Black History Month is held each year in February and is a federally recognized celebration of the contributions African Americans have made, as well as a time to reflect on the struggle for racial justice. Started by Carter G. Woodson, the founder of the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, Black History Month started as Negro History Week and expanded to a month in 1976 when President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month, calling upon the public to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area and endeavor throughout our history.”

In recent years past, DOC staff have worked to bring in influential speakers to talk to the incarcerated populations. Due to COVID, that was not an option for 2021. So, we got creative! Informational handouts and activity sheets were created about notable persons and groups whose accomplishments have played a role in civil rights and racial justice, including but not limited to Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, John Lewis, Bass Reaves, Josh Gibson, Shirley Chisholm, Rosa Parks, and the Black Girl Magic Movement; movies that have delivered some credible depictions of real Black lives and events were aired; and a meal was planned for all incarcerated, that included popular and traditional food items requested in our facilities in honor of Black History Month. But that’s not all - an idea was sparked, and a group of DOC staff, from various facilities, departments, and walks of life, came together to create a three-part video series, aired on the Internal facility networks at each facility, and put on iShare for all staff to view, debuting on Friday, February 12th, 19th and 26th, respectively. These videos have gone virtual! In an effort to keep the tradition alive and share resources across the department, the planning committee (including Arthrea Cunningham, Antonio Espinosa, Sarah Gibbison, Nicole Green, Jeremy Hermann, Lori Korts, Andrea Long, Eddie Miles, Lathan Scott and Curtis Shanklin) coordinated contributions from community leaders, government leaders, DOC staff and the incarcerated population to share their stories, insights, and passion.

The result is a broad reaching, honest, inspiring and challenging look at the past, present and future of our shared history, through the lens of Black History, and the people that are making it.

The first two videos are viewable on the Minnesota DOC YouTube page here, with the third video coming on February 26th.
Commissioner Schnell Speaks at Peace of Hope Community Forum

The Peace of Hope Community Forum on January 19th brought together those with an investment in the well-being of people who are incarcerated. Commissioner Paul Schnell took questions from a small group at Shilo Temple in North Minneapolis and a larger audience watched via Zoom.

Schnell was joined on stage by Communications Director for Peace of Hope— Marquis Rollins, founder and CEO of Until We Are All Free— Kevin Reese, and CEO of Peace of Hope—Sharon Brookes Green.

Topics ranged from COVID mitigation inside our facilities, to the tablets arriving in February. The audience and panel were very supportive of future proposals the DOC is working on.

Commissioner Schnell ended the night saying, “We owe people the best system we can possibly develop and the only way it happens is if we do it together.”

Watch a recording of the event, here: https://www.facebook.com/STIMMN/

Mitchell Named Captain at Faribault

Christopher Mitchell is the new Captain at MC-Faribault.

Mitchell began his career in Lino Lakes in 2004 as a Corrections Officer. He then transferred to Faribault in 2005, where he promoted to Sergeant and in 2014 became Lieutenant. Christopher has been involved in the Field Training Officer program, Special Operations Response Team, being a Master Instructor for the Control Tactics/Self-Defense program, and took on the role of Incident Command System Coordinator. He’s been involved in the department’s Incident Management Team and most recently completed the Minnesota Emergency Management Certificate Program through Homeland Security and Emergency Management.

Congratulations, Captain Mitchell!
Brenda Muthoni has been selected by the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Advisory Board to serve as the CISM Coordinator for our department. Brenda was identified as the top finalist in a competitive pool of our colleagues who all demonstrated a strong commitment to providing care and support for those they serve alongside.

The CISM Coordinator is embedded within the agency’s peer support unit, a key priority included in our strategic plan. CISM is the peer support process utilized by the DOC to provide short-term psychological help and support to staff who have experienced a work-related critical incident. It includes facilitating debriefing opportunities to colleagues involved in responding to critical incidents in the workplace as well as providing one-on-one follow-up support for those impacted staff. The CISM Coordinator is responsible for coordinating the CISM debrief process and supporting the CISM team.

“I’m so excited for Brenda to take on this important role and to work with her and the entire CISM Team to better serve our colleagues,” said Lydia Newlin, Peer Support Director. “Brenda is well prepared to lead this work because she has the experience, skills, heart, and determination to support our extraordinary CISM team and help move us forward in meeting the needs of our entire agency and our colleagues that do this transformative work every single day.”

