


Lifers' Unlimited Club
Executive Body

President: Robert Kelley
Vice President: Brian Waybrant
Secretary: Troy Ramsey
Treasurer: Bill Knepper
Facilitator: Steve Weavill

Proposal Updates

| Proposal | Status |
|--------------------------|----------|
| Coffee Bar In Visit Room | Approved |
| Food Truck | Pending |
| Evening Visits | Denied |
| Holiday Packages | Pending |
| Gaming Consoles | Pending |

Lifers' Unlimited Club
Newsletter



Oregon State Penitentiary

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September 2019



Troy Ramsey
New Acting Secretary



Steve Weavill
New Acting Facilitator

Greetings: From our New Secretary.

Hey my fellow Lifers,
My name is Troy, but a lot of you know me as Beetle. I have been appointed to be your acting secretary. I will work to maintain the integrity of this position until the elections next year.
Thank you.
Troy

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Oregon D.O.C Automated Criminal Risk Score
By Tricia H. and Lisa Hall.
7.11.19

- There are three types of counselors on staff in the DOC (outside the Behavioral Health Division which address mental health needs): Intake, Institution Counselors (on-going case management in the institution), and Release. Release counselors are assigned the last six months of an adult in custody (AIC's) sentence. Ms. Hall Talked with us about Institution Counselor.
- Historically, Institution Counselor have functioned as case managers, making program and other referrals for services as well as assisting AIC's in his or her affairs. As there are approximately 14,700 AIC's in custody and only 86 Institution Counselors, the caseloads are very high, resulting in counselors occasionally meeting with AIC's. So the DOC is making a significant shift in the roll of the Institution Counselor -to become a direct service provider. This means Institution Counselor will be required to provide cognitive interventions to AIC's that are identified as having the highest risk to reoffend. It was asked of the State legislature this past session for funding for additional counselors. This was not approved.
- ACRS is a risk assessment tool DOC used to determine the risk level (risk of recidivism) for each DOC AIC. Although the level of service/ Case Management Inventory (LS/CMI) is also a risk/ needs assessment tool, Doc Uses the LS/CMI as needs assessments to determine the AIC's criminogenic needs. All adults male AIC's are assessed at Intake and then again every two years if the AIC's is assigned to a high / medium caseload. The women receive the Women's Risk Needs Assessment (WRNA) and not the LS/CMI. Some low ACRS AIC's may be overridden to a high /medium caseload if they are engaged in misconduct or become a management issue, such as being in a "security threat group"(aka gang). DOC is in the process of recalibrating ACRS, making it gender specific-one for adult male

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Announcements/Upcoming Events

2019 Meeting Dates
October 10th Annual Lifers' Fundraiser
November 14th General Meeting
December 12th Christmas Party

-O.S.P. Activities Floor-
Lifers' Unlimited Club Monthly
Newsletter

LIFERS' CLUB COFFEE

 Drip Cone: \$6.00
Coffee Filters: \$6.00
PRICE INCREASE ON FILTERS

\$7.00 Coffee
➢ French Vanilla
➢ Blue Berry Cobbler
➢ NEC Choc. Cappuccino

\$10.00 Coffee
➢ Kauai Coconut Car. Crunch
➢ SB Morning Joe DARK
➢ SB Pike Place Med. Roast
➢ SB Colombia
➢ NEC Toasted Hazelnut
➢ Archer S'mores Light Roast
➢ SB Espresso
➢ SB Sumatra Dark 12oz
➢ SB Caramel 12oz
➢ SB Verona Dark (DECAF)

1Pound Bags
➢ Death Wish \$25.00
➢ Dutch Bros \$17.00

Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430

Mission Statement

The purpose of the Lifers' Unlimited Club is to unite the incarcerated men of OSP with a goal of improving the quality of life for those inside and outside of these walls. The club will work with charity programs, informational services, youth speaking panels and other positive programs. We cannot change the past, however, we believe through rehabilitation and pro-social behavior we can create a more productive future.

