

The Mabel Bassett Balance

SPEAK THE TRUTH. ELEVATE THE COMMUNITY. SHIFT THE VIEW.

Vol. 2 | Issue 1 | August 2025

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Illustration by MarekPhotoDesign

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MBCC's newest mental health clinician helps patients find a way back to themselves

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Painting by Sharee Asberry



The Mabel Bassett Balance

Est. 2024
Vision statement: Speak the truth. Elevate the community. Shift the view.
Mission: Our mission is to inspire hope and advocacy within our community.

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The staff of The Mabel Bassett Balance wishes to thank the Prison Journalism Project for all their training, guidance and encouragement. We extend a special thanks to the Oklahoma SPJ Pro Chapter for the generous program grant that made this anniversary edition of the newspaper possible. We also gratefully acknowledge the generous contributions of donors from Poetic Justice, including Linda Lambert. We wish to thank staff from the Oklahoma Department of Corrections for supporting our endeavors to launch a community newspaper. Finally, to Kaya Dierks: Thank you for all the time, research, care and kindness you poured into our program this summer. We could not have done it without you and wish you all the best in your next chapter.

Ideas? Feedback? Concerns?
We'd love to hear from you!

We are always looking to uphold a standard of excellence. Our aim is that every member of the broader community at Mabel Bassett feels their perspective and voice are welcome in this publication. To submit story ideas or provide feedback, contact:
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The Mabel Bassett Balance is sponsored by the Tulsa-based nonprofit Poetic Justice

Design by Cait Palmiter | www.caitpalmiter.com



Staff photo. Front, from left: Melissa Antonucci, The Balance co-advisor, Crystal Avilla, Michelle Walker, Victoria Hooper, guest contributor Rachel Rivera, Jax, Sharee Asberry, Lindsey Smith, Tabitha “Angelica” Mattison, and Erica “E” Bonner. Not pictured: Dusti Rickert and Heather Barbee. (Photo by Kimberly Wenthold)

FROM THE EDITORS
Giving thanks

It has been one year since the inaugural issue of The Mabel Bassett Balance was published, and we hope you have each found something about it you enjoy. We want to thank all of you again for your support and encourage you to use the brand new Balance submission box in the gym to give us feedback on what you would like to see in future editions. Remember, this is your paper. Submit recipes, letters to the editors, acknowledgements of people or groups you have seen doing positive things on the yard. Whatever it is, we want to hear about it. The editors will collect your contributions

periodically and review them for possible publication. Finally, we want to thank the Inmate Council for going above and beyond in showing what it means to be leaders in your community. We know most of you go to school and have full time jobs yet still make time to do extra things, like when you worked late to finish the administration floors. We want you to know that we see you and appreciate you.

*Sharee Asberry
Crystal Avilla
Jax*



Meet Amanda Purcell, director of the Bloom & Groom course coming to MBCC, and her nine-year-old rescue Doc Holliday. (Photo courtesy from Amanda Purcell)

Animal lovers emerge

Erica Bonner | Staff writer

There is a new CareerTech program coming to Mabel Bassett Correctional Center called Bloom & Groom. The program, starting in late summer, will offer dog lovers the opportunity to care for and spend time with a variety of furry friends.

Learn more

If you want to learn valuable skills and spend time with man’s best friend, sign up with a case manager today.

This therapeutic nine-month program will equip residents with a strong foundational skill set for employment upon release. To qualify for the Bloom & Groom program, candidates must have two years or less remain on their sentence. Classes meet Monday-Friday from noon to 4 p.m. and include hands-on collaboration with peers as well as textbook work. Participants required to score 80% or higher on tests to remain in the program.

Amanda Purcell, Bloom & Groom coordinator, said, “All people and animals deserve a second chance at a great life. This program allows me to provide that opportunity for two-legged and four-legged friends.”

Participants in Bloom & Groom will:

- Engage in a professional environment.
- Earn certification through International Professional Groomers.

After graduation, participants will:

- Be trained in handling household and rescue dogs.
- Earn a two-year certification in CPR and first aid for canines.
- Possess valuable vocational training in grooming, managing, bathing and brushing dogs.



Captain Robert Reed made the Fourth of July a hit at MBCC. (Photo by Chaplain David Shaner)

Read about Reed

Victoria Hooper | Staff writer

While the smell of briquettes drifted across the compound and the food popped and sizzled, Captain Robert Reed gave his undivided attention to ensure residents at Mabel Bassett Correctional Center had a great holiday. Music blared and games were organized all over the compound. Even the special meal served in the institutional dining room ran smoothly. Only with Reed’s sacrificed time and energy was any of this possible. It was his volunteered presence that allowed Inmate Council representatives to fire up the grills so that they could cook residents’ food for the holiday.

Reed has become an integral part of MBCC and should be celebrated for his good works within the facility.

For the last year or so, MBCC has been repositioning itself toward positive change and growth, and Reed is no exception. The Reed from a few years ago cannot compare to the present Reed we see today.

Rhonda Frantz has seen a difference. “I appreciate Reed because you know what to expect and that makes it easier.”

D-unit resident Danelle Lee agrees. “He doesn’t judge us by the actions of one person.”

Reed says this is in part due to a class he took offered by upper management called Women 101. “After I took the class,” he said, “I realized that I had to communicate differently with you ladies. The old way wasn’t working. I was not aware of the trauma these ladies have been through.”

His new approach is more effective than ever, enabling him to build bridges between him and the population.

Reed has been employed at MBCC for almost four years and has been a part of the Department of Corrections for 16 years. When asked about his first impression of MBCC, he admitted “this is not what I was used to in the Department of Corrections for sure. I see so much potential in you ladies, and now I’m invested.”

With his new skill set, Reed has cultivated great working relationships with the very women he used to write up for misconducts. C-1 unit resident Kathy Taylor admitted that she loves working with Reed. “It’s amazing seeing the difference,” she said.

“I appreciate Reed because you know what to expect and that makes it easier.”

Rhonda Frantz

FEATURE

Nail in the Pell

Michelle Walker | Staff Writer

In March 2025, panic hit the college department at Mabel Bassett Correctional Center when Rose State College (RSC) emailed the coordinator that they would no longer be participating in the Second Chance Pell (SCP) grant program for incarcerated students. The news spread like wildfire, reducing many students to tears.

Ashley Brown, an RSC freshman, said, “I was devastated because I don’t have family to help me pay for college. For someone like me, I was a high school dropout, seeing the grades I made was motivational. To lose all of that.”

The initial disclosure from RSC stated that the program would end after summer 2025. However, they were able to extend the current Pell grants for previously approved students through the spring 2026 semester. After that, the federal Prison Education Program (PEP) that allows the use of the Pell grant will not be accessible to their incarcerated students. RSC will continue to offer classes at their nine prison sites with verification of ability to pay. The college currently serves approximately 165 students using the Pell grant. The number of students will drop significantly when federal funding becomes unavailable.

RSC initiated the SCP program for those with five years or less at MBCC in spring 2021. They increased enrollment to include all sentences except life without parole in spring 2024. MBCC currently has 65 RSC students and had planned to enroll substantially more in fall 2025. They had more than 100 approved FAFSA applications. The announcement was a shock to both RSC professors and DOC college coordinators.

Rachele Lowry, the MBCC college coordinator and Oklahoma Department of Corrections 2025 Teacher of the Year, reflected on her dismay when she received the email: “So many of my students have unrealized potential. Watching them flourish in the college program

BY THE NUMBERS

Every **\$1** spent on Correctional education programs saves the taxpayers **\$4-\$5** (Rand study 2013)

\$1 million

invested in prison education prevents 600 crimes (Department of Policy Studies at the University of California)

and begin to believe in their own abilities ... I am heartsick about the loss of the Pell and the new students it could have helped.”

The RSC student handbook states that “Rose State College provides higher education programs and services intended to foster life-long learning for a diverse population.” RSC core values tout the importance of different backgrounds and perspectives. The college’s commitment to community has been reflected in their services to the prisons, but even this commitment is challenged by economic hardship. RSC expressed regret, saying that financial costs to administer the program was the primary cause of their decision to exit the program.

Many, however, might question why it is important for higher education to

be available in prisons.

Economics is the first answer. According to a 2016 U.S. Department of Education Study, from 1979 to 2013 state and local spending increases outpaced the funding of pre-K-12 public education three to one. In 2021, the Justice Center issued a report projecting Oklahoma would spend \$129 million in 2022 just for costs of those returning to prison.

Any decrease in recidivism will result in real dollars that can be better used in our flagging public education system or other infrastructure programs. A 2013 Rand study showed that for every dollar spent on correctional education programs, including college, taxpayers save \$5 from future crime and incarceration rates. Additionally, a Department of Policy study at the University of California found that every \$1 million invested in education can prevent 600 crimes.

