

NCIA NEWS

SUMMER
2021

WORKING ON THE INSIDE – SUCCEEDING ON THE OUTSIDE



Why I Work in CI



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The National Correctional Industries Association (NCIA) is the only association solely dedicated to advancing the unique profession of Correctional Industries. For more than half a century, NCIA has operated as an international, non-profit professional organization of individuals, agencies and companies, both public and private, who are committed to:

- Promoting excellence and credibility in the field of Correctional Industries through the professional development of its members
- Increasing public awareness of the benefits of Correctional Industries as work/training programs funded in part or whole by the sale of goods, services and commodities produced by incarcerated individuals
- Supporting innovation in and the development of work programs for incarcerated individuals
- Promoting reentry and reducing recidivism by providing incarcerated individuals with real-world work experience that teaches transferable job skills, life skills and work ethic to prepare them for post-release reentry and employment

NCIA's Mission Statement

The National Correctional Industries Association (NCIA) is an international nonprofit professional association whose mission is to promote excellence in Correctional Industries through professional development and innovative solutions that improve public safety, business operations and successful reentry.

NCIA Members

NCIA members represent state Correctional Industry agencies, Federal Prison Industries and numerous county jail work programs, as well as private sector companies that work in partnership with Correctional Industries, both as suppliers/vendors and as partners in apprenticeship and work programs.

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WHY I WORK IN CI

When working in any job, especially Correctional Industries, it is important to ask yourself 'why'—more specifically 'why do I work in CI?' In this issue of *NCIA News* numerous reasons of 'why' CI staff do this job every day will be brought to the forefront through experiences and personal stories shared by CI staff highlighting their accomplishments, as well as their personal mission and vision for working in CI.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

From Danielle Armbruster, President, NCIA

When the idea to ask our members to submit a story on why they work in CI was first discussed, we thought we might receive five to ten stories... enough to fill a regular issue of *NCIA News*. Well, it turns out we were a little too conservative in our estimate. You are holding the largest issue of *NCIA News* in the history of our association, and there are over thirty personal stories from CI practitioners representing states (and FPI) from all across the country.

As I read these stories, I can't help but see how each is directly tied to NCIA's Vision Statement: "Working on the inside – Succeeding on the outside." Some stories start out simply stating that at first they just needed a job, but these stories evolved into how that job became a career... one where their daily activities pointed to one mission – to help prepare incarcerated individuals for post-release reentry success. I was so moved to read about the members who counted one of their highest career achievements to be a phone call or letter from a formerly incarcerated individual who was now gainfully employed or owned a business, taking care of their families, and a productive member of their community. It is clear that all of us in CI share the idea that if we can have a positive impact on the life of just one incarcerated individual it makes what we do worthwhile. I know that as you read these inspiring personal stories, that it will not only allow you to reflect on your own successes, but motivate you to keep striving to help those incarcerated individuals that you work with on a daily basis.

And to help you be the best at what you do in CI, NCIA is here to not only continue to provide networking and educational opportunities, but our Board of Directors, Committees and NCIA Staff are developing new programs to help you be more operationally effective, as well as provide you with the tools and resources so that you can deliver a positive impact on an incarcerated individual's reentry success.

I'm also excited to announce that the 2021 National Training Conference will take place on September 27 – 30 in Indianapolis, IN. I look forward to seeing everyone in Indianapolis. We are all overdue to get back together to share ideas, learn from one another, and meet with our corporate members to see the latest in product and service offerings. Please make sure to go to page 40 for the conference preview and then register to attend at www.nationalcia.org.

As we continue through 2021, I see the inspiring stories in this issue of *NCIA News* and our September conference as signs of hope that CI will emerge from the pandemic of the past year and a half stronger than ever. •





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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE



From Kelli Baxter, Executive Director, NCIA

In this year of change, NCIA has welcomed me as the new Executive Director, and I could not be more honored to join an association of dedicated and inspiring professionals helping to bring positive change and opportunities to returning citizens across the country. As I assumed the role of the Executive Director of NCIA, I received a warm welcome from both the NCIA Board of Directors and national staff, who have made my first 90 days a smooth and enjoyable transition. I owe a huge thank you to the association's Board of Directors, committed staff, and outgoing Executive Director Gina Honeycutt, for making the transition seamless. As we entered 2021, the anticipation for a vaccine that would help bring our country back to some normalcy was higher than ever. While the vaccine is currently being administered at record levels, we are not yet out of the woods and still face a major pandemic that has taken the lives of so many.

We still have a long road ahead, and through it all, NCIA has successfully transitioned in a year of major change, managing many challenges that not many other associations faced. With 2020

behind us, we are in the first quarter of the New Year with what you might call our "new normal". We all know that change is sometimes inevitable.

As such our first quarter saw staff changes with long-time Associate Director of Finance and Organizational Development, Karl Wiley departed NCIA to advance his career in Finance and Accounting. We wish him well. As we said goodbye to both Gina and Karl, we welcome back NCIA's veteran staff member Becky Warfield who took time off to expand her beautiful family and will now be working part-time on special projects with NCIA. Welcome back, Becky!

Moving forward during a pandemic can be a very daunting experience because let's face it... I would dare to say that no one in my lifetime has ever experienced such a transition during a pandemic! Because of the dedicated, well-organized, and efficient team already in place, I can hit the ground running and continue moving the association forward in its strategic mission.

One of the most important elements of this New Year and a new way of doing business is in expanding staff efficiencies while providing more tools and support to our national staff. To accomplish this, we outsourced our accounting and finance function to Chazin and Associates, based in Rockville, Maryland replacing the position of Associate Director of Finance and Organizational Services. Chazin specializes in small non-profit association accounting and finance services. Our objective is to provide enhanced efficiencies in our day-to-day operations and quarterly reporting to the Board. This change will offer an opportunity to create a new Membership Services Administrative Specialist position to support the daily membership services function and more. A search is currently underway.

Our cooperative agreement with the National Institutes of Corrections (NIC) will continue with a revised CI Leadership Training virtual component, as we serve Correctional Industries through the management and technical training assistance of the Prison Industry Enhancement Certification Program (PIECP). The national staff will continue to work remotely and adjust to virtual operations. There are plans to return to the office by mid-summer with an enhanced hybrid work model of both virtual and in-office hours. During the first 18 months of my tenure with NCIA, my primary goal is to increase our visibility in CI and beyond through social media outlets and enhanced marketing efforts. Our focus is to promote NCIA membership, locate new revenue streams, increase support of the Grieser Scholarship Fund, and improve data collection and analysis that further advance best practices in CI. I also look forward to finding new ways to re-engage with the Jail industry. As we plan for our upcoming fall conference, stay safe, and look forward to meeting everyone in Indianapolis. Here's to new opportunities and continuing the legacy of "Working on the Inside—Succeeding on the Outside". •

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WHAT I DO MATTERS

BY **JOE BILLERA**, TECHNOLOGY AND MARKETING SPECIALIST, OREGON CORRECTIONS ENTERPRISES



Above: AICs Cayce and Yoshi in the Graphic Design room at OSCI, hard at work on the day's tasks from their project boards.

For the past 13 months I have worked remotely for Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE), and yet, have never been as connected to my team as I am now. I lead a group of five adults in custody (AICs) in a graphic design training program within our print shop in Salem, OR. As the only staff member in OCE's marketing department, I collaborate regularly with the Graphic Design Team (GDT) to generate ideas, create assets, and refine processes. I encourage them to invest themselves in the program and to utilize the opportunity to better their lives and earn a second chance at a great career. Providing them this quality program is what motivates me to be at my best each day and to seek opportunities for them to grow and have relevant, applicable experiences. This is at the core of why I work in CI. I know what I do matters, especially to these five men.

Throughout the pandemic, it has been a challenge at times to communicate with the team. The AICs live and

work at the Oregon State Correctional Institution (OSCI) and I work from home. Even prior to COVID-19, my work station was in our OCE's administrative office several miles from OSCI. In an effort to bridge that gap, we began utilizing modern technology and practices and have set about removing the disadvantages the AIC population has in the post-release workplace. We are leveling the playing field for when these AICs start their careers. No matter how well they learn to draw or even learn business concepts, without being able to use modern technology and software, they will always be a step behind in the job hunting process. At OCE we are doing something about this.

Our model for the GDT is for them to train on the same tools they will be using when they are employed as professionals. In addition to widely accepted modern graphic design software, each member of the team has an email account they use to communicate with staff relevant to

Continued on page 10

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their position. In a given day, we email back and forth numerous times, allowing for rapid progression of the workflow, and the AICs communicate directly with the multiple managers they support on key projects. To manage all of this, each AIC keeps a digital project board and can email in-time status updates on any of their tasks. Periodically I send them tips and tricks on using email effectively and professionally. A recent email strategy tip was about the Cc and Bcc lines, how they function, and what our enterprise practices and expectations are for their use. A few weeks ago we covered how to accept a meeting and how to view the meeting notes. It's easy to take something as commonplace as email for granted, not including it in a training program, but what an advantage they will have being able to follow proper etiquette and understand the functionality of such an essential tool. It melts away their anxiety over being ill-prepared for the workforce. One must keep in mind that some of the AICs have been incarcerated since before email was widely in use.

For much of the past year, my team was also a man down. A great problem to have as one of our most talented designers released from prison, and this left an open seat on the GDT. With AIC transports extremely limited, travel budgets on hold, and several other desirable OCE positions open in the OSCI print shop and call center, I was faced with needing to recruit statewide without the ability for our committee to interview the candidates in person. With so many of our administrative staff working remotely, one of our leadership's solutions to help us maintain operations was the implementation of Microsoft Teams, sending many of us home with webcams for our workstations. It was in this that we found our solution. After sending out a recruitment notice to every institution and receiving over 60 qualified applicants from across the state, the final candidate pool was whittled down to four. Using Microsoft Teams to interview the candidates turned what was at best an inconvenience into an incredible opportunity for humanization and normalization for these four potential graphic designers.

At OCE we choose to emulate the real-world work process wherever possible. This type of environment is a joy to provide and truly helps our workers with their soft skills and preparation for maintaining living-wage employment. Each work assignment includes recruitments, screenings, interviews, onboarding, reviews, raise oppor-



Above: OCE IT Manager Scott Willis in his office while he, Joe Billera from Marketing, and Linda Simpson from People, Programs, and Services interview an AIC (Jemaell) from across the state using Microsoft Teams.



Above: The Graphic Design Team Lead (Todd) receives individual instruction on a new course the GDT recently started called 365 Days of Creativity by Martin Perhiniak.

tunities, applicable training, and succession planning. In this case we combined several into one. We assembled an interview panel, prepared a list of questions, and scheduled Microsoft Teams interviews at three different institutions over two days. In one case, two staff were in the institution with the interviewees and a third was on the video chat. For the other two interviews, we were at four different locations. We ran into several logistical obstacles at first, but because we had full administrative support from OCE and the Oregon DOC, including Oregon DOC staff members and correctional officers willing to step up to facilitate the process, all four interviews went off without a hitch, allowing us to meet and still follow COVID protocols.

By giving each candidate the list of questions prior to the interview and allowing some time to read them over, they were able to calm their nerves and mentally prepare their best answers. The candidates loved being able to actually use the technology they heard about from family and friends and saw on television. We gave them a quick visual tour of what was on the screen and made our introductions, then transitioned smoothly to the interview. All four candidates shined and any one of them would have been excellent. The person we chose turned out to

live eight hours away on the other side of the state and would never been given the opportunity to interview had it not been for the modern technology and the willingness of leadership and staff to stretch a bit and try something new. I believe this may become the new normal after COVID is over, if for the cost savings and broad reach alone.

With all of the advancements we are making with communication tools, it was time to take some additional steps to turn what started out as a marketing support program into a full-fledged training program. OCE currently offers a certification program to our new designers using Adobe's Photoshop, InDesign, and Illustrator programs. Once they complete the initial certification, it has always been up to the designers themselves to seek out additional resources to advance their skills. This is now no longer the case. Having support from our IT staff and manager, we have added several plug-ins, some new design software for creating characters and rendering products, and some physical books about graphic design software. I also polled my team and asked them to identify some top level designers they would like to learn from. The one they picked above all, Martin Perhiniak, turned out to be an incredibly supportive person with a desire to help. We



Above: AICs James, Jemaell, and Yoshi learn about websites for selling personal graphic art on an instructional video from Martin Perhiniak.

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Right: Utilizing webcams and staff access to the Internet, GDT members are able to meet with University of Oregon Professor Kiersten Muenchinger to discuss project deliverables. The Zoom call eliminating expensive travel and helped advance the project. After the meeting, every member of the GDT expressed how much they appreciated the experience and the human connection.

have entered into a partnership with him to provide a robust training course for the team called 365 Days of Creativity under his Yes I am a Designer brand (<https://yesimadesigner.com/courses/365-days-of-creativity/>).

With so many new tools to use, and all but our newest designer having completed the individual-study OCE certification, there needed to be an outlet to collaborate, an opportunity to learn next-level concepts as a team. Having taught a few courses as a grad student, I created what we have named our Design Forum. In Design Forums, we meet every other week to discuss ideas, present designs, critique each other's work in a safe space, and learn from one another's experiences. We view pre-screened, high-quality graphic design content on YouTube from Martin Perhiniak and others, and review blogs about everything from how to monetize graphic art to what are the best sites for creating mockups. In each class they are completely focused on relevant content and often come away with some new ways to streamline what they do or improve a technique they've been trying the perfect. The discussions are high-end and everyone participates willingly. Our newest designer came to his first Design Forum recently and he was blown away by the realism and seriousness of the graphic design training program. When he releases, he has every intent of becoming a professional graphic designer. After finally talking to him face-to-face, I have

no doubt whatsoever he will achieve his goals. He is an incredibly bright young man with a renewed focus in life and his priorities in order. Thank goodness for Microsoft Teams!

On the day I am writing this article, the now full Graphic Design Team participated in their first Zoom call—yet another communication tool being leveraged to sustain operations. They learned how to share screen content and recognize who is talking and who is muted. They collaborated with staff and an AIC CADD designer from another institution and presented their project deliverables to a professor and two college students for our OCE/University of Oregon Joint Venture. Watching them present their ideas to people outside of the prison setting was an absolute joy and a positive experience for the students as well.