Continued from page 1

- 4. and another for women. At this time, sex offense conviction does not raise the AICs level, except having multiple theft convictions does raise the level. If an AIC is eligible for earned time, it is also part of the ACRS calculation.
- 5. Each Institution Counselor will carry two caseloads 1) a high/medium caseload and 2) a low caseload. The high/medium caseload will have a maximum of 60AIC's per caseload. This was accomplished by adjusting the current ACRS cut offs (not scoring). In other words, the AIC's supervision levels were changed, not there ACRS. Only those AIC's in the high and medium risk levels will receive direct counseling services from their Institutional Counselor. The low risk AIC's will be "case banked" and will only meet with the counselor if there is a particular problem (like disciplinary issue or special need.) There is one Institutional Counselor assigned to O.S.P. Mental Health Unit specifically.
- 6. All the Institution Counselors and their managers are undergoing training in cognitive behavioral therapy, based upon a program out of the University of Cincinnati. The training is called Evidenced Based Practices in Community Corrections (EPICS). The training should be complete d by January 2020. EPICS is being delivered to AIC's who are assigned to high/medium caseload. The DOC except a counselor to be at full expertise in this training in 3-5 years. Following the cognitive behavioral therapy training, the counselor will then undergo Motivational Interview training. In addition to receiving direct cognitive interventions from their Institutional Counselor, AIC's may also be referred to attend group cognitive classes taught by contractors. The men's program is called "Free Your Mind." The women have a different gender-based program called "Moving On".
- 7. The Institution Counselors are required to meet regularly with each of the 60 AIC's on their high/medium caseloads. If the AIC's is participating in EPICS. The AIC will meet with their counselor monthly, for approximately an hour depending upon the intervention. The AIC will be given "Homework" to do between sessions. Counselors are being trained on how to engage the AIC and help them identify their criminogenic needs, address thinking errors, risky thoughts and behaviors, learn pro-social skills, etc. Ms. Hall reports that the counselors appear eager to provide the cognitive interventions.
- 8. None of the current programs in the prisons, such as Getting Out By Going In, Parenting Inside Out, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, and Alcohol &Drug treatment are being cut. The counseling by the Institution Counselors is in addition to the already existing programs (different ones are offered at various institutions.)
- 9. After meeting with the Institution Counselor, the high/medium AIC's will receive a document called an "Action Plan" which lists the homework the AIC needs to complete before they meet again with their Institution Counselor. Each AIC has a "Behavior Change Plan" that outlines the AIC's goals they want to accomplish in their cognitive restructuring as identified by their top criminogenic needs. Family members can ask their AIC to share a copy if the AIC wishes to do so.
- 10. Ms. Hall said that the notes from the sessions will not be placed in the AIC's general DOC file. What is discussed with the prison counselor does not usually come under the HIPAA requirements of confidentiality but there could be exceptions, depending on the situation. Again, please ask your AIC if they would like to share with you what they are working on with their counselor.
- 11. The AIC's Behavior Change Plan follows the AIC upon release and is provided to the Community Corrections supervising officer. In the community, the "Public Safety Checklist" is used to determine level of supervision. The Public Safety Checklist is the community's risk tool, just as ACRS is for DOC. (Those Convicted of sex offences have a separate classification process for level of supervision)
- 12. The University of Cincinnati is providing the EPICS curriculum in which the counselor s are being trained. ✕

A Word From Our President

Gentlemen

We hope everyone enjoyed the banquets. It was great seeing Trevor again and having him jump right in as a guest host with the certificates. Trevor also sends his thanks for the invite and good time. For those who were not at our September banquet, I appointed Steven Weavill to the Facilitator position and Troy Ramsey to the position of Secretary until the can be confirmed by the membership at our November meeting. We are hosting a fundraiser during our October meeting date. So our general meeting is canceled for that date. ✕

If you, your friends, or family are experiencing difficulty with the Telmate system, the official Telmate Customer Service Number is: 866-516-0115

Access Challenged
A Message From Scott Spenser Wolf

Something is missing from the Lifers' Meeting. That would be Scott. Here's the story in brief. When one comes into the Institution, one does a LEDS check, which, of course, I have had numerous times.

At some point, an outstanding probation warrant from 1975 (that's right, 44 years ago) in Florida showed up and triggered something. The curious thing was that I wasn't on probation in Florida at that point so, after hiring an attorney in Florida - we determined that it was a clerical error of some sort, but would still require a Judge and a motion to dismiss. (and a couple of thousand dollars for the attorney to do all the research into long archived files).

So, once I finish paying him, things will be back to normal, and I'll be back. My commitment to you at OSP (and the numerous other Oregon Department of Corrections stuff I'm involved with) is very important to me.

I left my job at Apple in March to further expand a small company I had around education for the incarcerated. I also sold my condo in Hillsboro with the idea of moving to Salem early next year. I've invested a lot of energy into working with you to make your program really exceptional and I have a bunch of ideas about more cool stuff that ultimately will move towards my goal of creating opportunities for greater consciousness and self-development. I want it to be a partnership.

My attorney in Florida said something funny - I'm working harder to get INTO prison than I ever needed to work at getting out. I'm committed to finding the humor in that. And, I do believe that getting whatever needs to be cleaned up - cleaned up.

I have things to work on for you the next month - and will be doing that. If there's something I can do for you, let me know. Your leadership will know how to reach me.
Love & Respect,

Scotty (AKA Dr. Scotty)

Lifers' Club Presents
Tuff-Enuff Long Rain Coats



Available in XS thru 3XL, the one in the photo is 2X
48in Long CLEAR .20 mm PVC 100 % WATER PROOF
Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser.
Write selection on back of CD-28, and Submit to Lifers #2430

LIFERS' CLUB COFFEE

PRICE & SIZE HAS CHANGED.

WE WILL NO LONGER

OFFER 16OZ BAGS OF

BONES COFFEE

Please submit

separate cd-28s

for each Fundraiser to

Lifers' #2430

BONES COFFEE

Maple Bacon 12oz \$18.00

Electric Unicorn 12oz \$18.00

Choc. Orange 12oz \$18.00

Red Velvet 12oz \$18.00

White Russian 12oz \$18.00

PB & Jelly 12oz \$18.00

Bananas Foster 12oz \$18.00

Mustachio 12oz \$18.00

LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS



- Cookies n Cream
- Cotton Candy
- White Chocolate
- Orange Cream
- Caramel Latte
- Chocolate Mint

3.5 Lb Bag

\$25.00

PRE-ORDER ONLY

This is a stand alone drink mix. Add it to water and ice for a smoothie type drink. You can also add it to your coffee, milk, or ice cream to blow your mind.

