

THE ECHO

Created by incarcerated people

NEWS
FROM
THE
INSIDE



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EASTERN OREGON CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

2500 WESTGATE

PENDLETON, OR 97801

CAR SHOW 2025

Rain Threatens to Thwart Event

Return After Six-Year Break

Written by Kurtis Thompson, with Chris Ainsworth,
Shahid Baskerville, and Phillip Luna



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

On Saturday, May 3, under a light sprinkle of rain, a 1932 Poppy Red Ford Hiboy Coupe is parked on the west yard of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution during the car show. The Ford is one of 25 cars and one motorcycle on display at the event.

On May 3, the west yard of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution was the sight of the first car show in six years. More than 300 EOCI residents attended and paid a \$5 cover charge, which included five photos, popcorn and snow cones. However, technical and scheduling difficulties prevented some people from getting their pictures taken.

Photo problems were not the only unwelcome guest at the event. The week prior was sunny with almost en-

tirely clear skies, but many were dismayed to see moody gray clouds and raindrops intrude on their special day. Fortunately for attendees, smatterings of rain and wind were not enough to stop the 26-vehicle show.

“It was sunny weather all the way up to this event,” said Bryan Clark, correctional rehabilitation manager. “It’s not usually like this, though, so next year will be better.”

See CAR SHOW Page 8

A CLASSICAL PERFORMANCE

Cheifetz and Students Perform Concert for EOCI Residents

Written by Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer

On May 23, Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution’s multipurpose building hosted an afternoon of chamber music performed by three Portland State University students, all pupils of Professor Hamilton Cheifetz.

Cheifetz, who performed at EOCI previously on Sept. 6, 2024, sat this performance out and was instead part of a rapt audience observing the string trio play. The musicians — Charles Dalrymple on violin, Julian Casas on cello and Carson Mangum on viola — expertly completed a rousing performance of two complex stringed pieces and answered audience questions after finishing.

The compositions included a serenade in C major by Ernst von Dohnányi and the String Trio No. 3 in G major, Op. 9 No. 1 by Ludwig van Beethoven. According to Cheifetz, both pieces are incredibly difficult to play, with few college students capable of doing so.

Before the artists began playing,

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The Echo Team

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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.

Friends can receive a digital version of The Echo by texting the word "CORRECTIONS" to the phone number 22828.

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PREA RESOURCE CENTER DEFUNDED

ODOC Remains Committed to PREA Policies, Despite Lack of Funding from Federal Government

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor

The U.S. Department of Justice terminated funding for the National Prison Rape Elimination Act Resource Center in April. The center trained PREA auditors, tracked investigations, provided resources to survivors of sexual abuse, and was a library of resources for how to prevent and address sexual violence in prisons.

According to reporting by The Appeal, a DOJ spokesperson stated the cuts were to eliminate "discretionary funds that no longer aligned with the administration's priorities."

The spokesperson also said the federal government's priorities are "prosecuting criminals, getting illegal drugs off of the streets, and protecting American institutions from toxic DEI and sanctuary city policies."

Jennifer Black, Chief of Staff Public Affairs Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections, said the full impact of the decision to discontinue funding is still unfolding.

"Our commitment remains unwavering," said Black. "DOC is firmly dedicated to upholding the Prison Rape Elimination Act standards at every institution. We will continue to ensure that all individuals in our custody live in an environment free from sexual abuse, sexual harassment and retaliation for reporting such incidents."

Black said the Oregon PREA team is engaged in communication with national partners to work on a path forward.

PREA was passed unanimously by Congress and signed into law by President George W. Bush on Sept. 4, 2003. PREA is a federal law that seeks to reduce incidents of sexual

violence, coercion and solicitation in correctional settings.

In 2010 the U.S. Bureau of Justice Assistance created the National PREA Resource Center to "provide federally funded trained and technical assistance to states and localities, and to serve as a single-stop resource for research and tools for all those in the field working to come into compliance with the federal standards."

The resource center provided resources, training and information for state and local governments to meet federal standards in 2003.

By 2014, every U.S. state was mandated by the federal government to PREA audit its facilities once every three years. Each Oregon facility received a national PREA audit by a USDOJ certified auditor in the mandated time.

The now-defunded PREA Resource Center supported audit functions. Their Online Audit System has been shut down and auditors will be unable to access documents and records previously available.

Despite the challenges, audits will continue to occur as scheduled, according to Black.

"There will be no disruption to our audit schedule," said Black. "All PREA audits will proceed as planned to ensure continued compliance and accountability."

"DOC is coordinating with the Department of Justice and the Governor's Office to stay aligned on developments and next steps," Black said.

ODOC maintains a zero-tolerance policy for sexual abuse and harassment. It is unclear what impact defunding the PREA Resource Center will have. | **ECHO**

PHONES ADDED TO H UNIT, MORE TO COME AT THE FACILITY

EOCI Increases the Number of Phone Stations Available for Residents

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor

Earlier this year, phone service provider IC Solutions provided 20 phone stations to be split between the east and west yards of EOCI, bringing the total to 20 per yard. IC solutions also provided two phone stations per housing unit, to be placed based on need and available space.

In May, H unit added two additional phones to its first and second floors, bringing each unit to six phones.

“We have been slowly adding phones as time allows,” said Steve Cox, Physical Plant Manager. “The west and east yards will gain phones sometime this summer.”

On the west yard, 10 phone stations will be added along the exterior multi-purpose building wall (directly to the left upon entering the west yard).

On the east yard, 10 phone stations will be added along the western fence, past the ice machine. Some tables may be moved to make space.

The location of additional phones on housing units will vary because many units have different layouts.



Photos by Phillip Luna/The Echo

A resident of H unit places a phone call. The unit recently had two more phones added, which were provided by IC solutions, bringing the total to six per 90 residents. Some units have eight phones.

The addition of phone stations may stem in part from a July 2024 ruling by the Federal Communications Commission. The FCC voted to implement a number of new regulations, including rate caps on the cost of phone calls.

According to ODOC, in 2026 phone rates are expected to reduce to \$0.06 per minute because of the FCC ruling. For those in ODOC custody, that means a 33% reduction in the cost of phone calls. | **ECHO**

EXPECTED SCHEDULE CHANGES

Yard Schedule and Count Times Change in September

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor

On Sept. 7, 2025, Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution will be changing some of its scheduled count times, when adults in custody are counted for security purposes, and recreation hours.

According to Assistant Superintendent of Security Tye Stewart, “This is due to the upcoming change in starting and ending time for staff shifts.”

The 8:45 p.m. and 11 p.m. count times will be removed and a new count time of 10 p.m. will be added. The day-

room will close at 9:55 p.m. for count and all out of cell or out of bunk area activities will conclude for the night.

With the removal of the 8:45 p.m. count time, line movements will be at 6:30 p.m., 7:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

Activity areas, such as multi and the recreation rooms, will be open from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. depending on housing unit. Units will still be scheduled by housing unit.

The yard schedule will also change.

Morning yard will open at 8 a.m. instead of 8:30 a.m. and will close at the normal time of 10 a.m.

Afternoon yard will continue to open at 1:30 p.m., but will remain open until 4 p.m.

According to Operations Captain Miller, line movements for morning and afternoon yards will adjust, but the exact times have not been determined.

“The schedule for night yard will remain the same,” said Stewart. Night yard will continue to end when the perimeter lights come on.

The scheduling change will increase yard time, but reduce late evening day room hours. | **ECHO**

AROUND EOCI

FACILITY UNDERGOES RENOVATIONS

Several Major Renovation Projects Occurred Last Year, 2025 Looks to Be the Same

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor, with Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

In June 2024, incarcerated workers are stripping paint and rust from E buildings stairwell which was repainted later that year. E and F buildings stairwells were both refurbished in 2024.

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution underwent major renovations last year, and the trend will continue in 2025. Scheduled for completion are the roofing project, the majority of the stairwell renovation, replacing the heat exchangers, generators, fuel tanks, and adding boosters to the chiller to cool down F and G buildings during the warmer months of the year.

THE TERRACOTTA TILE

The roof replacement project began on Feb. 5, 2024, with six buildings undergoing major roof repairs. According to Steve Cox, EOCI's Physical Plant Manager, the state allocated \$2.33 million to remove, repair and replace the terracotta tile roof.

The project was near 95% complete

at the end of 2024, but Portland-based Carlson Roofing, who is contracted to repair the roof, returned in May to bulk up supports.

The project is expected to be completed in the first few weeks of June.

STAIRWELL REFURBISHMENT

On June 7, 2024 the facility's physical plant workers and outside contractors began refurbishing and repainting the external stairwells for each housing unit. Every building has an external stairwell with four flights of stairs that are subject to year-round weather.

Each stairwell is either pressure washed or sandblasted to remove paint and rust. Some stairwells then undergo structural repairs and afterward, every

stairwell is repainted.

E and F building stairwells were completed in 2024.

In April, the A building appendage stairwell and the G building side stairwell were refurbished. B building was scheduled next, but the process was paused briefly while the scaffolding company completed another contract.

"The stairwell project is fluid and subject to change," said Cox. "The scaffolding company is having difficulties meeting our schedule."

Painting each stairwell requires the use of a four-story scaffold, which is built by a company outside of EOCI.

Cox said the project will continue with B building, then D2, C, A, B appendage, G, and finally F appendage. EOCI has 13 external stairwells and more than 35 flights of stairs.

B building will be completed in June, as scheduled.

"If everything goes as planned for the season," Cox said, "we'll be done the week of September 8."

He said the west side medication line stairs and the religious service stairwell are slated for spring 2026, after which the project will be completed.

AN UNEXPECTED PROJECT

The completion of the stairwell refurbishment coincides with another ongoing project which stems from an event last fall.

In September 2024 the A building heat exchanger, which produces hot water for unit showers and inside each cell, stopped working.

“A heat exchanger is a steam operated water-heater,” Brian Hardegger, an apprentice plumber, told the Echo in September. “It uses copper coils to heat the water.”

A mobile shower unit – a trailer with ten propane-heated showers – was brought to EOCI for the over 200 incarcerated residents of A building. The heat exchanger was replaced by an outside contractor.

Most of the exchangers in the facility are nearly 40 years old. The failure of A building’s exchanger prompted the facility to make replacing the remaining exchangers a priority in 2025.

The \$1.587 million project to replace 10 more heat exchangers began in April.

“They’ll be more efficient,” said Cox of the heat exchangers. “There will be less hot water issues.”

In order to replace the heat exchanger and refurbish the stairwells, residents of the unit must be relocated until the project is complete.

In April, the residents of west side unit C1 moved to unit E2 on the east side of the facility. The remaining floors of building C are for visiting, education and the library.

In May, B1 moved to E3, B3 moved to A3, and B4 moved to E4. The residents of B2 were relocated throughout the facility.

“B unit has been cleared out to replace the heat exchangers and complete the stairwell project simultaneously,” Cox said.

GENERATORS, SOFTWARE AND BOOSTERS

A large hole in the ground on the west side of the facility is the site for a



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

An outside contractor builds a scaffolding on May, 21, 2025 for B building’s stairwell so that it can be painted by incarcerated workers. While the stairwell is being repainted a separate contractor will be replacing B building’s near 40-year-old heat exchanger.

new fuel tank that will support the facility generators. The generators will also be replaced in summer.

“These are tanks with leak detectors and 3,000 gallons to match the east side tanks,” said Cox.

The project will cost \$1.677 million.

In addition, the facility will be updating HVAC computer software and adding booster pumps to the chiller on the west side.

The booster pumps would help reduce temperature in F and G buildings, which is generally high in the warmer months because of how far away the buildings are from the chiller.

H building, which is the farthest away from the chiller, runs off its own system.

While the various construction projects and stairwell renovation may cause temporary inconveniences, the temperatures on F and G building in the warmer months are a annual source of frustration for residents.

“The excessive heat makes me more

irritable,” said Joseph Rife of F2.

“With no air circulation, it gets muggy and adds to the feeling of claustrophobia, making me aware of just how little space we have. I find myself sitting in the dayroom near the door wishing they would prop it open. The heat makes everyone’s irritability go up and creates conflict.”

Rife added that he believes there are more fights and conflicts when the unit is warmer, because the heat adds to the overall tension.

Axel Ries, another resident of F2, said the heat puts people in a sour mood and that if the HVAC equipment functioned properly this would not be a problem.

