

GRATERFRIENDS

The VSU at SCI Dallas, One Year Later

Landon W. Thomas of SCI Dallas

This is an update to the article published in the May-June 2024 issue of Graterfriends which was authored by me.

Let me start by saying that the morale on the Veterans Service Unit at SCI Dallas has improved exponentially. There are many reasons for this, but I will address the most important ones. First, was the hiring of a new VSU Manager. He is a person of integrity with honest and sincere beliefs that all veterans on the VSU should be treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their crime.

Second, was the appointment of Jason Bohinski (U.S.M.C. Veteran) as Superintendent. With Mr. Bohinski's support, our VSU was allowed to make a change in the staffing of correctional officers who were more supportive of the goals we had. This was a breath of fresh air, as the newer C.O.'s didn't use the DC-141 Misconduct Reports as a vindictive weapon to issue punishment at their whim because of their own personal bias' and demons, but as a tool to manage the care, custody and control of the unit. There have been very few misconducts issued since the change was made, but more can still be done.

There were a few bumps in the road along the way that could have derailed the program altogether. Right after our Memorial Day and 10 Year Anniversary ceremony, an inmate assaulted two corrections officers. This was not a good look for us, as Secretary Harry had just left the ceremony that very day.

As a result of the article published in Graterfriends last year, I was removed as VSU Program Coordinator. However, a new position was created for me that allows me to use my abilities in serving the men here. I am extremely grateful both to staff and the veterans here who supported me over the last year.

Our VSU is better, stronger and more unified in our purpose. We are striving to become the target destination for veterans in the DOC. We were the first VSU, on our way to becoming the best VSU. Our reentry programming has shown the lowest recidivism rate among parolees in the DOC. Our rate of getting VA disability claim medical assessment for our vets is multiple times any VSU.

Our Inmate Veteran Organization (IVO) recently made a financial contribution to a Women's Combat Veteran Organization through our prison sales. Their gratitude, along with our pride in this effort, made for our most memorable ceremony ever. There wasn't a dry eye in the house. If you are a veteran in an institution without a VSU, please try to come join us, as we strive to make a difference both inside and outside.

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An Overview of the Pennsylvania Prison Society

Founded in 1787, The Pennsylvania Prison Society is the nation's oldest human rights organization. Our mission for 235 years has been to promote the health, safety, and dignity of people impacted by mass incarceration. In 1828, the Prison Society was granted access to all people in state or county custody in PA – we remain the only non-governmental organization in the United States with our level of statutory access to people in prison. Although some of our specific programs have evolved over time, we remain committed to responding to the needs of incarcerated people and their loved ones. Today, we use that access to monitor prison conditions, assist people in prison with individual issues they raise, build connections to family and community, and educate the public about the largely hidden world of prisons.

WHO ARE WE?

You may write to us at 230 South Broad Street, Suite 605 Philadelphia, PA 19102. You can also have your loved ones call our family support helpline at anytime: 215-564-4775. Our team can assist to answer questions about specific facilities, policies, general issues, and concerns. Our team is small and we are not able to provide legal assistance, but we will do our best to help you get the information and resources you need. Unfortunately, at this time as an organization we are generally not able to use ConnectNetwork to correspond with people confined in SCIs.

HOW DO I CONTACT THE PRISON SOCIETY?

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WRITE TO YOU?

We will always do our best to assist you. You can write to us to request resources, report conditions at a state or local facility, or request a prison monitor. The Prison Society is not a legal organization and can not provide specific legal advice or representation. However, our correspondence volunteers thoroughly respond to each and every letter we receive with information about other resources and organizations. We can also help you navigate different issues related to education, free books and other creative programs, reentry services, mental health resources, pen pal programs, and more.

We are grateful to the countless people in custody and their families who help promote prison transparency across the Commonwealth. Beyond working to address concerns on an individual and/or facility level, the information you provide drives our vital conversations with Pennsylvania legislators, allied organizations, and the public. As we work to educate others and engage in systemic advocacy, it is vital that this is led by the experiences and opinions of the people closest to the problem- you! Your voices directly informed our current advocacy to end the \$5 medical copay for incarcerated people, as well as our work to remove barriers to family visits.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SHARE WHAT'S GOING ON IN PRISON?

WHAT IS PRISON MONITORING?