Please submit separate cd-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430

Brain Fog Causes + 7 Natural Treatments

By Jillian Levy, CHHC

August 12, 2018

If you find yourself constantly feeling fatigued, distracted, moody and just plain “off,” you’re likely dealing with some sort of “brain fog.” Unfortunately today, many of the convenient-but-processed foods and factory-farmed meats we eat and the various ways we spend our time do not support brain health.

Symptoms of Brain Fog

Brain fog symptoms usually include low energy or fatigue (including chronic fatigue syndrome), irritability, trouble concentrating, headaches, forgetfulness and trouble remembering information, low motivation, feeling hopeless or mildly depressed, anxiety, confusion, trouble sleeping through the night or insomnia and difficulty exercising.

What Causes Brain Fog?

First and foremost, if you’re not getting enough sleep, you have a higher likelihood of always feeling tired and dealing with brain fog. We all need between about seven to nine hours of quality sleep every night to think clearly (children and teenagers usually need more).

If you do consistently get good sleep but still struggle with brain fog symptoms like ongoing fatigue and low motivation, chances are this might have something to do with the quality of your diet. Deficiencies, coupled with sugar, alcohol, refined carbohydrates and caffeine overdose can majorly impact brain function.

A 2013 study printed in the Journal of the Clinical Autonomic Research Society used the Wood Mental Fatigue Inventory test (WMFI) to gather information from 138 subjects suffering from brain fog. The top-ranked descriptors of brain fog were “forgetful,” “cloudy,” and “difficulty focusing, thinking and communicating,” while the most commonly reported brain fog triggers were fatigue, lack of sleep, prolonged periods of standing, dehydration and feeling faint.

The other factor that increases brain fog symptoms and robs you of your usual personality “spark” is, unsurprisingly, inflammation, which is at the root of most diseases. Inflammation is caused by low-grade over activity of the immune system and is tied to mental disorders like depression, Alzheimer’s disease, dementia and insomnia. One theory behind the underlying reason for brain fog symptoms is that higher levels of inflammatory molecules, including adipocytokines and histamines, stimulate microglia activation.

Microglia activation is commonly found in brains of children with autism as well as in other psychiatric diseases and is related to corticotropin-releasing hormone that seems highly tied to mental disorder development. According to a 2015 report published in Frontiers in Neuroscience, people most likely to suffer from brain fog include those dealing with chronic fatigue syndrome; autism spectrum disorders; celiac disease, gluten intolerance symptoms or other food allergies; fibromyalgia symptoms; mastocytosis; Alzheimer’s disease; and other neuro-psychiatric disorders.

The good news is that anti-inflammatory foods support brain health, and high intakes of vitamins and minerals have been shown to benefit people’s moods and mental capabilities.

7 Natural Treatments for Brain Fog

1. Watch Your Sugar Intake but Eat Enough Healthy Carbs

Cutting back on packaged and processed foods that are loaded with sugar, in addition to many other artificial and harmful ingredients — like artificial sweeteners — is the first step to fixing brain fog. That being said, going too low in terms of natural sugar/carbohydrate intake can backfire and increase brain fog. While refined sugar raises inflammation, quality carbs from things like fruits and veggies do the opposite.

Serotonin is the hormone that’s released when you need carbohydrates, and its main role is to keep you calm, hopeful and confident. When levels of serotonin fall too low (perhaps from a very low-carb diet), increases in feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, sadness and anxiety can set in. What’s the best way to keep serotonin levels within their optimum range? Eat complex, unprocessed carbohydrates throughout the day in appropriate quantities. Focus on filling up on brain foods that improve focus and memory — things like sweet potatoes, yams, fruit, raw dairy and ancient grains are all good sources of serotonin-boosting carbs.

2. Get Enough Protein and Healthy Fats

We all require a steady supply of amino acids and essential fatty acids in order to make all of the brain chemicals we need to think clearly. Protein deficiency is caused by a lack in certain amino acids, specifically the kinds that are called “essential amino acids,” because the body cannot make them on its own. Complete proteins are food sources like meat, dairy products, fish and eggs that supply all the essential amino acids we require, and these are the best way to keep the brain pumping out enough of the hormones that support a positive mind-set.

While it varies a bit from person to person, making about 20 percent to 30 percent of your food intake quality sources of protein (grass-fed beef, cage-free eggs, pasture-raised poultry and wild fish, for example) and about 30 percent to 40 percent healthy fats (including coconut and olive oil, avocado, and nuts/seeds) is the best way to ensure you cover your bases and help manage inflammation.

3. Manage Stress

High amounts of stress increase the production of cortisol, which has side effects including feeling “wired but tired,” weight gain, suffering hormonal imbalances, sexual dysfunction, insomnia, depression, and further anxiety. In modern-day society, to

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keep cortisol in check, most people need to regularly put aside time for practicing “stress-reducing techniques,” particularly since chronic stress can kill your quality of life. These can include praying, meditating, exercising/yoga, journaling, reading and spending more time in nature.