The intrinsic rewards I receive every day working in CI are beyond description. I get to be the person that directly impacts the futures of these five men who are making every effort to better themselves. The effort I give and the decisions I make contribute to their lives and success. My team is as culturally diverse as it is wide-ranging in age, and yet the joy of discovery, the love of learning, and the smile of having taken a step toward a renewed life looks remarkably similar on all of their faces. I wouldn't want to work anywhere else. •

WHY WE WORK IN CI—OREGON

Bill Doman, General Manager – SRCI/WCCF

I like making a difference. Many times we get to actually talk to the guys about good choices and consequences as we work with them, and many times you can see their change from someone who always gets into trouble, to someone who “gets it” and is working to become a better person. That change is a powerful thing to watch happen and be a part of.



Above: Bill Doman and staff serving up and AIC appreciation meal.

Scott Bartholomew, General Manager – EOCI

I came to work in corrections years ago as a part-time officer at the county jail. During my time there, I quickly saw the positive effects that Adults in Custody (AICs) jobs inside the jail had on the AICs who were either serving out their sanctions, or were awaiting trial.

I was offered a position inside Eastern Oregon Correctional Institution’s (EOCI) Garment Factory, and at that moment, I realized that I could continue assisting the AICs to focus on making better life choices, choosing a path that offered them the most important rewards of all: self-respect, self-esteem, and pride stemming from being a productive member of a team. I have never regretted that decision, and I would do it again without a second thought.



Scott Bartholomew

Joseph Billera, Technology and Marketing Specialist

I work for CI because I know firsthand of the value for AICs... the self-worth they gain from meaningful work, the creative process of going from an idea to bringing a new product to market, as well as the skill maintenance and skill building from active participation in many aspects of the production process. I work for CI because it matters what we do. It literally changes lives, casting ripples into families, loved ones, and people who will not become victims because of the changes and opportunities we help create, empowering people to act differently, choose differently, live differently.



Joseph Billera



Randy Addington

Randy Addington, Production Coordinator

My name is Randy Addington, Production Coordinator at Oregon State Penitentiary’s Furniture Factory. I have almost twenty three years in with Oregon Corrections Enterprises (OCE). My journey here at OCE has been just that, a journey. Working in a correctional institution is certainly not what I thought I would be doing as a career. There are so many rules and policies to learn it can make your head spin. It’s also not the same as it used to be twenty three years ago. As we all know time brings change and people have come and gone (both staff and AICs).

As a Production Coordinator in the furniture factory I have been able to be a part of something quite unique and extraordinary. I work with AICs that have a like interest in

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woodworking, as I do. There have been many complex projects that have come and gone through the furniture factory here, requiring journeyman-level work and master craftsman projects involving the need to understand many concepts, techniques, skill, patience, blueprint reading, and thinking. It pleases me to know that I have a pool of talent to have drawn from over the years. Some have come in “green” to rise above their own known talent, skill, craftsmanship, others have been happy with just a craftsman level and to be part of a team production. In summary, it has been a privilege to work amongst men that have a sense of pride in their work. In cabinetry, the level of your skill is quickly apparent in the results of your work. Kudos to those AICs who have risen above, and also to those that have just tried.

Barb Canard, General Manager – CCCF

Take a moment to imagine working as a teacher, coach, counselor, or parent. Now fuse those professions into one, and you begin to understand the role of those who work in the field of Correctional Industries. I help our agency produce the best quality product we can: a person who is better prepared to be a success, both inside and outside of the facility. As a person who has always lived a life of service, my position allows me to fulfill my personal mission for however long I live on this planet... make the world a better place.

As I look back over a 26 year career, I am pleased to see what we have accomplished so far. We inspired legislation that helps adults in custody (AICs) save money for release. We developed certification programs to teach people both occupational and employment skills in a structured format. We encouraged countless individuals to complete their General Education Degree (GED) by making it a requirement of many of our programs. We encouraged public and private partners to become second-chance employers. We worked with thousands of AICs to help them choose a different path and to develop the skills necessary to be a successful part of our communities. Best of all, multiple independent research projects have proven that our work has reduced recidivism. This has reduced the number of potential future victims, reduced the number of families torn apart by crime, and reduced the incarceration tax burden on our citizens. We have made the world a better place.



Above: Barb serving up an AIC appreciation meal pre-COVID.

I have worked in several different roles in my time with Oregon Corrections Enterprises. Each one has been rewarding in its own right. My favorite roles have been those that allow me to work directly with AICs. Some days are more challenging than others as we work with those who may be experiencing both physical and mental health difficulties. Finding the right approach to inspire change in each individual can be frustrating and exhausting, but when I see the lightbulb come on, when a person suddenly makes the choice to succeed, it is one of the most rewarding moments of my day. It does not matter to me if a person has a release date or not. Success can happen to any person at any time. If a person without a release date decides to make better choices, then I have helped make the job of both security and non-security staff easier. If a staff experiences less stress, then that person's family life is improved. In multiple ways, we make the world a better place.

Working in the field of corrections was never a childhood dream of mine but it has become my passion. Eventually I will retire and find yet another way to make the world a better place. Until then, I simply cannot imagine anything more rewarding than crossing paths with someone who says, “Thank you for not giving up on me.” Make the world a better place. •

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WHY I WORK IN CORRECTIONAL INDUSTRIES

BY **JANET K. LANE**, DIRECTOR,
MARYLAND CORRECTIONAL ENTERPRISES
REENTRY SERVICES



Walking through the plants and shops that operate as the business units for Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE), the hum of activity and shared sense of purpose among the program participants is captivating. Some are operating complex machines, others instructing, mentoring, or calling out product or box numbers. Forklifts are roaring to life to load their cargo. There are shared meals, laughter, and a recounting of the morning accomplishments, as well as planning for the work to be done after lunch. Apart from the uniforms worn by the workers, any of these shops could be well-run, high-energy, productive warehouses or manufacturing plants anywhere in America.

Although one of the goals and benefits in the establishment of Correctional Industries was to reduce idleness for incarcerated individuals, MCE goes way beyond just checking that box. For those serving sentences, there are even greater rewards and earned benefits such as money, monthly diminution credits that translate to ten days reduction off for every month of their sentence, resume writing skills, certifications, apprenticeships, socialization, and a real-world job experience. MCE maintains a long waiting list for programming in our shops. Those who appear motivated and demonstrate positive behavior are eligible for assignment to a shop on the compound

of their correctional facility. All program participants are given guidance and a chance, but if their only motivation is to escape boredom, that will not be enough to retain their place in the program. To continue in the programming, participants must continue to build and grow their hard and soft skills.

For most participants, there are often unexpected benefits such as taking part in the production process and taking pride in the outcome. Promotions to become a peer leader can be earned, and often, even those serving a life sentence become mentors to younger or newer program participants. Shop visits, random surveys, and routine chats with workers reveal that those who participate in our program for any real length of time become part of our MCE family and look forward to those early morning starts, expanding their knowledge base, and reconnecting with their shop mates each day.

Most national studies demonstrate that Correctional Industries work also has positive effects on the smooth reentry into communities and fewer returns to a life of crime. The credit for recidivism reduction can be attributed to a work ethic that is instilled into each program participant. As a reentry specialist, I can relate that the credit for enhancing both soft and hard skills of our

returning citizens are mainly due to the plant and shop managers and it is their management style and their connection to every person who works for them, that is the foundation of our reentry program.

With almost no exception, every MCE program participant has a conviction for a serious felony. Their sentences range in length from 3 years to life. There are varieties of classes offered at most Maryland correction facilities. Some are weeks or months in duration and all aim to enhance knowledge, educate the participant on behavioral change or on scholastic topics. However, these classes take place over a finite amount of time, and then they end. MCE's business units operate every weekday and consist of laundry, furniture design, graphic design, re-upholstery, metal plants, textiles and apparel, license plates, printing & CAD designs, meat processing, and warehousing storage. During the COVID pandemic, staff had to be laid off and shops that were open had to operate at a high level and with much fewer staff. Under normal operations, we can employ more than 1,500 incarcerated individuals and our finest products are improving human capital for the State of Maryland.

I sat down with several of our shop managers specifically to ask them why they work in Correctional Industries. Even though our shop managers come from a variety of backgrounds, they all adopt the "fair, firm, and impartial" management style as taught at the Maryland Department of Corrections academy. There is a mutualistic relationship between the shop managers and the incarcerated individuals that they supervise and train. As each of our managers started their jobs, they looked at their shops through the eyes of a business owner. They want to leave the plant and the human beings better than they found them in as many aspects as possible. The managers take on various roles other than plant manager, and they are adept at diagnosing the needs of each program participant.

Everyone has a story... and the plant managers know that you start by listening to those stories. People who are in our criminal justice system have rarely been



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Above: A program participant works on a project in our graphics plant.

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heard. Managers build trust by providing clear instructions and making reasonable demands and requests. A person who was heard now feels confident to speak up and make a suggestion to improve efficiency. He or she may become a peer leader and earn the respect of the other participants. Our managers essentially re-upholster the incarcerated individuals working in their shop and derive enormous satisfaction from the resulting improvements. There may still be some old scratches on the frame, but the people are now stronger and the fabric of their being is refreshed.

All the exciting aspects of running a correctional business unit that I saw when I went on a tour of these shops are what these managers experience daily. They are training incarcerated individuals in a variety of applicable job skills that include: safety regulations, record keeping, reading barcodes and inventory control, shipping, sewing, laundry, manufacturing, cleaning, database management, warehouse management, forklift, printing, computer designing, order entry, meat processing, metal fabrication, license plates, and business cards. The staff who work in Correctional Industries do not just come for the pay

or the regular hours—they come to build people... and, to see the pride in someone's eyes over a job well done.

I asked the managers what they thought were the low points of working for MCE and everyone stated that redundant paperwork and typical workplace woes were the main frustrations. Not one person said that a low point was working in a correctional facility or with incarcerated individuals. When asked what the high points of working in Correctional Industries, here is a summary of what they all said: watching people learn a trade and take pride in their abilities, making a difference and coaching, teaching and imparting values, testimonials from the women participants, and taking part in their growth and development.

Human capital is the measure of skills, education, and attributes of labor that influence productive capacity. Working in Correctional Industries, we have the unique opportunity to assist in rebuilding lives and providing the framework for a fresh start. The business and the product lines are valuable, but the people who work in the shops give the industry its merit and worth. •



Above: A plant manager instructs a program participant in our graphics plant.



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A SIX MONTH JOB THAT LASTED THIRTY-THREE YEARS

BY **JAMES BROWN**, CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER, PRIDE ENTERPRISES

CI, Correctional Industries, an interesting acronym in society today for someone that has worked at a Correctional Institution (another CI) for the past 33 years. The question this article asks and hopefully answers is “Why do I work inside a Correctional Institution for Correctional Industries”? Of course, at first it was because I needed a job!

I started working for PRIDE Enterprises (PRIDE) on November 5th, 1987 when PRIDE was only six years old. I have been an employee of PRIDE (which is another acronym that stands for Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diver-

sified Enterprises, Inc.) working at Sumter Correctional Institution, a correctional facility located in Bushnell, FL for over thirty-three years.

Back in 1987 I needed a job after working a season on Ship Island for the National Park Service in Gulf Springs, MS. I had just finished working the summer season and was driving home to my family in Miami, FL. I stopped in for a visit with a cousin who had recently taken a job with PRIDE in the furniture division. His wife’s father happened to be the Industry Manager at Sumter Wood Furniture and they were looking for more employees. I asked if he could put in a good word for me as I had scored high enough to have my job back on Ship Island the following April and so needed a job for the next six months. My basic knowledge of furniture and completion of the National Park Service Law Enforcement training helped to secure the job supervising incarcerated individuals inside a correctional facility.

At first it was an adjustment going from one job where celebrations such as going away parties were held frequently to a job inside a correctional institution where parties were simply not allowed. There were also a lot of clear, strict rules. However, I made the adjustment and as good fortune would find it my wife landed a job as well two months after I started at PRIDE. Today, she’s still at her job as well.

As I was approaching six months at my new job at PRIDE, the call from my Ship Island Supervisor came and I had a big decision to make. Either stay at PRIDE or go back to Ship Island. I decided on PRIDE and now thirty-three years later, I prepare for retirement and just recently saw a job posting for my current job.

A little background on PRIDE... it is forty years old this year. Its mission is to reduce the recidivism rate of incarcerated individuals when they are released by teaching them a trade which will help them be more productive post-release. Incarcerated individuals working for PRIDE learn this trade while working in shops that manufacture a variety of products from business cards, eyeglasses,



Above: An incarcerated individual working in the PRIDE Dental Lab.



Above: PRIDE License Plate.

wood and metal furniture, dentures, cleaning and sanitary products, lumber and much more. PRIDE's recidivism rate is 10%... which is much lower than the overall state recidivism rate.

At Sumter Correctional Institution, PRIDE has two operations. The first one is wood office furniture where I worked my first ten years supervising incarcerated individuals in the assembly of office furniture. The second is the printing operation where I have worked for the past twenty-three years supervising staff and incarcerated individuals in the printing of various items from business cards to banners. I've been fortunate to work at Sumter Correctional Institution as the institutional staff has always worked closely and professionally with PRIDE to maintain the success of both operations. For a program like this to work and succeed all areas of the institution must work together, with each knowing the limitations of the other and accepting everyone will do their job honestly and be respectful of each other.

It's a win—win situation as I would explain working at various trade shows promoting the printing operation and PRIDE in general. PRIDE does not take state tax dollars and is trying to reduce the rate of formerly incarcerated individuals going back to prison after their release to society.

The job does come with challenges. For example working with a small incarcerated workforce can be an issue at times when you are trying to fill a specific job role. I couldn't just put an ad in the paper (or online) and highlight "experienced preferred." When I did find an incarcerated individual with some of the right job skills, often this person still needed some additional direction, but was willing to learn. I recently talked with a formerly incarcerated individual that had served over 25 years and he told me the most important lesson he learned from me while work for PRIDE was "accountability." He had been released and was coming back as a member of the "Lifer's Group" at Sumter Correctional Institution. The members of this group act as a positive example for those still incarcerated and show how they can successfully transition back to society after release.

