

## Saginaw Correctional Facility builds cabin bound for state park



A rustic tourist cabin is bound for the Port Crescent State Park in Port Austin thanks to a Michigan Department of Corrections partnership between vocational education's Prison Build Program and the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). After approximately 18 months of discussions with DNR, the first cabin was completed for the state park.

Six inmates from the Saginaw Correctional Facility (SRF) worked under the direction of Jack Adam in the facility's prison build program with assistance from administrative assistant Ed Rosek to complete the building.

"We hope that this is the first of many cabins to be built in this program," said Warden Blaine Lafler. "Projects like this benefit everyone in the state as well as give our inmates a chance to learn a skill."

The facility and the department's Prison Build Program will soon be looking at the possibility of working with the Department of Agriculture to build homes for the state's migrant workers. **F.Y.J.**

## Is it time to quit?

Are you a quitter? You can be. Join the ranks of smokers across the nation on Thursday, November 18 by participating in the American Cancer Society's Great American Smokeout. The event encourages smokers to light up less or quit for the day.

One goal of the smokeout is to draw attention to the deaths and chronic diseases caused by smoking. Tobacco use can cause lung cancer, as well as other cancers, heart disease and respiratory disease. Smoking is responsible for one in three cancer deaths and one in five deaths from all causes. That's not counting the additional

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## Is it time to quit?

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8.6 million Americans living with serious illness caused by smoking.

Studies have shown that states with strong tobacco control laws have lower smoking rates and fewer deaths from lung cancer. In addition, the rise of smoke-free public places and work areas are improvements that help to protect non-smokers and smokers who want to quit.

Nicotine replacement products, counseling, prescription medicine to lessen cravings, guide books and the encouragement of friends and family members can help smokers quit their nicotine habit. For more information call the American Cancer Society at 800-ACS-2345 or visit their Web site [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org). *F.Y.I.*

## Grand Rapids center hosts staff



The Grand Rapids Correction Center/TRV held an Oktoberfest picnic recently. The idea behind the event was to provide Grand Rapids area staff an opportunity to meet their co-workers.

“We work together everyday but seldom get to put a name with a face,” said center manager Glenn Gomery. “This was an opportunity for staff to actually meet one another. It was a great morale booster.”

Sgt. Richard Cook lead a tour of the Center/TRV and Gomery grilled sausage and barbequed chicken. Center employees each brought in their favorite home made dish. *F.Y.I.*

*Staffing the grill from left are Manager Glenn Gomery and Sgt. Paul Rafferty.*

## Corrections employees recognized

During the statewide Vision and Values training, staff had an opportunity to identify those co-workers who best exemplified the Vision and Values of the department. Those selected are listed on Governor Jennifer M. Granholm's Web page through a link to the *Employee Recognition* page. Many corrections employees are pictured on this Web site with some comments made by their peers.

To access; visit [www.michigan.gov/gov](http://www.michigan.gov/gov), select Employee Recognition and then choose corrections to view MDOC employees. The page will be updated with new names periodically. *F.Y.I.*

## Adopt a Michigan National Guard family

Many guard members are serving overseas while their families are trying to make the best of the holiday season without them. The Michigan National Guard Adopt-A-Family Program is an opportunity for organizations and families to reach out and support a guard member and their family. The Adopt-A-Family Program, coordinated through the state family program office in Lansing, is seeking organizations and families interested in sponsoring a Michigan National Guard family.

Applications for both families and sponsors/contributors will be matched up to meet the needs of both parties. This is a safe and confidential way for families to receive support.

Support may be in the form of money, food or mentorship. Traditionally, families have received Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets. Christmas gifts have included a clothing outfit for each family member and a few toys for each child.

Organizations and businesses who would like to adopt-a-family or need more information should contact the family program office at (517) 702-5116/5117. [F.Y.I.](tel:5177025116)

## CJTA, Excelsior College and MDOC make degree completion easier

The Criminal Justice Training Assessment (CJTA) has joined with Excelsior College in designing degree programs for law enforcement, corrections and criminal justice majors. All department employees may use CJTA to help them complete a degree.

Excelsior College [www.excelsior.edu](http://www.excelsior.edu) is a private nonprofit institution based in Albany, New York. Established by the New York State Board of Regents in 1971, it is the only institution in the country offering degree programs based exclusively on an outcome-based assessment of learning. Recognizing that college level knowledge can be obtained in many ways, Excelsior provides access to many different avenues for earning college credit, focusing on what students know rather than on where or how they learned it.

Undergraduate credits are earned through a variety of accredited sources including traditional classroom courses, for-credit exams, distance learning and online courses and corporate and military training.

In May, 2003, the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) completed a Criminal Justice Training Credit Assessment. As a result of this assessment, the department's training program received a total of 38 college credits that may be used toward the completion of a college degree. Each approved MDOC training course is awarded a set number of college credits.

