

Corrections Connection



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The image on the cover was taken by Legislative Analyst Matthew Boak. For the chance to have your photo featured on the cover of the newsletter, email a high-resolution version of the image and a description of where it was taken to Lisa Gass at GassL@michigan.gov.



MDOC Supports its Own

"You made a difference in our lives, and I would hope that we pay that forward to make a difference in the lives of others."

Photo taken after the fire inside bedroom

Chris Schweikert and Robin Gilbert are familiar names and faces within the Department. Robin began her career with the MDOC in 1994, first working at the Huron Valley Center. Chris joined the Department four years later, in 1998, at the State Prison of Southern Michigan, and now serves as the Southern/Central Region Officer Recruit Training Manager. Through the years, they've witnessed the good deeds that MDOC employees have done for each other during tragedies.

Gilbert has worked as an Officer, Sergeant, ARUS, and Acting RUM, participated in facility audits and is now the Department's Americans with Disabilities Coordinator for all individuals under our jurisdiction. She first experienced the support of her peers in one

of her darkest times, the death of her late husband.

Within four hours of his passing, she had over 200 text messages and calls from her colleagues asking how they could help, and what they could do for her. She vividly recalls a moment at the viewing when she became overwhelmed. It was then that staff and colleagues from her previous facilities formed a barrier around her, letting her gain her composure, and keeping her protected. Remembering back to that moment, Robin said, "They let me know that I was not walking alone. It was a bright spot in a storm, to know people had my back."

When the Department established an Employee Engagement Committee in 2017, Gilbert immediately volunteered to serve. "I raised my hand

and asked, 'Can I help?'," said Robin, remembering her own personal experiences and the outpouring of love and support she'd received over the years.

The Employee Engagement Committee's mission is to foster support and enhance employee engagement within the MDOC through group events and inclusive activities. The committee also supports MDOC families who have experienced a tragedy or loss through a financial donation from the Employee Engagement Fund. Schwickert was also serving on the committee, and the couple formed a relationship.

Years later, Chris and Robin bought their first home together with their then 16-year-old son, Nathan. Less than one year after owning their home, tragedy struck when a fire started in Nathan's bedroom. The couple was bowling on the evening of October 17, 2022, when Robin received a frantic call from Nathan, stating that their house was on fire. Rushing home from the bowling alley, they found smoke rolling out of Nathan's bedroom, the roof of the house being knocked down, and five fire trucks lining the driveway.

"I couldn't even breathe," said Robin. Chris added that friends from work who had heard the news were already starting to show up at the fire scene, wanting to help. Nathan escaped with just the clothes on his back, not even wearing shoes. Thankfully, the family was safe, but most of their possessions were destroyed.

Chris, Robin, and Nathan eventually checked into a local hotel for the night. Robin said she broke down when she realized that MDOC staff had already dropped off clothing, including shoes, for Nathan.

"To know that someone would care that much, to get up and go that night, 'I'll do it tomorrow' or 'I'll see what they need.' It was immediate action, because the people that work for the Department, who had heard about the fire, were in contact with each other in the background, without us even knowing," Robin added.

The help and support continued the next day, with the Wellness Team in the Upper Peninsula and Lennie Alcorn sending Nathan shirts to replace his beloved bright-colored Autism shirts and some strip lights. MDOC staff from across the state donated to Robin and Chris, giving meals, gift cards, laundry

soap, toiletries, and other necessities.



Image of inside the bedroom

The Employee Engagement Committee gave the family a financial donation. Remembering when they received the donation, Chris said, "I remember them saying 'This is all we can give.' Well, when you don't have anything, 'that all' truly means the world, right?"

The Employee Engagement Committee is a 501(c)(7) nonprofit organization, which means to be able to financially support the Department and its employees, it must rely on raising money from fundraisers and activities.

After the fire, Schwickert decided to serve on the Employee Engagement Committee once again. "There are hardships throughout the entire Department, and Employee Engagement is there to contribute when we can by giving funds that we receive from Busy Bee or popcorn sales," said Schwickert. "But we also have several events we do not receive reimbursement from. Instead, they strictly offer current employees a chance to get to meet new people, network, or attend an event they can share with their families."



Image of Chris, Robin, and Nathan

Chris, Robin, and Nathan were able to move back into their house in May 2023 and began the process of rebuilding the life they had before the fire.

But then, on Sunday, November 12, 2023, the unimaginable happened. The house caught fire again, this time, starting in the basement. Ruled to be electrical, the family wasn't as lucky after the second fire. Their recently remodeled house was a total loss.