The Prison Society is the only non-governmental organization in the country with a legal right to meet privately with any person incarcerated in their state. Each month, we receive hundreds of reports concerning access to healthcare, abuse, property, conditions of confinement, treatment, and other issues. Our trained volunteer Prison Monitors can meet with anyone incarcerated in Pennsylvania state or county prison to hear their concern in detail and engage in follow-up advocacy.

Out of respect for one's privacy and safety, we will never send a Prison Monitor without an explicit request for a visit from an incarcerated person or their loved one. During a visit, a prison monitor will meet with the person in custody one-on-one to discuss and document their situation. Following the visit, volunteers are empowered to speak with prison administration on their behalf to try to improve the situation. It is important to note that we are not lawyers and cannot assist with legal issues or casework.

For individuals returning to the Philadelphia area, The Prison Society does have a mentoring program available designed to help ease the transition from incarceration back to communities by providing a strong social support network. We hope to expand this to other regions in the state in the future.

WHAT ABOUT REENTRY SERVICES?

Launched in 1981 by Joan Gauker and adopted by The Prison Society in 2002, Graterfriends is a critical outlet for incarcerated people to share their opinions and experiences. We are proud to have built a powerful community with you over these past two decades and encourage you to continue submitting to Graterfriends.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WRITE TO YOU?

We reserve the right to edit submissions. Original submissions will not be returned. Allegations of misconduct must be documented and statistics should be supported by sources. All submissions should be no more than 500 words, or two double-spaced pages. Letters more than 200 words, or one double-spaced page, will not be published in their entirety and may be shortened for clarity and space. To protect Graterfriends from copyright infringement, please attach a note, on your submission, stating that you are the original author of the work and that you give us permission to edit and print; date and sign the declaration



PENNSYLVANIA PRISON SOCIETY

Legislative Update

Leigh Owens, Pennsylvania Prison Society

Although Summer is in full swing, the Pennsylvania Legislature is still working hard to get a budget passed through ongoing negotiations that will likely continue through the remainder of the season. Despite the uncertainty around this annual happening, the House was able to pass two very important measures that the Prison Society is happy to support.

HB 150. Representative Rick Krajewski's medical parole bill would update Pennsylvania's medical release program in an effort to reduce the prison population and bring people home who have served substantial sentences and are not a danger to the community.

The full co-sponsorship memo is below:

On December 21, 2018, the First Step Act (FSA) was signed into law. This was a bipartisan effort to reduce the size of the federal prison population by creating mechanisms of release for sick people. Very ill people are among the most expensive to incarcerate, yet pose little to no danger to the public. While we have now made progress on the federal level, this issue remains a major burden on our state correctional institutions.

Pennsylvania's current "compassionate release" program is largely failing. In use for 15 years, only 54 incarcerated individuals have successfully petitioned for release due to serious illness in Pennsylvania. Since 2016, 11 people have died in our Commonwealth's prisons waiting for a judge to hear their petition for medical-based release. Medical care for incarcerated people costs the state more than \$400 million in annual taxpayer funding, and some of our state prison facilities are experiencing vacancy rates nearing 40% of their medical complement. We cannot afford inaction.

Our legislation would model language in the FSA to create an expanded process authorizing a court to modify a term of imprisonment in cases involving serious health issues, such as a chronic and debilitating physical or medical condition. All petitions for release would be subject to criteria that considers public safety and would require notification to both the original sentencing court, the District Attorney, and the Office of the Victim Advocate.

Improving and expanding our medical release system would bring us more in line with other states, and has strong bipartisan support, including from civil liberties groups, medical practitioners, correctional leaders and advocates of fiscal responsibility. Please join us in co-sponsoring this important, commonsense legislation.

HB 282. Rep Tim Briggs' bill would create a pathway for individuals returning home from prison to secure medical coverage upon release, particularly to address substance abuse issues which can contribute to reincarceration. Ensuring that reentrants are supported after release keeps recidivism down and keeps streets safer.

The full co-sponsorship memo is below:

In the near future, I will re-introduce legislation authorizing the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) to establish a medical assistance (Medicaid) reentry program for incarcerated individuals who are scheduled to be released and returning to their community.

Historically, a large percentage of incarcerated individuals (80 to 85%) are dealing with substance use issues, many of which may have contributed to their incarceration. While incarcerated an individual's access to medical assistance is suspended and all the cost of treatment and medication falls on the DOC. Once these benefits are suspended it takes time to reactivate and causes delays in access to care.

