

The Razor Wire

“Sharing stories within our community”

The Newsletter of the California Institution for Women

From Your Editors

To celebrate Women’s History Month, we shine light on some of our residents who have worked together to build our own CIW community—women whose contributions may sometimes go unnoticed. After all, this month is not just about acknowledging celebrities, or famous people. Please join us in honoring our educators, mentors, tutors, clerks, facilitators, and many others who form the backbone of our community. We reached out to as many working women as we could. However, due to space and time limitations, we acknowledge that there are countless others who are just as deserving that we did not get to feature in this issue. We publish quarterly, so if you feel strongly about who else you would like to see in the next issue, let us know. If you love the photos in this issue, there’s also Mr. Mumm and our featured residents, TB and Bobbie, to thank.

In celebrating Women’s History Month, our community found ways to lift each other up. The featured women working in our community showed us the connection we all share. From residents to staff, we found women who lead by example and pave the way for other women in leadership. Incarcerated women face challenges unique to womanhood. This issue is dedicated to all of the women persevering through the challenges and advocating for themselves every step of the way.

Women’s History

by Stacey Barker

The month of March is Women’s History Month. With this year’s theme of “Moving Forward Together! Women Educating and Inspiring Generations,” the event held on March 27 in the Aud did not hold back the energetic force, empathy, and resiliency in its selection of a panel of symbolic women: ADA Associate Warden M. Thorpe, IAC Chair Paige Linville, Community Resources Manager C. Jimenez, Keynote Speaker – Author Stephanie Covington, Captain N. Paredes (presented the essay contest winners), and Correctional Business Manager I S. Garcia. A special shout out to CIW’s Second Chance Band for their magnetic musical entertainment.

ADA Associate Warden Thorpe welcomed us all by sharing about all the strong women mentors she has met and still has in her life today from her mother to our very own Ms. Dotson. IAC Chair Paige Linville encapsulated women’s courageous historical struggle and how we have to and continue to advocate, fight, and organize for everything we have today. The moment we were in anticipation of is when CRM



Dr. Stephanie Covington shares words of wisdom

Jimenez introduced the monumental woman we had been excitedly waiting to hear from. Introduced as a pioneer in the field of addiction, creator and author of gender responsive and trauma informed services, it was Dr.

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Featured Staff— CDW Sonia Padilla

by Paige Linville

After a 27 year long career with California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR), Chief Deputy Warden (CDW) Sonia Padilla is finally where she wants to be: at CIW. “I’ve always wanted to work with incarcerated women because I feel I can make a difference,” CDW Padilla explained. Before she started working for CDCR, she worked at a group home for girls between the ages of 8 and 18. One of her duties was to accompany the girls to court. “It was devastating to see girls as young as 8 years old dealing with difficult adult things,” CDW Padilla said. While working at the group home, she provided resources to help the girls heal and develop self-esteem. Throughout her later career with CDCR, CDW Padilla remembered her time working at the group home and tried to find a position at a women’s prison. “I interviewed at CIW twice before but this time was the right time,” she described, “I am prepared and excited to make a difference.” Her experiences and education at the group home inform how CDW Padilla interacts with female incarcerated persons (IPs). “I want to help them

heal, build them up, and make sure they have the resources they need because some individuals didn’t get that assistance when they were young girls. Healing is about talking, treatment, and feeling safe,” noted CDW Padilla.

As CDW, Ms. Padilla has many responsibilities. Her expertise is in Business and she is currently assessing all areas of the institution to identify what needs to be improved. “I put myself in your perspective and ask what I would want,” she said. This approach has already led to CDW Padilla put into place a plan to install longer mirrors in each housing unit and trying to find a way to purchase dryers. Another focus for her is ensuring IPs here have access to meaningful programs. CDW Padilla has ideas to help IPs prepare for careers including mentorship, learning how to dress for success, and assist with practicing mock interview and increasing job skills. CDW Padilla talked about how being the oldest sister and a mother to girls has shaped the way she plans to interact with the population and staff at CIW. “Coming up in the department



CDW Sonia Padilla

as a female is difficult. I started a mentorship program for female staff at my previous prison and I want to start a similar program here,” she said. CDW Padilla believes that mentoring helps women establish their own identity. “It makes me happy seeing progress and other people happy. The door is open for me to make an impact. Doors are open as an opportunity. We are so blessed each day to be here together,” she said.

When asked about her message to the population, CDW Padilla said, “Look yourself in the mirror to see your worth. You are loved and cared for and worthy. You should love yourself no matter what because then you can begin to heal and share that love. Everyone has beauty.”



**Supervisor of the Year
Lieutenant Hinostroza**

*Chino Valley
Chamber of Commerce
Salute to
Public Safety
Award Winners*



**Employee of the Year
Acting Lieutenant Avina**

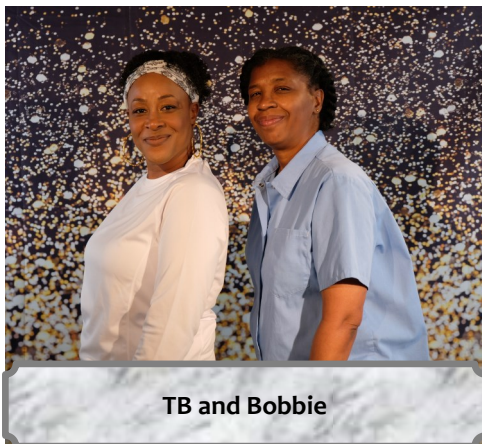
Featured Residents—TB and Bobbie Phillips

by Kinzie Noordman

For this edition, I decided to feature two wonderful women who many of you have seen at special events throughout the year. Tasha Brown, known affectionately as TB, and Bobbie Phillips both work as Media Center Technicians alongside their supervisor, Mr. Mumm. As a former Media Center Tech myself, I know the hard work, patience, and flexibility that is needed to work in this field. As Media Center Techs, TB and Bobbie are responsible for documenting special events, graduations, and holidays throughout the institution. When you graduate from college or get your GED, they'll be the ones to take your picture. If you play in the annual USO softball game, they might just be there to snap a shot as you slide into home base. Whether working as photographers, capturing video or editing film into a polished finished presentation, TB and Bobbie work hard to ensure that the history and memorable moments of CIW are preserved.

Mr. Mumm, TB, and Bobbie work extra hard to ensure we here at *The Razor Wire* get the photos we need to make this newsletter beautiful. We couldn't do it without you. Thanks for taking those great shots!

In keeping with the theme of the rest of this edition, I asked TB and Bobbie to introduce themselves in their own words:



Hello, my name is Ms. Bobbie,

I work at the Media Center with Mr. Mumm and my co-worker and best friend, TB. I love working in the Media Center because I am exposed to current media technology, learning the craft of being a production assistant. I am honored to work with Mr. Mumm and TB because Mr. Mumm has a wealth of knowledge and collaborating with TB expands my creativity.

I would like to extend my gratitude to Mr. Mumm, because although I have been incarcerated for 28 years, Mr. Mumm allowed TB and I to bring our CIW cooking show to life: "Is This Doable?"

Before I close, I would like to say thank you to the population for being cooperative on the celebratory picture days. Our goal is to make you shine like a diamond.

I couldn't talk about the Media Center without giving a shout out to Mr. Mumm! Author, movie director and producer, five-time Emmy winner and Media Center guru, Mr. Mumm makes it all happen!

Look out for more on Mr. Mumm in one of our upcoming editions!

Hello, I'm Ms. Brown (TB),

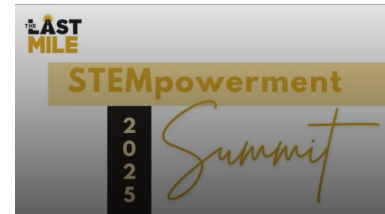
I've been incarcerated over 20 years. Looking back, I feel like the days go slow but the years have gone fast. Coming to prison as a juvenile offender, at a time when lifers were not going home, I followed the advice of those who came before me and tried to get comfortable; there was no hope. A place without hope is dangerous for everybody, yet despite this we still work to rehabilitate ourselves.

The apparatus of mass incarceration has yet to come to a halt, yet slowly society is reimagining what accountability looks like, and because of that paradigm shift, people are afforded meaningful opportunities to regain freedom. Hope is the impetus for personal transformation that fosters positive change in others. That is what I see now: more hope.

Working at the Media Center has been a tremendous opportunity. Under the tutelage of our five-time Emmy award winning supervisor, and colored by our imaginations, we approach each project like it is a construction site to build upon the experience.

STEMpowerment Summit

by Grace Coleman



On March 3, in honor of the Women's History worldwide theme of 2025 – Women Educating and Inspiring Women – The Last Mile (TLM) hosted the STEMpowerment Summit to connect women working in STEM career paths with women inside. TLM is an organization for fair chance hiring in Web Development and Audio Video Production. Connecting women inside to women in technical internships and apprenticeships, TLM students in prisons across the country saw a bright glimpse into their future.

