

# GRATER FRIENDS

## ***A Numbers Game by Shawn Younker of SCI Greene***

How long, O Lord, how long? Not for the first or last time this decade, those words echo through my brain with haunting repetition. To my left and right, a star-crossed group of men sat in quiet tandem, nursing hope and clinging fast to what remains of their dignity. One might even notice a subtle hint of desperation in the air, the sweat-laced product of apprehension and uncertainty.

This is our annual parole hearing, and tensions are high. One man even whispers a quiet prayer in his far corner, while others display overblown gestures of bravado and false senses of security. But underneath all the theatrics and self-delusion, every man in this room imagines a life outside the fence.

The conversation that really peaks my interest is the one commencing behind me. Two comrades are discussing a board hearing they endured two months prior. On a closer earshot, I hear them exchanging old, time-tested answers to parole questions. They are absolutely convinced that a certain combination of answers and responses either guarantee parole or deny it.

Honestly, I chuckle and shake my head. Only a seasoned veteran of the system understands the error of this. It has long been known, after all, that your parole decision has been made well before you even walk in front of the hearing examiner.

Parole is a numbers game. Always has been. That is the cruel and callous reality of our DOC. All the productive, extra-curricular work

an offender may boast matters very little when it comes right down to it. Let's face it, folks, there is no reward for good behavior in Pennsylvania. How many comrades have you seen with no write ups, program complete, and gainfully employed get a parole hit for one misguided reason or another?

These are just a few of the things I sit mulling over as a poor, pale-faced kid comes shuffling absently from the office, his lips quivering, green sheet trembling in his hands, a look of confusion and shock twisting his features. Sorry kid, better luck next year.

There was a time, long since past, when I was in his shoes, feeling bitter discouragement and stark bewilderment, trying to make sense of a convoluted bureaucracy, a despicable machine designed to do only one thing – regulate the numbers and keep the beds filled.

But not anymore. As a prison journalist, I have found a way to turn my circumstances into a meal ticket. Not only am I prepared for a parole hit, I will actually profit from it. There are publishers out there willing to pay you for a written account of your prison experience. I should know. It's been paying for my commissary for well over three years now. Journalism has given me a renewed sense of purpose and, in some circles, a degree of notoriety.

As for now, my name is being called. Time for my hearing. One man beside me wishes me luck. I smile and shake my head. "Don't need luck," I say, "when I have pen and paper."

## **July & August: In This Issue**

Cover Story	1	From the Society	5-6	Requests for Resources	22
Letter from the Society	2	FAMM Talk	7	Reader Survey	23
Overview of the Society	3-4	Mail Room	8-18	Subscription Form	24
		Food Service Survey	19-21		

# Letter from the Society

Dear Friends,

On page 19 of this issue, you will see a survey about food and nutrition in State Correctional Institutions. This survey is a critical part of our work to advance better nutrition in prisons and jails. Thank you to everyone who has already been a part of this project – we are grateful for your input.

This year, the Allegheny County Jail switched to a new food service provider after the Prison Society helped bring serious problems with the jail's food to light. Our survey of incarcerated people in the ACJ last year documented reports of food that was moldy, rotten, and contaminated with insects and rodent droppings. Ninety-five percent of respondents said they regularly went hungry. We have received some early feedback that meals have improved since the jail switched to a new vendor and continue to monitor the issue.

We also testified before Washington, D.C. City Council in support of a law that would strengthen standards for food service in the city's jails. "We are especially encouraged by the inclusion of regular inspection and continual quality improvement of food service," the Prison Society's

director of monitoring, Noah Barth, said of the legislation. Among other provisions, it would require the city jail to meet federal nutrition standards and direct it to adopt the Good Food Purchasing Policy.

Philadelphia jails have also adjusted mealtimes after we made administrators aware that incarcerated people were going hungry. The jails used to serve dinner at 4 p.m. forcing incarcerated people to fast for 16 hours until breakfast at 8 a.m. or buy supplemental food from the commissary. Now, dinner is served at 5 p.m. and breakfast is served at 6 a.m., reducing the gap between meals by three hours.

Our project to improve food in Pennsylvania state prisons is featured in the blog of The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI). A reprint of the article can be found on page 5.

We look forward to providing more updates on this important work as our project to improve food service in Pennsylvania state prisons progresses.

With gratitude,

Kailyn Schneider & the Graterfriends Team

## Graterfriends

Executive Director

Claire Shubik-Richards

Designer

Kailyn Schneider

Editorial Organizer

Noelle Gambale

Editorial Assistants

Jack Murphy, Sarina Sandwell, Madeline Cerulli

Founder

Joan Gauker

Contributors

Shawn Younker, Joel Wolfram, FAMM, Rob Pezzeca,

*as they appear*

Jeffrey West, Mark Rokita, Mark White, Charles

Sheppard, APWA, Kasheyon Lee-Chima, Juicy Queen

Bee, Freddie Jenkins, Muwsa Green, David Croyle,

Keeshawn Crawford, Larry Stephenson

# **An Overview of the Pennsylvania Prison Society**

Founded in 1787, The Pennsylvania Prison Society is the nation's oldest human rights organization. Our mission for 235 years has been to promote the health, safety, and dignity of people impacted by mass incarceration. In 1828, the Prison Society was granted access to all people in state or county custody in PA – we remain the only non-governmental organization in the United States with our level of statutory access to people in prison. Although some of our specific programs have evolved over time, we remain committed to responding to the needs of incarcerated people and their loved ones. Today, we use that access to monitor prison conditions, assist people in prison with individual issues they raise, build connections to family and community, and educate the public about the largely hidden world of prisons.

## ***WHO ARE WE?***

You may write to us at 230 South Broad Street, Suite 605 Philadelphia, PA 19102. You can also have your loved ones call our family support helpline at anytime: 215-564-4775. Our team can assist to answer questions about specific facilities, policies, general issues, and concerns. Our team is small and we are not able to provide legal assistance, but we will do our best to help you get the information and resources you need. Unfortunately, at this time as an organization we are generally not able to use ConnectNetwork to correspond with people confined in SCIs.

## ***HOW DO I CONTACT THE PRISON SOCIETY?***

## ***WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WRITE TO YOU?***

We will always do our best to assist you. You can write to us to request resources, report conditions at a state or local facility, or request a prison monitor. The Prison Society is not a legal organization and can not provide specific legal advice or representation. However, our correspondence volunteers thoroughly respond to each and every letter we receive with information about other resources and organizations. We can also help you navigate different issues related to education, free books and other creative programs, reentry services, mental health resources, pen pal programs, and more.

We are grateful to the countless people in custody and their families who help promote prison transparency across the Commonwealth. Beyond working to address concerns on an individual and/or facility level, the information you provide drives our vital conversations with Pennsylvania legislators, allied organizations, and the public. As we work to educate others and engage in systemic advocacy, it is vital that this is led by the experiences and opinions of the people closest to the problem- you! Your voices directly informed our current advocacy to end the \$5 medical copay for incarcerated people, as well as our work to remove barriers to family visits.