My bill will ensure individuals transitioning back to our communities have access to substance use disorder treatment and case management services before release as well as a 30-day supply of medication upon release. This program may be available to counties that choose to opt in and will enable transitioning individuals an opportunity to continue their recovery.

This bill will undoubtedly reduce recidivism and help make our communities safer. Please join me in sponsoring this important legislation.

House Resolution 189. Representative Johanna Cepeda-Freytiz recently introduced a measure that would direct the Joint State Government Commission to conduct a study on the nutritional value of food, along with the nutrition-related health of incarcerated individuals, in State correctional institutions in Pennsylvania. This commission would issue a report of its findings and recommendations to the House of Representatives. Last year the Prison Society released a report on this very topic. Our research found that there were serious inadequacies in the nutritional value of the food being served in these state correctional facilities leading to the Department of Corrections revamping the menus to rectify the issue. Although there have been many improvements in the food quality there is still room for improvement to ensure that incarcerated individuals are being given quality, nutritious food. The Prison Society supports this measure and we look forward to working with Rep. Cepeda-Freytiz to get this resolution passed.

Updates to Board of Pardons Clemency Application

Noelle Gambale

The Board of Pardons recently released an updated clemency application. The old applications will only be accepted through **December 2025**.

Request an Application By Mail:

You may request a new application from the Board of Pardons by mail. You must send the Board of Pardons the following information:

Applicant name
Mailing address to send the application
Phone number (optional)
Email address (optional)

The Board of Pardons address is:

PADOC/BSAAC/Division of Field Audits & Clemency Investigations
1920 Technology Parkway
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

New Updates:

Easier to follow graphics

Personal Statement is no longer an optional section - it is now required

More emphasis on court debt needing to be paid off- this has become a larger factor in the Board's decisions

More helpful guides in the case information section

Pennsylvania Legislative Update May 2025

FAMM

Medical & Elderly Release

HB 150 (Ecker - R, Krajewski - D) would expand upon PA's ineffective current "compassionate release" statute to allow more chronically and terminally ill incarcerated people to petition the court for a modification of their sentence.

SB 136 (Street - D) addresses both medical and geriatric release opportunities, by granting the parole board the authority to grant parole to people based on age or medical necessity. SB 136 would allow incarcerated people aged 55 or over who have served the lesser of one-half of their minimum sentence or 25 years in prison; and people experiencing chronic, debilitating, or terminal medical conditions to seek relief through the parole board.

Representatives Burgos, Curry, Rabb and Carroll have also circulated a co-sponsorship memo signaling upcoming legislation to address Pennsylvania's ballooning population of aging people in our state prisons.

Felony Murder Reform

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court is expected to issue a ruling in the next few months on the case of Derek Lee, who is challenging the Constitutionality of mandatory life without parole sentences for second-degree murder convictions in Pennsylvania. There are also bills introduced in both the PA House and Senate that aim to address this issue - HB 443 and SB 387. HB 443 (Briggs - D) would set the sentence for a second-degree murder conviction at not more than 50 years for people over age 18, not more than 40 years for people aged 15-18, and not more than 30 years for people under age 15 at the time of the offense.

SB 387 (Bartolotta - R, Street - D) would set the minimum sentence for second-degree felony murder convictions at 25 years for people over age 18 at the time of the offense, instead of life without the possibility of parole. The minimum sentence for people aged 15-18 at the time of the offense would be 20 years, and 15 years for people under age 15 at the time of the offense.

Communications for Incarcerated People

SB 231 (Cappelletti - D)

Would require the PA Department of Corrections to provide voice communications at no cost to an incarcerated person and would mandate an adequate number of voice communication devices in each prison facility.

Rep. Andre Carroll (D) has also circulated a co-sponsorship memo that would make voice communications free for people incarcerated in Pennsylvania.

Additional PA Efforts of Interest

(Nelson -D) seeks to provide credits toward a sentence reduction for incarcerated people when they

complete vocational and educational programs. Under HB 1042, these credits could not exceed one-fourth of an individual's minimum sentence, and there is a list of convictions that would make a person ineligible for these benefits.