You can also combat stress by regularly doing things that you love, which increases the brain’s production of the “happy hormone” dopamine. A lack of dopamine leaves you unfocused, bored and uninspired, not to mention it’s associated with a higher risk for addictions, learning disabilities and mental illnesses. Make it a priority to do something fun every day if you can, even if it’s only for a short period of time.

4. Get Good Sleep

The hormones in your brain stay in better balance when your body gets adequate rest every night, at least seven hours for most adults. When you’re constantly “running on fumes,” you’re very likely to find it hard to pay attention at work, engage in meaningful conversations and retain information. You’re also better able to manage your hunger, food cravings and emotions when well rested, which can benefit your weight and health in multiple ways.

5. Exercise in a Healthy Way

Exercise lowers inflammation, helps bust stress and increase energy levels, but too much poses risks for hormonal imbalance and even more fatigue. For most people, moderate and regular exercise can help balance hormones, improve insulin resistance and help you to get better sleep, all of which are important for fighting fatigue. Exercise releases natural endorphins, boosting your stamina and lifting your mood. But at the same time, overexerting yourself without enough rest increases cortisol and depletes the body of electrolytes, nutrients and energy. That’s why it’s vital to get the appropriate amount of rest between workouts. The type of exercise you do should make you happier and more energetic, not the opposite! To avoid overtraining but still get all the benefits of exercise, make sure you take at least one to two rest days weekly.

6. Consider If You Have a Hormonal Imbalance

Low thyroid function, adrenal insufficiency and chronic fatigue syndrome can all increase symptoms of brain fog. These hormonal imbalances are mostly caused by the same factors as inflammation: a poor diet, possible sensitivities and allergies, stress, and not enough rest.

In order to regain your energy and solve underlying adrenal or hormonal issues, adjust your diet to balance hormones naturally and also aim to cut back or eliminate caffeine, alcohol and excess sugar or “white carbohydrates (foods made from refined white flour).” Instead, fill up on hormone-balancing healthy fats, proteins and plenty of fresh vegetables while giving yourself enough rest.

7. Address Any Unknown Food Allergies or Sensitivities

When people suffer from a food sensitivity but don’t cut out all sources from their diets, they experience gut-related damage that affects brain function. Despite what most people think, food-related reactions like the symptoms of lactose intolerance are more than just digestive problems. These can cause significant changes in the gut micro biota — which is problematic because your overall health depends heavily on the health of your gut. An allergy triggers inflammatory reactions, which affect everything from nutrient absorption to hormone-synthesizing. Nearly every cell, tissue and system in the body, especially the gut-brain connection, suffers from an unresolved sensitivity, so consider an elimination diet if you haven’t yet experimented with going gluten-free and conventional dairy-free (meaning avoiding non-organic, pasteurized dairy).

You can also try these food allergies natural treatments to help eliminate brain fog.

Supplements to Help Stop Brain Fog

Certain supplements can help clear up brain fog and get the wheels in motion when it comes to a healthy lifestyle. That being said, there’s no substitute for a healthy diet, regular rest, exercise, and a fun and connected lifestyle. The bottom line is that if your brain’s major hormones are off, all the supplements, self-help books and even therapy likely won’t make you feel better. So first, tackle the lifestyle changes mentioned above that apply most to you, then consider adding in certain supplements to further speed up the healing process.

- Adaptogens like holy basil, maca and ashwagandha – Adaptogen herbs help lower cortisol and give your body support against dealing with fatigue and stress.
- Omega-3 fish oils — Effective at helping lower inflammation, omega- 3s balance the ratio of fatty acids in your diet and support brain health.
- B vitamins — Deficiencies in various B vitamins can leave you feeling sluggish and moody. B vitamins help convert nutrients from the foods you eat into usable fuel for the body, so taking a B complex supplement can make sure you’re in the optimal range.

Also keep in mind that certain medications can lead to brain fog, including antidepressants, stimulants, sleep aids, anti-psychotics and even blood pressure medications. There’s speculation that many medications increase brain inflammation and impair hormone function. If you regularly take any prescriptions and have noticed changes in your mood and energy, talk to your doctor about what you can do to minimize brain fog symptoms. ✕

A Health Tid-Bit

Submitted

By

J. R. Oslund

She struggled for years with off-and-on dieting, trying various programs. They all worked, but the weight was too easy to put back on. With every setback, more weight gained than was initially lost. She thought this time would have to be different. Nearly a year after committing herself to vigorous daily exercise, no white flour and no refined sweeteners, she has lost 56 pounds. Despite her success, there is still an awareness of past failures and the fear that the weight may all come back. Why is rebounding so easy?

It is estimated that 66 percent of the adults in the United States are overweight or obese. About 33 percent of children and adolescents are overweight or are considered at risk. At any given time, some \$40 billion a year!