Of course, working in a correctional environment not all stories are happy ones. A few years ago, I had to terminate a hard-working incarcerated individual for a cell phone violation. Every time I saw him, he would apologize for his mistake. When he was released, he called me to tell me again that he was sorry for making the mistake and putting me in that hard position where I had no choice but to terminate. As I stated before, the rules are both clear and strict.

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Not only does PRIDE equip incarcerated individuals with meaningful job skills, it increases the chance that they will not return to Florida's prison system after release. And it's done with a special group of people that work in various departments within PRIDE: Accounts receivable/payable, information technology, purchasing, and of course the job placement staff all have a direct impact on not only PRIDE's success but the reentry success that our formerly incarcerated individuals achieve upon release.

I recently moved into a new job as the Customer Service Manager for PRIDE, and I have seen many great workers making the program successful by being the example they were hired to be. Both PRIDE staff... or "free world" as they are referred to... and the incarcerated workers both doing their job to the best of their ability. That's how you maintain a successful working atmosphere.

I have realized over the years working for PRIDE that it is often my job to help an incarcerated individual not only learn job skills, but ever-changing life skills as well. I think about an incarcerated individual who was released recently after being incarcerated for over thirty years and he asked the difference between a debit and credit card. That story got me to think about how society has progressed over the past 33 years. If someone was incarcerated when I started my career with PRIDE, they would have watched VHS tapes, wrote letters instead of email or texts, and a laptop would have been unheard of.

Working for PRIDE provides some interesting workplace conditions. For example, coming to work and taking off your shoes, going through a metal detector, and sometimes being patted down, is not something someone working outside of corrections is going to experience on a daily basis. There's also the days when workers don't show up for security reasons or are called out for education or medical reasons. Here is where we all learn to work together... and let's not forget that the correctional facility staff's first concern is security. For us working for PRIDE, we use these examples as a way to teach our incarcerated workforce to work through these issues and continue to strive to be positive and productive.

In closing, the original question of "Why do I work for Correctional Industries?" While at first, the answer was simply that I needed a job. Then it became a career, and then it became personal in that I wanted to teach more than how to just get ink on paper. After thirty-three years, it's my way of making a small difference and being a positive influence on the lives of incarcerated individuals that sometimes just need a little direction to become successful upon their release to society. Sometimes it's just as simple as teaching someone to do their job.

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VIRGINIA CORRECTIONAL ENTERPRISES— THREE DIFFERENT PATHS... ONE SHARED COMMITMENT

For Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE), staff come from various backgrounds and take different paths to VCE. Regardless of how they got to VCE, everyone shares a commitment to successful reentry.

Karl Schnurr, Senior Sales Representative



Karl Schnurr

As I reflect back on my work life over the years, I realize how great my opportunity has been to work in the Correctional Industries field. About 29 years ago, the seed was planted as I worked in sales for a company in Baltimore, MD. I stumbled on the Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) office in an industrial park and spoke to a woman who

explained what they did and who produced the products that they sold. I was surprised to hear that incarcerated individuals created everything I saw in their showroom. She then told me about their mission and I thought it was fantastic that it provided an opportunity for people who were incarcerated to help better themselves.

A few months later, I decided to make a job change. When I opened the newspaper, right there in the middle of the page, was a quarter-page ad for a Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE) Sales & Marketing Representative for Northern Virginia. I called to see if VCE was the same thing as MCE and they said it was... just in a different state. I'm not sure if I felt at that moment that I was "chosen" to work for VCE, but in hindsight I think that is exactly what happened when I saw the ad that morning.

Being a sales & marketing representative for VCE is challenging, but so is every sales position. Sales is all about creating solutions for our customers and letting them know we care about the long term outcome for them. The challenges that exist for private sector sales can happen at VCE as well, along with the unique issue that can come from manufacturing in a prison environment. But, you go make the sales calls and share your knowledge of the products and services and you work with your client to close the sale. You both win—you get the sale and the customer gets the product or service they desire. In the private sector that is usually enough, and with the sale comes a commission. However, at VCE there is no commission but you do get one more win.

The third win comes in the form of a third party benefiting every time you ring the sales bell! To put it in terms from the movie "It's a Wonderful Life," every time a bell rings an incarcerated individual gets a job! Well, the thing that motivates me on top of getting the sale is exactly that... another incarcerated individual gets an opportunity to become better. That is a win you do not get in the private sector. To be able to be in a position to help another human be better is a great and powerful thing. Other than my personal mission to make sure I take great care of our customers and continue to create sales solutions for them, this is my daily driving force that helps me pop out of bed each morning ready to go at it again! The more I sell, the more the bell rings!

After 28 years, I am still ringing the bell for VCE!

Dawn Knighton, Apparel Industry Group Manager**Dawn Knighton**

Prior to coming to Correctional Industries my experience was in production and quality in private industry in my native Scotland and also in Virginia. I came to VCE as an apparel plant manager as the locality offered family support with my young child. I thought I would work with CI for a year or so... that was 20 years ago!

While I was trained on working with incarcerated individuals, nothing really prepares you for the journey that you take in trying to manufacture a quality product while also being a life coach for the workforce. On my first week in the plant I was faced with many questions, like who are you? Why are you here? Where do you come from? But the question that sticks out in my mind from that first week was, "do you want us to like you or respect you?" I pondered that for a minute and my response was "I don't care whether you like me or not and respect is something you earn, so give yourself some time and you answer that question down the road. That incarcerated individual who asked reminded me of that question eight years later when he was getting ready to go home. He was one of the lead operators by this time and a role model for the other incarcerated individuals. He said that he thought

about that question many times in our time working together and he said it was in that moment that I challenged him and it changed his mindset. He went home and for many years would call the institution around Christmas time and tell me how well he was doing!

I always explain to newly hired incarcerated individuals that a factory is not a building, it is a group of people who work together as a team to produce a quality product or service, and for a quality product to be produced we have trust and respect each other to do our best. There is not one person that sets out with the goal to fail or make a mistake. None of us are perfect and at one point or another we will all make a mistake... it is how we confront the mistake that determines the success or failure of our product or position. This is achieved through teamwork, knowing it is ok to make a mistake but to make sure that we, as a team, have evaluated what caused the mistake and have developed a viable countermeasure to prevent the same mistake from happening for the same reason again.

It is the team concept of quality that builds a cohesive team and when quality is the goal, it can be life changing as it does not only apply to products or services, it applies to life... quality is key to integrity. My goal has always been to make a difference in each one of the incarcerated individuals who buy in to the philosophy of quality and to make sure that when they go home they have both the technical skills to succeed in an assembly line process and the soft skills to keep the job.

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WHY
I work in CI...

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Telesea Sims, Warehouse Foreman

I followed a different path to my 15-year employment with VCE. I started working at the VCE warehouse as an incarcerated individual in 2006 and kept that position until 2011, when I transferred to another facility for intensive reentry for the last six months of my sentence. While at that facility, I received word that I could apply to VCE as a temporary employee six months after my release. I applied right at six months and was hired at the VCE warehouse in 2012 in a contract position. I applied for and became a full-time employee with VCE in 2013. When a warehouse foreman position opened in 2015, I applied and got the promotion.

I've been supervising incarcerated individuals for six years and I run a tight ship with high expectations. With my background, I am in a unique position to influence the lives of these workers. I make no bones about it, I come right out and say prison is hard, but working for VCE was the bright spot for me. VCE staff treated me like a person. Getting out of the building and coming to work in the warehouse was like being normal, something I missed in the daily grind of being told when to wake up, when to take a shower, or even when I could watch TV. I tell the ladies that you have a little freedom at VCE, you learn job skills, and can feel more normal. You can connect with the products at VCE and take pride in loading a truck with furniture going to a university where your kid could be attending.

I put myself in prison... no one else did. I tell the ladies that those "friends" you had on the street aren't your friends—they don't visit or put money on your books—so why run back to them when you get out and end up making the same mistake? I tell them to get it right because you come back to prison again, the second time will be harder. Remember the things you don't like about prison life and keep that in mind as you make decisions on the outside. I tell them that VCE gave me time and a chance to make that change and I took advantage of that opportunity with no regrets.

I tell my workers that there is no "I" in team. It's important to work together to get the job done. Those new workers hearing my "talk" sometimes shrug it off, saying I haven't been where they are. The senior workers are quick to correct them, saying "the boss ain't one to mess with as she's been there."

I am there for the ladies, and making a difference by reaching out is who I am. For the workers, it's being able to talk to someone who understands without everyone at the prison knowing and gossiping about it. I've gone back to the prison to talk to the incarcerated individuals about my experience and success but working with my crew is where I have the most impact! •



Telesea Sims

HOPE & IMPACT AT OHIO PENAL INDUSTRIES

BY **LORI WALLACE-ROBERTS**, MARKETING MANAGER, OHIO PENAL INDUSTRIES

For the staff of Ohio Penal Industries (OPI) providing hope and having a meaningful impact on incarcerated adults is the key to supporting the overall mission of OPI. See their stories below.

Conductor of Hope – Gina Hofer



Gina Hofer

Gina Hofer comes to work every day with a positive outlook and a can-do attitude, one that is immediately conveyed to those around her... both staff and incarcerated adults alike. Hofer, who has been employed by the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction (ODRC) for 21 years, currently works in the distribution section of the OPI license plate factory at the Lebanon Correctional Institution, where she's been employed for the last 8 years. She wasn't particularly searching for a job in Correctional Industries, instead, the cling, clang of the license plate factory kind of found her.

Believe it or not, Gina believes it all begins with one simple action... talking. She talks with the incarcerated adults working in her area. She speaks in a positive manner, offering words of encouragement and suggestions for improvement. That, so to speak, is the first instrument in her symphony of success.

To begin, Gina starts with the basics. She works with her crew, training them in job specific tasks, such as warehouse and equipment operations. She stresses the importance of the work performed, because let's face it,

shipping Ohio license plates to deputy registrars across the state is an important job!

Not only does she talk about the importance of the work being done, she teaches the skills needed to perform the work. Incarcerated adults are certified in real-world, relevant and marketable skills, such as forklift operation, that translate directly to today's job market. These skills give them a leg-up and a way to hit the ground running upon their release. All the while she is teaching and training, she is talking, answering questions, listening and serving as a guiding force for those she supervises.

In addition to the direct on-the-job training they receive, Gina believes heavily on a cacophony of soft skills that will serve them regardless of the type of job they may someday have. Teamwork, patience, compassion, understanding others and knowing when to walk away are just some of the traits Gina works to instill in her team.

For Gina, however, it doesn't end with talking, training and certifying. She encourages those under her supervision to provide her with information on prior employment and uses that information to create updated resumes, setting them up for future success. She works with OPI's reentry coordinator to schedule interviews, oftentimes prior to release. To hear her tell it, "I find personal satisfaction in helping incarcerated adults, whether assisting on the job, writing a resume or just talking and offering my guidance."

She continues to work with three tenets in mind – understanding, observation and consideration. She tries to understand that not everyone thinks, learns or works the same. She also tries to observe changes in behavior and look for stressors that may impact performance and she tries to be considerate of the wide range of situations these incarcerated adults face.

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Gina’s three tenets fall right in line with the core values of ODRC’s Director, Annette Chambers-Smith. Specifically, Gina personifies the Director’s core value of civility towards all. She treats everyone with respect and dignity. She listens. She talks. She engages. In addition, another of the Director’s values is “hope is job one,” which is exactly what Gina offers her incarcerated workforce. She works to instill confidence and optimism and serve as their champion and beacon for a brighter future.

For Gina, her why is simple, “I like the thought of helping an incarcerated adult who is ready and willing to help himself make better life decisions. I want to be a part of helping them gain the knowledge, tools and confidence to succeed.” Down in southern Ohio, at the OPI license plate operation, it seems pretty clear that Gina Hofer has become a conductor of hope.

A Meaningful Impact – John Lyon



John Lyon

A successful job... not returning to prison... a happy future. If we’re all being honest, that’s what most Correctional Industries’ professionals dream of for the incarcerated adults working under their purview. Throughout the years, John Lyon, former Sales Manager for OPI, has had the fortune to make a meaningful impact on many lives. John’s career in corrections spans 28 years, with 22 of those working in the CI side of things, Pre-OPI, back when John was a correction officer, he became aware of that revolving door effect—the incarcerated adults would walk out the door and oftentimes, end up walking right back in—whether it was months or years later.

After coming to OPI, first as a modular installer and then working his way up to the Sales Manager position, John was thrilled to find an extremely diverse and talented incarcerated workforce already hard at work in the OPI sales area. He continued to build the sales team by interviewing and screening potential workers. He was anxious to help them learn, grow and, ultimately, have a successful life and career upon release.

John and his team put forth a great deal of effort to train the incarcerated adults in everything from Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and order entry processing to CAD design and project management. John also collaborated with OPI’s vendors, who provided hands-on training to the incarcerated workforce, whether training on CAD operations, project management or specific vendor product offerings.

After multiple conversations and a little convincing, John was able to get the go-ahead for OPI’s incarcerated adults to travel with OPI sales representatives to visit customers across the state. During these visits or meetings in the OPI offices, these incarcerated adults, alongside OPI staff, were able to develop exceptional communication skills and showcase their newfound knowledge to those outside of OPI. At its core, they were the personification of the OPI mission. What better way was there to demonstrate what OPI was all about?

During those meetings, our incarcerated adults were able to meet with customers, learn about project requirements and design workspaces that met those requirements. From conception to completion, they worked jointly with the OPI sales representative and the customer on design and delivery. They were instrumental in helping bring office visions to life.

As so often happens, releases started to occur, but that didn’t stop John. He was instrumental in helping to place several restored citizens with private sector businesses, some of them were OPI vendors. Even more, John was a key factor in ensuring that OPI itself was willing to do the same. With the blessing of upper management, John encouraged restored citizens to apply for open positions within OPI. It started with one individual coming back in a contractor role and, within a few years, OPI had 6 restored citizens working alongside long-time OPI staff.

As it stands now, some of those restored citizens have moved on to things outside of OPI. Some of them have been promoted directly within OPI. But, to hear John tell it, we haven't yet reached complete success. "We see new faces every day and must continue to teach and develop individuals. Positive interaction is the key."

While John's sentiment is certainly true, the impact John had on three current OPI staff members is unparalleled.

Current OPI Sales Manager Zach Taubenheim mentioned that, "John Lyon gave me an opportunity to come back to OPI as a contractor after I was released and that made a huge impact on my life and career. I will always be grateful for that opportunity as I would not be where I currently am without it."

