

THE ECHO

Created by incarcerated people



NEWS
FROM
THE
INSIDE

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EASTERN OREGON CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

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Recreation Department Holds First Open Mic Night of the Year

Written by Antonio McCaw and Kurtis Thompson

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

The Recreation Department records the open mic night for air on the institution's closed circuit channel on Feb. 21, 2025. After a several month hiatus, Recreation Specialist Jerrad Templin hopes to see the return of monthly open mic nights.

On the starry evening of Feb. 21, from about 6:30 to 8:15 p.m., recreation staff and approximately 30 AICs attended a musical jam session known as “Open Mic Night” in the multi-purpose building at EOCI.

Most people were there to perform or support their fellow musicians who sang and played instruments. It was a small, but precious oasis of joy – precious because of the rarity of those moments behind the razor wire, and joy as in the jubilant celebration of music.

The scene was very similar to live-band performances one might see at a Saturday night bar or motel conference room. Acoustic, electric and bass guitars, drums, a keyboard, foot pedals and multiple microphones connected to a sound and mixing board were all being operated by talented people.

Event emcee Treshaun Thomas led the event and shared comedy and banter as he introduced the performers.

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OPPORTUNITY OREGON AT EOCI

Cofounder Nancy Pance Holds Workshop on Feb. 5

Written by Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer

On Feb. 5, about 40 AICs total attended the Opportunity Oregon presentation across three different one-hour blocks from 8 to 10 a.m. According to the data Opportunity Oregon’s co-founder and Executive Director Nancy Pance, in 2024, more than 50 new fair chance employers have been added to their databases. She also said that as of 2025, Opportunity Oregon workshops have been approved for every facility in the state, with the next presentation at EOCI scheduled Aug. 1.

Pance shared testimony, information and positive updates about her organization’s efforts to assist AICs in successfully finding employment after prison. The organization’s mission is to help justice-involved people find work both in and outside the carceral setting, providing cover letter and resume assistance, connecting job-seekers with training and education options, setting up job interviews and more.

According to Pance, new businesses are joining the felon-friendly employer

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The Echo
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The Echo - Mission Statement

To serve the incarcerated community by providing monthly news and other important information, while highlighting the human experience in the carceral setting.

PRISON BREWS TO SOFT OPEN IN MARCH

A Handful of AICs Hired as Baristas; Food Service Department Accepting More Applications

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

An Italian model espresso machine in the new Prison Brews coffee shop at EOCI on Feb. 26, 2025. The 250 volt, 20 amp machine has water directly piped in and is a similar model and set up to what might be seen in a Starbucks or high end coffee shop.

Prison Brews to Open Soon

Applications for EOCI's new coffee shop are still being accepted as the finishing touches of Prison Brews are being made. The Food Service Department has hired a handful of AICs who will undergo training as baristas over the first few weeks of March.

The AICs who are hired as baristas will be trained by a local coffee company, the Pendleton Buckin' Bean, which will also be the supplier for the coffee shop. Baristas earn PRAS 12 points.

The coffee shop, which is located in D2, is not open to the AIC population for consumption.

Prison Brews is scheduled to soft open at the end of March.

According to Food Service Manager Liza Emory, the coffee shop provides a "win-win" opportunity.

"The coffee shop will help support a local business," said Emory, "and AICs have the opportunity to train in a field that may employ them after release."

Accepting Applications for Baristas

EOCI's Food Service Department is accepting applications for baristas in Prison Brews.

Hired AICs will receive on-the-job training and experience as a barista.

AIC workers will work closely with staff, make pastries daily, and work with food and drinks.

Applicants must be incentive level 3, with no convictions for arson, no staff assaults, and no escapes on their record.

Emory said that experience is preferred, but not required.

Interested AICs should send an application to IWP. | ECHO

OPEN MIC NIGHT continued from page 1

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Event emcee Treshaun Thomas led the event with comedy and banter as he introduced the performers on Feb. 21. Thomas shared several “dad jokes” during the event.

Thomas shared several “dad jokes” with the audience.

“I gained a little weight, so guess what the sofa said when I sat down,” Thomas said with a dramatic pause. “Couch!”

Some people laughed and others groaned, but it was all in good-natured fun. There were a few in the audience who tossed friendly banter back and forth with Thomas which added to the humor.

The performances were diverse, including solos without lyrics, country, punk, love songs and even some free-style rap.

Among the first to play music was Timothy Taylor who gave a solo country-esque rendition of “Mary Had a Little Lamb” on his acoustic guitar with a backup of prerecorded beats and no lyrics. The song was several minutes long, and after his performance he also played in the next set with Luis Trybom, James Coonrod and Luis Fernando Del Rio in a band named The Elderly Brothers.

Together The Elderly Brothers played the songs “Devoted to You” and “Dream, Dream, Dream.”

There were also original songs crafted entirely from scratch. Luis Rodriguez, resident from H2, shared a bittersweet love song from the perspective of a person longing for a connection with a special someone, something that many incarcerated people can relate to.

“Looking down to see if you’ll catch me / because I’m looking down and falling for you,” Rodriguez sung as he performed his piece titled “Falling.”

When he first began writing his song, the focus had been on how a woman might look at him carnally. Later, he reconsidered his approach because of the possibility that his children might listen to it, so he pivoted to writing about love instead.

In the song he wanted to convey the butterflies of walking an emotional tight rope when meeting someone new and wanting to share that attraction and interest with them.

Rodriguez said he likes the fact that

anyone can sign up for open mic night and perform.

“I like when people have the guts to go up and do it,” Rodriguez said. “There is a lot of people who put work into their craft and it’s a way to show how much progress they’ve made.”

Recreation Specialist Jerrad Templin is currently the main EOCI staff member who has been championing the expansion of the music program. He does more than simply supervise the recreation events - Templin also analyzes and assesses the recreational program’s needs, making suggestions for policy, funding, organization and more to facility administration.

“We’ve got song writer’s classes and new classes coming in April,” Templin said. “We want wind instruments. I can’t talk about it yet, but expansions are coming.”

The opportunities on the horizon have given the musicians at EOCI something to be excited about. After the disruptions caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, many programs had been shut down. In addition, Oregon is experiencing a staffing shortage in ODOC facilities. In order to have programs, there must be staff to securely run them, so many AICs jump at the chance to participate when opportunities come along – even if they are not at 100% health.

G4 resident Luis Fernando Del Rio is one of the AICs who makes the most of the music program opportunities. His voice was recovering from a previous issue, but he participated despite the discomfort he experienced.

Del Rio sang during a quartet in The Elderly Brothers band, and then performed again in a free-style rap session with five other musicians.

“This is amazing,” said Del Rio. “My throat was messed up and my voice was a little sore, so when they

Continued on next page...

AROUND EOCI



Photos by Phillip Luna/The Echo



...continued from previous page

called me I wasn't sure if I could pull it off. But, yeah, I love this."

AICs are getting more than just an opportunity to perform. Events like open mic night build both connections and skills that contribute to a healthy, pro-social environment for incarcerated people and staff.

"This was a great opportunity to showcase the talent and to break away from the stereotype of how we are viewed," Luis Trybom said, who also performed during the open mic night. "The courage it takes from some of these guys to come up and perform is incredible. The support we show for them while performing and even after, man, they feed off of that. This support creates bonds for these guys and it shows."

The open mic night contributes to a normalized atmosphere for both staff and AICs, something that studies show reduce recidivism and promote rehabilitation. The music program is an example of how many staff members are trying to bridge the gap between officer and AIC.

"These are guys trying to navigate life," Templin said. "This is part of the coolest thing I've done here in 12 years."