Brenda started her DOC career as a corrections officer at MCF-Stillwater before serving in a Work-Out-of-Class opportunity as a community transitions coordinator. She also served as a transitions coordinator at MCF-Stillwater and MCF-Oak Park Heights. She is currently a clinical program therapist at MCF-Lino Lakes and completing a clinical social work internship at MCF-Stillwater.

“I am very humbled and honored to take on this role with the department,” said Muthoni. “Creating relationships with those I work with and being there for them in times of critical incidents is meaningful to me because I have seen and experienced how authentic relationships with my colleagues influences my wellbeing and outlook at work and the importance of these relationships during critical times. As I take on the role of CISM Coordinator, I hope to be a part of this positivity for all of those I work with. I truly believe in the power of peers supporting each other in the Department of Corrections, as camaraderie and unity are highly valued.”

Please join us in congratulating Brenda and welcoming her to her new role.

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Sgt. Robyn Lee has been selected as MCF-Faribault’s first Mentor of the Year. Robyn has been a mentor for nine years, and he regularly steps up to help his mentees, is willing to mentor more than one mentee at a time and shows understanding of what the new trainees are going through.

In total, Robyn has mentored 24 individuals and he is also active behind the scenes and often offers the mentor committee help when they need it. He has a natural way of embodying a person-centered approach when it comes to meeting the needs of his mentees.

“I am grateful for the past and present mentors that I have had,” said Robyn. “It is rewarding to pay forward the same to other new staff.”

Congratulations, Robyn, on being MCF-Faribault’s first Mentor of the Year!

Faribault’s mentor committee thanks facility administration for their support of the mentor program.
Moose Lake Print Technologies Program

By Ian Heaslip, Corrections Program Director

The Print Technologies Program run out of MINNCOR at MCF-Moose Lake has had 20 graduates from the bindery program since 2019. This six-month program uses the curriculum designed by Graphic Arts Technical Foundation (GATF). Recently, the facility saw their second graduate from the labor-intensive offset printing program, which incorporates the curriculum from Printing United Alliance with hour logs that demonstrate proficiency in the use of equipment.

Both Deb Woitalla and Scott Danelski (Corrections Manufacturing Specialists) have noted the success rate of placing incarcerated individuals directly into high paying, productive jobs upon release. Seven individuals have walked directly into high paying, print industry jobs and are still employed to date. In non-COVID times, employers will come to the facility to meet with prospective employees, setting up initial interviews and eventual job-site interviews upon release.

Woitalla spoke of the long wait list of companies that want to hire individuals that graduate from these programs, such as recent graduate Paul Wilson. Wilson described the program as truly “restorative.” By completing the program, he feels the confidence to succeed outside of prison, using the latest technology and best practices of the industry.

Daniel Angus is the other graduate from the offset printing program. Angus stated, “I need a career when I get out.” He went on to state that the printing industry is it. There is a demand for this career field, and thanks to the work of Woitalla and Danelski, individuals are succeeding when they release from incarceration.

Follow DOC on Social Media

The DOC’s social media accounts recognize the excellent work of our staff and incarcerated population and help us recruit new employees. Follow the department on Facebook, Twitter:@MinnCorrections, LinkedIn, Instagram, and TikTok.
Staff Testimonial: Red Wing Teacher Angela Pedersen

I’m Angela Pedersen, a teacher at MCF-Red Wing. I began my career as a Corrections Officer but have spent most of my 20 years with the DOC teaching language arts. My father was a Sergeant here; I also have two brothers that work in corrections (a sergeant and a plant maintenance engineer).

The longevity of my career is directly attributable to the enjoyment I feel helping my students work through new educational experiences. For instance, we wrote essays this week. Over half of my students had never written an essay and didn’t exactly know what one was. Some of them were mad about the assignment and some accepted it. All of them completed it and did well. Sometimes I hear that a book we read together might be the first actual book they’ve ever completed (same goes for book reports).

I enjoy observing my students celebrating their academic achievements, from graduating high school to making the honor roll for the first time.

I have peace of mind knowing that my family is covered with health insurance that includes vision and dental plans. I also see the corrections retirement as a huge benefit.

Helping to transform lives has been a meaningful career for me.

Dotson Promotes to 3rd Watch Commander/Visiting Lt. at Lino Lakes

Kevin Dotson recently promoted to 3rd Watch Commander/Visiting Lieutenant at MCF-Lino Lakes.