## ***WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I SHARE WHAT'S GOING ON IN PRISON?***

## ***WHAT IS PRISON MONITORING?***

The Prison Society is the only non-governmental organization in the country with a legal right to meet privately with any person incarcerated in their state. Each month, we receive hundreds of reports concerning access to healthcare, abuse, property, conditions of confinement, treatment, and other issues. Our trained volunteer Prison Monitors can meet with anyone incarcerated in Pennsylvania state or county prison to hear their concern in detail and engage in follow-up advocacy.

Out of respect for one's privacy and safety, we will never send a Prison Monitor without an explicit request for a visit from an incarcerated person or their loved one. During a visit, a prison monitor will meet with the person in custody one-on-one to discuss and document their situation. Following the visit, volunteers are empowered to speak with prison administration on their behalf to try to improve the situation. It is important to note that we are not lawyers and cannot assist with legal issues or casework.

For individuals returning to the Philadelphia area, The Prison Society does have a mentoring program available designed to help ease the transition from incarceration back to communities by providing a strong social support network. We hope to expand this to other regions in the state in the future.

## ***WHAT ABOUT REENTRY SERVICES?***

Launched in 1981 by Joan Gauker and adopted by The Prison Society in 2002, Graterfriends is a critical outlet for incarcerated people to share their opinions and experiences. We are proud to have built a powerful community with you over these past two decades and encourage you to continue submitting to Graterfriends.

## ***WHAT HAPPENS WHEN I WRITE TO YOU?***

We reserve the right to edit submissions. Original submissions will not be returned. Allegations of misconduct must be documented and statistics should be supported by sources. All submissions should be no more than 500 words, or two double-spaced pages. Letters more than 200 words, or one double-spaced page, will not be published in their entirety and may be shortened for clarity and space. To protect Graterfriends from copyright infringement, please attach a note, on your submission, stating that you are the original author of the work and that you give us permission to edit and print; date and sign the declaration



**PENNSYLVANIA  
PRISON SOCIETY**

# Center for Science in the Public Interest

## *The Pennsylvania Prison Society is working to change the culture of food behind bars*

Soggy pizza soaked in beet juice. Sour milk and rotten apples. Room-temperature Salisbury steak. These were a few of the items on the menu in Pennsylvania state prisons in the second year of the Covid-19 pandemic, according to incarcerated people who filled out our [survey](#)<sup>1</sup> on prison food.

The Pennsylvania Prison Society started surveying incarcerated people after receiving a deluge of letters describing how bad prison food had gotten since the prisons closed dining halls during the pandemic and began serving all meals in-cell. Dishes got jumbled together in transit and sat on trays for hours before being served. Hot menu items were rare, and were cold by the time they arrived. Making the fare even more unappetizing, incarcerated people were forced to eat it just a few feet from the toilet they shared with a cellmate.

“Food is not even fit for an animal,” one incarcerated person wrote.

The notion that prison food should be punitive is so deeply ingrained in our culture that even the Prison Society, whose mission is to ensure humane treatment in prisons and jails, had taken it for granted—until now. In our survey, 73 percent of the 429 people in Pennsylvania state prisons who responded reported receiving fewer hot meals, 74 percent reported receiving rotten food in the past month, and 72 percent said that portions had gotten smaller compared to before the pandemic.

Thanks to a grant from the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Pennsylvania Prison Society is now working to change the status quo toward a future where meals in prison satisfy the basic human need for nourishing and wholesome food.

While never known for culinary excellence, prison food has managed to get even worse in recent years. According to a [report](#)<sup>2</sup> by Impact Justice, spending on meals behind bars plummeted as mass incarceration put pressure on state correctional systems to reduce costs. Pennsylvania prisons cut food costs more than any other state. In 1996, the state spent \$8.96 per person per day (adjusted for inflation). By 2018, it was spending just \$2.61. Several other states also cut food spending precipitously, according to Impact Justice. Florida slashed food spending from \$5.65 to \$2.02 (adjusted for inflation) during the same period.

“Budget cuts and stagnant spending have led to fewer hot meals, smaller portions, lower-quality protein, fewer fresh fruits and vegetables, and more ultra-processed foods, as well as poorly equipped and ill-supervised kitchens that further compromise quality,” the Impact Justice report states.

Prisons’ penny-pinching coincided with a trend of outsourcing food service operations to the private sector. Impact Justice reports that at least 15 states have privatized some aspect of correctional food service to corporations like Aramark and Trinity. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) has contracted with Aramark since 2017, when it signed an initial three-year, [\\$154 million](#)<sup>3</sup> contract. This centralized food procurement for all 23 prisons, which previously sourced food independently. Under the arrangement, Aramark only supplies the food—the DOC formulates menus, staffs kitchens, and handles the rest of the food service operation. At the time, state officials said the contract would save \$16.6 million.

The state didn’t consider how the savings could be offset by the damaging consequences. Poor quality food with inadequate nutrition makes incarcerated people sicker, increasing medical expenses. The Pennsylvania DOC plans to spend [\\$356 million](#)<sup>4</sup> on medical care in the coming fiscal year—about 12 percent of its overall budget. Elevated rates of acute and chronic illness contribute to the bill. A Centers for Disease

---

1 [https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/62957b3831cc3cd13ca36180/63029844503bbe3a214d31f3\\_In-Cell%20Dining%20Survey%20Report.pdf](https://uploads-ssl.webflow.com/62957b3831cc3cd13ca36180/63029844503bbe3a214d31f3_In-Cell%20Dining%20Survey%20Report.pdf)

2 <https://impactjustice.org/innovation/food-in-prison/#report>

3 <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2018/nov/6/aramark-gets-pennsylvania-doc-food-procurement-contract/>

4 <https://www.budget.pa.gov/Publications%20and%20Reports/CommonwealthBudget/Documents/2023-24%20Budget%20Documents/Budget%20Book%202023-24%20WEB%20V.5.04182023.pdf>



Control and Prevention [study](#)<sup>5</sup> found that incarcerated people contract foodborne illnesses at over [six times](#)<sup>6</sup> the rate of the general population. An unhealthy diet can also lead to long-term health problems. People confined to prisons are [one-and-a-half times more likely](#)<sup>7</sup> to have high blood pressure, diabetes, or asthma than the general population, and 40 percent more likely to have any chronic illness.

“I entered county jail 134 pounds, fit and healthy,” [commented](#)<sup>8</sup> one formerly incarcerated person during a national listening session hosted by CSPI and Impact Justice. “I was 206 pounds ten months later in prison, and I had high blood pressure for the first and only time in my life.”

The poor diet may take a toll on health even years after release. One [study](#)<sup>2</sup> found that formerly incarcerated people were 60 percent more likely to develop high blood pressure in young adulthood after accounting for other risk factors like smoking.

“I had a heart attack and a triple bypass 17 months after release, and I was one of the fortunate ones to have made it and to recover,” another formerly incarcerated person [said](#)<sup>10</sup> during the national listening session. “There was a direct correlation with the 23 years of poor diet I had while incarcerated—a prison sentence can turn into a death sentence for many.”

Inadequate nutrition in prisons also adds to the financial burden borne by incarcerated people and their families. Nearly three-quarters of the incarcerated people who responded to our survey reported spending more on food from the prison commissary to supplement their diets as the quality of meals declined. While the salty, sugary snacks and preserved foods typically available in the commissary may taste better and help incarcerated people get enough calories, they do not provide the healthy micronutrients that are lacking in the prison diet.