A 2019 Vera Institute article reported that Tulsa Community College awarded 500 associate degrees since 2007 to incarcerated students. The recidivism rate for these graduates was only 5%, compared to a normal recidivism rate of nearly 70%. In general, incarcerated students involved in post-secondary education are 48% less likely to recidivate than those who are not. As the level of the degree increases, the rate of recidivism decreases even more.

According to a 2022 Bankrate article, by 2027 70% of jobs will require some

sort of post-secondary degree or training, but only 6% of the incarcerated individuals nationwide have access to these forms of education. Those with felony records earn an average of 41% less than those without a record of a similar age.

Broader access to college will better prepare incarcerated individuals to earn a living wage when they are released. The ability to adequately support themselves not only ensures formerly incarcerated persons rely less on public support but that they will contribute their share of taxpayer dollars, effectively improving the community for everyone.

In addition to the societal economic benefits and reduced recidivism, significant personal benefits can be associated with prison college programs including greater political engagement, more volunteerism and improved health after release.

Generational benefits are also a factor since more than half of those who are incarcerated have minor children. Just as children with an incarcerated parent are more likely to be justice-involved, children with a parent who has a college degree are more likely to take education seriously. Changed mindsets can interrupt cycles of incarceration and end generational poverty for many families.

Not only does college improve lives post-release but it also has an impact within prison. Prison residents that participate in post-secondary education commit 75% fewer infractions since these programs are contingent on good behavior. A college education produces mature, well-spoken leaders who can have a calming effect in high-stress environments such as prison.

Many college students realize unrecognized potential through college participation. Layna Fischer, an RSC sophomore, carries a full-time

college schedule while maintaining a 4.0 grade point average. She now has much larger aspirations, wanting to pursue a long-held dream of becoming an anthropologist. “A college degree never seemed possible before the grant,” she said, “since I had my children and bills.”

Choosing not to participate in the Pell

The higher the degree, the lower the recidivism rate

... PELL continued on page 5

PELL ... cont. from page 4

grant program is a growing trend across the nation due to increased costs imbedded by colleges as well as added scrutiny and staffing issues. Several suggestions have been proposed to increase the economic impact and bolster public opinion of prison higher ed programs:

- Allow Department of Corrections officers and other staff members to take college courses in the prison college program to increase career opportunities. Not only do employees have access to financial aid if they qualify but DOC provides additional benefits to employees who earn a post-secondary education degree.
- Encourage state community colleges and universities to participate in PEP. These colleges could add fees approved by State Regents to help offset the cost of additional staff members, accreditation and regulatory requirements, secure-network internet-based access and any other unforeseen expenses.
- Publicize college PEP results, recidivism rates and inmate behavior patterns to allow the public to see tangible, positive outcomes. For example, in spring 2025 MBCC had 78 college students with a cumulative GPA of 3.52.
- Build a system of state-funded and volunteer donor support for higher education and the PEP program. The Pell grant was intended to supplement other payment methods for secondary education, not supplant them. Additional financial support and political support is sorely needed to foster higher education.

Those that leave prison directly affect Oklahoma communities, since over 95% of the incarcerated population will someday be released. Education is one of the most transformative tools available. Funding college and other post-secondary programs is the best way to decrease recidivism and increase public safety while allowing the formerly incarcerated the chance to contribute to the prosperity and well-being of our state and local communities.

Saying goodbye to a legend

Crystal Avilla | Editor

The beginning of July signaled the end of an 11-year career in the Oklahoma Department of Corrections for Jami Chambers, the principal of Mabel Bassett Correctional Center's education department. Chambers spent her final hours gathered around a table with fellow education staff and tutors, attempting to enjoy her retirement luncheon through bittersweet tears. The ladies laughed and told funny stories from her time as Literacy teacher, then Pre-High School (PHSE) instructor, and finally, principal. But most of all, they cried together.

"I'm going to miss you all so much," Chambers stated profusely. "I can only marvel that I was blessed enough to finish a 34-year career in teaching loving it even more than when I was 22, just starting my career."

She wants the residents of MBCC to know that she appreciates being allowed into their lives. "I started out just wanting to make a difference for those who found themselves residing there. I didn't realize the women of Mabel Bassett would have such a profound effect on my life. I met some truly amazing people. You changed me more than you know, and I am forever grateful for you all."

Chambers has long been the heart and soul of the education department, and many cannot imagine what the future will look like without her.

Amber Franklin has been working for years to earn her Hi-Set and remembers fondly how Chambers never backed down from anybody, not even her. "No matter how crazy I was acting, she believes that anyone can change and do better, that they can accomplish getting a diploma. I've passed all my subjects but math. Praise the Lord for Ms. Chambers!"

"I walk into a room thinking people are gonna judge me or take me the wrong way," former tutor and current college student Brittany Payne said. "But Chambers was always there saying 'you got this.' It immediately filled me with confidence. I love her."

Tina Lamb says Chambers only



Jami Chambers, beloved principal of education at MBCC, retired last month. MBCC residents wish her all the best and will miss her greatly. (Photo courtesy from Jami Chambers)

started at the facility a couple of months before she enrolled in Literacy. "When I doubted myself, she would give me the 'Mother Look' that told me to do it anyway. She had more faith in me than I had in myself. She made me want to do better."

Lamb is projected to earn her second associate degree in 2026. "She's seen me accomplish so much, from Literacy to graduating from college. I hate to think that she won't be there. It's definitely not going to be the same."

There is a very real fear on the yard that whoever eventually fills the position will not care as much as the beloved former principal.

"I've seen her go to housing units to get students or tutors who didn't show up when they were supposed to," Lamb said. "We'd all laugh, but it was great knowing she'd hunt you down to find out what was wrong."

Rachele Lowry, college coordinator and Literacy teacher, wants to assure everyone that standards will not dimin-

ish in the absence of a principal. "Even though Chambers left big shoes to fill, her guidance remains within all of us."

All instructors agree they will make it a priority to ensure the education building remains the same safe place to learn and grow, and they hope that everyone will get a chance to experience the life-changing atmosphere at some point in their incarceration.

During her time at MBCC, Chambers was many things: educator, principal, friend, mentor, mediator, and at times, avenging angel. She was never afraid

to stand up for what she thought was right, and God help those who crossed the line. She beamed with pride at every graduation and always said "Good morning," even when there was nothing good about it. She showed respect and grace to every resident who crossed her path and left behind a legacy worth its weight in gold.

Jami Chambers, you will be missed.

"She had more faith in me than I had in myself. She made me want to do better."

Tina Lamb

OPINION

A message to the community: Vote

Lindsey Smith | Staff Writer

Voting may be the last thing on our minds when we leave Mabel Bassett Correctional Center and rejoin society. The belief our government cares about our welfare may be damaged, but we should still make voting a priority. As citizens of Oklahoma, voting on the state level is not only important as we forge new paths, but it is also the best way to ensure our voices have an impact. By voting, we have the power to elect lawmakers who reflect our beliefs and share our desire for positive societal change.

In Oklahoma, felons regain the right to vote when they have fully served their sentence of court-mandated calendar days.

As someone with a split sentence, 13 in Oklahoma Department of Corrections custody and 12 on supervision, I will not regain my right to vote until I am 55 years old. Even though I have not yet entered my 40s, I am aware of the moment when my right to vote will be reinstated. I keep up with state events, recent statistics, and I have a college education, yet the state of Oklahoma



Photo by Freepik

dictates that I am unworthy to vote for over a decade even after I return as a taxpayer.

Voting is one way we can change future voting regulations for felons. Regulations differ for each state, so the elected officials we vote into office are a direct causation of our state laws. The ones we elect are a direct representa-

tion of our voices.

I believe in the power of the people. I also believe our elected officials do their best to reflect the people they govern. But the only voices that will be heard are those who speak out.

Steps to vote

Register to vote by filling out a voter

RESOURCES

Oklahoma State Election Board
Room B-6, State Capitol Building
PO Box 53156
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73152

To find out if you are eligible to vote, go to oklahoma.gov/elections.html or email info@elections.ok.gov.

Election schedule is available at okvoterportal.okelections.gov

registration application form. Forms are available at post offices, tag agencies, libraries or the county election board.

You will need the following information: name, address, political affiliation (e.g. Democrat, Republican, Independent or Libertarian), birth date, driver's license number and the last four digits of your Social Security number, which is required if you do not have a driver's license.

You can register to vote at any time, but to vote in an upcoming election you must have been registered at least 25 days before. So do not wait until the last minute to register.

Once your application has been approved, you will be mailed a voter identification card that lists your name, address, political affiliation and the place where you will cast your vote. Make sure all the information is correct.