Templin explained that he views prison as "... a place full of human beings."

| ECHO

Photos from top to bottom:

In the band The Shape, Jack Avila, left and John Damron sing and play guitar. Taylor Carson plays the drums in the background with DeeJay McKenzie (not pictured) and Jacob Harper (not pictured) accompanying on guitar and bass, respectively.

Luis Fernando Del Rio does a freestyle rap accompanied by the house band. Del Rio also performed with the band The Elderly Brothers.

Tim Taylor performs solo while the audience looks on.

A FUN GAME NIGHT; A FARWELL

Activity Night Held; Recreation Specialist Garton Returns to Security Detail

Written by Jacob Harper, Correspondent



32Pixels/Shutterstock

The activity night on Feb. 6 included cornhole, Ping-Pong, dominoes, chess and a basketball tournament. The event, which was originally spearheaded by Recreation Specialist Travis Garton, was Garton's last as he returns to a role in security.

Garton's last hurrah! The time has come for Recreation Specialist Travis Garton to return to security detail. On Feb. 6 the activity night was a farewell event to someone who brought a positive atmosphere to the multi-purpose facility. Garton picked specifically the most popular events, encouraged the highest level of competition and brought with him the most valuable things he has in his arsenal, excitement for sports and a congenial attitude.

Travis Garton started Feb 1, 2024 as one of EOCI's first recreation specialists. An "Activity Night," a concept which was originally spearheaded by Garton, is an evening of sports and tabletop games. The night's activities consisted of basketball, Ping-Pong, chess, cornhole and dominoes.

The basketball competition was teams of 3 players with a special bracket for players 45 years and older. Certificates were presented for both brackets of winners for 3 on 3, ping-

pong and dominoes. Chess and cornhole were open for free play.

The basketball tournament was full of stiff competition with 36 participants for the regular bracket and seven participants for the 45 and older bracket.

There were originally even more players slated for the competition, but the event was limited to level 2 and 3's only. Tournament winners were Kevin Clay, Marshawn Edwards and Anthony Mack in the standard bracket with Branch Niehouse, Michael Jump and Tyler Gardner winning the 45 years and older bracket.

Ping-Pong had 21 competitors culminating in a matchup of east versus west, between Jeremy Adams and Dylan Ostrom, respectively, with Adams winning 21-7.

Ostrom was a first-time finalist and Adams a defending champion. Ostrom played often while stationed in Tokyo while in the Marine Corps whereas

Adams played in the juvenile system, a federal penitentiary and at EOCI.

There was friendliness to the rivalry, with Ostrom telling Adams that "he'd better smile" for the winners photograph and to "Let me know how that Snapple tastes,". A Snapple was part of the winner's reward.

When asked about the outcome of the match, Adams said "I Mahomes'd him." Then he pantomimed a mic drop as he flashed a smile. Adams has now won the Ping-Pong tournament three times. The Patrick Mahomes reference was made before the recent Super Bowl game on Feb 9.

The final competitors for the dominoes tournament were Shane Goins from H1 and Esteban Ordaz from G2 with Ordaz taking the win.

Some of the heroes of the night were behind the scenes scheduling, populating lists and coordinating events through no-shows and the general chaos of 110 AICs participating.

"The rec guys are adapting on the fly, making the corrections which make for the best competition. No-shows and the participation in multiple events can cause a scheduling nightmare," said Luis Trybom.

With Garton returning to his role in security, there was some disappointment voiced from participants. Dominic Geronimo, who was playing cornhole, said, "It really sucks, he was awesome at what he was doing, getting people off unit and together more. I really appreciate him."

"I hope we keep it going, I know that I left it in a better spot than when we got it and I hope it stays that way," said Garton, his final words in regard to leaving multi.

Valentine's Day was Garton's last day as a Recreation Specialist, a position he held for a year. He has a lifelong love of sports and said he has enjoyed his time in multi. |ECHO

AROUND EOCI

PROJECT REPLACE GATE

Welding Shop Designs and Creates New Gate for the Institution

Written by Shahid Baskerville, Correspondent



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

On Feb. 12, 2025, welder Jacob Whitman, left, maintenance worker Aaron Toole, and welder Benjamin Jones pose in front a 17 by 12-foot gate they created.

“It’s given me confidence, in knowing we can put something together,” said Benjamin Jones, an apprentice welder in EOCI’s physical plant.

The crafting of a 17 by 12-foot gate, with two inch square tubing and half inch tubing down the center, required a few sets of hands. Welder Jacob Whitman, maintenance worker Aaron Toole, and Jones crafted the 500 lb custom gate will replace the old standard chain link gate between the housing units of EOCI’s F and G building.

The project, both decorative and functional, is scheduled for paint and installation in March.

Jones said the design came from “Jake’s [Whitman] brain.”

Whitman started working in the physical plant in 2023. Jones and Whitman enrolled in the apprenticeship program in September 2024.

According to Jones and Whitman, a gate of such dimensions and fine intri-

cacies costs anywhere between \$15,000 - \$20,000, whereas the welding shop was able to keep their material cost at a minimum of \$2,000.

The welding shop handles work order repairs throughout the institution, like bunks, drawers, and storage boxes. However, when it came to the crafting of this gate they were granted the opportunity to showcase their creativity.

The countless hours spent learning flex core arc weld (FCAW), gas metal arc weld (GMAW), and metal inert gas (MIG) welds paid off as the experience is something they plan to bring past these walls and into society.

Both said they were proud of the opportunity and responsibility the special project brought them. Jones and Whitman shared how during the welding process others made critiques and suggested how to better the gate.

For the welders, the project was an example of applied knowledge and creativity.

“Anything you can think of you can do” said Whitman, smiling as he looked at photographs of project. |ECHO



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

On Feb. 11, 2025, Jacob Whitman lays welds on a new gate that will replace the existing gate between F and G building. Whitman is one of two apprentices in the welding shop. Benjamin Jones is the other apprentice.

METAL ROSES

An Unexpected Creative Arts Project in the Welding Shop

Written by Shahid Baskerville, Correspondent

Metal Roses, a creative arts project created by welders Trevor Trollope, Doug Haggard and Gerry Hight, recently gained notoriety around the metal shop. While bringing the flora to life, Trollope said the group was dubbed the “flower guys.”

The metal roses are priced at \$15 each. They can be purchased by the public and staff. Each rose weighs a few pounds, depending on length.

The outcome shows how three minds can execute a plan. Aluminum, mild-steel and stainless-steel were materials used for the creative art project that became available for purchase in February.

“There was no layout,” said Haggard.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Metal roses on a work table in EOCI’s welding shop on Feb. 4, 2025. The roses are part of the creative arts program in the physical plant and are sold to the public at \$15 each. Each flower consists of three layers of metal, patterned and welded together.

One rose required the layering of three petal shaped pieces. A four-inch welded piece was used as the outside growth, a three-inch piece sat in the middle and a two-inch piece on the

inside. When welded together it creates the appearance of a rose.

One has even found its way to Counselor Key’s office, which has given life to a metal rose. |ECHO

OPPORTUNITY OREGON continued from page 1

databases regularly, spelling out good news for the justice-involved people looking to restart their lives with the best chances of success upon release.

Pance also announced her organization is now tracking their data, which will soon paint a clearer picture on how much of an impact secure employment after prison will have on the previously incarcerated they assist.

To start the presentation, Pance shared with AICs that she came from a similar background as many who attended. She said drugs were a part of her life for 14 years, and she established her clean date after participating in a gas station robbery that led to her arrest, incarceration and finding the Christian faith.