Dotson attended Southern Illinois University and is a graduate of Loop City College in Chicago. He started with the DOC as an Officer in 1994 and promoted to Sergeant in 2016, where he served in the Utility Pool. Through his career, Kevin has been a member of many committees, including Recruitment & Diversity and Critical Stress Management (CISM). He is CIT trained and has been a member of the Crisis Negotiation Team (CNT) and was part of our youth mentoring program.

Dotson has also worked in various positions within the DOC, including time as an Investigator with OSI at MCF-Faribault, taking on the duties of the department’s Diversity & Inclusion Officer/Southern Region Recruitment Coordinator, and most recently as a WOOC Watch Commander on 1st and 3rd Watch.

“Kevin has experience, dedication and a high level of professionalism that will be beneficial to staff and incarcerated individuals at Lino Lakes and the DOC,” said Captain Steve Harding.

Congratulations, Kevin!
Staff Receiving the Vaccine
**K9 Officers Have Standout Performance at Narcotics Trials Event**

The DOC Canine Team had a banner day at the recent Region 12 United States Police Canine Association Narcotics Trial. MCF-Rush City Canine Officer John Kelly and his partner took 1st place overall, along with Top Rookie Handler/ Rookie Dog, and teamed up with MCF-Lino Lakes Canine Officer Cha Vang (not pictured) for Top 2 Person Department Team.

In the vehicle search event, MCF-Oak Park Heights Canine Officer Alan Gocken took 1st place, Dennis Zahn from MCF-Stillwater was 2nd and Gary Atkins from MCF-Oak Park Heights took 3rd.

The trial event was hosted by the New Hope Police Department and featured nearly 60 canines.

Congratulations on the fantastic results! Our K9 teams are integral in keeping our facilities safe and secure for staff and those in our population.

**Local Children Honor Red Wing Staff**

Kids in the Red Wing community have started making hearts with jokes on the back to bring smiles and laughter to front line workers. MCF-Red Wing staff were the recipients of many of the hearts. These amazing kids have made over 500 hearts to deliver to front line workers.
Shakopee Food Service Staff Shine During Pandemic

By Kim Evans, CPD, and Jackie Sims, Food Service Director

The MCF-Shakopee food service team exemplifies the true definition of teamwork. It has never been more prevalent than during this pandemic. In general, food service relies heavily on the incarcerated women at the facility working side by side with our staff to provide regular meal service. But when that is halted, our food service staff’s dedication shines. The attention to detail and relentless determination to produce the same quality and consistency during a pandemic is commendable.

We are lucky to have such a great group of individuals adapting to any change and coming together in a time of need. Thank you for your support, hard work, and for going the extra mile every single day.

Moose Lake Retirements: Lt. Gordy Abrahamson and Sgt. Jim Bell

By Ian Heaslip, Corrections Program Director

MCF-Moose Lake recently had two significant retirements, totaling over 50 years of state service between the two of them! Lt. Gordy Abrahamson retired with more than 30 years of service. He began his career at MCF-Stillwater prior to transferring to Willow River-CIP, and eventually MCF-Moose Lake. He worked in all security ranks prior to finishing his career as a Living Unit Lieutenant. At CIP, he was an integral team member in shaping the program. Gordy also spent time on the DOC Security Audit team, SORT team, CNT team, COOP team leader, and as coordinator for the Moose Lake Shakedown Team.

Sgt. Jim Bell served more 20 years with the DOC. Jim spent most of his career working at MCF-Willow River/Moose Lake in the Food Services area. He was known for his work as a Field Training Officer, working with new staff to learn the essentials of the job. Jim ran a tight ship in the kitchen area.
Legislative Session Underway

By Safia Khan

The 92nd Legislative Session is well underway—it’s hard to believe we are already over a month into the session! For the first time, the House and Senate are offering livestream hearings to maintain public access during the COVID-19 pandemic. This shift in how the legislature conducts business makes access by interested constituents easier than ever before.

The DOC has several proposals before the legislature, including boosting and supporting our reentry practices, a strong and vast juvenile justice reform package that includes investments in creating better information systems to serve juveniles across our state, enhancing safety inside state and local corrections facilities, and offering community alternatives to pregnant and postpartum women to ensure a healthy start for their babies.