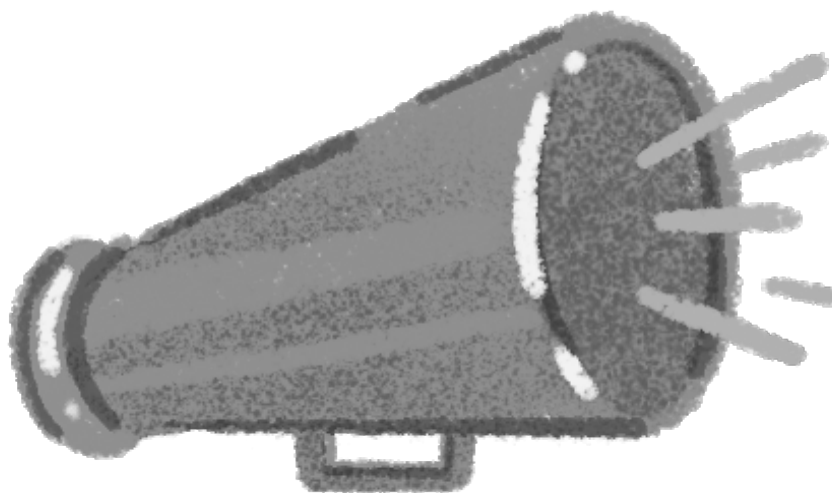
Rep. Carol Kazeem (D) introduced House Resolution 59, which would designate November 1, 2025 "State Correctional Institution Day" in Pennsylvania. HR 59 would encourage members of Pennsylvania's House of Representatives to visit a state prison unannounced at least twice each year, and raise awareness about the need for oversight and improved conditions in our prisons to best support the people living there.

Bad Bills

Unfortunately **SB 92** (Mastriano - R) passed the Senate and has now moved over to the House. SB 92 would create new mandatory minimum sentences for some people convicted of drug delivery resulting in death. FAMM is hopeful that SB 92 will be unsuccessful in the House and that the General Assembly will reject mandatory minimum sentences as a response to addressing harmful substances in Pennsylvania's communities.

Advocacy

FAMM is looking to help facilitate the submission of legislative feedback for the bills we are hoping to push forward this session! If you are interested in being a part of this effort, please reach out to FAMM's State Legislative Affairs Director, Celeste Trusty at 1100 13th Street NW, Suite 201, Washington, D.C., 20005.



Lifetime vs. Eternity- Part I

Stephen Burton of SCI Houtzdale

This is the first installment of my attempt to help people who have life. There are two types of lifers. Those that share positive advice and those who don't care. I am appealing to those who are stuck in the middle of those two thought processes.

This is dedicated to the men or women who have to serve a life sentence. There is a huge difference between a lifetime and eternity. A lifetime may consist of eight or nine decades. After that, you enter into the realm of eternity. There are many different interpretations of what that may consist of. My personal beliefs are based in a non denominational perspective of the Christian faith. I am not trying to incite a theological debate.

Consider this for a moment: A sparrow lands on an iron sphere the size of the earth. The sparrow pecks at the surface three times, then flies away for a million years. The Sparrow returns to the surface, pecks three times and flies away once again for a million years. When the sparrow finally wears the sphere down to the size of a marble, eternity will be just beginning. Allow that mind bending to sink into your thought process.

Incarceration has a way of squeezing a person mentally, physically and emotionally. When an orange is squeezed, orange juice emerges. Now that you are being squeezed- what will you produce?

If rage, hopelessness and self destruction is in you, that is what will emerge when pressure is applied. Be strong during the struggle and change your thinking, so that you can produce positivity in the midst of your pain. Don't be envious towards the short timers; help them to see the world differently so that they will not return.

Brothers and Sisters: think about this, I will return soon with part two.

Domestic Violence Survivors Shouldn't be in Prison

Carol Hann of SCI Muncy

When I came to prison in March 2013, I was 45 years old. I couldn't believe this was happening to me. I had never been arrested before; I didn't do drugs and was a minimal drinker. I was an online entertainer. Everything I had built up in life became a memory. I was a victim of corruption, searching for answers. I held onto my faith in God, throughout my trials and tribulations.

Once I settled down, in prison, my new neighbors tapped on my cell door, and said, "Come on; we're going to lunch." I went with them, and we all became fast friends. We went to meals, yard, and church groups. They kept me busy and out of my head. We shared our life stories, mine was a case of corruption, a wrongful conviction, and theirs were about domestic violence. They didn't focus on themselves. They helped me write out request slips, get with the people in the law library and start working on my case, getting me whatever resources I needed. But what about them?

I started asking more people about their cases. I would estimate that over 50% of women lifers are here because of domestic violence cases. The more I heard, the more I was appalled with all the ignorance in society. What was wrong with society? I turned into a domestic violence survivor's advocate. I now write up petitions for the survivors to get back into court.