“We just have old equipment that doesn’t work,” Ries said.

Cox said EOCI is seeking funding to add a chiller on the east side of the facility, where F and G building are located, but the booster would offer aid in the reduction of temperature.

“Right now, it is hard to get cool air to F and G building,” said Cox. | **ECHO**

AROUND EOCI

CONCERT continued from page 1

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Students from Portland State University perform a concert at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution on May 23, 2025. Charles Dalrymple, violin; Julian Casas, cello; and Carson Mangum, viola are students of Professor and Cellist Hamilton Cheifetz, who also attended the event. Cheifetz performed a solo concert at EOCI in September 2024.

Cheifetz introduced the musicians and gave a short explanation of the composition pieces to be performed. He lauded his students for their skill and work ethic.

“I’ve been teaching at Portland State for 48 years, and I love what I’m doing,” Cheifetz said. “But I especially love what I’m doing when I have students who can play anything, can play really beautifully and work hard. And these guys do all that.”

The professor said compositions for string trios are few because they are so difficult. He said only a small percentage of works composed for a stringed quartet were written for the combination of violin, cello and viola in a stringed trio. With only three people,

performers are playing more, sometimes multiple notes at once.

“In these pieces, as you’ll see, nobody gets a break” he said. “They’re constantly playing all the time, and it’s difficult stuff.”

Cheifetz said one part of the Dohnányi piece was “infamous and notorious for being almost unplayable.”

The complexity of the compositions became evident almost immediately when the tempo of music increased. As fingers flew with ever-increasing pace, the naked eye could hardly keep up. In the midst of musical flurry, the trio also had to maintain non-verbal communication.

To the novice observer, when one of

the artists took a short but sharp intake of breath, it may have appeared as if they were holding their breath before playing a particularly difficult part. However, that was not the case.

“When we’re breathing while we’re playing, it’s a way of communicating with each other,” violist Carson Mangum said. “So, when we breath in before we start, that sets the tempo and the style of the movement or piece we will be playing.”

Cheifetz went on to explain how artists cuing one another involves much more than simply listening to the music. He said body language plays an important role, be it a glance, nod or other small gesture. Non-verbal cues like these are developed between group

members to improve collaboration.

For this performance, the string trio had been practicing Dohnányi and Beethoven's pieces for several months. The musicians said the work was worth it and they are thankful for the opportunity to play chamber music.

"The biggest opportunity Portland State University has provided us is doing this, to engage as a chamber group," Cellist Julian Casas said.

He also said some students at other universities do not get opportunities to go out in the community to play as a group because there are so many students.

"A lot of professional musicians who do get lucky and play in a symphony orchestra full time, what they really want to do is this kind of thing (chamber music)," Cheifetz said. "Because, in an orchestra, you're one of ten cellists playing the same thing. You could fall over and nobody would really miss you ... here, there's no conductor, nobody out there saying this is how fast it goes, or how you should play. It's up to the people. So, it's great for personal growth."

Cheifetz said he plans to return to EOCI to play for the residents again, but his return date is tentative. | **ECHO**

Top right: Audience member and EOCI resident Luis Fernando Del Rio shakes hands with cellist Julian Casas after the concert.

Middle right: The trio performs a serenade in C major by Ernst von Dohnányi.

Bottom right: Hamilton Cheifetz, cellist and professor and Portland State University, answers questions from audience members after his students performed two compositions from renowned composers Ernst von Dohnányi and Ludwig van Beethoven.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

AROUND EOCI

CAR SHOW continued from page 1

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

A row of classic cars and a recreational vehicle line the west yard on May 3, 2025 during EOCI's first car show in six years.

A ROUGH START

Clark and counselor Ward King coordinated 26 entries for the show. Some of the contestants drove over an hour from places such as Washington to attend, while others were from the Pendleton area. There were also some current and previous EOCI staff with entries.

“Both Bryan Clark and Ward King are the reason this event occurred and we had so many individuals willing to attend,” said Andrea Neistadt, assistant superintendent of special housing. “I am very grateful and thankful they cared so much about this event and were able to get so many commitments from the community in spite of the rain.”

Having multiple contestants gave

facility residents many options to choose from for the car show contest. The viewers were able to vote for their favorite vehicles across ten different categories. Facility residents were called down to the event in small groups to participate, one housing unit at a time.

After facility residents began their tour, precipitation dropped from Pendleton’s wide-open skies. The rain was not enough to end the event early, but two new problems created their own little storm – scheduling and technical difficulties.

Viewers were allotted 30-minute time blocks to view vehicles, chat with contestants and have photos taken. Unfortunately, many of the viewers did not know about the time limit and

missed the opportunity for photographs.

Adding to time constraint issues, one photographer’s camera suddenly began chewing through batteries like a Chevy 454 through gasoline. Having one less camera and only 30 minutes led to some residents not getting photos, even though they were in line.

“The camera issue isn’t something we could’ve predicted,” Clark said. “But I plan on working with the people who didn’t get their photos to see if we can’t come to some kind of resolution. Next year will be different.”

Clark said he took photos of every vehicle and plans to offer some as compensation to the people who missed out. He is also considering limited refunds minus the cost of refreshments.

Recreation Specialist Jerrad Templin, who was responsible for the photographers for the event, said staff plan to have an “after-action meeting to discuss constraints and hurdles” of the car show to be more efficient in the future.

OVERALL SUCCESS

Event staff and resident photographers adapted and became more coordinated as the event went on. Some workers began informing groups of the time limit as they entered, advising them to get in line for photographs as soon as possible. This one pivot in coordination improved the event team’s efficiency.

Due in part to impromptu process improvements, the car show received positive reviews from contestants and many of the viewers.

“This has been a really good experience, and I haven’t been to a car show in maybe 20 years,” said Michael Wister, contestant and 1986 Ford Fox Body Mustang owner. “This has been nice. You meet a lot of good people here.”

EOCI resident Eduardo Mendoza said, “It’s good that they’re giving us the chance to mingle with different caliber people from society. They are taking the time to come out here to let us feel like we are not incarcerated.”

Resident Marco Xiap-Jelkes echoed Mendoza’s sentiment. “We get to see nice cars and it makes me feel like I’m not in prison,” he said.

Some residents in attendance have been to previous car shows and said this year’s event had the greatest selection of vehicles and voting categories to date.

Axel Ries said he has been to every car show since 2015.

“There’re more cars here than there’s ever been before. I’ve been here since 2015, and I’m blown away by the number of vehicles and number of



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Randall Pierce, owner of the 1982 Chevrolet Corvette, answers questions from residents of the correctional facility at the 2025 car show. He says his car is the only color he thinks a Corvette should come in – “Arrest-me Red.”



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Water droplets blot the hood of an aquamarine Chevy during the May 3, 2025 car show. Car show participants expected poor weather during the event, but while a few canceled in the week prior, 26 volunteers attended and put their vehicles on display.

things you’re able to pick from on the voting sheet,” Ries said. “It’s raining, so I’m sure there’s going to be a few annoyed people who brought their things of beauty out to get rained on, but I appreciate it … I’m grateful to

every one of them who came out.”

According to facility residents, when these types of events it helps dilute toxic prison culture.

Continued on next page...

AROUND EOCI



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

The one motorcycle in show, a 2012 170 horsepower Fat Pounder sits protected under a tent at the 2025 car show. The motorcycle has a Ground Pounder frame, but the "fat" rear tire gives the motorcycle its name.

"There's no real uptightness about [this event] like normal prison activities are," said Dylan Sanchez, facility resident and event volunteer. "A lot of people that don't come together are coming together ... the only thing more you could ask for is your freedom."

A BIT OF HISTORY

Contestant Tom Cary, owner of a custom two-toned 1937 Ford pickup, won Best Exterior. His vehicle, and especially the Ford 351 engine it contains, has a special history at EOCI. According to Cary, the engine was rebuilt in the facility's auto shop between 2012 and 2013.

"I worked [at EOCI] for 30 years," Cary said. "There were only two engines built. The old superintendent had one built and when I found out I said, 'Hey, I want an engine built.' So they built me this one here – I just had to pay for everything. I owned the engine, brought it in and they rebuilt it."

He said he inherited the pickup from his great grandfather, which was pur-

chased brand new in 1937 for a whopping \$900.

Cary's Ford was not the only vehicle with ties to the Pendleton area.

Best of Show and Best Engine contestant winner and Vietnam veteran Jim Humphrey brought a 2006 Dodge Viper SRT-10 truck. He said the truck sat for a long time, and the elements had been slowly degrading the vehicle. Humphrey purchased it about six years ago and poured time and money into its restoration.

"I found it in Pendleton sitting under a tree," he said. "It had been there for years. It was just a mess ... She's kind of my girlfriend, you know? My wife says I spent too much time on it."

According to Humphrey, only 215 of his Viper Truck's year, make, model and color were made. He said the engine pushes "a hair more than 500" horsepower where any high speed is "as smooth as ice."

"It doesn't haul anything," Humphrey said, "but it does haul ass."

ONE BEAUTIFUL BIKE

Clark and King hoped to have multiple motorcycles along with the cars, trucks and recreation vehicle in attendance. But, due to expected weather conditions, three of four motorcycle owners cancelled.

Correctional Officer John Pittman took Best Motorcycle in show by default, however his bike build still would have been a strong contestant had there been other choppers in the running. His custom-built brass and aluminum-billetted 2012 Fat Pounder is no stranger to wins, previously taking awards for Best in Show and Loudest Decibel in different shows.

"It's pushing 170 horses to the wheel," Pittman said. "The engine is so ridiculously overpowered that it kept blowing belts off, so we had to put a drag belt on it to keep everything together."

Pittman said he purchased the motorcycle largely complete, but put in approximately \$32,000 of upgrades and additions. He brought a tent to protect his investment from the elements during the show.

STAFF AND COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Even though attending residents were able to vote for the vehicles they thought were best in each category, majority of people did not witness the award ceremony because it occurred at the end of the event, after many participants had returned to their unit.

During the awards ceremony, Clark thanked all the show participants for attending and announced that EOCI will attempt to have annual shows.

"A great appreciation to all of you, thank you so much for bringing your



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Classic vehicles sit on EOCI's west compound yard. Interestingly, each vehicle here is much younger than the EOCI facility which was complete in 1911.

vehicles," Clark said. "Our guys greatly appreciate it and just the wide variety we had made this just an awesome event."

Most of the contestants had no professional connections to the ODOC, but several were either active or retired employees of EOCI. Clark said the staff were collectively excited to see the return of a car show and eagerly supported efforts to "make it the best" they could.

"The significance of this is that we have many staff who see the value of the event," he said. "This is what we want to have because it's something everyone was excited about."

Administration at EOCI attributed the event's overall success to the collaboration between staff and community members. Many of the contestants were invited directly by staff or were former staff themselves.

Neistadt, the assistant superintendent, said connecting facility residents and community members through these events helps dispel the misconceptions of prison.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

Clark said event organizers are determined to make 2026's car show more organized for all in attendance. He said staff are already looking into solutions for this year's issues.

"We are working on having more time for everyone," Clark said. "We will also have a specific system in place for taking pictures."

Staff are planning to have more photographers available who will work in specific areas during the car show. They are also considering separating the event into east and west groups, and limiting attendance to incentive level three.

Event organizers said they hope to have an even greater selection of vehicles for next year's event, and staff are hoping participants from this year will invite others in the future. They also said contestants were "all very happy with the event and had a great time."

"With the right communication and getting things started again, we are hoping for a significant increase in participants for next year," Clark added.

EOCI administration plans to have an annual car show on the first Saturday of May. | **ECHO**

Photos continued on next page...



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

The 1972 Dodge Charger sits on display, with some viewers saying it reminded them of the Dukes of Hazard.

AROUND EOCI

IN THE PHOTOS

1. Two classic cars on the west yard as volunteers, staff and residents walk around the event.
2. Facility residents get a special opportunity to mingle with the owners of vehicles on display.
3. Contestant and EOCI counselor Joe Byrnes flashes “rock on” behind the wheel of his 1972 Dodge Charger.
4. Ten car show trophies are on display. Each was designed and built by metal shop workers from EOCI’s physical plant. Left, Gerry Hight and to the right is Trevor Trollope.
5. An aquamarine Chevelle on the west yard.
6. The giant deuce-and-a-half military-style flatbed boasting six four-foot tires towers over its smaller automobile relatives.
7. Tami Clark, an office specialist for Food Services at EOCI, smiles for a photo as contestants enter facility grounds – she is driving a 1971 Chevrolet Monte Carlo.
8. Doug and Diane Dalton’s 1972 Ford Mustang, winner of the Best Car award gleams. It has a 525 horsepower 427 stroker engine with a four-speed overdrive automatic transmission. “It will literally shred tires,” Mr. Dalton said.
9. STM Lieutenant Mark Younics sits inside his 2023 CF MOTO 950 Sport which has over \$15,000 in customizations.