As we rejoin society with plans to do things differently, it is important to make voting a priority. Remember, your voice is worth being heard.

"It was the first 'yes' I got in 10 years"

Lindsey Smith | Staff Writer

"It was the first 'yes' I got in 10 years," Kimberly Wenthold smiled as she told the room of Hope Behind Bar scholarship participants, all residents of Mabel Bassett Correctional Center pursuing higher education. Everyone cheered, some even jumped to their feet. A win for one of them is a win for all of them.

The 'yes' Wenthold finally achieved came after 10 years of incarceration, hard work and a fateful meeting with Cleveland County Judge Michael Tupper after he waived her \$18,000 in fines and fees.

"I didn't know how I was going to pay" that much, Wenthold said. "It was something that my family and I had thought

about. In fact, I was taken out of my grandparents' will due to fear the courts would seize family assets before I would have a chance to make payments."

Wenthold's win comes on the trail of a decade of 'nos'. Even after serving time with good behavior, she has been denied relief on multiple occasions including a judicial review and multiple commutation attempts.

Wenthold's motivation to keep fighting in spite of 'nos' for a better life is what brought her to that meeting with Judge Tupper. As a senior at Northwestern Oklahoma State University, Wenthold attends a bi-weekly Thursday night study hall. The group meets for extra study time and occasionally discusses events pertaining to Oklahoma. Kris Steele, executive director at The Educa-

tion and Employment Ministry (TEEM), often brings in guests who "do good work in Oklahoma," Wenthold stated.

As someone who keeps up with events in Oklahoma, she was already aware of Judge Tupper before his visit on May 22, 2025. "I had been following some of his cases, and I was excited to meet him," Wenthold said.

Judge Tupper's restorative reputation proceeds him. In 2022, he made headlines when he suspended a woman's life sentence to 16 months in ODOC custody, "a proportionate punishment for the crime," he stated at the sentencing.

The dismissal of Wenthold's fines and fees was not instant upon her meeting with Judge Tupper but a process that included a hand-written letter providing a list of the programs and work she has

completed during her incarceration.

"I want women to know what we do here does matter," Wenthold stated.

Fine and fees for incarcerated individuals have been debated by advocates, legislators and even the governor of Oklahoma in recent years. Judge Tupper's decision to grant financial relief to Wenthold shows one way in which the judicial system can break the cycle of redundant punishment for those who experience incarceration in Oklahoma. For Wenthold, it showed that societal change can start with one person. "I thanked him for his courage, not just in the letter I wrote after the courts dismissed my fines, but the day I met him. I thanked him for his courage," Wenthold said.

Kindness matters

Tabitha “Angelica” Mattison
Staff Writer

“Have you ever felt isolated despite being surrounded by people?” That was the first question asked in a recent survey of 80 residents and staff members at Mabel Basset Correctional Center. The questionnaire was conducted as part of an effort to raise awareness that, according to “A Prison Writers Guide to Media Writing,” although “we are all suffering in seen and unseen ways each and every day[,] this experience does not have to isolate us, we can allow it to bond us together.” Helping others, even amid one’s own struggles, often proves to be mutually beneficial.

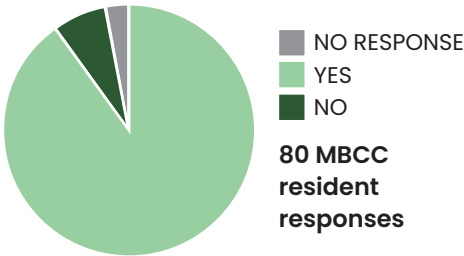
According to the collected data, most residents and staff not only understand but have experienced the negative and oftentimes debilitating effects loneliness produces.

The second and final question of the poll asked: “Aside from giving and receiving material gifts, how does one know they are loved or cared for?” Respondents provided insightful answers. Here are a few:

- “Helping with a job, chore, or physical activity.” -Macy Schmeder
- “How they support you when you’re not around.” -Correctional Officer Sgt. McSwain
- “They love you through your mess and forgive your flaws.” -Kayla Wilson
- “Praying together.” - Amber Henry
- “Active listening and interaction.” - Correctional Officer Sgt. Snodgrass
- “If their words and actions match up, how they treat you.” - Lips
- “Caring about how their actions effect [sic] you, and by what activities they include you in.” -Alexsis Carver-Rodriguez
- “They respect my boundaries.” -Annie Brooks
- “Actions speak louder than words” - Ms. Howard, Case Manager
- “If they can be with me, even in silence.” -Warrior
- “When they care enough to wonder how I’m doing.” -Zimmerman
- “If they are genuinely happy to see me.” -Emani Farmer
- “Time spent with you of their own

SURVEY RESULTS

“Have you ever felt isolated despite being surrounded by people?”



- free will.” -Camille Lewis
- “They smile at me, are kind, and are concerned for my well being.” -Carina Romero
 - “They support me in healthy ways, want the best for me and even better, and they don’t hurt me.” -Melissa Sawyer
 - “Behavior and kindness.” -Unit Mgr. Ola Onajobi
 - “They wake me up for breakfast.” -Cayla Ray
 - “Know me well enough to anticipate my needs and try to meet them.” -Correctional Officer Sgt. S. Serta
 - “They tell me they love me, and never give up on me.” -Egg Girl
 - “They’re eager to share their life and moments with me.” -Panda
 - “Random acts of kindness, doing small things you wouldn’t ever ask for.” -Suzanne Satterfield
 - “If they take time out to do something for me, without being asked or expecting anything in return.” -Amy Kinsley
 - “They check on me, their character.” -Teresa Cope
 - “Spending time together.” - Brett Bell

We should make the choice to become the type of person we would like to meet. The resulting ripple effect would drastically improve the quality of our time and change the whole atmosphere here at MBCC in a positive way. MBCC resident Dimples summed up this concept beautifully, stating, “Sometimes it only takes one person.”

We have nothing to lose and everything to gain. The odds are in our favor. We owe it to ourselves and to our community to be the change we want to see.

Tabitha “Angelica” Mattison | Escrito de Personel
Traducido por **Rachel Rivera**
Colaboradora

“Alguna ves te has sentido aislado aun estando rodeado de gente?” Fue la primera pregunta en una reciente encuesta de 80 residentes y personal en Mabel Bassett Correctional Center. Este cuestionario fue conducido como parte de un esfuerzo para aumentar la conciencia de que según, “A Prison Writers Guide to Media Writing,” aunque estamos sufriendo de maneras que se pueden ver y en las que no se pueden ver cada día; esta experiencia no tiene que aislarnos, podemos permitir que esto nos une. “Ayudando a otros, sin embargo teniendo nuestras propias luchas, muchas de las veces muestra ser benéfico.”

Según la información de la encuesta, la mayoría de los residentes y personal no todos entendieron, pero han reconocido el efecto negativo y debilitado que produce la soledad.

La segunda y ultima pregunta de la encuesta fue: “Aparte de regalando y recibiendo regalos, como sabe una persona que es amado o querido?” Los que respondieron dieron respuestas asombrosas. Aquí hay algunas respuestas:

- “Ayudando con su trabajo, faenas domesticas o actividades físicas.” - Macy Schmeder
- “Como te apoyan cuando no estas presente.” - Correctional Officer Sgt. McSwain
- “Te aman aunque estés echando a perder tu vida y perdonan tus fallas.” - Kayla Wilson
- “Orando juntas.” - Amber Henry
- “Escuchando atentamente y interacción.” - Correctional Officer Sgt. Snodgrass
- “Si las palabras y las acciones de una persona son iguales y como te tratan.” - Lips
- “Si les importan como sus acciones te afectan y en que actividades te incluyen.” - Alexsis Carver-Rodriguez
- “Respectan tus limites.” - Annie Brooks
- “Las acciones hablan mas fuerte que las palabras.” - Ms. Howard, Case Manager

- “Si pueden estar conmigo aun en el silencio.” - Warrior
- “Cuando se preocupan por mi lo suficiente para preguntarme como estoy.” - Zimmerman
- “Si verdaderamente son feliz de ver me.” - Emani Farmer
- “El tiempo que pasan contigo por su propia voluntad.” - Camille Lewis
- “Me dan una sonrisa, son bondadosos y están preocupados por mi bien estad.” - Carina Romero
- “Me soportan en maneras saludables, quieren lo mejor para mi, y mucho mas mejor, y no me lastiman.” - Melissa Sawyer
- “Comportamiento y bondad.” - Unit Mgr. Ola Onajobi
- “Me despiertan para el desayuno.” - Cayla Ray
- “Me conocen lo suficiente para reconocer mis necesidades, intentan de satisfacer esas necesidades.” - Correctional Officer Sgt. S. Serta
- “Me dicen que me llaman y no se dan por vencidos.” - Egg Girl
- “Si están entusiasta para repartir sus vidas y sus momentos conmigo.” - Panda
- “Actos de bondad, haciendo cosas pequeñas en las que nunca les preguntases que hicieran.” - Suzanne Satterfield
- “Si toman el tiempo para hacer algo para mi sin que les pregunte o que esperen algo de mi en regreso.” - Amy Kinsley
- “Vienen a ver como estoy, su carácter.” - Teresa Cope
- “Pasando tiempo juntos.” - Brett Bell

Debemos hacer una decisión de ser el tipo de persona que nosotros decíamos encontrar. Los resultados de este efecto mejoraría la calidad de nuestro tiempo y cambiaría las vibras aquí en MBCC de una manera positiva. En resumir, una residente de MBCC, Dimples, dice, “A veces se lleva nada mas que una persona.”