Thus far, we’ve participated in hearings on our COVID-mitigation safety efforts and participated in an in-depth discussion of the Office of the Legislative Auditor’s findings on safety in our facilities. We have been grateful for the opportunity to present our robust efforts and are receptive to the important feedback surrounding these critical issues. The Department also appeared along with representatives from MACCAC and MACPO to provide an overview of the DOC and information on the three community supervision delivery systems, and we testified before the House Preventing Homelessness Division to discuss incarceration and housing insecurity. We are thankful to our partners at the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency, the Inter-Agency Council on Homelessness, and the Department of Human Services for working with us to strengthen the state’s response to homelessness.

Looking forward, we anticipate budget hearings in both the House and the Senate and several opportunities for the Department to testify on our proposals as well as those brought forward by others.

Our focus the next few weeks is on getting our policy bills through committees before their deadlines. We also eagerly await the February forecast in hopes for good news for the revised budget. A revised budget is also where we might bring forward additional proposals with a budgetary impact.

Please reach out to me at safia.khan@state.mn.us or to Government and External Relations Specialist Amy Lauricella amy.lauricella@state.mn.us if you have questions about the session.

Welcome Back Officer Skaar

By Kevin Dotson

Welcome back to Lino Lakes Corrections Officer Steven Skaar, who recently returned from military deployment.

Steven started with the DOC as a Corrections Officer at MCF-Lino Lakes in July of 2019. Shortly after joining the DOC, Steven was activated to a long-term military leave for deployment overseas. In October 2019, he was deployed with the Minnesota Army National Guard Unit – 834th Aviation Support Battalion out of Arden Hills – which is headquartered by the 34th Expeditionary Combat Aviation Brigade out of St. Paul. Steven’s unit was deployed primarily in Kuwait and Iraq and was on active duty 13 and a half months of his 15-month deployment. Steve says he is grateful for the support he received from the DOC:

“I can say with ease that the Minnesota Department of Corrections is the best job I have had,” said Skaar. “Their support of my service and the benefits they’ve provided have been unbeatable. Continuing to accrue PTO and sick leave time, seniority, and receiving time-based raises have been huge perks. I am happy to be back stateside and getting back into the swing of things!”

Welcome back Steven and thank you for your service!
to encourage you to put all of your valuable assets into this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Those who are brave enough to accept the risk will reap the reward. Many investors are already reaping the rewards of their initial investment which should encourage you to do the same.

I'M ASKING YOU TO INVEST IN THE ONE STOCK YOU HOPEFULLY BELIEVE IN.

In order to maximize returns, you must remain invested for the long haul. Many unexpected events will happen in 2021 that could potentially derail you, but I am advising you to stick with your investment strategy and don’t cave into momentary upsets in the market. I am recommending you take one-year to invest and then re-evaluate your plan. Like all investments, I cannot guarantee results. Past performance does not necessarily determine future rewards. However, a well-planned investment strategy historically proves more beneficial than no plan at all. If you choose not to invest, then nothing really changes.

Before I reveal to you this sure-to-win opportunity, understand that everyone falls somewhere on the investment spectrum. Some are quite frugal and invest sparingly while others see the same opportunity and are willing to sell the farm. Some have more assets to invest while others have only a few. Wherever you fall on the investment spectrum, I want camp counselors, coaches and friends. In some cases, those who truly believe in you have invested significant capital into your future. In other cases, not so much. Maybe they would have invested more, but they did not have the resources available to do so. Nevertheless, you should say with a thankful heart, ‘they did the best they could.’

As humans, we are not one-dimensional. We have a physical side that requires attention; but we also have emotions and intellect. There’s also a social side of us that requires routine maintenance...and let’s not forget we were created with a spiritual side that all too often goes neglected. If you are going to invest properly into YOU for 2021, I suggest a balanced approach. If you choose not to invest, nothing really changes. “You are the same person a year from now as you are today except for the books you read and the people you meet.” Mark Twain

START SMALL, BUT GET STARTED.

Here is a simple approach to investing in YOU.

Start small but get started. As you contemplate how much to invest, begin small. Read a book for ten minutes a day. Take a fifteen minute walk every day. Do ten minutes of cardio every day. Save $20 per paycheck into a special fund. Talk 10-15 minutes a day with a different co-worker. A number of years ago, I started jogging for exercise. My
first day, I ran almost ½ mile before I came into the house, falling on the floor and puking my guts out. But everyone has a first day. I stayed at it and by the end of four weeks, I was going multiple times around the block. That would have never happened had I not gotten off the couch and endured a little pain.