Image of wall where electrical fire is believed to have started

Once again, the Department showed up again for Chris, Robin, and Nathan. By the next day, the family was looking at a rental house in part because of an MDOC employee. They were able to move in a week later. The Employee Engagement Committee offered another financial donation. Staff from across the state were sending clothing, dishes, a microwave, Christmas tree, and began replacing Chris' beloved Nutcracker collection.

"I was intimidated to ask for help because of the outpouring of support after the first fire. But it didn't matter. They showed up. They gave without knowing what we even needed," said Robin.

In the aftermath of the first fire, Robin says she was the one making the calls, ensuring everything was taken care of. "For the first seven days after the second fire, I was completely broken," recalls Robin. "Chris was trying to get everything taken care of and I was just numb."

The MDOC Wellness Unit contacted Chris and Robin almost immediately. In the days following the fire, as the devastation set in, Robin said she relied heavily on the Wellness Team, adding that they became a strong support for her.

All three of them recognize how truly lucky they are to be part of the Michigan Department of Corrections family.

When asked how the MDOC helped him throughout

the fire, Nathan said the Department helped him a lot. He added that he really appreciated all the things that MDOC staff tried to replace for him that were lost in both fires, including so many of his favorite clocks. For that, and many more reasons, Nathan hopes to be able to return to Central Office for the next Bring Your Kid to Work Day. The most important reason of all though, in his own words, is that he's "proud to be a part of the MDOC family."

When asked about what the Employee Engagement Committee's events and fundraisers mean to them, Robin said she doesn't believe they'll ever be able to give back all they received from the MDOC and the friends they've made over the years, some of whom they met at an Employee Engagement activity.

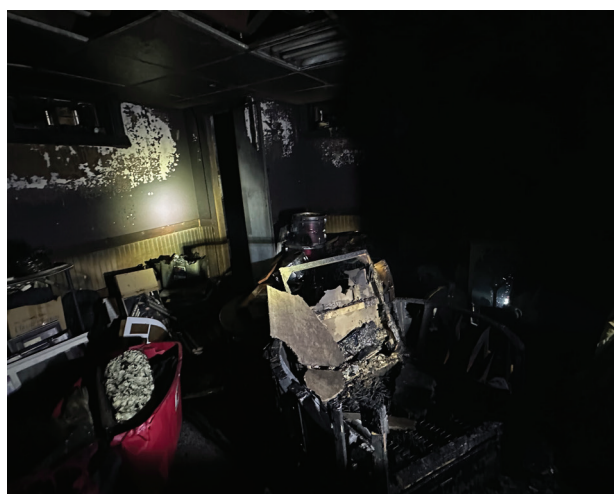


Image showing family belongings destroyed in the basement fire

"We are part of a living, breathing organization that wants us to succeed. I think that engaging helps the Department and helps employees not only network, but it could help their career if they're looking at advancing within. Plus it makes you feel more valued as an employee," Robin said, before quickly adding, "When I was young in my career with the Department, engaging with others helped me see my administrators as humans, as individuals who were also employees of the Department."

Chris, pausing before responding said, "It's amazing. I'd like to take an opportunity to say thank you to those that I haven't been able to personally thank, because I don't know who you are, that have assisted us in our path since we lost our home." Pausing for a few more seconds, he said, "You made a difference in our lives, and I would hope that we pay that forward to make a difference in the lives of others. So whether I haven't seen you in person, or we don't know who you are, thank you."

MDOC STAFF GIVE BACK TO THOSE IN NEED DURING HOLIDAY SEASON

During the 2023 Holiday Season, Michigan Department of Corrections employees helped our communities and gave back by adopting families, participating in Shop with a Hero events, donated food to local pantries, and more.

In total, MDOC staff provided more than 1,000 toys and 23 bikes to hundreds of kids. The Department also gave more than 3,000 pieces of winter warmth gear to those in their communities.

We are incredibly thankful for the compassion and kindness of so many MDOC staff!





Alvin Bulerski and Eric Ruesink during the academy in 1998

While Department of Corrections employees are part of an 11,000-strong statewide team, the bonds between employees can be very close. This especially goes for employees who work together in the same facilities, offices, and work sites. These bonds are even more special considering that some are formed over the course of decades. This is true for Oaks Correctional Facility (ECF) Corrections Transportation Officers Alvin Bulerski and Eric Ruesink. When the pair received their 25-year pins together in 2023, they let staff know that they had met at the very beginning of their careers before the Academy they attended even began, and their friendship has continued since. The Public Information Office sat down with both officers recently to discuss their decades-long friendship.