Where did TLM begin? Founders Beverly Parenti and her husband Chris drove by San Quentin on their daily commute and the discussion sparked. Intrigued by the motivation of men inside, Beverly, with the encouragement of Chris, brought their San Francisco business into San Quentin. As a trailblazing woman in business, Beverly, now founder and CEO of TLM, found herself more fulfilled through the rush of jumpstarting careers of incarcerated people than she has working in any other company. Through TLM, Beverly grants people a “fair chance,” rather than a “second chance,” because some people were never even given a first chance.

With a thriving passion to opening new doors for women, Beverly brought TLM to the women in Folsom and then into CIW. Navigating her way over to Indiana Women's Prison (IWP), Beverly met Molly Kelly as a woman inside who is now the Vice President of TLM programs. To add an extra layer of women empowering women, the women at IWP were present via Zoom and cheered Molly on during the Summit.

There is something inspirational about successful women redefining what it means to be successful. Women who are strong in their career paths have an intriguing ability to catch the eyes of women searching for their next steps. Kayla Ousley, a representative from NBC Universal, is formally incarcerated and knows all too well how it feels to not belong in the workplace. Kayla emphasized “leaving her past behind without shrinking” into the depths of imposter syndrome. Working on NBC movies and television today, Kayla told students to “take up space, in a good way” by being present in a way that makes people feel confident and comfortable; the world lies at the fingertips of women working in technology.

TLM creates a space where powerhouse women are lending hopeful hands to incarcerated women. Which media and technological companies are opening the

doors to fair chance hiring? NBC Universal, Dreamworks, Checkr, Bric Foundation, Crewvie, and Catch Light Studios. Technology on the rise does not mean fewer jobs for people, but it does present a stronger need for human connection.

Part two of STEMpowerment allowed professionals from Apple and Legal Aid at Work to spend a day inside CIW.

Representatives from Apple Headquarters, Apple TV, and Apple Music joined CIW's Coding and Audio Video Production students for mock interviews and career-building activities. Legal Aid at Work provided information regarding justice-impacted individuals' rights in regards to job-seeking. Major takeaway? Ban the Box has passed, California employers do not have the right to discriminate against parolees outside a direct nexus to their offense.

STEMpowerment Summit 2025

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS



Beverly Parenti is a serial entrepreneur, specializing in the advancement of innovative technologies. Along with longtime business partner and husband, Chris Redlitz, she launched their non profit, The Last Mile (TLM), in 2010, at San Quentin State Prison. Beverly's professional experience includes digital media, online payment solutions, e-commerce, financial services, advertising, tech accelerators, and consumer products.



As the VP of Programs at The Last Mile, Molly supports and empowers justice-impacted individuals to pursue careers in technology and entrepreneurship. Molly graduated from The Last Mile program in 2020, where she learned computer software engineering and developed a web app using the MERN stack. She also completed the Flockjay Tech Sales program, gaining valuable skills in sales, communication, and negotiation.

PANEL SESSION

The Power of Skill-building: Women in Technical Internships and Apprenticeships



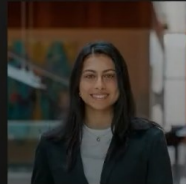
Rabia Abedin
DreamWorks



Xochitl Torres
Bric Foundation



Kayla Ousley
NBCU



Shivani Sundaresan
Youth for Policy

Meet your PREA Educators

By Bridget Adams

The PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) program has three PREA educators who are dedicated to making a difference. Though our office at Harrison is only open 5 days a week, you may approach us anytime. We understand when we hear “PREA,” shock waves may go through the air, shutting people off, and can make a person shut down. Maybe it’s lack of understanding, feeling unheard, or maybe it’s both. But whatever the circumstances, know that we have solutions for all those fears. CIW’s current PREA Educators are Annett Batten, Victoria Corrales, and myself.

As a PREA Educator, I have a background in helping individuals who have experienced trauma and attend to the population with compassion and empathy. I am here to be of assistance and be of service. I am pursuing additional education through Healing Dialogue and Action, writing workshops, and NLTG groups.

Annett Batten (Annie) devotes her time to self-improvement by putting herself into rooms that allow her to expand her growth. Church services, and self-help groups Healing Dialogue and Action, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), and Narcotics Anonymous (NA), allow her to do just that. She both passionately and whole-heartedly believes every individual is valuable and important.

Victoria Corrales (Tori) spreads joy everywhere she goes. As an active member of the PREA Educator team, she is expanding her personal psychological development through the Substance Abuse Program (SAP) and life-skills education.

While PREA concerns are triggering and painful, we are trained to address these concerns. As peer support, we are here to help you exercise your rights. Yes, just because we’re in prison doesn’t mean our rights are taken away. We offer an empathetic ear when you feel unheard.

What to Expect

Within the first 30 days of arriving at CIW, you will receive a non-priority ducat that says “Harrison Dorm.” There is no option in the computer system for “PREA Class” to be selected, so it will be listed as “Misc.” Don’t let that fool you as this class is a priority. If you get another priority ducat that may coincide with your PREA ducat, please drop by our office in the middle of Harrison (enter through the B side) and speak with any of us. Our office is open from 8 am-3 pm, Monday-Friday. The class consists of a 25-minute video educating you about your rights as an incarcerated person (IP) in PREA-related situations, how to report, and more on what PREA is about, along with some discussions and Q&As. At the end of the class you will receive a Certificate of Completion. You may be saying to yourself, “But I watched this already.” While this is true, you have to remember that this is a CDCR policy, and is required in every prison. So because you transferred to CIW, it’s considered a new prison/intake, no matter how long you’ve been incarcerated. It is important to arrive on time for your class as the PREA educators are on a time constraint, having classes back to back. If you’re late, you run into the risk of being reeducated. You may also be thinking, “None of this applies to me. PREA never happened to me.” This is FANTASTIC news. But you want to be protected and prepared. This may have happened to your friend on the yard and being that good friend that you are, you can pass this information to them and help them. Just being in prison makes us a target. People most at risk are individuals who are mentally ill, suffering from drug addiction, with disabilities, and the LGBTQ+ community. So let’s all work together by developing awareness to build a stronger community.



Tori, Annie, Mona (former) and Bridget

See information posted in every housing unit for multiple ways of reporting PREA

“Our patterns have helped us survive and get along in the world. They’re defenses that have protected us well when we needed protection...Our sense of security increases as we develop a supportive group of people around us...”

~ Stephanie S. Covington, Ph.D.

Meet Your LifeScripters

by Sabrina Limon

As LifeScripters at CIW, we are determined to give back what is good, honor our victims, and shine light in any positive way we can. Through LifeScripting, all of this becomes possible. In the program, founder Virginia Dunstone reminds us humans by nature have a desire to love and belong, and find meaning behind who we are and why things have happened in our life the way they have. In the search for meaning, love, and belonging, people are often held back by past experiences. The truth of the matter is, the answers to meaning and purpose have been inside us all along. As facilitators of the LifeScripting program, we navigate how to find our true selves. It is a sincere joy to continue to expand the light within each of us and pass it on throughout our communities. As a team who shares a passion of helping others understand their true selves, we are here to walk the journey unraveling the “script” of their life.



Cecilia, Olivia, Sabrina, Amelia, and Brittany

“Catch yourself faster, stay in it shorter, and move on.”

~ Virginia Dunstone

Meet your LifeScripting Team!

My name is Cecilia, and I am privileged and honored to be a part of a team that empowers women from the inside out. I believe every person can benefit from knowing themselves on a deeper level to do things they are meant to do and be who they are meant to be. I have discovered aspects of myself I did not appreciate before. Now, I have awareness, I have choices, and I hope to give what I’ve been given to all who are seeking better for their lives. –Cecilia Ochoa

I’m the newest member of the team. I believe each person has a purpose and potential to fulfill it. I have a passion for encouraging others to discover options and embrace their strengths. –Tricia MacCallum

Hello I’m Brittany and I have had the honor to be a LifeScripting facilitator for about six years here at CIW. This group has deepened my understanding and has brought me wisdom and growth, along with becoming fully aware of who I am today. As a facilitator, I have the opportunity to help others recognize patterns, develop self-awareness, and understand the fundamentals of social behavior. All of this is utilized in order to give individuals a better understanding of who they are by teaching them the tools and techniques, so they can make better choices in life. As women, we owe it to ourselves to assist, support, and serve others. So, remember to always honor the child in you, find ways to reassure her. Be firm but supportive, structured but flexible. Let her know she is loved, worthy, and valued. –Brittany Ingrassi

My name is Amelia, and I have a heart to help others. I am an “open book,” and am willing to help prevent anyone from making the same mistakes I have made. Art and yoga have been huge factors in my healing process. I have found the freedom of expression and release of emotion through practicing both art and yoga. I love education, dark chocolate, and I miss the beach! –Amelia Carlson

My name is Olivia and I have been a LifeScripting facilitator for five years. I devote myself today to self-improvement and am constantly eager to seek out ways to help others. LifeScripting allows participants to travel through their life story. Women find who they are, why they do the things they do, and most importantly, who they want to be. Becoming a LifeScripter has allowed me to take positive action in my life through the guidance of Virginia Dunstone’s devotion and passion in positive psychology. Everybody needs a little positivity, and LifeScripting allows me to do just that. I am grateful for this opportunity to extend LifeScripting into our communities from the inside out. –Olivia Culbreath

Meet Your Library Clerks

by Haena Worthing

CIW's Library is the place to be. It is where SHHH happens. On any given day, we may see over 100 patrons. Kelly McLaughlin, Michlynn Thedorf (aka Mikey), and myself are the clerks who help things run smoothly day after day.