I was surprised to find out that most made peace with it, nobody can hurt them in prison like when they were in society. They have a home, get fed, and are safe from abusive partners. That's really a lot to think about. I want out, like a feral cat in a cage, and they want to stay, because it's safe. These women serve more time than many other

criminals in prison.

These women and others took me under their wing. Now, this baby bird is ready to soar with eagles. Not only for me, but the other beautiful birds, getting ready to soar in the beautiful skies; being safe isn't enough. Let's get these amazing women out there, the ones that helped others to get out, and stayed behind. Isn't it their turn?

Domestic Violence Survivors Acts are being passed in various states. Let's get one in the Commonwealth states. Are you a victim or a survivor? Are you a sister, cousin, aunt or mother? Every time one person speaks up, someone is listening. Let's change the world. It starts with you.

Sex Offender Housing

Anonymous

For far too long, a problem has been allowed to persist within the DOC without any attempt to rectify the matter. It is how Sex Offenders are housed.

It is well known that prisoners with sex cases are the pariah of the prison system and are often victimized due to their charges. The prison staff is well aware of this, yet they do absolutely nothing to alleviate the threats and assaults of these individuals. Actually, staff tends to do the opposite - they intentionally house sex offenders with men who have other charges, knowing that it will create a hostile environment. For instance, over the past four months or so, a friend of mine has been in and out of the RHU due to not feeling safe in his cell assignments. When he reports threats being made because of his offense, he is the one who is placed in the RHU for refusing to obey a direct order (by asking for help and not being housed in a threatening environment). When he found someone who was compatible, despite knowing his charges, staff refused to allow that cell move.

One of the DOC's defenses is that they can't give preferential treatment to a certain class of inmates. That is simply not true. For instance, SCI Benner is a designated facility for Trans- gender prisoners, with special housing and treatment accommodations. Also, sex offenders are singled out by being required to register under Megan's

Law. In New Jersey, they have a prison called Avenel that is just for Sex Offenders. This facility provides a constant treatment environment, permitting the inmates to feel safe. DOC should implement a model like this.

Update to Conditions at SCI Coal Township

Andrew Spedden of SCI Coal Township

I want to clarify a few items in my piece Conditions Update at SCI Coal Township. Paragraphs 1-7 describe ops, procedures, practices as of the date I wrote, that are standard/common at all SCI's. I hope matters have improved.

I have some updated items:

The limit to 8, 1 ounce envelopes each month is strictly enforced.

Yard is 2 times daily in the winter and 3 times in the summer.

2 of the 22 computers in the library are handicap-accessible

You can copy and paste from Lexis to Wordpad to save money by decreasing line spacing and font sizes

Gym is done by block 2-3 times per week

Chapel activities are all call-out's

Gym is call-out and each group has 90 at a time

I encourage more people to write these types of letters. We can help each other plan where we may wish to go based on up to date description of op's, procedures and practices.

We need to let each other know about other SCI's. If we dislike one SCI because we know a lot about them (religious groups, activities, etc.), then we will now not put this SCI on the transfer request list.

Deceptive Practices in Promotional Transfers

Timothy Wright of SCI Mahanoy

In July of 2024, I was sent to SCI Mahanoy as an Incentive Base Transfer(I.B.T.) or what is commonly known as a promotional transfer. When one is eligible for such, by meeting all the criteria, you are interviewed by your counselor and asked to choose three facilities you wish to go to in your region depending on where you live. I chose SCI Coal Township, Phoenix and Chester.

However, I was sent to SCI Mahanoy. I was told that as long as I was sent to the region in which I built my home, the choices I made were obsolete. Therefore, the question begs, why was I interviewed and asked where would I like to go if it has no bearing on where I am sent?

I chose those three institutions for one simple reason: they were not prisons that projected any signs of elder abuse like the one I am in.

The above facilities I had chosen had wings or units specifically for old timers with life sentences or long term offenders who have been incarcerated thirty years or more and who are fifty five and older. The staff of the prisons I chose have a healthy respect and regard for the old timers who have been incarcerated for decades. The living conditions are conducive to the men of age as well as their health situation.

