

Corrections Connection

Honoring OUR HEROES

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Corrections Connection is a publication of the Office of Public Information and Communications. Story ideas, feedback and comments can be submitted to Holly Kramer at KramerH@michigan.gov. Like MDOC on [Facebook](#) or follow us on [Twitter](#).

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YOU ARE HEROES

During this pandemic, we've heard about the heroes on the frontlines fighting this virus and protecting all of us.

Our heroes wear uniforms. They wear scrubs. They carry a badge. They are corrections officers, nurses and teachers. They are field agents, Parole Board members and analysts.

They work in mailrooms and in maintenance, in food service and front offices.

Our heroes always deserve to be honored, and especially now, as they work incredibly hard under unprecedented circumstances.

In the following pages you'll hear from a number of our heroes in their own words about what it means to them to work in corrections and how they are lifting up their colleagues during this time.

As National Correctional Officers and Employees Week, National Nurses Week and Teacher Appreciation Week comes to a close, we'd like to thank all corrections professionals across the department for their incredible work.

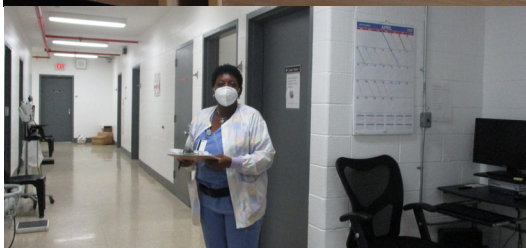
"I would like to thank all my fellow corrections officers, and MDOC employees throughout the state. I would encourage everybody to find something they love doing outside of work to maintain good mental health, while still maintaining good distance from others. Although times seem gloomy, and there seems to be no end in sight for this virus, we will get through this together. Everyone needs to pull together, and help your fellow brother and sister. If anyone needs anything please reach out to me, or someone you trust at your facility. Stay strong, we will get through this and be stronger than we were before."

Corrections Officer Brandon Reynolds
Charles E. Egeler Reception and Guidance Center



"Being a Correctional Nurse means you work independently using the skills to decide if a higher level of care is necessary for each patient. The final outcome is often on your shoulders. You have to have solid assessment skills. The last 29 years with MDOC as an RN has provided an excellent life for me and my family. I will always be grateful for the career I have been afforded as an RN with the MDOC."

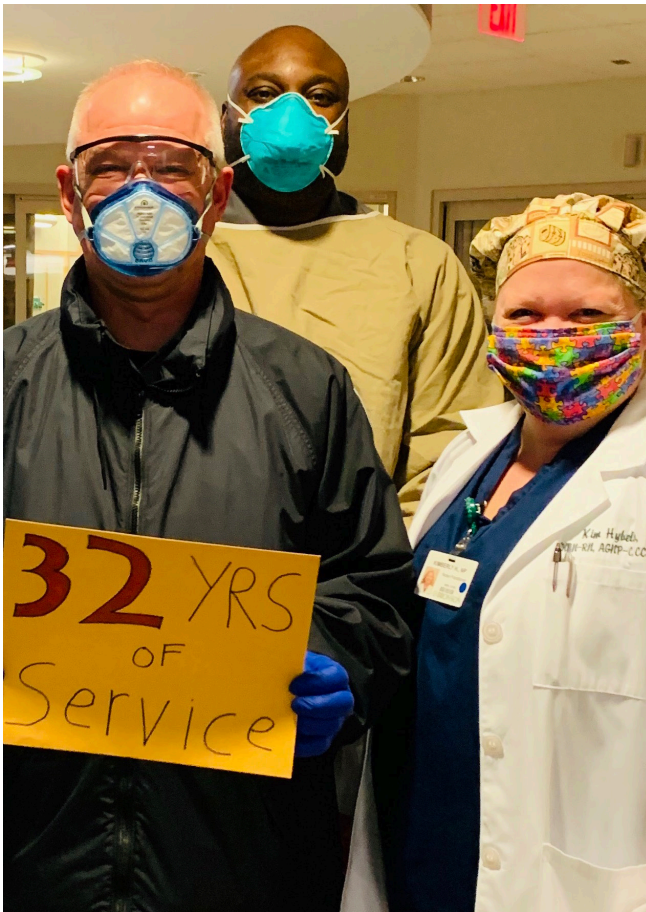
Health Unit Manager Melissa LaPlaunt
Chippewa Correctional Facility
(Pictured top left)



"The MDOC has become family and not just a job. As a professional, I feel more valued and utilized than I have with any other organization, and appreciate the opportunities that it has presented me. As a nurse, this job is fulfilling to me because of the autonomy and responsibility that it brings with it. My favorite part about being a nurse here is seeing my interventions positively change the course of someone's ailment, and the opportunity to educate the population about their health."