Theoretically, a pound of body fat is gained for every 3,500 calories consumed in excess. With the extra calories, fat cells are filled; they stimulate the production of more fat cells. Obesity is determined by both the number and size of fat cells that grow or shrink based on fat deposits. Interestingly though, “When energy out exceeds energy in, the size of fat cells dwindles, but not their number.” In other words, the body keeps all those extra fat cells even if they become empty through weight loss. This is one factor that makes it easier for some to regain lost weight rapidly. All those empty fat cells are ready and waiting to be refilled.

Another hurdle to maintaining weight loss relates to the body’s set point. The body maintains homeostasis (its normal), by making all kinds of adjustments. “Researchers have confirmed that after weight gains or losses, the body adjust its metabolism to restore the original weight. Energy expenditure increases after weight gain and decreases after weight loss.” But just as with any significant change the body has to accustom itself to, the body will eventually adapt after you’ve faithfully hung in there over a period of time.

Obese individuals have more lipoprotein lipase (LPL) activity to increase, probably in an effort to again maintain homeostasis. This makes fat storage easier in those who are overweight. Even modest excesses in calorie intake has more dramatic impact on obese people than on lean people.” They gain weight more readily. For example, abdominal fat cells in men produce abundant LPL, encouraging more fat to be stored in the abdomen. Those who have lost the most weight appear to have the most dramatic increase in LPL activity after the loss. So in addition to fighting the visual temptations, of say brownies, the person who has lost weight is doing battle with enzymes within that want to store fat. It will take time to win this battle, but even the enzymes will eventually adjust to the new normal.

Leptin is another factor in the challenge to maintain weight loss. Leptin is a chemical messenger that has been thought of as an appetite suppressant. It also triggers an increase of energy expenditure. Eat less, burn more calories is leptin’s message. This is just what two-thirds of Americans need to hear on a physiological level. The quandary is that, in general, obese individuals have high leptin levels. Leptin increases as body fat increases. So why isn’t leptin’s message getting through? The answer is leptin insensitivity. “Researchers speculate that in obesity, leptin rises in an effort to overcome an insensitivity or resistance to leptin.” Reportedly exercise and diet will eventually correct leptin insensitivity.

To make matters worse, when calories are reduced and weight is lost leptin levels decline and metabolism slows! In their research, Michael Rosenbaum, M.D. and Rudolph Liebel, M.D. found changes in leptin activity, which could account for why people have a hard time keeping the weight from creeping back on. The reduction in leptin tells the brain to fight the loss of fat. Dr.’s Rosenbaum and Liebel gave leptin to people who had lost weight to see if it could help overcome the tendency to gain the weight back. They injected four individuals who had lost weight with leptin twice a day, bringing their leptin levels to what they were previous to losing weight. “They found that restoring pre-weight loss levels of leptin reversed many of the metabolic changes that make it necessary for people to cut calories of increase activity levels to maintain their reduced weight.... Dr. Liebel says. ‘It’s plausible that giving low doses of leptin to people trying to maintain a lower weight will trick the brain into thinking that the body has its usual level of fat. But more research needs to be done to test leptin as a potential weight maintenance aid in people who have lost weight.’”

Abdominal fat, diet, inflammation, menopause and not enough REM sleep have been found to be part of the problem in altering leptin function. Omega-3 fatty acids are said to raise leptin levels.

As you can see, the body is subject to powerful biological forces that must be battled to maintain weight loss. Until something like leptin injections become mainstream treatment, Dr. Rosenbaum says, “Whatever lifestyle changes you make to lose weight must be continued indefinitely beyond the period of weight loss if you want to keep the weight off.”

This is the conclusion of the above-discussed individual. She recognized that sugar is a trigger for her to lose control. She now enjoys her exercise regime and has learned to reward herself with something other than food. She knows that at any time, she could revert back to her old ways. Understanding that her body is more efficient at storing fat, she cannot enjoy the same flexibility in her food intake and activity level as someone who has never been overweight can. In this arena, her battle will always be greater.

Plato said, “Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a battle.”

We all have weaknesses, areas where it is easier to fail. For some the war is obvious. Others fight in secret. Some have

LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS: BHU FUNDRAISER
DaVinci Flavored Syrup



- Classic Raspberry
- Red Velvet Cake
- Banana Flavor
- Classic Mango
- Classic Chocolate

NEW FLAVORS

\$10.00 Per Bottle

We still have a few: Peppermint left.

Write your selection on the back of your CD-28
and Submit to: **Lifers #2430**



LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS

**Frontier Deluxe
Veggie Mix**



\$18.00

1 Pound Bulk Bag

All-Natural, Kosher

Non-Irradiated

No Additives

No Preservatives

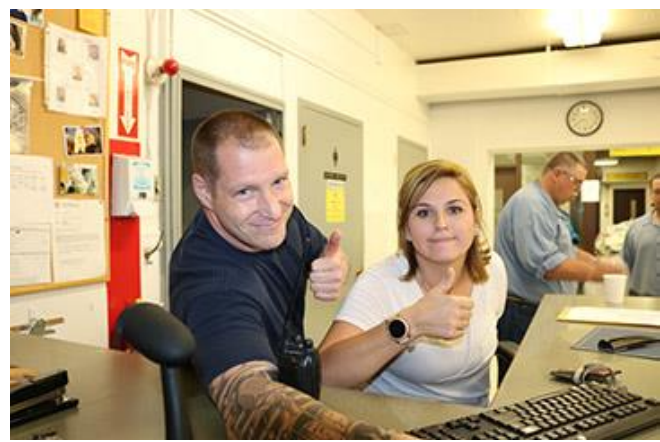
Certified Gluten Free

Rated 4 out of 5 Stars

Approximately 5 lb of fresh Vegetables per bag!