In addition, the department recently participated in the first CJTA Training Providers Forum. John Cordell, the department's CJTA liaison, shared ideas and information on how CJTA can help criminal justice professionals obtain a college degree. Agencies around the nation gathered to discuss topics such as credit bank, online college courses, use of credit recommendations through Excelsior College, how to educate staff about CJTA and degree completion.

While a total of 38 credits can be earned through department training programs, staff can also use department training to gain credits through the credit bank. Training credits can be converted into college courses for a cost of \$25. Those courses will be placed on an Excelsior College transcript. Courses can then be transferred to another college which accepts credits from Excelsior College.

For \$250, Excelsior College will consolidate credits from all of the colleges that you may have attended and complete a degree plan for each individual. That plan will outline exactly which courses are needed to complete a degree, and list colleges that provide the courses. Both on site and distance learning courses are available.

Information on the Criminal Justice Training Assessment of MDOC training programs can be found on the MDOC training Web page. In the NAL window select the Online Training icon and then the Excelsior College icon to access the report. You can also visit [www.excelsior.edu](http://www.excelsior.edu) for more information. [F.Y.I.](tel:5177025116)

## FOA Region II holds blood drive



Clockwise from top: P.O. Brad Meissner, P.O. Kali Rhoads-Allison and Supervisor Larry MacDonald

FOA Region II Macomb County Probation sponsored a Red Cross Blood Drive on October 18. A total of 26 pints of blood was collected.

Plans are already underway to make the probation office's next blood drive even more profitable for the Red Cross by extending an invitation to "Give Blood, Give Life" to others outside their own office.

The group plans to invite other local corrections and law enforcement associates and businesses in their downtown Mt. Clemens community to participate in the drive.

In addition, Macomb Probation will be donating four weeks of casual day donations to the American Red Cross. *F.Y.I.*

## Poker run riders brave cold to help kids



The Ionia Chapter of the Grey Dragons Association of Michigan braved a cold morning to raise money for pediatric brain tumor research in a motorcycle poker run.

Thirteen riders took a 100-mile route through Ionia, Barry and Kent counties. At stops in Nashville, Middleville and Lowell, riders were dealt cards which comprised a poker hand. At the final stop in Ionia the poker hands were scored and the winners named.

The top three places received gift certificates from Route 66 Powersports. All totaled, the

poker run raised \$194 for research.

This event marks the start of the group's fund-raising year. Money raised through August 2005, will be presented as part of the Wheels for Wishes 2005 Ride for Kids held in Ann Arbor.

Ride organizers invite all motorcycle enthusiasts to join in the April 2005 ride. *F.Y.I.*

## Support our troops

West Shoreline Correctional Facility (MTF) and Earnest T. Brooks Correctional Facility (LRF) are putting together care packages for their deployed coworkers. Collection boxes are located in the facilities' records offices. Sam Day and Pat Benson at LRF and Angie Hall at MTF are collecting cash donations to help cover shipping expenses. All donations should be in by Friday, November 26 so the soldiers will receive the care packages before Christmas.

Is your facility or office taking steps to support our troops over the holiday season? Send information about a current or completed activity to *F.Y.I.* at [madziagl@michigan.gov](mailto:madziagl@michigan.gov). *F.Y.I.*

## MDOC is taking steps to assist paroled veterans at risk of homelessness

When you think of a homeless person, who comes to mind—the unemployed, a substance abuser, a parent of small children who is down on his or her luck? While you would be accurate with those answers, it's unlikely that you would have placed honorably discharged veterans on your list of those most likely to be homeless.

After all, these men and women survived military training and have gone on to fight wars. They were uprooted from their families and endured all the hardships that accompany the service of their country. Veterans are tough. They are survivors.

However, many of these service men and women were sent around the globe and immersed into a culture of drugs that left them addicted and scarred. The rate of mental illness for these vets is much higher than that of the average citizen.

Nationally, one-third of homeless men and nearly one-quarter of all homeless adults have served in the armed forces. While there is no true measure of the number of homeless veterans, it has been estimated that more than 200,000 veterans may be homeless on any given night and that twice that many veterans experience homelessness during a year.

Many other veterans are considered at risk because of poverty, lack of support from family and friends and precarious living conditions in overcrowded or substandard housing. Ninety-seven percent of homeless veterans are male and the vast majority are single. About 45 percent of homeless veterans suffer from mental illness and slightly more than 68 percent suffer from alcohol or drug abuse problems. Thirty-three percent have both psychiatric and substance abuse disorders.