Also, because incarcerated people make vanishingly [low wages](#)<sup>11</sup>, the extra expense often falls to their families. It adds to the [hundreds of dollars](#)<sup>12</sup> a month these typically low-income families pay on phone calls, prison visits, clothing, and other support for their incarcerated loved ones.

With CSPI’s support, we hired a registered dietitian with expertise in food policy development, Arielle Herman, to evaluate food service in Pennsylvania prisons and make recommendations for change. Since January 2023, Herman has been thoroughly reviewing the state of food service in Pennsylvania prisons, the DOC’s policies and contracts with Aramark and its commissary supplier, and researching best practices in other jurisdictions. She has visited several state prisons to tour kitchen facilities, talk to kitchen staff, and interview incarcerated people about their experience with prison food. Herman has also conducted a nutritional analysis of meals served in state prisons.

The Aramark contract expires this year, and Herman’s findings and recommendations will help inform the department’s decisions as it draws up a new contract. The time is ripe to begin changing the culture around prison food

*This article was written by Joel Wolfram for the Pennsylvania Prison Society. The e-version can be found at <https://www.cspinet.org/blog/pennsylvania-prison-society-working-change-culture-food-behind-bars>*

---

5 [https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2017.303816?url\\_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr\\_id=ori%3Arid%3Aacrossref.org&rfr\\_dat=cr\\_pub%3Dpubmed](https://ajph.aphapublications.org/doi/abs/10.2105/AJPH.2017.303816?url_ver=Z39.88-2003&rfr_id=ori%3Arid%3Aacrossref.org&rfr_dat=cr_pub%3Dpubmed)

6 <https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2017/12/prison-food-sickness-america/549179/>

7 <https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/mpsfpi1112.pdf>

8 <https://www.cspinet.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Food%20Nutrition%20Corrections%20Convening%20WHC%20Submission%207-15-22.pdf>

9 <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19364998/>

10 <https://www.cspinet.org/sites/default/files/2022-07/Food%20Nutrition%20Corrections%20Convening%20WHC%20Submission%207-15-22.pdf>

11 <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2017/04/10/wages/>

12 <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/17/us/incarceration-holidays-family-costs.html?auth=link-dismiss-google1tap>

## **Legislative Report from FAMM**

Our General Assembly is on their Summer break from session days in Harrisburg, and spending a lot of time in their home districts. Here are some of the recent legislative efforts FAMM is tracking in Pennsylvania around sentencing and the criminal legal system:

HB 689, introduced by Representative Jordan Harris (D), passed in the House and was referred to Senate Judiciary Committee on June 6, 2023. HB 689 expands clean slate and limited access to apply to more criminal records, including some felony drug convictions.

SB 852, introduced by Sen. Lisa Baker (R), is the companion bill to HB 689, and was introduced and referred to Senate Judiciary on June 30, 2023.

HB 900, introduced by Rep. Morgan Cephas (D), passed in the House and was referred to Senate Judiciary Committee on June 26, 2023. HB 900 is a part of the Dignity for Incarcerated Women set of bills, and addresses specific needs and treatment of pregnant and postpartum incarcerated people.

HB 1069, introduced by Rep. Carl Metzgar (R) was introduced on May 2, 2023. HB 1069 would make mandatory that sentences for convictions of assault by prisoner, assault by life prisoner, or aggravated harassment by prisoner be served consecutively to a current sentence if the person subjected to the aggravated harassment or assault is a correctional employee. HB 1069 would also mandate the denial of parole eligibility for anyone convicted of these offenses.

HB 1181, introduced by Rep. Darisha Parker (D), would limit an employer's or potential employer's ability to consider cases that result in non-convictions, cases adjudicated as delinquent as a juvenile, summary convictions, or records that have been pardoned or expunged in employment decisions. HB 1181 would also have potential or current employers consider the nature of and time since a misdemeanor or felony conviction in employment decisions.


SB 235 (Tyler's Law), introduced by Sen. Doug Mastriano (R), passed out of Senate Judiciary Committee on June 27, 2023, and is set on the Senate Calendar for September, 2023. SB 235 would stiffen penalties to at least 10 years of confinement and a fine of at least \$15,000 for people convicted of drug delivery resulting in death when a person had two or more previous convictions under Sections 13(A)(14) or (30) of the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act, or if the person convicted received anything of value during the offense.

SB 695, introduced by Sen. James Dillon (D), would create a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years imprisonment for people with two or more convictions related to providing false statements during the purchase, delivery, or transfer of firearms, or on an application to carry a firearm. SB 695 would also create a mandatory minimum sentence of 5 years imprisonment if a person who knowingly is not permitted to purchase or carry a firearm attempts to buy or carry a gun, and for a second or subsequent conviction for making a false statement or using false identification on an application to carry a firearm.

SB 838, introduced by Sen. Lisa Baker (R), seeks to make changes to PA's probation system. SB 838 passed out of the Senate on June 27, 2023 and then out of House Judiciary committee on June 29, 2023, and is currently set on the house calendar for September 26, 2023. SB 838 would create incentives and standardize case review to assist people in terminating probation supervision in a more sensible timeframe. SB 838 would also narrow the definition of a technical probation violation and establish a framework for limiting incarceration and sanctions for technical probation violations.

## Mail Room

*Graterfriends accepts submissions regarding prison legislation, life, and creative endeavors. We do not accept submissions that are offensive in nature and target specific individuals. All letters must be signed for consideration. Names will be withheld from letters on rare occasions. While Graterfriends seeks to preserve the integrity of your work, we reserve the right to edit submissions as we see fit. Allegations of abuse or misconduct may be censored or omitted for your protection and safety.*



### Criminal Justice Reform Seminar

*Rob Pezzeca of SCI Coal Township*

On May 23, 2023, 30 lifers in SCI Coal Township participated in a C.J.R.S. event created by lifers Robert Pezzeca and Derrick “Dee’s” Stevens. We hosted an event which lasted five and a half hours. The men who were there did a phenomenal job focusing on the issues that we Lifers face.

Our Superintendent, Thomas McGinley, put on a speech that should be in front of the entire General Assembly. He is fully supportive of second chances, ending LWOP, commutation reform, fixing the compassionate release laws, and creating “good time” in Pennsylvania.

We had four lifers speak on four different topics: Kyako Pippen spoke on Victims; Derrick Cramer spoke on LWOP; I spoke on commutation reform; Bryant Arroyo spoke on compassionate release. Bryant is the only Lifer I have ever met who helped get another lifer home on compassionate release (Bradford Gamble).

I tell everyone about this event to say this: Lifers in every prison can do this. Our Superintendent Thomas McGinley spoke on positive change and how it’s needed. He supported this event from the very start.

Here’s a resource for every lifer. [www.dgs.pa.gov](http://www.dgs.pa.gov). Have your people go online and order you the Commonwealth telephone directory. Make sure it’s updated for 2023. It lists every government office, title, who works there and phone number. It is priceless. Because of this directory, I was able to invite our Lt. Governor. And, at our event, I asked the Lt. Governor to meet the lady Lifers of SCI Muncy next. Our sister Lifers deserve to be heard as well.