“We started May 2, 1998, at the DeMarse Academy in Lansing,” said Bulerski. The pair did not previously know each other and had met just before the Academy began when an MDOC employee in Manistee told Bulerski about Ruesink and provided him with his contact information. “He ended up finding me at my house and just showed up out of the blue,” said Ruesink. It was at this first encounter that the pair met, got to know each other, and from there

they started carpooling to the Academy each day in Lansing, switching off every week with the driving responsibilities. “It worked out great right from the beginning,” said Bulerski.

Once they graduated from the Academy, both Officers started their careers at ECF in 1998. They worked together for roughly two-and-a-half years until Ruesink transferred to the Lake County Technical Rule Violation (TRV) Center in November of 2000. Back at ECF, Bulerski performed most of his work as a yard cop, eventually joined the Emergency Response Team, and then performed transportation work on the side as a trained officer and filled in when transport had too many runs. Meanwhile, Ruesink ran public works groups at the Lake County TRV. “It was a really good fit for me,” said Ruesink. “It was very hands on. You got a lot of awesome things done in the community.” He led public works crews until 2010, and then from 2010 to 2019 did primarily transportation work at the TRV Center.

Through the years they were separated, Bulerski and Ruesink kept in touch. “We’d bump into each other,” said Ruesink. “I’d always ask everyone how Bulerski

was doing.” Ruesink’s transportation runs involved ECF, so there was always an opportunity for the two to interact.

In 2019 when two Corrections Transportation Officer positions opened at ECF, Bulerski applied, and then soon after found out that Ruesink had applied as well. “I thought, ‘Man, this is going to be a heck of an interview now,’” said Bulerski once he knew Ruesink had put in for the position, too. “I didn’t know if I’d get it because of the competition.” When Ruesink also applied for the position at ECF, he had the same thought as Bulerski. “I was thinking, ‘Aw man, Bulerski is interviewing, too?’” said Ruesink. “I knew it was going to be tough competition.” Both Officers even had their PT test on the same morning as well, one right after the other, without ever coordinating beforehand.

In the end, both Bulerski and Ruesink were lucky enough to be offered both positions. When they found out they got the jobs, Ruesink said, “It kind of felt like it was supposed to be.” Bulerski added, “I was hoping to God he got it and he did. I just wanted to be his partner again. It worked out really well.”



Alvin Bulerski and Eric Ruesink 25 years later

“Now we ride in a van together,” said Bulerski. ECF has four Corrections Transportation Officers, all with over 20 years of service. All four switch dependent upon what their routes are, but Bulerski and Ruesink can always count on driving in the same van at least half the time.

“It’s kind of neat that we started together the very same day in the same academy, same platoon, rode together, and then for 19 years I was in a whole other facility,” said Ruesink. “It was neat the way our careers worked out.”

When asked if the pair will retire together, Ruesink said, “That conversation comes up all the time.” Bulerski added, “It will be really close to the same time.”

When reflecting on 25 years, Ruesink noted, “You used to think, ‘Man it’s the old guys that are retiring,’ not realizing how fast 25 years goes by. Now we’re those guys. It goes by so fast.”

TUITION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FOR MICHIGAN RESIDENTS



Michigan Reconnect is a scholarship program for Michigan residents 21 or older who don’t have a college degree to pursue an associate degree or skill certificate. The Michigan Reconnect Scholarship covers up to the 'in-district' tuition, mandatory fees, and contact hours at any of Michigan's public community colleges. While the scholarship has always been open to individuals aged 25 and older, the age expansion for those who are aged 21-24 is only available for a limited time. The application window closes Friday, November 12, 2024, at 11:59 p.m.

To be eligible for Michigan Reconnect, you must:

- Be at least 21 years of age
- Apply and enroll in a community or tribal college no later than fall semester 2024.
- Complete the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid).
- Have lived in Michigan since July 1 of the previous calendar year.
- Have a high school diploma or equivalent or certificate of completion.
- Have not yet completed a college degree

More information on Michigan Reconnect, including a list of participating colleges and the online application, can be found at <https://www.michigan.gov/reconnect>, or by contacting the dedicated Customer Care Center at 888-447-2687.

JULIE HAMP NAMED DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF BUDGET AND OPERATIONS ADMINISTRATION

Julie Hamp was appointed Deputy Director of the Budget and Operations Administration on January 2, 2024, by Director Heidi E. Washington.