Registered Nurse Supervisor Beth Stain
Chippewa Correctional Facility
(Pictured top right)





"On May 1st 1988, I punched my time card for the first time. I often wondered over the years where I would be when my 32 years finally reached me. I never thought I would be a sergeant number one, and number two, working out of a hotel room in Kalamazoo Michigan leading 20 CTO's to assist my brothers and sisters at the Lakeland correctional facility, who are the true heroes in this fight we have before us. I have always tried through the years to find good in every bad thing that I have faced. In this time of need, the call for all staff to say we will not be beaten and we will overcome this as one, has given me meaning to the years I have served with my brothers and sisters. I can retire on August 15th, but will never abandon my brother and sisters that I have stood by for 32 years. I dedicate my final years to all of you and will not leave until our fight against this epidemic is complete. Stay strong everyone. We are here for you! God bless all of the men and women of this department that have sacrificed so much to keep the people of the state of Michigan safe!"

Sgt. Brian Dell
 Jackson/Adrian/Lakeland Transportation
 (Pictured left with CTO Gary Liddell and Bronson Hospital Dr. Kim Hybels)



"While the COVID-19 pandemic has forced many people to stay home and stay safe, the safety of the community must continue. Hospitals, law enforcement, prisons, and probation/parole agents are all working non-stop to ensure people are healthy and safe."

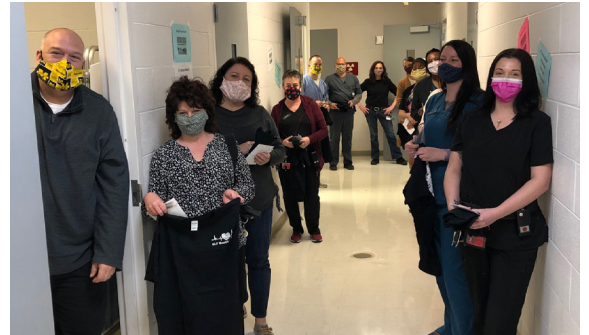
Agent Martin Byrnes
 Montcalm County Parole and Probation



"A Sincere Heart felt THANK YOU to All of the Health Care staff at LCF. Lakeland Correctional Facility has had many challenging days over the past couple of months however, with the assistance from Health Care Staff from LRF, SMT/JCS/SAI, WHV, IBC, ICF, MCF and Corizon the impossible has been possible.

As the Director of Nursing I am so, grateful for each and everyone on the front line here at the Lakeland Correctional Facility. I greatly appreciate the Health Care staff who have done more than anyone can imagine during the COVID -19 pandemic."

Karmen Bussell
Director of Nursing

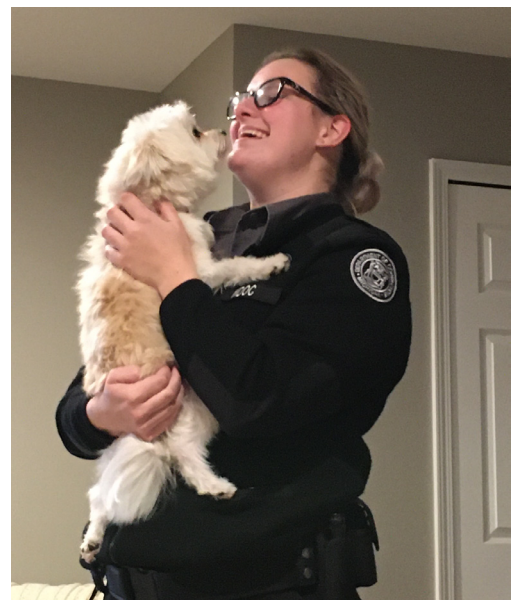


"The staff that are assigned here are the backbone of what we are doing. Warden DeAngelo and her team are doing an amazing job setting us up for success. Whether they volunteered or they were directed to report everyone is doing an amazing job. Some have even said they wish this was their permanent location. That says a lot about the team you have. They feel valued by the supervisors we have, and know that there is a greater cause out there that we are managing."