Lifers state wide are urged to work on events like this. We are not done working here at SCI Coal Township. I have received over two dozen emails from outside guests so far, and the most impactful part for so many was when they were put into small groups to have discussions.

There were four different groups with four different discussions. This event was titled *Changing the Narrative*.

We are not our crimes. We have grown to become so much more. And what we did that day was exactly that. FDR said “People acting together as a group can accomplish things in which no individual acting alone could ever hope to bring about.” As a group, we Lifers made a difference and only together will we ever see an end to Death By Incarceration.

Thank you to the lifers, the guests, and DOC Staff who attended. A special thank you goes to Mr. Beyah Sulieman. He was approved to attend the event, but chose not to due to the fact that he was pretty sick and didn’t want to get any guests sick. It was a very selfless act, and we thank him for this.

We have A LOT of work left to do.



## **Inside-Out Prison College Program**

*Jeffrey West of SCI Somerset*

We have finished the spring semester of the Inside-Out College program. Carnegie Mellon University and the University of Pittsburgh spent the last twelve weeks coming to the prison to offer four on-campus courses. We want to thank the professors, the college administrators, the SCI Somerset administration and education department, and the university students for all they have done to offer us this unique opportunity.

I was one of a handful chosen to take CMU's Russian History course, which was held weekly over the last four months. Our professor was great. She challenged us, treated us like students, and held us to the same standards as the university kids. There is nothing like, and no substitution for, in-person learning.

The university students who opted for this course – none of which are majoring in anything related to criminal justice – spent their Fridays on a long bus ride to sit for three hours to take a class that they could have easily taken on campus. For the last four months, we shared ideas and opinions, agreed and disagreed on the material, and acted out events from the text that had us all laughing. I'm a bad actor, but I honestly couldn't wait each week for class.

Education equals rehabilitation, so we are so grateful for everyone's time and effort. We know you have busy lives, yet you gave your time to see that we could learn too. It is a proven fact that any amount of college teaches prisoners critical thinking skills that they can use in every aspect of their lives, so we thank you for giving us a better chance now and in the future. Our Fridays will never be the same. Thank you all so much.

## **Mission Prison Recycle**

*Mark Rokita of SCI Houtzdale*

I have been at SCI Houtzdale for ten years now and may not be going home for a while. I would like to utilize my time towards something progressive and conducive to the growth of humanity and the community. Prison should not be a hindrance to bettering the world. I would like to use the things I've learned to compose a program that not only saves

the State money but contributes to the environment.

I have noticed that plenty of the waste in prison could be reduced, re-used, or recycled as opposed to trashed. Namely, the amount of paper that is used in prison could easily be reduced. Many services, such as the law library, require an inmate to submit a request-slip for each day a person desires to attend. Many of us submit requests 3 or more times a week, and submit individual request-slips for the entire month at once, on individual pieces of paper. An easy solution could be to allow an inmate to request multiple sessions on one slip.

In my vocational program, waste is also excessive. When I asked if we could recycle all this metal and copper, I was told that "this is how the state wants us to operate." Loads of metals are trashed every week from every prison, ending up in landfills and destroying the environment.

The kitchen and maintenance departments throw away tons (not figuratively) of waste each day that could be recycled. There are some quick and easy solutions, such as installing recycle bins for the tons of cardboard, plastics, glass, and metals. Other issues may require more strategic approaches, like limiting food waste and avoiding Styrofoam trays. I aspire to respectful discussions between staff and inmates to tackle these issues; "are we willing to do a little extra work and label hard-trays to reduce the cost of Styrofoam?" "There could be an appreciation meal each month allocated to the inmate and staff population that utilizes some of the financial savings." "We could use money procured from recycling the trashed metal and copper to purchase new sporting or educational equipment." "We could show the community our rehabilitative desires by donating portions to local hospitals."

In general, recycling at SCI Houtzdale would be conducive to setting an example towards rehabilitation. Together, we can teach and learn how important it is to protect the environment and show the community that we care. It is my goal to create a pilot program at this prison that invites inmates and staff to work together to problem solve, building relationships with each other and the community. If this program were to proliferate to other prisons, we could be saving millions of taxpayer dollars, protecting the environment, and providing a rehabilitative program to those who are interested.

# The Game of Life

*Mark White of SCI Benner Township*

You can walk up to any basketball court in the yards or gyms at any institution across the state, and it'll be packed with onlookers waiting to be entertained by some of the most phenomenal ballers amped up to display their skills for the masses. Intramural league games are enthusiastically discussed for the entire week prior. Everyone in attendance comes dressed in their best sweatsuits and the newest footwear available to us. There's music being blasted out of keyboards and radios with playlists made especially to hype the players and crowds up. Fiery opposing coaches laying out carefully crafted plans of attack designed to give their team the edge. Crowds maneuver to and from the snack shops to get their ice cream, bottled water, and other refreshments to stay hydrated.

These epic battles take place on the blacktop surrounded by energy and excitement so great that it's almost intoxicating. Sports are one of our favorite pastimes while we're in prison. A moment to feel free, even if for just a little while. Free from the heartache and pain of being separated from our loved ones and our lives outside of prison. These games are a welcomed and much needed escape from the everyday stressors that accompany incarceration.

As a Peer Educator here at SCI Benner, I am passionate about encouraging my peers to take advantage of every possible opportunity for self-betterment while we're here. I see so many good men spending hours upon hours working out multiple times a day and perfecting their jumpshot for those games on the weekends. Yet, they will not commit that same level of effort and enthusiasm to education and preparing themselves for success outside of prison.

There are over forty-five thousand people in Pennsylvania's prison system with 86% expecting some form of release in the future. But, many of the people that are waiting to be released from the DOC possess very few bankable real world skills off the basketball court and are destined to face uncertain futures when they get out.

There are a variety of vocational programs available in the education department of every Pennsylvania SCI that will equip us with the necessary

skills and training to become eligible for well-paying jobs upon release. There are also multiple grant programs that we qualify for after prison, one being OVR (Office of Vocational Rehabilitation) which pays up to 7k for equipment needed to start a business or to gain employment in your chosen field. The application is as simple as contacting them with proof of certification and a business plan once released. Many people know nothing about them. Write to the guidance counselor in your institution to get all of the information to learn what's available to you in your county to get the ball rolling.

Take advantage of these opportunities while you're here. Our communities need carpenters, electricians, plumbers, barbers, and truck drivers. These industries are accepting ex-offenders more than ever now and are providing us with the opportunities to earn a living that can sustain our entire families. If you dedicate the same amount of time, effort, commitment, and concentration that it takes to break a defender down and make him look silly on the court into obtaining your G.E.D and elevating your chances to be successful on the outside of prison, you'll have the edge to win in the biggest game you'll ever play in: the game of Life.



# **Lifers Incorporated: SCI Phoenix**

*Charles Sheppard of SCI Phoenix*

Even though we are physically confined, our will and determination still motivate us to rise above the fray. The chaos and confusion, the obstacles, pitfalls, and tarps that are laid before us will not consume us. You have locked up my body but never my mind.

Lifers Inc., continues to move forward in spite of the situation at hand. The prison industrial complex has made it difficult for our families, friends, supporters, and volunteers to visit or assist us. The COVID-19 pandemic has given the Department of Corrections (DOC) a stacked deck to implement unheard of policies and restrictions that may never be removed. Nevertheless, we will continue to persevere in our goals and objectives for prison reform on all levels.