Julie has more than 34 years of experience working in the Department in a wide variety of roles, beginning her career in 1989 as a Corrections Officer at the Carson City Correctional Facility. She then transferred to the former Mid-Michigan Correctional Facility in 1990 and promoted through roles of increasing responsibility, including Special Activities Director, Classification Director, Assistant Resident Unit Supervisor, and Resident Unit Manager.

In 1997 Julie transferred to Central Office, where she served as the Administrative Assistant to the Deputy Director of the Correctional Facilities Administration. In 2001, she took on the role of Deputy Warden at the former Pine River Correctional Facility until 2004 when she returned to Central Office to serve as the Assistant Administrator of the then Office of Risk Management. In 2013 she was promoted to Procurement Manager of the then Bureau of Fiscal Management.

Julie was named Administrator of the newly created Procurement, Monitoring and Compliance Division (PMCD) in 2016, where she served prior to the Deputy Director position. As Administrator of PMCD, Julie led a team of 45 staff in successfully building a comprehensive division that leads the state in monitoring the performance of contracts.

Julie has received many accolades during her service with the Department, including Receiving a Good Government Symbol of Excellence award in 2013, being named Corrections Manager of the Year in 2015, and receiving numerous Teamwork and Leadership Coins over the years for her participation on various work teams.

Julie holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from Michigan State University.

MDOC WELCOMES NEW OFFICERS

The Michigan Department of Corrections welcomed 181 new corrections officers as members of the Jodi DeAngelo Academy class. MDOC Director Heidi Washington and class namesake Jodi DeAngelo addressed the recruits and offered them words of advice during graduation ceremonies held on November 29 in the Upper Peninsula and December 13 in the Lower Peninsula. Graduating recruits earned awards for personal conduct and academic achievement.

Upper Peninsula Academy Award winners:

- Jack Budd Award, Corrections Officer Amber Nault
- Josephine B. McCallum Award, Corrections Officer Adam Ayres
- Academic Excellence Award, Corrections Officer Loralee Swick

Lower Peninsula Academy Award winners:

- Jack L. Budd Award, Corrections Officer Latoshia Green
- Josephine B. McCallum Award, Corrections Officer Brian Donker, who was also the Academic Excellence Award winner.



We also extend our thanks to the veteran and active-duty service members of both the Upper Peninsula and Lower Peninsula academy classes.

WORKSITES GET WELLNESS UPDATES

The Fiscal Year '23 budget brought exciting news to MDOC employees with the inclusion of \$2.5 million of one-time funding to improve and enhance staff workspaces in the MDOC across the state, including break areas, outdoor areas, bathrooms, fitness rooms, and decompression rooms. The idea was to create staff designated areas that are accessible to staff and to improve the overall work environment.

In January 2023, MDOC's Bureau of Operations and Administration initiated Phase I of this project by putting out a call for Worksite Wellness Proposals to CFA work sites across the state to include proposals for the addition, renovation, and/or improvement of break rooms and bathrooms. The projects began in the second half of 2023 and will continue in 2024. Phase II of the project was initiated in December 2023 with the call for proposals to make fitness area and decompression area upgrades in both CFA and FOA work sites.

Because of the enhancement funding—and in addition to ongoing Wellness funding—staff workspaces across the state have already received welcome changes, including new tables and chairs; new appliances including coffee makers, refrigerators, and ice makers; desk risers; outdoor pavilions and picnic tables; and more. These upgrades are just the start, as the Department continues to review other tangible ways to enhance staff wellness through the development or renovation of other staff-designated areas. Below are just some of the many renovations that have taken place across the Department so far.