No tenemos nada que perder y todo para ganar. Todo esta en nuestro favor. Nos debemos a nosotros mismos y a nuestra comunidad de hacer el cambio que queremos ver.

1. Shiloh Revilla, Glenda Wesley, and volunteers serve MBCC residents. (Photo by Lance West)

2. This year's PJ graduating class. (Photo by Cristina Holloway)

3. Beginning in California and ending in Washington, D.C., the Moccasins Across America journey champions unity, reconciliation and healing among Native peoples. (Photo courtesy of Melvin Battiest)

4. Mabel residents dance in celebration of Juneteenth. (Photo by Lance West)

5. Mabel resident Landyn Sowards emerges from his baptism during the Princess Within Conference. (Photo courtesy of Dana Green)



POETIC JUSTICE GRADUATION 2025

Michelle Walker | Staff Writer

The Poetic Justice (PJ) graduation, delayed from the previous evening due to a tornado warning for McLoud, took place in Mabel Bassett Correctional Center's gym on June 4, 2025. Despite the bad weather, the poets, storytellers, artists and their enthusiastic sponsors took the time to laugh and admire each other's projects.

They were served fruit, vegetables and a feast of cheeses and other treats as they were praised with heartwarming congratulations. Cristina Holloway, former MBCC interim mental health clinical director, and Nathan Farrow, MBCC behavioral health clinician, were commencement speakers, along with former MBCC resident Lisa Black, a PJ alumna and current board member. They each recited moving speeches on how the written word and art are beneficial to overcoming trauma.

Holloway said it succinctly, "You've taken pain and turned it into art. You've taken shame and turned it into truth. You've taken confinement and created freedom."

The art projects and poetry created by the graduates were inspirational and healing. Farrow encouraged them to "keep writing. Keep listening to your dreams, your longings, your wisdom. Keep tending the flame inside you."

The 2025 class roster is as follows: April Rodriguez, Sarah Ganis, Kelly Stowe, Oleithia Cudjo, Carlotta Rich, Carlene Dunbar, Melissa Grayson, April Summers, Dana Reeder, Suzanne Satterfield, Christina Nelson, Patricia Welker, Christina Renea, Mariah Henderson-Martinez, Aunika Boyle, Ashe Garrison and Michelle King.

Congratulations to the graduates for all your accomplishments. Keep writing.

RESTORING HOPE

Lindsey Smith | Staff Writer

Residents of Mabel Bassett Correctional Center crowded in the gym for the yard's second Hope Event on June 14, 2025. Hosted by Prison Fellowship and The Church OKC, the event offered a message of hope spoken by a woman who once lived among many of them.

"Hope can sound hollow in a place like this," Shiloh Revilla said to those in the packed gym. "I know the power of hope because I lived with it, and I lived without it." Revilla was released from MBCC in 2019 after having her life sentence modified. She now works for Prison Fellowship as a Justice Ambassador Specialist.

The women gladly ran through the rain to receive their gifts as organizers and volunteers quickly moved the event into the facility's gym due to storms. For the 2025 Hope Event, Prison Fellowship in collaboration with Pastor Tammy Akerman of The Church OKC provided the 1,200 plus residents of MBCC with two hot dogs, a bottle of water, bag of chips, lemonade packet and a snickerdoodle cookie.

Brooklyn Williams, a Prison Fellowship graduate and Pathways member who helped set up the event, said it built confidence for her future. "I feel rejuvenated. It opened up my eyes to dream. If she can do it, I can do it."

Events such as the Hope Event bring inspiration and motivation to the residents facing incarceration. Outside support reminds the population that there are still people willing to help and that life has more to offer than the current circumstance.

EVENTS RECAP

Summer of Positive Events

It was a busy summer at MBCC as residents took advantage of sun, fun and praise.



MOCCASINS ACROSS AMERICA

Delila Pacheco and Kimberley Perigo
Guest Contributors

Drums beat as Moccasins Across America made it to Mabel Basset Correctional Center on July 7, 2025. Led by Native Wings Like an Eagle pastor Melvin Battiest, approximately 100 MBCC residents of all races walked in awareness of the spiritual need to reverse generational curses endured by Native American peoples in the wake of the Trail of Tears.

Tribal citizens driven from their homelands experienced diseases, discrimination and death in their pursuit of a better life for future generations. Moccasins Across America gives this and future generations an opportunity to show their respect for and acknowledgement of their ancestors’ sacrifices. It is also an act of reclaiming stewardship of the land.

“We no longer call it the Trail of Tears; we call it the Trail of Joy,” said Battiest.

The Eagle Stick, a ceremonial staff, was carried throughout the walk. It was used in blessings of and communion with the land by tribal members as it made its way across the country. Everyone touched the ceremonial staff at some point, and many participants carried and passed it as a baton. Those present placed their hands upon the soil and prayed together.

Participants reported a sense of freedom as they walked and felt as if a weight had been lifted from their shoulders. Several walked for those unable to do so or in memory of their ancestors.

Staff also honored the walk. “Reversing the blood line and generational curses that were placed upon us is exactly what is needed for the First Nation people. God be with us in generations to come,” said MBCC staffer Arisha Blood, LPN.

Resident Amber Killer used the walk as an opportunity to gain more spiritual connectivity. “I prayed that the generational curses would be broken and all chains be broken,” Killer said.

Participants across the country began Moccasins Across America on May 3 on tribal land in San Pasqual, California. The goal is to walk across the length of the country, ending on the east coast. People from all tribal affiliations and all races attend.

This generation has the opportunity to make history. “I like the unity of the tribes across the nation and that we’re walking for our future generations,” said Katisha Zuniga.



JUNETEENTH

Sharee Asberry | Editor

In January 1863, Abraham Lincoln, the 16th president of the United States, signed the Emancipation Proclamation, declaring slavery illegal in all rebellious states in the U.S.

According to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, there were geographical limits to the proclamation’s scope. It could not be enacted in cities and states under Confederate control, such as Texas. It was not until the war’s end in 1865 that all slaves were finally freed. On June 19, 1865, the Union Army arrived in Galveston, Texas bringing news of liberation.

Although celebrations have been ongoing in African American communities since 1866, it was not until June 17, 2021, that the day became a federal holiday.

This year, MBCC residents had the chance to experience the Juneteenth event organized by their peers right here on the compound. Though incarcerated, residents celebrated one day of African American liberation.

The day began with prayer and a morning of beauty with haircuts, finger waves, cornrows, braids and much more by the most talented hairstylists in their community. Stylists shared with their clients fun facts about Juneteenth.

The midday consisted of ice-cold Kool-Aid, basketball tournaments, and music while many used their dance moves to attract the crowd onto the black top. The day of unity ended with a peaceful march around the compound—an unforgettable ending to an unforgettable day.

Special thanks to Warden Tinsley, Deputy Warden Robinson, Deputy Warden Brewer, Chaplain Shaner, Kiabi Wilkerson, Atiana Jordon, Teneecia Pennon, Mica Shoate and all who joined in the celebration.



THE PRINCESS WITHIN CONFERENCE

Lindsey Smith | Staff Writer

Residents of Mabel Bassett Correctional Center started to line up outside the chapel an hour before the event was scheduled to start. Rumor on the yard was that last year’s event was powerful. Greeted with live music and a pink cupcake, 200 women entered the chapel on June 27, 2025, for a two-day Princess Within Conference.

The atmosphere of the chapel felt more like a family reunion than a conference, joyful and welcoming. “It was moving to see how many people showed up for us,” first-time attendee Krysta Muniz said. With moving testimonies and sermons of faith, the conference sought to bring the gospel of Jesus to the women through the Pentecostal faith.

The Princess Within Conference has been hosted in prisons 74 times, across 20 states with the goal to bring the feeling of redemption and love through Jesus to women in song and message.