## **Lifers Inc. Activities Report**

1. Regular Public Safety Initiative (PSI) meetings held in the School Education Department on the Westside of SCI Phoenix to engage the men in critical thinking and ways to improve the quality of life in their respective communities and family lifestyle;
2. Ongoing dialogue and visits with movers and shakers on the outside in collaboration with our PSI movement;
3. Regular weekly meetings with Lifers Intra-Organizations Network (LION). LION is a collaboration of the men at SCI Phoenix representing the various groups exploring parole eligibility of life sentences in Pennsylvania and other prison reform initiatives. To date, we have provided instrumental input on two bills, (H.B. 135 Rep. Jason Dawkins) and (S.B. 135 formerly S.B. 942 Senator Sharif Street). These bills, if passed, would eliminate life without parole. They have been introduced in the Pennsylvania General Assembly three consecutive times. The biggest challenge is getting the bills in a judiciary hearing with Republican support;
4. Monthly meetings with outside support teams from the Defender's Association and juvenile lifers released on parole in order to develop a mitigation manual and workshops for lifers and other prisoners to use in their presentation for commutation, post-conviction relief, and parole review. We plan to revisit this project when the institution reopens for volunteers;
5. Held legal seminars on civil rights, criminal rights and practices, and explored the possibility of getting voting rights for prisoners;
6. Collaborated with Queen Mother Falaka Fattah of the House of Umoja in West Philly with on gang and violence prevention workshops. We continue our collaboration, utilizing a renowned publication titled "A Conversation Between Brothers," centered on stopping crime in our communities, violence in our homes, and the self-destruction of our youth;
7. Ongoing collaboration with IN SEARCH OF FATHERHOOD, an international organization run by Diane A. Sears and former Judge James DeLeon of West Philly. We hold youth mentor and transformation workshops through Lifers Inc., Public Safety Initiative (PSI);
8. Held a conference call with campaign managers of United States' presidential candidates (2020) to discuss Lifers Inc., public safety initiatives, pipeline to prison proposal, and a national platform for parole eligibility of life sentences throughout the United States;
9. Recently, Lifers Inc., was asked to be a part of a core team for a Philadelphia mayoral candidate, however, we have not yet committed;

10. Core group of lifers at SCI Phoenix, including Lifers Inc., representatives, filed a lawsuit in the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania in March 2021. They seek, among other claims, parole eligibility review and other consideration of all life sentences in Pennsylvania. We are asking for class action certification and a number of prisoners have filed for intervention;

11. Hosting JUST Listening Workshops in collaboration with attorney Sharon H. Browning, et al., with men in the SCI Phoenix population. We established a core team and an alumni group and have prepared, published, and disseminated a JUST Listening Manual on how prisoners and their family can cope under COVID-19, a pandemic, and the frustration of being restricted in movement over an extended period of time;

12. Currently working on publishing a Little Red Book on JUST Listening;

13. Published a Booklet of “Transformation Stories,” which highlights the positive impact and intervention of many men here at SCI Phoenix, sentenced to life imprisonment, who have positively influenced the lives of non-lifers, as well as lifers. The booklet is currently being sent to Republican legislators and other stakeholders who have the ability to influence positive change in life sentencing status with the intention additionally of humanizing lifers in Pennsylvania;

14. Recently participated in a successful Day of Appreciation Event, In collaboration with organizations here at SCI Phoenix, acknowledging family members and distinguished volunteers for their unconditional support and as a way to afford them some relief from the lengthy restrictions they too experienced in the wake of the COVID-19, pandemic;

15. Participated in a research project and publication with the University of Pennsylvania regarding the overly politicized commutation process, highlighting how Reginald McFadden does not exemplify the typical lifer and how his release was gained by legislators who showed favoritism for his cooperation in the Camp Hill Riot, and therefore, not by any legitimate merits review process;

Family members, friends, and supporters can link and get information on Lifers Inc., website, [www.lifersincpa.org](http://www.lifersincpa.org). The website includes access to DVDs/videos including “Second Looks, Second Chances: Commutation by the Numbers” and links to important petitions for Parole Eligibility.

## Calling for Essays

The American Prison Writing Archive (APWA) is an internet-based, non-profit archive of first-hand testimony to the living and working conditions experienced by incarcerated, formerly incarcerated people, and prison volunteers. Anyone who lives or volunteers inside American prisons from all writing skill levels can contribute non-fiction essays and poetry, based on first-hand experience. 5,000 word limit. Visit us at:

PRISONWITNESS.ORG

Anyone interested in providing writing needs to include a signed permissions-questionnaire (PQ) obtained by writing to the address below. Hand-written contributions are welcome. There are no reading fees and The Archive will cover postage for responses. We will read all work submitted. For more information and to request the PQ, please write to:



American Prison Writing Archive  
Johns Hopkins University  
3400 N. Charles St.  
Baltimore, MD 21218

or

[prisonwitness@jh.edu](mailto:prisonwitness@jh.edu)



# Financial Status Determines Ability To Receive Information From The DOC

*Kasheyon Lee-Chima of SCI Benner Township*

The available information from institutional channels are not equally accessible to incarcerated individuals and something must be done. It appears that prison officials are stating only the individuals who are financially capable of paying for cable are allowed to receive institutional information and updates. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (DOC) and State Correctional Institutions (SCI) are consistently releasing a variety of information and updates. According to DOC policy (DC-ADM 002), each prison facility has been equipped with in-house television channels, which were designed to provide necessary and important information in a timely fashion. However, the information received through the channels is not equally accessible to individuals who may not own personal TVs, choose not to, or cannot afford to have cable. The result of this is that individuals are being barred from access to certain information and updates, which is the overall problem.

The number of channels that each institution provides may vary. Therefore, we have selected the PA DOC SCI Benner Township as the main focus for this article. At the time of writing, there were four institutional in-house channels: 37, 38, 67, and 68.

## **Channel 37**

This channel is designated for facility information. It displays both DOC- and SCI-based written correspondences (e.g., memos, notices, updates, etc.). Critical information regarding COVID, flu shots, and other health concerns are some things generally presented on this channel. To receive this information, it is usually recommended that individuals without personal TVs refer to housing unit bulletin boards. However, these boards are not properly maintained, updated, or in good conditions. At times, prison officials simply refuse or procrastinate to have such information printed and posted.

## **Channel 38**

This channel is designated for facility information. The difference, however, is that this channel displays content in the format of videos. Video content in regards to various treatment,

institutional programs, PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act), and other recorded messages from the Warden are broadcasted on this channel. Many times, facility administrators will discuss details and information on this channel that will not be presented nor located elsewhere. For example, the Warden records a town hall meeting and will release information that every individual needs to know. Information is released about facility health, process change, and/or security concerns. The information shared exclusively from the Warden's chat will not be accessible anywhere else.

## **Channel 67**

This channel is designated for the Institution's Chaplaincy Department and serves to broadcast a variety of religious content. Religious education, sermons, and worship is made available on this channel. Such content is broadcasted in the forms of written correspondences, video/audio, recorded services and events. The schedule for Chaplaincy programs, religious services, memorials, and other observations are available on this channel. Any changes or cancellations to the Chaplaincy programs will be learned about by viewing this channel. Routinely, to extend religious education, additional religious content, which is inaccessible to individuals elsewhere, has been displayed on this channel. This channel has become vital for individuals throughout this facility.