Here at SCI Mahanoy, there is none of that. Actually, this facility has no respect for its older population. I have watched over seven men die in this prison in such an undignified way that it churned my stomach. There is not one program here for me and other men similarly situated. All programs are closed to men like myself who have been incarcerated for decades. We don't even have one wing where there are just old timers on it. I didn't sign up for this. Could I have refused to come? Of course. But, the price you pay is another two year wait and you are still not guaranteed you'll be sent to a prison you chose out of the three you select.

I chose the three institutions above because men like myself are considered useful, as we are

used by those institutions to curb some of the violence perpetrated by the younger population by helping the administration have open dialogue about what is needed to stop the negative things in an effort to prevent the violence in the first place.

Was it too much to ask to be sent and put around men my own age whose possible last remaining days could be useful instead of just fading away in a cell? Hopefully, with some help from others I am granted what I signed up for as this is all I ask for.

Black Lives

Wayne Thomas of SCI Albion

We protest to be heard, equal, in the entire U.S. criminal justice system. To disassemble or to dismantle the deep-prevalent bias and prejudice that infects our institutions--- especially law enforcement.

This is a call for action and reflection of the oppressed Black people are over-proportioned and underrepresented; this must be ground zero of non-violent protests subjected to the undeniable biases of police brutality.

The oppressed must recognize the countless Black Lives that are dead, slaughtered by the police; we are demanding no more death. We are fighting against an American vision of policing towards limiting the power and responsibilities of the police.

Recognizing that there must be reflection, by exposing inadequacies of the prison system. Black Lives Matter doesn't only mean making protests for decreasing the spending for the police--it means a totality of reflection and action in the Black communities. We must ride for our freedoms while leaving behind a legacy of this struggle.

We are facing a real threat, and must engage in a monumental task of ending systemic racism, and we must invest more in Black communities to achieve more, despite the centuries of harm imposed on communities of color.

Open Letter to Governor Shapiro

Hugh Williams of SCI Phoenix

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Long Johns

James R. Cruz Jr. of SCI Fayette

I am a senior over 65 and am being denied the yearly allotted set of Long Johns. I've been told the reason is that the higher ups say that it is not in the Budget to give the Seniors a free set of long johns, and though I also work maintenance and am in and out of the cold, only certain workers are given the free long johns, age not a factor in that determination.

I am a senior as well as diabetic, and I sent a request slip to my Unit Manager. He informed me that the Superintendent also said that due to budget constraints that I would have to purchase

my own from commissary.

Well, I think if SCI-Fayette can afford to give bottled water to staff as well as spend money on chairs for staff and free televisions to inmates with their free cable, I do not see why the seniors of age are not eligible for Long Johns.

I know that I have seen certain inmates, who are not seniors and that do not fit the criteria receive Long Johns.

I wonder if all of the institutions are having budgeting constraints. Probably not, just here at SCI Fayette I suppose.

Winter-Fall Moon Solstice Ceremony

Dale Richard Arnold of SCI Benner

I'm Dr. Arnold, an Indigenous American Indian at SCI-Benner Prison. We just had our 5th Sweat Lodge Ceremony inside the Prison - with 11 inmates and 4 guests with our spiritual chief leader Ammon Bailey, singing, drinking, and standing around the Big Sacred Fire, heating up the rocks, with a temperature of 14 degrees that morning. We all are committed, dedicated, to our obligation in our inherited ancestral right. The sweat lodge is a sacred purification- sacrament of baptism by Earth, Wind, Fire, Water ceremony, which was amazing with all those who participated. A couple wore Native Regalia, and they looked fantastic.

Myself and Mr. River Banks fought hard in Federal Court to make this ceremony happen. For two years, the DOC in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania fought us all the way in court. Thanks to the Creator and his spirits, those ceremonies have happened. This was a great victory for Native Brothers here and all Pennsylvania Prisons.

This Ceremony is for our mental, physical, emotional, spiritual rehabilitation.

Inmates paid for each ceremony: fire wood, rocks to build the sweat lodge, branches, tarps. Donations are welcome. The prison refuses to pay for the cost. This is educational, religious, and rehabilitative.

Tribute to Dan

Chuck Hoyer of SCI Laurel Highlands

Dan was just a little guy, but you could hear him a mile away. He was hard of hearing and spoke loudly. I knew him for years, but wasn't aware of what all he was going through. I knew he had some medical issues and later found out those issues caused him a lot of physical pain and discomfort.

I didn't see him for a while and wondered about him. I found out he was on the hospital block with cancer. He developed large tumors all over his body. When I went to see him he was sitting on his bed with his head braced between his hands. He looked like he was in so much pain.