Pance said when she found out police were searching for her that she

prayed, accepted God, and had a moment of clarity. She decided to turn herself in to authorities.

Pance was sentenced to six years in prison, a time she invested in changing herself through programs like Pathfinders, a cognitive behavioral program, and by choosing to associate with people who also wanted to make positive changes.

Despite those efforts, she said her record after prison kept her in the past. Employers, even fast-food businesses, would not hire her because they considered felons a liability.

“That was a feeling of rejection,” she said. “I had made changes, I had broken the cycle, but nobody was giving me a chance.”

To address these discriminations, Pance and her brother cofounded Op-

portunity Oregon as a recruitment agency focused on justice-involved persons.

Pance said assistance can include advocacy with parole and probation officers to structure requirements of supervision to be more flexible for job locations and scheduling conflict with groups.

Pance encouraged AICs who want more information or would like to participate in the Opportunity Oregon program to send a communication kyte to Transition Services Counselor Sue Robson. Pance can also be reached at the following address:

Opportunity Oregon
c/o Nancy Pance
1045 Charlie Gateway Loop
Springfield, OR 97477

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AROUND EOCI



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

The west yard covered in snow on Feb. 14, 2025. The Pendleton area had seven days of snowfall in February and between four and six inches of snow resulting in burst pipes, a low turnout of visitors and a few rambunctious puppies.

WINTER WEATHER IMPACTS EOCI

February Snow Causes Pipes to Burst, Families to Forego Visits and Pups to Zoom Around

Written by Phillip Luna, Chris Ainsworth and Antonio McCaw

In February, the area of Pendleton saw seven days of snowfall and temperatures as low as four degrees. The four to six inches of snowfall had varying effects at EOCI.

Frozen Pipe Bursts, Floods Electrical Shop

In the physical plant's electrical shop, a pipe for the fire suppression system froze and burst in mid-February, flooding the tool room.

The pipe was in a less-insulated part of the tool storage area of the electrical shop and froze as temperatures dropped. When temperatures thawed the pipe burst.

Electrician Ben Edwards said the solid steel of the pipe was "split in half."

Edwards said the ceiling caved in on the tool room as well. He also said none of the tools have shown any water damage so far.

Plumber James Renfro said the pipe was replaced, the area was reinsulated and a new fan was put in to direct warm air to the attic where the pipe burst, in order to maintain the temperature. Some of the sheetrock was replaced as well.

Renfro said, "This is the second time the pipe has burst. We reinsulated, so it should not happen again."

Plumber Luis Rodriguez completed the tedious task of reinsulating the area.

Snow Turns Valentine's Day Luncheon into an Intimate Gathering

Visitors and AICs shared a meal at the first family luncheon of 2025, but the two-day event saw limited participation due to a snow storm that arrived the day before the Valentine's Day luncheon was to take place.

Originally the luncheon, held in EOCI's visiting room on February 13 and 14, anticipated close to 100 participants. Due to the winter storm less than a quarter of the people expected were able to attend the event.

Throughout the year the facility holds luncheons and family events that allow AICs to share a meal and spend additional time with their loved ones. These events provide AICs and their visitors an opportunity to interact in an environment different than a standard visit.

According to visiting room staff, the winter months generally see a decline in visitors. This can be caused by dangerous driving conditions that prevent families from making the trip safely.

“My wife braving the snow storm just to attend the Valentine’s Day luncheon meant everything to me,” said Jason Hogan, who participates in every special event he can.

“After a visit with my wife it brings me back to life,” he said.

During the record-setting fire season of 2024, Hogan’s wife drove through fire and smoke across Oregon to visit him because she said it “promotes human dignity regardless of one’s past.”

Future luncheon and family events will be advertised on unit bulletin boards when they become available.

New Pups Brave The Snow

Snow is falling and dog handlers are bundling up to take their pups outside to play in the snow.

On Nov. 5, 2024, five puppies were born at EOCI as part of the JLAD whelping program. For these puppies, the February snowfall was their first time experiencing the icy weather.

“They love the snow,” said Larry Wilt, a JLAD facilitator, “We call it the ‘zoomies.’”

Wilt described zoomies as the puppies excitedly running back and forth in the snow.

“The first time they see it, their world changes,” said Wilt.

Chip, a puppy born on Nov. 5, 2024, got to play in the snow.



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Jason Hogan, right, and wife visit on Feb. 14, 2025 during the Valentine’s Day luncheon. Hogan was one of the few who received a visit despite the weather.

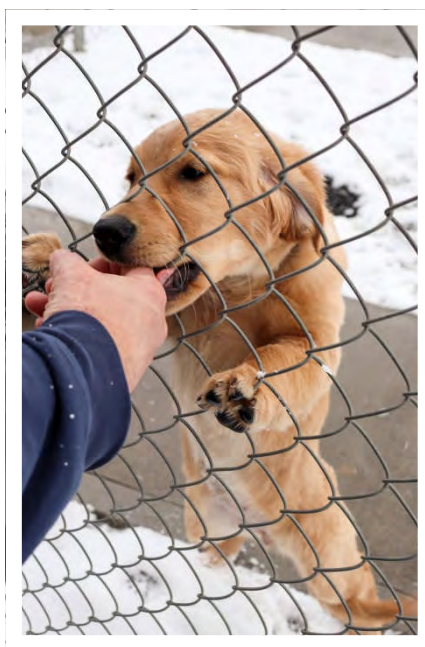


Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

A puppy bounds through the snow and nibbles on fingers through the chain link fence on Feb. 14, 2025. Many of the puppies have what JLAD trainers call the “zoomies,” which is how they describe puppies bounding back and forth in the snow.

“He put his nose into the ground and ran through the snow like a plow,” said Clinton Hylton, Chip’s handler. “He also tried to catch snowflakes”

When the snow falls, the handlers

will bring the puppies out and monitor them. The dog paw covers are no longer in use, but paw butter is used to ensure their paws don’t dry out.

The JLAD program is expected to whelp new pups in April. |ECHO

JOB HIGHLIGHT



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

On Feb. 4, 2025, workers in the paint prepare for a typical day which includes various work orders and assignments throughout EOCI. The shop, which has existed for many years, recently began an apprenticeship program through Penn Foster College.

JOB HIGHLIGHT: PAINT SHOP

Paint Shop Teaches Valuable Job Skills; Apprenticeship Program Begins

Written by Chris Ainsworth, Staff Writer

Music can be heard faintly from outside while the odor of thinner and paint greet anyone entering the double doors at the rear of the physical plant. The sound of paint sprayers mixes with the music upon entering the shop while workers wearing respirators and masks can be seen hard at work in a special booth outfitted with their craft in mind.

Many people walk by buildings or houses without giving the time or craftsmanship put into its outer appearance a second thought. For the workers, however, countless hours are spent learning how to mix and match colors, remove and apply paint and apply the proper finishing or clear coats so the product will stand the test of time. The employees at EOCI's paint shop are no different, balancing their work orders and job assignments with training and education.

"If you are interested in being a

painter it is easier to get a job if you do have experience," said Zach Schrader, who has over 12 years of experience working in EOCI's paint shop, "even if your experience is in prison."

Ryan Cecil transferred from the carpentry shop to become the paint shop's supervisor over seven years ago. He had worked previously in the paint booth at a friend's body shop so he thought the EOCI paint shop would be a good fit.

Cecil recently set up his first worker with an apprenticeship as a paint booth technician, a certification that has been available to AICs since Cecil became the paint shop supervisor. The program is offered through Penn Foster College and requires 6,000 hours for completion. Even though the apprenticeship has been available, the first AIC began his training and education a few months ago. The program only has

space for one apprentice at a time.