Choose an area and stay with it. “This one thing I do.” Some people begin their personal life investment with great gusto and super high expectations. Sadly, they are guilty of setting too many goals and achieving nothing. Set fewer but challenging achievable goals that will encourage you and keep you motivated. If you are going on a diet and want to lose 50 pounds, set a goal to do so in weeks, not days. Make it challenging but achievable. Hey, if you meet your goal early, you can always set a new goal. My father-in-law remarried at the age of 83. He has always been a big man; tipping the scales at 250 plus. His new bride (also 83 when she married him) told him he must go on a diet. In less than one-year, he now weighs about 170 pounds. His problem with diabetes has cleared up and he has more energy to enjoy life. How did he lose so much weight? He changed his eating habits gradually and he stayed with the decision. He did a stellar job of investing in his health.

The simple truth is, no one is responsible to do this investing for you. If you do not take responsibility to invest in yourself, there is no one to blame but the person who stares back at you in the mirror. At least, that’s the view from here.

Red Wing Residents Create Valentine's Cards for Seniors

Jordan Pride is currently completing her internship at MCF-Red Wing. Recently, she was tasked with planning an activity for the juvenile residents. Jordan (with some help from the recreation therapists) came up with the idea of making Valentine’s Day cards for senior citizens living in nursing homes or assisted living in Red Wing.

MCF-Red Wing juvenile residents and staff made over 300 Valentine’s Day cards. These Valentine’s Day cards have been delivered to five nursing homes/assisted living locations in Red Wing.

Pictured: Recreation Therapist Brooke Juliar, Intern Jordan Pride, and Recreation Therapist Theresa Eastlund
Dialysis Barrier Curtains Installed at Oak Park Heights

Health Services staff at MCF-Oak Park Heights recently contacted Physical Plant staff to request separation barriers for dialysis patients. The maintenance staff stepped up by installing clear (poly) hospital curtain barriers with retractable tracks. These are a great asset for barrier protection as well as being security minded that they are transparent.

Photo: The new dialysis barrier curtain installed at Oak Park Heights.

OPH Witter Brothers’ Seasonings Venture Helps Correctional Peace Officers Foundation

Sgt. Joe Witter and his brother Sgt. Brandon Witter recently made an $800 donation to the Correctional Peace Officers Foundation, thanks to the success of their seasoning company Smokin’ Bros Rubs and Seasonings, which started in March 2020.

For every bottle of seasoning that is sold, a portion of their sales is donated to the Correctional Peace Officers Foundation. The CPOF supports families of corrections officers who have lost their life in the line of duty, as well to employees impacted by catastrophic events, hurt on duty or natural disasters.

Smokin’ Bros Rubs and Seasonings are currently in 21 stores in Minnesota and Wisconsin and have sold 3,000 bottles in 10 months!

“The Correctional Peace Officers Foundation is an important resource that helps so many of us throughout the country,” said Joe Witter. “I encourage everyone to support this foundation, which is built for everyone in corrections. You never know when you might need help, or a colleague could really use the assistance.”

Follow on Facebook @smokinbrosrubs for updates and stores where you can purchase their products. For questions about ordering or delivery, direct message them on their facebook page.

Great job on the donation, Joe and Brandon!

Togo Donates $2,500 as Part of Restorative Justice Program

By Lt. Jeff Peterson

MCF-Togo recently donated $1,250 to the Itasca County Victim Assistance Program and $1,250 to Support Within Reach (SANE Program), both located in Grand Rapids.

The donations were raised by meals offered to CIP participants, as a fundraiser, over the last year. The fundraiser is coordinated by the Restorative Justice Sergeant, Food Service staff and CIP participants at the facility. The meals are typically held the Sunday before a Senior Blue Hat squad graduates from Phase I.

Photo: (L – R) Togo Lt. Jeff Peterson and Itasca County Attorney Matti Adams.
Collaboration Efforts Lead to Safer Facility

At MCF-Stillwater the Food Service staff, and incarcerated population workers have teamed up to help keep the food service area disinfected and COVID-19 free.

Between each meal service, the designated incarcerated worker puts on the Flow Zone Cyclone 2 backpack and disinfects the food production area. This effort has helped keep our food service staff, employed incarcerated individuals, and all our residents safe. Along with personal hygiene, temperature checks, mask mandate and social distancing, food services has managed to keep open and producing 4,000 meals a day to meet the needs of the MCF-Stillwater population.