When the doors open at 8 am, the clerks arrive to get the morning started. Greeted with a smile, Ms. Moreno and Ms. McConnell are always there to welcome us into a great day.

Mikey is famous for her smile and kind deeds. She patiently answers legal questions and willingly gives a helping hand when offering her services. She's disappointed if she has the day off due to her passion for coming to work. Through her assistance, she builds up self-esteem for herself and others. The library is a place that nurtures our spirit.

The library is a safe space for many who come in and are unsure where to go. It is known for its warm, inviting environment, for we take customer service seriously. Books provide comfort and a sense of normalcy.

Surrounded by knowledge, the clerks are able to provide a positive escape to the community.

Library clerk Kelly McLaughlin works alongside Mikey in answering legal questions. She willingly offers compassionate care to the population until the sun goes down. She also dedicates her time to help people by actively listening to them and finding them exactly what they need. Because of her hard work and dedication to the Library program, her assistance is sought after by many. With her creative eye, she is in charge of the artwork displays and is passionate about making her artistic vision come to life. Kelly loves working in the library because she is interested in meeting people and addressing their individual concerns. With a passion for reading books, she believes the library is a supportive and productive place to allow our minds to think.

As a team, we realize the importance of being a part of the community as a whole; however, we



Kelly, Mikey, and Haena

also know the importance of working on us, in order to be the best version of ourselves. We could not be who we are and fulfill the work we do without our supportive staff. A big shout-out to Ms. Moreno, Ms. McConnell, and Mr. Bushin for allowing us to be a part of the Library team. Through every book given out to the population, we are paving the way to a brighter future. One page at a time, we are able to immerse ourselves into fictional worlds beyond the depths of our current reality. Through self-help and how-to reads, we can unlock our hidden potentials. Stop by the library today to show support to the library staff and offer yourself some much needed self-care.

Meet Your CRD Workers

by Misti Mangone

As part of the Community Resources Department (CRD), it is with pride and humility that we serve our community. Working in this multitasked and fast-paced job, the team working underneath the Community Resource Manager (CRM) stays ready and willing to complete every day tasks.

So much goes on behind the scenes that nothing would get done without the help of the team of clerks and CRM staff.

The CRD oversees events, graduations, and banquets, which we set up and clean up after. We assist in all tasks related to groups — from waitlists to rosters to filling out 2016 forms. We navigate the tracking and distribution of fundraiser sales forms



Dolores, Ali, Misti, and Pat

and distribution of over 65 movies, ensuring they are returned weekly.

Ms. Pat Krenwinkel, in charge of the Senior Center, oversees events as well as creating the newsletter and monthly calendar for seniors.

Ali Espinoza is in charge of making sure that all CRD tasks are complete, as well as assisting in any assignment and complicated task thrown her way.

Ms. Dolores Sanchez, is a part of our CRD team daily, and she is currently one of the Beyond Violence facilitators. Dolores is the longest standing member of the CRD staff. Due to her multitude of experiences, she remains a valuable asset to the CRD team.

We understand everyone has someone they want to go home to and we have a vast amount of resources to get you there. Through paving the way to self-help groups and Rehabilitative Achievement Credits, we are always here and ready to help.

Note: Ali recently left the CRD team to pursue a construction job with IDL.

Meet Your Coding TAs

by Trang Luu

A little history about the CalPIA/The Last Mile (TLM) Coding Program (Code 7370): in 2018 the CIW facility was selected by TLM to pilot a web development coding program. This was the first at a women's facility to offer a complete curriculum to train and prepare students to become **Web Developers** – creators of websites and applications. CIW is now the go to facility for new incarcerated individuals who are seriously interested in a coding career.

As for the TAs, first and foremost we are supporters of your successes! Luu is the crazy scientist and Kinzie is the fun-loving coding assistant. Our jobs involve helping students understand concepts. We also troubleshoot grueling code, bounce around ideas for tough projects, encourage and fuel curiosity, and when the going gets tough, we cry with you. Each day we help students move one step closer toward their goals and achievements. Since being part of TLM, we have seen this program save lives by inspiring students to turn things around and find a new purpose for their lives. When you join TLM, you're not just becoming a coding student, you're joining the TLM family. Many thanks to CalPIA and TLM for making this possible. CalPIA and TLM are committed to changing lives on the inside and extending their commitment to support us and our families on the outside.



Check out our code formula for success below:

```
let resources = ['TLM Team', Classroom Facilitator, 'TAs', 'Curriculum'];  
let studentSuccess = studentTime + studentCommitment + studentCodes + resources;  
printCompleteStatus(studentSuccess);
```

*** Software Web Developer, awesome Coding Graduate of CALPIA/TLM ***

Meet Your CIW Uncuffed Team

by Koi Bagnerise

There is freedom in boldly speaking the truth even while your voice shakes. There is liberation in vocalizing the thoughts that only exist in our heads because we lack the courage to express them. The microphone was placed precisely in front of my mouth and it whispered to me, “Take off the mask when you speak to me.” Our hearts are rubbed raw from our personal traumas, pain, addiction, the stigmatization of our crimes, and the oppression that incarceration inflicts. Men from San Quentin prison paved the way offering a male perspective, yet the world is starving for a woman’s point of view. CIW is the first women’s institution to record, produce, and build a podcast series. Having a platform to share a collection of women’s perspectives on various topics surrounding trauma accompanied by incarceration, Uncuffed has given our community a voice. Three times a week, we meet with the Uncuffed team to get educated on interviewing, producing, media software editing, and recording techniques. P. Bellows, Julie Harper, Daphnye Luster, Keyna Osorio, Haena Worthing, and myself meet alongside Kelly McEvers, Eli Wirtschafter, Shy Cannon, and Cat Schuknecht. We have collectively come to the realization that our individual trauma and pain unites us as one, aligning our hearts to receive the commonality between us in our human experiences. Uncuffed promotes female empowerment being facilitated by female instructors that have selflessly dedicated themselves and invested their time and energy to our personal development. Uncuffed provides educational developments that contributes to potential success in our future professional endeavors. Thank you to Uncuffed for supporting us and strengthening our community to find the courage to articulate and utilize our experiences to share our stories within the CIW community. We are shedding the skin of our former selves, no longer setting ourselves on fire in order to keep others warm. We vow to audaciously bare our souls, to discover and reveal the deepest trenches of our pain, and to incessantly speak with authenticity to adequately be the voice within our community. We are representing women who are uncuffed, unfiltered, and unapologetic.



Meet Your Muralists

by Amelia Carlson

What a wonderful experience and such an amazing opportunity! On Wednesday, January 22, a mural wrap-up party was held in the Auditorium. It was a day to celebrate the completion of CIW's very first mural project. With the help and guidance from professional muralist, Eric Davis, and CIW staff, Brandi Davis, four IP artists trail blazed the way to blast some color through CIW. The team consisted of Elijah Leon, Genesis Vasquez, Sandy Witte, and Amelia Carlson. It was a fun-filled, inspirational project. In asking the team what our biggest takeaways were, Genesis Vasquez said it is "the freedom to express myself in a positive way," while Elijah Leon said it was "learning how to work with others, learning different artist skills and techniques, and giving back." For Sandy Witte, it was "the ability of all walks of life coming together on common ground," adding, "we're like the Breakfast Club!"

Eric Davis was happy that we "were able to collaborate and work together on a project that empowered you and gave you confidence. This project allows you guys the freedom to express yourselves, which gave me great joy to be a part of. I watched you guys grow throughout this entire process. Your confidence enabled you to make choices that pleased the aesthetics. I'm so proud of you all."

My biggest takeaway is the imprint through creativity that my heart is leaving at CIW. I was honored and blessed to give our community so much brightness and color. There truly is an internal freedom in being of service, helping others, and giving back to the community. And there is no better way than through art.



Muralists in front of their masterpiece

"Art is something that allows you to communicate and share love, joy, and color." ~ Eric Davis, Professional Muralist

Meet Your PLMP Mentors

by Lisa Tseng

Peer Literacy Mentor Program (PLMP) was established at CIW in 2020 to provide literacy services for adult incarcerated people (IP) who do not have a high school diploma or high school equivalent education with support of literacy mentors. This program trains IPs to be certified Peer Literacy Mentors. Currently, there are eight PLMP Mentors who provide tutoring services to students on their path toward getting a GED or high school diploma, as well as college students in Palo Verde College, Feather River College, and Coastline Community College.