## **Channel 68**

This channel is designated as the institution's selected movies channel. The facility administration by way of the Activities Department will select a variety of movies, videos, shows, and other recorded programs as entertainment to be broadcast onto this channel. This is the only in-house channel designed more for entertainment than information.

The importance and necessity for each of these channels should be evident. And making these channels accessible to everyone, regardless of their economic status, should be important. All incarcerated individuals should be entitled to the in-house channels at each of their facilities.

In an attempt for a resolution, I personally reached out to the Warden of SCI Benner Township,



Mr. M. Houser, as well as to Former Secretary of the DOC, Mr. G. Little, and have received similar responses. Both administrators are incorrectly assuming that this request is not possible. And because administrators are refusing or declining to resolve this issue, I am addressing this article to legal agencies and other prison support organizations who could assist with proposing a law that would mandate the PA DOC from barring incarcerated individuals from any and all institutional channels. Law and policy should be passed that would mandate institutional channels to be accessible, available, and without cost to individuals at institutions statewide.

Individuals not paying for cable will go without the in-house channels. Based upon this response, it appears that individuals are being charged a fee to receive information and updates from their SCI facilities.

Deputies and Unit Managers have also stated that all inmates without cable should access the televisions in the housing units' dayrooms. However this, too, is not a remedy. Prison administration does not grant enough time during dayroom recreation for incarcerated individuals to review content from all four of the in-house channels. Recreational dayroom is only offered three or four times per week.

Only during this winter season has the dayroom recreation become available on a nightly basis, at approximately two-hours each night. There are two TVs in the dayroom with over 100 individuals per each unit. How could any individual capture such overwhelming information from multiple channels all within a two hour timespan?

On an average day, the approximate duration for just one of these channels to complete a full rotation of its information is between 45 and 60 minutes. If you were to add all four channels then you will quickly realize that there is simply not enough time to allow individuals to obtain all, or even some, of the information. In addition, many unit officers are already complaining about the volumes from the dayroom TVs. Although this is not an issue at some facilities, such as at SCI-Smithfield, which has separate enclosed TV rooms, other facilities have TVs next to or near the Housing Unit Officer desk. Therefore, unit officers demand that the TVs are

without any volume. But even when attempting to watch an in-house channel, many other incarcerated individuals prefer to use their recreation time to review sports and/or movies instead of obtaining necessary information.

Not only would prison officials refer to using the dayroom televisions to obtain information, but officials would also refer to the housing unit bulletin boards. Facility administrators are under the assumption that housing units bulletin boards should suffice as an alternative means of receiving access to information. Yet this solution is not sufficient either. Because while most memos can be printed and posted onto the boards, this is not the case for every memo. At the time that this article was written, there is information found on the in-house channels that cannot be found on the bulletin boards.

To any legal agencies and/or prison organizations, and to all readers, if you are able to bring justice to this situation and can help remedy this injustice, please help by taking action as soon as you can. To all incarcerated individuals who are enduring this situation, I encourage you to do your part by submitting request slips to your prison officials. Once you receive your responses, then start filing grievances and appeal to the final level. This will only work when we all work together.

As a short-term remedy, until this issue is properly resolved, whenever recreation dayroom is terminated or is not in progress, I would like for all dayroom TVs to NOT be turned off and instead to be turned to and left on channel 37 (the information channel). I would like for every incarcerated individual who purchased and own televisions to have free access to their facility's in-house channels regardless if that individual is, or is not, paying for cable.

I would like for every incarcerated individual to receive prison information equally.

## Where to Start with Making Change

*Juicy Queen Bee of SCI Smithfield*

In life, we are all put through many tests and trials. We go through obstacles and face roadblocks day-to-day, though some are far worse than others.

Back in the days of slavery, African-Americans were faced with far worse tests and obstacles than we face today. They suffered. They couldn't vote. Women were used for any purpose by their white slave master owners. They were often raped and forced to have an abortion. They were beaten, starved, and deprived of an education. It took people who wanted change to come together to make a difference. Martin Luther King Jr. went to prison and had a dream. Rosa Park refused to give up her seat to a white man and was sent to prison, just to name a few before I get to my point.

You might be wondering where I'm going. You might be doing time for the first or second time. But here's something to think about: change isn't a joke. And the only way you can change something is if you want it and are willing to fight for it. Whether it be exercising, going to the library, practicing your faith, keeping active, keeping your children or your family. Whatever you love or whatever motivates you in your mind.

Think before you do something. Make sure your mind is focused, especially when going against the system. This is only a test, but you'll get through it. Patience is a virtue. Time is real, and neither is a game. But when you use both together, you'll succeed in everything you do, and the outcome will be better than what you thought.

## Caring is More Than Important

*Freddie Jenkins of SCI Rockview*

As I sit here, I'm wondering where I would be if I didn't discover what's in my heart and mind. I'm faced with the reality that I care about life as a whole. I'll admit it: sometimes I reject others as well as myself. When I'm all alone, it weighs heavily on my mind, bringing sadness and a want to go into isolation. I'm afraid to open myself to others because of how different I am in personality, ways of thinking, views of inner reality, and so much more.

I'm known by many, but few accept and try to know the real me. All my life, I had trouble accepting myself, and it hurts deep inside my heart and mind. There were times when I took things to the extreme, losing my way, screaming in my mind until I would break down and cry.

When I'm hurting inside, I get the greatest joy out of putting a smile on someone else's face. Even just a simple "hello" or "good morning" to someone can bring a smile and help them to know that it is not that bad. I can't read another person's mind, but even without knowing anything about their situation, I can feel the vibes from his or her stress. Sometimes I wish that I could take all the people that are sick or stressed out and put all their burdens on me so that they all would have complete happiness until the end of their time.

I've seen so many changes in this world as well as changes in myself. I see love and hate, as well as loving to hate others. Why can't we learn to love or care about someone with the same energy we give to hating, even if that person never knows we care? Whenever I see and hear a bitter person, I feel there must be a reason why that person is so bitter. Perhaps that person has been told he or she would never amount to anything in life, was teased as a kid, or is coming from an abusive background, somewhere he or she was never given a feeling of care or comfort. The list goes on and on.

We tend to hate or dislike people for all the wrong reasons, but when we learn some people hate or dislike us, we feel hurt. Why is that? We respond by seeing all the ugly faults of the next person and starting to judge. We must never under any circumstance hate another person, only hate that person's actions. Those people may feel the same way about us. No matter how much good or bad we do, we seem to always find fault in each other.

Everyone on this planet, I believe, has a seed of goodness. Some hold it in their hands yet never plant it in their heart and mind. If we let it take root, though, it will sprout into a beautiful human being.

So make caring more than important. Make it NECESSARY.

## **Our Right to Privacy**

*Muwsa Green of SCI Huntingdon*

SCI Huntingdon PSS and PSA have a pattern in breaching inmate confidentiality in the Restricted Housing Unit. They often arrive at an inmate's cell and ask him to disclose information about his mental health history aloud. This opens an unnecessary door to other inmates verbally abusing their peers. This type of abuse may cause him to suffer mental, and emotional deterioration, potentially leading to suicide.