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AROUND EOCI





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IN THE PHOTOS

10. A 1937 two-toned Ford, pictured right, is owned by Tom Carey who said he had worked at EOCI for almost 30 years beginning in 1988 until 2017.
11. A “for-fun” 1992 Toyota pickup sits in stark contrast 1949 Chevrolet 3800 work truck.
12. A 1968 Chevrolet Camaro.
13. Lee Flower’s 1970 Chevrolet C-10 step-side truck sits alongside paint shop supervisor Ryan Cecil’s 1932 Ford Victoria.
14. Cecil stops for a photo in his 1932 Ford Victoria. The vehicle won the Portland Roadster Show two years in a row in 1964 and 1965.
15. Pam King’s 1964 Plymouth Valiant.
16. John Thompson’s 1966 Pontiac Catalina with its iconic front end and wide body.
17. Office specialist Emma Munsterman presented Jim Humphrey with award for Best of Show for his 2006 Dodge Viper SRT-10.
18. The snakeskin paint was applied as a dip, similar to how NFL football helmets are decorated. An image – like the snakeskin design – is laid onto a liquid surface and the part is dipped into it, applying the image.
19. The engine bay of Humphrey’s Dodge Viper SRT-10 truck is open, displaying custom aluminum trimmings designed and cut using CNC technology.

CONTEST WINNERS

- Mike Powell for Best Paint, 1968 Chevrolet Camaro
- Mark and Tina Cave for Best Wheels and Tires, 2021 Jeep Wrangler Black Widow Edition
- Tom Carey for Best Exterior, 1937 Ford pickup
- Ron Lamar for Best Interior, 1961 Chevrolet Impala
- Ward and Laura King for Best Concept, 1932 Hiboy Coupe
- Doug and Diane Dalton for Best Car, 1972 Ford Mustang
- Debbie Powell for Best Truck, 1957 Chevrolet 3100
- John Pittman for Best Motorcycle, 2012 Fat Pounder
- Jim Humphrey for Best Engine and Best of Show, 2006 Dodge Viper SRT-10 truck

AROUND EOCI

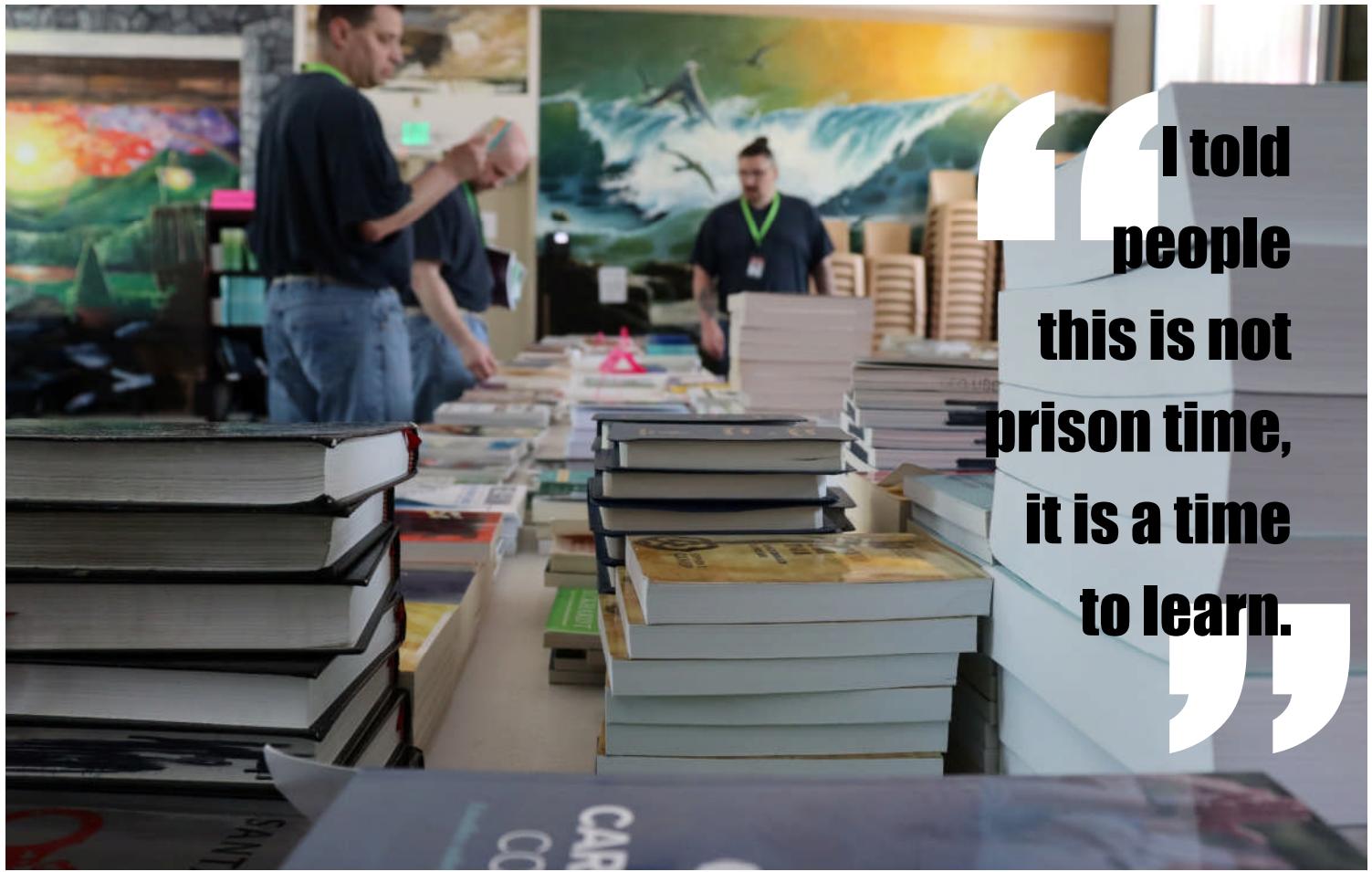


Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

The book fair in the chapel on May 21, 2025. This is the first book fair at EOCI in more than half a decade, and the chaplains handed out more than 500 books to over 105 participants.

YE OLDE BOOK FAIRE

Chapel Book Fair is First in More Than Five Years

Written by Chris Ainsworth, Staff Writer

For the first time in over five years the chapel at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution opened its doors to any adult in custody interested adding to their personal library. The book fair, held on May 21, took over the chapel as men browsed over 1,000 books throughout the day. The event provided the chapel an opportunity to give away donated books.

Three chapel clerks and Chaplain Zuleta sat at tables near the entrance so AICs could have their books stamped and signed at the event. This streamlined process allowed attendees to leave with the books they selected.

“I am just grateful for the opportunity

to come down here and look at the donated books,” said Robert Medley, who took home ten books. “It is nice to be able to come grab stuff relevant to you.”

An average of between \$200 and \$300 in books were distributed to the 105 men who signed up to participate. The chapel handed out more than 500 books.

“I feel really blessed to be able to attend this. I told people this is not prison time, it is a time to learn,” Jaime Gomez said from behind his stack of 25 books.

“Reading allows you to become more civilized. It gives you a richness of your soul.”

Gomez collected Bible and history books prior to prison and found two Bi-

bles he has been searching for to add to his collection. He was also able to find books written over 200 years ago by a few of his favorite ministers. He left the chapel with more books than any other AIC.

“It is a place where everyone could come together and not have to worry about race or anything like that,” said Kaleb Villarreal, who is attending his first book fair in his seven years of incarceration. “There was very good energy, everyone could get along with one common goal.”

Villarreal said he only expected to come home with a couple of books. He found nine. He plans to start coming to chapel services because it will “provide an opportunity to connect with family.”

Most of the donated books came from Christian organizations that chapel clerk Luis Trybom said donate 200-800

**I told
people
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it is a time
to learn.**

books annually. The topics were not limited to faith-based books and included secular literature focusing on self-help, recovery and anger management.

"I think there was quite a diversity of books. A lot of inspiring things," said Justin Alexander Clark Jameson, who also took home ten books. "I found some books to share in fellowship and there was even a book down here for my kids."

Any of the books not handed out at the book fair will be circulated back into the free book shelves in the chapel. Additionally, the chapel will be restocking the libraries in the infirmary and on the disciplinary segregation unit. Some of the overstock will be donated to various non-profit organizations in the community that provide books for veterans, homeless, or recovery and support groups.

In the future the chapel hopes to hold an annual book fair and offer books as part of a care package to



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Chaplain Zuleta and clerks help participants with their free books on May 21, 2025. The book fair allowed EOCI residents to select books and have them tagged as part of their personal property.

adults in custody arriving at the facility who complete a new arrival program through the chapel. Completing the program will allow new arrivals to par-

ticipate in open chapel, currently only offered to incentive level three AICs, which requires 18 months of clear conduct. | **ECHO**

CHAPEL MURALS REPINTED

A Tasteful Sanctuary for All Religions

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor

The chapel at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution received a fresh coat of paint on May 22, as paint shop workers set to repainting the chapel's numerous murals.

The change is intended to ensure the chapel is a welcome place for all faiths and religions. While all the murals depicted nature scenes, the scenes may have been viewed as opposing to the religious beliefs for several denominations.

"It's not our purpose to make it difficult for anyone to practice religion," said Superintendent Dave Pedro. "We want to treat everybody with respect."

The murals in the chapel have been painted over, but the work still needs to

be trimmed out and completed. The paint shop is currently in the process of repainting stairwells around the facility and must work within the schedule of the scaffolding company.

Essentially, the paint shop has a limited window of opportunity to paint each stairwell and the chapel murals will be refined as time permits.

Some of the chapel murals were painted by incarcerated artists more than a decade ago, like many other murals around the facility. However, Pedro said this does not effect murals outside of the chapel.

"The murals around the facility will remain and this only effects where people go to pray," said Pedro.

Pedro said that some of the art and décor he has seen in different places of worship, specifically from his time in Iraq, was truly beautiful. The challenge is finding décor that works for many different religions and hopefully enriches every service.

For example, the décor in a Christian church is very different from a synagogue, a mosque or other places of worship. In the correctional setting one chapel provides for multiple services.

"It's not our purpose to be disrespectful," said Pedro. "We want there to be a tasteful, acceptablye sanctuary for all people to practice their religion."

Pedro added that this is being considered as a standard for every Oregon facility and its chapel.

Contrary to rumor, EOCI's administration will not be accepting proposals for new chapel murals. The walls are expected to remain a solid color. | **ECHO**

AROUND EOCI



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Opportunity Oregon Co-Founder Nancy Pence speaks to residents of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution on May 21, 2025. Opportunity Oregon is a non-profit organization that helps incarcerated people find employment upon their release.

OPPORTUNITY OREGON VISITS EOCI

Co-Founder Nancy Pence Gives Presentation; Career Fair Coming in August

Written by Logan Gimbel, Correspondent

On May 21, about 40 residents at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution came to hear Nancy Pence share an optimistic message about employment after prison. Pence's foundation, Opportunity Oregon, helps connect incarcerated adults with meaningful employment and reentry services after release from prison.

Pence began by sharing her own experience with drugs, her incarceration in 2010 and struggling to find employment after release.

She said drugs were a big part of her life for 14 years and eventually lead her to participating in a gas station robbery.

Later, once Pence found out police were searching for her, she had a moment of clarity and turned herself in to police.

Pence was sentenced to six years in prison.

While incarcerated Pence invested time in changing herself, took advantage of cognitive behavioral programs and chose to associate with people striving to make positive changes.

Despite the change she made during her incarceration, she said not even Burger King would hire her after she released. They considered her a liability. Pence said she will never forget the feeling of rejection and how she felt stuck.

That same Burger King was demolished and is now a car lot while Pence went on to cofound Opportunity Oregon, a recruitment agency which has been able to help hundreds of individuals across the state find not just jobs, but careers.

