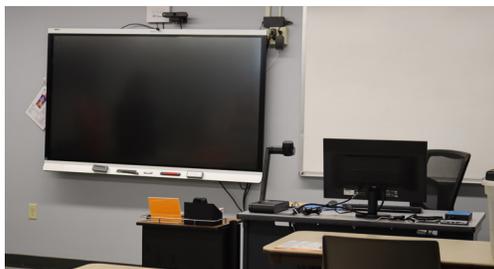
tual dream of owning a fabrication and auto body shop.

“I believe it will be an essential part of my success,” he said. “It’ll help give me the skills and the ability to have a career and to stay out and never come back.”



Billings, Great Falls College Montana State University, Helena College University of Montana and Dawson Community College in Glendive.

Despite being in Deer Lodge, Helena College Dean Sandra Bauman said the students at MSP will get the same experience as if they were in Helena. The students can attend



Process of Repurposing DOC’s WATCH East in Glendive to Treatment Facility Enters Final Steps

To facilitate the final transition of the Montana Department of Corrections’ (DOC) WATCH East facility in Glendive to a privately run community substance use disorder treatment center, the department began directing DUI treatment referrals to other facilities last month.

“This move will provide Community, Counseling, and Correctional Services, Inc. (CCCS) the available beds to begin delivering much-needed treatment options to rural residents on the eastern side of the state, including Medicaid recipients,” DOC Director Brian Gootkin said. “Creating treatment opportunities in rural Montana is critical to diverting folks from the criminal justice system.”

The facility, which is owned by the state, will be utilized by CCCS, which currently runs the WATCH East program, a correctional program for individuals convicted of felony

DUIs. WATCH East opened its doors in 2005, but has seen declining use with the concurrent expansion of Medicaid and felony treatment courts around the state.

Offenders in the WATCH East program will be released to community supervision or transferred to other correctional facilities based on their individual risks and needs. The DOC will assist staff at the new Badlands Recovery Center with case review, transition planning, and transport of offenders over the next couple of months.

CCCS has been working with the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) to complete the licensing

process required to accept Medicaid reimbursement.

Mike Thatcher, chief executive officer for CCCS, said he is thankful for the collaboration and assistance he has received from the DOC, DPHHS, Governor’s Office, and the community of Glendive to make this transition.

“We’re excited to activate this program,” he said. “This will allow many folks to gain access to inpatient treatment at the 3.5 level of care. Obviously, there’s a great need and we’re ready to step up to meet that.”

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 ~ **DOC Director Brian Gootkin**



Montana Department of Corrections Receives \$780,000 Grant to Combat Opioid Epidemic

In July, the Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) received a \$780,000 grant for a Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Program (COAP) from the Montana Board of Crime Control. The grant runs from July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023, and its purpose is to help agencies implement programs and support for those impacted by the opioid epidemic.

“We’re honored the Montana Board of Crime Control chose to award this grant to the Department of Corrections to help combat the opioid crisis in Montana,” DOC Director Brian Gootkin said. “Because of this grant, we’ll be able to offer more services to individuals under our supervision through our Rehabilitation and Programs Division. These programs will help decrease drug offenses and better ensure offenders are success-

ful when they transition back to Montana communities.”

The COAP grant will allow the DOC to develop additional programs to complement current services offered and help cover reimbursement for some medications, equipment, and medication assisted treatment. The DOC’s Health Services Bureau is finalizing the program offerings.

Substance Use Disorder (SUD) treatment programming is available at all DOC facilities. During intake, inmates are screened by licensed addiction counselors to determine the level of care required. The level of care for patients can vary between partial hospitalization, inpatient, or medically managed intensive inpatient services.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to continue building on the work we’ve already been doing at our secure facilities to help inmates who are struggling with substance use disorders,” Health Services Bureau Chief Cindy Hiner said. “We look forward to rolling out new evidence-based programming to help inmates in their recovery journey and hopefully keep them from returning to us.”

The National Institute on Drug Abuse estimates that 65 percent of inmates in U.S. prisons are dealing with substance use disorders. In FY21, the top offense for male and female DOC offenders was criminal possession of dangerous drugs.

State Tribal Relations Committee Visits Montana Women’s Prison

Members of the State Tribal Relations Committee paid a visit to Montana Women’s Prison in Billings in July to experience first-hand the cultural opportunities available to Native American inmates at the facility.

The group met with Director Brian Gootkin,

Public Safety Chief Jim Anderson, Warden Jennie Hansen, and Eloise Leahy, who coordinates many of the Native American activities at the facility.

Inmates were on hand to display their artwork, participate in a drum circle, and more.

Native Americans comprise about 38 percent of the inmate population at MWP, and about 19 percent of the DOC’s population as a whole.



Hunting Season Underway on Montana Correctional Enterprises Ranch

Hunting season is officially underway at on Montana Department of Corrections property on the Montana Correctional Enterprises (MCE) ranch. Applications and regulations are available on our website at: <https://cor.mt.gov/MCE/Programs/Agriculture>

Hunters wishing to hunt on the MCE ranch are required to obtain a permit by either emailing, mailing or sending a fax with a completed permit application, copy of driver's license, and valid year conservation license with evidence of bow and arrow endorsement. Permit application materials

can be emailed to NChandler2@mt.gov, mailed to 350 Conley Lake Road, Deer Lodge, MT 59722 or faxed to 406-415-6587. The permit will be prepared and laminated by MCE staff.

The archery-only hunting season on the MCE ranch began Sept. 3, 2022 and ends Jan. 1, 2023. Hunting is not allowed on prison ranch lands between archery and rifle season, which is Oct. 17-21, 2022.

The random drawing for MCE's special access rifle hunt for cow elk only on the prison

ranch will be held Thursday, Oct. 6 at 7 p.m. at the Deer Lodge Community Center. Hunters must have a 213-01 elk B license and be present to enter. The only exceptions are youth and out-of-state hunters. If youth or out-of-state hunters can't be present, they must send a designee (on a one-for-one basis) to enter their name into the drawing.

The DOC is proud to be a part of hunting season in a way that benefits the hunter, the game population, and the ranching operation at MCE.



DOC Fire Crew Tackles Montana Wildfires

Fire Crew Supervisors Ethan Reich and Mike Livermore and Fire Crew Officer Tyler Wolter supervised 14 Montana Department of Corrections (DOC) inmates on the DOC Fire Crew in the field for a week in August. The fire crew helped the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) fight a fire north of Clearwater Junction. The DOC works in conjunction with the DNRC to fight wildfires throughout Montana. During the off season, the Fire Crew helps with a variety of projects in the community.