Chris Schweikert
New Employee Training Supervisor,
currently working at the Green Oaks quarantine unit
(Pictured left with Capt. Nicholas Cusack)

"Being a corrections officer means that I get to be a part of the greatest team of all time. I have the honor of serving the great State of Michigan next to the best corrections professionals that there are. I've watched the men and women I work with make constant sacrifices during these challenging times and I do not think that there is enough, "Thank you's" that are able to be said for all that they have done. So thank you to all of the MDOC staff your hard work and dedication has not gone unnoticed. Stay safe! I choose to attach this photo because every night I come home safely to this little guy is a good day! I hope that you and your family stay safe and thank you for your dedication!"

Corrections Officer Rebecca Mabbitt
Thumb Correctional Facility
(Pictured right at home with her dog)



"Growing up in an education family sparked my interest in the field at a young age. I have been proud to walk in the footsteps of my family and carry on the tradition as time goes on. It isn't always a flashing career, but I enjoy helping others and feel like I can make a difference.

My path into teaching has been anything but conventional. I switched my major three different times in college before I found my calling. After graduating with a Bachelor of Science and obtaining my teaching certificate for 6-12 Integrated Science I started my career in 2014 teaching middle and high school science at a small Upper Peninsula School. Over the next few years, I taught at two other Upper Peninsula high schools before finding my way to the Newberry Correctional Facility. A friend told me about the job posting so I decided to take a risk and try something new. I have not regretted the decision because I like teaching adult students and enjoy the flexibility that career offers.

I have now been teaching at the prison for over three years and still find enjoyment helping students discover their potential. I take pride in creating a professional repour with students and pique their interest in subject matter by using my communication skills. Respect goes a long way for the individuals that I encounter each day.

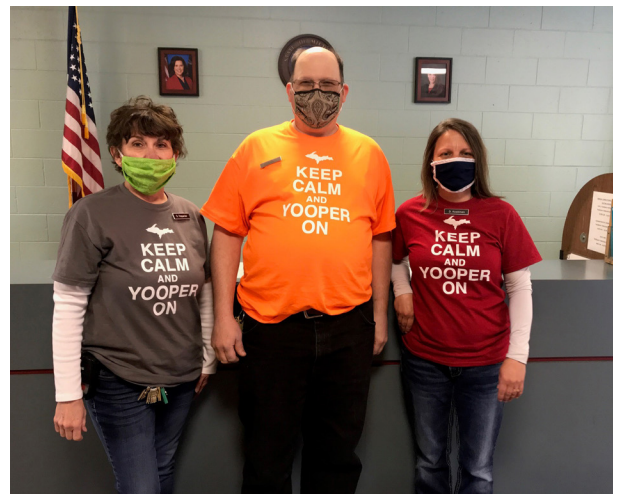
During this difficult time, I enjoy being there for my friends, family and coworkers. I am the type of person that would do anything for everyone; that is the way I was raised. I feel that the school runs well when staff are on the same page and working together. We have an outstanding team approach at Newberry and stick together even in the toughest times. I will do my best to foster lifelong learners and successful member of society.

This is why I am proud to be an educator for the Michigan Department of Corrections."

Academic Teacher Kyle LaVacque

Newberry Correctional Facility

(Pictured below with Amanda Pope of Employment Readiness)



"I have learned to thrive in the unique RN-run clinic atmosphere and take pride in the role I play in the care and growth of these inmates. Each day is almost like having a different job depending upon my assignment and I enjoy the unique dynamics involved with each. For me, it has truly been a privilege to care for the inmates most days. I have definitely grown in both my practice and as a person and I consider myself blessed to be a part of this health care family.

Registered Nurse Addie Briske

Oaks Correctional Facility

(Pictured left)

Spotlight On



Deann Gallagher, Industries Manager for Michigan State Industries Garment Manufacturing

Deann Gallagher knew early on in life that she enjoyed working with people and helping them improve their lives.

Growing up with family in corrections, she too, joined the MDOC as a corrections officer before transitioning to Michigan State Industries' garment operations in 2005. She said both her custody background and experience in sewing made the job a good fit. She hasn't looked back. Last month, Gallagher led and helped turn around the production of more than 200,000 cloth facemasks for both prisoners and staff, as well as more than 4,000 gowns and several hundred protective isolation suits for staff working with COVID-19 positive prisoners. There was an urgent need to manufacture the items quickly and Gallagher and her team, with the help of procurement and transportation staff, completed production and distribution in a matter of weeks.