(Carrots, onions, potatoes, peas, tomatoes, celery, peppers, green beans)

Please submit separate CD-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430



LIFERS' CLUB PRESENTS
Clear PVC Backpack

\$23.00



Clear sling bag is compact, However big enough to carry your most important things in large zip compartments, external pockets and water bottle holder.

Style and Color May Vary based on Availability

Please submit separate CD-28s for each Fundraiser to Lifers' #2430

What It's Really Like When a Prison 'Lifer' Gets a New Shot at Life

Story by Shawna Kenney

11.22.16

He's wearing a light blue suit that was given to him by a cousin, like most of the other clothing he owns. It hangs from his compact frame as he makes his way through the crowd, greeting friends, some for the first time since his release, with a mustachioed smile. They fist-bump and hug one another. He makes sure his mother has a seat of honor at the head of table.

She touches his face, saying how handsome he looks, adding, "some people have told me you look like a detective." He moves with a soft-spoken confidence, without the puffed-up exterior of some who have done hard time. "This is the second time in my life I've ever worn a suit," he laughs. "The first time was when I took my girlfriend to her junior prom." That was when he was eighteen, a year after he joined a gang and dropped out of high school – a year before his life would drastically change.

Sapienza grew up in the Gateway Cities area of Los Angeles, a kid who was into drawing and sports. His dad returned from the Vietnam War with a drug problem and left his mom with three kids when Sapienza was thirteen. That's about the time he got into graffiti, running the streets with his crew while his mother made ends meet as a bank teller and check cashier. His family bounced around from place to place, even living in a motel at one point, using the nearby public telephone as their own.

By nineteen, Sapienza was a member of a gang in Bell Gardens, a largely Latino city in southeast Los Angeles County. He had already fathered two children, been arrested once on a domestic violence charge and survived two bullets to the head from a rival gang, leaving him deaf in his left ear. On August 16, 1991, he and his fellow gang members rolled up to a public park in San Pedro in five cars, looking to settle beef with one gang when they accidentally ran into another. Words and bullets flew, and at the end of it all one sixteen-year-old lay dead and another, an eighteen-year-old, was injured.

"When shots were fired, everyone scattered – that's gang mentality; you do your thing and then you leave," says Sapienza, who was picked up and questioned by the LAPD's gang unit the next day. He says he understands now why they assumed he was the shooter. A gun was never found and nine eyewitnesses put him at the scene of the crime. He lied at first, saying he wasn't there, but he "wasn't a very good liar." He says two other gang members saw who did the shooting, but when they went to trial they decided they didn't want to be snitches. Sapienza lived by the code of the streets, too. It's what drove him to serve time for crimes he maintains he didn't commit. (The court records for his case were sealed by a judge in Long Beach, but parole board hearing transcripts state Sapienza was "shooting into a crowded area," which he denies.)

He says his first mistake wasn't that he didn't leave the scene of the crime soon enough that day, it's that he was there in the first place. "Even though I didn't actually do the shooting, I had to ask, 'Am I innocent?' I didn't pull the trigger but I was there. Our intentions weren't to have a picnic that day. It wasn't planned to murder someone, but we were ready to retaliate if something happened." He says he wrote to the Innocence Project once but withdrew his request once they asked him for names of the guilty to help with his exoneration. "Because of my dedication to the neighborhood, I got convicted and had to live with that. It's crazy because now I look at it with a bigger perspective and can't believe I was willing to spend the rest of my life in prison before saying anything."

It was a long road to this epiphany. Sapienza was sentenced to 25 years to life. His gang promised to "have his back" on the inside. He says they sent him \$15 – once. Sapienza tried to go the other way. He steered clear of prison gangs, kept his body tattoo-free, became a Christian, attended AA meetings, and discovered Criminal and Gang Members Anonymous (CGA) meetings, all of which helped him clean up what he calls "polluted thinking."

In 2010, he went before a parole board and told them he was living a clean and sober life. His hearing transcripts showed only three write-ups for rules violations, all minor infractions made within his first few years of incarceration. Someone on the board asked him about the twelve-step meetings and which step he liked the most. Sapienza was stunned. He couldn't recall a single one. "I was such an idiot and told them I didn't know any steps but at the next hearing I would. I realized I had just been going to meetings for the certificates and not utilizing the program," he says. He was denied parole and told he could try again in five years. "I realized I had more work to do."

Sapienza spent the next five years trying to better himself with trade courses and more self-help groups. He also credits in-prison visits from the Victims' Awareness Program – a nonprofit educational program designed to teach offenders about the impact of their crimes by having victims and victims' families share their stories. "These are people from the streets who themselves or someone in their family were victims of violent crime. They didn't have to do this – they hate us – but those people said, 'I'm going to put away my feelings and I'm going to come to prison and share my story and see who I can help.' It's really emotional to see."