The host of the MBCC conference, Dana Green, whose cheerful deposition and witty remarks feel more like a favorite aunt than what some may imagine a typical Pentecostal preacher might be, made the event feel safe for all. “I was so excited, I couldn’t sleep last night,” she recanted on the first day as she snapped her fingers to the sound of a keyboard.

A pleasant surprise from the conference was the humor and humility each speaker exuded. “I’m not being funny, but raise your hand if you’ve ever felt judged,” Rev. Dr. David Rangel asked as he raised his hand alongside MBCC residents to begin his message of facing obstacles with unwavering faith. A message that proclaimed healing to the sick.

The second day ended with a session dedicated to baptisms. Almost half in attendance lined the chapel walls waiting for their turn to be dipped in water while a train of Pentecostal pastors, sisters and brothers cheered on around them.

“This conference was something I’ve never experienced,” Brittiany Nabors, one of the women baptized during the conference, stated. “I really felt changed.”

BOOK REVIEW

“Ground Zero” is earth-shatteringly good

Jax | Editor

“Ground Zero” is not the normal zombie story.

Five members of Hogan’s Zeroes, an elite military unit, wake from stasis in a cold medical laboratory to discover they do not know who they are nor where they are, only that they are in grave danger if those answers remain undiscovered.

Lazarus Corporation began as a biotech firm reanimating the bodies of the dead to give grieving loved ones the opportunity to indefinitely delay their final goodbyes. The company’s focus has changed, however, and the seemingly compassionate mandate to assist families suffering from loss has morphed into more sinister directions with catastrophic consequences.

The Zeroes join forces with Brynn Garland, a newly hired public relations fixer tasked with salvaging Lazarus Corp.’s morally challenged reputation. Together, they uncover institutionalized chaos and madness, government conspir-

acies and the truth behind their own identities.

Each page is saturated with suspense and keeps the reader yearning to discover what perils and challenges the group will face next. Avilla drives the story with tight prose; scenes move seamlessly from one to the next with purpose and a sense of urgency. As the plot develops and expands, motivations are uncovered and mysterious figures are revealed, such as the seemingly unconcerned owner of Lazarus Corp., Mr. Lee.

Avilla excels at developing deep, charismatic characters with whom we want to spend time learning their personalities, their likes and dislikes and how they interact with each other and the world around them. The unit’s actions and dialogue reflect interactions occurring at every military installation or deployment area. As a group, they remind us of the importance of family (both blood relations and the families

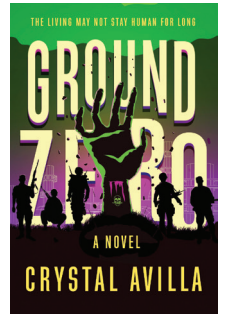
we make), honor and sacrifice.

Readers will recommend this book to their friends and neighbors, as we recommend it to you.

“Ground Zero” is the first book in a planned series. “[T]he serum is mutating, and none of them are prepared for the disturbing truth: the dead at Lazarus don’t stay dead . . . and the living may not stay human for long,” Avilla writes. Lazarus Corporation: Give your loved ones a peaceful forever.

Editors’ note: Crystal Avilla, a Mabel Bassett Correctional Center resident actively involved in full-time work and other programs, is celebrating the publication of her second full-length novel.

Full disclosure: Crystal Avilla is an editor for *The Mabel Bassett Balance*.



“Ground Zero”
Crystal Avilla

Genre: Sci-Fi
Biotech Thriller

Writers Guild celebrates first novel

Jax | Editor

Writers Guild Advanced is celebrating its first full-length novel publication with the release of Crystal Avilla’s sci-fi biotech thriller “Ground Zero.”

“The number one goal I have for every single student is to hold their novel in their hands,” says Executive Director Shayla Hale.

A dozen additional women currently enrolled in Writers Guild are working toward making that goal a reality.

“I have found a confidence that comes through healing, and a healing that comes through writing. I am finding that lost creative child within me, and bringing her to light,” said Sara Ganis, Guild member and Mabel Bassett Correctional Center incarcerated resident.

Classes are ongoing and meet twice monthly. Students access word processing programs through their Securus tablets and upload homework assignments and writing completed on their manuscripts for Hale’s review.

“I’m not sure how many people realize what an undertaking it is to write (and rewrite) a full-length novel. These women aren’t doing this as a hobby, they’re committed to a long-term goal, and I’m going to cheer them on to

the finish line,” Hale said.

Writers Guild is operated by Crime & Compassion, a nonprofit founded in 2024 a few months after Hale began classes at MBCC. She has a background as an editor and publishing mentor in addition to experiences as a volunteer chaplain at Oklahoma County Jail. Crime & Compassion combines both of those interests.

Hale said, “By 2020, I knew I was called to work with and for the incarcerated, but it took until 2024 to make that happen. I had spent 30 years in a climate that prioritized punishment over compassion, so I knew my approach to incarceration had to be founded in love first and foremost,” said Hale.

Crime & Compassion has plans for the future of its incarcerated writers that extend beyond publication. As the nonprofit grows, Hale stated, we will one day see these novels on the shelves of the first-ever incarceration-focused bookseller, Unbound Bookstore. All books will be authored by formerly or currently incarcerated individuals, as well as books on the topics that support the mission.

Additionally, the nonprofit promotes a component designed to impact recidivism rates for its participants. This future bookstore will also act as a reentry program, where released

Get in touch

If you are interested in applying for Writers Guild Advanced, please reach out to the workshop’s co-facilitators Jax, Crystal Avilla, or Ashe Garrison.

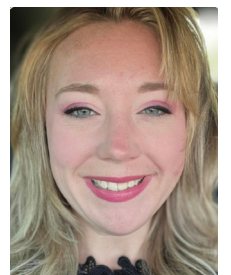
among the writers. She says watching the women inspire each other and hold each other accountable is like a breath of fresh air.

MBCC incarcerated resident Heather Barbee appreciates the kindness, caring and support shown by other Guild members. “I love that I can learn new writing skills in a safe community that doesn’t judge me, but uplifts and encourages me to be all I can be,” Barbee said.

“Ultimately, I want these students to become authors and to find a vocational purpose in the writing and publishing industry. They can do it. I know it because I’m watching it happen in real time, and it’s a beautiful thing,” Hale said.

offenders can find employment and even continue their education in writing and publishing so they can have a career, not just a job, Hale said.

Writers Guild members support and encourage each other in class and on the yard. Hale is energized by the camaraderie shown



Meet Shayla Hale: Former editor, author and founder of Crime & Compassion. Her writing workshops, Writers Guild Advanced and Writers Guild Beginners, nurture writers at MBCC.



Meet some of MBCC’s budding writers.
From left: Melissa Clark, Shayla Hale, the group’s founder and workshop facilitator, Veronica Bruner, Crystal Hoglan, April Rodriguez, Shauna Brown, Alyssa Bonnell, Kristie Evans, Susan Ratcliff, Kelly Fairchild and Crystal Avilla.

THE NEXT CHAPTER

Crystal Avilla | Editor

Twelve women sat around the table on a hot Sunday afternoon, excited to take part in the first meeting of Writers Guild Beginners. Inspired by the success of Writers Guild Advanced, Shayla Hale, published author and founder and executive director of Crime & Compassion Inc., officially took these fledgling writers under her wing on June 1, 2025. Lessons for day one included time management, embracing accountability and ignoring negative comparisons.

Minnie, a participant who was originally accepted into WGA but wanted to complete the beginner class first, is grateful for the tips on how to find a writing schedule that works for her. “This is just what I need. I believe taking WGB first will help me find the discipline I didn’t know I needed when I do write my novel.”

“I’ve always wanted to be a writer,” says fellow WGB student Melissa Clark, “but doubted I had the talent or skills to be one. It’s amazing that in here I can learn how to write. That I can actually learn how to do it the right way, step-by-step.”

Hales’s goal is for each WGB student to finish a fully edited short story within a six-month deadline, which will be published in a group anthology. This move only made sense to Hale, who knows that not everybody is ready to take on a beast known as THE NOVEL. Instead, some need to start exactly where she did with fiction—short stories.

Yes, it is hard work. Yes, it requires sacrifices. No, it does not happen fast. But it is so worth it.

Next year, Writers Guild plans to introduce a new class to its curriculum. In it, writers will learn how to create successful children’s fiction. Be on the lookout for flyers in spring 2026.

We asked, you answered, we listened

Heather Barbee | Staff Writer

Several residents suggested to The Mabel Bassett Balance that we conduct a review of the products available for purchase through the Oklahoma Department of Corrections Access SecurePak program. We

listened.

The Balance staff surveyed 105 residents last month, asking participants to rate their overall experience and whether they liked the products received on a scale of one to five (1=Disliked, 3=Liked, 5=Highly Liked). Space was also provided for additional comments.