Sales Representative Brent Peters noted that, "John Lyon did not take no for an answer when OPI was thinking of hiring and John wanted former incarcerated adults that he had personally trained to come back and work for him as staff members. He was 100% for the workforce

he trained and knew we could do the job and stood behind us in everything we did."

Shaun Martin, current Reentry Coordinator for OPI, had this to say, "John played such a huge role during my incarceration and re-entry by providing tremendous support and stability in the OPI sales office where he was the sales manager. Upon my release, he advocated for me to come back to OPI and begin working as a contractor just thirty-three days after my release and a year later he encouraged and supported my permanent hiring into the OPI sales department. Without John, I would not be where I am today with OPI. I will be eternally grateful for all his encouragement and support over the last 8 years!"

"A better society is achieved by the people who live in it," according to John.

John's diligence and passion, encouragement and inspiration, helped to impact folks who are not only productive members of society, but members of the OPI family, as well. •

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CONTINUING A CAREER WITH UNICOR

Like many CIs, some of the staff at Federal Prison Industries (trade name UNICOR) spent many years working in the private sector before continuing their careers in Correctional Industries. See the stories below of how these UNICOR staff take their expertise to help incarcerated individuals succeed post-release.

Paul Campbell, General Manager, Clothing & Textiles Business Group



Paul Campbell

I was let go from my job in June 2008. For the first time in my adult life, and at age 49, I was unemployed. I had worked in manufacturing since graduating from college, however, employment was difficult to find due to the recession. A friend suggested I consider working for UNICOR. I did not know a lot about what UNICOR did except that they

manufactured products primarily for the United States military and Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP). I thought I would give it a shot.

I began my career with UNICOR in January 2009 as a Program Manager. My role was to work with factories to meet the customer requirements in the most cost-effective way while employing as many incarcerated individuals as possible. At first, I found this counterproductive to everything I had been taught and tried to do in the private sector. It was only after visiting the factories and talking with the incarcerated individuals working the production jobs that I realized the true mission of UNICOR:

“To protect society and reduce crime by preparing inmates with job training and practical work skills for reentry success.”

Since 2008, I have been promoted through UNICOR and I am now the General Manager of the Clothing and

Textiles Business Group. Every day is a balancing act. UNICOR is self-funded and therefore does not receive money from the federal budget and must operate as a business to support the mission. I enjoy the challenge of balancing the business aspects with the BOP’s reentry initiatives. It is rewarding to see the positive impact on incarcerated individuals who learn meaningful life skills while working in UNICOR and apply those skills after release to successfully reintegrate into the community. Additionally, I am proud that the clothing and textiles items that UNICOR produces are used to support the United States warfighters in their mission to protect our country.

Steve Thaler, Assistant General Counsel



Steve Thaler

I work for UNICOR as an attorney because of the satisfaction gained from helping incarcerated individuals change their lives for the better. Years ago, I was a business litigator working for corporations. The clients were interesting, and the pay was excellent, but I was not passionate about it. That desire to do something more meaningful with

my legal skills is what brought me to UNICOR.

With our mission, UNICOR offers me an opportunity to do something significant every day. For example, I assist incarcerated individuals who work for UNICOR with obtaining letters of reference and work verification when they release. Doing so enhances the post-

release employment prospects of men and women who have been given a second chance, something we all can identify with somehow.

In fact, collaborating with staff in UNICOR and the Federal Bureau of Prisons, I helped develop the template for the reference letter initiative and the process to request, draft, and distribute the letters to incarcerated individuals who are being released. That kind of work makes me love coming to the office. It is a privi-

lege to play even a small part in helping someone who is seeking to restore their lives. And when I hear that a formerly incarcerated individual and UNICOR worker has landed the job, I could not be happier for him or her, as well as their family and community.

Do I miss business litigation? Would I return to it? Not a chance, or better yet, not because of the second chances for which UNICOR equips its incarcerated workers to have at life. •



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MANAGER'S MOTIVATION AT MICHIGAN STATE INDUSTRIES

Want to find out what motivates the shop managers who keep Michigan State Industries (MSI) running? See these two stories and find out that for MSI managers, the job could lead to a future in writing or provide the gift of sight to the less fortunate.

Matt Yeager, Optical Shop Manager



Matt Yeager, far left

The phrase “it takes a community” certainly applies to every aspect in my goal to provide incarcerated individuals with opportunities to learn real world applications and optical theory instruction. My goal each day when I arrive at work is to try and make a difference in a worker’s life from helping them learn the optical trade to obtaining meaningful employment to collaborating with outside community programs to provide less fortunate kids locally and overseas with eye care and eyewear to countries and portions of the world that would otherwise receive no care at all. It warms my heart with gratitude when I think about the reentry success of a formerly incarcerated individual who now runs his own optical lab or to see images of children overseas wearing glasses donated through our program’s great partnerships.

I focus on the valuable hard skills necessary for outside employment in the field of optometry in processing and filling optical prescriptions. Many of the skills workers receive will ready them for future employment in the optical field after reentry such as lens surfacing, finishing, polishing, edging, and working with the latest cutting-edgetechnologyandequipmentssuchasdigital len

someters, wax blockers, generators, and edger machines to name a few. Although hard skills are important, “soft” skills are by no means overlooked, and I strive to instill these daily as a work ritual... showing the importance of having a strong work ethic, positive attitude, time management, respect for yourself and others, cleanliness, and communication.

My commitment to changing the lives of incarcerated individuals is unwavering and can be measured by the success stories shared by former parolees over the years and recent parolees alike who continue to reach out to me with updates on their success. On a recent project helmed by members of the First United Methodist Church of Adrian, MI., eyeglasses were shipped to Liberia, a country in West Africa, which borders the Atlantic. Key participants in the project were incarcerated individuals at the MSI Optical Lab who are involved in the cleaning, sorting, repair and packaging of slightly damaged glasses. Additional community assistance in the project came from the Adrian Breakfast Lions Club, which was responsible for bringing in a number of additional donated glasses; Tecumseh Packaging Solutions, which provided preformed shipping boxes to neatly pack and hold each individual pair of glasses; and Postal Plus of Adrian, which



Above: Former MSI Optical Lab worker now owns his own optical shop.

was responsible for getting the many boxes of glasses from Adrian to their destination. A Methodist Church in North Carolina with ties of its own to Liberia offered to ship the glasses from Adrian to Liberia at no charge. The same church in North Carolina sent along 1,500 eyeglasses of its own, bringing the total shipment of glasses to 3,000. It is the satisfaction in knowing that our program touches the lives of others each day and puts these guys on a path to success.

Will Rondeau, License Plate Manager



Above: Will Rondeau, (left) and a formerly incarcerated individual meet post-release.

Even today I ask myself at times what was I thinking 34 years ago when I chose a career in Corrections. After all, everything you see on TV shows you how dangerous and unfulfilling of a job it must be. Well, it has turned out to be just the opposite. In fact, I am not sure another career choice would have been so satisfying and rewarding as this one has ended up being.

I was a journalism major in college looking for a career where I could write books on how I could save the world or how I could help people make lots of money. I even thought about maybe writing murder for hire fiction novels that would keep my readers on edge until the very end. So, when my friends ask me today why I am still working for Corrections, this is what I tell them.

I have been working for Michigan State Industries (MSI) since 1994 and every day I go through 13 different gates

and doors just to get to my office. Things have not changed much with the building I work in, but it sure has changed a lot with the job itself. I learned a long time ago, that the only way you will be successful in any business, is to take ownership of that business even if you do not own it. I also learned not to burn any bridges because you inevitably may need to cross that bridge again sometime down the road. These are things that you eventually learn at most jobs. Correctional Industries goes much further than that.

I sit back in my chair at work and think how many other jobs allow you to meet so many different people from all different backgrounds. How many jobs do you call most of your co-workers only by their last name? How many jobs would you walk into the door and have someone make you empty your pockets and go through your personal items and be ok with it? I could go on and on, but the bottom line is that we all have learned or been trained to enter this other world and at the end of your day try and leave it behind. Good luck with that! The strange thing is that even though there have been many times I wish I could have done this, there are many more times I am glad I could not. I have so many stories to tell and so many friends that I have met that maybe when I finally close that last prison door on my way out, that I will sit down and write that nonfiction novel and entitle it: "The World Left Behind but Never Forgotten."

Each of the more than 8.8 million registered vehicles in Michigan must include a plate made at the MSI License Plate factory, which cranks out about 12,000 license plates per day, an estimated 1.5 million plates per year. Employment at the factory is a coveted job for incarcerated individuals, who gain work experience and learn valuable soft skills. I am also proud of my production team, who have been instrumental in the successful reentry to job placement for many of our incarcerated workers.

We employ incarcerated individuals that learn a profession here that hopefully they will take out to the world with them, which means they will get a good job and not come back to prison. That's one of our major goals here... to teach these guys a skill. •

SERVING OTHERS AND COLLABORATION IN WASHINGTON STATE

Whether its food service or construction, the dedicated staff at Washington State Correctional Industries know that serving others as well as serving with others is critical to creating a culture conducive for positive reentry outcomes.

Servant Leadership – Jamie Dolan



Jamie Dolan

October 1, 2014 was the first day of my Washington State Correctional Industries (WACI) career. At that time, I had very little knowledge about the transformative journey I was embarking on. I had spent the prior 15 years working various aspects of the private sector food industry ranging from recipe development, bakery management, food

sales account management, as well as traveling the country conducting cooking demonstrations marketing the world's premier culinary college, The Culinary Institute of America. After receiving my Master's degree in Organization Leadership, I began my WACI career as an assistant food service administrator where my focus was transitioning the food service environment from a routine corrections setting to one focused on reentry and soft-skill development for incarcerated individuals. Admittedly, walking into the prison on my first day was nothing short of eye-opening. The world of food service was familiar and comforting, however, at that moment I also realized that I knew very little about a correctional system and the culture within a prison. My only prior exposure to a correctional setting was the mostly inaccurate television portrayals which led to my pre-conceived notions of chaos and negativity. Luckily throughout my tenure with WACI, I have experienced a complete paradigm shift on who we are and why we do what we do. I contribute this to working for a progressive correctional system that focuses on the pro-social behavior of the incarcerated population.

Today, I serve as Assistant Director for Operations working with food service, food manufacturing, commissary and field crops teams across the state. Over the past seven years I have found my professional purpose of serving others... others being Department of Corrections (DOC) professionals, WACI staff, the incarcerated population, their friends and family, as well as the greater Washington State community. I am inspired to take action on a daily basis and empower those in my charge. Our mission in WACI is committed to maintaining and expanding work training programs which develop marketable job skills, instill and promote positive work ethics, and reduce the tax burden of corrections. This mission fuels my emotional motivation to come to work each day.

In my current role, I utilize a variety of platforms to positively impact the lives of the incarcerated individuals who work within WACI. I have access to policy work, legislative work and overall pricing strategies which ensure we sell the highest quality product for the lowest possible price. The goal is to have all aspects working in concert to create an environment of operational sustainability where our incarcerated workers have the opportunity to gain the necessary soft skills needed to assist with successful reintegration into society.

As an example, during our monthly CI Food Group strategic planning meetings we rotate presenting a diversity moment. Often times the topics focus on a self-reflection of our individual 'whys' and how our work positively impacts others. One of the most memorable discussions centered on the question of; "what did you do today that will better someone else?" The subsequent dialogue revealed that at the end of the day, it was small, consistent acts of kindness that were most impactful to both our coworkers and the incarcerated population we serve.

It is my goal that through daily interactions (phone calls, meetings, and operational visits) with team members, I promote a culture of servant leadership where the common denominator is acting in the best interest of others, whether it be other staff or the incarcerated workforce within our industries. It is my mission that the domino effect takes place where others continue to follow suit mentoring one another. I feel fortunate to have found my professional 'why' and encourage all CI staff to do the same. Not only will it benefit yourself, but also your coworkers and the incarcerated populations you serve. I hope to inspire others to ask themselves, what gives you a professional sense of satisfaction and fulfillment, what is the favorite part of your job, and what engages you to learn more?

People and Collaboration – Steven Petermann

Since I starting with Correctional Industries over 8 years ago, I can say with confidence that the reason I enjoy my work so much is the people I work with and the collaborative spirit we foster within and outside of this organization.

I am always humbled by the amount of people that are involved in the success of a releasing Trades Related Apprenticeship Coaching (T.R.A.C.) graduate. Mr. John Brown, TRAC instructor at Mission Creek Corrections Center for Women (MCCCW), would always be the first on my list of people that I enjoy working with. On the facilities level these collaborations start with the correctional officers and continue in an unbroken chain right to the superintendents of MCCCW and the Washington Corrections Center for Women. I'd also like to point out the staff at Eleanor Chase Work Release in Spokane and Helen B. Ratcliff in Seattle continue to support the efforts of our graduates to pursue their dreams of non-traditional employment as well as all of the re-entry division staff.

Correctional Industries and the workforce development team here at WACI are also one of the most integral components in the process, providing "Makin It Work" (a cognitive skills program), resume writing, letters of recommendation and many times, connections to a transitional job or program. Calvin Thorpe and his team do the work of ten people every day and are always responsive to the needs of releasing individuals.

As a Correctional Industries employee I have also been rewarded with the opportunity of working with the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges (S.B.C.T.C.) and the Washington DOC education department. As a result of the hard work and vision of many dedicated educational staff together we were able to create the Construction Trades Apprenticeship Preparation (C.T.A.P.) program that has a common curriculum at six men's facilities across the State of Washington. This means that within the Washington DOC we have the largest pre-apprenticeship network in the state.

Neither the Trades Related Apprenticeship Coaching, nor the Construction Trades Apprenticeship Preparation pre-apprenticeship programs would exist without the



Above: TRAC graduate Marilyn Redd on her evaluation day at Iron Workers Local 86 on April 9th 2021.

Continued from page 35

robust support of the organized labor market in the State of Washington. We have successfully placed many graduates into living wage jobs all over the state (as well as Oregon) in multiple crafts.