Image of updated breakroom at Ionia Correctional Facility



Image of updated breakroom at Genesee County Probation Office

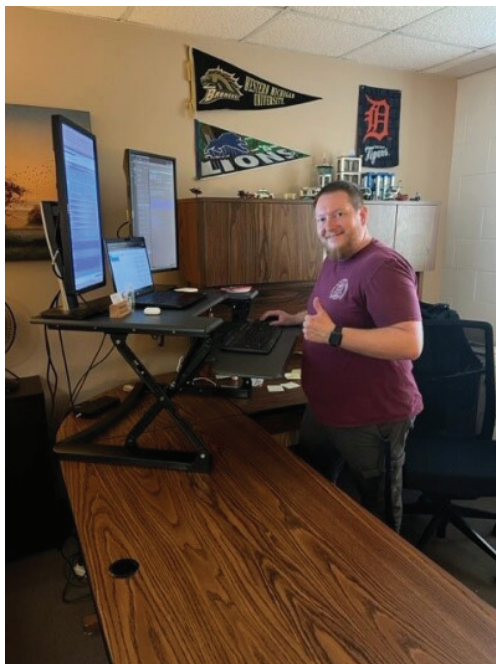


Image of improved workstation at Berrien County Parole Office



Image of updated breakroom at Richard A. Handlon Correctional Facility

NEW AND IMPROVED WELLNESS APP PROVIDES TIPS ON FINANCIAL, PHYSICAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH

Are you looking for ways to improve your physical, financial, and mental health this year? MDOC employees, retirees, and eligible family members have access to many free tools and resources through the MDOC Wellness App. Visit the following tabs on the App's HOME screen to learn more on these topics:

- **Physical Fitness:** Visit the Physical Fitness tab to learn more about the key benefits of physical fitness, discover how much exercise you need, risks of sitting without exercise, assistance with restarting your exercise routine, learn pre and post nutrition, hydration tips, and more! Level 1 workouts are available for physical therapy exercises and stretches which help reduce pain and prevent injury. Level 2 workouts are also available, for increasing flexibility, stability, and strength.
- **Financial Wellness:** Visit the Financial Wellness tab to get tips on how to avoid debt, increase savings, achieve financial fitness, and make sound decisions about money and investing. This section also provides financial wellness resources that can assist with financial planning, insurance/retirement, and how to build financial strength.
- **Emotional & Mental Health:** Visit the Emotional & Mental Health tab to find tools, confidential assessments, resources, and tips to assist with anxiety, fatigue, depression, empathy, grief/loss, ADHD/ADD, alcohol, substance abuse & addiction, anger management, suicide prevention and watch, available Dr. Gilmartin videos on the hypervigilance roller coaster and strategies to thrive.

Not a current user? Download the app today and use the MDOC log-in credentials to receive confidential 24-7 access to resources, tools, and support.





Reflecting on Service: The MDOC as a Veteran-Friendly Employer

The MDOC is proud to employ nearly 1,500 veterans who have given their time and service to our country. As a Gold-Level Veteran-Friendly Employer, the Department is committed to veteran recruitment, training, and retention practices, and is continually looking for ways to accommodate veterans throughout their employment. The Public Information Office recently sat down with Carson City Correctional Facility Warden Randee Rewerts to discuss his work history with the Department, his military service, and how they both intersect to show how veterans can excel working a fulfilling career within the MDOC while experiencing a workplace culture that is familiar to that which they experienced during their service.

MDOC WORK HISTORY

Rewerts started his career with the Department in 1996 at the Richard Handlon Correctional Facility (MTU) in Ionia after he left the Marine Corps and needed a job. He started at MTU as a Food Service Leader E9. Several of his cousins and friends were in the Department at that time and he was enrolled in Lansing Community College's accelerated course for corrections officer credits. "One of my cousins told me, 'You should interview for Food Service. You don't have to have college credits,'" said Rewerts. "I had been in the Marine Corps since I was just 18 years old and the thought of not having a job was freaking me out." Rewerts applied and got hired, marking the beginning of his career with the Department.

After his initial hire, Rewerts was thoughtful about where he wanted to go in the MDOC and over the years promoted to many different positions of increasing

responsibility at a variety of facilities, including as a Food Service Leader, Assistant Food Service Director, Food Service Director, Facility Manager, Business Manager, Deputy Warden, and Warden, a position he has served in at the Carson City Correctional Facility since 2018.

Rewerts credits these advancement opportunities in part to having involved, helpful supervisors who mentored him and encouraged him to take on new tasks and to constantly learn. One of these supervisors, Ray Williams, always challenged him to do things right out of the gate when he was hired as a Food Service Leader. "He challenged me to take a promotion. He said I had too much energy and that if I didn't take a promotion, he was going to end up firing me," joked Rewerts. When he was hired as a Food Service Director at the former Pine River Correctional Facility, he reminisced on his interactions with Warden John Mackowski. "He was always about teaching and coming up to me asking me scenarios—what would you do if this happened or what policy should you look for if you want these answers? We were encouraged to do other things outside of what our jobs were," said Rewerts. Later, as a Facility Manager at the G. Robert Cotton Correctional Facility, Rewerts mentioned how Warden Doug Vassbinder was extremely big on teamwork. "There I learned storekeeping, mailroom, maintenance, and all those other support elements that go into a correctional facility and I could see how they all meshed together and how it all worked."