The results:

Approximately half of the survey participants said their families ordered via the program website. Almost all who ordered by disbursement were frustrated by the process and reported it took twice as long to receive orders than those placed from the outside.

A handful of the participants said they were “happy with the items” but believed that the processing, shipping and handling charges and wait times were troubling. Most of the participants who were satisfied with their products bought Casio or IronMan watches, Nike or Under Armour running shoes, Rawlings non-slip shower slides and televisions. The data suggests that the participants were more happy with the electronics than with clothing or shoes.

Participants were most dissatisfied with high-priced, poor-quality items. They reported that the items fell apart quickly, sometimes within the first few washes for socks, underwear, bras and shoes. Many said watches arrived broken or with dead batteries that are unavailable at Mabel Bassett Correctional Center.

Many participants felt that there was a lack of selection for women, especially for items such as underwear and shoes; catalog selections seem to cater mostly to men. They also reported a lack of traditional sizing, often receiving items that do not fit. One of the most widespread concerns was the “lack of information” in catalog descriptions.

MBCC resident Kimberly Perigo

stated that her family ordered her shoes, bras and T-shirts twice, and she has never received any. The money was refunded after the company sent a message to the family member confirming items would be delivered.

Other residents produced receipts where the cost of the out-of-stock item was refunded but tax and shipping and handling were not. Unsolicited item substitutions were also of concern. Access SecurePak replaces one product with another without notifying the purchaser.

Inmate Council Vice Mayor Cassandra Bray reported, “The underclothes are terrible! They offer no support and are not even the brand they state. I ordered the ‘higher priced’ sports bras and got shipped Bob Barker brand.” She also noted that towels are too small to cover the body, and they snag and tear easily. Bray said, “I just spoke to my parents who are currently television shopping

and told me Walmart has a 40-inch smart TV for \$88.00, right now! Yet we are having to pay \$261.50 for a 15-inch with no speakers. It’s truly absurd.”

Participants also offered possible solutions, including reducing high-priced processing and shipping and handling charges. Instead, they would like to be able to order items on the matrix, where allowable items are listed through canteen, such as white blankets (especially for those allergic to wool), fans, ice chests and televisions. They also expressed a desire for better health and beauty items, such as skin and hair products and the

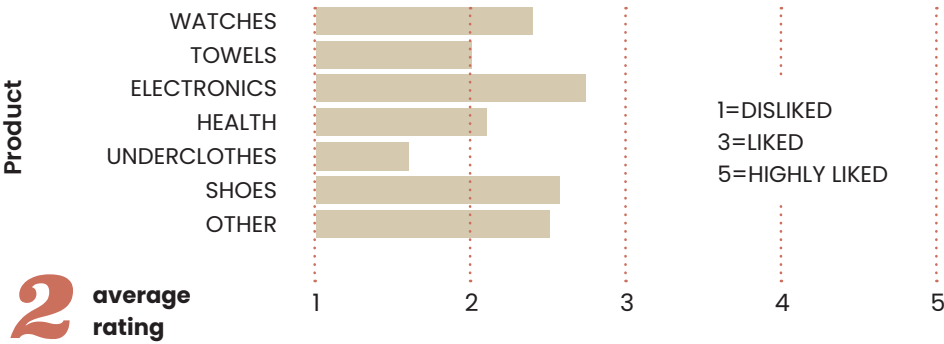
ability to purchase items such as the eyeliner and eye shadows featured in the Access SecurePak catalog.

Overall, most survey participants encouraged ODOC to work with Access SecurePak to resolve issues with quality, availability and pricing of products.

“I just spoke to my parents who are currently television shopping and told me Walmart has a 40-inch smart TV for \$88.00, right now! Yet we are having to pay \$261.50 for a 15-inch with no speakers. It’s truly absurd.”

Cassandra Bray,
Inmate Council Vice Mayor

PRODUCT RATINGS BY RESIDENTS



Source: 2025 survey by Mabel Bassett Balance

NEWS IN BRIEF

Victory for Veterans

MBCC's Victory for Veterans group meets in the chapel the second and fourth Monday of each month from 1 to 3 p.m. We encourage any veterans not already attending to come.

Contact Dusti Rickert, the group's secretary, for more information.

WOW and others wow at MBCC

WOW sign language team, SEED and a variety of MBCC's talented singers and musicians held a Praise and Worship concert during lunch on July 26, 2025. Residents assembled in the bright sunshine on the basketball court and in front of the gym joined in celebration, sitting in chairs or lounging on towels and blankets like picnickers. WOW founder Cheryl Williamson joined numerous volunteers from several ministries sponsoring the event.

Saying good-bye to Ms. Holloway

On August 1, 2025, after almost five years at MBCC, Cristina Holloway said good-bye to residents here.

"I will miss everybody and have enjoyed working with this population," said Holloway. "It's been a learning experience."

Ms. Holloway, you will be missed.

The Domestic Violence Awareness 5K returns

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month, MBCC's second annual Domestic Violence Awareness 5K will be hosted by The Education and Employment Ministry (TEEM) in October. Come run, walk and roll. Be on the lookout for more information in the coming months.

Congrats to Coach

Jarod McCord, known by many as "Coach," won the DOC "We Change Lives" award for all his hard work in the gym and his role in creating new programs at DOC. Congratulations Coach McCord.

Breath of fresh air for mental health

Dusti Rickert | Staff Writer

With a full beard and shoulder-length hair, one's initial impression might be that this man could give the key actor of the TV series "Chosen" a run for his money; however, Nathan Farrow is not an actor nor is he acting.

Farrow is Mabel Bassett Correctional Center's newest behavioral health clinician tasked with providing mental health support for residents through counseling and medication management. He has also taken over the case management position for the mental health pod within the C-3 unit.

With a soft-spoken manner and a humble demeanor, Farrow expressed how honored he felt to be able to help the residents of MBCC. Though the second part of his clinical internship was completed here at MBCC, Farrow said he had not thought of starting his official career at a women's prison.

It was under the guidance of the late Dr. Laura Pitman, former mental health clinical director for both MBCC and Eddie Warrior Correctional Center, that Farrow said his internship turned into a full-time offer.

Due to negative past experiences, many of the residents have trust issues where men are concerned. Within this area, Pitman felt that Farrow could

create a positive male experience for his clients, which would enable them to begin a healthy path toward healing.

Though not without challenge or effort, Farrow has been successful in his works, receiving positive feedback from not only clients but from other staff members as well. Cristina Holloway, former interim mental health clinical director of MBCC, stated, "From the beginning, as an intern, I could see the positive male experience he was going to provide for the residents and that is why I was so excited to learn that he wanted to come on full-time."

Julia Barton, an MBCC resident under Farrow's care said, "A lot of us women have never known healthy interaction with men. He is a breath of fresh air. After a year and a half of sessions, I have found him to be professional, compassionate and appropriate as a mental health therapist."

Influenced by Carl Jung, founder of Analytic Psychology, Farrow has implemented a therapeutic approach that involves exploring psychosis and illness in a very personal way. This approach fortifies the client by realizing their true self. Farrow said that it inspires him to see people be empowered by who they are.

Jung also placed an important emphasis on interest in play and creativity, stating, "The soul demands your folly, not your wisdom." With that in mind, Farrow developed an art therapy program that has provided healing

in fun, creative ways such as painting, and is hoping for continued expansion of the program.

A favorite quote of Farrow's is one by the award-winning American poet Mary Oliver: "Joy is not made to be a crumb."

Farrow said that he was drawn to working within the mental health side of corrections rather than a traditional clinical setting. This realization came after witnessing the struggles of a high school friend who suffered mental health issues and was in and out of jail. When he died by suicide, his community objected to a funeral because of his criminal background. This experience shaped the trajectory of Farrow's professional work. Not only did he and a few others hold a funeral for their friend, but he also decided that he wanted to help justice-involved individuals suffering from mental health issues.

When asked what his greatest challenge has been since becoming a full-time clinician here, Farrow said that it was ensuring he is providing efficient care to all 50 plus clients that he has. At the same time, and while creating strong healthy bonds with each client, it is difficult to not take on and take home the emotions of all. At the end of the day, Farrow said, "I am really inspired by the courage that these women show."

Note: Since the writing of this article, Farrow has cut off his lengthy locks and beard.



MBCC's newest mental health provider Nathan Farrow relies on play and creativity to support patients' healing. (Photo by Chaplain David Shaner)

CHAPEL BEAT

Visions

Sharee Asberry | Editor

To have a place of refuge is vital for those who are incarcerated. The chapel has become a place of opportunity for everyone who is hungry for change. Rehabilitation, on any level, begins with a decision. However, it requires a person to take one step towards the advantages given.