Not long after the parole denial, he learned his estranged father had died of a heroin overdose.

On November 4, 2015, he faced the parole board again. He told them about his childhood, about his absentee father and "getting love from the streets." He admitted gang life was a choice. He used the full names of the boy who was killed and the one who was injured and showed empathy for their families.

"I have to accept that I was convicted and no matter what, the victim's family will forever know my name as the one who murdered their son," he says now. "That's hard to swallow. They'll always think that, so I have to accept that."

He was nervous when the board took a forty-minute break. "I was praying, thinking there was a lot of stuff I should have brought up that I missed," he says. He knew there was no formula for earning parole and that prisoners have no guarantees in the process; most state law books explicitly call parole "an act of grace" and not a right.

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When the two parole board members and the Commissioner came back to the room, they announced they had unanimously found him suitable for parole. Sapienza remained there in his orange jumpsuit trying to sit up straight. “I wanted to say ‘did I hear right?’ I kind of looked at my public defender and I think he smiled and blinked his eye. I was truly amazed.” Then they gave him a speech. They reviewed his crime, “...actions deemed deplorable and vicious,” but noted he had taken full responsibility for them. “You were young, you were dumb, full of machismo when you committed this offense at the age of twenty.” They complimented him on his presentation as a “calm individual with reasoned thoughts and a mature disposition.” The board noted his upgraded education – a GED and vocational courses in upholstery, silk screening and computer literacy. They stressed that he understood the difference between “just being sober and being in recovery,” and that he had a relapse-prevention-plan in place.

At the end of it all, the Presiding Commissioner said, “Good luck to you, sir. The officer will have your paperwork. And we hope not to see you ever here again.”

Sapienza answered, “Amen. Thank you very much.” Once a prisoner is found suitable for parole, the state offers a release date 150 days from that date. This is when transcripts are reviewed, the governor can intervene or a victim’s family can object. “In my case, they didn’t show up but they had the right,” he says.

He was bussed back to the California Men’s Colony in San Luis Obispo on what he remembers as a beautiful day. “I got out and was walking and it was like a dream, I was wondering, ‘Is this real?’” he says. The few men he knew in the yard gave him ‘thumbs ups’ with questioning looks on their faces. He nodded and they all smiled. He took a moment to walk around the track, just taking it all in, then went inside to call his mother, telling her, “I’ll be going home soon.” The next call was to his former prom date, the one who had remained a supportive friend, sending letters over the years.

In prison, Sapienza connected with a transitional housing program. He signed a contract, agreeing to live in their facilities and participate in their services for six months once released. They picked him and one other parolee up on parole day.

“The first humbling moment I had was when I was leaving the prison and some guys I knew were cheering me on, wishing me luck. Some will be there forever, but they still were happy for me,” he says, choking back tears. “But some were just happy to get my stuff. I gave away almost all of my CDs,” he jokes. “They’re like \$30 in there!”

When the driver of the van asked the two men where they wanted to go for breakfast, Sapienza says he was struck by the fact that, for the first time in many years, he had a choice. He didn’t exactly know what their options were, but remembered he had liked one fast food chain when he was young. “Carl’s Junior?” he asked. They found one on the highway heading south to L.A., and he enjoyed his first breakfast sandwich in many years.

After 24 hours in one housing facility he landed at Amity, a nonprofit recovery program that helps the homeless and formerly incarcerated rebuild their lives using the “therapeutic community model.” California has adopted laws over the last decade to reduce its overcrowded prison population by more than thirty thousand, meaning programs like Amity’s are at capacity these days. Those released include many older prisoners.

“Part of it is that when the economy got bad, we cut \$450 million dollars out of the corrections budget,” says Matthew Cate, former secretary of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation. “Offenders over age 45 are the most expensive to keep – they’re the least dangerous, least likely to re-offend, and most expensive due to health problems because prison is not a place to maintain a healthy lifestyle.”

Sapienza lived in a dorm-style apartment with two “thankfully cool” roommates. He slept on a top bunk near a shared desk full of letters and paperwork. He could stroll the pleasant courtyard sprawled between the housing building and dining hall. He ate chef-cooked meals made from organic ingredients grown in their on-site aquaponic gardens. Still, it was a sea of testosterone where some men sat alone with their thoughts and others shared their latest accomplishments.

While Sapienza lifted weights in the outdoor gym area in his spare time, he faced a barbed wire fence against a brick wall. The new environment sometimes got to him, like the day he learned a fellow resident was caught with pruno – prison wine made from fermented fruit. “This is sober living,” he scoffs, shaking his head. “That is just prison mentality.” It was not quite independence, but it beat prison. “I like that black, white, and everyone can congregate.”

“Guys like Ricardo had to do a lot of work to get out of prison, so having the ability to reach end goals is important to a lot of things,” says Mark Faucette, the Community Relations director for Amity. While the campus has its rules – a curfew, onsite parole officers, and mandatory drug testing – “students” are free to come and go on weekends.

On his first weekend out, Sapienza’s family held a homecoming party for him at his aunt’s house in South Los Angeles. His two daughters – ages 29 and 27 – and three grandchildren greeted him along with a house full of cousins, nieces and nephews. They brought him sneakers and brightly colored athletic wear as gifts.