Pence told residents "to really expand the mind" when filling out Opportunity Oregon's application. She said to list not just work a person thinks they are limited to, but "work you are excited to do."

After receiving an application, Pence then matches the applicant with the best possible employer.

Pance does not just focus on applicants, however, but on potential employers too. Her goal is to encourage companies to hire previously incarcerated people. Pance advocates for “second chance hires” by meeting with business owners and bringing them into prisons across the state, showing employers how many incarcerated jobs are similar to jobs and careers outside the prison system.

Helping find careers is not all Pance and Opportunity Oregon do. They provide connections to reentry services, vocational rehabilitation, housing, veterans assistance and peer mentorship. By being partnered with more than 30 reentry organizations, Opportunity Oregon is able to help from multiple angles.

The various reentry organizations, such as Golden Rule Reentry and Regroup, do everything from providing mentorship to tech support. According to Pance, all reentry organizations Opportunity Oregon is partnered with are run by formerly incarcerated peoples and “they know what you need.”

“You are going to get mentorship and continued support,” said Pance. “Us returned citizens are here for you returning citizens.”

Pance, who has been out of prison for 15 years and free from active addiction for 17, had her record expunged November 2023. She is no longer a felon – something she said she never thought would happen.

“I have absolutely no record at all,” said Pance. “Things are changing out there and they start with making the right choices while we are inside.”

Nancy Pance will be returning to EOCI on Aug. 1, 2025 for the career fair. | **ECHO**



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Two sessions of 20 participants were held on May 21, 2025 in the multi-purpose building for Opportunity Oregon’s presentation.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Co-Founder Nancy Pance takes notes and asks participants about jobs they are interested in pursuing upon release.

SECOND ANNUAL CAREER FAIR AT EOCI

Event Scheduled for Aug. 1, 2025

The 2nd annual career fair is scheduled for August 1, 2025 in EOCI’s multi-purpose building. The event will include outside employers and organizations that help formerly incarcerated people obtain employment, housing, work clothing or other resources.

Sign up will be available in the month of July.

There are several organizations currently committed to attending the Au-

gust career fair - the Sheet Metal Institute, local unions, and Changing Patterns (an organization assisting releasing AICs in successfully navigating the barriers and obstacles of reentry) to name a few. There are several more unions, vocational organizations, and recovery centers tentatively scheduled.

At this time, AICs who are within five years of their release date will be given priority, with the exception of physical plant and OCE workers, who will be

scheduled to attend regardless of sentence length.

Career fairs allow potential employees to network with hiring managers. People exiting prison after long sentences need strong support structures in order to be successful. Obtaining gainful employment and being financially stable are important factors in success.

More details will be provided in the July Echo. | **ECHO**

AROUND EOCl



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Keaton Stephens poses with Snapple drinks at the handout for the Enrichment Club build-your-own-sandwich meal on May 28, 2025.

ENRICHMENT CLUB FUNDRAISER, FINALLY

Enrichment Club Fundraiser Delayed; Raises Funds for School Supplies

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor

The Enrichment Club build-your-own-sandwich meal, an event to raise funds for the purchase of backpacks and school supplies for children attending this year's two family events, occurred on May 28.

Finally.

The event was originally scheduled for handout on May 8 and 9, but was delayed several times.

First, the food items for the event were not ordered by EOCl's administration in time for the handout date. When the food was ordered, several items were delivered late by the vendor. Additionally, the price of some items increased and the Enrichment Club had to find new options to support their event at a similar price, according to Ben Edwards, Enrichment club President.

Two hundred and thirty-one people participated in the event.

"We had a lower turnout because a lot of people just bought the KFC fundraiser from GOGI," said Edwards.

The KFC fundraiser and the build-it-



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Enrichment Club members serving ice cream on May 28, 2025. The club ran out of ice cream with a few units to go, resulting in a few hour delay until more could be purchased.

yourself sandwiches were expensive. The sandwich meal had a base price of \$30, or approximately 45% of the average adult in custody's monthly pay.

Participants in the fundraiser received two sandwiches with their choice of meat and cheese; two 16 oz bottles of V8 Splash; four bags of kettle chips; and guacamole.

The sandwich fundraiser also had a buy-up option for ice cream, which added \$6.

Edwards said 210 of the participants bought the ice cream as well.

The ice cream included three scoops of ice cream — chocolate, vanilla and strawberry — and cups of chocolate, strawberry and mango syrup.

Unfortunately, the club ran out of ice cream with a few orders unfulfilled. Although the handout started around 1 p.m., some participants received their meal after 6 p.m., after more ice cream could be purchased.

Edwards said the fundraiser raised a few thousand dollars for the cause.

The club is expected to donate backpacks and school supplies for children attending the family events on June 14 and in August. | ECHO

MOXIE'S PUPS

JLAD Has Litter of Puppies

Written by Shahid Baskerville, Correspondent

Eight newborn puppies cooed and whimpered inside Joys of Living Assistance Dogs' whelping room, nestled together as their mother, Moxie, stood close by. She gave birth at EOCI on March 25 to her second and final litter.

Moxie welcomed five males, three females and lost one puppy at birth. Moxie and Darby, the puppies' father, were both born at EOCI.

After giving birth to a litter of nine via C-section, Moxie's body can no longer handle a third birth.

"They were born too early," said JLAD trainer Travis Freniere. "There was too many puppies."

In the whelping room, JLAD facilitators and handlers rotate through watching the puppies in hourly shifts.

Trainer Jeremy Adams and Freniere are part of the team working with the puppies. A shift for them consists of making sure the puppies are fed properly, creating a sleeping and bathroom schedule, and cleaning the puppies.

The puppies are introduced to early gastric stimulation, which reduces their chance of developing food allergies.

"We mix goat milk with all [the food]," said Adams. "They get introduced to certain enzymes in their system early."

Bananas, potatoes, lamb, beef, duck, hard boiled eggs and turkey are few foods mixed with goat milk. A healthy diet assists with muscle growth and the puppies learn what and when to eat.

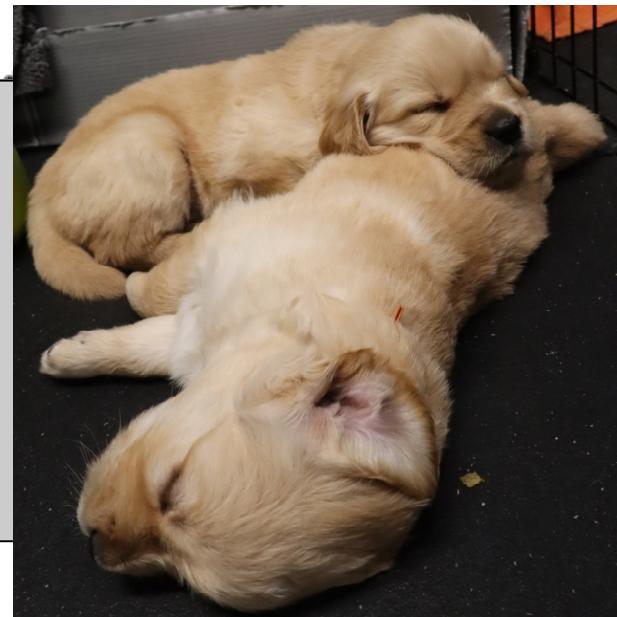
Trainers are also the puppies' first form of socialization. Socialization teaches the puppies how to interact with people and other animals. Training begins when they can eat from a trainer's hand.

Sleep is a part of training for the



Above: On May 7, 2025 eight puppies, about six weeks old, sleep in a pile in the JLAD puppy whelping room on H unit at EOCI. Of the litter, three will become service canines at EOCI.

Right: Two of Moxie's puppies sleep on top of each other in the JLAD puppy whelping room.



Photos by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

puppies. Their bodies tire quicker than mature dogs and certain rest hours are needed.

"Never wake a sleeping puppy," said Freniere. "It builds bad behavior."

Another form of training is early neurological stimulation. Trainers introduce the puppies to early neurological stimulation: 1) placing their paws on an icy towel connecting sensitivity with their feet; 2) elevating a puppy's head when holding them to steady their blood pressure.

"These early challenges prepare the

puppies for life," said Larry Wilt, JLAD trainer.

After seven weeks of training in the whelping room the puppies will break from their litter. Having learned to sit and respond to hand-signed commands, they will begin another stage of socialization — leaving the whelping room for playtime and staying overnight in a JLAD trainers cell.

Of the litter, two will go to a breeding program and six will be split between EOCI and Oregon State Correctional Institution JLAD programs. | **ECHO**

AROUND EOCI

SWARM REACHES NEW HEIGHTS

Beekeepers Wrangle Swarm 25 Feet in the Air

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

A swarm sits on top of the power house as beekeeping facilitators Brett Lloyd and Scott Steffler use a scissor lift to catch the bees on May 21, 2025.

April and May are the busy season for the beekeeping community. Beehives usually create swarms during these months, which indicates a strong and healthy hive. Beekeepers have the typically unpredictable task of preventing or catching swarms which may occur at any time of day.

On May 21, 2025 Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution's beekeeping team experienced new heights to their busy season. One of the nearly dozen hives that is part of EOCI's apiary created a swarm, which landed on the top of the power house – nearly 25 feet in the air.

Beekeeping program facilitators Brett Lloyd and Scott Steffler caught the swarm using a scissor lift, a spray bottle, a plastic box and a brush.

Fortunately, the hive swarmed on a Wednesday afternoon when the beekeeping class usually occurs. More than a dozen students went on a field trip instead of spending their afternoon

in the classroom. The students were able to witness the catching of a swarm.

EOCI's beekeeping program is peer led. Students in the one-year program earn a beginner and apprentice certification through the Washington State Beekeepers Association.



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Lloyd sprays the cluster of bees with sugar water which helps keep the swarm from flying. The bees are then brushed into a container.

The program's facilitators are former students that are selected to pursue a journeyman certification – a three-year process that requires mentoring students and facilitating of classes.

Swarming is a natural process of reproduction that students and facilitators must address each year.

When a hive becomes too populated and there is not enough room for continued growth, the original queen will leave with approximately 60% of the bees in order to form a new colony.

Beekeepers normally aim to prevent hives from swarming by creating splits, a synthetic swarm where one hive is divided into two hives, or through other methods to prevent swarming altogether. A beekeeper would try to prevent a hive from swarming because it sets back honey production.

A hive that swarms loses more than half its bees. When a colony swarms, the worker bees fill their stomachs with honey to ensure they have enough food for the journey and to build out

Continued on next page...

wax when they arrive at their new home.

The original hive will produce a new queen and continue to develop, but ultimately the development of a new queen sets the hive back several weeks.

While some may find a large cluster of bees unsettling, the colony is actually less hostile during this phase of their life.

The honey stomach being filled actually makes it difficult for a bee to protrude its stinger. Additionally, in this state the bees do not have brood (eggs, larvae and pupae) or resources to protect, since they have left all of that behind in their original hive.

When a cluster of bees gather (on a fence, fire hydrant, in the razor wire or on top of the power house) they are surrounding their queen while scout bees fly out to find a suitable living location. This process can be quick or take several hours, even days. Once all the scout bees, or at least 80% of them,



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Beekeepers pour captured honeybees into a hive body on May 21. As long as the queen is in the hive body, the remaining honey bees will follow her.

agree on a suitable living location, the swarm will fly there and begin a new hive.

The swarm was successfully caught

by Lloyd and Steffler and added to a new hive body.

This is the first known swarm for the beekeeping program in 2025. | **ECHO**

THE ROCK CHUCK INFESTATION

Marmots Wreak Havoc on EOCI's Gardens, Workers Hope for Permanent Solution

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor

A colony of yellow-bellied marmots, commonly called rock chucks, are inhabiting the grounds of Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution.

The marmots, which resemble chubby squirrels, are native to the western United States, but have been wreaking havoc on EOCI's gardens and landscaping over the past month.

“They devour everything. They eat all of the vegetables we grow,” said Joe Tuttle, a greenhouse worker and facilitator for EOCI’s agricultural classes.

Between 35,000 and 40,000 pounds of fruits, vegetables and herbs are grown on the grounds. The produce supports mainline meals for the ap-

proximately 1,350 person incarcerated population.

Rock chucks are omnivores — mostly they eat vegetables and grass, but will also eat insects and bird’s eggs on occasion.