However, PSS and PSA are supposed to bring the inmate to an isolated area in the RHU to protect confidential communications made during one-on-one sessions. This practice is supposed to be in place so these inmates may avoid embarrassment, disgrace, and antagonism.

PSA must impede development of the confidential relationship necessary for successful mental health treatment.

This relationship depends upon an atmosphere of confidence and trust in which the patient is willing to make a complete disclosure of facts, emotions, memories, and fears.

We should be able to avoid an unjust intrusion into our lives.

## **Freedom Through Honoring Authority**

*David Croyle of SCI Albion*

1 Peter 2:13-14 (AMP-adapted for prisoners)  
*"Submit yourselves to [the authority of] every human institution for the sake of the Lord [to honor His name], whether it is to a (judge) as one in position of power, or (correction officers) as sent by him to bring punishment to those who do wrong, and to praise & encourage those who do right."*

Independence Day celebrations are marked by picnics, parades, pleasures, and possessions. While the citizens celebrate freedom, prisoners look out through their cells with freedom being just a memory. Instead of celebration, there is mourning.

When I came to prison, I went through a horrible period of grief. Not only was I in a foreign environment, I grieved as I watched the loss of those things I had built over 40 years. I learned first hand

the lament of Solomon: Ecclesiastes 6:1 (AMP)  
"There is an evil... that weighs heavily on men: 2) a man to whom God has given riches & wealth & honor, so that he lacks nothing of all he desires, yet God has not given him the power or capacity to enjoy them ... but a stranger [... succeeds him and] enjoys them. This is ... a cause of great distress."

Furthermore, I saw lawyers so consumed with the "win" that they distorted the truth. I started in a cell with another inmate who was known for his violent outbursts. A guard came into the cell, putting his finger on the inmate's chest, trying to incite him to violence as he demeaned him verbally and poked at him physically. At state prison orientation, we were threatened: "I won't lie TO you, but I will lie ABOUT you!" I still have a hard time when a guard sexually harasses an inmate. If I file paperwork, I face the wrath of that guard away from cameras and the eye of administration. Therefore, it was difficult for me to grasp today's text - that I was to submit to these people "for the sake" of God.

I eventually found that real freedom comes when I can bless (give honor to) those who persecute me (Rom. 12:14). I pray you find that freedom too inside you!

## **Letter to Senator Jay Costa**

*Muwsa Green of SCI Huntingdon*

Dear Costa,

SCI Huntingdon is about 130 years old. Its structure was adopted by Frederic Auguste Demetz and Guillaume Abel Blouet 1837. Huntingdon has second and third floor cells whose dimensions are smaller than the first floor cells. There is no ventilation in these cells. The cells are double locked. There are no emergency call buttons in the cells. The cells have no automatic sprinkler system and no smoke detectors.

Inmates at Huntingdon are forced to breathe in black mold, asbestos, and other inmates' germs. If an inmate next to my cell has a fever, his germs will travel to my cell since the cell doors are wide open with no glass or plastic covering. It is difficult to defeat a cold because we continually pass our germs back and forth to each other due to the lack of ventilation.

## Exerpt from *Traits and Emotions of a Salvageable Soul, Vol II*

*Keeshawn Crawford of SCI Huntingdon*

### **Lesson 7: Respect is the Harmony of Life**

*“One’s life has value so long as one attributes value to the life of others, by means of love, friendship, indignation, and compassion.”*

*- Simone de Beauvoir*

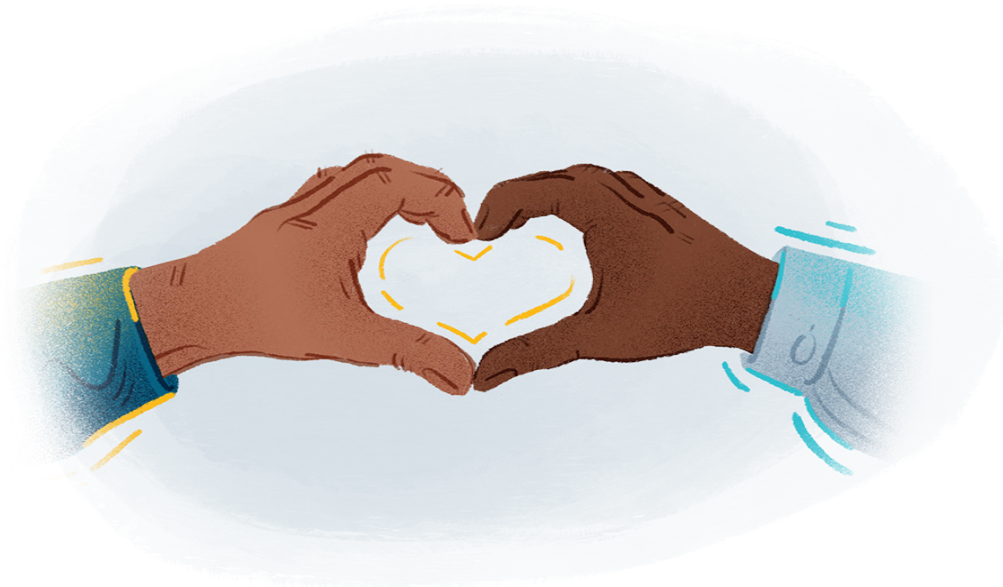
There is nothing too big nor too small, tangible or intangible, that is unworthy of receiving respect. The laws of nature are clearly defined by uncompromising boundaries and a harmonious reality that naturally exists between everything. Respect should always be given, that is, until one’s lack of manners causes offense and becomes disrespect.

Although we all are entitled to be respected, keep in mind that it can only be gained the old-fashioned way; it must be earned. Your looks, your appealing personality nor the sweetest words you can conjure up will ever gain you true regard. Respect begins with the love of self. You cannot expect others to admire you until you demonstrate that you value yourself first.

Do not be hasty to commit foolish acts for shallow praise. What good can come from that? There’s no need to seek a false sense of respect from anyone, and should someone try to convince you otherwise, their nature may be tainted. Respect may be something that their soul hasn’t been blessed to appreciate. Regardless of how well you treat others, certain people will not grasp the meaning of reciprocity.

A display of respect shouldn’t come with preconditions. The ingenious woman who has found herself down on her luck is just as worthy, if not more, than the CEO of a Fortune 500 company. Today she may be struggling to make ends meet, but with a dose of determination and a blessing from above, tomorrow she might reclaim her rightful position. And if you were the one who made fun of her condition, there will be nothing you can do or say except pray that she has a compassionate heart to forgive your ignorance!

*Traits and Emotions of a Salvageable Soul, Vol I* can be found on Barnes and Noble, Amazon, Walmart, and Books a Million, ISBN: 9780998780313





# **In Memorium**

## **In Memory of Fishtown Bob**

*Robert Pezzeca of SCI Coal Township*

On May 10, after almost 40 years of incarceration, our friend and brother, Robert Grabfelder, died in SCI Dallas. Bobby G, or Fishtown Bob, spent just under 4 decades in prison. He died just two days shy of his compassionate release court hearing. Bobby G. was a good man who spent decades in prison, improving himself and hoping to go home one day. When I was transferred out of Dallas, he said, "I don't want to die in prison Rob. Will you help me with my commutation application?"