Some of the organizations contributing to the success of our graduates are:

- ▶ The Northwest Carpenters Institute
- ▶ Iron Workers Locals 86, 29, and 14
- ▶ Cement Masons and Plasterers Local 528
- ▶ Northwest Laborers locals 242, 238, and 252
- ▶ IBEW local 46
- ▶ The Northwest Pipe Trades
- ▶ Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee

Being a Correctional Industries employee has also afforded me the opportunity to sit on many committees and work with many fine community organizations that offer unparalleled support for re-entry around the State of Washington. These include:

- ▶ The Regional Pre-Apprenticeship Collaboration (RPAC)
- ▶ Priority Hire Advisory Council (City of Seattle)
- ▶ Sound Transit Authority
- ▶ Washington State Labor and Industries
- ▶ Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council
- ▶ Washington State Dept. of Transportation
- ▶ Apprenticeship and Non Traditional Employment for Women/Apprenticeship Opportunity Project
- ▶ Low Income Housing Institute
- ▶ Metropolitan Urban League of Seattle
- ▶ Port Jobs Seattle
- ▶ Oregon Tradeswomen Inc.
- ▶ Bureau of Oregon Labor and Industries

Because of the concerted efforts of a combination of the above people, industries, and organizations many of our formerly incarcerated workers and TRAC/CTAP graduates are now self-supporting, tax paying citizens that are living the dream of reconnecting their families and pursuing happy and productive lives. •



Above: TRAC Graduate and Cement Masons and Plasterers Local 528 member Danyielle Slothaug at work.

Below: TRAC Graduate and new Carpenters Local 29 member Miriam Whitman.



A COMMITMENT TO A MISSION & SUCCESS AT MVE

The staff at Missouri Vocational Enterprises (MVE) are committed to organization's mission and to providing successful reentry outcomes for the incarcerated individuals working at MVE. See their stories below.

A. C. Lindquist, Sales and Marketing Manager



It's funny how grandkids tend to shape our lives. I had one, and was informed by my wife there were more on the way. My wife also said, "You need a job that will allow you to spend time with your grandkids." She was correct. This began my quest to find a job that not

only would satisfy the time requirement but also be personally rewarding.

I was informed about a job opening at Missouri Vocational Enterprises (MVE). I searched online and read their mission statement:

"MVE is committed to developing personal responsibility in offenders through the development of diversetraining programs that enhance offender employability and the opportunity for success while incarcerated and upon release".

A salesperson must believe in the product in order to effectively promote and sell it. This sounded like something that I could believe in. Here was an opportunity to be a part of something bigger than just the financial "bottom line." However, there were matters to consider – my personal bottom line would be drastically affected. The starting salary was less than half of what I was currently earning. Could we afford to take a monetary cutback of this size? After much consideration, discussion with my wife, and prayer, I decided that this was about more than just the money. I made the decision and submitted my application. I soon began my new career with MVE.

It wasn't long before I realized that my decision was spot-on. I am on a team that is committed to the MVE mission and we work as one to accomplish our goals. The camaraderie among the sales team is matched only by our affiliation with our customers. When our customers purchase from MVE, they become a partner in this vital program that benefits all of us.

We take great pride in our program and the products we offer. However, our greatest achievement at MVE is an incarcerated individual that returns to society and becomes a productive citizen... an asset rather than a burden.

I have worked at Missouri Vocational Enterprises for over 13 years. I left a lucrative job for less money because I believed in the mission. I have never regretted my decision.

Eddie Sherman, Factory Coordinator



My name is Eddie Sherman and the reason I work in CI can be expressed by this great success story about Mike Smith... someone that we helped become a successful business owner post-release.

When upholsterer Mike Smith reflects on his path to becoming a successful business owner, he's eager to credit the people he met in prison. Smith spent 18 years incarcerated in facilities run by the Missouri Department of Corrections facilities. While working in the Missouri Vocational Enterprises' chair factory at the Tipton Correctional Center, he found himself drawn to furniture repair... more specifically, the transformative process. "You take something old and not any good," he explains, "and when you get through with it, it's brand new." Fostering this passion for craftsmanship, factory manager Steven Glenn gave Smith a chance in the re-upholstery unit. There Smith honed the skills that would shape his career.

After his release, and while working in a construction job his parole officer helped him find, Smith's entrepreneurial spirit took over. Noticing the sad state of the forklift seats on the site, he offered to take one home and work his magic. Wowed by the transformation, Smith's boss hired him to re-upholster all the seats... and also recommended him to other clients. Now Smith is his own boss, owner of Smith's Upholstery in Kansas City, where he employs a staff of five in making old things new again.

EARNING BETTER RETURNS IN WISCONSIN



The CI professionals highlighted here from Wisconsin do not write about the products they make or services they provide, rather, they focus on a particular success story and how they were able to play a critical role in that formerly incarcerated individual's re-entry success.



Wes Ray, Director

I was driving to work at Wisconsin's Bureau of Correctional Enterprises (BCE) one morning when my work cell phone rang. I did not recognize the number, but that is often the case with work calls so I answered the phone. The person calling me was the HR manager for a non-profit agency that provides services to help persons who are homeless. She said I was listed an employment reference for a man whom I know had worked on BCE's upholstery industry team and BCE's product development center team. I con-

firmed that he had worked with us, that I understand the types of work he had done as part of our team and that I had observed enough of his work to provide a reference. I talked about each of the jobs I had seen him do and talked with him to learn a little about each job. I described the limits of my knowledge and named the team supervisor and manager who could provide more information, including performance evaluations completed each month while he was on our team.

She confirmed he had listed those persons as references, which I think is a statement to the man's character. I asked about the job he was applying for and learned he would be working with military veterans at the organization's shelter to help them overcome their current circumstance of being homeless. She and I acknowledged that this man is a military veteran himself and he would likely share a perspective with those he worked with that few others would have.

I told her that he had completed his associate's degree while incarcerated and working for BCE, and that he had talked about completing his undergraduate degree when he got home so he could get a job that would let him help others get through their challenges. She confirmed he had completed his undergraduate degree. I affirmed that I believe he will be a quality addition to their team and a very good person for that job. About a week and a half later, I called the man's parole agent to learn he had earned that job. I told his parole agent that I would communicate with the former BCE worker to congratulate him. I did that and he spoke so positively about what BCE had helped him do. I like to say that BCE doesn't make our workers successful, but we all work to help them better prepare themselves to succeed in correctional facilities and when they go home. I am glad to be part of this man's success and the help he gives to the veterans he works with in his job. This is an example of how the work we do in Correctional Industries compounds like interest... but with a better return!

Kristine Buscemi Employment Program Coordinator

I work as part of the Wisconsin Bureau of Correctional Enterprises (BCE) Transition Team. My colleague and I present information about BCE Transition to each of BCE's twenty-one teams of workers who are in the Department's care at least once each year. During those presentations, we share great stories of the success former BCE workers achieve when they return to their families and communities.

A former BCE worker was released from custody and went back to his hometown where he had worked as a carpenter. He interviewed for a finish carpenter job with a company that builds homes in that area and I'm glad to say I provided an employment reference to confirm he was a reliable part of our team. The company offered him the job, but said they only hire carpenters who have the power tools needed to do the work. The former BCE worker spoke with his parole agent, and his agent called me to talk about that challenge. I followed BCE Transition procedures to buy and mail to the agent a gift card to a business where the needed power tools could be purchased. The parole agent met the former BCE worker at that store and used the gift card to purchase the power tools. That man is now working as a finish carpenter and succeeding as an active member of his family and community. We know this because he sent a holiday card to the office and thanked us for everything BCE had done to help him be ready for and earn that job. This is just one example, but I think it is one that helps others understand why I do this work. •



2021
National Training Conference
September 27–30, 2021
Indianapolis, Indiana

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Mark your calendars and join us for NCIA's 2021 National Training Conference, where Correctional Industries professionals from across the US will meet to network and learn about the latest and greatest trends, practices and products in the field.

Join us in Indianapolis and experience the best professional development Correctional Industries has to offer. **Discuss current issues and trends** in CI with your peers at the CI Staff Roundtables. **Learn from CI experts** and thought leaders in a series of educational workshops. **Explore new products, services, clients and partners** in the exhibit hall, state date, and vendor spotlight.

See you in Indy!

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SCHEDULE OF EVENTS



SUNDAY September 26

10:00 AM – 12:00 PM
CI Director Roundtable
(CI Directors Only)

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM
CI Director Lunch
(CI Directors Only)

1:00 PM – 3:00 PM
CI Director Roundtable
(Continued)

6:00 PM – 7:00 PM
President's Reception
(By Invitation Only)

MONDAY September 27

9:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Conference Registration

9:00 AM – 3:00 PM
Exhibitor Setup

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM
NCIA Board of Directors
Meeting

1:00 PM – 2:00 PM
State Date

2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
CI Staff Roundtables

3:45 PM – 5:00 PM
Opening Session
& Keynote Address

5:00 PM – 7:00 PM
Exhibit Hall Grand Opening
& Reception

"I boosted my CI's media exposure based on principles shared at last year's conference. In six months, four local television news stories, three newspaper articles and radio broadcasts helped us share the positive Correctional Industries story. Thanks to the conference, my CI is building stronger public and customer awareness of the great things we do."

— **Wes Ray**
Director
Wisconsin Bureau of Correctional Enterprises

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

TUESDAY September 28

9:00 AM – 4:30 PM
Conference Registration

9:00 AM – 9:45 AM
Vendor Spotlight/
Coffee Break

9:45 AM – 12:00 PM
Exclusive Exhibit Hours

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM
Concurrent Workshops

2:45 PM – 4:00 PM
Concurrent Workshops

"The organization of the event was excellent. The awards ceremony was one of the best I have been to, and the host staff and NCIA staff had excellent customer service. Gold star!"

— **Rusty Bechtold**
Branch Manager, Operations
California Prison Industry
Authority (CALPIA)

WEDNESDAY September 29

8:30 AM – 2:00 PM
Conference Registration

9:00 AM – 10:15 AM
Concurrent Workshops

10:30 AM – 2:00 PM
Exclusive Exhibit Hours
with Lunch

2:00 PM – 3:15 PM
Concurrent Workshops

2:00 PM – 10:00 PM
Exhibit Hall Dismantle

3:45 PM – 5:00 PM
Regional Business Meetings

6:45 PM – 9:30 PM
Closing Award Reception
& Banquet

THURSDAY September 30

8:00 AM – 11:00 AM
Correctional Industries Tour
Hosted by ICI

"Throughout the conference, I found it wonderful how many relationships, on the first day alone, are made between people who start out as strangers, but are friends by the end of the day."

— **Armanda Dzafic**
Lead Audit Manager
Utah Correctional
Industries

Tuesday, Sept. 28 and
Wednesday, Sept. 29

LEARN FROM THE BEST at NCIA's 2021 Conference Workshops.

Workshops will include the following and more! Check nationalcia.org for the latest dates and times. *Subject to change.*

- › Associated Quarterly Assessments
- › Bias, Diversity, and Inclusion in CI
- › Benefits of Developing an Incentive Pay Program for CI Workers
- › Benefits of Engineering Standards in a Production Environment
- › The Certainty of Change
- › Creating a Space for Meaningful Change: Organizational Culture, Social Support, and Mature Coping
- › Construction Apprenticeship Opportunities and Reentry
- › Affordable House Building Program
- › Correctional Industries' Positive Impact—Community Outreach
- › Investing in the Mission of CI Staff: Moving Away from Training and Toward Professional Development
- › Management in the Changing Work Culture
- › Non-Verbal Communication
- › Seeking 3rd Party Certifications for Your CI Products
- › *Striving to Thrive* Partnership through the Pandemic
- › Successful and Innovative Approaches to Reentry and Workforce Training
- › TRICOR Transformational Training





**NCIA 2021
INDIANAPOLIS**



INDIANA CORRECTIONAL INDUSTRIES

Thursday, Sept. 30, 2021
Departure: 8 AM Return: 11 AM

COMMISSARY/CENTRAL WAREHOUSE TOUR

Hosted by Indiana Correctional Industries

The Indiana Correctional Industries Commissary and Central Warehouse is the home of the Indiana Department of Correction's fulfillment operations and located at the Plainfield Correctional Facility near the Indianapolis International Airport. Each day approximately 90,000 items are picked, packed, and shipped to IDOC locations across the state.

The 80,000 square foot warehouse serves as the central distribution point for nearly all goods manufactured or processed by ICI. The warehouse operation offers real world job opportunities and experience for approximately 180 incarcerated individuals. ICI provides training in valuable warehousing areas such as computer software, inventory management, forklift operation and logistics.

The tour will highlight training provided to incarcerated individuals and proprietary computer systems utilized to make the operation run efficiently while minimizing waste and theft.



Space is limited, so make sure to sign up for the tour when you register!

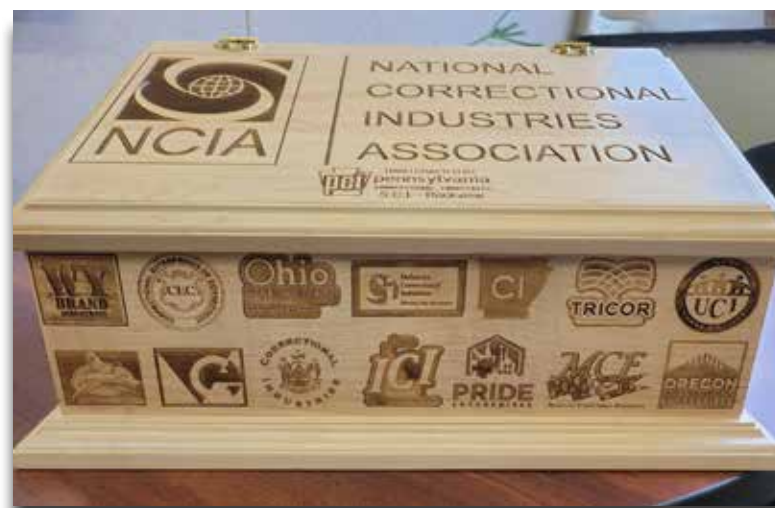
APRIL 2021 BOARD MEETING RECAP



NCIA held its April 2021 Board of Directors Meeting via Zoom. Danielle Armbruster presided over her first Board Meeting as the newly-elected NCIA president and all newly elected or re-elected Officers and Board Members were sworn in for the 2021-2022 term. President Armbruster officially welcomed incoming Executive Director Kelli Baxter and said farewell to retiring Executive Director Gina Honeycutt, thanking her for her years of service. President Armbruster also welcomed newly appointed ACA Representative Stuart Hudson, Assistant Director for the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction.