Although rock chucks spend nearly 60% of their lives in hibernation, they are social creatures and can live in colonies of several dozen.

“There are at least 20 outside the fence,” said Tuttle. “We’ve caught them in traps in years past. We painted them and then staff relocated them outside the facility, but they just come right back. This is where the food is.”

More than six marmots have been spotted in the JLAD yard and apiary. Several have been sighted in EOCI’s greenhouse, and dozens more on the grounds outside the fence, which are inaccessible to the incarcerated population.

According to Tuttle, this year there are more marmots at EOCI than there have been in past years.

“They have become an issue,” said Tuttle. “I don’t like killing them, but relocation will not work.”

Tuttle said Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife is supposed to come and help address the issue sometime in the near future. | **ECHO**

AROUND EOCI



Photos by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Gerry Hight stands with the decorative art piece he created in the welding shop on May 21, 2025. Hight has been in the welding shop since 2019 and has hopes to leave something behind as he prepares for release.



Hight working in the welding shop in May, 2025.



Hight's project included nearly 300 individual pieces and took three weeks to build.

TIME WELL SPENT

Welder Gerry Hight Completed Decorative Art Piece

Written by Phillip Luna, Editor

In the welding shop, incarcerated workers learn valuable skills and certifications that lead to employment upon release. But the shop is perhaps more well known for the incredible creative art pieces created by its workers.

Gerry Hight is an experienced welder who is known for creativity in his work. Most recently he created a decorative eagle from stainless steel with nearly 300 individual pieces.

He said it took him three weeks to complete the piece. Hight created the design in CADD, and used various tools and welds in the project which displayed his expertise.

“I just wanted to see how much I

could do, what I could come up with,” Hight said.

But he was far from an expert when he came to prison.

Hight had never worked in a skilled labor job before becoming incarcerated. In 2017, he found his first opportunity in EOCI’s carpentry shop.

“I had to be taught how to read a tape measure,” he said. “I had to be taught the basics.”

In 2019, Hight went to work in EOCI’s physical plant and eventually earned a spot in the welding shop.

By October 2022, he had completed 2,000 hour certification for structural

welding through Cascade JTC.

“I remember when I earned my certification, it was five days after I finished the Measure 11 part of my sentence,” he said. “I got a notice in the mail that said I would have gotten 60 days off my sentence if I completed my certification after the Measure 11 part was up.”

But Hight doesn’t worry about that and said he didn’t complete the program for time off his sentence.

He has the potential to release in 2025 with AIP and hopes to find work as a welder after he releases. Hight plans on purchasing his own equipment and creating art as a side business.

“The advice I have for anyone, just keep trying and don’t give up,” he said. “When you get an opportunity, leave that bridge better than when you crossed it.” | **ECHO**



Photo by Chris Ainsworth/The Echo

Stevon Welch, left, and Mark Brunson are father and son. They reconnected in prison after more than 26 years. Brunson was part of his son's baptism at the EOCI chapel on April 23.

FATHER AND SON RECONNECT IN PRISON

Son is Baptized in EOCI's Chapel; Father Performs the Rite

Written by Chris Ainsworth, Staff Writer

On April 23 Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution's chapel held baptisms for eight adults in custody. The event was held in place of a weekly gathering for men participating in Full Gospel Businessman Fellowship service. This baptism held special significance for two of the men involved.

Mark Brunson was given the unique experience of offering testimony for Stevon Welch. The two are father and son. Following his testimony, Brunson was told he would have the honor of performing the baptism rite on his son.

"I thought I was just going to give testimony and show my support," said Brunson, who did not hide his emotions as he recalled the event. "I am overwhelmed with it all, the most awesome thing I have done in my life."

In 2024 Brunson was reunited with his son, Welch, after more than 26 years. Their last contact was when

Welch was about 4 years old. Welch was incarcerated in 2019, but did not arrive at EOCI until 2024.

A few months after arriving, he was finally able to meet with his estranged father.

"A guy on my unit told me my son wanted me to come outside. I said, 'You're nuts, my son ain't here,'" Brunson said.

But it was true – his son was at EOCI.

The two met on the facility's east yard for a very emotional reunion.

"I was so full of joy and happiness. Kind of in a daze because I couldn't believe it was him," said Brunson.

"It was saddening to know that we had to meet [in prison]," Welch said. "But it was relieving to know that what I felt was real. It was an emotional day. There was a lot of crying."

Welch attended church with his grandmother for about seven years during his youth, but stopped attending around 14 years old. After getting married he attended church occasionally with his wife. He said he chose drugs and alcohol and was never baptized.

Following their reunion, Brunson convinced his son to begin attending church with him. A few months later Welch was signed up to be baptized – in the same chapel where Brunson was baptized 14 years prior.

"I always wanted to have somebody that I loved and cherished [at my baptism] with me, but honestly I never thought it would be my dad," said Welch. "I'm a little speechless at that, still trying to comprehend that moment was real."

Welch said he has seen support from his loved ones since being baptized. "Especially from my wife's family," he said. They now connect over Bible study and Scriptures.

"There is a lot more honesty and truth in our relationship now," said Welch about his wife. "I can now give her the honesty she deserves."

The father and son bond has also grown since the baptism.

"I believe we are closer now. It is something we will share for the rest of our lives," said Brunson. "So much of our lives have been lost – now we have a chance to build a stronger relationship."

Baptisms at EOCI's chapel occur for several denominations throughout the year. Two men from the Lighthouse Pentecostal service were baptized on April 26, and on May 20 Restoration Ministries held a service baptizing seven men.

The next round of baptisms is planned for August 20 and 23 for the Full Gospel Businessmen Fellowship and Lighthouse Pentecostal, respectively. | **ECHO**

WEDDINGS

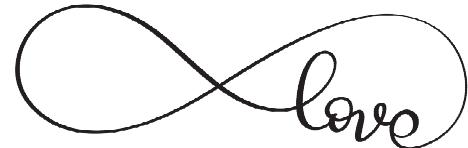
Wedding Announcements

Weddings held in EOCl's visiting room in May; Three couples married



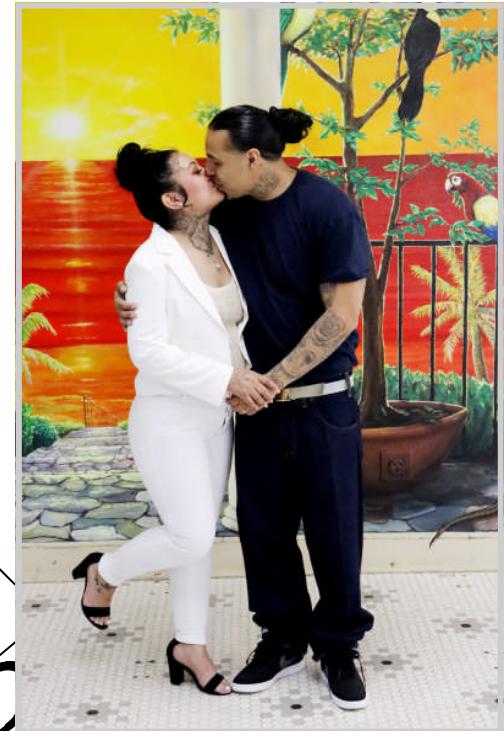
It's Official

Aimee and Matthew exchanged vows in front of their families and friends on May 13, 2025. After a whirlwind romance, the two souls were joined by the bride's sister in Pendleton, Oregon. They are happy to announce they are officially husband and wife, and although you were not there in person you were there in their hearts – the new Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Martinez.



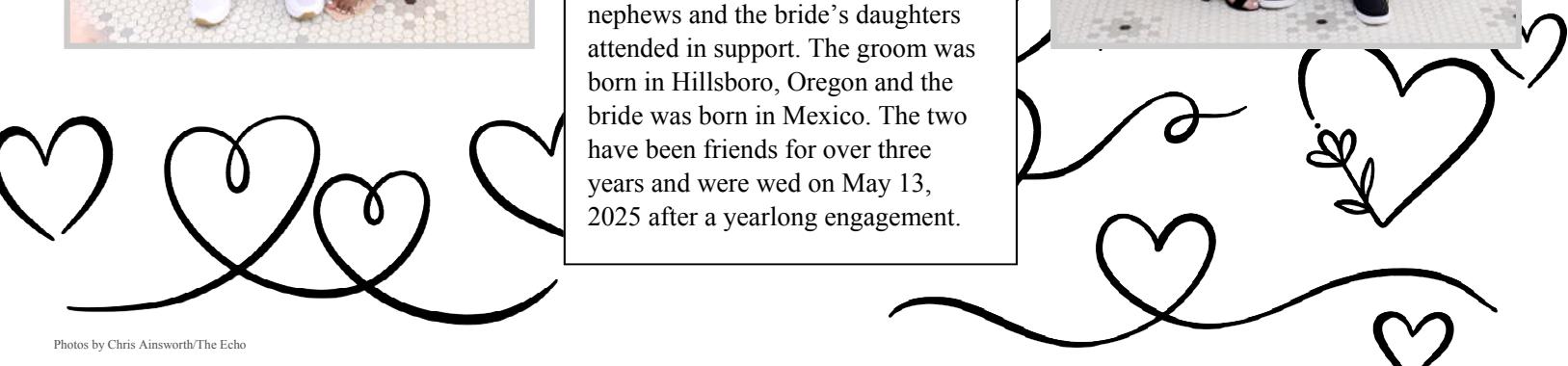
We Tied the Knot

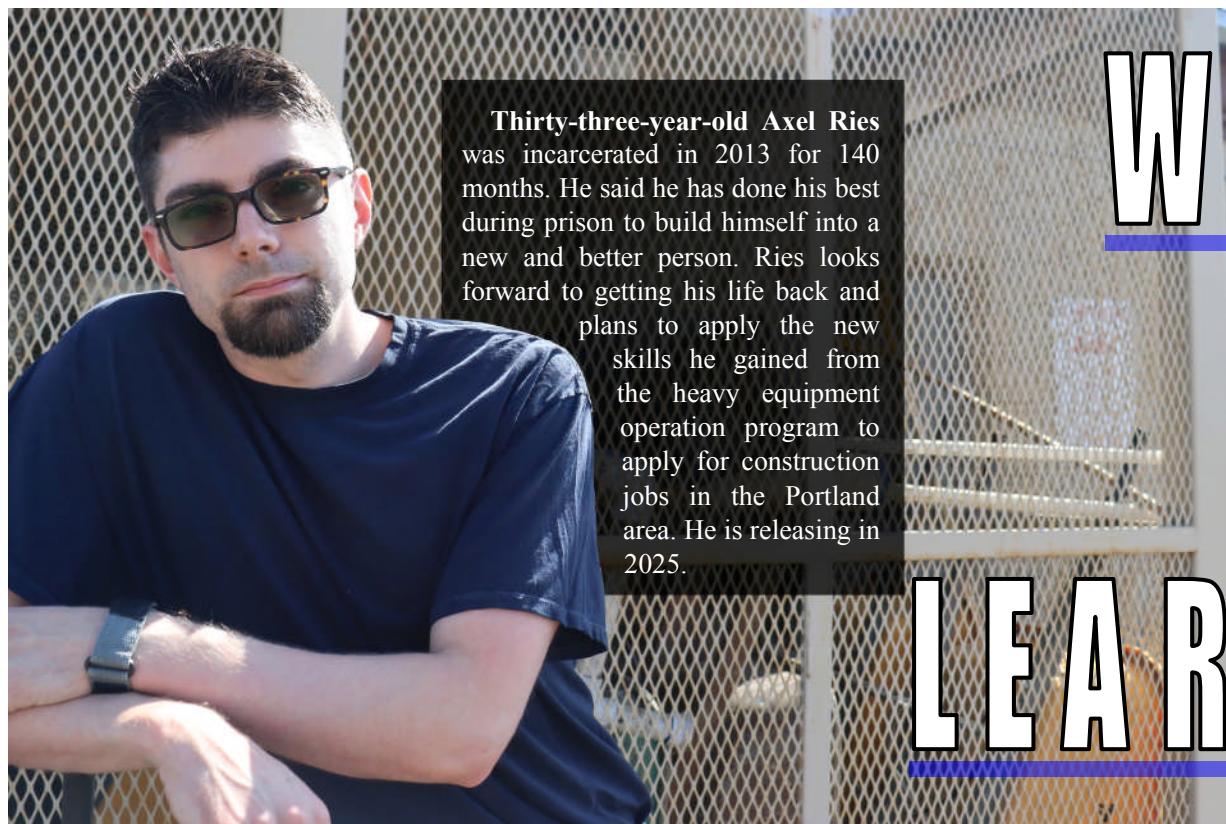
Mr. and Mrs. Marcus Phillips are happy to announce their union in marriage. The couple shared heartfelt words in front of their families and friends on May 13, 2025. The newlyweds were friends of twelve years who reconnected and after a brief engagement were married in Pendleton, Oregon.