The question is, how determined are you? Regardless of the surrounding circumstances, determination had always been a key factor in success. What is triumph without resistance? Focusing helps people overcome obstacles and consistency gets them to the destination. Short-term and long-term goals can become a blueprint for what is being built. If there is a vision, revitalize it. If the vision is lost, fan the flame and create another one. Purpose is inevitable and to waste it is a choice. We have more control over the outcome than we think.

In the chapel, services and classes are available that offer guidance. They will help steer you in the right direction and help you stay on track by teaching you how to deal with deeply rooted issues. The classes offer tools and strategies to accomplish goals that seem out of reach. These services and classes range from prayer and bible study, to learning leadership skills and setting boundaries. The volunteers are qualified preachers, teachers, leaders and counselors who make themselves available for those who struggle but want better and those who strive towards

real change. Check the chapel for listings of upcoming classes and dates and times. Submit an Inmate Request to the chaplain requesting desired classes. Though services and classes are open to all, only levels three and four can participate in special events such as the Global Leadership Summit, conferences, hip hop worship and the Crossings Block Party that are scheduled throughout the year. Let us help you on your journey towards a new, refreshed life.

Faith-based classes:

- Apprentice
- Bondage Breakers
- Celebrate Recovery
- Deeply Rooted
- Genesis One
- Jesse Bufford Prison Ministry (JBPM) Leadership Training
- Just the Beginning
- Kingdom Women

Non-faith-based classes:

- Brief Intervention
- Cage Your Rage
- Girl Scouts Beyond Bars
- Victims Impact
- HIV Education

Clases basados en la fe:

- Apprentice (Aprendizaje)
- Bondage Breakers (Personas que quiebran la Esclavitud)
- Celebrate Recovery (Celebrando su Recuperación)
- Deeply Rooted (Plantado Profundamente)
- Genesis One
- Jesse Bufford Prison Ministry (JBPM) Leadership Training (Jesse Bufford Prison Ministry (JBPM) Entrenamiento para ser Líder)
- Just the Beginning (Solamente el Principio)
- Kingdom Women (Mujeres del Reino)

Clases no basadas en la fe:

- Brief Intervention (Breve Intervención)
- Cage Your Rage (Enjaula tu Rabia)
- Girl Scouts Beyond Bars (Girl Scouts Mas Allá de las Rejas)
- Victims Impact (El Impacto de la Víctima)
- HIV Education (Educación de la VIH)

LATIDO DE LA CAPIA

Visiones

Sharee Asberry | Directora
Traducido por Rachel Rivera
Colaboradora

Teniendo un lugar de refugio es vital para los que están encarcelados. La capia se ha vuelto en un lugar de oportunidad para todos lo que quieren un cambio. La rehabilitación en cada nivel comienza con alguna decisión. Sin embargo se requiere que la persona tome un paso hacia las ventajas que se les ofrece. La pregunta es, de que tan decidida estas. A pesar de todo las circunstancias que nos rodean, la determinación siempre ha sido la clave del éxito. ¿Que es triunfar sin resistencia? En

centrar la atención le ayuda a las personas vencer obstáculos y la consistencia los lleva a su destino. Las metas pueden convertirse en un proyecto para lo que estas construyendo. Si hay una visión rejuvenece lo. Si has perdido la visión, ilumina el fuego y empieza de nuevo. El propósito es inevitable y echándolo a perder es una decisión. Nosotros tenemos mas control de lo que pensamos sobre lo que pasa. En la capia los servicios y las clases están disponible y son una guía. Te guiaran por el camino recto y también te enseñan como tratar con algún asunto con raíces profundos. Estos clases te ofrecen herramientas además de niveles de estrategias para alcanzar metas afuera de nuestro alcance. Estos servicios y clases variar entre la oración, estudios bíblicos, aprendiendo como

ser líder, y como poner límites. Los voluntarios son personas calificados como pastores, maestros, líderes y consejeros que están disponible para aquel que lucha, pero quiere algo mejor y a los que buscan un cambio real. En la capia hay una lista con fechas y horarios para los próximos clases. Escribe un Inmate Request al capellán para los clases que quieres tomar. Aunque los servicios y las clases son para todos, solamente los que tienen niveles tres y cuatro pueden participar en los eventos especial como el Global Leadership Summit (Cumbre Mundial de Líderes), conferencias, adoraciones de hip hop, el Crossings Block Party (La Cuadra Fiesta de Crossings) que están en el orario durante todo el año. Déjanos ayudarte en tu viaje hacia una vida nueva y refresca.



OBITUARIES

In Memoriam

Susan Esco

Lindsey Smith | Staff Writer

I can still remember the first time I met Susan Esco as she and her friend Joan Jenkins walked into the Prison Fellowship class looking like movie stars with blonde hair and big smiles. Esco had the class introduce themselves and asked if they could be any animal, what would they be and why. Even though introductions took almost half the class, it did not matter. That was what Esco cared about. She cared about people.

"Susan had a way of making me feel like I had never made a mistake in my life," Mabel Bassett Correctional Center resident Chandler Kardaras said of Esco. "We need more people like her."

While Esco's physical presence brought comfort to the residents at MBCC when she volunteered on Sundays with Crossings Church services or on weekday evenings with Prison Fellowship, it was her spirit of love and the humanity that she brought to the residents that will last an eternity.

"She was always genuinely involved, connected and spoke life to us," Patricia Welker, MBCC resident, said with tears in her eyes. "I remember when I got bad news, it was like she was more upset than I was."

Resident Brooklyn Williams noted Esco's playful side as she remembered playing games during a Christmas party. "She got into a football

players stance. She was ready to win," Brooklyn smiled as she told the story of throwing hoops onto the antlers of Esco's reindeer headband. "She was an angel. She always had a smile on her face. She instilled in us that we are loved."

Heather Adams, a member of the MBCC worship team who spent Sundays with Esco at the Crossings Church service, recalled how she was influenced by Esco's wisdom. "I remember Susan telling me, 'We're all just walking each other home to Jesus,' and that described her prison ministry," Adams said. "I will remember that for the rest of my life."

Losing Esco feels like more than just losing a close friend. It feels like losing a leader. Even though I did not understand at the time, I can vividly remember Esco telling my Prison Fellowship Academy class to trust what is bigger than us. "He is always faithful. He never disappoints," she said. Her wisdom, smile and warmth will be severely missed, but her faith and love will live on in each of us.



Susan Esco was a revered champion for the residents at MBCC and her community at large. Her spirit of generosity and love continue to inspire us. She passed away on

July 11, 2025, and will be dearly missed by MBCC residents.

IMPACT ON OKLAHOMA'S INCARCERATED RESIDENTS

Joan Jenkins | Guest contributor

Susan Esco spent approximately 12 years volunteering with a group from Crossings Church every Tuesday to bring Joy Bible Study to the women of Mabel Bassett Correctional Center. For several years, she visited the facility with Bible Study Fellowship (BSF) and attended every graduation of the five cohorts that have graduated from the Prison Fellowship Academy program at MBCC. These are special celebrations with guest speakers, families, volunteers and DOC staff and leadership. We celebrate the hard work and commitment of these precious graduates. In addition to her work inside the prison, Esco was an advocate for the women on the outside. She served on many boards of ministries who help residents when they get out.

The article has been lightly edited.

MEMORIES

Tammy Franklin | Guest contributor

Susan and I met in 2015 when she immediately took me under her wing and connected me with leaders in our community who I would have never imagined having been able to meet. People like Kevin and Sarah Stitt, before they were the governor and first lady, and Wes Lane, Peggy and Mick Thompson, Joan, Kellie and so many others. She served with such fierce passion and loved so unconditionally. She cried when others suffered injustice and she was our voice. The Word says as believers we are to speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves and Esco did. She served on the front lines tirelessly, loving everyone she came in contact with with absolute passion and Grace.

She invited the women from prison to her dinner table as often as she could and she treated us like royalty because she believed we were. My life is so much better because of what I learned from Esco. She loved like Jesus, and I believe each of us will carry her in our hearts forever. When I have the opportunity to tell my story, I always mention the church ladies with the sparkling eyes who radically changed my life. This was Esco, and I will forever be grateful. She carried a joy in her heart and it radiated through her eyes and lit up every room she entered. She always introduced me as her hero. I suspect she did the same with other ladies she ministered to, but she made each of us feel like we were the only one, like we were her favorite. I loved hearing it, but I knew the Truth, Esco was the real hero and like all heroes, her legacy will live on way past her time here on Earth.

The article has been lightly edited.

"She was always genuinely involved, connected and spoke life to us. I remember when I got bad news, it was like she was more upset than I was."