Highlights of the meeting included the presentation and subsequent Board approval of NCIA's 2021-2022 Strategic Plan, Legislative Position Statement and Public Policy. NCIA Treasurer Gayle Butler presented the current quarterly financial statements and provided an update on investments, and a report from the Audit Committee. Officers provided committee reports from the Membership, Marketing and Program Development Committees and discussed the new networking initiatives that those committees have already initiated in 2021 for NCIA members. The Board of Directors also discussed plans for the upcoming 2021 conference in Indianapolis in September. •

Right: Two photos of the custom jewelry box that was handcrafted by incarcerated individuals working for Pennsylvania Correctional Industries. This beautiful gift was presented to retiring Executive Director, Gina Honeycutt during the Board Meeting.



WHY I WORK IN CI

At the height of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the NCIA Board of Directors tossed around the idea of shining a spotlight on CI staff. While discussing this idea, a thought evolved: ask CI staff why they work in CI and publish their responses in an issue of *NCIA News*. It sounded like a simple question, and there were concerns that there would be a low response or that maybe CI was just a job and not a professional calling.

But the results turned out to be very abundant and clear—there are a lot of dedicated professionals who have found their calling in Correctional Industries and have a passion for CI’s reentry mission. Here are their stories!

Alexis Burgard

Rough Rider Industries (North Dakota)



My career began with Rough Rider Industries (RRI) in March 2019 as an Accounting/Budget Specialist. I graduated college a few months prior with a bachelor’s degree, double majoring in business management and marketing. I changed my college major multiple times and even considered criminal justice. I have a strong interest for criminal justice and spend a lot of my free time watching true crime documentaries and learning about the criminal justice system.

Before I started with RRI, I worked in accounting for a company unrelated to corrections. Being fresh out of college, I was actively searching for a new and more challenging career when I came across a job posting within RRI. Before applying, I did some research on RRI and found it very interesting... however, I had no experience in corrections. Regardless, I applied, interviewed,

and got the job. I was excited to start my new career, but nervous to be working around male incarcerated individuals (residents) since I am a young female. I went through new-hire training and felt much more comfortable working in a correctional setting after that. I later took on an additional role of managing RRI’s marketing, such as website maintenance, social media, email campaigns, product literature, and more. My job title then officially changed to Accounting/Marketing Specialist.

With my marketing role, I work with residents in RRI’s Computer-Aided Design (CAD) department to retrieve realistic 3D images and product structures of RRI products that I incorporate into marketing material. It is amazing how the residents working in RRI’s CAD department essentially taught themselves how to use the software and programs, which I would like to have them teach me someday. I also work with resident workers that specialize in RRI’s gift & engravable items, such as engravable tumblers, awards, plaques, metal art, and various other engravable and promotional items. We collaborate to think of fun, new ideas, and work on creating more efficient procedures for producing these items. I allow residents to give their input (with limitations) on these subjects versus just demanding what should be done. I believe giving residents a voice will allow them to grow and improve their job skills for successful reentry.

I work in CI because I believe in giving second chances. Showing fairness and appreciation for hard work goes a long way, not only for civilians, but especially for those residing in prison. I do not let good work or change go unnoticed and occasionally write positive behavior reports, which are written reports documenting a pro-social behavior demonstrated by a resident that includes

the specific behavior and why it was recognized. Before being employed with RRI, I viewed prison as a place for punishment. I have been working in corrections for a little over two years and my perspective on prison has completely changed. I now believe it is a place for rehabilitation.

Michele Wayland

Colorado Correctional Industries



Initially, getting a job as the Supervisor for the Prison Trained K9 Companion Program for Colorado Correctional Industries (CCI) was an ideal blending of acquired skillsets and passions. I am a creative person with a love for animals and have leadership skills developed during ten years of managing a small, rural animal shelter. I often joke that as many jobs as I've

pursued working with animals I always seem to end up managing people!

It didn't take long for a deep sense of purpose—a "calling" if you will—to settle into my new job as the supervisor managing a program that employs up to 141 incarcerated individuals and trains as many dogs in seven facilities throughout the state of Colorado. Most of the dogs (about 62%) are privately owned and many have significant behavioral issues themselves that have their owners considering the idea to give the dog up.

Of course everyone loves talking about the dogs and telling me how lucky I am to get paid to play with dogs. I do relish the doggie time I am able to work into my primary duties, but it really comes down to the people attached to the leashes. The dogs are catalysts for positive change in people's lives that extends well within and far beyond prison walls. When a new incarcerated individual enters a facility for the first time and sees a dog walking beside his handler on a prison yard, it is so out of place that this experience can let them forget—even for an instant—where they are. Transformations begin there.

Positive memories of childhood pets drive many incarcerated individuals to work toward getting the opportunity to join a K9 handler team by displaying better behavior to earn a spot in an incentive unit. When an incarcerated individual achieves a coveted opening on a dog handler team and is assigned their first dog, they learn to work cooperatively with the rest of the team, studying and progressing through the dog training curriculum, so that they understand how to care for and train their dog. Suddenly, it isn't all about them anymore. As one former handler put it so well, "you become selfless, instead of selfish."

Handlers begin to see positive changes reflected back to them as the dog responds and develops a bond during the training process. They share their achievements with the team, their families and with owners of the dogs they train. Handlers develop more positive relationships with facility staff and even if they don't hang up a shingle as a dog trainer on the outside, the real benefit is breaking through the walls erected by the negativity they may have experienced in their past, by learning to cooperate and communicate in a positive way with other people. Our K9 program and nearly all other Correctional Industry programs create the environment and opportunity for beneficial changes for so many people and I am extremely proud and honored to be a part of it.

Jim Cluster, Sr.

Maryland Correctional Enterprises



I began my career with Maryland Correctional Enterprises (MCE) in August 1986 as a Pressroom Supervisor. Over the years, I had the opportunity to work in every institution in Maryland—eventually advancing to my current position as the Graphics Regional Manager. Like many other Correctional

Industry programs across the country, our services are used by Maryland state agencies, government entities, and non-profit organizations. Over the years, it quickly became evident that we are a people-based organization. Our work starts by offering opportunities and training to male and female incarcerated

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individuals throughout the state. We build working relationships with the wardens, assistant wardens, correctional officers, the Commissioner, the Maryland General Assembly, our customers, and my co-workers at MCE.

When I began my journey, I can honestly say I was not sure if this was what I wanted to do for the rest of my career. However, after working with the incarcerated individuals and becoming a mentor, I decided to dedicate over thirty years to this field. I still get a sense of pride looking at all of the accomplishments I have witnessed over the years. Every day, I know we are working towards developing skills and a positive work ethic to help returning citizens succeed. We not only offer them training, but structured support and confidence that can be invaluable during incarceration. It is gratifying to know we are making a difference.

As anyone in our field knows, our work doesn't stop once participants are eligible for release. We know we've given them the skills to succeed on the outside, but we also help them seek employment and the tools they need for a second chance in life. Studies across the country continue to show that Correctional Industries reduce recidivism on a national level... we feel this is a great reflection of the work we do here at MCE. This is why I've continued my career in this field. I take great pride in seeing the men and women we have worked with and trained succeed after being released. I would highly recommend this career path to anyone.

Bob Thrash

Alabama Correctional Industries



To be frank, I was just looking for a job when I found this one. At the time, I was employed... just not gainfully. I had never really spent much time, if any, considering a job in corrections. A position opened at Alabama Correctional Industries (ACI) requiring skills and

experience that I had, so I applied. The interview went pretty much as any interview. Then one question caught me off guard. You've never been in a correctional environment before? To which I answered no. I was then asked, do you believe you can do the duties described in this job

while being around persons that are incarcerated for any/all types of crimes... murderers, rapists, embezzlers, etc.? The position I was applying for was not in a correctional facility. It was in the administrative offices, which looked like any other business.

My first response surprised even me. I told them, "give me a moment to think about it, where is your restroom?" While I was thinking about the question, I remembered something I heard once... should a person be remembered only for the worst thing they ever did? I returned to the interview and told the interviewers that I would not have an issue working around incarcerated individuals. To my surprise I got the job. In my position, I work one-on-one and with small groups of incarcerated individuals where sometimes I am the only free-world person in the room. This took a little to get used to.

While many of the work behaviors are different in Correctional Industries, many are the same. Free world or not, most people are making the best of the situation they are in and striving to make their situation better. Being a part of that effort, with these workers, has come to mean something to me. I never thought it would. Understanding that when an incarcerated individual tells me on Friday to have a good weekend, that it is ok to reply in kind. I have good and bad weekends, so do those that are incarcerated. Many of those I train will take these skills and experience into the free world and I hope they have a better life because of the work. For the others I train, the "lifers," the work seems to have more meaning. I was not expecting that.

I have been with ACI for six years now and I have no regrets taking the job, and I have learned that we cannot change an incarcerated individual's circumstances, but we can bring a sense of acceptance and belonging; of being part of a team with real world goals, accomplishments and the satisfaction of a job well done along with the disappointment when the job was not so well done. The ability to learn from our mistakes, to pick it up, own it and move forward to a better outcome next time... that is the single most valuable experience I believe I bring to CI. Moving it forward... at the end of the day isn't that what most of us are looking for from our work?

Lei Vonchon Isaacs-Ramiro

Hawaii Correctional Industries



Hawaii Correctional Industries is a unique opportunity like no other. Here in Hawaii we strive to create meaningful, educational, and contributive opportunities for incarcerated individuals who are ready to take the next step. Correctional Industries plays an

instrumental role in an incarcerated individual's success during their transitioning period because of the programs and hands on opportunities offered. These opportunities encourage growth, knowledge, and help to make a positive impact on society.

Working for CI has allowed me to be a part of their journey in becoming a productive and contributing member of society." This is a most humbling and gratifying experience with a reward far greater than words can express. For these reasons and countless more, I am proud to be a part of the Hawaii Correctional Industries Ohana*! Making a difference in the lives of these individuals is why I chose to work for CI. Thank you for the opportunity to be a part of the CI Ohana. Mahalo Nui Loa!

**Ohana means family*

Ken Lindsey

Maine Correctional Industries



I graduated from our state university in 1988 with a degree in criminal justice, I thought I would start my career at our state maximum security correctional facility

in the next town from where I lived to get some experience, and after thirty-three years of working in the Maine DOC I would say I am here to stay.

My first ten years were spent as a correctional officer working everywhere within the facility. In 1998 I started working in our Correctional Industries program, in the print shop at first, then finishing shop, tool crib and finally in 2012 I became the Industries Manager. We are a unique program as we build novelties and furniture items that are sold to the public at a showroom three miles from the facility. Our showroom is a destination for travelers visiting the coast of Maine.

Being a maximum-security facility with over 130 incarcerated individuals participating in our program and with an inventory of over 10,000 tools in the building, things at times can be a challenge but we have a great staff and incarcerated workers that appreciate the opportunity they have been given and want to work to make the program as successful as possible.

We have a mix of workers, "short-timers" who are to be released in a year or so to "long-timers" who may be doing life. To be considered for work in this program incarcerated individuals need to be participating in another program to include anger management, substance abuse counseling, or participating in GED or college classes.

Vic had been sentenced to 20+ years and had been involved in many disciplinary incidents at the facility to the point that he had been sent to our super-max facility for a few years. Vic realized he needed more from life and wanted to change. After a meeting with the former industries manager and myself, Vic told us that he wanted to learn and be part of the solution not the problem at the facility. We could see he was sincere and decided to give him a chance.

Vic started out on a team with three other workers learning what we do in the shop, building quality items and being part of a team can be a challenge for an incarcerated individual and Vic met that challenge. He quickly progressed and became the go-to guy whenever we needed to build a special project like a kitchen island, cabinets or other high-end furniture. His hard work was noticed by others at the facility and as he approached time for release one of the facility caseworkers brought

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in the owners of a local furniture builder and they conducted an interview in my office. They were very impressed and hired him. Upon release and after a short time working at their company he was promoted to manager and ten years later continues to work for their company. In appreciation, Vic participated in a video about our program to help let the public know why this program is important as we prepare incarcerated individuals for release back into society.

Justin Winters

Pheasantland Industries (South Dakota)



My name is Justin Winters and I am the Sign Shop Foreman for Pheasantland Industries. We are an extension of the South Dakota Department of Correction based in Sioux Falls, SD.

I have almost twenty years of law enforcement experience that includes duties as a Pharmacy Investigator, Intake Sergeant for the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office, and a Correctional Officer at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

I have almost twenty years of law enforcement experience that includes duties as a Pharmacy Investigator, Intake Sergeant for the Minnehaha County Sheriff's Office, and a Correctional Officer at the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls.

In my experience, there is always a defining factor in a person's life that makes them want to comply with rules and regulations and/or make bad decisions that may land them in the prison system. Some of these factors are structure, accountability, and a feeling of self-worth.

It was important to me to create an atmosphere that our workers can feel a sense of accountability for their work and actions not only in the shop, but also when they are in the cell halls. I want to make sure that the workers understand that the choices they make can not only affect them, but also the other workers who work alongside them every day.

We have our safety and update meetings weekly. I have a worker lead the meeting and talk about the topic that is being addressed. In my opinion, that gives the workers a sense of ownership and pride to work as hard as they can to complete all orders accurately and in a timely fashion.

The foreman in the shop will wear many hats over a day. But making sure to speak with our workers with respect and clarity is an essential must in any job. I make a conscious effort to take that us versus them mentality out of their minds so they know we are working together to complete a goal.

It is important to me to be an example of consistency and calm. The sign shop is a high-volume department which creates and completes orders for law enforcement, state agencies, and non-profit organizations. We create helmet decals, banners, and signs for many schools and colleges in the state. The workers are also responsible for completing orders for any correctional facility in South Dakota and also employee's personal purchases. There are instances when miscalculations or errors occur. It is important to explain to the assigned person what is needed to be corrected and why. But I always end the conversation with something they are doing well to keep them focused on completing the task correctly.

I absolutely love being a Foreman for Pheasantland Industries. It brings me satisfaction that I can be a positive force in these gentleman's lives. I take great pride in knowing we are making a positive difference and will continue to do that for a long time.