Just Married

Oscar and Tanya Mandujano were proud to exchange rings at an intimate ceremony in Pendleton, Oregon. The groom's mother, sister, and nephews and the bride's daughters attended in support. The groom was born in Hillsboro, Oregon and the bride was born in Mexico. The two have been friends for over three years and were wed on May 13, 2025 after a yearlong engagement.





With Axel Ries

Interview by Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer

One thing that surprised me about prison was...

I heard all these war stories about fighting the biggest guy you see when you first get there, and it wasn't that way ... prison was a whole new thing to me.

The best advice I could give someone new to prison is...

Know how you want to do your time – easy or hard. If you want to be a knucklehead you'll be in and out of the hole and doing hard time. Doesn't have to be like that.

The best item to buy off canteen is...

Staple snack foods, probably unsalted peanuts, the health mix. It's a healthier choice when it comes to your foods. It's a mid-level protein and better for you than Little Debbie.

One thing I wish I had never wasted money on is...

A set of Golden Age Wonder Woman books. They were big old hardbound books, like \$50 each. I read them and was like, "why did I buy these?" I sent them out to sell and I got like, \$3 for the both of them.

The food I'm looking forward to the most is...

Panda Express. I want the three-piece meal, with Beijing beef, orange chicken and chowmein. Oh, yeah.

The program that helped me the most...

Baker Technical Institute, the heavy equipment operation



Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

program, hands down the best thing that ever came to this institution. After that is Opportunity Oregon.

Before coming to prison, I would consider myself...

Everything that I'm not now. I was naïve, more stubborn. I was listless and lacked any direction. I was emotionally driven, that was my biggest problem. I would act without thinking about the consequences.

Now I consider myself...

Better. I'm more grounded with reality. I have discipline for the things that matter. I'm aware of the decisions I make now. I have a drive for where I want to go. I have a goal.

What I've learned is...

How to be a better person. I've done my best to become the best person I can be. The only similarities between the old me and now is in looks alone.

I am looking forward to...

Being able to get behind the wheel again. Being able to walk out on my front porch when I wake up at 3 o'clock in the morning – I can go walk outside. I'm not trapped on my bunk.

A piece of advice I could give to someone in prison...

Listen to those who are successful. I hope you're not asking advice from people who are in and out of the hole. They don't know how to do easy time. | **ECHO**



AN INTERVIEW WITH CAPTAIN MILLER

Captain Miller Takes Over Role as Operations Captain, Interviews with The Echo

Written by Shahid Baskerville, Correspondent

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution selected a new Operations Captain after Captain Robert Rabb, who previously filled the role, moved to Two Rivers Correctional Institution for a position.

Captain Miller is filling the chair and sat down for an interview with The Echo.

The following has been edited for length and clarity.

Echo: How long have you worked for Oregon Department of Corrections?

Cpt. Miller: 20 years next month [June].

Echo: What is an Operations Captain?

Cpt. Miller: I am still learning that myself. It is the captain of captains. I oversee operations. I am the Assistant Superintendent's right-hand man, overseeing plans or questions about operations with all the physical plant stuff – I give security approval for major projects. I sit on pretty much every com-

mittee. Anything you can think of, I am on the committee now.

I give approval of several things such as package authorizations. I handle operations between staff and AICs alike.

Echo: What was your path to getting the position you hold now?

Cpt. Miller: I was an officer for just over four years. Then I got out-of-class corporal and I think I set a record by being out-of-class corporal for 15 months.

Next was permanent corporal then out-of-class sergeant. I did that for a year before becoming a full-time sergeant.

By year 12, I was an out-of-class lieutenant, then went back down to sergeant. I was content with being a sergeant because it is one of the best positions. So, I stayed in that position for six years.

My mentor [Assistant Superintendent] Stewart and Captain Walker twisted my arm to make me interview for lieutenant again.

I became a lieutenant two years ago,

July of '23. I did that for eight months then got out-of-class captain. I did that for four months and now I am permanent captain.

Echo: Is EOCI the only institution you have worked in?

Cpt. Miller: This is the only institution I have worked at.

Echo: Going from officer to sergeant to lieutenant to captain, what have you noticed with the changes at EOCI?

Cpt. Miller: Everything is always and will forever change. The higher you go the more input you have.

I am given more knowledge because I am making some decisions. Like Sergeant Krol calls himself a compound admirer, but he is more than that.

Sergeants and lieutenants coordinate with each other to get staff where they need to go, and captains coordinate much of that, but now I am more behind the scenes.

Echo: Does your current position allow you to make rule changes?

Cpt. Miller: No. Actually, my current position is very big and allows me to have input within changes. We are going to re-vamp the guidelines for AICs when we switch the start of shift times for the officers.

Yards are going to be extended and count time will be adjusted. I am going to pretty much be stuck to my desk re-writing and updating all the post orders.

I have input on putting out the final product because there is always more than one person making decisions. There is a committee, and Stewart is involved, and also [Assistant Superintendent of Special Housing] Neistadt and all the assistant superintendents.

Special operations, operations captain – there are a lot more people who have a hand in rule changes. I cannot just make decisions by myself. I cannot change a rule either.

Echo: Do you have plans to better the operations at EOCI?

Cpt. Miller: I do not think you can get much better. I am stepping into a chair that Captain Rabb filled, with his vast experience and knowledge. I got a big chair to fill. People say I have big shoes to fill, but no, he took his shoes with him. I will be filling his chair, but I have a lot to learn.

It will be awhile before I am up to speed 100%. Every day I learn just a little bit more, which makes it more routine. I have a lot to learn still.

Echo: Recently, a memo was posted on housing units in regards to items AICs can bring to the yard. What caused the change?

Cpt. Miller: I had several yard staff come to me and ask for something to be put out. It is one of those rules, well more of a guideline that kind of got overlooked. So, in those cases we put out memos as a gentle reminder that “hey we need to start following this.”

If you go by the rule, stickers and headbands are not allowed on the pitchers. There is a reason behind it. It is not like we just want to start cracking down on people.

If you have items covering the pitchers, how are we suppose to know what is inside the pitcher? We have clear pitchers for a reason, and we need to make sure we keep those clear. Nothing other than an empty pitcher.

So, you will see postings from time to time which is just a gentle reminder of something that is in the guidelines and we are simply re-enforcing it.

It is us giving AICs a heads up because this is going to be a focus of ours. It’s a forewarning – and I do not want AICs to be surprised by it, because I want everyone to be informed on these things.

We are trying to keep the population as informed as we can, while at the same time keeping an open line of communication on both ends. | **ECHO**

ASK EHR

The Echo

Over the past year, the Health Service Department has begun transitioning from paper records to electronic health records (EHR).

In a press release on Feb. 3, ODOC Director Mike Reese said, “DOC will also implement an enhanced electronic health records system to improve documentation, data tracking, and communication across all DOC facilities.”

As a result, the Health Service Department started an “Ask EHR” program, where questions about the change to electronic records can be asked. | **ECHO**

DO YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ELECTRONIC HEALTHCARE RECORDS (EHR)?

SEND A KYTE!

If you have any questions about how the EHR will work, we’re here to help!

Simply send a kyte with your questions, and we’ll do our best to provide the answers you need.

[Learn More](#)

Please address your kyte with questions about the EHR to:

ASK EHR



NEWS YOU CAN USE

HYDRATION

One and a Half Pitchers Per Day

Written by Logan Gmibel, Correspondent



KieferPix/Shutterstock

According to Nutrition Facts by Karen Frazier, water is one of the most important things the body depends on. Its uses include helping to keep the body cool, assisting with lubrication of the joints and more.

With the high heat of summer comes the need to drink more water.

In her book, Frazier said an average adult male needs to consume roughly 101 ounces of water per day, or about one and a half two-liter pitchers. An adult female needs about 74 ounces, or a single two-liter pitcher.

The numbers may seem like a lot, but thankfully water is in just about everything consumed.

Frazier stated that as a rule of thumb to drink when thirsty and sip water throughout the day. Beverages containing caffeine, such as coffee or tea, have a diuretic effect increasing hydration requirements.

Drink too much water too quickly for the body to handle and a condition called hyponatremia may develop.

Hyponatremia occurs when water in the body dilutes the electrolytes so much that cells begin to swell; cases can be mild or life-threatening. Symptoms may include nausea, confusion, energy loss or muscle weakness. | **ECHO**



Zhanna Hapanovich/Shutterstock

TRACK ETIQUETTE

The Right Shoes and Respectful Walkers Make for Good Running

Written by Logan Gmibel, Correspondent

With sunnier days and more yard times, many residents at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution are heading outside. Whether it is to play sports, lift weights, or utilize the track, the yards seem more populated than ever. For those dedicated runners the increased activity and crowded lanes can be a source of frustration.

Runners are often forced to either step off the track or weave around clusters of people when individuals spread out across the lanes or stop in the middle of the track to talk – both of which increase the risk of collisions or injury.

To prevent conflict the tracks at EOCl have been spray painted with “walk” and “run” on their respective lanes. Slow movers stick to the two outside lanes, runners use the two inside lanes with the fastest individuals running on the innermost lane.

When passing people or crossing lanes, a safe precaution would be taking a moment to look for incoming runners.

When stopping – either to talk, stretch or take a sip of water – stepping off the track leaves the lanes open. For

those who are running, shouting “track” when coming up to a person obstructing the lane lets them know to step out of the way.

“Most people hear you coming and move out of the way,” said resident Matt Gilbert. “If they don’t, you can just say, ‘Track,’ and people will move out of the way.”

Running Health

According to Pete Magill, Thomas Schwartz and Melissa Breyer, authors of *Build Your Running Body*, a good running shoe protects against excessive impact forces that occur when the foot strikes the ground.

Build Your Running Body stated a good running shoe fits well, provides good support, and is lightweight.

Gunner Cravens, an EOCl resident and avid shoe enthusiast, said the new Nike Swiftruns check all the boxes.

“They’re a good running shoe, well cushioned and they conform to your sole,” said Cravens, who owned hundreds of shoes prior to his incarceration.

The Nike Swiftruns are available from commissary for \$114. | **ECHO**

STOCK TRADING WHILE INCARCERATED

What to Know About Investment Portal Companies from AICs

Written by Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer



Kenary820/Shutterstock

Stock market trade is possible for incarcerated people, and some are using stocks to build wealth for things like retirement and transitional funds. Many have been turned off to the stock market, however, because trading can be complex and appears to require a lot of money. To overcome those barriers, some AICs use investment portal companies and can start with as little as \$50.

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution residents Charles Frost and James Gulley suggest using investment portal companies like Goldman Sachs and Computer Share. Adults in custody can write the company requesting information on specific companies – such as the ones who appear on EOCI's cable channel 96 – and the IPC will reply with the requested information and instructions for investment. An individual can then send money using the instructions provided by the IPC for investment.

Frost, an investor for 20 years, and Gulley, an investor for 15 years, are two people who were trading stocks before incarceration and continue to do

so successfully. They have traded stocks over the phone with assistance from people they know and have traded stocks through the mail using investment portal companies.

"I have what's called a stewardship," Frost said. "You can contact places like Goldman Sachs or Computer Share [through the mail] and they'll process your investments for you."

When Frost and Gulley contact their IPCs they know which businesses they want to invest in. While there are many sources of information on tradable businesses, they both suggested watching channel 96.

Once a person knows which company to invest in, they can request information on that business from the IPCs.

"I would write a letter to Computer Share and tell them which companies you want and they will send you a prospectus and enrollment packets," Gulley said. "The prospectus is a company's statement on 'why you should buy our stock,' almost like an annual report. It gives you the company metrics so you can make an informed decision."

Once a person decides who to invest in, they can send money via CD28 to the investment portal company who will buy and manage the requested stocks. After the stocks are bought, investors receive statements of their accounts when changes happen such as the payment of dividends each quarter. A person also receives an account statement when they send money to be invested.