(L-R): Kitchen Supervisor Dan Kiser and Frederick McGee; Mr. McGee is pictured using the backpack sprayer

Togo Launches Virtual Orientation for CIP

By RJ Kruse

As part of COVID prevention methods, Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP) participants are quarantined for two weeks upon arrival to MCF-Togo. In order to ensure both CIP participant and staff safety during their quarantine phase, Togo has begun conducting virtual orientation.

Using Microsoft Teams, staff conduct orientation from a separate facility location yet can see, hear and interact with the new squad in real time. This greatly reduces the amount of staff entering the quarantine unit and minimizes chances of infection or spread of potential COVID. This also maximizes time efficiency during the quarantine phase, allowing participants to immediately start participating in all programming areas of CIP the day they complete quarantine.

Photo: Incarcerated CIP participants attending a virtual orientation at MCF-Togo.
Lieutenant Practicums lead to WOOC Opportunities

Two MCF-St. Cloud staff were recently selected for WOOC Lieutenant opportunities.

Sgt. Tyler Haugen was selected for a temporary role as the Lieutenant overseeing Intake and Living Unit E. and Sgt. Nick Lanners was selected as the All Shift Relief Lieutenant, responsible for 3rd Watch Master Control, Towers and Perimeter Security. During the past year, both staff completed the 40-hour Lieutenant Practicum, spending time learning the responsibilities of Lieutenants on all three watches.

Congratulations!

Wallace Promotes to WOOC Lieutenant Appointment at Lino Lakes

Congratulations to Matt Wallace on his Work-Out-of-Class Lieutenant appointment at MCF-Lino Lakes. Matt is filling in behind Lt. Capocasa in West/Restrictive Housing/Intake/Health Services.

Matt has a degree from St. Thomas in Biology and Criminal Justice. He is a SORT member, a master chemical instructor, firearms instructor and a marksman observer. He has also completed the lieutenant practicum. Matt promoted to Sergeant in May 2017.

Congratulations, Matt!
Faribault’s Mentor Program

By Jon Chappuis

MCF-Faribault’s Mentor Committee recently encouraged mentors to give testimonials about the important work they do in helping others.

Below are several mentor testimonials:

• I have been a part of the mentoring program for over five years. It has given me the opportunity to connect with new DOC hires. Each mentee has given me a different experience. I make it known that I am available whenever needed and that our conversations are confidential unless policies are being breeched or there is a security risk to what is being discussed. I feel honored that they have the confidence to reach out when needed after their mentee time has expired. Making sure all mentees know we are a team and together we can accomplish the DOC’s mission is important. – Jason Starkson, Casemanager

• I have been fortunate enough to be paired with mentees not only in my work area but with some in other work areas. This has allowed me to gain a knowledge of what other departments look like on a day to day basis. It gave me reason to go to other areas to meet with a mentee and gained a higher level of respect for what others contribute. This is an integral part of working together as a team within the facility and something that is much needed. I also have benefited from valuable relationships with colleagues throughout the facility. Mentor programs should encourage participants to grow professionally and advance within an organization. – Anonymous

• I’ve been a mentor for only a couple of years. I meet with the new staff and tell them about my career in DOC of 24 years and what I’ve learned. I tell them why I’m a mentor and it’s because when I started, I didn’t have a mentor. I started in Birch Records and jumped right in as they needed someone in the intake and transfer position “right now.” The department was busy, and I felt lost for the first six months or better. I didn’t know all the available resources for staff. I didn’t even know there was two women’s bathrooms in Birch! So, I decided that I didn’t want new staff feeling this way. I tell the new staff to call or email me anytime they have a question and there are no dumb or silly questions. – Kelly Ellis, Program Coordinator

Corrections is a unique experience with diverse experiences. The mentors and mentor committee at Faribault are committed to assisting in the transition for those employees that are new to corrections. The mentor committee is committed to assisting our mentors by sending out regular “helpful hints,” reminders or simple messages to assist the mentors in helping new staff with this transition.

Faribault mentor committee members include Sam Ranta, Travis Blomberg, Holly Collins, Paul Banon, Nick Duffy, and Jon Chappuis.

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Visiting Reopens at Oak Park Heights

By Lt. Jeff White

On January 14, 2021 MCF-Oak Park Heights successfully re-opened the Visiting Room.