Given these characteristics, it is not surprising that a large number of veterans – many who were homeless at the time of their arrest – are incarcerated in state prison systems across the country. Given that alcohol or drug abuse are implicated in about 80 percent of all crimes committed by men and women behind bars, the enormous number of veterans with substance abuse problems is a natural target population for correctional programs that hope to reduce crime and homelessness, particularly programs that affect inmates who otherwise would not be paroled.

A recent study of veterans in the Michigan prison system showed that 2,822 inmates self-reported veteran status, while 93 percent reported that they were honorably discharged. Of this total, 273 are in for life, leaving 2,549 who are eligible to eventually be released on parole.

Post-release services such as substance abuse treatment, physical and mental health services, job placement and vocational training and education programs are closely associated with reduced recidivism, reduced alcohol and other drug relapse rates and other measures of positive outcomes.

As part of the Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative, the Michigan Department of Corrections (MDOC) seeks to partner with the Employment Service Agency of the Department of Labor And Economic Growth to provide needed support and services to eligible veterans to help ensure their success on parole. This will be accomplished by assisting staff from the Employment Service Agency to meet with veterans while they are still incarcerated to develop more

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### Homeless Awareness Week is November 14-20

What have you done to help the homeless?

Central Office, the Office of Training and Recruitment, Michigan State Industries and Electronic Monitoring Center staff in Lansing answered the call of a local homeless shelter by holding a coat drive that provided hundreds of winter coats along with hats, mittens and boots for distribution to the homeless in Lansing. The event was organized by the Parole Board staff and involved some friendly competition to see which area could provide the most coats.

Send information about your activities to help the homeless to **F.Y.I.**  
E-mail Gail Madziar at  
[madziagl@michigan.gov](mailto:madziagl@michigan.gov).

## MDOC is taking steps to assist paroled veterans at risk of homelessness

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effective parole plans which take into consideration their specific risks of becoming homeless, unemployed, and returning to the use of alcohol or other drugs, all of which is likely to result in parole failure.

“Incarcerated veterans who have been denied parole due to inadequate parole plans would significantly benefit from a community-based parole management system,” said MDOC Policy and Strategic Planning Deputy Director Dennis Schrantz. “That is exactly what the Michigan Department of Corrections is looking to provide with the Veterans Transition Program which is a part of the Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative.”

Transitional housing is critical in avoiding situations that bring about homelessness in the veteran population.

“By placing these veterans in transitional housing and providing veteran-specific assistance programs, the probability of making a successful transition from incarceration to self-sufficient employment within a reasonable period of time would be greatly increased,” added Deputy Director Schrantz.

MDOC is presently working with the Employment Service Agency to secure a federal grant that would fund two staff positions for the Veteran’s Transition Program (VTP).

Staff would begin working with veterans at risk of homelessness before they are discharged from prison via a corrections transition assistance program and continue to assist them until stable community reintegration is achieved. If full funding can be obtained, the veteran would receive housing assistance, career counseling, employment training, job search assistance and life skills.

This initiative would be accomplished through a liaison with existing community programs and services which might otherwise be difficult for recently released veterans to find or access on their own.

“These men are at a higher risk for failure during their parole,” said Deputy Director Schrantz. “With some specialized assistance, we can address their specific needs, put them in touch with the community services that can offer support and thereby increase their chances for a successful parole.” *F.Y.I.*

## Agents' tip helps police apprehend bank robber



*From left: Agents Vanessa Twiggs, Kaunda Gray, and Yvettia Smith*

Eastern District Probation Agents Kaunda Gray, Yvettia Smith and Vanessa Twiggs were instrumental in the arrest of a suspected bank robber.

During their lunch break, the agents made a stop at a credit union. While in the parking lot, they noticed a cloud of red smoke near a man in a white vehicle.

While other patrons were not paying any attention to the scene, the agents decided to investigate and found that the man had opened a bag of money.

They also saw a stack of money covered in red ink under the suspect’s vehicle. The agents called 911 and reported the incident to the dispatcher.

As the agents drove around the corner, they observed a group of police officers at a local bank. The agents then informed the police officers that a man was right around the corner with a bag of money that was covered with red ink.

The police moved in and apprehended the suspect.

According to local authorities, the suspect was believed to be involved in several other bank robberies. *F.Y.I.*

# Stress: A positive life force

By Roseanne Leland, Work/Life Services Coordinator

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tress is a basic force of life which can allow us to reach higher levels of performance. Regardless of whether pleasant or unpleasant events cause the stress, when managed properly, stress can be a powerful ally for growth and accomplishment.

Without stress, our lives would be monotonous. Stress is the automatic state that results when the body is told to make changes in order to adapt to any demand.

There are two types of stress. The first kind is eustress, which is the “good” kind of stress. This type keeps us challenged and is necessary for effective performance to achieve certain goals. Examples of eustress are: purchasing a new home, birth of a baby, marriage, promotion, graduation or a sports competition.