For beginning investors, both Frost and Gulley suggested beginning with dividend stocks. Dividend stocks pay a percentage of their worth at set times, commonly every quarter of the year. Many organizations found listed with Computer Share offer dividend reinvestment programs, known as DRIP accounts.

"The dividend is the safer bet," Frost said. "I'm getting to be almost 40. I'm going to be a grandpa soon, so everything I'm focused on now is dividend investing."

"If you don't have much money, and you're only putting maybe \$50 per month into the market, don't take chances on it," Gulley said. "Do dividend-paying stocks in sectors that are stable, like healthcare, utilities, pharmaceuticals and consumer staples."

For more information on trading stocks, AICs can request information from Computer Share at the following address:

Computer Share
PO Box 43078
Providence, RI 02940-3078

Disclaimer: The information contained in this article are the opinions of those interviewed and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Echo, ODOC or their staff. The Echo does not give stock trading advice. | **ECHO**

GAME KEEPER



Photos by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Main character Ein executes a super move during a fight sequence in the video game Harvestella for the Nintendo Switch. Harvestella can be purchased through FLE for \$69.

ROLE-PLAYING AND FARMING SIMULATOR

Harvestella Combines Elements of Two Genres

Written by Kurtis Thompson, Staff Writer

For those who enjoy franchises like Final Fantasy and Rune Factory, Harvestella will fit right in. Square Enix combined familiar elements from role-playing games and farming simulators to create a farming/lifestyle action title complete with craftable items, side quests, and unique characters. Originally released November 2022, Harvestella is available from FLE for \$69.

When beginning the game, players will create a custom character from basic preset traits and then choose either the preselected name “Ein” or type a custom one. The storyline begins with Ein lying face-down inside an unknown village during a dangerous atmospheric phenomenon, known as Quietus, which makes people fatally sick. The air is filled with irradiated dust emitted by the nearby Seaslight – an enormous crystalline structure. After being awoken by an angelic being who then disappears, Ein wanders aimlessly to a cliff face over looking the Seas-

light before passing out.

After the Quietus has passed, Ein is again woken, but this time by a village doctor named Cres. She finds it unusual for someone to be alive after Quietus exposure, and the mystery is further exacerbated by Ein’s apparent amnesia. Eventually, the village mayor kindly gives Ein permission to stay at an abandoned farm so they can heal and attempt to uncover clues to their own origins.

The game begins with Ein trying to recover at her new digs, but then quickly progresses to investigating the Seasights, of which there are four. Disturbances occurring with the giant crystals are causing the dangerous Quietus phenomenon. Players will divide their time between uncovering the Seaslight mystery, completing side-quests and earning income and items from their farm.

The game has a 24-hour and four-season time system which forces players to plan their daily actions and balance

crops for maximum benefit. Ein must sleep each day or risk passing out, upon which players will pay a medical fee to Cres. When the time reads “Early Hours” and the screen edges are turning black, it is time for bed.

Players can raise chicken and ram-like animals, cultivate cropland and build processors to create different products. In front of the house is a shipping container where items can be sold by the player.

The crafting system allows food to be cooked for sale or use, and each dish has different benefits when Ein consumes them. Players can also craft tools, farm processors and weapon items.

Harvestella has an overworld map for navigating to different areas. Once in a location, players will be able to explore, talk to NPCs, visit stores, fight many unique enemies and more.

There are three different types of quests; the main storyline missions, side-quests and character story quests. By completing character story quests, players can unlock buffs and new abilities for their party members. There is a total of eight unique characters who will join Ein’s party on quests, two at a time, and can be swapped out at save locations throughout the game world.

Ein has two equipment slots for beneficial accessories and three class slots for combat. Players can progressively unlock a total of 12 different combat classes, each with their own look, style and abilities. There are only five overt categories of stats; hit points, physical attack and defense, and magical attack and defense.

The combat is action-RPG rather than turn-based, and players will be able to swap between three equipped classes on the fly. During boss combat, breaker bars can be built up on the enemy which gives damage multipliers and allows for Ein’s party members to use special moves.



Character profiles in the menu of Harvestella.

Photos by Phillip Luna/The Echo



Main character Ein in the farming section of Harvestella.

Photos by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Weapons are static but can be upgraded at the village blacksmith. The farm can be expanded through the renovator, and farm animals plus their feed can be purchased from a vendor who appears later in the game's beginning. Everyday items and food recipes can be purchased at stores in each village.

Physical actions, whether from combat, farming or sprinting, consumes stamina which can be restored by sleeping or eating certain foods. Once depleted, the player can only walk and talk to NPCs.

Players gain experience through combat which is applied each night

towards leveling up. Later on, there will also be goal awards through NPCs who come to live at the farm. New items and abilities are gained by completing the special goals.

Square Enix did well balancing complexity and graphics within the Nintendo Switch's processing constraints. The storyline moves along at a likeable clip while maintaining a slow-burn but rewarding progress typical to farming/lifestyle genres. Harvestella will likely be well received by RPG and farming fans.

Estimated play time: approximately 47+ hours for speed run, 101+ hours for 100% completion | **ECHO**

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 linea 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

SCRABBLE CHALLENGE

See how many points
you can score in one word!

Scrabble Board: June, 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

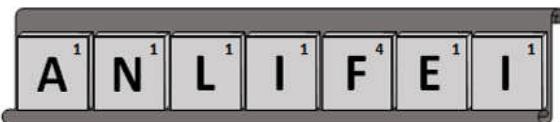
DW = Double Word Score

TL = Triple Letter Score

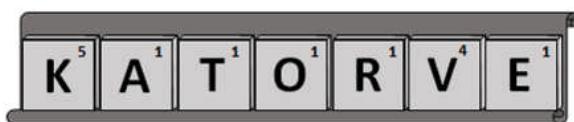
DL = Double Letter Score

TW			DL			TW				DL			TW
	DW			TL			TL				DW		
	DW				DL		DL				DW		
DL		DW				E ¹				DW			DL
			DW			L ¹			DW				
				TL	TL	I ¹		TL				TL	
E ¹	L ¹	E ¹	V ⁴	E ¹	N ¹	DL	G ²	DL	I ¹	N ¹	A ¹	R ¹	H ⁴
TW			DL		O ¹	N ¹	I ¹	O ¹	N ¹		DL		TW
	DL				DL	B ³	DL				DL		
		TL		TL		L ¹		TL				TL	
			DW			E ¹		DW					
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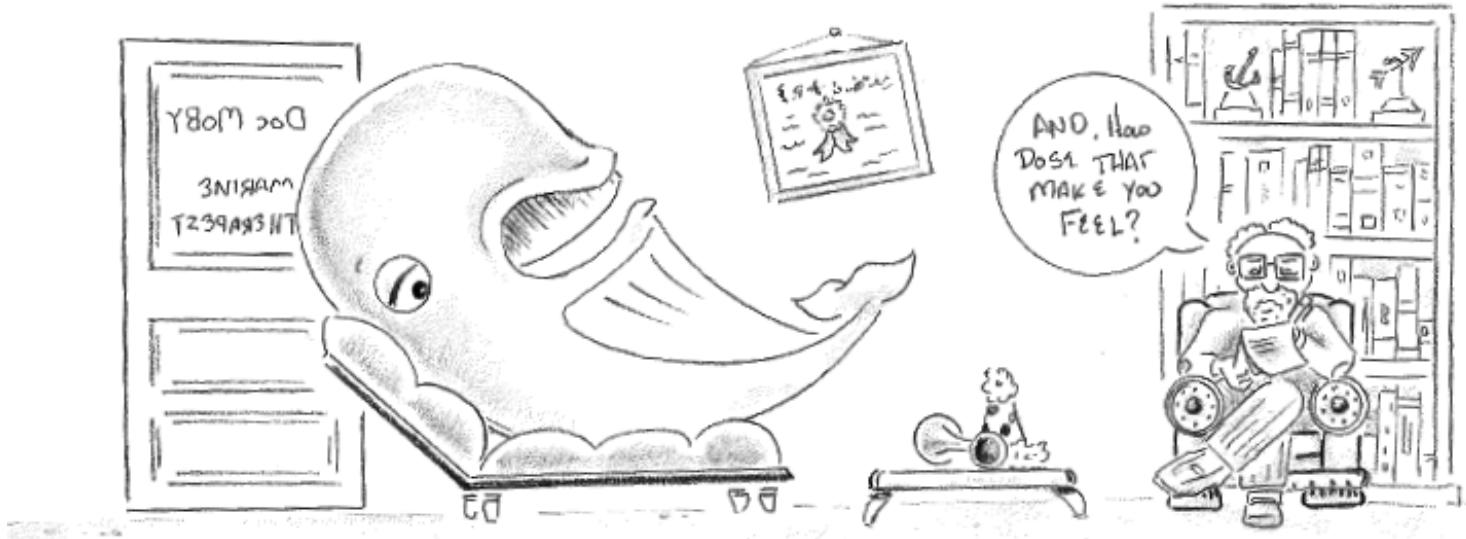
PLAYER 1



PLAYER 2



Did you hear about the whale that swallowed the clown?

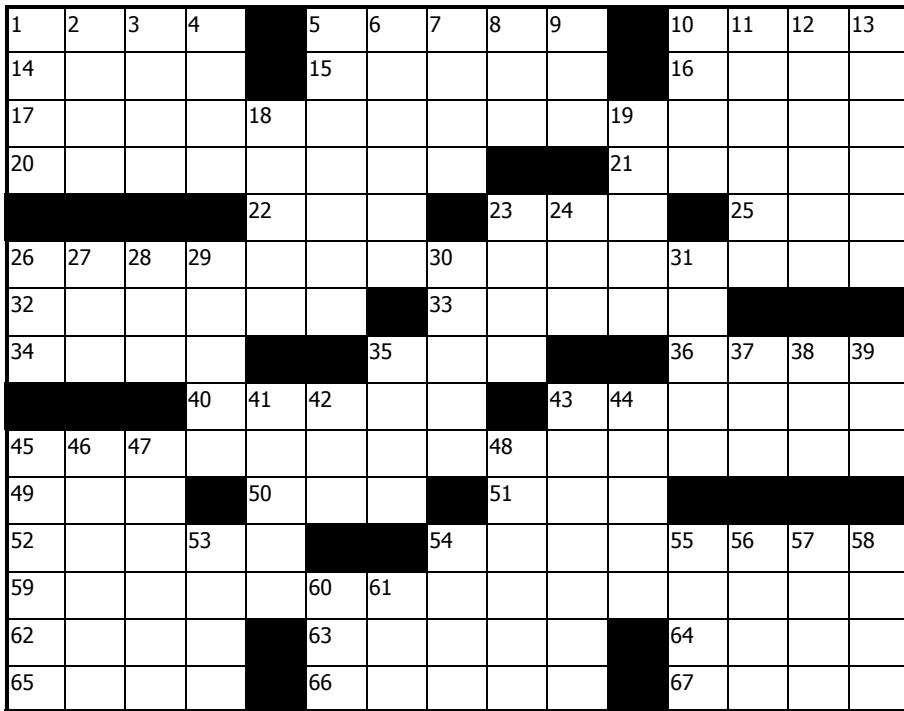


Comic by Seth Mathews

It felt funny afterward.