"If he were to have started this seven years ago he would probably already be done," Cecil said. Adding he believed his apprenticeship student saw how "successful other AICs were" following release and decided to work towards his own certificate.

On the job training through apprenticeship and entry level employment is how most painters acquire their experience. However, community colleges, trade and vocational schools offer a more formal education for people interested in joining the field. Here they can learn techniques, color theory,

safety procedures and surface preparation.

Schrader, who has been back for 90 days after working various other positions within the institution, returned to the paint shop instead of continuing his employment at the garment factory. The reason for his return is because he wants to "continue to paint when I get out."

Even workers not involved in the apprenticeship program learn valuable skills in the trade. Cecil's previous experience has aided in educating his workers.

"[Cecil] likes to be able to teach people," said Schrader.

The paint shop is responsible for completing a multitude of tasks within the institution. When holes need to be repaired and painted on walls in the housing units they complete work orders.

The paint shop takes on special assignments like applying the multi-tone paint job in EOCI's new coffee shop, Prison Brews.

They are responsible for larger work

orders like painting the exterior of the facility or sandblasting the stairwells down to the base metal before applying a rust and corrosive resistant paint. The stairwell project started the summer of 2024, and Cecil aims to have the remaining 11 staircases completed by summer the of 2026.

Cecil believes painting in the sum-

mer months is “going to be exhausting.” The combination of the safety equipment, like respirators and Tyvek suits, and the extreme heat “takes its toll on the workers.”

“When you are wearing rubber rain suits or standing inside the scaffolding it gets pretty hot,” said Cecil. “It’s going to be a rough summer. They don’t

get paid enough for all the work they do.”

According to indeed.com, standard painters outside of prison make between \$17.50 and \$25 per hour with specialized painters, like aerospace and industrial painters, making about \$40 per hour. | ECHO

THE ECHO INTERVIEWS



Zach Schrader has been incarcerated for 23 years and is looking forward to spending time with his kids and grandkids upon his release. He works in the paint shop currently and plans to continue in that field and automotive work upon release.

WHAT
I'VE
LEARNED

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

With Zach Schrader

Interview by Chris Ainsworth, Staff Writer

One thing that surprised me about prison was... the amount of politics when I first got here.

Earlier on, I wish I'd... saved more money.

With what I know now, at the beginning of my prison sentence I would have told myself... be a better person, when it comes to helping people out, to people who are just coming in.

The best advice I could give someone is... don't get into anyone else's business, keep to yourself and do the best you can to stay out of trouble.

The best item to buy off canteen is... coffee, if you are someone who likes coffee. And hygiene.

One thing I never wish I had spent money on is... my affair with Lil' Debbie.

The program that helped me most was... music education and performance.

The job I enjoyed the most was... paint and automotive shop.

Before coming to prison, I would consider myself... a good parent but impatient, not an impatient parent just impatient in other aspects.

Now I consider myself... I'm sober which has made me a better person. GOGI and utilizing the GOGI tools has really helped me.

The culture in prison has... mellowed, compared to how it was in the past. You essentially had to be a part of some sort of group, if not you were alienated.

My favorite meal in prison is... spaghetti. That's always been my favorite. Both in the chow hall and making it on the unit. I have always been a pasta junkie.

A meal I can't stand is... fish. Had a bad experience with it when I was a kid. Got sick and have never been able to smell or eat it since.

The food I am looking forward to... steak, prime rib, and ribs.
| ECHO



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Stat keepers and referees look on as B1 trounces H1 in the first game of the series on Feb. 17, 2025. B1 won 88-41 and went on to sweep the series and win game two 117-55, sweeping the series for their second straight championship.

AN UNSTOPPABLE B1 MEETS A VERY MOVABLE H1

Unit B1 Sweeps the Series to Win Basketball Title in 2025

Written by Shane Goins, Correspondent

West Side Championship B1 vs. B4

On Feb. 12, 2025 unit B1 was matched against B4 for the west side championship. Led by Lamar Stanton, Kevin Clay, Xabien Riley and Maciel Munoz, B1 avenged their only loss of the season and won the championship in the West.

With All-Star guards Marshawn Edwards and Aaron Garcia, B4 was ready to accept the challenge and try to knock off B1 twice in one season.

Unfortunately, B4 wasn't able to overcome the offensive display from a resolute B1 team and they lost the game 72-44. It was B1's second title in two years.

East Side Championship H1 vs. G4

On the east side, H1 upset an undefeated G4 and won the championship.

Led by Joseph Cardoza, Eric Evans and Elnando Broussard, G4 was poised for a victory and clear path to the institution championship against unit B1.

Enter unit H1 led by Carter Bell, Carlos Ramirez and Benjamin Edwards.

H1 was a concerned about their chances due to the loss of head coach and player Michael Epperson from an ankle injury sustained the night before.

Defense and aggression were the orders of the night for a feisty, undermanned H1 team.

Bell, Andrew Webb and Ramirez each had 17 points. Webb, however, grabbed an impressive 10 rebounds while being guarded by a 6'7" Michael Altherr. Edwards had a total of 12 rebounds, six points and one block.

H1's Izrael Correa had five points, but he caused eight turnovers and was an overall off-ball pest. Justin Weber had four points, four rebounds, and one block to contribute to their 65-52 win.

G4 had a phenomenal season and finished with a 15-1 record, their first loss coming in the championship game.

Now the match-up was set; unit B1 versus H1.



H1 attempts to score while heavily guarded by B1 during the first game of the series on Feb. 17, 2025. H1 was held under 50 points.



Photos by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Izrael Correa, H1, attempts layup in game one of the championship series.

Institution Championship B1 vs. H1

On Feb. 17, 2025 in the multi-purpose building, unit B1 met H1 for game one of the best-of-three championship series. B1 and H1 are very familiar with each other as they often play each other in numerous EOCI championships.

Lamar Stanton, Kevin Clay and Xabien Riley led B1, while Carter Bell, Carlos Ramirez and Izrael Correa took the lead for H1.

Through all four quarters B1 scored at will. B1 won 88-41, handing H1 their worst loss since 2021.

B1 forward/center Maciel Munoz finished game one with a total of 20 points, 15 rebounds and five steals. Clay had 25 points, eight steals, five assists, and two rebounds.

For H1, Bell finished with a season-low 12 points and three rebounds while Ramirez and Andrew Webb both had eight points and center Benjamin Edwards had six points, eight rebounds and an assist.

Game two was played Feb. 18.

For B1 Clay, Riley, Stanton and center Justin Waldrip all played error-free basketball during the first half, leaving the score at 65-24 in favor of B1.

B1 asserted basketball dominance with six steals and two blocks in the second half as they beat H1 117-55, thus giving B1 their second consecutive bas-

ketball championship in two years.

With 42 points, 12 rebounds and two assists in the second game, Stanton was named season and championship MVP.

Stanton's stats on the season were 362 points, 135 rebounds, 96 assists, 35 blocks and 21 steals. |ECHO



Lamar Stanton finds himself alone under the basket during game one of the series. Stanton was named the game and season MVP.

FREE BOOKS FROM PUBLIC RESOURCES

Creative Solutions to Book Resource Access

Written by Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer

Finding desired books and magazines in a carceral setting can be difficult, but there are some organizations that will send a limited number of free books to people in correctional facilities. The process of requesting and receiving books can take anywhere from six weeks to six months, but if an AIC makes several requests to multiple different organizations, their drawer or shelf will eventually be full of books they are interested in.