I spoke his name and he looked up. When he saw it was me, he immediately got out of bed, smiled and told me how good it was to see me. Although he did tell me about his medical issues, most of his conversation was finding out how I was doing. He told me that the good Lord has his life in his hands, and how blessed he was. Then he asked me if I was able to bring him some books to read. I told him I would.

I found some books I thought would interest him, some magazines and a puzzle book. When I took them to him, he was sleeping, so I put them on his chair and let him rest. The next time I saw him, he was in such bad shape, I don't believe he even knew I was there. I said his name, but he didn't respond.

I never was able to speak with Dan again. A few days later he left this life and transitioned into the next. Part of me was glad that he wasn't suffering, but I couldn't stop thinking about him.

There were times when I was impatient with Dan in the past. I took him for granted and don't remember taking the time to just simply ask him how he was doing, or to ask what he wanted me to pray for in his life. He was in so much pain...and yet he gave me such a cheerful greeting...always. How could someone facing so much pain and his own death be so concerned with how I was doing? I could've been so much nicer to him over the years. His last words to me were a gift, one I didn't deserve.

I asked God to help me learn something from everyone I meet. Thank you Dan for reminding me that we are only in each other's lives for a season, and most of the time we have no idea when that season will end.

When someone passes away, we reflect on the good things they did, their accomplishments, and the good memories we had with them. Everything else seems to just melt away. We barely remember when they annoyed us, or when we were upset with them. We don't seem to focus on their faults. Our every mention of them is to honor their life.

What if we treated them that way while they were still living? What if our words would be softer, if we were more loving, more patient? What if we were better listeners? What if we helped them carry the burdens they carried alone? What difference would it make to them if they were appreciated while they were alive instead of only after they've gone?

Regrets don't help us unless we learn from them. I have learned that the only way to not have any regrets in the way we treat each other is to love others like God loves us. Dan reminded me that being kind to others even if we are going through difficult times is a way to honor them, and for a moment, forget about our own pain and trials.

Dan was brave in a time that most of us wouldn't be. I won't ever forget the last talk we had, and what I learned from it.

Adjusting to New Technology

David Meade, Pennsylvania Prison Society

Dear family & friends of Graterfriends,

As always I am excited to tell you about the things which I've been learning and adapting to since coming home, such as technology.

When I first came home, I felt lost, baffled, and literally stuck on stupid (lol) when going out with family & friends. But I've learned a lot! For the first time in my life I ordered an Uber to work, and I did it all by myself without the help of a friend or my relatives. I was very proud of myself for completing it successfully.

I was incarcerated for several years and came home less than three years ago, and so much technology changed during that time.

There are no more old parking meters as we all remember; they now have digital parking meters that you no longer place change in. A credit or debit card must be used and you must enter your license plate & other required information into an app.

QR codes are everywhere! When you go to a restaurant, most of the time there will be no waitress to assist you. You must go to your phone to the camera settings and scan a QR code and the menu will pop up in a new window.

Going inside of Wa-Wa or other establishments you will have no one to wait on you. It's self service kiosk's with touch screen ordering systems with automated digital interactive menu displays.

Keys are also becoming uncommon! Many homes, doors, bathrooms, and workplaces use digital codes to get in. Digital cards are used on elevator's, AirB& B's, etc to gain access.

Don't be surprised if an Uber comes & gets you & no one is in the vehicle. Self-driving cars! I know. Scary, right? (lol).

Lastly, when you go to a Target, Walgreens, etc., be prepared to engage in self-checkout, meaning that you must scan and pay for all your groceries on a kiosk but the good thing about that is that there is always someone around to assist people!

Well until next time-Stay strong & stay focused as you prepare for this new digital spectrum.

Sincerely David Meade,

A Vision Without Execution Is Hallucination!

REQUESTS FOR RESOURCES

In lieu of a list, please request resources directly with this form. Please allow one month for a response.
Complete and mail to the Pennsylvania Prison Society:

Pennsylvania Prison Society
ATTN: Resources
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605
Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Name, ID Number, Facility
If Applicable: Returning County for Re-entry Resources

Resource Description
Note: The Prison Society does not offer financial assistance

READER SURVEY

We welcome comments and suggestions from all readers. Please complete this form and mail it to the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

Pennsylvania Prison Society
ATTN: Graterfriends
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605
Philadelphia, PA, 19102

Name, ID Number, Facility

Comments and Suggestions

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