Daguerre Henry

Mississippi Prison Industries



As I approach celebrating my ten-year anniversary with Mississippi Prison Industries (MPIC), I enjoy looking back at the number of incarcerated individuals that I have had the opportunity to work with. I started at MPIC working in customer service. At the time, I only had direct contact with the incarcerated individuals that worked in our main office. It was a great introduction for me to learn more about Correctional Industries and what it meant to the incarcerated individuals to have an opportunity to go to work every day while still incarcerated. It did not take long for me to realize there is so much more to this indus-

As I approach celebrating my ten-year anniversary with Mississippi Prison Industries (MPIC), I enjoy looking back at the number of incarcerated individuals that I have had the opportunity to work with. I started at MPIC working in customer service. At the time, I only had direct contact with the incarcerated individuals that worked in our main office. It was a great introduction for me to learn more about Correctional Industries and what it meant to the incarcerated individuals to have an opportunity to go to work every day while still incarcerated. It did not take long for me to realize there is so much more to this indus-

try than just manufacturing products. It was an opportunity to mentor to those who really needed someone to help change their outlook, showing them they can have long-term success after being released.

After customer service, I moved into sales for MPIC. I love telling those who aren't familiar with us about our mission. We are here to support and guide our workers through job and skill training which in turn will help to create their pathway for success. The talent inside our shop truly amazes me. Through sales I was able to see firsthand the pride the incarcerated individuals take in their work.

Over the last year I have started a new position as Vice President of Sales and Marketing. When our new CEO, Bradley Lum, started with us in September of 2019 one of the first projects we worked on together was a video about MPIC. It was one of the most rewarding things I've done in my ten years here. We interviewed several formerly incarcerated individuals who have been released and come back as full-time employees for MPIC, as well as several currently incarcerated MPIC workers. To hear them all say how MPIC played such a large roll in their personal change was rewarding to hear. There are two quotes from our video that will stick with me forever. One was a current worker speaking about working for MPIC, he said "Being able to say I made something of myself in spite of the situation ... we are bigger than our charge or our past." The second quote was from a formerly incarcerated individual who is now a full-time employee for MPIC. After saying everyone needed a second chance, she says "They give you hope... that's what I needed, for someone to believe in me. They unclipped my wings and let fly!" Those words will forever be the drive for my mission of sharing the power of Correctional Industries. We not only provide workforce training and teaching a skillset for them to use once they are released, but we are also given the opportunity to show someone they deserve a second chance. We at MPIC want to provide that second chance and create a pathway to ensure they have long term sustainability once they are released. This is why I work for Mississippi Prison Industries; I believe in second chances.

David Taylor

Arkansas Correctional Industries



As a program manager for Arkansas Correctional Industries, I am met with many different challenges throughout the day. Sometimes it seems that no matter which way you turn there is nothing going right and at times that can be very discouraging. As a program manager it also helps to look for an incarcerated individual that is willing to make an extra effort to better themselves.

One of these individuals that really shined was James Shomaker. He came to our bus factory in 2015 as a porter, but quickly worked his way up to a welder... and then from a welder to a fitter. He had a great eye and ability for detailed work! One day he asked if he could move into our drafting and design room and try his hand at that. This area handles all the creative design that goes into our grills, lockers and any other metal fabrication requested. He was up for the challenge so he was handed the Auto-CAD manual and training material. Then he was told that he had two weeks to complete a simple drawing. Mr. Shomaker said he could do it, and he did.

Time progressed on and he soon became an excellent draftsman. In 2018, Mr. Shomaker paroled out and received employment in drafting. He is doing extremely well and recently made contact to let us know that he is now a partner in a small company called Wicked Trailers, where he is the lead Drafting and Design Manager. This is a proud moment for Arkansas Correctional Industries, but it is an especially proud moment for me as a program manager. When you pour your time and energy into a

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person and see that person take off and excel it makes what you do seem worth it. It makes you realize that you are not just doing a job, but you are making a difference. And if you just reach one incarcerated individual, you have been successful.

Ron Hudson

Texas Correctional Industries



Since October 2017, Ron Hudson has served as the Deputy Division Director for the Manufacturing, Agribusiness and Logistics (MAL) Division within the Texas Department of Criminal Justice (TDCJ). In February 2020, Ron's area of oversight was transferred from Agribusiness, Land and Minerals, to Texas

Correctional Industries (TCI) and Transportation and Supply. In this capacity Ron oversees all operations for TCI including the furniture, garment, graphics, metal and marketing divisions. He is a graduate of Sam Houston State University, with a Bachelor of Science in general business.

Ron has spent most of his career preparing for the unique challenge that overseeing the moving components of TCI presents. In fact, he has over 28 years of service with the TDCJ, including 15 years with TCI. During his tenure with TCI, he has served in several capacities other than his current role, including accountant, division accountant, assistant division manager and manager of the garment division.

While Ron began his career with the TDCJ as a correctional officer, he describes the initial motive to pursue a career with TCI as the opportunity to make a positive impact on an incarcerated individual's life. He was inspired to apply for an accountant position within a TCI factory because he says, "It struck me to my very core that I could have an impact like this on a human being."

Working in TCI factories allowed him to interact with numerous workers and help refine skills that could later be used by these individuals after their release from prison. Reflecting upon his years working with the incar-

cerated population through CI, Ron recalls the very first incarcerated clerk he worked with as an accountant. This former clerk recently reached out to him to thank him for the experience he gained through TCI. During the call, the former clerk relayed that upon his release from TDCJ, he was able to obtain two jobs using the work history he accumulated while incarcerated. This individual expressed at one point, he did not think he would even be eligible for release, and now, he was working, living his life, and succeeding. He attributed this success to the life-lessons he received and the skills he learned while he was assigned to a TCI factory.

Ron says, "To be able to meet an inmate, who knows very little, if anything, about the work they've been assigned, and watch them progress as their skill set enhances, knowing what you are teaching them can forever change their life, that's something."

Mark Riel

Corcraft (New York)



Is it a job or is it a career choice? That's the question that I am sure most people have pondered a few times throughout the span of their work experiences. For me, the answer is easy—definitely a career! By the strictest definition, a career is an occupation or profession requiring special training which follows as one's lifework. Within the context of that definition, I am very fortunate to work for the NYS Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) as an Assistant Director for Operations of Correctional Industries (Corcraft).

In my previous employment in the private sector, specifically manufacturing, I acquired a broad range of skill sets that enhanced my academic background to provide a solid base in systems, processes, industries, and customer-based solutions. Further work and acquired expertise in the field of Lean Process Improvement as well as Six Sigma methodologies led me to a position in New York State Government, which eventually opened the door into a career in DOCCS.

The opportunity to apply my academic background and professional work experience to Correctional Industries has proven to be the most rewarding time of my work life. Our mission statement is:

“To employ incarcerated individuals in real work situations producing quality goods and services at competitive prices, delivered on time as required by its customers at a minimal cost to the taxpayer. Corcraft provides the necessary resources for a real work environment where opportunities are available for the incarcerated to learn marketable skills and work habits, including the soft skills necessary to achieve success and enhance their employability upon release. Corcraft strives to develop a work ethic in incarcerated workers, to motivate each to seek and maintain employment, and become productive citizens upon re-entry into society.”

The crux of this statement is providing opportunities, skill sets, and a chance for redemption to individuals in need. The benefit pool is deep and the consequences are enormous as our work has a direct impact on people, families, the community, and society in general. This impact continues to provide me with an enormous feeling of satisfaction knowing that I contribute to this worthy cause. This past year as the world faced the worst pandemic in over 100 years, I was both proud and honored to be part of a State effort aimed at defeating this deadly virus. In March of 2020, in the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, Corcraft responded to a request from the Governor’s Office to produce and distribute various forms of PPE to the citizens of New York. Relative to this request, the first item produced was hand sanitizer, followed shortly thereafter by face masks and protective grade gowns. At the onset of this all-hands-on-deck initiative, I recall a conversation I had with an incarcerated worker at one of the correctional facilities during the hand sanitizer

startup. This individual was performing the labeling operation prior to the bottling operation on the assembly line. As I was checking in with this person, they conveyed to me a great sense of urgency and pride as they knew that this emergency-level initiative could help stem the tide in the fight against this deadly virus and also support their communities.

These stated actions and events clearly demonstrate the versatility, dedication, and resourcefulness of Corcraft staff. As always, and consistent with our mission, incarcerated workers continue to respond accordingly when called upon by the citizens of New York as well as engage in further self-development, and this...“Is Why I Work in Correctional Industries.”

Francisco Pinales

Rhode Island Correctional Industries



Rhode Island Correctional Industries (RICI) is a rehabilitative program founded in 1934 with the purpose of providing marketable job skills for incarcerated individuals and is now a thriving local business that employs approximately 130 incarcerated individuals who will use those skills to lead productive lives upon their re-entry to society. Here at

RICI, our mission is to produce quality, salable goods and services for all state agencies, municipalities, and non-profit organizations, while remaining financially self-sufficient, and creating a resourceful atmosphere training and employing incarcerated individuals. Currently, RICI offers employment and training to incarcerated individuals in our furniture, upholstery, license plate, print, garment, and autobody shops. We also train incarcerated individuals for work crews and ground maintenance service.

Francisco Pinales, RICI’s Garment Shop Supervisor, has been with the program for twenty-one years. Originally from the Dominican Republic, he has over 65 years of experience in tailoring. Francisco began his career at the

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young age of six and moved to Barcelona, Spain in 1965 to study patterns and fabric design. Upon moving to the United States, Francisco owned and operated multiple fur and tailor shops across the country. He has opened shops in Puerto Rico, Alaska, and currently still owns and operates his own fur business in Warwick, RI established in 1984.

Francisco was originally referred to the RICl Garment Shop Supervisor position by a customer of his fur shop who was familiar with Francisco's unique skill set and extensive experience. He was hired by RICl in 2000 and has since trained thousands of incarcerated individuals in tailoring, sewing, and cutting to make a pattern. In addition, he has also taught multiple classes in his trade to both incarcerated individuals and the public. Francisco claims his most rewarding contribution has been helping numerous incarcerated individuals attain employment in sewing factories upon their release. RICl's garment shop manufactures uniforms for incarcerated individuals, sheets, pillowcases, laundry bags and towels across Rhode Island DOC facilities under the training and guidance of Francisco.

Jesse Gettler

Utah Correctional Industries



My career began as a correctional officer in 2005 with the Utah Department of Corrections where I provided security in order to help incarcerated individuals make lasting changes through accountability, treatment, education, and positive reinforcement within a safe environment. After ten years working mostly in a maximum custody facility as a correctional officer, I had an opportunity

to work for Correctional Industries. Who would have thought I would learn so much about what it really means to make a difference in people's lives through a work program inside a prison?

Now that I am six years into my CI career I reflect back on things I have experienced and learned along the way that show me why CI is the place I want to finish my corrections career. We know that stable employment is critical to a successful transition to the community and reintegration into society. We help influence this success every day here at Utah Correctional Industries (UCI).

Some skills that incarcerated individuals learn while working in CI are the soft skills. Soft skills taught through Correctional Industries programs go hand-in-hand with post-release employability. Some examples are: basic writing, grammar and math skills, personal integrity, courtesy, positive work ethic, honesty, ability to get along well with others, reliability, willingness to learn, team skills. While these come standard in a work environment, CI offers the ability to learn these traits and become skilled in a trade. These trades vary from shop to shop, but all work allows an incarcerated individual to progress towards a goal.

Beyond the programming side of this career, the personal interactions with the incarcerated individuals can make a difference. Getting involved in the training and becoming a mentor for incarcerated individuals has been impactful to me. They need that leadership we all have to help achieve their goals, and leave the program better than they came.

I have had incarcerated individuals tell me stories about staff who have impacted them in a positive way. I hope that one day, future or present staff will hear the same about me. I have also been able to expand my career working for CI. There are so many opportunities to advance your career within UCI, which aren't available in other areas of our correctional system.

Most of all, it's been fulfilling to work with staff who have the same interest that you do and work as a team to improve the lives of our participants. Although I've had a great career, I look forward to the future of CI. Being part of this UCI family has had a major effect on my future.

Dmetria Gibson

TRICOR (Tennessee)



Zip code 37208 is home to one of the most vibrant communities in this nation. The area has long roots in the African American community and is the home to two historically black colleges and universities. In the 70s and 80s this zip code, which is located in Nashville, served as a cultural and

artistic hub for the black community. Tragically, 37208 also has the highest per capita incarceration rate in the country. It is also the area in which I grew up.

As a child of the 80s, I was raised in the midst of young talented peers. Each of us were blessed with different gifts and aptitudes. Among us there should have been scores of doctors, lawyers, scientists, artists, and so on. But we all happened to be black and poor. In the face of abject poverty and a severe deficit of opportunities, many of my peers often made unwise decisions. The confluence of the war on drugs with the crack epidemic that disproportionately impacted black and brown communities left a devastating mark on the area I call home. I personally witnessed talented black men and women exchange their future for a prison cell. Some were able to serve their sentences and return to some modicum of success; that however was far too often the exception and not the rule.

A criminal record serves as a smear against one's reputation. Some individuals, truly intent on turning over a new leaf, find themselves returning to their illegal activities for want of a real opportunity. I watched as my brothers, cousins and friends faced countless re-entry challenges. Those who have been successful did so with significant help from their support systems; but everyone is not blessed to have these types of support. I love my work with TRICOR because it is an organization that truly believes in its mission:

To Prepare Offenders for Success After Release.

My TRICOR teammates and I provide occupational skill training, cognitive behavioral training and other soft skills to incarcerated individuals with the express purpose of having our participants get out and stay out. Gifts and aptitudes don't disappear because of incarceration; often incarcerated individuals just need to be reminded and mentored to obtain their post release goals.

Visit any TRICOR location in the State of Tennessee and you will see some remnants of the 37208 zip code. The sites are full of men and women bursting with potential. The largest difference is that all eligible TRICOR participants receive significant transitioning planning and at least three years of post-release support. TRICOR serves as the support system many of my childhood peers desperately needed to be successful. For these reasons and more, I remain honored by my ability to help the participants and serve my community through my work with TRICOR.

Kelly Goodman

Iowa Prison Industries



When I left the Iowa Department of Corrections in 2017 for greener pastures, I thought I would never look back. It turns out I was wrong (rare, but it happens). The Iowa Prison Industries (IPI) program always appealed to me because I got my start working as a welder. Welding was something that I always enjoyed, and I thought what better way to use my knowledge than to pass that on to guys who may use it in a positive way like I did?