These organizations might not be able to provide a specific title, but AICs can request specific subjects or genres. For example, they may not have a copy of “Traveler’s Guide to Hokkaido,” but they might have books about Japan in general they can share. For the greatest chance of success in getting books, requestors are encouraged to list several subjects and genres they’re interested in.

Here’s a list of three different organizations AICs can write to for free books:

Rogue Liberation Library
P.O. Box 524
Ashland, OR 97520
(Up to five books every three months)

Books to Prisoners
c/o Left Bank Books
92 Pike Street Box A
Seattle, WA 98101
(Up to three books and a magazine every five to six months)

Prisoner’s Literature Project
c/o Bound Together Bookstore
1369 Haight Street
San Francisco, CA 94117
(Up to three books every nine months) | ECHO



Brian A. Jackson/Shutterstock

FINANCIAL INFORMATION YOU CAN USE

Common Mistakes on CD-28s

Written by Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer

Aside from canteen purchases and transferring funds from Trust Accounts to phones and tablets, the CD-28 is how AICs request the use of their monies. When CD-28s are improperly completed, this often means people may miss deadlines for fundraisers or money orders are not processed in the timeframe desired.

To avoid delays in processing CD-28s, EOCI’s Accounting Technician Susan VanEpps pointed out several of the most common mistakes made on the CD-28 form.

According to VanEpps, when a CD-28 is filled out the monetary amount must be filled out in full.

If the purchase made is for a \$9 item, the amount an AIC puts on the form should be \$9.00 – the period and zeros included.

She also said for money orders being mailed, the recipient and address on the CD-28 must match the recipient and address on the envelope.

After filling out the CD-28, VanEpps

said AICs must take the form to their unit officer who will verify who they are and witness the AIC signing the bottom of the form. AICs must sign the form in front of the officer, not before. The officer will then stamp and initial the CD-28.

VanEpps said once the CD-28 is complete, it should be stapled to the top left corner on the front of the envelope where the address appears.

If there are any other accompanying documents, such as letters, order forms and authorization forms, those should be inserted into the envelope. The envelope should not be sealed when it is dropped in the mail box.

For CD-28s attached to fundraiser forms, the same rules apply.

AICs must make their selections on the fundraiser form, write the total monetary amount including dollars, period, and cents even if they are zeros, and the AICs signature must be witnessed by a unit officer who will stamp and initial the form. | ECHO

TAKE THE VEGGIE CHALLENGE IN 2025

The 800-Gram Challenge and Why It's Obtainable in The Carceral Setting

Written by James Paulk, Correspondent

A study conducted by the International Sports Science Association (ISSA) showed that 74% of U.S. citizens are consuming less than three servings of fruits and vegetables a day.

In the carceral setting healthy food options are limited, but Baltimore-based nutritionist EC Synkowski offers the “800-gram challenge,” a very attainable goal for incarcerated people.

Micronutrients (vitamins and minerals) and phytonutrients are behind the scene keeping the body and all its systems functioning properly. Research has long suggested that produce has a protective effect, not just against heart disease and cancer but also diabetes and strokes.

Synkowski said instead of worrying about the amount of vitamins, minerals, antioxidants or phytonutrients, just eat 800 grams of fruits and vegetables.

“They can be fresh, cooked, frozen, canned in water, even beans count,” Synkowski said.

Vitamins are organic substances that must be obtained by foods or supplements because the body does not produce them. Minerals are solid inorganic substances that are ingested through food, water or supplements.

Phytonutrients, a substance found in plants like soy beans, cabbage, squash broccoli and cauliflower are believed to function as an antioxidant. They also help reduce blood pressure, decrease LDL cholesterol, protect against some



Shutterstock/AI image

By replacing one meal a day with a vegetable tray AICs can meet the 800-gram challenge, which is shown to lower the risk of cardiovascular disease, some cancers and all causes of death, according to nutritionist EC Synkowski.

cancers and help balance some hormones according to ISSA.

Essential nutrients such as vitamins, minerals and phytonutrients are found in unprocessed foods such as fish, meat, fruit and vegetables.

Synkowski based the 800-gram challenge on a 2017 study published in the International Journal of Epidemiology. Researchers analyzed 95 studies and concluded that eating 800 grams of fruits and vegetables daily was associated with a lower risk of cardiovascular disease, some cancers and all causes of death.

While the variety of fruits and vegetables are limited at EOCI, enough food is provided to meet this challenge.

Botanically, beans are a fruit, but the USDA classified them as a subset in the vegetable group. Either way, they are high in minerals and dietary fiber and can be included in the daily tally.

A typical vegetable tray offered at EOCI tips the scales at about three pounds, just over 800 grams.

Exchanging one meal a day for the vegetable option, fulfills all essential micro and phytonutrients requirements for the 800-gram challenge. |ECHO

Help Shape the Content of The Echo

For AICs: If you have a story you think should be covered in The Echo, send a communication form to IWP and let us know. The Echo is always looking for new and interesting story ideas.

For Staff: Have an idea for a story? Have a program or class that is graduating? Are you implementing a new process or policy in your area? Send an email to Ray Peters or J. Stewart.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Photos by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Jorge Gonzalez-Ortiz poses for a photo while working on his art on Feb. 12, 2025. Gonzalez-Ortiz is originally from Chihuahua, Mexico and his first experience with art was tracing t-shirt graphics at 8 years old.

HOME IS WHERE THE ART IS

Artist Spotlight with Jorge Gonzalez-Ortiz

Written by Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer

In 1995, about 1,658 miles south of Pendleton, Oregon, Jorge Gonzalez-Ortiz learned from his third grade teacher how to trace t-shirt graphics. He was in Chihuahua, Mexico, and to the average U.S. citizen appeared to be a regular 8-year-old kid who liked art. What people did not know by observing him at school was that Ortiz had a work ethic to shame many grown men.

“I worked in the morning so I could buy my own things and all the stuff I needed for school,” Ortiz said. “After work, I would go to school from 1:30 to 6 p.m.”

Mexico has laws against child labor,

but agricultural work in that country is similar to kids in the United States mowing their neighbor’s lawn for a few bucks. Ortiz was earning about 700 pesos a week, equivalent to about 70 U.S. dollars at the time. Working under the table, he gained skills and experience from agricultural and manufacturing fields, and by the age of 12 he decided to drop out of school to focus on work.

“I told my dad, ‘You know what? I like workin’ and makin’ money,’” Ortiz said. “It’s my decision. I need to go work to have my own stuff, no more asking mom and dad [for help].”

When he turned 17, Ortiz’s friends convinced him to try working in the United States for better money. In 2004 Ortiz got his worker’s green card, a government-issued document that allows foreign people to legally live and work in the U.S. Eleven years later, in 2015, he was arrested for a Measure 11 crime and given a day-for-day sentence ending March 26, 2030.

Ortiz has been trying to invest his time wisely at EOCI, engaging in work assignments, participating in Getting Out by Going In cognitive intervention groups, working towards his GED, and improving his artistic skills. Through

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT



Photos by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Gonzalez-Ortiz' artwork displayed at a table in his unit's dayroom on Feb. 12. He spends hours each day working on his art.

practice and art lessons from friends, he has been learning blending and shading techniques.

Ortiz said he works on his art nearly every day, spending between a half hour to an hour on each project. In total, it takes approximately one month to create, shade and color his typical piece. His projects are very vibrant, saturated with bright colors that sometimes appear to shine on the page.

He said he prefers to start with dark colors in his pieces before moving to lighter ones. He also said some artists use the tips of their colored pencils to shade, but he likes to use the side of the pencil tip, making small concentric circles resulting in very smooth blending transitions. Ortiz said one trick he learned was to sharpen the pencil about every minute to keep the flow of color consistent.