CROSSWORD PUZZLE

Theme: First Comes Love



From USAtoday.com

Puzzle created by: S. Daily & B. Venzke

ACROSS

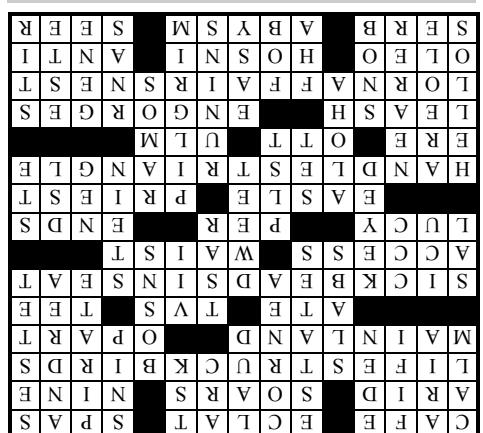
- 1 Many an outdoor restaurant
- 5 Brilliant success
- 10 Manicurists' locales
- 14 Like the Sahara
- 15 Flies like an eagle
- 16 Diamond number
- 17 First comes love, then these three
- 20 Part of China
- 21 Eye-bending pictures
- 22 Lunched, e.g.
- 23 Den fixtures
- 25 Placekicker's prop
- 26 First comes love, then these four
- 32 Admittance
- 33 Place for a spare tire?
- 34 Redheaded sitcom legend
- 35 According to

- 36 What means may justify
- 40 Stand for the arts?
- 43 One doing clerical work
- 45 First comes love, then comes these
- 49 Before, in verse
- 50 Giants Hall-of-Famer
- 51 Einstein's birthplace
- 52 Pet restraint
- 54 Eats to excess
- 59 First comes love, then comes these
- 62 Bar on the table
- 63 Egypt's Mubarak
- 64 Pro's opposite
- 65 Native of Novi
- 66 Bottomless pit
- 67 Soothsayer

DOWN

- 1 Storm preceder
- 2 "Don Giovanni" highlight
- 3 Poodle name, sometimes
- 4 Idyllic locale
- 5 Dead giveaways?
- 6 Membrane of the eye
- 7 Give praise to
- 8 Jeanne d' ____
- 9 "Shame on you!"
- 10 Barbershop sound
- 11 Steel City pro
- 12 Tuscan tenor Bocelli
- 13 Part of a sonnet, perhaps
- 18 Marble units
- 19 Ship petty officers, for short
- 23 Russian ruler of old
- 24 Sundial's seven
- 26 Erie Canal mule
- 27 Hospital area, briefly
- 28 XXX x X
- 29 Tense (with "up")
- 30 Resided
- 31 Oktoberfest vessel
- 35 Brat or bug, e.g.
- 37 Not pos.
- 38 Alternative to dial-up, briefly
- 39 Sault ____ Marie
- 41 Parting word in one of 50
- 42 Filming area, often
- 43 Mayflower passenger
- 44 Philippine president Fidel
- 45 Greeting words
- 46 Nipple ring (Var.)
- 47 Closer
- 48 Clashes, as with the law
- 53 Arrogant one
- 54 Not very challenging
- 55 Transfer and messenger materials
- 56 Chromosome part
- 57 Noble Italian name
- 58 Prison, slangily

ANSWER KEY



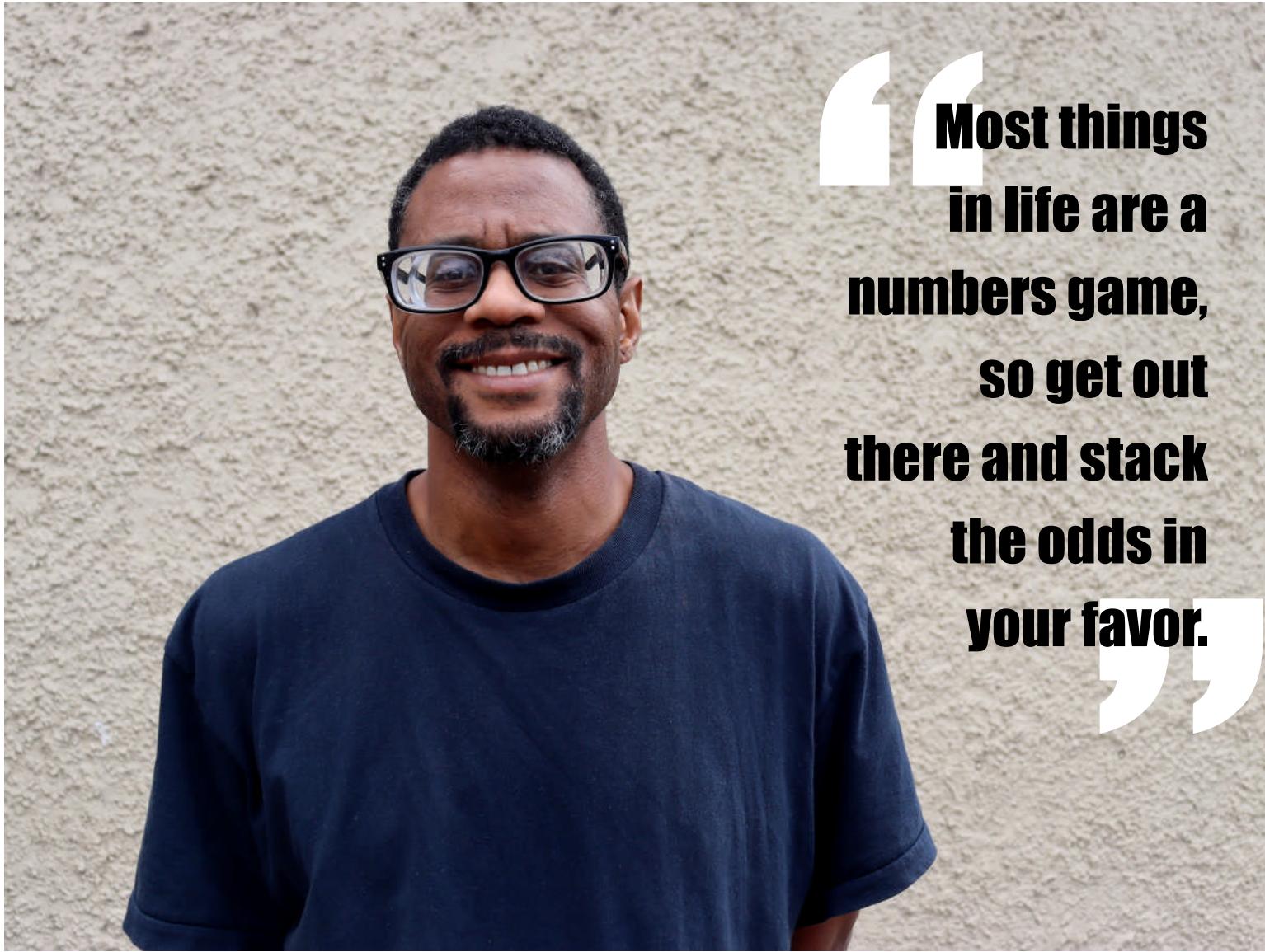
SEEKING ARTISTS

NOTICES

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, and any other medium. If you are interested in being featured in the next artist spotlight, send a communication to IWP.

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

FROM THE READERS

Photo by Phillip Luna/The Echo

Wallace Moreland on May 22, 2025. Moreland describes himself as an entrepreneur, writer, public speaker and comedian. He has worked for the Oregon Corrections Enterprise call center for two years.

A DAY IN THE CALL CENTER

Wallace Moreland Shares His Expertise from Working in the Call Center

Written by Wallace Moreland. Edited for length and clarity

I have worked in tele-sales and fundraising a few times in my life. More recently, I have been in the call center for the last two years. It's not for everybody – some people have a knack for it, some develop one, and others get chewed up and spit out.

A person who sticks around can make up to \$300-plus a month. Starting out a worker earns about \$200-plus per

month. A good money-manager could save \$100 per month, which equates to \$1,200 per year. In a five-year prison set, someone in the call center could save \$6,000 this way and still have a drawer full of property and shoes when they wanted.

Valuable budgeting skills can be learned here.

But I digress.

Prison telemarketing centers will hire nearly anybody who can read a script. They especially like people with the gift of gab. On top of the benefits of having a good-paying job in prison, Oregon Correction Enterprises offers jobs to their once-incarcerated workers upon release.

There are probably more pros than cons to working for OCE's call centers.

FROM THE READERS

The experience of working here has taught me a lot. Here's some of what I gleaned at the call center which I think parallels life skills:

1. You got to have thick skin. Everyone is going through something in their life – if they're snappy, it's not all about you.
2. Just because something works fine for one person doesn't mean it will work for you. Success does leave clues, however, so stay receptive to tips which may help you reach goals.
3. Repetition is the main ingredient for mastering anything. If you do something purposefully 500 times, it becomes second nature, so expect improvement when you apply yourself consistently.
4. The best salesmen get told no the most. You might have to get 50 no's before you get a yes – as with many things in life.
5. Perseverance and resilience are boons – perseverance means to keep going even if you feel like

quitting, and resilience is recovering from loss and bouncing back.

6. Sometimes you have to repeat yourself to get your point across. Sometimes you have to repeat yourself to get your point across. Much success is owed to repetition – it's a numbers game. Much success is owed to repetition — it's a numbers game. Many things in life are like this.
7. Not everybody is going to buy what you're selling, and those rejecting your offers don't have time for you to be successful – they have their own lives.
8. Never forget your goals or why you're working. Maybe you want gate money for release, or perhaps you're programming. Maybe you just want to make your incarceration more comfortable, or you might be trying to send money home. Whatever the reason, don't forget it.
9. Be adaptable. Everything changes; be prepared when things do shift.
10. Be upbeat and positive – those things come through in your tone and it's contagious.
11. Put your personality into the script and make it your own.
12. Be friendly and likable. People will do business, buy from and

associate with people they like.

13. "No" is not always no, but after two definite no's let it go. It becomes harassment after a point.
14. Listening is a gift for the listener and the one being listened to. The listener gains insight and information and the one listened to gets heard. We all want to be heard, and when you allow people to get things off their chest they love you for it.
15. People will respond differently to different approaches. In other words, what attracts one may repulse another. Know your audience.
16. Save or invest your bonuses. It adds up quickly so you are ready when a drought comes along, and it always does. Stack. Your. Money. Period. Times will not always be good.

Most things in life are a numbers game, so get out there and stack the odds in your favor. Don't be afraid of getting no's. If the word "no" could kill you it would have already, so don't let it stop you. All these things I mentioned can be utilized in life, whether in business, dating or just being the best you. | **ECHO**

Wallace Moreland is an entrepreneur, writer, public speaker and comedian who is housed in an EOCI honor unit and works in the OCE call center.

Help Shape The Content of The Echo

For adults in custody:

If you know of a story that could 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 Jaylene Stewart.

EOCI'S 1664 GIVEN OUTSTANDING SERVICE AWARD FOR 2024



The EOCI newsroom from left: Phillip Luna, Jaylene Stewart, Ray Peters, Chris Ainsworth, Shahid Baskerville, Logan Gimbel and Kurtis Thompson.

The Echo and 1664's support staff, Ray Peters and Jaylene Stewart, travelled to Salem on May 15, to receive an award. Peters and Stewart were recognized with an Outstanding Service in 2024 for 1664 — a statewide yearly award issued by ODOC.



STILLWATER AWARD FINALIST

The Echo and 1664 editor, Phillip Luna, was a finalist for a national award in feature writing in 2025.

The Stillwater Awards, an annual journalism contest sponsored by the Prison Journalism Project and the Society of Professional Journalist, announced its winners during an award ceremony on May 8, 2025.

In the category of feature writing, Luna placed second.



Come and Work for The Echo

Build your writing portfolio! Learn a valuable skill! Compete in writing contests! The Echo is accepting applications for future positions. Full details on back page.

WHERE TO FIND THE ECHO AND 1664

Online:

The Echo and 1664 are available online at www.pollenpress.org.

On Edovo:

The Echo and 1664 are available on the Edovo app at more than 1,200 prisons in the U.S.

Incarcerated people on Edovo can type the publication name into the search field to access current and previous editions.

On Tablets at all 12 of Oregon's correctional facilities:

1664 is available in the free section of state-issued tablets at every Oregon prison. Incarcerated people can access the publication by selecting the "notices" icon on tablets.

In Print:

1664 is available in limited print copies at Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution and Coffee Creek Correctional Facility. Check with your housing unit officer.

HOW TO CONTACT

For incarcerated people in Oregon:

Send a communication form (a kytic) to IWP at EOCI.

For incarcerated people in the United States and non-incarcerated people:

Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution C/O IWP
2500 Westgate
Pendleton, OR
97801

COME AND WORK FOR THE ECHO

The Echo is accepting applicants for future positions. This position starts at 11 PRAS points with the opportunity to go up to 15 PRAS over time.

Criteria:

- Must be **NCI level 2 or 3**
- Must work well with staff and AICs of many different backgrounds

Duties include:

- Article writing, conducting interviews, and researching various topics
- Incorporating writing feedback and taking direction
- 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
- Working within the guidelines of ethical journalism, as set by the Society of Professional Journalists
- Being impartial and looking at a topic from multiple angles
- Having 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.

TREASURE VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE

If interested in enrolling in Treasure Valley Community College courses for the 2025-2026 school year, please make sure the Education Department receives a communication by June 13, 2025 indicating your interest.

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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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