Patricia Welker

OPINION

BURNOUT

Erica Bonner | Staff Writer

We all crowd the breezeway of C-1 unit during the early morning work-line movement, often more than 50 strong. It smells of coffee breath and lotion, sounds of chatter and repressed coughs. There are polite collisions of people's elbows and bags, scenes of ladies gripping walkers with wheels, faces dolled up with make-up.

Dr. Sharon Grossman, author of "The Burnout Solution" and "Motivated to Stay," studied the benefits of rest on the body and mind. Rest, she noted, helps reduce stress, energizes and restores the body, enhances one's focus and supports creativity. Together, these benefits help reset the body's baseline and foster mental and physical rejuvenation.

General state pay wages range from \$15 to \$35 monthly, including an imposed 20% savings and prison taxes. State pay recently experienced a \$5 pay cut due to a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) ruling regarding phone fee rates according to information posted by MBCC staff.

Some opportunities exist for in-

creased wage rates. MBCC has two exclusive state-industry jobs that pay up to \$160 per month: Oklahoma Correctional Industry (OCI) and Oklahoma Turnpike Authority (OTA). There are also two licensed journeymen, an HVAC technician and an electrician, classified as skilled maintenance workers, who receive up to \$160 monthly.

The majority of working residents at MBCC, including those with OCI and OTA, work five days a week at 40 hours. Workers in other departments, however, such as food service, maintenance, medical staff assistants, chapel detail and mental health aides, work more than the standard 40-hour work week. Sometimes much more. Typically, oth-

er than specialized maintenance and medical workers, these members of the MBCC workforce receive the flat \$15 per month state pay, which happens to be the same amount as those residents who do not have jobs.

Our efforts while incarcerated will reflect upon our actions after release from prison.

As reported by Lightcast, a labor analytics company:

- Five million people have retired since 2020
- Baby boomers, the horsepower of the workforce, are retiring, therefore, by the end of the decade U.S. workers will be at a deficit of six million laborers
- By 2032, customers will outnumber workers eight to one

Upon release from MBCC, most of us will be ready to work, joining the already dwindling workforce. Without proper rest, however, we will continue to experience the symptoms of burnout and be ill-prepared to take our places.

Granting residents a paid vacation time, once or at various times throughout the year, will aid in cognitive and physical rehabilitation. The same is true for paid sick leave. Alleviating burnout can lead to even more productivity, worker engagement and better health and wellness outcomes that affect not just the worker but their community as well.

We are from all different work sites, representing various races, ages and physical abilities, but all ready to embark on the quest of greasing the facility's wheels.

Propelled by a sense of purpose, fear of losing a coveted job or a desire to flee a chaotic housing unit, we persist faithfully, year after year. Most of us do not feel good mentally, physically or emotionally and get no respite from the demands of our jobs. We generally receive neither vacation time nor paid sick leave. Many are burned out.

According to the American Psychological Association, burnout symptoms include susceptibility to sickness and poor health outcomes, such as hypertension, musculoskeletal pain, heart disease and mental health issues.

These symptoms are commonly experienced by some of the incarcerated workers at MBCC.

The easiest way to combat burnout is simply to give workers an occasional break from their duties.

The Balance staff surveyed the work line population and found that 79% of participants would very much enjoy a vacation if ever given the opportunity, especially if it were paid. Twenty-one percent said "no" to taking a vacation.

Those surveyed were also asked how they would spend time off. Though many indicated that they missed reading, spending leisure time outside, engaging in hobbies or just watching TV, there was one resounding answer: rest.



WORKSITE SPOTLIGHT

Intake: MBCC's welcome wagon

Michelle Walker | Staff Writer

Intake workers Roxann Barnard and Catherine Vigil (not pictured) ease the initial process of entering MBCC for the first time with kindness and cheer.

The first contact incoming residents have with Mabel Bassett Correctional Center is Intake. When they arrive from county jail, they do so shackled, passing through a razor wire-lined sally port before entering the back door of the facility. Many do not know what to expect and feel alone and scared. Thankfully, there are a couple of women in the Intake Department who help make the transition to the yard a little easier. Catherine Vigil and Roxann Barnard, along with their supervisor Sgt. Moore, work to get the new arrivals processed and transferred to Assessment and Reception (A&R) as smoothly and painlessly as possible.

Vigil has worked in Intake for nine years and loves helping the women adjust. "It makes me

happy when women stop me on the yard or when they are leaving for Eddie Warrior Correctional Center," she said. "Most tell me that they're glad I helped them." This work is Vigil's passion, and she has no plans for retirement.

Barnard has only been at Intake for seven months but can be seen cheerfully carrying out daily tasks. Both dedicated workers help with paperwork, supply new arrivals with transitional clothing, give advice on how to deal with incarceration and assure these residents that everything will be alright.

Thank you, Intake, for your hard work and humanity at what feels like the lowest point in a person's life.



Photo by Wirestock

INGREDIENTS

- 1 package double stuff cookies
- 1 iced honey bun, cut up
- 8-ounce cup hot cocoa
- ½ tablespoon of cinnamon
- 3 tablespoons of Nutella

RECIPES

Hidden Delight Cake

Suzanne Satterfield | Servings: 8

DIRECTIONS

1. Separate cookies and place cream and cookie pieces into separate bowls.
2. To make the batter: crush cookies into fine pieces and add hot cocoa.
3. Add the cinnamon and the honey bun pieces.
4. Bake in a 6-quart microwave-safe bowl until middle is barely wet.
5. Melt the cream for 30 seconds, mix with the Nutella.
6. Finally, ice the cake and enjoy!

SUGGESTION BOX

If you have suggestions or submissions you would like The Balance editorial staff to address, a box is now available in the MBCC Gym. Submit your story ideas, recipes, book or Securus product reviews, or your propositions, proposals and recommendations with your name and housing assignment. Outside contributions may be mailed to:

The Mabel Bassett Balance, c/o Melissa Antonucci
PO Box 4117
Tulsa, OK 74159

Just a snapshot

Jeremiah Braudrick | Guest Contributor

The article has been lightly edited.

Do you remember getting picked last for kickball in elementary?
Or maybe the sting of your first “No,” after pouring your heart into a crumpled-up note asking, “Will you go out with me?”
Most of us can recall some moment in childhood when our whole world felt crushed.
Seems kind of silly now, does it not?
But it hurt back then, did it not?
It felt like everything was falling apart. Like life would never be the same. Like we were ruined.
All that was a snapshot.
A single frame.
It was not the whole story.
When we look back on our lives, we often recall them as a series of snapshots. One memory rises to the top while others fade into the background. But life does not actually work like that. Life is a story.
A moving reel.
Much like an old movie reel, each snapshot—each frame—is strung together to form something compelling.
Something larger.
But if you pull out just one of those snapshots—just one still image—depending on which one, it might look horrific.
Dread.
Trauma.
Worst of all—hopelessness.
It might even look like the end.
But that is not the full story, is it?
It is just a snapshot.
If you asked me my favorite scene from my favorite movie, “The Lord of the Rings,” I might tell you it is when Samwise Gamgee picks up Frodo and carries him up the lava-filled slopes of Mount Doom—eruptions everywhere, fire raining from the sky.
That scene might seem terrifying on its own. But that’s not the story.
It is just a snapshot.
When the reel plays out, we see that Sam and Frodo do make it to the top. The ring is destroyed. Peace returns to Middle-earth.

And that is the message I want to share: Your situation right now—as trying, as heavy or as hopeless as it might feel—is not your whole story.
It is just a snapshot.
We all have snapshots we wish we could forget.
Moments we caused ... or moments caused by others.
And if we freeze the frame on one of those scenes, it can feel like the end of the story.
But it is not.
The point is this: Do not get caught up in the snapshot.
It is just a glance.
A frame.
A flicker of time.
But it is not your entire story.
And it is certainly not your eternity.
Every day we wake up, we get to help shape the story.
We are not that kid picked last for kickball anymore—how silly it would be to carry that moment around like it still defines us.
Your time during incarceration—or whatever hardship you are facing—is not the full story.
It is a mere snapshot.
And how tragic it would be to surrender control of your story—to lose hope—because of one painful scene.
All the best stories have moments of sadness, despair and fear.
But those moments are not the story.
In fact, they only serve to make the full story all the more better—often, all the more lovely and meaningful.
Tomorrow, you get to wake up and toss that god-forsaken ring into the fire—once and for all ... if you so desire.
You are the director now.
Your story can be as beautiful as you choose to make it.
Do not let the frame fool you.
Do not get stuck in a single moment of despair.
It is just a snapshot, my friends.
You are all telling a beautiful story—or at least, you have that option.
Do not let today get you down.
Tomorrow the sun will rise, and your story will continue.
Make it a good one, dear friends.
You have that eternal option.