Ortiz described doing art as a coping mechanism for him during stressful times. He said he likes to make himself a cup of coffee, put on his headphones to listen to the radio while he works on

his art projects in peace.

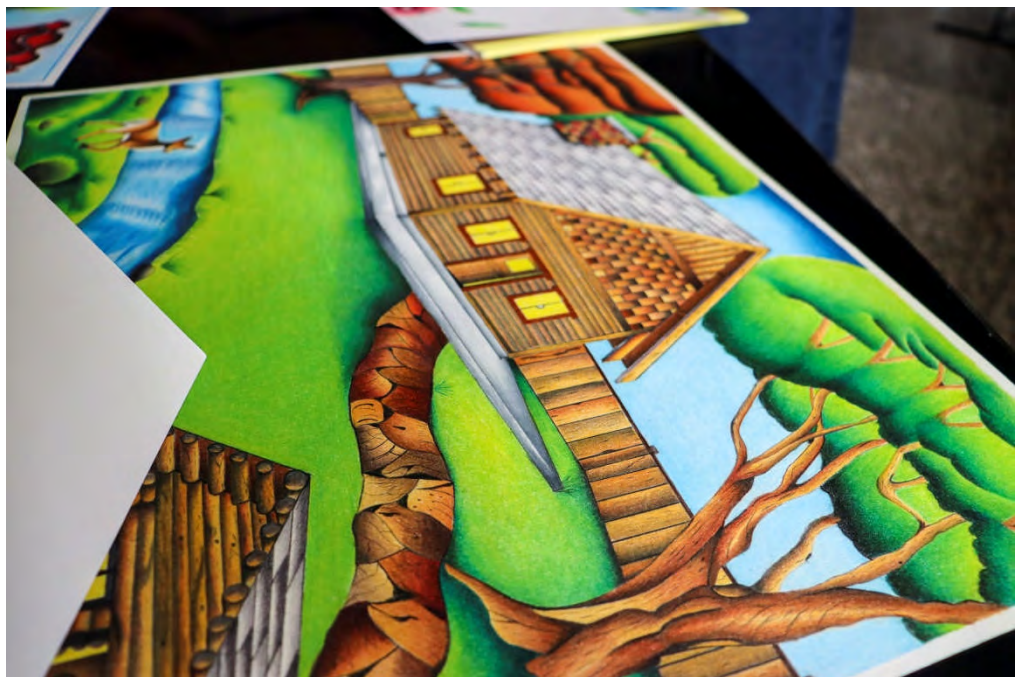
"I feel good," he said, "not thinking about everything around me, just focusing on what I wanna do."

Before being arrested, Ortiz had been earning income as a construction worker, sending large amounts of money to his father in Mexico to support his family and build a home. Spending \$800 for property and another \$100,000 for materials, his father had purchased a 22 by 15-meter plot that and built a four-bedroom home on in Mexico. This was accomplished within two years, but unfortunately, Ortiz would never get to celebrate his new home with the father who built it; his father passed from cancer in 2024.

Ortiz said he worked on an art piece during that time which he drew entirely from hand – a

little house sitting on a small pretty plot of land. He said that doing art helped him grieve and keep his calm. He also said doing art for family helps him cope with missing them by clearing his mind and passing the time productively.

Continued on next page...



Photos by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Gonzalez-Ortiz' projects are very vibrant, saturated with bright colors that sometimes appear to shine on the page.

ARTIST SPOTLIGHT

...continued from previous page

“Time goes fast when I do art,” he said. Ortiz added that he also feels very accomplished when he completes a project, and he evaluates his completed pieces to set future improvement goals.

For other artists, Ortiz said they should not throw away projects just because they made a mistake, otherwise all the time and resources are wasted needlessly.

One might say the same of someone’s life – there can be beauty despite mistakes, and the investments made are worth saving. |ECHO



Ortiz described doing art as a coping mechanism for him during stressful times. He said he likes to make himself a cup of coffee, put on his headphones to listen to the radio while he works on his art projects in peace.

SEEKING ARTISTS

The Echo is seeking incarcerated artists to feature in the next artist spotlight. Art from all genres is welcome, including, but not limited to: pencil, graphite, pen, paint, origami, food (if food is art to you), and any other medium. If you are interested in being featured in the next artist spotlight, send a communication form to IWP.

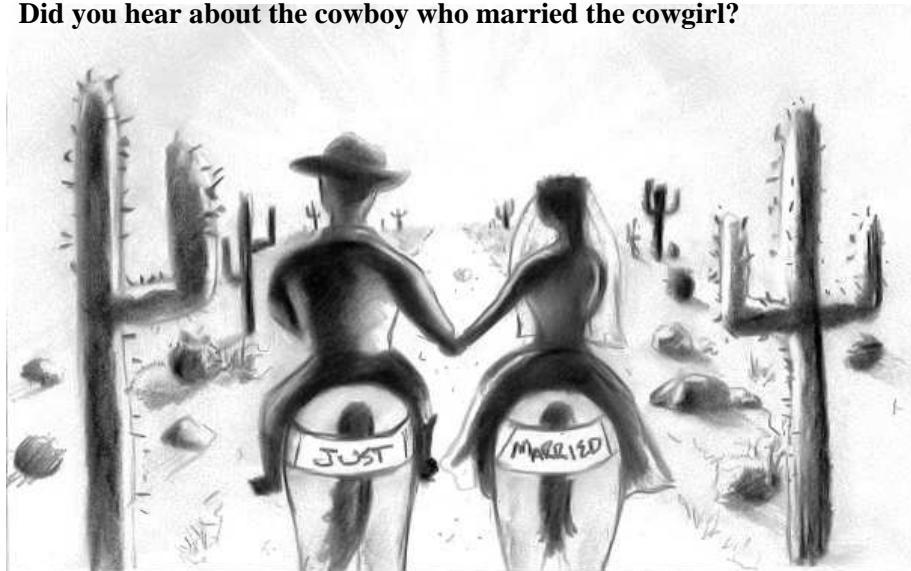
Please include a brief description of your art style.

Interested artists will be placed on a call out to IWP.

COMICS OF THE MONTH

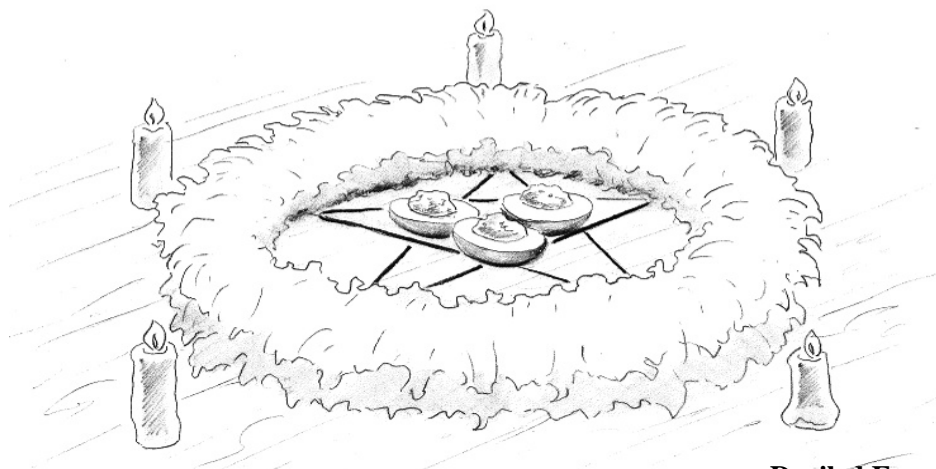
Created by Seth Mathews, Illustrator

Did you hear about the cowboy who married the cowgirl?