As a correctional officer of nearly 18 years I always knew that I had the tools to help these guys. Dealing with difficult people in a positive way was something I always felt

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good about, and what better way to expand on that would there be than heading up the program at Rockwell City?

Our operation has expanded from two private sector partnerships to four, and we are now in the works of adding yet another. It's not only about shop sustainability or jobs for the guys. Ownership and pride in your work is the key to being an integral part of the team's success. For me it's exciting to see how community leaders can help us in the journey of reducing recidivism. Success here really can lead to these guys filling those vacancies outside the facility upon release. And now it's not a hope, it's an expectation. Consider these words from one of our program participants:

New companies are eager to participate in IPI partnerships, and these trade-backed jobs offer opportunities that are both a privilege and a lifeline for those who take the time and effort to maintain apprenticeships, employment, and strive to better themselves every day. These companies that are partnered with IPI are taking the time to set up transportation, housing options, and employment for us. These are valuable opportunities for those of us who are returning to society. These companies are taking a serious look at the amount of work and the quality

of work being done inside this institution. What a remarkable release plan, to have worked for the company that is willing to hire you once the Parole Board releases us. What better way to reduce recidivism than to continue to work for the company that you have been working for while having been incarcerated? Companies are taking a chance on us because we have put in the work and effort to prove our value even while being incarcerated. Now because of IPI and the apprenticeship programs being offered, these companies are taking a second look at those of us seeking a second chance.

I have had great mentors in my journey so far, and most likely will have a few more over the years. I have always believed people could change and I was never afraid to pass on my beliefs to them.

Tom Brown

Arizona Correctional Industries



After my college graduation, and facing a bleak job market in Phoenix, a friend suggested that I apply to the State of Arizona. I did and received requests for interviews from six agencies. One of those was the Department of Corrections at a small division whose name had just changed to Arizona Correctional Industries (ACI). There had just been a major restructuring of the organization and I was asked to work in the sales department to help start a customer service department. Now, thirty two years later, both ACI and I are much different. I would never have guessed that I would make a career in this field and that it would continue to motivate and inspire me.

There aren't many jobs that provide the opportunity to see and contribute to the growth, change and renewal of spirit like working with the staff and incarcerated individuals at ACI. The chance to be a part of that process has kept me challenged to find new and better ways to expand and grow this program over the years.

Starting as a one-person department with one incarcerated clerk, it was a very hands-on experience training someone who had no job skills. I was able to make the time to really work one-on-one to build them up and give them the confidence they needed to work an office job. Watching incarcerated individuals grow in confidence and gain a renewed sense of purpose, opened my eyes to the possibilities that the program could accomplish.

As ACI grew, so did the opportunities to hire more incarcerated individuals to learn job skills within our administrative offices. Soon we had clerks in accounting, purchasing, inventory control, payroll and more. Starting more industries meant hiring more incarcerated individuals and needing more clerks to handle the growing stacks of paperwork.

ACI's growth over the past thirty years has been tremendous as we increased annual revenue from \$5 million to nearly \$50 million. Technology has brought even more opportunities to train the incarcerated individuals in new skills. With the Arizona Department of Corrections Rehabilitation and Reentry recent name change, it has committed, like ACI, to make an even larger push towards improved reentry outcomes. ACI has created additional training classes for the incarcerated individuals as they near their release date.

As the print and sign shops started using more digital tools, I had the opportunity to help create a graphic design training program utilizing several of the programs within the Adobe Suite (Photoshop, InDesign, and Illustrator). We brought in trainers and taught a group of incarcerated individuals the basics and then expanded on their skills by having them work on the design of the ACI Annual Report which has continued for the last eight years.

Last year, prior to COVID, I supervised 10 incarcerated clerks that supported the sales department, customer service and the sublimation/graphic design division. The downside of so much growth has been the inability to spend a lot of one-on-one time with each worker, but I believe I have adopted a managerial style that allows for great communication and encourages learning as much as possible during their time with us.

The fact that the vast majority of the incarcerated individuals who have worked with us in our administrative offices have successfully reentered the workforce (three of them currently in our offices), is a testament to the effectiveness of this program.

Paul Metevier

WY Brand Industries (Wyoming)



Correctional Industries (CI), an essential program and operation for any state or Corrections Department. The array spans across business, community service, and making a difference in one's life. To really understand why I love this field, one must understand some basics of what CI is and does.

CI routinely operates like a business leading to many challenges from balancing a budget, lean manufacturing, inventory, managing staff and incarcerated workers, etc. These challenges provide a sense of pride and success, especially for me when we are able to exceed expectations. A sense of fulfillment is not something many experience, nor can it be duplicated easily in a corrections setting. Imagine running multiple businesses with their own objectives, location, and product lines but under an umbrella while working towards the same goals. Meeting the same challenges of a private business, we operate under the restraints of security, government procurement, state law, and department policy while within the restraints of a facility and its operations. The sense of accomplishment and pride I receive and feel being able to be successful under these conditions is not easily found doing anything else.

CI is also unique as it is a business and a program; it is an opportunity to influence and push personal growth and development. We are the reason why some succeed when they leave. We spend a lot of time interacting and challenging the way the custodial community thinks and interacts

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daily. We are involved in the training of everything from job task and producing a product; as well as, role modeling pro-social behavior, and developing the community on a large level. We engage and challenge the workers in ways that teach them to respond professionally... many times, it is in contrast to how they behaved prior to incarceration. We teach them accountability and responsibility. The program teaches them how to forecast, and how to conduct business while providing a sense of purpose and contribution back to society. CI promotes structure, which many participants take pride in. This training focuses on teaching individuals the ability to articulate and be able to present themselves in a way that benefits them personally while maintaining jobs and careers. This program allows us to have a big impact on these individuals while giving them opportunities to succeed. Watching them return to society and succeed can be another source of fulfillment since it's related to one's own efforts.

Working in CI allows me to give back to the community (which I have always had a strong drive to do). CI provides opportunities for me to impact individuals as well as the community in a meaningful way. In addition, we are able to offset the cost of incarceration further contributing to society. The job fulfillment, the daily contribution to society as a whole makes what we do and the challenges we face something of a substance and reward. That is part of the reason why I love working in Correctional Industries.

Tim Seilhan

Louisiana Prison Enterprises



My interest in Correctional Industries came after a 35 year career in retail management at the multi-unit supervision level, the majority of my time being with large big box retailers. The part of my retail career that I enjoyed the most was training and developing people. As my position with my prior company was requiring increased travel, I began to look at other careers that would allow me to be home more and to use what I enjoyed about my job, but in a different career. Having friends in law enforcement at different levels created an interest for me in that type field.

With the changing retail environment, I felt it was time for a career change before I suffered retail burn out. This is when I discovered Louisiana Prison Enterprises. They had a similar multi-unit management position over several plants that would allow me to change careers and still use my prior experience. I would be managing the furniture plant and my hobby is wood working and construction projects. It seemed like a good fit.

I had a few adjustments to make from private industry to state, but once I learned the ropes I was able to see where I could contribute to the department. It allowed me to use my training and staff development skills to improve the production in the plants while working with the incarcerated individuals. The furniture plant gives me the opportunity to work with incarcerated individuals on furniture designs and production but also to interact with the customer on the other end to see the products reach their destination. I am also in charge of any issues with the furniture which allows some hands on working. Working with the garment plants involves a lot of my retail management skills, as well dealing with incarcerated individuals, production, and inventory, to name a few.

I have been in CI for 6 years now and I enjoy getting to use the skills from my retail career to help operate state facilities and teach job skills to incarcerated individuals.

It is rewarding to me to be able to show a picture to an incarcerated individual of a piece they built after it is at the end destination or when a garment plant worker learns a new skill and gets promoted to a higher position. Also rewarding, is to see how proud they are of their accomplishment and knowing that Louisiana Prison Enterprises is a part of their excitement.

Greg Heishman

Delaware Correctional Industries



My name is Greg Heishman. I work as a trades Instructor with Delaware Correctional Industries (DCI) located at the James T. Vaughn Correctional Center in Smyrna, DE. I have been with the Delaware Department of Correction (DDOC) for 12 years. Five of those years were in the housing units as an officer. The last seven years have been with DCI instructing in the areas of screen printing and custom embroidery.

Prior to joining the DDOC, I owned and operated a custom embroidery business for 21 years. This business experience was handed down to me and my brother by my dad, a retired member of the United States Air Force.

My business was doing well until 2001, when the World Trade Center attacks took place. In the time following that tragedy, my business slowly began to dwindle. My primary customers were businesses and corporations, who placed a great importance on offering employee incentives. Embroidered shirts, jackets, tote bags, hats and sweatshirts were among the more popular offerings. With the World Trade Centers in ruins, the thoughts of many businesses moved away from employee incentives and began to be focused on the idea of financial survival. Nice, embroidered incentives were not high on the priority list. The joys of owning my own business were beginning to wane and the decision to sell the business and find other gainful employment was necessary.

I applied and was accepted to the Correctional Employee Initial Training Academy with the DDOC in December of 2008. The area of corrections was entirely new to me.

Working in a prison was something I had not considered up to this point. Be that as it may, I made it through the academy. An achievement I was happy to obtain given my age of 50 years old.

In the middle of my fifth year, the embroidery shop in DCI had been closed and was behind in completing customer orders. It became known that I had experience in the embroidery business and was asked to come and help with the back log. It brought back many memories of my business when I went to the shop and discovered the embroidery machines being used were the identical machines I had owned and operated for many years. Having the help of two incarcerated workers, we managed to get the back log of orders completed in three months. Two months later, a trades instructor position opened. Sure enough, it was in the embroidery and screen-printing shop of DCI. Things went well with the application and interview, and the rest is history.

I have been in the shop for seven years teaching and training workers to run and maintain 2-six head, 1-eight head, and 1-single head embroidery machines. We have a full complement of digitizing tools to create designs in house. We run 3-single head, 1-six head, 1-eight head and a soon to be operational, automated six head silk screen presses.

Working with these men is extremely rewarding and fulfilling. It is the goal of a teacher to train his students to achieve more than he has. This is true of several of the men in the shop. They know the skills, they can produce quality products, and they take pride in assisting and training new workers that enter and leave the program. We have seen three men leave with skills enabling them to be hired in the industry. I look forward to several more years working with these men teaching them machine skills, business skills and mentoring them in building a good set of life skills. •

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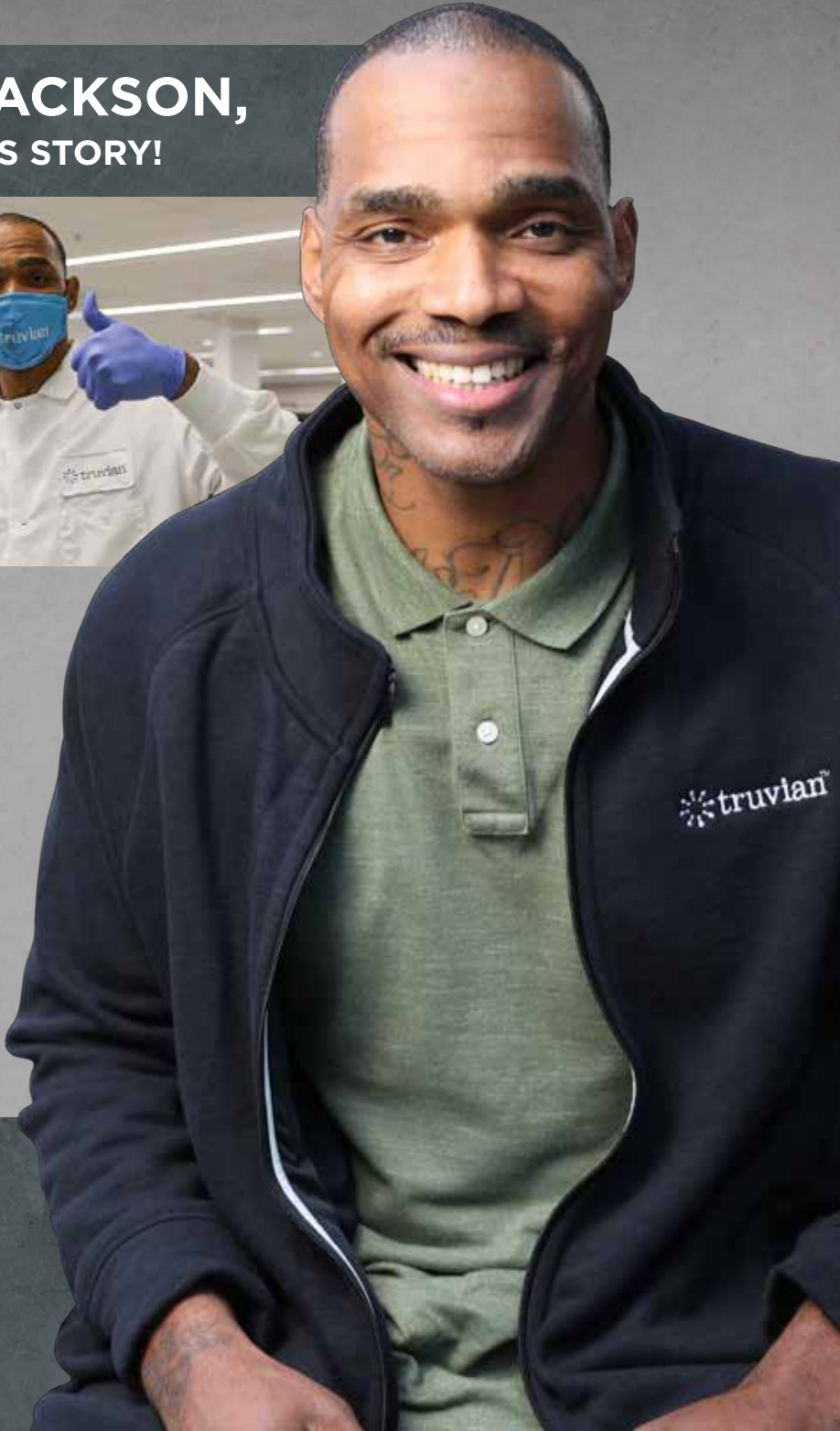
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