The incarcerated men and their family members are grateful we can once again safely conduct visits. Initially, we closed visiting last March at the beginning of COVID. We re-opened in August with revamped visiting and safety procedures, but due to cases of COVID within the facility, visiting was closed again. We can currently host six incarcerated men with having up to three visitors at a time.

For the most updated information on visiting at each facility, visit: https://mn.gov/doc/family-visitor/visiting-information/
"Tool on Device" an Intervention for the Digital Age

By Danelle Gorra

The DOC is receiving CARES Act Funding to purchase 100 Electronic Carey Guides and 170 Tool on Device (TOD) resources in order to provide greater access to agents and clients to research-based tools that promote positive change.

The Carey Group outlines the “why” of TOD as:

Research demonstrates that traditional methods of supervision are ineffective in reducing recidivism among adults and juveniles. For behavior change and recidivism reduction to be possible, [clients] must understand the personal and environmental factors underlying their illegal behavior and be taught the skills they need in order to make positive changes in the future. The Carey Guides are designed to equip corrections professionals with the information and tools they need to support these changes among their clients.

The TOD tool gives Field Services the ability to send or have clients interface with staff on Carey Guides, The Brief Intervention Tools (BITS) and Driver Workbook electronically. TOD provides agents the ability to:

- Use a navigator that helps an agent identify which handbook or guide works best for addressing their client’s specific, criminogenic needs.
- Send electronic homework assignments to clients to either work independently or alongside the agent so that the client might be able to better understand their risk factors, their triggers and what skills can be built to ensure their success.
- Allow agents to track progress and completions of Carey Guide homework and how much intervention work clients have completed (dosage).

Moreover, TOD assists in reducing paper and helps agents connect with clients virtually, especially important during the pandemic.

TOD trainings wrap up in February; however, some agents attended a January training and are beginning use. Initial feedback is overwhelmingly positive.

Agent Kurt Hoehne indicated the guides are easy to use and that he is working alongside his clients with the TOD, and he and his clients are learning to use it together. Nola Seidl agrees stating, “getting it set-up and finding the right TOD for him was very easy.” She feels the choice of communication options, email or text, are nice.

Agent Robert Fyre says “I have used them via Zoom and did a share screen and walked through the work. It has been nice to get in meetings in between their work and treatment, it is great to help facilitate conversation.”

Agent Megan Bader suggests they help place the accountability in the client’s hands and helps clients confront difficult realities that may be barriers to change.

TOD fits in with having a more person-centered approach as the assignments are tailored to a client’s criminogenic needs specifically and clients have access to work on assignments at their convenience so they are available when they might be struggling with a particular issue.

Field Services is committed to providing tools to foster change with clients and TOD represents one more tool in the toolbox.
Office Services Steps-up to Assist in Central Office Streamlining

A big thanks to Central Office’s Amy Chamberlain and her staff for reducing the size of Central Office from three floors to one. The team, consisting of Andrea Stephani, Kathryn Held and Rose Widell engineered a plan to consolidate and reconfigure the footprint of Central Office. Over the course of three months they assisted in redesigning the second floor space to accommodate the business needs of relocated work units and the decommissioning of space and conference rooms on the first, third and lower level areas. The reduction in leased space at Central Office will streamline operations and save the department money. This was a huge undertaking, and the work of the Office Services staff is greatly appreciated.

Sgt. Rivard Retires from MCF-Oak Park Heights

By: Sherry Bohn

Sgt. Rodney Rivard retired on January 26th after a 25-plus year DOC career.


Rodney promoted to Sergeant on July 25, 2007 and developed a positive rapport with the incarcerated population and his peers.

Rodney served our country with the U.S. Coast Guard – thank you for your service.

Throughout his career of dedicated service, he worked in virtually every area of the facility and retired as Sergeant in Control 2. His 26 years of service is a significant achievement and is magnified when the quality of service that he gave, accompanies the length of service.

On behalf of MCF-Oak Park Heights, congratulations and thank you for your service to our country and to the State of Minnesota, we wish you all the best in your retirement.

Special Thanks to:
The DOC Hotline newsletter is produced by DOC Communications staff Sarah Fitzgerald, Aaron Swanum, and Jeremy Hermann with special assistance from Amanda Evenski with DOC MINNCOR. Thanks to everyone who contributed this month! If you have a story idea, contact sarah.j.fitzgerald@state.mn.us.