Rewerts realizes the unique path he took throughout his time in the MDOC from starting as a Food Service

Leader to his current position of Warden, and the time in his life in which he came to the Department. “I came into the Department at age 28, which is a lot older than most people and I had people that saw something in me,” he said. “With the support that I received from those leaders, I was able to promote in a different path than most people.”

MILITARY SERVICE HISTORY

Before his career with the Department, Rewerts spent 12 years serving our country in the United States Marine Corps. He joined when he was a senior in high school in August of 1984 and left for boot camp in July of 1985. “I actually joined when I was 17,” said Rewerts. “My parents had to sign a waiver for me to enlist.” Rewerts moved to San Diego for boot camp and then on to Camp Lejeune for training. His first duty station was in Quantico, Virginia as part of a ceremonial platoon that performed duties as an Honor Guard at the burials and funerals of fallen Marines. Rewerts then moved to Guantanamo Bay from 1988-89, where he was promoted to an E4 Corporal and was in charge of an 81-millimeter mortar team. During this assignment, he learned to work with others and lead, even his best friends. “As soon as you became a non-commissioned officer—a first-line manager—they would give you some terrible task to do and they would give you your four or five closest friends to do it with you and you would be in charge of those people”, said Rewerts. “You would find that not everybody is your friend because they want to goof off. You either become a failure or you become a supervisor and realize that you didn’t have any friends.”

From there, Rewerts transferred to a naval station in Millington, Tennessee, where he started as a troop handler and a training non-commissioned officer (NCO). He then was promoted to Sergeant. “Our jobs as young NCOs were to keep the standard of the Marine Corps as high as it was and not let the Marines slip to a lesser standard,” said Rewerts. He then moved to a few additional assignments in Twentynine Palms, California as well as Mogadishu, Somalia, where he led both mounted and foot patrols across the city, ran supplies to outlying villages, and guarded United Nations personnel. Once he returned to the United States after five months abroad, he worked on a mission with the United States Border Patrol on a Native American Reservation to help stop the drug stream from Mexico. Rewerts’ final assignment was serving as a Marine Corps Recruiter in Jackson Michigan, where he recruited in Hillsdale County for three years. At that point, familial obligations led him to the decision to leave the service.



Image of Warden Rewerts in uniform while in the military

VETERAN RECRUITMENT WITHIN THE MDOC

“The MDOC and veterans are a perfect fit,” says Rewerts. “They come in, they know standards, they’re morally and mentally qualified to do the jobs we do.” Rewerts is a big proponent of how well veterans can fit into the culture and routine of the Department and find employment that still carries with it a sense of their time in service. “The things that I learned as a young Marine in the Marine Corps have helped me a lot in corrections. The ability to defuse situations, to handle mass groups of people, to get unpopular projects or missions done and have people buy in—these were all things I learned in the Marine Corps, and I brought that experience to corrections.”

Working in the MDOC is where service members can continue the culture and discipline that they learned in the military. “This is where you can keep that up,” said Rewerts. “I like the structure of it and I think most veterans like the structure.”

Rewerts also made note of his ability to meet and work with prisoners and staff of all backgrounds and walks of life, a skill he credits to his experience in the military working and living amongst people from many different backgrounds. “Veterans have been immersed in that diversity for at least four years,” he said. “When you’re surrounded by people and it’s a diverse population, you realize how to work with people of different backgrounds. That’s a huge deal and an incentive for veterans.”

When Rewerts was told that his facility was one of the most difficult to recruit for, he created one of the

Department's first facility recruitment teams and was successful with it. "One of the things we looked for was veterans," said Rewerts. "Most people that get out of the service, they don't have plans, right?" He emphasized the point that the best time to recruit veterans is when they're first coming home, with his personal experiences highlighting the best results happening when he spoke to young people between Thanksgiving Break and the end of the first semester of college.

ADVICE FOR VETERANS

When asked about what advice he'd have for current veterans working in the Department, Rewerts says, "The Wellness Unit is dedicated to veterans. They're there for them. The VA is remarkable and has a 24-hour hotline for veterans in distress or who have issues and need them to be addressed, and they will move heaven and earth for a veteran."

Rewerts also encourages employees who are veterans to connect with other veterans. "Don't think you're by yourself," he said. "Get involved in veterans groups because those are the same people you were hanging around with when you were active in the service and they understand." Further, Rewerts encourages veterans to keep in touch with those they serve with. "Don't lose touch with your veteran buddies from your time in the service," he said. "I still have great friends of mine that I might not have seen in 25 years, but we still talk or text."