Here are your PLMP Mentors:

- Marlene Cerda, who enjoys working with ESL students and is bilingual in English and Spanish.
- Brae Hansen, who is helpful in all subjects up to college level and is also bilingual in English and Spanish.
- Daina Haan, who is able to work with

students of all levels, all subjects, and college-level subjects.

- Catherine Kieu, who specializes in math, and can help students in all levels, including college-level math.
- Sandy Nieves, who works with students in ABE, GED, or HSD levels where she tutors in all subjects.
- Jennifer True, who specializes in Language Arts, English, Reading, and Writing.
- Lisa Tseng, who prefers GED math and college algebra, but she can tutor any subject at any level.
- "Flower" Yang, who specializes in math, and she can tutor people in any ABE, GED, or HSD class.

If you are interested in receiving our services, please contact Ms. DiGerlando at the DRP building weekdays between



Lisa, Sandy, Jenn, and Marlene

8 am and 2:30 pm, and let her know your preferred schedule and tutor. Tutoring is available weekdays with 2 hour time blocks for each session from 8 am-10 am, 10 am-noon, 1 pm-3 pm, or 5:30 pm-7:30 pm.

Already have your high school diploma or GED and are willing to help others? Why not become a PLMP Mentor yourself? The tutoring mentor program offers milestone competition credits in the first two modules or training and 3-month Education Merit Credits (EMC) upon completion of the internship training.

Meet Your Puppy Trainers

by Stacey Barker

You may have seen certain individuals walking around with an adult dog or puppy, a heartwarming sight you didn't think you would see in prison. It is my honor and privilege to introduce you to the dogs and individuals that make up the Prison Puppy Program (PPP). The program is made up of two integral parts: there are those who train adult dogs to become service dogs and those who assist in raising puppies to become service dogs.

With the training comes three levels of trainers: Primary, Secondary, and Babysitter. Primary trainers are solely responsible for the training and care of the dog, as well as who the dog stays with inside the institution. Secondary trainers are those who support the primary in the needs of care and training for the dog, usually selected by the primary. Babysitters are those who support primaries and secondaries. They are available to watch and care for the dogs when needed.

The puppy teams assist in the care and training of the puppies.

Canine Support Teams is the life-changing non-profit organization that brings in these amazing puppies and dogs for us to train. These gifted dogs have the potential to become service dogs who will assist people with disabilities other than blindness. As a participant in this program, we train based on scientifically-proven techniques. All these amazing dogs depend on the trainers in this program to help them reach their full potential.

Primary Trainers: Stacey Barker, Olivia Culbreath, Sky Houghton, Pat Krenwinkel, Paige Linville, Misti Mangone, Kinzie Noordman, Amber Riley, and Jenn True

Secondary Trainers: Jen Medina and Pup Chinn

Babysitters: Denise Goodwin, Sandy Witte, Michelle Remsen, Tricia MacCallum, Amber Jackson, Vanessa Acosta, Alexandria Bayne, Grace Coleman, Jade Janks, Samantha Muniz, and Cassidy Porter

Puppy Teams: Jenn Henderson & Kelsey Morasci, Kym Cano & Karen Provencio, Karen Culuko & Kelly Lau

Dogs on grounds: Lady (sweet and sassy black Labrador), Johnny (life of the party white Labrador), Samson (fun and sweet blonde Labrador), Gracie (sweet and plucky Corgi), and Leo (bratty, opinionated, and fun Parti Poodle)

Golden Retriever Puppies:

Brothers: L.T. & Deacon

Sisters: Willow & Meadow

We appreciate the dogs & puppies... trainers & staff... and of course, our population's support. As tempting as it may be to pat and say hello to these beautiful animals, please remember, they are service dogs in training and not pets. Please ask the trainer first, if you want to pet them.



Meet Your Transgender Women— Celebrating SB132

by Kier Anderson

"I owe everybody at CIW a huge debt of gratitude just for allowing me to be myself and be a member of this amazing community," says Lisa Briggs, a formerly incarcerated transgender woman who paroled February 19, 2025, after serving 12 years in CDCR facilities. Describing her 34 months at the California Institution for Women, Lisa added, "Overall, I felt very welcome here."

CIW's Associate Warden Delinia Lewis previously served as Community Resources Manager for the nearby California Institution for Men, where in 2018-19 Lewis and Briggs worked alongside state lawmakers and other justice-impacted transgender women to help develop what would become Senate Bill 132, "The Transgender Respect, Agency, and Dignity Act." This groundbreaking legislation made it possible for Briggs and other transgender individuals (myself included) to serve our debt to society at correctional institutions that authentically affirm our gender identity.

Reflecting on her input to SB132, Lisa Briggs explained her goals were to feel safe and supported while expressing as female, which she says were "110% achieved. Coming to CIW allowed me to connect with my true self, and the program opportunities were amazing, better than anywhere else I've been statewide. I'm a better person today from the experience. I wouldn't trade it for anything; I totally thrived at CIW."

Serving 25-to-Life, this author is another transwoman perpetually grateful for the many ways in which SB132 has improved my quality of life and empowered me to flourish at CIW. But for over 15 years I was held in men's facilities, an exhaustingly hypermasculine culture of brutality and gang activity where living as a woman who refuses to become chattel for male sexual gratification is incredibly difficult.

While fear is very common in correctional facilities, incarcerated men cannot show any fear. Along with kindness, compassion, and empathy, fear is considered a 'weakness' inside California's male facilities. Picture a savage high school with a bunch of insecure, afraid, image-conscious people who would rather stab you than say, "Hey, you hurt my feelings." Most male prisoners can't even admit they have feelings. Enveloped in a conspiracy of silence, secrecy, and shame, "Don't Snitch, Don't Trust, and Don't Feel" becomes their mantra to survive every day.

Like me, Lisa says she left a lot of fear behind when she transferred. "It took me about 4 months to get over all those fears and realize I was safe at CIW." Still, she admits experiencing anxiety about moving to the women's side, "mostly started by staff at men's facilities. Threats of being physically harmed were greatly exaggerated," she says. Lisa noted other differences in the female corrections environment: Incarcerated men demand a different type of respect from one another, while the "more relaxed structure" at women's facilities can sometimes feel like there's "No accountability, no consequences. The freedom we have at CIW is often taken for granted," Lisa opined. "But in order to be safe on the men's side, I had to be with someone, which comes with expectations of maintaining a certain appearance and providing sex. I never felt pressured for sex at CIW, which is very liberating. With that freedom, I was able to channel my energies to groups and self-improvement."

"Being among women helped me learn to express myself within realistic expectations of gender roles. On the men's side there were so many more expectations, but CIW helped me to just be myself. I feel less need for external validation these days."

"As I leave here, I feel I'm really going to miss this place and the depth of friendships we've created. When women are sincere, they allow others in...on a deeper level than men usually do. Women are more open to making a genuine connection. Incarcerated men are limited by prison culture and the narrow boundaries of masculinity. I lost part of myself on the men's side, but I felt much more accepted at CIW. We don't have to put on a show here; I felt much more pressure to perform gender at men's facilities. Here I can truly be the woman that I am, rather than try to impress or convince anybody else, and that is an important awareness to take with me as I parole."

What do you call a police officer who refuses to get out of bed?

Undercover cop!



Why did the archaeologist have a breakdown?

His career was in ruins!



Meet the Elderly: Aging in Prison

by Stephanie Lazarus

As a longtime member of the Compassionate Companions Program (CCP), I was able to sit with a few elderly residents on a vigil. This experience made me think about why there are so many elderly residents who are still here, especially those who have serious health issues. To see many of our elderly struggle to walk to the shower room, chow hall, self-help groups, or to church, saddens me. It made me question why the California prison system continues to house elderly women in prison when they are no longer a threat to anyone but themselves. Most are unable to walk without help and have to use a walker, wheelchair, or cane to get around. They are likely to trip over the many cracked and raised sidewalks in prison and break a hip or face other serious injuries. I am currently 64 years old and have been at CIW since 2014 and have fallen at least half a dozen times. My most serious injury from falling was three broken ribs.

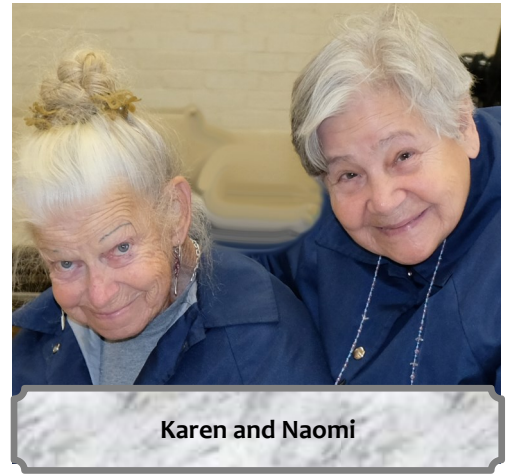
We have approximately 212 residents who are over the age of 55, the oldest being 93 years old. Out of these 212, I decided to interview 100 of them in October and November 2024, and came up with the following powerful statistics.