They had a Western Union.

What does an evil hen lay?



Deviled Eggs.

SUDOKU

Puzzle 1: Demanding

			5					3
8	1				2			
	2					7		4
		8				3	1	2
	9			5				
7		3						
				8	9			
						2	6	
		4		6			5	

Puzzle 2: Very Challenging

6	2				5	3		
		7						4
						5		
7				5			9	
								5
	8	9	6	1				
2		4	7					
						6		
			9	2	1		8	

PREA INFORMATION

Sexual abuse and harassment are never okay. Tell Someone. GET HELP.

Call the Inspector General's Hotline:

1. Pick up a handset
2. Press *999 to leave a message

All PREA Calls are confidential.

Send a letter to the Governor:

Governor's Office, State Capitol,
Room 160, 900 Court St., Salem, OR
97301

The Oregon Department of Corrections has a zero tolerance policy for sexual abuse and harassment. AICs family can report on their behalf by contacting the Inspector General's public hotline at: (877) 678-4222.

El Abuso sexual y el acoso sexual nunca son aceptables. Avisele a alguien. CONSIGA AYUDA.

Llame al Inspector General:

1. Al numero de ayuda:
2. Levante el teléfono, marque *999.

Todas las llamadas a 'PREA' son gratis y confidenciales.

También puede reportar a la oficina del Gobernador por escrito.

Governor's Office, State Capitol,
Room 160,
900 Court St.,
Salem, OR 97301

Sus amigos o familiares pueden hacer un reporte llamando a la línea del Inspector General al 877-678-4222.

PREA Advocate:

You may write the PREA advocate at:
ODOC PREA Advocate
3601 State St.,
Salem, OR 97301

PUZZLES

See how many points
you can score in one word!

Scrabble Board: March, 2025

Scrabble Basic Rules

No proper nouns like names or places

No contractions like “it’s” or “that’s”

No abbreviations like “app” or “spec”

Board Scores

TW = Triple Word Score

DW = Double Word Score

TL = Triple Letter Score

DL = Double Letter Score

TW			DL				TW				DL			TW
	DW				TL				TL				DW	
		DW				DL		DL				DW		
DL			DW				L ¹				DW			DL
				DW			O ¹			DW				
	TL				TL		U ¹	N ¹	D ²	O ¹	N ¹	E ¹	TL	
		P ³	R ¹	I ¹	S ¹	E ¹	D ²	DL				DL		
TW		L ¹					E ¹				DL			TW
		A ¹			T ¹	A ¹	R ¹	S ¹	I ¹	E ¹	R ¹	DL		
	TL	Y ⁴			R ¹			H ¹	TL				TL	
		E ¹		DW	I ¹			I ¹		DW				
DL		R ¹	DW		M ³		DL	E ¹			DW			DL
		DW				DL		D ²				DW		
	DW				TL				TL				DW	
TW			DL				TW				DL			TW

PLAYER 1



PLAYER 2



RECIPE

RECIPE FOR MARCH: ORANGE DREAMSICLE CAKE



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Ingredients:

- 2 pkg vanilla crème cookies
- 2 pkg cream cheese
- 1 pkg Tang
- 1 pkg orange slices

First, open both packs of vanilla crème cookies and separate the cookies from the filling into two different containers.

When all cookies have been decreamed, crush the cookies into a fine powder.

Then take the cream cheese packets and empty them into the cookie filling. Mix until smooth. this will be your frosting. Once frosting is smooth add Tang drink mix to taste.

At this point make a half a tumbler of Tang in warm water. Slowly add the liquid tang to the now crushed cookie powder mixing it until it forms into a cake-like consistency.

Now form the cookie ball to the bottom of the bowl and let rest until firm.

Place the lid on top and carefully turn bowl upside down. Gently tap bowl so the cake falls unto the lid. Remove the bowl and frost with your Tang-flavored frosting.

For decoration, spilt four orange slices in half and place equal distance apart. |ECHO

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Theme: P.S., I Love You

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17					18						19			
20							21				22			
23					24	25	26			27				
				28				29	30				31	32
33	34	35			36							37		
38				39		40				41	42			
43				44	45					46	47			
48			49							50				
		51						52				53	54	55
56	57					58	59			60	61			
62					63			64	65					
66					67						68			
69					70						71			

From USAtoday.com
Puzzle created by: Lynn Lempel

ACROSS

- 1 Room for contemplative leisure
- 5 Largest artery
- 10 Lotion base, perhaps
- 14 Discharge, as light
- 15 Thick mass
- 16 Monster of a lizard
- 17 He inspired a 2006 Springsteen album
- 19 Eternity, seemingly
- 20 Gear components, often
- 21 Musher's footwear
- 23 Abbreviation in an Eddie Murphy film title
- 24 Subside
- 27 Days of yore
- 28 Best Actor winner of 1966
- 33 Luau entertainment
- 36 Like a cat's tongue
- 37 Bill-killing vote
- 38 Cousin of salmonella
- 40 Event from 1914-1918
- 41 Numbered highway
- 43 Realtor's abbr.
- 44 Dangerous insect
- 47 Imitated
- 48 Pol who called Reagan the Teflon President
- 51 Sounds of mirth
- 52 What it all adds up to
- 53 Whammy
- 56 1960s folk rock band
- 60 Silly
- 62 Junior, e.g.
- 63 Record-setting doubles champ
- 66 Trim
- 67 Practice piece
- 68 2003 Pixar star
- 69 Chooses
- 70 Mayor in Katrina spotlight
- 71 Quartz used in jewelry

ANSWER KEYS

7	5	6	3	9	1	4	8	2
8	9	2	5	7	4	1	3	6
1	3	4	6	8	2	9	7	5
6	4	5	1	2	8	3	9	7
9	7	8	4	5	3	2	6	1
2	1	3	7	6	9	8	5	4
4	8	7	9	1	6	5	2	3
5	9	6	2	3	4	7	1	8
3	2	1	8	7	5	9	4	6

Puzzle 1:
Demanding

7	8	4	1	2	9	5	6	3
1	2	6	4	3	5	8	7	9
3	5	6	9	8	7	4	1	2
2	4	7	3	1	9	6	8	5
5	3	8	7	6	2	9	4	1
6	9	1	8	5	4	2	3	7
8	6	9	2	7	1	3	9	4
4	5	7	3	6	9	2	1	8
9	3	7	5	4	8	1	2	6

Puzzle 2:
Very Challenging

DOWN

- 1 Distance down
- 2 Islamic prince (Var.)
- 3 Evenings, in adpeak
- 4 Cancel a dele
- 5 Impeccable
- 6 "Bravo!" relative
- 7 Navajo weaving
- 8 U.S. investigators
- 9 Fitting
- 10 Winner of all four Grand Slam titles
- 11 "Don't be so serious!"
- 12 Oil-rich spread
- 13 Assuage
- 18 Subway Series locale
- 22 Thin cookie
- 25 Super Bowl XXXVII celebrant, briefly
- 26 Word with leaf or snow
- 28 Buddy
- 29 Was responsible for
- 30 Critical situations
- 31 Accommodating to night owls
- 32 Like Easter eggs
- 33 Rope-making fiber
- 34 Pauley Pavilion locale
- 35 Become discouraged
- 39 Affected by poison ivy, e.g
- 42 Galley mover
- 45 Whet
- 46 Part of some e-mail addresses
- 49 Cavalry swords (Var.)
- 50 Islamic prince
- 53 Refuge
- 54 Antagonist
- 55 Copy of a trade name?
- 56 Manuscript blunder
- 57 Junker of car
- 58 Research results
- 59 Cocky
- 61 El___(weather problem)
- 64 Regan mil. Plan
- 65 Egg protector