Sapienza was anxious to start job hunting right away but first had to abide by the rehabs thirty-day “threshold” period of adjustment. “I had to take self-help classes. They taught us healthy eating and singing for confidence, stuff like that, which I guess is good, but I wanted a job.”

Eventually a non-profit called Friends Outside assisted him with creating a resume, and Amity helped him secure a ninety-day contract job with the California Department of Transportation, picking up trash from the sides of roads. He was excited about that first paycheck. “It was \$400. It’s the most legal money I ever made in my life and I don’t mean to boast but I felt proud of that. I was able to give my niece \$100 for her birthday. That felt good,” he shares. “It’s a blessing to work.”

A fellow parolee referred him to Manifest Works, a workforce program geared toward helping the formerly incarcerated and

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those aging out of foster care to learn life skills and work in the entertainment industry. Now he spends his Saturday’s learning how to be a production assistant on actual working sets. It’s an internship with strict guidelines – “not a handout,” Faucette stresses. Interns can be fired for tardiness and the agreement is to work for free for twelve weeks, knowing paying jobs could be offered during or after the training period. “Even in expensive film school you don’t have access to talk to some of these people,” says Faucette. “They expose them to opportunities for PA work, camera jobs; some have landed union jobs,” he adds.

Sapienza completed his program with Amity on October 8 – his birthday. He has since moved into an aunt’s townhouse in the city of South Gate, where he’s sleeping on a couch while she has an extra bedroom built to accommodate him. His contract job has ended but he’s picking up hours as a paid production assistant, learning the ropes of the film industry. “I can’t believe so many hours go into making a two-minute commercial,” he says.

Even though getting around LA and making early call-times by bus has been a challenge, he’s glad to have the work. “I carry a radio. I keep people off the set. I do what’s asked of me. I’m learning the lingo. It makes me feel important,” he says.

Between work and mandatory anger management classes, he spends time with family and Gabby Esquivel – the girlfriend he once took to prom as a teen. “He smiles more now,” she says, comparing his behavior to when he was first released. “He was always social growing up. But when he first came back, it was like he was afraid to laugh.” They are officially back together and he credits her with teaching him how to use emojis and the calendar on his phone and “all of these technology things” he missed out on.

He admits his relationship with his youngest daughter is “in progress.” “My younger went through a lot with me not being there for her and her sister and their mother... I have to be patient. She has every right. She has to get to know me.” The conditions of Sapienza’s parole mandate he see a parole officer twice a month, with the possibility of less supervision over the years, depending on his behavior. He is also forbidden to travel out of state, and as a parolee, isn’t allowed to vote. None of this seems to bother him. He says in five years he sees himself with steady work, married (“because I’ve never had that experience”), owning a car and living in his own home. “If grace stays upon me, I can do it,” he says.

On a Monday in November, he and Gabby sit side-by-side in a diner booth, having lunch. He sports a blue Nike tee and a five o’clock shadow on this day off between production shoot. He recently passed the written test for his driver’s license and has been practicing with Gabby. When she jokes that his skills are “getting better,” he rests his head on her shoulder, saying he’ll be ready to go for the driving test in a few weeks. Next weekend he’ll take his grandchildren out for the day alone for the first time. He’s also happy about being able to buy his mother a turkey for Thanksgiving. Above all, he seems grateful for this second chance. “A lot of lifers give up on the inside when they lose friends and family over the years. I’m lucky. Whenever I get a little impatient or agitated I just think about where I was at and I never ever want to go back there.” ✕

The Art of Leading

In place of Leadership Notes, this month, here are some points on the subject submitted by fellow lifer, Will Myhre.

- Leadership is a matter of intelligence, trustworthiness, humaneness, courage and sternness (From The Art of War, by Sun Tsu).

(The following are selections from a 1981 self-published book entitled The Art of Leading, by W.L. Myhre)

- Management is leadership.
- A leader is a person who, in the normal course of living, attracts those who by association will profit in a meaningful way.
- Trust and admiration are power.
- Genuine power is power unexpressed.
- The managed can sense an insecure manager.
- Time and trouble define a leader.
- Choose your battles well, or they will choose you.
- When confronted with a large problem, divide it into discrete parts, prioritize the parts, and deal with each separately, in a specific order.
- Punitive measures deserve last position in the hierarchy of leadership responses.
- Behavior can be shaped by the examination of causative factors and appropriate reward.
- There is power in asking questions.
- Shape them up-don’t ship them out.
- A leader can’t always pick his team, but he can make a team by building value in and recognizing a common purpose and obtaining a team “buy in”.
- Coercion and threat is a sign of weakness in a leader.
- Even chaos can be managed-control your emotions and you will be able to control circumstances.
- Information is power-anticipate, anticipate, and anticipate.
- A leader is a trainer-teach leading, teach training.
- To deal with an emergency or special project, choose a team, choose a leader, gather information, organize a response and act. After action-debrief, identify positive and negative, reward, plan remediation and follow-up.
- Be a calming influence, be rational, be there.
- When leadership is fumbled, someone will pick it up.