"These are clearly unprecedented times," Gallagher said. "Making that many masks, gowns and isolation suits took a total team effort. Everyone involved was more than willing to do whatever

it took to make the PPE's as quickly as possible so staff and prisoners would have an extra layer of protection against this disease."

MSI Administrator Chris Kamrada said Gallagher has shown a continued commitment to supporting the department through the production of quality products.

He said the creation of the thousands of personal protective equipment items is all the more impressive when you consider it takes more than just sewing know-how. It requires coordinating the purchase of supplies and equipment, scheduling and resource allocation for multiple sites.

"I'm extremely proud and fortunate to have her as a member of the MSI Management Team," Kamrada said. Gallagher said she has enjoyed having the ability to help teach prisoners new skills that can help them excel in their future careers. Prisoners gain experience operating a forklift, filling orders, fixing and maintaining equipment and in quality control, in addition to sewing.

"The best part is, they can later apply these newly learned skills when they are released back into their communities," she said. "Watching people from drastically different backgrounds working together as a team through the manufacturing process is what makes this job meaningful to me."

Recognizing our Incredible Corrections Staff

To my colleagues in corrections, These past several weeks have not been easy. We've all had to adapt quickly to new challenges by making significant changes to the way we live and work.



While our lives look different today than they did two months ago, our mission remains the same. Thanks to you, people across our state are safe, as you've stepped up and quickly adopted new ways to work to ensure they are protected during this unprecedented time

This week, we honor all our corrections professionals as part of National Correctional Officers and Employees Week. We additionally recognize our nurses and educators as we celebrate National Nurses Week and Teacher Appreciation Week, which both also begin this week.

Because of the challenges we're facing and continued efforts to slow the spread of COVID-19, this year's recognition weeks will be different from previous years. Our Employee Appreciation Banquet has been postponed and other recognition events at your worksites may be structured differently.

But that does not take away from the important work you are doing or how grateful I am for your dedication to the safety of our communities, the offenders under our supervision and each other.

While many people across our state have been doing their best to stay sheltered at home, many of you – our amazing corrections professionals – have continued to head out to work in our communities, our correctional facilities and other work sites, to keep Michigan's citizens safe and to guide and care for offenders. Others have put in long hours while working remotely to help us accomplish our mission to make Michigan safer.

Some of you have stepped out of your comfort zone and volunteered to take on new roles and responsibilities, or have accepted new assignments far from home. I know every one of you, in every administration across this department has been working unbelievably hard.

I am so proud to work with such an extraordinary team, that is doing incredible work under extraordinary circumstances. We've all come together to lift each other up, lend a hand and unite in the fight against this virus.

To our nurses, educators, officers and corrections professionals across the department, I'd like to thank you for your unending commitment to public service.

Today, Michigan is a better and safer place to live because of your hard work. You truly make a difference in the lives of Michigan residents.

Heidi E. Washington
Director

Muskegon Community Shows Support for Corrections Officers and Employees



Members of the Muskegon community, including local fire and police departments, stopped outside Muskegon and Earnest C. Brooks correctional facilities to show their support and to thank all of our Heroes at Work during National Correctional Officers and Employees Week. Area residents lined the drive near the entrance to the facilities and held up signs thanking officers and staff during shift changes. Thank you to the Muskegon community for honoring our corrections professionals and acknowledging all their hard work to keep the people of Michigan safe, including prisoners under our supervision

[Click here to see a story from WZZM TV 13 on this great recognition event.](#)

MDOC Pays Tribute to Fallen Staff

On April 28, staff at the Detroit Reentry Center and the MDOC Honor Guard held a memorial service for Corrections Transportation Officer Damon Burton and Corrections Officer Terrance Thompson who also passed away recently. CTO Burton passed away on March 31 after contracting COVID-19, and Officer Thompson also passed away in February from causes unrelated to the virus.