ANSWER KEY

X	N	O		N	I	G	V	N		S	T	P	O
O	M	E	N	E	D	E	L	E		E	R	A	P
R		V	I	R	H	S	M	A	P	A	V	E	A
E	N		N	I		S		D	V	B	E	H	T
X	E		H	M	U	S		A	H	V	H		
			R										
			R			O	E	D	E				
D	E	P	A		E	S	T	S	T	S			M
E		U	O	R		I	W	W		I	L	O	C
A				N		E	S	R	O	C	A	V	H
D		L	I	I	O	C	S	L	U	A	P		
			T	S	A	P		B	B	E	S	S	H
E	O	H	S	W	O	N	S			H	T	E	T
S													
S													
E	M	I	T	C	L	U	M	P					
D	E	N	S	A	O	R	T	A					

RECOVERY

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

With Branch Niehouse

Written by James Paulk, Correspondent

Niehouse celebrates nine years of sobriety and enjoys a relationship with his daughter and grandchildren. He is active in the Enrichment Club, a mentor for his peers and a facilitator of programs. He recently began writing a book. In his spare time he talks about the benefits of mindfulness on an institution channel at EOIC.



Branch Niehouse poses for a photograph on Feb. 21, 2025.

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

In 2016, Branch Niehouse finally faced the destruction his actions had caused and where his past choices led him. Niehouse was eight years into a 42-year sentence as a result of his 22-day crime spree in 2008. He realized he needed to make serious life changes - for his family, for his daughter, and for himself - and those changes started with sobriety.

"If I keep doing what I've always done, I'll keep getting what I've always gotten," he said.

Niehouse's philosophy reflects years

of experience with substance addiction and self-reflections on his life and the choices that led him to EOIC.

Up and Down the Pacific Northwest

Niehouse grew up with his older brother and father. He said his childhood home was very rigid and his father was overbearing.

"He was so militant, I couldn't even speak at the dinner table," he said.

His father owned an apartment complex in Los Angeles, California where Niehouse and his brother worked. He

began using methamphetamine when he was 14 years old.

"My brother said we should put [meth] in our coffee, so we could work harder for dad," he said.

Shortly after he began using methamphetamine his family moved to Oregon. In Oregon, Niehouse was suspended from high school and his father sent him to live with his mother in Alaska. It was the first time he remembers meeting his mother.

While he described his father as



strict, Niehouse said his mother was the opposite and encouraged self-expression.

“The only thing my parents held in common was their alcoholism,” he said.

A combination of addictions and this newfound freedom eventually led to more trouble. Niehouse was suspended from his new high school in Alaska.

“They found a gun in my locker in my junior year and kicked me out,” he said. “I thought everyone in Alaska had a gun.”

He was sent back to Oregon to live with his father again.

“He wasn’t happy with me,” he said. “The first thing he did was rip my earring out and slap me.”

Instead of enrolling in high school for his senior year, Niehouse fled from his father’s home to Portland. He continued to use methamphetamine and he began committing crimes to support his addiction.

The next five years he described as a “drug induced blur.” In 1994, during a short moment outside of prison, Niehouse had a daughter named Tavia.

Niehouse spent the majority of his

adult life incarcerated and he was never present in his daughter’s life. Between the years of 1996 and 2025 he has spent less than one collective year outside of prison.

In 2008 he was handed his 42-year sentence.

“I lost everyone I loved,” he said.

Niehouse said he felt depressed and angry. He did not have the tools to express his emotions and continued to use drugs while incarcerated.

After he had two urine analyses test positive for methamphetamines while at the Oregon State Penitentiary, ODOC transferred him to Two Rivers Correctional Institution.

“They kept me there for 10 years,” he said. “But that’s where I found myself.”

Getting Sober at Two Rivers

He described a day in 2016 that he was alone in his cell. Niehouse remembered seeing his reflection in the mirror and not liking the person looking back.

“Everything that has happened to me in my adult life is my fault,” he said.

This new found perspective inspired him to change his behavior by learning coping tools and creating new habits. At first, Alcoholics Anonymous was the only program offered to him, but he did not believe he was an alcoholic.

“I was in the corridor arguing with my counselor that I wasn’t an alcoholic when Chaplain Hodney came out and said ‘Hey, you want to join my anger management course instead?’” said Niehouse. “He must have thought I needed it.”

It was a three month class. Niehouse stayed for three and a half years.

“Chaplain Hodney changed my life,” he said. “I learned so many tools in that class.”

Niehouse requested a transfer to EOCI and arrived in 2021. He found employment at canteen, became a sports official in his off time, and started facilitating a mindfulness program in the disciplinary segregation unit.

“Working with others is my new lane,” he said.

Once he faced his own actions, he no longer felt the desire to mask his struggles or insecurities with substances and anger.

“I’m able to look back now and truly feel remorse for the terrible things I did in my past,” he said. “I hope for the chance to make amends one day.”

In 2025, Niehouse celebrates nine years of sobriety and enjoys a relationship with his daughter and grandchildren. He is active in the Enrichment Club, a mentor for his peers and a facilitator of programs. He recently began writing a book. In his spare time he talks about the benefits of mindfulness on an institution channel at EOCI.

“Once I realized my potential it changed my perspective,” he said. “Now I try to share that with others so they can experience the peace I feel today.” | ECHO

THE ROAD TO RECOVERY

Do you have an inspiring story of sobriety and recovery you would like to share with The Echo and its readers? Contact The Echo and let us know.

The Echo’s “The Road to Recovery” articles feature stories of sobriety. Send a communication form to IWP if you are interested.

COME AND WORK FOR THE ECHO

The Echo is currently seeking to add a correspondent to the masthead, with potential for advancement. This position starts at 11 PRAS points.

Criteria:

- Must be NCI level 2 or higher
- Must work well with staff and AICs of many different backgrounds

Duties include:

- Incorporating writing feedback and taking direction
- Will include article writing, conducting interviews, and researching various topics
- Attending training sessions with outside journalists and other field experts
- Completing weekly homework assignments on AP style writing, news article structure and grammar and punctuation
- Work within the guidelines of ethical journalism, as set by the Society of Professional Journalist
- Ability to be impartial and to look at a topic from multiple angles
- A positive attitude and outlook. The Echo does not publish articles that are unnecessarily disparaging to the institution, the Department of Corrections or other incarcerated people

Hours of Work:

Correspondents are scheduled on weekdays. They may also be sent on assignment during evenings and weekends (covering sporting events, multi activity nights, religious service events, etc...).

To Apply:

Send a communication form (kyte) **and a job application** to IWP.

If you have not completed an application in the last three months, please resubmit.

HELP SHAPE 1664

1664 is currently seeking AICs who are interested in talking about or sharing their experiences on the following topics:

Culture: How do you observe your culture in prison? Are there certain foods to make that represent your heritage? How do you express your culture?

Addiction: How has addiction impacted your life? Are there certain triggers in prison that are difficult to avoid?

If you are interested, send a communication form to IWP and let us know.

WHAT I'VE LEARNED

Are you interested in sharing what you've learned during your time in prison? Edging closer to that release date?

Send a communication form to IWP and let us know. You may be featured in next month's "What I've Learned" section.

The Echo and 1664 are publications of the Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

Direct questions and comments to EOCI Institution Work Programs (IWP). All views and opinions expressed are those of the contributing writers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Corrections.

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