- The average age of these elderly residents at the time of their arrest is: 43 (oldest was 78 years old)
- The average age of these elderly residents is: 65 (Oldest being 93-years old)
- The average length in prison is: 20 years (Longest being 54 years)
- Individuals that have served over 20 years in prison: 52
- The number of LWOPs (Life Without the Possibility of Parole) currently at CIW: 39 and 25 of them are elderly
- Number of chronic care patients with health issues serious enough to be seen by a doctor on a regular basis: 87
- Individuals that use medical devices: 74
- Total amount of devices used by these individuals: 173

The cost to California taxpayers to house residents 55 years and older with few health issues is about \$130,000 per year. But for elderly residents that have health issues, the cost may range from \$200,000 - \$300,000. If we use \$160,000 as our point of reference, that means that for every 100 elderly residents, the State is spending \$16 million per year. The average yearly tuition cost to send a student to a California community college is approximately \$1,350. To a state college, such as the California State University Fullerton, the approximate cost is \$7,147. And for a university like UCLA, the approximate cost is \$14,208. These funds that are being used to house elderly women prisoners would be better used to send 11,851 students each year to a community college, 2,238 students to a state college, or 1,126 students to a university. Imagine that. Housing 212 elderly residents here at CIW is costing our State \$34 million per year. That same money could send 25,185 students each year to a community college, or 4,757 students to a state college, or 2,393 students to a university.

The reason to incarcerate an individual is that they are a threat to public safety. Women over the age of 55 are likely to have one of the lowest recidivism rates among the groups studied in California. It seems very clear that these elderly residents have health issues and have to use some form of medical device to get around. The average time spent in prison for these elderly residents is 20 years. For these reasons, they could be released back into the community and are very unlikely to reoffend. Otherwise, these elderly incarcerated women, and LWOPS are now staying at CIW's very expensive convalescent home.

The people of the State of California and the State Legislature need to seriously reconsider why we are continuing to incarcerate the elderly. It would alleviate the already strapped State with this financial burden by re-evaluating these elderly incarcerated residents and releasing them to family, friends, or to a rest home. Lastly, 100 of the 212 elderly residents have spent a combined total of 2,035 years in prison.



Karen and Naomi

"I wonder how many people I've looked at all my life and never seen"

~ John Steinbeck

Meet Your Elderly

compiled by Mindy Jones

As I have aged in prison, I discovered that I have the superpower of invisibility. As a child, being unseen was a great defense mechanism in a volatile home; however, it can be annoying as an adult. Young people pushing in front of me in a crowd as if I do not exist is frustrating and can even be a safety concern; nevertheless, there is also a flip side to ageing while inside prison. I find myself surprised and delighted there are young people with a deep respect for their elders. I have had several ladies in their twenties insist on carrying canteen bags and sincerely happy to do so. Things like this restore my faith in humanity. - Mindy Jones

I was actually excited when I got my "golden card," at 55 with that privilege of shopping first at canteen, going first to the chow hall, being allowed to have two pillows, and the all-coveted second mattress. The downside is that second mattress does little to soften my aches and pains in my back and hips caused by sleeping on a hard cookie sheet. It would be nice if the elderly community was allowed memory foam toppers to elevate the issues that come with being older... wink wink! -Kelly Wolfe

I have often said, "I don't feel old..." until I look in the mirror! In getting older, my wisdom has grown in a way I never thought it would. The things I used to think were so important are not so important today, like my appearance. This is what you get as an old lady. Being an old lady means people underestimate me, so they talk more freely. This allows me to get to know a lot of information about my community... It is both good and bad. -April Soma

Meet Your Twenty-Somethings

by Grace Coleman

Amongst the incarcerated population, there lies a growing number of young women spending their developmental years inside prison walls. Inside CIW, we have about twelve hundred residents with merely one hundred and seventy five of those women under the age of 29. When initially hearing this number last year, it was shocking. However, as a twenty-something in prison, I came to realize I was the youngest in many of the rooms I entered inside these walls.

Stripped from the outside world, incarcerated young women find themselves even more lost than your average twenty-something walking a college campus. Through women's courageous attempts to discover themselves in prison, young women begin to break free from the rebellious seeds their teenager years planted by shedding the layers of who they once were. Young women become sober and pour out the misery of their false identities. They nurture their mental wellbeing by becoming the women their younger self would admire. They redefine their faith, by undressing the confinements of their childhood. Many women spark something new and exciting within them: self-worth.

Today, at 26 years old, I am okay with admitting I know absolutely nothing. Every day I am learning to be okay with unraveling this new version of who I am. At 22 years old, entering the system and coming to terms with what I had done was something I did not know how to grasp. I anxiously flipped through books and bibles I thought would carry me to terms with the damaging dangers of my decisions. I tried to unravel new versions of myself and who I was supposed to be through holding onto inspiring mantras. I had a difficult time identifying with groups formally established by a group of middle-aged white business men; nonetheless, I mustered up the courage to be a leader within those restorative circles.

Twenty-somethings in prison are a unique experience far different than the timeframe when the majority of women become mothers and wives. I am surrounded by women of wisdom who make space for growth and development in between my day-to-day chaos. Inside a system created for men, young women reestablish themselves by continuously breaking the barriers of yesterday. Change-making women are reinventing what doing time looks like by creating new circles and finding what it means to make women united. Through extending one open hand to another, young women begin to forgive the bits and pieces of themselves that are the hardest to heal. As twenty-somethings, we can become the women we are supposed to become, by turning away from our former addictions, defying the odds of popular culture, and planting the seeds for a future far more worthy than our adolescent selves could have imagined.

Ode to the Elderly

by Ruby Padgett

How can I be invisible?
With walker, wheelchair, or cane.
Am I a reminder of mothers, grandmothers?
Is this why you avert your eyes?

I am ignored by you on the sidewalk.
I see your smile at the young girls;
thinking of your clever remark.
Why don't you just go away?

I was vital, young, and important.
Once upon a time, everyone saw me.
These people are now like me.
Unseen, unheard, uncared for.

We are mocked, called bitter.
No longer asked for opinions.
We fade into the grey background.
Yet our minds race to another era.

An era this new generation will repeat.
Believing they are the first.
That we were always old.
With our walkers, wheelchairs, and canes.

Stephanie Covington.

The justice impacted audience was quietly focused and hearts open to Dr. Covington's inspiring and healing words. Dr. Covington humbly began with sharing how upon her preparation and entrance into CIW, she felt a strong sense of anxiety which matched the importance of what she would share and its impact on us. She transparently shared her personal life journey, noting that she wanted us all to know her journey includes us, that her life is about us. Her servitude to her community began at a young age when she was in high school and part of a girl's group where she got to volunteer at a child guidance center. She would go to college, major in Sociology and earn her graduate degree. She concealed the location of her first job on 125th in Harlem, due to coming from a family of privilege and racist beliefs. Maintaining her privileged lifestyle, she worked as an antique dealer and interior designer while keeping invisible who she really wanted to be, and alcohol became her drug of choice. Getting into recovery changed her life. She wanted to run a women's group in an addiction treatment program in San Diego because it did not exist. Attending numerous conferences, she realized women were not talked about. Her life changed at a conference in North Carolina where she met a warden of a women's prison. The warden explained the lack of programs in women's prisons and Dr. Covington felt an incredible need to do something. She would go on to author "A Woman's Way Through the Twelve Steps" using women's stories. For women who committed violent aggressive crimes, she created Beyond Violence. For women who experienced trauma, she created both Healing Trauma and Beyond Trauma. These are three curriculums that heal and help us here at CIW. A book she authored last year is called "Hidden Healers." With genuine compassion and emotion in her voice, she expressed the inspiration behind this book. Not just through history, but in women's prisons, we are able to manage because of each other. Dr. Covington interviewed 22 formerly incarcerated women and honorably shared their stories and told memories of those that became invisible and disappeared in prison. This amazing book is about women overcoming oppression (invisibility) and bringing our accomplishments and strengths into the spotlight, making us visible.

Someone I would also like to make visible is Dr. Covington's business partner, Dr. Nena Messina, who was also in attendance. She is a criminologist and researcher. Without her efforts and research, Dr. Covington's curriculums would not be possible here at CIW. She started a non-profit called "Envisioning Justice Solutions." She is working on a beautiful "mission" which I hope she is willing to come back and share with us one day.