I was moved so I got our friend and fellow lifer Tom Greene to help. But, the process is so lengthy that Bobby G. was unable to even be staffed for merit review. At our recent May 23 criminal justice reform seminar in SCI Coal Township, BOP Secretary Shelley Watson and Lt. Gov. Davis both spoke on how the board is changing and how they are hiring more people to expedite applications.

Bobby G, will be missed by all that knew him. I write this about him because we have all watched our fellow Lifers die in prison. It is a horrible thing to see. It's time we work together so we don't end up like the ones who passed before us.

Good men and women are dying needlessly behind bars.

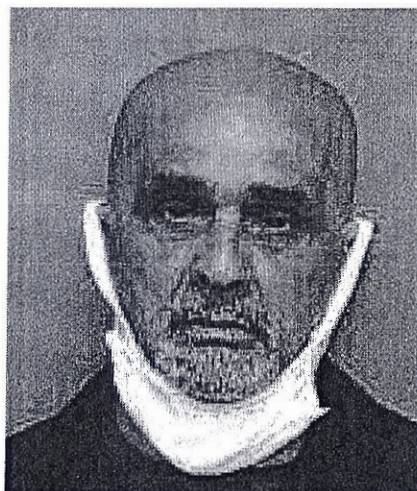
Bobby G. was the one who got me hired in the prison's maintenance repair shop. He didn't know how to cook, but he was always ready to throw in so someone could cook a pot. He loved talking about the old neighborhood, and he would talk with anyone from Philly about it.

I wish you an eternity of peace Bobby G. You were a friend. And you are missed.

Riposa in Pace (rest in peace).

## **In Memory of Floyd Wilson**

*Larry Stephenson of SCI Phoenix*



Another Lifer with over four decades served. Denied a second chance at life on the outside. (Juvenile Lifer)



# **Pennsylvania Prison Society**

## **Food Survey 2023**

**DOC Food Service survey, Spring 2023**

**The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections is reexamining food service. The Prison Society wants to make sure the Department hears from people in custody about what is working well, and what isn't working well with food service. Our goal is to help the Department provide quality, nutritious food.**

**We will share the anonymous results from this survey with the Department of Corrections leadership. The more survey results we receive, the louder your collective opinion will be heard. We will also publish survey results in Graterfriends so you can learn about the experience of your peers. If you would like to participate, please fill out this survey and mail it back to us at:**

**230 South Broad Street, Suite 605, Philadelphia, PA 19102.**

**Please note that survey responses will not be sent a confirmation of receipt.**

1. Which menu are you currently receiving?
  - a. Regular entrée (regular menu)
  - b. Alternative protein entrée (regular menu)
  - c. A mix of a and b
  - d. Religious diet menu (kosher, no animal products)
  - e. Therapeutic diet menu (texture modified, renal, lactose restricted)
  - f. Other
2. Are you hungry between meals, as if you did not get enough to eat?
  - a. I am hungry everyday between meals
  - b. A few times a week I am hungry between meals
  - c. I am rarely hungry between meals
3. If you do get hungry between meals, what do you do to curb your hunger?
  - a. I purchase food items from commissary to supplement my meals
  - b. I save food items from the tray and eat later
  - c. Both a and b
  - d. I do not do anything to curb my hunger
  - e. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  - f. Not applicable (I don't get hungry between meals)
4. How often are meals served at the correct temperatures (e.g are hot meals served hot or warm, are cold meals served cold)?
  - a. At every meal
  - b. At least once a day
  - c. A few times a week
  - d. Never

5. In the last month, how often did you receive rotten or spoiled food?
  - a. Daily
  - b. Several times per week
  - c. About once a week
  - d. Once or twice in the month
  - e. Never
6. In the last month, how often did you receive fresh fruits?
  - a. Two or three times per day
  - b. Once per day
  - c. Less than once per day
7. In the last month, how often did you receive green vegetables (fresh or cooked)?
  - a. Two or three times per day
  - b. Once per day
  - c. Less than once per day
8. What is the name of the prison where you are currently incarcerated?
9. What is your age?
  - a. 18 years or under
  - b. 19-30 years
  - c. 31-40 years
  - d. 41-50 years
  - e. 51 years or over
10. What is your favorite meal served?
11. What is your least favorite meal served?
12. What meals or food items would you like to see more on menus?
13. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your experience with food service in PA DOC (i.e., food quality, taste, schedule/timing of meals, portion sizes, temperature, eating environment, withholding of food)?

14. Were you incarcerated before or after March 2020?

- a. Before March 2020
- b. After March 2020

*Only answer the questions 15 and 16 if you were incarcerated at a Pennsylvania Department of Corrections (PA DOC) before March 2020.*

The PA DOC states that the closure of dining halls and the move to serve food in housing units was designed to increase your recreation and programming time.

15. In comparison to the amount of recreation time you received prior to the COVID lockdown of March 2020 do you now have

- a. the same amount of recreational time
- b. less recreational time
- c. more recreational time
- d. I'm not sure

16. In comparison to the amount of programming time you received prior to the COVID lockdown of March 2020 do you now have

- a. the same amount of programming time
- b. less programming time
- c. more programming time
- d. I'm not sure

Thank you for sharing your experience and opinions with the Pennsylvania Prison Society. We exist to protect your health, safety, and dignity.



# REQUESTS FOR RESOURCES

In lieu of a list, please request resources directly with this form. Please allow one month for a response.  
Complete and mail to the Pennsylvania Prison Society:

Pennsylvania Prison Society  
ATTN: Resources  
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605  
Philadelphia, PA, 19102

**Name, ID Number, Facility**  
**If Applicable: Returning County for Re-entry Resources**

**Resource Description**  
**Note: The Prison Society does not offer financial assistance**

# READER SURVEY

We welcome comments and suggestions from all readers. Please complete this form and mail it to the Pennsylvania Prison Society.

Pennsylvania Prison Society  
ATTN: Graterfriends  
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605  
Philadelphia, PA, 19102

## Name, ID Number, Facility

## Comments and Suggestions



First Class postage is required to re-mail  
230 South Broad Street, Suite 605  
Philadelphia, PA 19102

# July & August 2023 GRATERFRIENDS

NON-PROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
CLAYSBURG, PA  
PERMIT NO. 84

## Subscription Information

Support our mission and become a member

### Receive Graterfriends for:

Print Edition for Incarcerated Individuals \$3 per year

Print Edition for Society Members \$25 per year

Digital Edition for Society Members FREE on our website

### Make a check or money order payable to:

The Pennsylvania Prison Society

230 South Broad Street, Suite 605

Philadelphia, PA 19102

Memberships/subscriptions last for 1 year.

New subscribers: Please allow 12 weeks for receipt of your first issue.  
Subscriptions cannot be refunded.

Starting January 1, 2020, all multi-year subscriptions must be exact; any overage will be counted as a donation to the Society  
(i.e. a \$10 check will be processed as a 3-year subscription and a \$1 donation).

Name \_\_\_\_\_

DOC ID Number \_\_\_\_\_ Institution \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Payment Amount \_\_\_\_\_ Payment Method \_\_\_\_\_