The opportunities that exist within the MDOC are also important. "The opportunities in the Department are endless," said Rewerts. "I know people who came in as a Corrections Officer or Food Service and now they're working in some different aspect that had nothing to do with their CFA assignments." Rewerts encourages employees to always be aware of what else is out there in the Department.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

When it comes to the Department's track record with accommodating veterans, Rewerts has nothing but positive things to say. "I'll always be thankful to the Director for what she's done for veterans in this Department and I won't ever not say enough about it," said Rewerts. "It's just phenomenal."

Rewerts doesn't shy away from the labor market and difficulty of finding employees today though. "It's a bad time in history all the way around for service. It's not just the MDOC, it's police departments, fire departments," he said. "All the Armed Forces except for the Marine Corps missed their recruitment goals last year, and the Marine Corps doesn't even know if

they're going to make this year, and the Marine Corps has never missed."

Overall, Rewerts encourages all employees to keep working hard. "Never stop striving," he said. "Look for your next step and plan it. If you want to be a CO, mailroom employee, warehouse worker your whole career, that's amazing, but be the best. Know everything about that position."

MILITARY AND VETERAN STAFF BENEFITS AND SUPPORTS

Members of the military and veteran staff can take advantage of a number of benefits before and during their employment with the Department of Corrections.

New MDOC Corrections Officers who are service members/veterans have access to unique benefits.

- Completion of Basic Training can be used in place of the 15 college credits typically required for the position.
- New Corrections Officers who have a GI Bill Educational Benefit from their military service can use it during their first year of employment. This period is considered an accredited apprenticeship/OJT experience, which allows them to receive a monthly monetary housing allowance from the federal government.

Last year, the Department's Military Advisory Committee started hosting a networking/educational event for recruits. At this event, military and veteran staff from various areas within the Department speak with them about how they leveraged the skills they learned in the military to be successful in the Department. They also discuss career paths that recruits could pursue, as well as extra duties or committees they could get involved in, such as the Shooting Teams, Peer Support, Honor Guard, and Emergency Response Team. Employees should keep an eye out for future events and opportunities put forth by the Military Advisory Committee.

The Extra Mile

MDOC staff go beyond the call of duty to help others



Carson City Correctional Facility Lieutenant Gabriel Morris was presented with the MDOC's Meritorious Award by Warden Rewerts on behalf of Director Washington for his actions during a medical emergency event, when a prisoner was discovered unresponsive in their cube. Lieutenant Morris responded and assisted with CPR by operating the AED. A shock was administered during this medical emergency. The prisoner responded to first aid that was administered by facility staff, and was transported to a hospital for further medical treatment. Lieutenant Morris displayed an exceptional example of teamwork as he worked hard to save a life. His ability to perform at a high level under a very stressful situation is an outstanding demonstration of his commitment to help others in need.

Monroe County Parole Agents Gregory Sands and Jacquelyn Applin were presented with Deputy Director's Coins by FOA DD Russ Marlan. Both Agents were recognized for the outstanding work they did in assisting a parolee who was diagnosed with Huntington's Disease which was progressing very quickly. The parolee was residing in MDOC transitional housing and quickly losing his ability to complete basic living tasks. Agent Sands and Applin moved the parolee's belongings to a lower-level room in the transitional home making it easier for him to move about the residence, assisted him in showing him how to safely maneuver around the house, and even did a load of laundry for him as he was having difficulties completing that task. Agent Applin was able to reunify the parolee with his mother with whom he is now residing. It is for their compassion, empathy, and assistance these two agents showed the parolee that they were presented with the Deputy Director's Coin.



Training Division Human Resources Manager Christopher Schweikert was presented with a Lifesaving Award by Director Washington and New Employee Training Manager John Cordell. Chris' actions helped to save the life of a recruit during the officer recruit academy in May of 2021. Chris stepped up and took decisive action during the emergency in which he brought lifesaving medical equipment to the scene and called 911 to initiate EMS to help save the recruit's life.

Corrections Quiz

What year did Warden Randee Rewerts begin his career with the MDOC?

Send your answer to Lisa Gass at GassL@michigan.gov. The first person to answer correctly will receive a congratulatory shout out and the answer and winner will be published in the next edition of the newsletter.

Second Quarter Quiz Recap

When was the MDOC's Employee Engagement Committee established?

Answer: 2017

Congratulations to Jennifer Fulmerhouser, Karen Wichter, and Jaron Arnst for being the first to correctly answer the Third Quarter Corrections Quiz.