After watching an educational media presentation, followed by a presentation of the essay contest winners, Ms. Garcia brought the event to an end with her divine feminism closing remarks. Everyone left feeling light-hearted, inspired, hopeful, encouraged, and grateful. While she wasn't in attendance, I believe Beyonce asked one of the most important questions, "Who runs the world? Girls!"

Women's History Essay Winner - 2nd place

by Mindy Jones

The media putting unfair expectations on women and girls is a particular pet peeve of mine. It has always been obvious that the media sets an unrealistic body image standard that is detrimental to females and, since the inception of television and movies, eating disorders abound. Female news anchors and "weather girls" must be beautiful, thin, and dress provocatively to attract male viewers which leads to distorted thinking that beauty and body types equate with success. This misguided assumption is something I worked hard to dispel with my two daughters as they struggled to establish self-esteem and confidence.

My perspective on the damage caused by media expectations took another turn when I was forced to deal with it after being arrested for the first time in my life. I was not aware how biased the media is against women caught in the justice system. I discovered the media wanted only the most salacious slant on stories involving women charged with crimes and that version always came from the prosecutor's theories that District Attorneys are so willing to share in front of the camera. The truth easily gets lost in the shuffle.

Men are portrayed as violent law breakers because they are raised to be aggressive. So it's not really their fault. That same standard of forgiveness does not apply to women because there is an expectation of softness and nurturing so shock, shame, and guilt is heaped on females. The result of this twisted thinking is responsible for women receiving longer sentences than men and even being blamed for the actions of males. Questions such as, "What were you wearing?" being asked of victims of rape, or "What did you do to make him angry?" in domestic abuse cases are all too common. Too many women languish in prison long after their male codefendants are released even when the men are the actual perpetrators of the crime.

The media must take responsibility for this inequity, and I pray for the day when the public realizes these unreasonable expectations must end.

A Musical Legacy

By Elysia Cossey (a.k.a. Liz)

Music is in me. Something that I had previously taken for granted now resonates powerfully with me in ways I never would have imagined. It has become a joy to share.

Shortly after arriving at CIW in 2014, I had the opportunity to check out a donated guitar from the Jewish chaplain and work out how to play the guitar. Since I have some training with other instruments, I figured I could also learn guitar. When Jail Guitar Doors began their songwriting workshop at CIW in 2016, I was there, mostly to improve my budding guitar skills. Once my mentors coaxed me into writing a few songs, I knew this was for me. My heart was opened and good things came out. Songwriting became a powerful tool to empower me to channel and process all the complicated emotions tied up inside of me, and let them out.

CIW's Second Chance Band, headed by residents Larissa Schuster and Kier Anderson, kindly invited me to join them. Once I had completed my college studies, I was in, just as the band was gearing up for their annual Christmas caroling tour of 2024. Picking up the mandolin and getting the feel of it was a new challenge for me to tackle, another opportunity to grow. In addition to playing mandolin, rehearsing with the band every weekend meant getting back to performance ready, something I had neglected since before COVID. By the time the band went to each housing unit to perform, I was ready. It takes a great deal of work and preparation to perform with a band. It is also fun and rewarding. Looking out into the faces of those in the audience, I felt the sense of what we were doing is indeed a service. No record deal awaits us, no one is paying us, not even a case of noodles. Our hard work and dedication serves the purpose of shining a light in a dark place, to boost morale, especially around the holidays. This place needs music.

Now I'm honing my skills on acoustic, electric, and bass guitars, learning new riffs for new songs. Working together as a band means listening to and respecting one another, as well as being responsible and taking constructive criticism. Ultimately, we build each other up as we reach new levels of professionalism and make beautiful music.

Music is a gift. I am grateful for the opportunity to grow, learn, develop, and share music here at CIW. It is an honor to give back and shine my light in a dark place. I hope music will continue to grow, flourish, and bring joy to this community as I begin my new journey on the other side.



Yoga

by Grace Coleman

On January 18, the fearless leader of Prison Yoga and Meditation, Nancy DeVille, brought the yoga retreat to CIW. DeVille initiated the transformative workshops in 2014 where she began to improve individuals' health and traumas inside prisons throughout the nation. In embracing a makeover of mind, body, and soul, DeVille hones in on our minds. DeVille voices the realities of finding ourselves outside of the labels we carry: inmate, incarcerated person, murderer, criminal, crazy. Incarceration can reinforce numerous negative messages we speak to ourselves and to each other. Across humankind, people become addicted to self-critical thinking. DeVille highlights the concept of, "Transforming our personality into our personal reality. The way in which we treat ourselves shines through in the nature of who we are." DeVille talks self-compassion, illuminating how, "People who practice self-compassion bring in more positive opportunity in life." DeVille considers affirmations and manifestations to shape the world our minds live in. While we may currently reside in prison, our minds do not have to. DeVille says to speak out loud, "I am awareness — to bring you to the present moment. I am worthy— because you are."

During the retreat, following the healing of our minds we stepped into a series of physical healing through yoga, emotional breathwork, and a sound bath. In her book, "Prison Yoga and Meditation," DeVille emphasizes how yoga causes the "full expression of a pose," to transform into a "full expression of yourself." Yoga was guided by certified yoga instructors, Kathrine and Jenika, who led all levels of yoga — from chair yoga to advanced poses. Colette led us through a series of intensive breathwork, where emotional toxins were released to build space for spiritual guidance. Reiki Master Cecile intuitively led us through our sound healing journey with the use of sound bowls, ocean sounds, and other naturalistic instruments. Cecile shared her struggles with anxiety and depression. Through Reiki healing and cleansing sound baths, Cecile found her freedom and innate ability to overcome her own self-inflicted challenges throughout her life.

Prison Yoga and Meditation is offered here at CIW on the first and third Saturday of every month. Come join us to embrace a new part of your healing journey through our yoga and meditative restorative practices.

Suicide Prevention Day: Your Story is Not Over

by Bernice DeAnda

Suicide Prevention Day at the Aud on January 22 brought suicide awareness to the CIW population – informing us on the importance of addressing suicide while creating an atmosphere of positivity and hope. Staff set up informational booths to offer positive programming alternatives to help break suicidal thoughts, mental health concerns, and negative thinking patterns. Shining light on resources available for our population lays out the path to taking informative measures when reaching out for help.

“I finally saw that I was a life worth saving and protecting; I finally understood that my number one job was to nurture this human who had been doing the best she could with what she had.” ~ Holly Whitaker

Let’s take a tour around some of the booths at Suicide Prevention Day...

GP Guidance Resource Center: Dr. Chow and Dr. Shah-Mistry provide the population with service and profession skill sets to help IPs anticipating suicide in hopes it does not get to the point of suicide. An IP can participate in groups and know there are staff who are there for them. The GP Center is located in Barneberg Middle providing one-on-one therapy as well as group therapy.

Medication Awareness: Dr. Heitkamp stresses how important it is to understand how effective medication is and that no person needs to suffer. Dr. J. K. Elliott emphasizes the availability of health care services offered to GP. The doctors are doing their best to direct the population with the proper resources and being empathetic of their needs.

LGBTQ Anti-Bullying: Chavez-Garcia, Social Work and M. Arciniega, ASW, Clinical Social Work stated they wanted to provide awareness of people who has had family members who have died from suicide. Reassurance that everyone goes through things in life but things can get better. Also expressed the suicide rate is higher in LGBTQ community.

Integrated Substance Abuse Disorder Treatment Program (ISUDT): K. Gomez, OT, and CIII Yorba-Felix provided information to GP which focuses on criminal thinking errors and antisocial behaviors often glorified by dealing drugs, stealing, fighting, use of guns, and manipulating people through power and intimidation

Psychiatric Technician Suicide Awareness Booth: E. Fuentes, Psychiatric Technician (PT), wants everyone to know what a PT provides with the availability offered. PT will provide material for an IP to work on in their cell, focusing on prevention of suicide.

Faith-Believers: R. Copeland, T. Copeland, B. Winn, and S. Dykema wanted to send a message to GP of their purpose with learning the word of the Lord, how it can work in their lives.

American with Disabilities Act: S. Cordoneanu, OT, to provide equal access to all of the incarcerated population for those who fall under the ADA act or have a disability.

Compassionate Companions Program (CCP): Staff sponsor L. Beveridge and CCP members led by C. Kopp, L. Freeman, S. Lazarus want the population to know there is help available to the population for medical needs, grief and loss, and medical recovery. CCP members provide support to the population providing comfort, care, and commitment to IPs in need within the CIW regulations.

Education El Prado Adult School and Colleges: Ms. Perico offered information and support for the population wishing to pursue their education. They have tutoring services, college, vocational education, high school diploma program, GED, ABE I, II, III, and E-Learning including accessibility to release educational records to El Prado Adult School.

SPRINT Booth: Ms. Henry – a Licensed Clinician Social Worker (LCSW) and LCSW Buchbinder brought joy into the environment with colorful lanyards – the intention to bring color into an environment where color is not typically seen. Multiple games were provided for IPs to play throughout the event earning tickets and winning prizes. I was personally happy with the interactions and communication between IP and staff. This was a successful event.