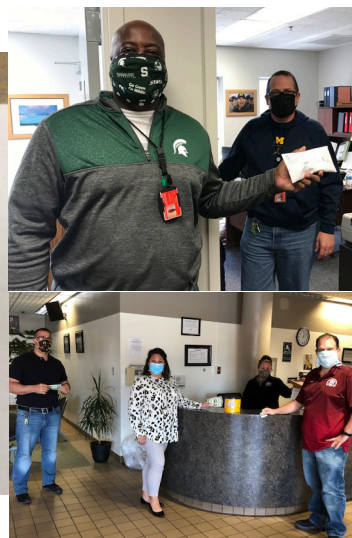
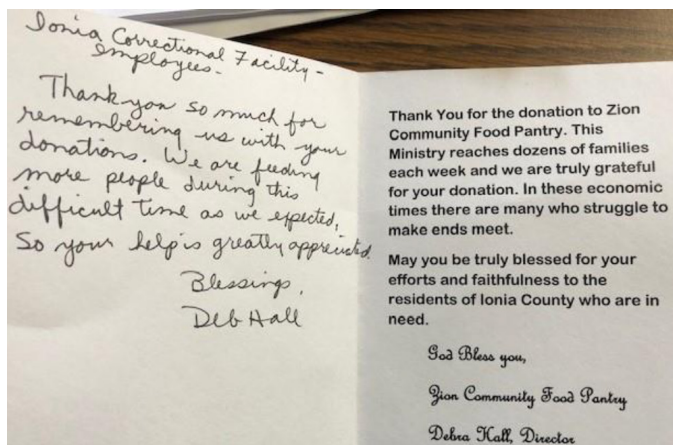
On April 20, Macomb Correctional Facility staff held a memorial ceremony with the help of the Honor Guard for Corrections Officer Albert Carnes, who passed away April 11 from a medical emergency that occurred on his way to work.

We are also deeply saddened by the recent passing of Central Michigan Correctional Facility Prison Counselor James Zamarripa. He passed away on May 2 at his home from causes unrelated to COVID-19. A virtual memorial service will be held at a date to be announced.

All were dedicated public servants whose commitment to the safety of all Michigan residents will not be forgotten. Our thoughts are with their family, friends and colleagues.



Bellamy Creek and Ionia Correctional Facilities Give Back to Those in Need



Staff at Bellamy Creek and Ionia Correctional Facilities have continued to give generously to those in the community who are in need. Bellamy Creek staff donated \$1,233 to the Zion Food Pantry through March and April. Ionia Correctional Facility also donated about \$800 and giving has continued. Thanks to all who donated!

Committed to Protect, Dedicated to Success

One Year With the Wellness Unit

We'd like to recognize our Wellness Unit for all of their hard work and support of the Team MDOC family over the last year.

May 5th marked one year since the Wellness Unit began working to provide assistance to the MDOC community through confidential counseling, crisis support and strategies for employee well-being. Since its inception one year ago, the Wellness Unit has had more than 2,000 initial contacts with individuals, in addition to follow-up contacts and in-person meetings, presentations, visits, and trainings. More than 1,000 of these contacts have been since the beginning of 2020. Lynn shared with us, this story of her experience in the last year:

"On my first day, I remember sitting in an empty office and saying to myself, 'just start.' And that is where it began and each day we continue.

I am so blessed with the beautiful people on the Wellness Team. Their commitment, compassion and



extraordinary drive to support for their colleagues is truly exceptional.

I think I speak for the team in saying our most meaningful accomplishment has been our connections with people. The MDOC community has opened their doors to wellness and the Wellness Unit. They have supported us and helped us to support them. They have given us the opportunity to earn their trust and have entrusted in us. Making "Wellness" part of the conversation and keeping it part of the conversation are a cornerstones of our work. The MDOC community believes in this and they are embracing it. We see it in the wonderful wellness initiatives from the field. The Warden who takes the time to walk around a facility and connect with the staff. The Supervisor who makes the commitment to organize a wellness room with the staff and encourages time to use it. Coworkers



reaching out to each other just to check-in. The newsletters, the emails of encouragement to each other and the acknowledgements of appreciation. So many examples of the work of the MDOC community and their commitment to wellness.

We have been with the MDOC community during times of incredible loss and heartbreak and times of joy and honor. Now, in an unprecedented time of struggle and challenges that lay ahead, we continue to wake up each day and 'just start.'"

Thank you to Lynn, Wellness Coordinators Lennie Alcorn and Sandi Powell and Chaplain Lloyd Scharer for their care and support, especially during this unprecedented time.

You can read a letter from the Wellness Unit [here](#), and you can reach the Wellness Unit at:

PHONE: 517-335-0570

TOLL FREE: 833-DCBWELL (833-322-9355)

EMAIL: mdoc-wellness@michigan.gov