If you're wondering, the Master of Trivia Randy Coyne was not among the first to answer, as he was spending time hunting.

CELEBRATING VETERANS WEEK 2023

During Veterans' Week 2023, work sites across the state celebrated the Department's nearly 1,500 Veterans and active service members who have dedicated their lives in service to our country. From flag raisings to plaque dedications, and cookouts to gifts of appreciation, staff worked hard to honor and show their gratitude to those who have given so much to fight for, and secure, our freedoms.



SNAPSHOTS

A LOOK AT LIFE AROUND THE MDOC



Corrections in the News

State program leads to confiscations of 500 illegal guns

Michigan Public | By Colin Jackson | MPRN
Published October 16, 2023 at 9:35 PM EDT



New Michigan law means people leaving prison will automatically be registered to vote

DECEMBER 16, 2023 - 5:00 AM ET

FROM WKAR

By Michelle Jokisch Polo

Spread the word about some of the great things happening at the MDOC and share these stories with friends, family and coworkers.

Seen on Facebook...



Michigan Department of Corrections

November 16, 2023 ·

Please join us in congratulating #TeamMDOC's Lora Hodges, who was recently appointed to the Correctional Peace Officers Foundation National Honor Guard! Lora has served alongside the foundation at memorial details and funeral services for many years. She formally started the process of joining the unit last year, and recently participated in her drill! We are so incredibly proud of Lora.

#ThankYou, Lora for your service and for representing the Department so well!

#Grateful

#HonorGuard

#EmployeeAppreciation

#StaffShoutOut

#Service



To see more, like the MDOC on Facebook

Committed to Protect, Dedicated to Success

RETIREMENTS AND DEPARTURES:

OCTOBER, NOVEMBER, DECEMBER 2023

Bearup, Jeffrey D	ECF	Liddle, Pennie	Wayne County
Bell, Dana M	Wayne County	Lincoln, Robert	MTU
Black, Carolyn L	Macomb County	Ludwigson, Jason P	ECF
Blakley, Mary A	RGC	Macmaster, Gordon R	KCF
Bowden, Cynthia	Macomb County	Mcdonald, Monoletoe	JCS
Branch, Karen E	SLF	Mcinnis, Cynthia J	MRF
Brandon, Larry G	TCF	Michalowicz, Bradley D	MRF
Brown, Jason R	JCS	Miller, Diane C	JCS
Budzinski, Kenneth L	LCF	Miskel, Troy D	KCF
Butler, Carl	Cass County	Modlin, Jeffrey G	JCS
Canterbury Miller, Diane	JCS	Moffett, Edmond J	STF
Clapp, Michael E	Shiawassee County	Moradi, Mohammad A	MCF
Dabb, Patrick C	AMF	Mueller, Herbert	MRF
Davis, Brent W	ECF	Myre, Jayme E	SLF
Davis, Matthew C	AMF	Newland, Monte L	ICF
Davis, Matthew P	STF	Niemi, Terry K	AMF
Donald, Jimmica D	TCF	Olmstead, Virginia A	URF
Ellsworth, Cynthia M	NCF	Parish, Cynthia O	Wayne County
Ervin, Jana M	STF	Parish, Lester L	RGC
Fenrick, Henry J	ARF	Petersen, Andreas M	DRF
Foster, Deborah L	ARF	Pittman, William T	IBC
Gormley, Timothy M	TCF	Poland, William C	JCF
Gratz, Mary A	RGC	Pouliot, Richard E	TCF
Grotkowski, Frank L	SLF	Proulx, Nancy L	Central Office
Hall, Barry L	MCF	Randall, Jamie	WHV
Hatton, Jana M	STF	Robertson, Amy S	JCS
Heap, Edwin M	Central Office	Sheffield, Nichole M	STF
Hegenauer, Craig P	SRF	Stevenson, Joseph C	TCF
Heinonen, Steve P	AMF	Villa-Mogush, Sandra L	AMF
Hogan, James G	SLF	Walters, Lisa M	MTU
Hull, Valerie	STF	Wheeler, Amy S	JCS
Irvin, Amy S	JCS	Wright, Rufus	IBC
Jones, Gilbert R	Emmet County		
Jones, Robert A	MRF		
Kellett, Scott A	MBP		
Lafraugh, Dianna M	Central Office		
Larson, Kevin R	URF		
Lavallie, Dean	MBP		
Leffingwell, Kathleen M	SRF		
Leonhardt, Gregory E	URF		