To anyone who is contemplating suicide or hurting himself or herself, “Do not hesitate to ask a Psychiatric Technician for help! Or submit a form 7362 to speak to a Mental Health Clinician.

Reentry Fair

by Aimee Gana

It has been a year since we had our first Reentry Fair at the Circle. In case you have not noticed, CIW has been hosting this event every quarter, and according to Parole Agent III Harris, February is always the one with the most participating vendors. Therefore, with about 74 representatives from various organizations showing up on Thursday, February 27, it was just fitting that the Rec. Field was chosen as its venue. Not only was it more comfortable for both vendors and CIW residents, it also worked better with the hotdog giveaway and the goody bag distribution.

In case you have not read our previous newsletter issues, we wrote that Agent Harris plays a major role in coordinating this event with support from CIW Administration and the Division of Adult Parole Operations (DAPO). She thinks, "Events like these are vital because it brings our community stakeholders inside CIW. That way, they can understand what incarcerated people (IP) are going through and respond accordingly to those needs." Indeed, the event personalizes and humanizes us. Case in point, I visited the Orange County Public Defender's booth and after interacting with their representatives, they said, "it is good to put a face to the name."

Agent Harris adds, "There are a lot of people outside who care." This was evident, not just with the interaction that was observed during this remarkable event, but also with the variety of resources that was offered.

As I walked the grounds interacting with both vendors and the population, IP Bea Marquez chipped in that she loved the event, adding that it was "set up in a way that you got a little bit of each, with just the right amount of information – education, housing, and recovery. I appreciate seeing resources for the San Diego area because I don't remember seeing them in the other fairs I've been to."

Former CIW CRM Ricky Dela Cruz, who is now Community Partnership Manager for DAPO Southern Region says, "It is important for the population to know that there are a lot of community-based partners out there who are willing to support." He added that we should "start networking as early as now to prepare for parole. Information is key to your success." That statement should ring true to everyone, whether one has a determinate or indeterminate sentence. Laws have been changing, and we see more and more people being sent home earlier than their original sentence. It is never too early to build relationships and gather relevant information that will help us succeed in both the professional and social level. If you agree, plan on showing up to the next reentry fair!



IPs get reentry resources



HERE ARE JUST SOME OF THE VENDORS THAT ATTENDED:

Center for Employment Opportunities
Community Health Initiative of OC (CHIOC) – Medi-Cal and Cal-Fresh Enrollment Assistance
Creating Restorative Opportunities and Programs (CROP)
CSU Dominguez Hills Project Rebound
CSUF Fullerton Project Rebound
Cypress College Rising Scholars
Healing Dialogue and Action
healthRIGHT 360
Only Miracles
Orange County Public Defender Re-entry Services
Project Kinship Adult Re-Entry Success Center
ReEvolution
Riverside University Health System
The Inside Out Program with Justice Education Center for The Claremont Colleges
TimeList
WorkingWardrobes

Black History Month

by Tanaza Whiteside

This year's Black History Month Event was celebrated on February 28, from 11 am to 2:20 pm, in the Auditorium. We had all IPs come out to celebrate with an "Eat and Paint" event where we rallied behind the accomplishments and the contributions of the African American Labor Force – this year's national theme. It was a day of positive vibes, bright smiles, and jubilant laughter. We even had snacks which were so generously donated by the Head of Culinary Mr. Dyer and CRM Ms. Jimenez. We invited professional artist Megumi Nakazawa to spend the day in celebration, and she did not disappoint. She created our stencils, and she artistically canvased one of our very own – Ms. Bobbie Phillips – who shared her experiences and her hopes. Nakazawa, founder of Faces of Mass Incarceration, is a 23-year-old artist who shares incarcerated peoples' stories, inviting both individuals and observers to recognize the inherent value, beauty, and dignity in each story. Her art is displayed in Art Share LA, The Prism Way, Alcatraz Island, and Salinas Valley State Prison. Together, we focused on how our collective efforts while incarcerated can bring educational awareness. As a community, we can labor for the purpose of educational advancements, as well as behavioral changes and modifications, to bring positive re-integration back into the greater society. Our purpose succeeded in giving a positive voice and space for the African American community, while also including and appreciating those who support and celebrate our accomplishments with us. We ate and painted our way into solidifying old friendships, while also creating new ones, which we hope will decrease the amount of negative choices we make while serving time in this community. Our upcoming event is "Juneteenth" on June 19. Juneteenth is a national celebration in honor of the last African Americans enslaved in this country. We invite all to come out to learn and to enjoy how we celebrate Juneteenth.



Bobbie and Nakazawa

"If you know me based on who I was a year ago, you don't know me at all. My growth game is strong. Allow me to reintroduce myself." ~ from *Mantra Wellness* magazine

Albertsons at Family Visiting

by Anne Marie Harrison

After all of the hard work and dedication from Administration, it is finally here! Albertson's Grocery is now available as an additional means to purchase food for family overnight visiting, in addition to our ability to order groceries through Walkenhorst, Access, and the Culinary.

On December 13, my family and I, alongside Michelle Hart and her daughter, were the first families in family visit to experience the long awaited luxury of real food! Family visits here at CIW are weekends from Friday morning to Monday morning, so you could imagine all the cooking, baking, snacking, and blending we ALL did! In fact, eating was the main topic that whole weekend! Walking into the kitchen of the apartment before my parents' arrival is a reminder of being at home – grocery bags on the countertop and all. Steaks, apple pie, and fresh fruit filled my eyes with tears. The simple basics took my mind out of prison. I felt as if I was at home looking through our family fridge. The little things in life are now life's biggest blessing. From the local grocery store to the connection between my family and I, my heart was filled with joy.

The Christmas visit added a special touch to the holidays, from the decorated Christmas tree to the stockings hung across the living room. The look on my parents' faces was priceless – as my mom has not decorated for any holiday since my arrest over 20 years ago. Spending time together, with the Christmas lights flickering and the smell of baking cookies in the oven, allowed us to experience the most meaningful of connections one could ask for. I truly believe family visits are well-needed, and Albertson's Grocery has opened another avenue for making memories, as well as strengthening and improving family relationships.

Friendly Tip: Do not forget to purchase your photos prior to your visit, giving you and your family an opportunity to hold onto this awesome memory. The smiles are cherished and long-lasting.

This weekend was amazingly perfect. Thank you CIW!

AB2483—Resentencing Guidelines

This law, effective 1/1/2025 will:

Create uniform resentencing procedures across the state and help resolve cases effectively and consistently.
Require the presiding judge of each county superior court to, on or before March 1, 2025, convene a meeting to develop a plan for fair and efficient handling of post-conviction proceedings.

At the beginning of a resentencing proceeding, a judge must consider whether or not to appoint counsel.

Require judges to consider any pertinent circumstances that have arisen since the prior sentence was imposed.

Allow judges to modify every aspect of a person's sentence, even if it was a guilty plea.

Require CDCR to designate a person for each prison as a point of contact for providing a case summary, disciplinary records, programming records, chronos, and any other material relevant to post-conviction proceeding. For requests submitted on or after January 1, 2026, the records shall be provided within 45 days of the request unless the requestor agrees to extend this period. The records shall be provided in a secure electronic format. CDCR must regularly maintain a public directory of each designated person.

Require judges to put on the record the reasons for granting or denying the initiation of resentencing proceedings and to inform the incarcerated person of the court's decision and to advise them of their right to appeal.

Allow a person to waive their personal presence and appear remotely

Allow for victims to be heard during resentencing hearing
Who qualifies? Anyone who is granted a resentencing hearing.
Thank you Jay Vasquez for this information!

Prison Retirement Bill

Current Co-Sponsors: LARRP, CCWP, CURE-CA

Provided by Jane Dorotik

According to CDCR, there are over 19,000 incarcerated people (IP) over 55, the age where CDCR begins to consider IPs as "elderly." This population is still required to be employed giving employment in many physically demanding jobs unsuitable for their capacity.

The only way an IP can be excused from their assigned work is from medical exemption, which can be difficult to receive and is up to the discretion of the attending physician, meaning it is also open to discrimination based on medical biases which already discount the pain and ability of women and folks of color. If an IP does not receive a medical exemption and is unable or unwilling to work, they risk being reprimanded, written up, and losing their work group privileges.

If this passes, it could provide folks above a certain age to be their own best judge of their physical abilities, allowing them to decide for themselves if they want to work fewer hours and keep their group privilege level. These levels include privileges such as receiving family visits limited only by the facility resources, maximum monthly canteen draw as authorized, and access to yard, recreation, entertainment activities during the IPs working/training hours and limited only by security needs.

Want us to talk about a specific bill, law or legal issue?