The second kind of stress is distress. Distress is the “unpleasant” kind. This stress requires us to constantly readjust or adapt to a major change or traumatic situation. Examples of distress are: death of a family member, financial problems, demotion or divorce.

Stress affects each of us differently depending on the meaning we place on various events and how we think about them. In order for stress to be a positive force in our lives, we should focus on what we can do to help minimize its negative effects. You can begin this process with a simple inventory.

- 1. Identify what’s stressful to you.** Different people react to similar stressors in different ways. What may be stressful to one person may not be stressful to you. Some of the more common sources of stress are: balancing work and family life, job security, difficult people such as bosses, co-workers, or inmates, financial problems or lack of time.
- 2. Identify how stress affects you.** Do you feel anxious, worry more than usual, feel depressed, have mood swings, experience difficulty sleeping, feel agitated, have headaches, upset stomach or feel fatigued? To handle stress in a more healthy way, we can either eliminate the source of distress or find out how to manage the stress.
  - One way to cope with distress is to engage in aerobic exercise a minimum of 20 minutes three times a week.
  - Coping with distress emotionally means engaging in a hobby, talking to a therapist, friend, family member, minister/rabbi or engaging in some form of relaxation.

Eustress or “good” stress helps us accomplish things. It gets our adrenaline going by forcing us to set deadlines, goals or take action. An athlete enjoys lifting the heavier weights because the sensation of sore muscles means that they are becoming stronger and more toned. Stress for an athlete means expending more energy to fulfill his or her dreams of breaking new records, and performing on demand at full potential.

To accomplish this, athletes make significant lifestyle changes through eating a balanced diet, maintaining a healthy weight and exercising. This physical training allows them to be more resilient in bouncing back from setbacks and losses without deterring them from their goals.

Managing daily stress can assist corrections employees just as daily physical training helps professional athletes.

- 3. Identify when you are most vulnerable to stress.** Identify the time of day, week, or a certain time of the month or year that you feel more stressed. Maybe you feel more stress at the end of the month when you are paying bills. Or maybe it’s during the winter months, anniversary of an event or during the holidays.
- 4. Identify when stress is good for you.** Stress can be one of our best defense mechanisms. For example, if we sense that we are in danger of an automobile hitting us, our bodies can respond by releasing adrenaline and other chemicals that can increase our alertness, raise blood pressure, increase strength, speed and our reaction time to help us get out of the way of an oncoming motor vehicle.

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# Stress: A positive life force

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Procrastinators at work can use the effects of positive stress to complete job tasks at the last minute. Some positive life events that have been identified as a cause of stress include marriage, retirement, vacation, Christmas, outstanding personal achievement or changes in financial status.

- 5. Identify how you manage your stress.** The goal is to be able to manage your stress rather than to try to eliminate it. There will always be some stress in our lives and to best cope, we need to be able to identify the stressors in our lives, and understand the feelings the stressors generate.

A stressor is not the same as stress. The stressor is any physical or non-physical event that caused the stress reaction or feeling. Keith Harrell, author of *Attitude Is Everything* states, "When you look in the mirror, you see the person who can do the most to improve your life, change your attitude, elevate your standards and overcome your limitations." You can choose your attitude. You decide if it is a positive or a negative one. Effective stress management combines a healthy lifestyle, management of emotions and the ability to think differently. Listed in the box at right are some ways to cope with stress.

- 6. Take advantage of strategies to manage stress.** Small changes over time can have a tremendous impact on our body's ability to fight off the negative impacts of stress. Make a commitment to yourself and those that are important to you to begin making positive changes to improve your coping abilities. Check out the State of Michigan Employee Service Program

confidential online Stress Management Program available on the Internet. The Web site is [www.michigan.gov/esp](http://www.michigan.gov/esp). Click on Online Systematic Stress Management Program. *f.u.j.*

## Effective ways to cope with stress

- Decrease/limit caffeine intake
- Set goals
- Don't use alcohol or drugs as stress reducers
- Get at least seven to eight hours of sleep every 24 hours
- Eat a nourishing breakfast
- Eat more fruits, vegetables, salads, whole-grain breads, egg whites and meats that are broiled or grilled.
- Learn skills to improve work and/or personal relationships
- Include fun and pleasure in your life with humor, music or a hobby
- Don't sweat the small stuff
- Consult your physician or personal trainer about an exercise program

## Western Wayne Correctional Facility officer deployed

LaShandia Willis, a corrections officer at Western Wayne Correctional Facility, was recently deployed to serve in Iraq. Her co-workers at Western Wayne raised \$600 for a going away gift as their way of showing her how much she will be missed for the next 18 months. C/O Willis leaves behind her friends and family including a young son.