***Send your request to The Razor Wire @
Class Room 23, North Education Building***

2025 Bills To Watch

The following information is about Assembly Bills being introduced in California this year. All of the bills are in the early stages and must pass through many votes and committees before being enacted. If you want to learn more about these and other bills, you can go to the Law Library application on your GTL tablet. Select the CA-Full Text Bills option. You can search by the bill number, year, and key words such as 'prison'.

A.B. 1144 (2025)

If this bill passes, it would authorize incarcerated persons 55 years of age or older, except those sentenced to death, in state prison or county jail to elect whether to continue to work, reduce the number of hours worked, or retire.

A.B. 622 (2025)

Currently there is a lawsuit challenging the awarding of credits authorized by Proposition 57 (percentage changes, MCCs, RAC, EMCs, etc.) to the sentences of people serving life terms. This lawsuit is currently being appealed.

If this bill passes, it would clarify that credits authorized by Proposition 57 shall be applied to the life sentences to advance their Minimum Eligible Parole Date.

A.B. 1140 (2025) Single-Occupancy Cell Pilot Program

If this bill passes, it would require CDCR to develop and implement a pilot program at 4 adult prisons to house 10% of the population in single cells by January 1, 2027.

SUBMISSIONS

Humility

by T. Brown

Nearly every single day somebody calls me “beautiful,” “pretty,” or “well put together.” I’ve honestly had people say they don’t understand why I’m not conceited. I guess it’s because of the way I was raised.

My mother is still a very attractive woman to this day. I will not give away her age, but I will say at her age the woman still doesn’t have wrinkles! While I was growing up, my mother was almost 5’8” and a very slim size 4. Whether she was going somewhere or not, my mother had a perfect coiffure (it was the ‘80s y’all), she smelled good, and she was dressed to impress.

Kid you not, men followed my mother around like sick puppies! And you know what? She was not arrogant, prideful, a user, or unkind. She was humble, kind, and hardworking. She very well could have engaged in survival methods of using her body and looks – but she used her mind and hands instead. That is not to pass judgment on anyone that has, it is simply to honor the woman that showed me there was another way.

There are many women that have inspired me, but none like my mother. So, it is not hard for me to walk in humility; I was raised that way.

Mental Health

by Tamara Hinkle

In a society where labels, judgments, and stigmas go hand-in-hand, I’d like to share about mental health. On March 6, 2024, I attempted suicide. No one, including myself, saw it coming... yet everyone gave their reasons of why it happened. What do you say to someone who feels like giving up? Who tried to end their life? So many believe they have to say something, but usually the wrong things. If I had a nickel for every time someone “reminded me,” as if I needed a reminder of what I’d done, or who made off-handed remarks to me about being EOP, I’d be sitting next to Jeff Bezos and Bill Gates.

Here’s the thing about people with mental illness, we didn’t ask for it... we breathe it every day... and we don’t want to be mistreated. Take the time to get to know us, so you can truly “understand” us.

You might think you are doing us a service, yet constantly asking, “Are you okay?” is offensive. The truth of the matter is... Everyone on earth – regardless of ethnicity, age, gender, or socioeconomic status – has experienced life on life’s terms. No one wants to be ostracized because of how they deal with anxiety, trauma, depression. Our blood is the same color as everyone else. To those who truly care about humanity and human life, know your kind words, presence, and encouragement does not go unnoticed. Rather than judging a book by its cover, why not read a chapter or two? Maybe, just maybe, you would realize having mental health issues does not define who we are but is something we are going through.

I would like to thank the following Correctional Officers and Mental Health Staff for helping me to see the light at the end of the tunnel: COs Contreras, Negrete, Drake, Hyde, Hicks, Harmon, Raya, Miranda, Allen, Ramirez, Alba, Iwu, Jaimez, Torres, Peralta... Sgt. Baker, Sgt. Bell... CO Harwood, Mosqueda, Martin, and Starnes. LCSW Shapiro, Godinez, Dr. Adhieri, Dr. Juarez, Dr. Nigbar, the PIP staff... the work you do truly makes a difference... you are appreciated!

Last Goodbye

by Kayla Spoon

No more you for me
This is my last goodbye to you for me
It took losing you, to find me.
I gave you my all and lost all of me.
Since I gave you up, I’m finally free.
I’m done dying, stealing, and lying for you.
Now there is a better life
and future I see for me.
It took prison to truly make me see
all the reasons
you were never really good for me.
Instead of spending a dime on you,
I get to spend it all on me.
Instead of thinking for you,
I’m thinking for me.
You really broke me down, you see
Both mentally and physically.
Instead of losing for you
I am winning for me.
Instead of dying for you
I’m living forever for me.
I’m really enjoying my sobriety
and all of the things I have
accomplished in my life.
I never would have thought
I’d get this far
Mending all these broken scars.
No more broken promises from here on out
Now I can finally make myself
and my family proud!

SUBMISSIONS

A Woman's Road to Recovery

Anonymous

As a woman in rehabilitation and recovery, it has become clear to me that I am not on this journey to self-awareness and soul-searching alone. One of the major factors all of us have in common in this facility is not the fact that we're felons, but we are all individuals with an exceeding amount of life experiences – be it good, bad, traumatic, painful, or impairing. We aren't born with "wisdom." Wisdom is born within us as we go through our life experiences and learn from them. I believe that each of us holds secrets to life that others could benefit from. Some people just need help with finding the right words to express their true thoughts. Not every group is right for every person. The more people are willing to go out and share their experiences the more chances everyone will have in finding that one person who might share the same thoughts, or simply have the right words, to help another somewhat lost soul try and find their way.

As of now, I believe my purpose is to touch as many lives as I can, in any way I can, in order to bring back a sense of safety, confidence, and support. I have lived a lot of life, and I have learned a lot more through living it. I believe "words" can make or break a person's ability to open up. It is my hope that maybe my words, my experiences, my life-skills, will not only inspire others but maybe bring a little clarity in all our moments of confusion and what-ifs through life.

I used to be a "dark person," but with time, acceptance, a lot of soul searching, and God, I realized there is beauty in darkness – when we come to light and can appreciate our past, instead of blaming everything on it.

**Congratulations Latham B for
winning the Unit Decorating
Contest!**



**California Institution
for Women**

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Would you be interested in writing for *The Razor Wire*? Can you meet a tight deadline? Are you flexible? Can you work with no pay? Can you work under pressure? Are you open to feedback and editing? Are you a team player? If you answered yes to these questions, let us know. *The Razor Wire* is looking for people to cover events for future issues.

We also welcome submissions, including poems, personal experience articles, essays, or artwork. We reserve the right to edit them for length, 300 word max, and content. We may omit submissions that do not align with our Mission Statement.

MISSION STATEMENT

We endeavor to create community by sharing stories, knowledge, and awareness.

We use storytelling to empower each other and propel our community beyond the razor wire.

Patient Safety Week

by Aimee Gana

In honor of Patient Safety Week 2025, the Quality Management (QM) department led by Health Program Specialist II Heather Phelps hosted a two-part event at the Auditorium.

The first one was a Bingo Bonanza on March 11, which was unique, as the bingo cards were not the regular cards we normally use. In lieu of the numbers 1 to 75, the bingo cards had words related to healthcare and patient safety, providing education for the players. In fact, as bingo caller Medical Budget Analyst Jennifer Olivares called out each word, she offered background information on what it meant.

Next was the Health Fair Event on March 13 from 11 am to 1 pm. It had eight educational booths that incorporated games or activities for residents to play and get giveaways – Mental Health, Infection Control (featuring UTI and vaccinations), Nursing, ISUDT, Dietary, Radiology, and Fire Camp. As a breast cancer survivor, I was happy to see the crowd's enthusiasm as they waited to touch and feel the synthetic boob embedded with fake mammary tumors on display at the Breast Cancer booth. The process educated us on the value of early detection. At the Dietary booth, I felt validated in light of a long-standing debate I have had with friends where I argued that even the juices I drank counted towards the required daily amount of fluid I needed to take. The dietician told me my required fluid intake could come from other sources, such as other beverages, fruit, and vegetables.

Kudos to those who thought of these creative ways to pull participation from both staff and residents. As I congratulated Ms. Phelps for a great turnout at both events, she humbly shared the credit with others. "It is a group effort between the QM Team, as well as support from custody and leadership, that made it possible," she pointed out. She added, "The objective is to bring in the population and make them an active part of their healthcare." Because she mentioned that this was going to be an annual event, I offered both praise and constructive feedback. It was genius to mention that it was bingo for both residents and staff, as it drummed up excitement from the residents who took it as there would be mingling among staff and residents. (California Model, here we go). Instead, there was disappointment because staff had their separate table and residents who tried to join them were told to move to their designated tables. Different prizes were also given out, depending on if you were a staff or resident. Ms. Phelps noted these suggestions, including the part where the waiting time to enter the Aud turned out to be longer than the actual game itself. She was thankful for the feedback, so I left our conversation feeling hopeful that her team would find ways to address the issues as they start planning the next one.



IPs enjoy a game of Bingo